Citizen Diplomacy—New US Public Diplomacy Strategy in the Middle East under the Obama Administration

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Abstract: *In the information and digital era, the international situation is becoming increasingly complicated. The construction of international relations and national image depends more on people-to-people diplomacy. During the Obama Administration, the Administration recognized the central role of public diplomacy as a tool and an essential element of the 21st century statecraft. US public diplomacy and public affairs faces the five strategic tasks: to pro-actively shape global narratives, expand and strengthen people-to-people relationships, counter violent extremism and better inform policy-making as well as redeploy resources in strategic alignment with shifting priorities. It presents new features under the guidance of the perfect mechanism, such as using digital methods and social media as the core to communicate, adjusting information transmission and message control, emphasizing the inter-departmental coordination, attaching great importance to the youth and women's groups and optimizing the evaluation mechanism. This article summarizes and analyzes the striking features of public diplomacy under Obama's administration, focusing on citizen diplomacy operations in the Middle East, thus putting forth a worthy reference for the further study of China's*

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton delivered a speech called "Arrival at the Department of State" on January 22, 2009, in which she compared American foreign policy to a stool with three legs: defense, diplomacy and development. Meanwhile, she pointed out that robust diplomacy and effective development are the best long-term tools for securing America's future (Clinton, H., 2009: January 22).

Tara Sonenshine, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs pointed out in her speech at Syracuse University on October 18, 2012 that public diplomacy was critical for the 21st Century Statecraft (Sonenshine, T., 2012: October 18). With the development of international situation and the information technology revolution, the Obama administration has not followed the Bush administration, which used "preemptive strategy", but has paid more attention to multilateral cooperation which is regarded as an important part of US foreign policy. Therefore, public diplomacy and public affairs with the purpose of publicity and cultural exchange increasingly draws great attention from the political and academic fields.

I. Basic Concept of Public Diplomacy

In 2000 and in 2005 respectively, the US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy and the US Government Accountability Office offered a relatively detailed, accurate and authentic explanation on public diplomacy, stating that it involves US Government activities intended to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics through international exchanges, international information programs, media research and polling, and support from nongovernmental organizations. Public diplomacy solidifies relations with America's allies, seeks to disseminate American

values, and promotes mutual understanding between the United States and other societies. Done properly, it reduces the potential for conflict—military, political, and economic—and dispels negative notions about the United States. Public diplomacy is an inexpensive, yet highly effective, way to promote American policy and interests overseas (US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 2000: 2; US Government Accountability Office, 2005: 4).

In the Performance Summaries from 2001 to 2007, Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs led by Under Secretary were evaluated from four performance perspectives: International Public Opinion, Mutual Understanding, American Values Respected Abroad and Domestic Understanding of Foreign Policy.[1] Under George W. Bush's administration, the United States initiated Arab and Muslim outreaching to win over international public opinion; the government promoted mutual understanding of public at home and aboard through global educational and cultural exchanges; the government promoted democratic values and behavior and fought against hostile elements to get American values respected and spread abroad; the government expanded domestic audiences for foreign policies to ensure their being understood by domestic public.[2] Thus, it can be seen that the strategic contribution of US public diplomacy and public affairs is to facilitate the realization of objectives of US foreign policies; through informing and influencing foreign publics, which can expand and strengthen the relationship between US citizens and the government with citizens in other parts of the world, so as to promote national interests and strengthen national security. Under the Barack Obama Administration (2009-), the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Richard Stengel led America's public diplomacy outreach, which includes communications with international audiences, cultural

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[1] Department of State and US Agency for International Development Fiscal Year 2001-2007 Joint Performance Summary.

[2] Department of State and US Agency for International Development Fiscal Year 2007 Joint Performance Summary: Strategic Goal Chapter 11: Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs: p.229. 2006. 2.

programming, academic grants, educational exchanges, international visitors' programs, as well as US government efforts to confront ideological support for terrorism.[①]

II. Key Features of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs under Obama's Administration

1) Strategic Core: Digital and Social Media

According to the 2013 Internet Report made by the Internet Queen Mary Meeker in ALLTINGD D11, by 2012, the Internet penetration rate of the United States had reached 78%. The studies done by the market research company Experian Marketing Services showed that in 2012, US users spent 27% of their time (30% for 2011) on BBS and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Qing, C., 2013: April 22).

Connection technology and innovation have changed the world. As we all know, the success of Obama's presidential campaign is greatly attributed to the Internet, which saves costs and wins support from young people using Internet to a large extent. "Obama's electoral success is an opportunity for him to change the public diplomacy policies" (Li, Z., 2011: 9). As the source of big data and the innovation leader, the United States is a leader in Internet and innovative capability of big data. "Data is a valuable national capital and should be accessible to the public, rather than detained in the government system" (US: National Strategy for Big Date, 2014: January 24). In the new era of digital and social media, the strategic pattern of communication and information sharing and the investment and trade pattern of US Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs have become the main pattern of American global dialogue. Through the transformation of traditional tools and the practice of cutting-edge technology, the US government takes full advantage of the Internet, science and technology to reach people all over the

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[①] US Department of State: Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Official Website: http://www.state.gov/r.

world. The Government utilizes a range of tools, including social media, when implementing public diplomacy, disseminating information about press conferences, speeches, media notes, videos, online material, and virtual press conferences with reporters spread over all continents.

The main reason of the United States considering digital and social media as a strategic core of public diplomacy is that digital and social media communication are in the open, in a fair and transparent Internet environment, as well as available at the grassroots and that extensive traits of citizens are consistent with not only the values advocated by the United States, but also with the nature of citizen diplomacy which the United States implements. In 2014, the Department of State (DOS) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) co-released the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, in which five strategic goals were put forward, the fifth of which was to "modernize the way we do diplomacy and development". It is emphasized that "in the 21st century, effective engagement with international partners, stakeholders, customers, and audiences requires fundamental shifts that involve applying new technologies and innovative approaches. Whether promoting transparency through open and accountable government as well as open data initiatives, or meeting increased customer demand for passports and other consular services, or expanding our digital media to reach a rapidly growing audience, or eliminating inefficiencies and reducing costs through business process reform, modernizing how the Department and USAID operate is key to bolstering the US government response to the range and magnitude of foreign policy and development challenges."[1]

In the 21st "Century Statecraft" document released by Department of State in 2011, it is pointed out that "the nature of digital media is a break from traditional forms of print and broadcast communications. These are one-to-many communication

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[1] United States Department of State and USAID Fiscal Year 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, 2014, p.37.

technologies." ① Under Obama's administration, US Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs has had some practices in digital and social media. Table 1 shows the practices of Department of State on digital and social media in terms of public diplomacy according to the performance evaluation from 2009 to 2013. Table 2 presents a series of specific communication media and platforms applied by US government up to now.

Table 1: The Practices of Department of State on Digital and Social Media in Terms of Public Diplomacy from 2009 to 2013

Year	Results
2009	The official website of Department of State (www.state.gov) was redesigned. Mobile SMS system, a group of blogs, the Amercia .gov and a multimedia interactive platform Co.Nx. were established.
	During Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to Africa, over 30 articles, 8 blogs and 4 portfolios were posted on the America.gov to support its outreach. In addition, information and feedback were produced on Twitter and special reports were made on Flickr. All kinds of news were released to shape the image of America, together with local media in Africa.
2010	Over 21 webcasts were produced and coordinated, one third of which recorded in areas outside the continental United States. More than 4,000 hours of on-demand videos were created and delivered to www.state.gov, DipNote, YouTube, iTMS, Facebook and location service such as PRNewsWire and Pathfire.
	New initiatives were introduced, such as mobilization to emphasize foreign policies. The mobile version of www.state.gov at http://m.state.gov was introduced to provide news, country information, press conferences etc. on mobile devices.
2011	Expanding the influence of social media using other languages
	4 million new fans on Facebook

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① The 21st Century Statecraft. http://www.state.gov/statecraft/overview.

	Produing 100 videos on IIP
2012	By expanding the use of social media, the U.S. government communicated more actively with the public. The DOS had 16.6 million fans on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.
	The DOS made all the embassies and consulates' websites accessible on mobile phones to run global content management system (CMS). This centralized NMS also supported the embassy websites in times of crisis, and at the same time supervised vital propaganda tools, such as a virtual embassy in Tehran.
	The DOS used Google+ for the first time to gather Persian-speaking correspondents in Farsi.
	Nearly 10 million foreign public had viewed the website of 450 embassies and consulates and 280 social media platforms.
	Co.Nx cooperated with the US Embassy and has published over 1,000 interactive pieces on important issues to the public and third-party experts around the world.
	IIP Digital modernized and digitalized the publications of the Department of State and continued to be a key resource-publishing platform.
2013	The official account of DOS was set on Instagram.
	Secretary of State for the first time participated in Google+ . A personal Twitter account was set and the blog platform DipNote State was used as a technical tool for foreign public communication.

Table 2: Specific Communication Media and Platforms Applied by US Government

Platform	Link
DipNote	www.blogs.state.gov
Facebook	www.facebook.com/usdos
Flickr	www.flickr.com/photos/statephotos

Google+	www.plus.google.com/+StateDept#+StateDept/posts
RSS Feeds	www.state.gov/misc/echannels/66791.htm
Tumblr	www.statedept.tumblr.com
Twitter	@StateDept
YouTube Channel	www.youtube.com/user/statevideo
Mobile APP	For example: American English APP

2) Strategic Objectives: Information Transmission and Control

Professor Cheng Manli, from the School of Journalism and Communication at Peking University pointed out that, "international communication is a combination of information dissemination activities in the two directions of information departure and entry. The former is the behavior of active dissemination while the latter represents passive reception; the former mainly addresses how the domestic voice can be spread to other countries and communities to expand its influence and to promote cooperation and exchange, so as to create a favorable external environment for the domestic development. The latter mainly deals with the problem on how to eliminate harmful parts in extraneous information and how to filter and select information effectively" (Chen, M., 2006: 113). During the diplomatic dissemination of information, US Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs has to take into account the transmission and control of foreign information on the one hand, and cope with foreign governments' practices towards the United States on the other hand. In the traditional media era, the transmission of international information was limited by time and space. With the popularity of Internet, however, the limitation is broken and the body of information transmission changes from the government to a wide

range of the public. The mode of information transmission is not one-to-many any more but many-to-many and the mode of communication is not one-way asymmetric any more but two-way symmetric. Meanwhile, Owing to the relative openness of Internet and the diversity in the information sorted out by subjects, countries are facing a situation in which information is usually overloaded, miscellaneous, highly compatible, highly false and lowly controllable. Therefore, US Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs under the Department of State in Obama Administration has laid more emphasis on transmitting and controlling diplomatic information related to the United States by taking more acceptable measures under the guidance of international communication in information transmission and control.

Firstly, in terms of information transmission, the Obama administration attaches great importance to public diplomacy and emphasizes the interaction and communication between "individuals" to break the traditional one-way, asymmetrical communication, so as to disseminate Americans' voices, tell the stories of the United States and help the country to achieve its vital interests. For instance, in March 2009, in order to alleviate the strained relations between Iran and the United States, President Obama launched the "YouTube" diplomacy to Iran: he recorded a video message titled, "A New Year, A New Beginning" and released the video on YouTube to Iranian people during the Iranian New Year (Norooz). The video contained Farsi subtitles; it got 150,000 views within only 18 hours once it released (Zhang, J. & Luo, H., 2009: 46). Meanwhile, in response to instantaneous changes in the 21st century, DOS has given priority to support key programs, for instance, the Department's Fund for Innovation in Public Diplomacy has been established to enable embassies around the world to carry out innovative public diplomacy initiatives that advance the nation's priorities. In this regard, public diplomacy is taken as a strong practicability and applicability, and domestic information transmission can target different audience and areas under the same goal framework, so as to achieve optimum results. In 2011, the Fund

supported the public diplomacy innovative project, the "African media freedom", through the embassy in Pretoria. In 2012, the Fund supported 33 public diplomacy projects about entrepreneurship, youth & women technical training, travel & tourism, investing $1.5 million in total. In 2013, the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs funded 68 projects worldwide for a total of $3.3 million.[1]

Secondly, in terms of information control, in response to the "noise" in information dissemination of new media era, the Department of State established the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), targeting violent extremists and terrorist organizations and dealing with their impact on US interests. In May 2011, the United States held a technical training camp in Indonesia and invited leaders of grassrooty organizations and Internet activists in Southeast Asian to participate. In June and July 2011, comparable training activities were held in Lithuania and Moldova to promote democratic community and open government. In the new media era, which is characterized by the fast speed of information transmission and the strong explosiveness of crises, the DOS's Bureau of Public Affairs established the Public Affairs Fly Away Communications Team (PA FACT). On the one hand, it can ensure that the Department can disseminate accurate and timely information to both domestic and foreign audiences during a crisis and, on the other hand, it can also provide guidance and support for different departments in dealing with the potential crises.[2]

3) Strategic Audience: Youth and Women

In today's world, the total number of young people under the age 25 accounts for 45 percent of the world's population. These

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[1] United States Department of State Fiscal Year 2011 Agency Financial Report, p.32; United States Department of State Fiscal Year 2012 Agency Financial Report, p.33.; United States Department of State Fiscal Year 2013 Agency Financial Report, p.32.

[2] United States Department of State Fiscal Year 2012 Agency Financial Report, p.34.

young people are directly or indirectly involved in the political, economic and cultural life of the United States through Internet and other new means of communication. In order to encourage young people around the world to learn more about the United States, relevant departments in Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs actively develop and utilize new strategies to stimulate the participation of these young people. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs designs various exchange programs for high school students to encourage them to learn other languages in addition to American English in the Western Hemisphere. The new media public diplomacy plan reflects closely the significant role of young people in public affairs and encourages young people to actively articulate different voices to the US government.

As we all know, women's population accounts for over 50% of the world. However, in many countries and regions around the world, they do not have access to some fundamental rights, such as education. As is indicated in numerous reports and studies, societies with women participating in the political, economic and cultural life turn out to be more efficient. Therefore, the Department develops a number of public diplomacy programs and projects to support women's rights and involve them in activities for improving community environment. In 2011, women from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine participated in a five-week mentorship program in the San Francisco Bay Area and Silicon Valley. This mentorship program, called TechWoman (http://www.techwomen.org/), was designed to empower, connect, and support African women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to advance their own careers and encourages them to make contributions to the development of local communities in Africa. In 2013, TechWomen matched 75 women from the Middle East and Africa with 150 American mentors at leading US technology companies.[1]

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[1] United States Department of State Fiscal Year 2013 Agency Financial Report, p.32.

4) Strategic Focus and Region

We have searched for public diplomacy-related reports, news, remarks, media notes, interviews and briefings on the official website of the Department of State. Until August, 20, 2014, the closely-related top five themes and top ten regions ranked as follows.

Table 3: Top 5 Themes

	Theme	Number
1	civil society	6329
2	democracy	6329
3	human rights	5722
4	religious freedom	5244
5	political rights	2335

Table 4: Top 10 Regions[①]

	Region	Number
1	Africa	106
2	Afghanistan	61
3	Egypt	52
4	Pakistan	50
5	Europe and Eurasia	48
6	Myanmar	47

[①] US Department of State Official Website: http://search.state.gov/search?q=Public+diplomacy&site=state_en_stategov&client=state_en_stategov&output=xml_no_dtd&proxystylesheet=state_en_stategov&filter=0&entqr=3&lr=lang_en&oe=utf8&ie=utf8&getfields=*&search-button=Search.

7	China	47
8	West Hemisphere	46
9	Syria	43
10	India, North Korea	39

As is shown in Table 3 and Table 4, US public diplomacy is mainly around civil society, democracy, human rights, religious freedom and political rights, with Africa, Middle East, Europe and Eurasia, Myanmar, China, North Korea and so on, as the main recipients.

Through studying each year's strategic objectives of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in DOS Agency Financial Reports, we learned that among the joint strategies from DOS and the United States Agency for International Development under the Obama administration, US Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs have implemented programs principally in "peace and security", "justice and democratic governance", "humanitarian assistance", "promotion of international understanding" and "enhancement of consular and management capacity". Among these five aspects, "promotion of international understanding" and "enhancement of consular and management capacity" are given a high priority. In 2012, US Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs made certain contributions to "peace and security" and "justice and democratic governance".

5) Strategic Evaluation

Traditional public diplomacy emphasizes the importance of government involvement addressing the question "Why public diplomacy is conducted" and "What should be done in public diplomacy". However, a series of public diplomacy actions of the Bush administration designed to "win hearts and minds" in the Middle East did not work. Therefore, the academic focus has gradually moved to the evaluation of the impact of the

implementation of public diplomacy. Significant factors for the implementation effect include whether public diplomacy is consistent with diplomacy policies and military operations and the role of the bureaucracy's competent departments in the execution of public diplomacy.

Strategic planning and performance management must be carried out each year by the United States government. The US Department of State releases yearly the performance appraisal and the financial situation reports of each department. Under the Obama Administration, DOS applies the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010---GPRAMA in terms of evaluating the performance of Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy, Managing for Results Framework as the pivotal tool, which includes associating strategic and long-term plans with the budget plan; importing systematic proof into the budget and decision of plans, programs and projects; using innovative methods to balance budget and optimize projects and better reporting of the implementation process to taxpayers and the Congress.[1]

III. US New Public Diplomacy Strategy in the Middle East—Citizen Diplomacy

Under Obama's administration, the focus of US public diplomacy in the Middle East is to rehabilitate US image and win over the trust, so as to facilitate the realization of American interests in the Middle East. Strategically, the US government tries to start from civil society, the new public society actor, to restore the relations with Arab peoples; they target young people and women to carry out strategic communication, use social media and new information technologies and implement international exchange programs through nongovernmental organizations to promote this new public diplomacy strategy.

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[1] United States Department of State Fiscal Year 2009 Agency Financial Report, p.2.

1) Strengthening "Engagement" Strategy with Citizen Diplomacy

On November 10, 2005, Karen Hughes, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in the Bush Administration put forward four ways to implement public diplomacy in the International Relations Committee of the House of Representatives: engagement, exchange, education, and empowerment. By stressing "engagement", the Obama Administration has encouraged the American public to become their countries ambassadors overseas and expand international exchange programs of all facets.

The US Center for Citizen Diplomacy makes the following distinction between Public Diplomacy and Citizen Diplomacy. "Public diplomacy is conducted through activities and programs carried out under the auspices of the federal government that promote positive and credible perceptions of the US generally, and of U.S. foreign policy specifically."

"Citizen Diplomacy is the engagement of individual American citizens in primarily voluntary, private sector programs and activities that increase cross-cultural understanding and knowledge between Americans and people from other countries, leading to greater mutual understanding and respect."

With the actions mentioned above, it is believed that Citizen Diplomacy is the concept that the individual has the right, even the responsibility, to help shape US foreign relations "one handshake at a time".

In a post-9/11 world, the power of individuals and organizations for shaping US collective destinies has never been more apparent. At present, more than ever, the remarkable accomplishments of America's citizen diplomats should be acknowledged and encouraged. The "Voice of America" not only refers to a radio station with an impressive history. It also includes individual voices and actions of dedicated citizen diplomats.

In 2009, the President gave a speech in Cairo, Egypt, outlining his personal engagement in the Muslim world, based upon mutual interests and mutual respect, and he illustrated how the United

States and the Muslim communities around the world can bridge some of the differences that have divided them. In order to acquaint more Muslims with the Obama administration's diplomatic philosophy and policy to the Islamic world, the Department of State translated the speech text into languages of the Islamic world. After the Cairo speech, 42% of Egyptian Muslims expressed confidence in Obama, and 31% in Jordan, 46% in Lebanon, 33% in Turkey and up to 71% in Indonesia.

2) Exchange programs start the face-to-face talk, building up people-to-people relations

One of the most important ways citizen diplomats can contribute to American foreign policy is through exchange programs, specifically, those in which community organizations often work with the DOS in the actual administration of the Department. For instance, the Institute of International Education (IIE), founded in 1919, helps DOS administer and promote the Fulbright program. Another example of these organizations is the National Council for International Visitors (NCIV), which organizes professional schedules, cultural activities, and home visits for participants in the State Department's International Visitor Program. Each year thousands of NCIV volunteers open their homes, offices, factories, farms, and educational institutions to foreign leaders and scholars – strengthening America's commercial, cultural, and educational ties with the rest of the world (Mueller, S., 2002: 23-29). Below are some influential programs conducted in the Middle East.

Refugee Resettlement and the US Refugee Admissions Program

Since 1975, Americans have welcomed over 3 million refugees from all over the world. Refugees have built new lives, homes and communities in towns and cities in all 50 states (US Department of States). The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is comprised of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) of the US Department of State, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the US Department of Homeland Security, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) of the US

Department of Health and Human Services.

Besides, there are five international nongovernmental organizations operating Resettlement Support Centers around the world under the supervision and funding of PRM, and nine domestic nongovernmental organizations with a total of about 350 affiliated offices across the United States. Thousands of private citizens volunteer their time and skills to help refugees resettle in the United States (US Department of States, b). Larry Bartlett, Director of the Office of Refugee Admissions said at New York Press Center on November 3, 2015 that "this is helping refugees in places like Jordan and Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, and northern Iraq to stay there, to remain in a safe place, to have food, to have shelter, to have some access to health care" and "it's very important that we have community support. And so we work very hard to make sure that communities understand the program, and to make sure that they realize kind of the attributes and the positive aspects that a refugee family can bring to a community" (Bartlett, L., 2015: November 3).

The Global Entrepreneurship Program (GEP)

The Global Entrepreneurship Program (GEP) is the US State Department-led effort to promote and spur entrepreneurship by catalyzing and coordinating private sectors and US Government programs to support entrepreneurs around the world. In order to fulfill the administration's commitment to leverage America's entrepreneurial culture, the GEP was launched in April 2010 at the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship. It was then reinforced by the positioning of Economic Statecraft at the heart of the US foreign policy agenda, selecting entrepreneurship as an important economic tool, to develop economic opportunity and create jobs in emerging markets.

According to Jose W. Fernandez, the Global Entrepreneurship Program has been heavily focused on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). It has served as a mechanism of bringing private partners, universities, companies, NGOs to look for ways to work with local businesses and local entrepreneurs to create a common future (US Department of State).

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), located within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at DOS, is a unique program designed to engage directly with and invest in the peoples of the MENA. MEPI works to create vibrant partnerships with citizens to foster the development of pluralistic, participatory, and prosperous societies throughout the MENA region. MEPI partners include local, regional and international non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and governments (US Embassy in Algiers).

The Women2Women International Leadership Program (W2W)

The Women2Women International Leadership Program sponsored by Empower Peace is an opportunity for young women from 15 to 19 of age to participate in an educational cultural exchange in Boston, Massachusetts. The W2W also provides participants with the opportunity to learn how to network and to acquire leadership skills that will empower them to make a difference in their respective communities and countries. The participants mentioned above will also have the opportunity to meet and develop friendships with their peers from around the world (US Embassy in Manama).

The Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program（IYLEP）

The Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program for undergraduate students, sponsored by the United States Government and administered by the Meridian International Center, provides four weeks of fully-funded leadership training, such as classroom instruction for those talented and dedicated students from Iraq. Participants, hosted at four universities throughout the United States, will focus on one of the four thematic "institutes": Public Policy, Entrepreneurship and Community Development, Information Technology, Media, and Leadership, and last but not the least, Law and Social Justice. Each institute will consist of classroom instruction, field trips, site visits, community service, leadership training, conflict resolution training, and cultural

exchanges (US Embassy in Baghdad; Office of the Spokesperson, 2014: August 19).

3) Effects of America's citizen diplomacy in the Middle East

The 225 citizen diplomacy programs, such as the International Visitor Leadership Program (SIVP), funded by the US Department of State and NGOs, cover various fields, including political reform, economic reform, educational reform and women's rights. These programs greatly promote educational and cultural communication between the United States and the Middle East countries and enhance mutual understanding between ordinary citizens from both sides, consequently subtly disseminating American values and popular culture and exporting American soft power. Young people and women have been the main actors in citizen diplomacy in helping, to some extent, the United States establish the political and social elite's ties with the Middle East to gain certain value identification. As the traditional Realist advocate George Kennan put it, "to maintain close cultural contacts with overseas political and social elites helps mitigate the negative impact of the world public opinions against the United States" (cited in, Nye, J., 2004: 44-45).

IV. Implications to China's Public Diplomacy

In recent years, public diplomacy has gradually become one of China's focal points in diplomatic work (Yang, J., 2011: 43). Meanwhile, the investigation of the operating mechanism and characteristics of US Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs can serve China's public diplomacy. It is believed that China can gradually improve the following aspects to make its public diplomacy more efficient.

Firstly, emphasis on new communication technology. Recently, the Fourth Meeting of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms passed the "Instructions on Promoting the Convergence of Traditional Media and New Media". President Xi Jinping stressed the necessity to build a number of new

mainstream media with varied shapes, advanced tools and high competitiveness, as well as a few new media groups with strong communication capability, credibility and influence (Xi Jinping: Construct Some New Media Group with Strong Strength and Credibility, 2014: August 18). It is obvious that China's public diplomacy cannot be well developed without the use of new media. However, for now, China lacks strong traditional media and new media platforms for external communication; new media practices and reports are also in need. In addition, China should pay more attention to worldwide transmission and establish its voice. At the same time, effective and cost-efficient new media communication should be emphasized and get further in strategic cooperation with the traditional means of communication.

Secondly, balance between information dissemination and information control. In the era of Mobile Internet with diverse disseminated subjects (multiple dissemination strengths), the integration of dissemination space (the integration between internal and external spaces), the polyphony of dissemination themes (attention, participation, criticism, influence and construction) and other characteristics (Fu, Y., 2013: 10-12), the background of China's external broadcasting is changing. First of all, the role of overseas Chinese should be emphasized during information dissemination; "Chinese Stories" should be told with an international language in a more accepted way; specific local conditions should be underlined and regional embassies and consulates should be given certain autonomy to design public diplomacy activities with local characteristics. Second, the establishment of public diplomacy crisis communication mechanisms should be especially highlighted in terms of information control. In this regard, a qualified staff in public diplomacy crisis communication can deal with crises efficiently and orderly once public diplomacy-related crises happen.

Thirdly, emphasis on strategic public. As one of the main ways to present China's image externally and safeguard China's interests, public diplomacy is conducted through various activities worldwide. China's public diplomacy activities are now focused on

cultural and elite-level exchanges. US public diplomacy involves a large scale of strategic public in implementing the strategy as to winning the support of the majority of people around the world. At present, China needs to develop some new projects with the emphasis on "citizen to citizen" approach; at the elite level, the sustainability and continuity of these programs should be stressed; diplomatic relations should especially reach to more vulnerable groups to some extent worldwide, such as African people; in the era of Internet, active young people as the key point of China's public diplomacy strategy is vital for its development.

Fourthly, optimization of evaluation mechanism. What challenges China's public diplomacy today is the quality of the project implementation, the use of funds, the effect of image construction and the efficiency analysis of project implementation. The construction and operation of the evaluation mechanism is of great importance for the effective implementation of China's public diplomacy strategy. It is believed that first of all, the academic field can do related research and studies on performance evaluation and can establish evaluation mechanisms taking China's national conditions into consideration; in the second place, the internal government departments or third parties shall carry out the pre-evaluation process, follow-up and post-feedback; in the third place, the government's public diplomacy feedback report should be accessible to all, so that people around the world can supervise our public diplomacy, assisting the citizens and taxpayers in fully understanding the relevant government initiatives in public diplomacy.

The development of US public diplomacy has been a long journey, starting from the spread of propaganda of US hegemonic power seeking to impose American values. However, in the mobile, interconnected and democratic international arena, where public diplomacy in the Middle East is particularly important, the United States has been compelled to emphasize "citizen-to-citizen" diplomacy, through program or project-oriented activities, targeting strategic public, stressing the openness and transparency of foreign

policies and underlining the integrality and collaboration of external dissemination. China's public diplomacy is still in its infancy compared to the overall development worldwide; thus, China's public diplomacy programs have a long way to go. Nevertheless, we truly believe that through constant practice and exploration, China will gradually conduct public diplomacy and development strategies with Chinese characteristics to enhance Beijing's international image as a great power.

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