

# American public diplomacy in the Middle-East

The inverted pyramid paradigm? Genesis, institutions, strategies and reception

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## SUMMARY

*Politique Américaine*, a political science journal published in French on US domestic politics and international strategies launches a call for papers for its special issue on: "American Public Diplomacy in the Middle-East: the inverted pyramid paradigm? Genesis, Institutions, Strategies and Receptions". Next to its impact on governments, public diplomacy is seen as a diplomatic practice aiming at directly or indirectly influencing civil societies. It encompasses all "seductive" strategies that a State implements towards the public opinions of another state or region.

The growing importance of this idea highlights the necessity for the main players of international relations to maintain a multi-level dialogue with foreign civil societies in order to anticipate political and social developments initiated by other players than the State itself.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### Scientific Argument

During a conference organized the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 2011 by the Council on Foreign Relations, Judith A. McHale, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in the United States between 2009 and 2011, described the implications of Arab revolutions for US diplomacy in the Middle-East as follows "In a world where power and influence truly belongs to the many, we must engage with more people in more places, That is the essential truth of public diplomacy in the Internet age". Judith A. McHale also used the metaphor of the inverted pyramid in order to express the need to consider, since the Arab revolutions, public opinions in the shaping of US foreign policy in the Middle-East. Indeed, the top of the pyramid (the head of the State) used to be the most important element because the choice of a leader was not subject to popular will; nowadays however, it is crucial for the American administration to pay attention to the basis of the pyramid (citizens). Taking this into account, the effects of both the political and digital revolutions at work in the Middle-East are likely to end up transforming the conception and possibly the practice of American diplomacy in the region in a fundamental way.

Distancing itself from a state-centered conception of diplomacy that values secrecy and intergovernmental power relations, the concept of Public Diplomacy makes diplomacy a public exercise reviving the Wilsonian liberal tradition of open diplomacy. The expression "Public Diplomacy" was coined in 1965 by Edmund Gullion, a former American diplomat. The legitimacy of this idea was challenged for a long time because it was first assimilated with a sophisticated form of political propaganda. Today, public diplomacy is seen as a new way of practicing diplomacy. Its methods have benefitted from a renewed interest in the United States as well as in other countries ; more than 20 reports were published between 2008 and 2010 in order to emphasize the importance of public diplomacy in protecting American positions in the world. The Middle-East is front and center in most of these reports.

Recent academic literature and reports point out that American public diplomacy is meant to fulfill various functions. First, it allows for an open circulation of information about official US positions within societies, through the diffusion of written material or the Internet. Then, public diplomacy players, including foreign press correspondents, are expected to keep the media informed. At the same time, the workings of public diplomacy foster communication with wider audiences, either by organizing debates or using resources offered by new technologies such as blogs and social media. Last but not least, public diplomacy makes it possible to develop a cultural policy (including education, artistic activities and

sports) that can be implemented either directly by the government or by specialized agencies subsidized by the US government.

This issue of *Politique Américaine* is an attempt to describe, at least partially, the new directions taken by US diplomacy in the Middle-East (defined as a region stretching from Morocco to Pakistan), especially the digital and popular diplomacy directed at Arab public opinions.

This call for papers welcomes articles on the following topics:

- The historical genesis of the image of the United States in the Middle-East and its development
- Origins and foundations of anti-Americanism in the Middle-East
- The digital revolution as used by US public diplomacy in the Middle-East
- Public diplomacy, cultural and academic exchanges
- The radio and TV strategies of the United States toward the Middle-East
- The debate on the implications of US public diplomacy in the Arab revolutions
- US public diplomacy and Arab revolutions, reactions and adjustments
- US public diplomacy and economic interests in the Middle-East
- Can we talk about a US religious policy in the Middle-East (especially towards minorities, including Shiites)?
- The Wikileaks disclosures about US actions towards groups or communities.
- Analysis of the local reception of US public diplomacy
- US public diplomacy in the Middle-East : assessment challenge.

We will obviously consider other proposals that are relevant to the general topic.

## **Bibliography**

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## Submission Procedure

Proposals (including a title and a 10 to 20 lines abstract) should be submitted by November 30th 2015 to m.eloifi@gmail.com / mohammed.eloifi@sciencespo.fr and fdechantal@univ-paris-diderot.fr

They will be submitted to the editorial committee.

- Please send the full articles by June 30<sup>th</sup> 2016. They will be anonymously reviewed, so that acceptance by the editorial committee does not imply final publication. Articles in English will be translated in French. Final publication is scheduled for December 2016.
- Proposals can be submitted in English and in French with a maximum of 50000 characters (including bibliography and notes). They need to comply with the editorial guidelines of *Politique américaine* ([http://www.editionsharmattan.fr/\\_uploads/complements/Principes%20de%20soumission%20des%20articles.pdf](http://www.editionsharmattan.fr/_uploads/complements/Principes%20de%20soumission%20des%20articles.pdf))

## Coordinator of the issue

This issue of *Politique Américaine* is coordinated by **Mohammed El Oifi**, analyst of media and public opinions in the Middle-East, (Sorbonne Nouvelle University and Paris Institute for Political Studies)

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