SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF AMERICA'S SOFT POWER BY PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Continuing Studies
and of
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

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Washington, D.C.
March 18, 2012
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ABSTRACT

For hundreds of years, countries have engaged in diplomatic relations in order to advance their national interests. Most people think of diplomacy in the traditional sense, which is characterized by government bodies or officials communicating with each other. Since the last century, however, there has been increased emphasis on the practice of public diplomacy, which involves governments communicating with foreign citizens in order to alter their attitudes. The United States still uses traditional means of diplomacy, as well as twentieth-century tools of public diplomacy, such as the use of radio broadcasts, specifically by means of the Voice of America, but recent events such as the Arab Spring suggest that embracing new forms of media is an effective means of conducting public diplomacy. This thesis shows how the United States government has used new media in public diplomacy, and how it currently uses social media to advance its soft power, which according to Joseph S. Nye,
Jr., is "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments" and "arises from a country's culture, political ideals and policies."\(^1\) The social media to be examined consist primarily of social networking sites, weblogs, and social videos. The effectiveness of new media throughout history will be compared to the new media of today, demonstrating how social media is among the most important component of contemporary discussions on US public diplomacy.

\(^1\)Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), x.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandparents, Manuel & Alicia Vazquez. They would have both been so proud.

Many thanks to Dr. Brown, who after many months of "tough questions," countless e-mails, scary phone calls, and a lot of revising, saw me through to the end of this thesis. Dr. Brown was an incredibly intense mentor, with a lot of expertise in the subject area I chose to study. I thank him for never being too busy and always helping me to make this the best product possible. He was the best professor I had at Georgetown, and I hope other students have the privilege of working under his tutelage.

I am extremely grateful to all of the support I received during my studies at Georgetown, especially the supportive ears of my friends and family. I could not have done it without you.
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CHAPTER I

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE USE OF NEW MEDIA
IN U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

According to the U.S. Department of State, the mission of American public diplomacy is to support America’s foreign policy agenda and national interests while simultaneously enhancing national security by informing and influencing foreign publics.¹ Public diplomacy differs from traditional diplomacy in that traditional diplomacy is characterized by interactions solely between representatives of a government. Since arguably the Declaration of Independence, America’s leaders have seen the value of public diplomacy as a component of an effective foreign policy strategy,² but it was not until 1965 that public diplomacy was coined to describe an activity as follows:

... deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with those of another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is


communication, as between diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the processes of inter-cultural communications.³

Today, as a result of globalization and the advent of the Internet, it is important for the United States to have an effective public diplomacy strategy. Given the global interconnectedness of the twenty-first century, with the ubiquity of social media sites, this thesis makes the case for the use of social media, particularly in the advancement of the United States' goal of increasing its soft power. The thesis also underscores that, since at least WWI and especially in times of global conflict, the United States government has employed the latest media to influence public opinion, albeit sometimes belatedly.

During his farewell address, George Washington said that the United States should have commercial relations with other nations, but should avoid a passionate attachment to one nation for another. He contrasted the United States to Europe, noting that many European nations had a set of diplomatic and political interests of limited importance for the United States. Europe would be frequently involved in conflicts, but the United States

should not be involved in them.\textsuperscript{4} During his inaugural address, Thomas Jefferson laid out a vision that was similar to Washington's. He called for "peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none."\textsuperscript{5}

In 1823, as part of his Monroe Doctrine, President James Monroe declared that, "In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so. It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparation for our defense."\textsuperscript{6}

At the beginning of World War I, the United States remained consistent with its traditional "hands-off" approach to international relations, despite the death of 128 Americans after the Germans sank the British ship Lusitania in 1915. As a response to the attack, President Wilson undertook a traditional form of diplomacy when he tried to negotiate with the Germans terms that would be in


line with international law, particularly the treatment of non-combatant citizens during warfare. Despite Wilson's best efforts, Germany did not exercise discretion in how it conducted war at sea. This, along with the discovery of the Zimmerman telegram, brought the United States into WWI. On April 2, 1917, President Wilson delivered his "War Message" to the United States Congress. In his speech, Wilson described the current European climate, and his efforts to bring peace to the conflict, as well as what he had done to secure the lives of Americans. He described German aggression as a war against all nations, saying "American ships have been sunk, American lives taken, in ways which it has stirred us very deeply to learn of, but the ships and people of other neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and overwhelmed in the waters in the same way." The old policy of non-intervention would not suffice, and a departure from this policy was necessary. Wilson said that "Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized

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7 The Zimmerman telegram was a diplomatic note between German Foreign Secretary Arthur Zimmerman and the Mexican government that urged Mexico to ally itself with Germany on suspicion that America would soon join the War, and in exchange, Germany would provide money and other resources to assist Mexico in taking up arms against America to reclaim some of their lost lands.
force which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people." Four days later, Congress passed a resolution bringing America into war.

As this was a significant departure from America's long history of non-intervention in European affairs, it was a priority for the Wilson Administration to sell the appeal of America's involvement in the Great War both domestically and abroad. On April 13, 1917, President Wilson created the Committee on Public Information (CPI), which was the American government's first large-scale information dissemination effort for both domestic and foreign audiences. It was made up by of the Secretaries of State, War and Navy, and was led by a civilian, George Creel. The Secretaries of State, War, and Navy were ex officio members as the organization existed primarily to advance the war effort. Under the leadership of Chairman George Creel, the CPI's primary functions were to release government news during WWI, to sustain domestic morale and to strongly encourage voluntary press censorship. All of these functions served to influence American citizens' support for the United States' role in WWI, but the CPI was also a vehicle for educating foreign audiences and

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promulgating American ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. It sought to convince foreign publics that America was reliable, honest, invincible, and would defeat German militarism and make the world safe for democracy—ideas that were solidly grounded in American exceptionalism.\textsuperscript{9} Harold Dwight Lasswell, Yale University School of Law professor, and a president of the American Political Science Association, wrote that the goal of the CPI was to preserve the relationship of the United States with its allies,\textsuperscript{10} to align America's victory as a benefit to those who are neutrals, and to demoralize the enemy.\textsuperscript{11} The CPI sought to achieve these aims in many ways by censoring\textsuperscript{12} news (whether that was print, or radio) and

\textsuperscript{9} Alexis de Tocqueville was the first writer to describe America as exceptional, and his writings provided the basis for the phrase. In his \textit{Democracy in America}, he says that "The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no other democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one." Alexis de Tocqueville, \textit{Democracy in America}, 2 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1948), 2:36-38.


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 161.

\textsuperscript{12} George Creel repeatedly asserted that the job of the Committee on Public Information was \textit{not} to censor. In Creel's \textit{How We Advertised America} (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1920), on page xiv, he writes, "in lieu of a Committee on Censorship, a Committee on Public Information for the production and dissemination as widely as possible of the truth about America's participation in the war. Undoubtedly for the country to adopt the censorship plan would have been to say, 'Now, we must all sit still and breathe cautiously lest we rock the boat.' It was an inspiration to say, instead: 'Now, this boat is just so many feet long, it is so many feet wide, it weights just so much, and the
by releasing information to foreign audiences, but what was most historically significant from the perspective of this thesis was the CPI's ability to utilize new technology. An emerging type of media was film, and the CPI used movies to its advantage to sell the war to foreign and domestic audiences, as well as to show the United States in a positive light.

Part of the CPI's responsibilities was to distribute American movies worldwide. These movies showcased the United States' culture in a positive light, and presented a critical picture of the United States' enemy. While using other, traditional forms of information dissemination may have provided a similar effect, the use of film made it easier to achieve this goal.

Movies were important in supporting the U.S. war effort by stressing America's commitment to justice and equality - and in demonizing the German military, as was the case with films such as The Kaiser, The Beast of Berlin, To Hell With the Kaiser and D.W. Griffith's Hearts of the World, which showed Germans throwing babies out windows. German propaganda exaggerated lynchings, made Puerto Rico and Cuba seem like slave nations, and depicted
America as a society characterized by either peons or greed. Hollywood-produced movies countered these images and showed a nation grounded in democracy, positive labor conditions, fairness, and advances in medicine.\(^{13}\) George Creel felt that the CPI was able not only to effectively combat German propaganda but that the CPI's efforts helped transform the United States into the world's most popular nation.\(^{14}\)

The last new medium used as a public diplomacy tool during WWI was the dissemination of President Wilson's Fourteen Point Speech over airwaves, which he gave before a joint session of Congress on January 8, 1918.\(^{15}\) His speech had three distinct audiences: Congress, the American people, and foreign audiences. Publics overseas were informed that an allied victory would be a positive for them. Copies of the speech were transmitted overseas in paper form, and to soldiers behind enemy lines. Newly emerging forms of technology, such as radio, were also used to disseminate the speech to foreign audiences.


\(^{14}\) Petra Dewitt, *Germany and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History* (Santa Barbara: ABL-CLIO, 2005), 253.

\(^{15}\) Cong. Rec., 65th Cong., 2d sess., 1918, pt. 680681.
Shortly after the United States entered WWII, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created Voice of America (VOA), America’s first radio broadcasting service, which was run by the Office of War Information (1942 – 1945), like the Committee on Public Information another independent agency created by the President to handle the U.S. government’s information program—both domestic and foreign—during a time of war. The first broadcast was on February 1, 1942 using British BBC transmitters. Its inaugural broadcast was to Germany, and American journalist William Harlan Hale in the first words transmitted, said, “Today, and every day from now on, we will be with you from America to talk about the war. Here in America, we get news from all over the world. The news may be good or bad for us—we will always tell you the truth.”\(^{16}\)

VOA provided Europeans with news, but also rebroadcast entertainment programs, including musical ones. Approximately two-thirds of Germans, for example, listened

\(^{16}\)The CPI was criticized by Congress and the American public for some of its propaganda methods. On page 19, of J. Michael Sproule’s, Propaganda and Democracy: The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Sproule writes about Will Irwin, a former member of the Committee’s 1919 An Age of Lies, that “[the Committee on Public Information] never told the whole truth - not by any manner of means. We told that part which served our national purpose.”
to western broadcasts during World War II. The impact of VOA's broadcasts was such that the German military tried to jam them, but was often unsuccessful.

Films with sound, which did not exist during World War I, were extensively used as propaganda tools by the U.S. government during the conflict against the Axis powers. In a book review for Why we fought: America's Wars in Film and History, Sean D. Cleveland of Texas Tech University writes that war films are:

... cultural texts that not only record events but also influence perceptions about the events depicted while simultaneously reflecting the values, morals, and ideals of both the era in which the events purportedly happened and the era in which the film was produced and released.

One notable set was the seven-film series Why We Fight, produced by Frank Capra and organized by Robert Riskin for the Overseas Branch of the Office of War Information. Both Riskin and Capra had philosophies on film that resonate with 20th century American wartime propaganda. According to Ian S. Scott in his essay Frank Capra, Robert Riskin, and the Making of World War II Propaganda, Riskin's

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18 Ibid.

belief in humanism and egalitarianism made him drawn towards advocacy for the repressed or disadvantaged; he felt that society could be improved and uplifted through film. 20 Riskin saw his films “as an extension of American liberty and freedom conveyed to a changing world in calm and measured tones.” 21 Capra, on the other hand, was drawn to “a rebuttal” of all things totalitarian. According to Scott, Capra “beat a drum for the Allies against the obdurate fanaticism of the enemy” 22 and highlighted American values. In War Comes to America, for example, the viewer is shown an American public as “hardworking but fun loving, committed to their communities and disciples of sport, leisure and the outdoor life.” 23

World War II was quickly followed by the Cold War, the third twentieth-century global conflagration in which the United States was involved and to which it committed large resources, including for the use of new media in combating the enemy, the Soviet Union.

VOA used as much cutting-edge technology as it could to connect with people overseas, and was the pioneer of

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20 Ibid., 242-258.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
many firsts. One of its initiatives was broadcasting ships-vessels equipped with studios and antennas that could reach the Soviet Union and its allies.

In 1953, the United States Information Agency (USIA) was created and charged with VOA operations. After the Cold War ended, it was consolidated into the State Department (1999). The stated mission of the USIA was to "submit evidence to peoples of other nations by means of communication techniques that the objectives and policies of the United States are in harmony with and will advance their legitimate aspirations for freedom, progress and peace."\(^{24}\) The USIA was prohibited from propagandizing the American public because of the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948.\(^ {25}\)

News was not the only content broadcast over VOA. Music was also a very important component of the VOA programming schedule. During the Cold War, jazz programs were played over VOA and were very popular.\(^ {26}\) The State


\(^{25}\) According to the National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book no. 177, which was posted on January 26, 2006, titled *Rumsfeld's Roadmap to Propaganda*, "The Smith-Mundt Act of 1948, amended in 1972 and 1998, prohibits the U.S. government from propagandizing the American public with information and psychological operations directed at foreign audiences."

\(^{26}\) From 1955 until the mid-90s, Willis Conover served as a disc jockey on Voice of America who regularly hosted a popular jazz program on VOA. According to a 1996 New York Times article by Robert Thomas, Jr., Conover called jazz "the music of freedom," and according to
Department recognized the cross-cultural nature of music, and sponsored The Newport Jazz Festival and coordinated jazz tours, starring headlining jazz artists such as Louie Armstrong and Duke Ellington, with rebroadcast streams to be played over VOA. These programs aimed to showcase a section of American culture that would result in the United States being seen in a positive light. Despite jazz being an "old fashioned" piece of music relative to other forms of music popular during this time, such as rock 'n roll, it provided an important piece of cultural public diplomacy that showed Americans in a positive light.

Despite the importance of spreading culture, VOA primarily disseminated news using its radio broadcasts. Several examples of important VOA news coverage were the United States' moon landing, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, and the worldwide coverage of the Cuban Missile Crisis. These broadcasts presented America as technologically advanced, racially inclusive, and militarily strong.

Thomas, "to those who had no freedom it became such a symbol of hope that at the peak of the cold war it was estimated that Conover had 30 million regular listeners in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and as many as 100 million worldwide." This article can be found at: http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/19/us/willis-conover-is-dead-at-75-aimed-jazz-at-the-soviet-bloc.html.

Under the directorship of Charles Z. Wick during the Reagan administration, the USIA grew significantly, doubling its budget and creating the world’s first satellite television network in 1983, Worldnet, to broadcast VOA programs across the globe.\textsuperscript{28} According to the Broadcasting Board of Governors,\textsuperscript{29} these programs disseminated information on U.S. foreign and domestic policies. Worldnet, which would eventually begin airing 24 hours a day, was one of the first examples of social media, allowing live phone-in talk shows to allow program hosts to speak directly with their foreign audiences.

The Internet began to grow at a fast rate in the 1990s, and by the mid-1990s, Internet usage began to increase by 100% each year.\textsuperscript{30} Recognizing this significant increase in traffic, the government began using the Internet to communicate its message and spread propaganda. The mid-1990s saw, for example, embassy website popping up

\textsuperscript{28} Before serving in the USIA, Wick was a Hollywood producer with strong ties to President Reagan. As a result of their close relationship, the USIA enjoyed preferential treatment and budgetary clout in Washington.

\textsuperscript{29} According to its website (http://www.bbg.gov), the Broadcasting Board of Governors is a bipartisan board comprised of nine members. Eight, no more than four from one party, are appointed by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate; the ninth is the Secretary of State, who serves ex officio. They oversee all U.S. civilian international broadcasting, including the Voice of America.

online for anyone to access and gain information on U.S. policy. As time went on, the United States began to see the value in having a presence online, even if its presence were rather limited because the Internet had not gotten as ubiquitous as it is today. Nevertheless, the Internet provided the United States with a new forum for public diplomacy that would only continue to grow in relevance.
CHAPTER II

WHAT IS SOFT POWER AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

In 2003 a reporter asked United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld about soft power and he said he did not know what it was.¹ This concerned foreign policy experts because dialogue around soft power had been brewing since the early 1990s when Joseph S. Nye, Jr. developed the concept. According to Nye, who served as the dean for the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, soft power is "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments." Soft power "arises from a country's culture, political ideals and policies."² As Nye flushed the idea out in many academic circles, he came to the conclusion that the United States needs to maximize its soft power if it is to be successful in meeting its foreign policy objectives after the end of the Cold War.

While a measure of a nation's power rests in its military might, in the contemporary era of increasing globalization, the United States will not be able to reach its goals on trade, international financial regulations without the support of some major world players, such as

¹ Nye, Soft Power, 1.

² Ibid.
the European Union, Japan, and China. In his book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Nye argues that a country may obtain the outcomes it wants because other countries admire its values and wish to cooperate with it.

In *Soft Power*, Nye uses historical examples showing soft power was an essential component of American foreign policy, and recommends that increasing American soft power is the only way to win what he calls the ill-defined “War on Terror.” Nye’s historical examples of soft power and American foreign policy lead one to conclude that soft power is an effective means of public diplomacy.

In *Soft Power*, Nye highlights how the Soviet Union and the United States were at odds during the Cold War. As a means to spread the “utopian paradise” that Communism would provide, in contrast to USA-style capitalism, Moscow elected to use high culture, broadcasting, and youth movements. Russian credibility was challenged, however, by the spread of both American high and low culture by video, radio, and face-to-face contact. During the Cold War, American orchestras intrigued Russians by showing that the “decadent west” could produce and play serious music. Further, despite Soviet claims about the terrible life in America, Hollywood films highlighted that Americans enjoyed
a vast array of consumer goods. This sparked an appreciation for the American way of life and was a catalyst for Soviets to yearn for change in their country. Further, it resulted in the Soviet Union suffering a significant blow to its own soft power. Nye argues that Russia’s “closed system, lack of an attractive popular culture, and heavy-handed foreign policies” resulted in the Soviet Union lagging the West in the Cold War.

Part of the reason why the United States came ahead of the Soviet Union during the Cold War was its ability to effectively “collect, process, act upon, and disseminate information,” in part because of technological investments made during the Cold War.3 As technology expands, and both governments and people embrace its possibilities, the world becomes less limited by boundaries, which facilitates the spread of information. According to Nye, this information advantage can help deter and even defeat traditional military threats.4 Much like the United States communicated with Soviet citizens using moving images, so United States can utilize technology to “bolster new democracies and

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4 Ibid.
communicate directly with those living under undemocratic regimes.”

Much evidence exists to illustrate the United States’ embrace of technology from the mid-1990s when the Internet began to be a staple of communication. In *America’s Information Edge*, Nye and Owens highlight the U.S. government’s reluctance in embracing technology after the end of the Cold War. First, they argued that “outmoded thinking clouds the appreciation of information as power,” and added that the United States depended too heavily on military force, GNP, population, energy, land and minerals. Second, the U.S. government was failing to grasp the nature of information.

Information does, however, have a profound impact on international affairs. For example, disseminated videos on the relatively fledgling Internet of Rwandan refugees fleeing certainly did spark international attention towards the issue, especially from those not directly affected by African conflict in the mid-1990s. The United States’ ability to increase its soft power in the Soviet Union and China was a direct result of those countries’ desire to

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5 Ibid.

6 As illustrated in Chapter 1, it is a historical pattern of U.S. foreign policy that when a global conflict ends, the U.S. government sharply reduces its resources devoted to overseas propaganda
expand their economies. As the Soviet Union and China became more open, and new technologies were being embraced, these mega-nations began to see increases in their soft power. The U.S. now had a new way of "[capitalizing] on its formidable tools of soft power, to project the appeal of its ideals, ideology, culture, economic model, and social and political institutions."  

Embracing these technologies resulted in a greater saturation in the Soviet Union and China of the United States' popular culture and democratic ideals, not only by film and television, but also by the Internet. With the United States having more of an influence overseas, it saw an increase in foreign students coming to its many colleges and universities. Many of these students embraced American culture firsthand, and would bring what they saw, learned and experienced back to their home countries.

In America's Information Edge, Nye states that four major goals of American foreign policy were to aid democratic transitions in the remaining communist and authoritarian states, to prevent backsliding in new and fragile democracies, to preempt and resolve regional conflicts, and to address the threats of terrorism, international crime, proliferation of weapons of mass  

\[\text{\footnote{Nye and Owens, "America's Information Edge," 29.}}\]
destruction, and damage to the global environment. Each of these four tasks require, according to Nye, cooperation and coordination between America’s military and diplomatic arms. Hard power is necessary for this, but so is soft power by “keeping them: [foreign people] informed on world events and helping them prepare to build democratic market societies when the opportunity arises.”\(^8\) Nye highlights the important role the USIA had in advancing America’s soft power in four previously mentioned foreign policy tasks.

Additionally, according to Nye, through the International Military Education and Training Program,\(^9\) both military and civilian personnel were trained to promote contacts among parliaments, business executives, military organizations, and people of new democracies. Such relationships helped foster the United States’ influence in these fledgling democracies and promoted the United States’ image as a “good nation.”

Finally, according to Nye, U.S. foreign policy aimed to combat crime, terrorism, nuclear weapons proliferation, as well as protect the environment. Through advances in technology, the United States could analyze data, and

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\(^8\) Nye and Owens, “America’s Information Edge,” 30.

\(^9\) The International Military Education and Training program began in the 1950s and trained more than 500,000 high level foreign officers in American military methods and democratic civil-military relations.
communicate between government agencies more efficiently. Finally, the United States’ ability to communicate its research on environmental degradation across the world resulted in the United States being seen as a pioneer in this area as an advancer of peace and democracy, along with being a nation concerned with eco-preservation.

When Nye and Owens wrote America’s Information Edge in 1996, they profiled a government moving in the right direction, but one that was not “there” yet. Both argued that the government was slow at moving towards policies that really aimed to “win hearts and minds [of foreigners].” They said that in 1996, some members of Congress were reluctant to approve defense spending that did not involve equipment and troops. This was not to say that the government did not recognize the importance the Internet could have on advancing its foreign policy agenda, but that it was not a priority. In 1996, the USIA and the U.S. Agency for International Development worked towards improving global access to the Internet. Over fifteen years later it is clear that the government has embraced this new form of public diplomacy by utilizing new technologies—illustrated by the Internet and mobile phones—and have capitalized on social media, the blogosphere, and internet video to conduct Statecraft 2.0, which according to the New
Policy Institute, is "a new mode of thinking at the State Department that understands the world as a networked place, and sees an opportunity to embrace the technologies that are tying together the world’s people."

As the United States became more entangled in conflict in the Middle East, anti-Americanism there rose, resulting in attacks against the United States and its allies from radical sects of Islam. The prevention of terrorism has, therefore, become a priority. Terrorism can be combated by having a sophisticated infrastructure of surveillance, along with soldiers and equipment, but the United States must also focus on supporting initiatives that prevent terrorist activities in the first place. Nye argues in *Soft Power* that the majority of terrorist recruits come from the “middle” of the political spectrum, becoming radicalized due to frustrations amplified by recruiters. American soft power could help prevent Islamic radicalization, but unfortunately the government has been focusing primarily on hard power, and with military actions causing damage and death, this gives terrorist cells recruitment material. In fact, according to Nye, research has shown that “Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups intensified their recruitment on three continents by ‘tapping into the rising anger about
the American campaign for war in Iraq.'"¹⁰ And where people weren't getting recruited, their positive attitudes to the United States plummeted—shortly after the beginning of the war, polls showed the United States lost 30% of European public support. With the rise of anti-Americanism comes a rejection of American society, values and culture.

We are not in an age where hard power has become irrelevant. Nevertheless, soft power is important because it is perhaps the only way the United States can win over the people in the Middle East, and one of the best ways of achieving the soft power it needs is by embracing social media technologies. Georgetown University associate professor Chester Crocker wrote in 2005 that the United States' Middle-East strategy of military might would not be the way the United States could win overseas. Rather, policymakers and others engaged in foreign policy should utilize all forms of smart statecraft, including embracing technology, particularly social media, as a component.¹¹ This method of thinking is supported by a 2010 Foreign Affairs article written by Nye in which he compared types of power to calories in a diet, saying "more is not always

¹⁰ Nye, Soft Power, 29.

better. If a country has too few power resources, it is less likely to obtain its preferred outcomes. But too much power (in terms of resources) has often proved to be a curse when it leads to overconfidence and inappropriate strategies." Therefore, it is important for a country to combine different resources in order to find the most successful strategy.¹²

CHAPTER III

SOFT POWER THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

According to the GSA's Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies, "Social networking sites are websites that connect people. In these online communities, people can join (for free) and at a minimum, establish a page with their profile."¹ A report published by the Pew Research Center states that 73% of teens, and 72% of young adults use social networking sites. This is a high number, but to contrast this statistic, only 40% of online adults use social networking sites.² Younger sections of the population have yet to fully develop their political beliefs, and so tapping into their impressionable minds by way of a medium they use may be an effective way of shifting their line of thinking for the future. Moreover, Amanda Lenhart, lead author of the Pew study, states as follows:

[The Pew Research Center] often [looks] to younger generations to see where technology use might be headed in the future [...] People under 30 have often been in the vanguard of Internet and cell-phone use, and it will be interesting to see how much of their enthusiasm for new gadgets is a time-of-life issue,


and how much will ripple through the broader culture of our coming years.\(^3\)

Because of this, it's important to recognize the potential that social networking sites can have on attaining soft power both now and for the future. U.S. policymakers must take a forward-facing approach when developing communication strategies in order not to play "catch up" in the future. Policymakers should be placing a greater emphasis on social networking sites in communicating with foreign audiences, and perhaps step away from more antiquated forms of older "new media," such as Voice of America. In order to demonstrate the importance of embracing social networking sites, this chapter will analyze their evolution, will report on how policymakers in the United States began using social media domestically, and then eventually internationally, and report how these practices have led to an increase in the United States' soft power, as well as greater citizen participation in global conversation.

The history of social networking sites dates to approximately 2003 when the first applications for the technology were sent to the U.S. Patent Office. One of the first social networking websites to appear on the Internet

\(^3\) Ibid.
was Friendster, which allowed users to digitally connect with friends and share Internet content, photos, videos and music much more easily than in person. Friendster made it possible to go on a friend’s profile page, view his/her network, and expand one’s network. Moreover, it allowed for old friends to reconnect. Friendster enjoyed much success during its early years, and at its peak, according to Nielsen Net Ratings, between September 2003 and March 2004, it attracted more than 1 million unique visitors per month.

Several web developers began to recognize the future of online communities and started building platforms off of Friendster’s model. Within ten days of Friendster’s founding, MySpace came to the Internet, with a highly organized team of business professionals and technology experts backing it. Their business model contrasted Friendster’s in that they actually had one, and their success came quickly. MySpace overtook Friendster to be the number one social networking site.

Facebook was founded in February of 2004, and would eventually overtake MySpace to become the world’s largest and most popular social networking site. It began as a website exclusively for students attending Harvard University (where Facebook was founded), and expanded to other Ivy League institutions, and then colleges and
Universities in the Boston area. Although MySpace and Facebook were very similar, they originally differed in two very significant ways: exclusivity and function. While MySpace was accessible to anyone that wanted it, Facebook was available only to university students on approved networks. While one could argue that that should have made MySpace more popular since it had no restrictions, it can also be said that Facebook’s exclusivity fueled its popularity. By June 2009, Facebook had overtaken MySpace by the first time in terms of website visits. How both websites functioned really altered their presence on the Internet. A 2009 article in The Guardian by Jenna McWilliams states:

Facebook's promise is that it "helps you connect and share with the people in your life". The point here is that you already have a social network. Facebook exists only to support communication with the people in it. Compare this to the MySpace slogan: "A place for friends". The difference is subtle but significant. While Facebook is a tool intended to support communication and networking, MySpace is a thing, a place, a new hangout site.4

Facebook allows people to communicate better within their network than MySpace, and hence the reason for its

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greater popularity. Although Facebook did not surpass MySpace as the most popular social networking site until 2009, politicians and policymakers began to believe in Facebook’s ability to deliver their message earlier than 2009. Facebook provided them with another avenue for reaching voters in a way that was less expensive than other means, such as conducting focus groups, running television ads, and using the radio. Moreover, not only did it allow for politicians to communicate with citizens, but the essence of social networking made it possible for them to observe an uncensored dialogue between participants. The 2008 general election was the turning point for the U.S. government as it saw the power of social networking in candidates successfully communicating with supporters, address dissenters, and mobilize fundraisers. During the 2008 Presidential election, then Senator Barack Obama said:

We have to use technology to open up our democracy. [...] As president, I'm going to change that. We will put government data online in universally accessible formats. I'll let citizens track federal grants, contracts, earmarks and lobbying contracts. I'll let you participate in government forums, ask questions in real-time, offer suggestions that will be reviewed before decisions are made. And let you comment on legislation before it is signed.\(^5\)

Nearly three years later, the Obama Administration has put those promises into practice by utilizing social networking sites, particularly Facebook, to advance that agenda. With its Facebook page, the White House can monitor trends, respond to citizen inquiries, and disseminate information, all of this in public view. In addition to the Executive Branch, many congressional offices and government agencies have shifted into the practice of having "New Media Directors," many of whom serve specifically to connect with the younger electorate on social networking websites such as Facebook. Many lawmakers, however, do not use these social media to their fullest extent. Instead, they will have a Facebook page or a Twitter account just for the sake of having one, as if it is a political requirement in the 21st century. Just using these services, however, is not enough, as lawmakers must actively employ these technologies in order to better connect with their constituency.

Facebook is not the only effective social networking site. Founded in 2006, Twitter came to the Internet allowing users to sign up and communicate with other users. While it was a social networking site in the sense that it enabled users to register and create a profile in order to interact with one another, it differed from MySpace and
Facebook in that its primary draw was its active status feature, which allows users to “tweet”; that is, send messages to the public in 140 characters or less. Users could also customize these messages by “tagging” them for people with the “at” symbol (@) and categorizing messages with hashtag (#) keywords.

There are many examples of the United States government using Twitter to communicate with the public. For example, when the Administration announces its position on a major policy, or wishes to bring attention to a particular matter, it will tweet about it. In an illustration of open government, the White House Press Secretary will take questions from the public sent to him on Twitter, and respond using that service. Although there are many domestic uses for social networking sites, there is much evidence showing that overseas it is an effective way of communicating with people and mobilizing activists, as can be seen in the recent Middle Eastern revolutions.

In 2009, the Islamic Republic of Iran held its presidential election. That election was primarily between the then-sitting President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, the former Prime Minister of Iran, and Mendhi Karroubi, the former speaker of the Majlis, also known as
the Iranian Parliament. The results of the election were very controversial. With a reported 85% voter turnout, Ahmadinejad won 62.6% of the vote. Many of the candidates and their election staffs, however, claimed that the results of the election were fraudulent. Mousavi was reported by Reuters to have said, "I personally strongly protest the many obvious violations and I’m warning I will not surrender to this dangerous charade."7 Instances of fraud that Mousavi was referring to were election monitors not being able to properly access polling stations. Mousavi cited several examples of polling stations with a shortage of paper ballots and of millions of people denied the right to vote due to a lack of resources.8

Not only were the candidates and their staffs claiming fraud, but so were the independent election monitoring committees selected by the campaigns. In a 2009 study, Professor Ali Ansari, who serves as the Director for the Institute of Iranian Studies at the University of St. Andrews, observed several statistically irregular

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8 Ibid.
situations with the election. Voter turnout in the provinces of Mazandaran and Yazd, for example, were recorded in excess of 100%, and in four other provinces it was around 95%. Such increases in turnout are usually linked to popular support for a particular candidate, which was not seen in this election.⁹

Of course, many Iranians did not need to read an official study to find confirmation of their thoughts on the election. Three days after it took place, hundreds of thousands of Iranians flooded the capital of Tehran in Freedom Square to protest the results. Expecting these protestors to use traditional communication methods, Iranian leaders took down telephone systems but did not move fast enough on disabling social networking websites. Many of the demonstrators organized using these websites, with a particular emphasis on Twitter. Messages would be sent back and forth, and when one person read a message, he/she would gather his or her friends and family, and they would send messages of their own, creating a wave of unblocked communication. It was so effective that many

people have nicknamed this movement the “Twitter Revolution.”\textsuperscript{10}

Not only were social networking sites used as a means of organizing participants locally, but Iranians were able to communicate with the outside world, sharing their experiences in real-time on the Internet.\textsuperscript{11} In one instance, a video of a woman’s death circulated on social networking websites by way of Twitter. While social networking websites were able to bring about some positive changes in the way domestic politics were conducted, it was after the “Twitter Revolution” sparked by the Iranian elections that the world began to see the unprecedented power of social media in political discourse. According to Michael Baumann in Information Today “the Internet (and social networking in particular) would bring democracy to autocratic states the world over.”\textsuperscript{12}

There are, however, some influential scholars that are skeptical on the impact Twitter has had in Iranian politics, including Evgeny Morozov, currently a visiting scholar at Stanford University and a Schwartz fellow at the


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{12} Michael Baumann, “A Political Revolution Goes Viral ... Not So Fast,” Information Today, October 1, 2008, 1.
New America Foundation. A few months after the hype of the revolution died down, Morozov argued that Twitter’s effect had been grossly overstated.\(^\text{13}\) Noting that there were fewer than 20,000 Twitter users in Iran before the protests started, he attributes much of the spike in Twitter’s Iranian user base to foreigners marking their location as Tehran in order to bog down Iranian government attempts at shutting down actual Iranian protestors.\(^\text{14}\) Expanding on Morozov’s point is Patrick Meier, then a Ph.D. candidate at Tufts University, who said “It’s absolutely true that the first information of what’s taken place in Iran came out through Twitter [but] where people start leaning on shakier ground is the mobilization.”\(^\text{15}\)

Morozov’s and Meier’s hypotheses overlook the fact that even if there were a “negligible” number users on Twitter before the revolution, one must take into account how many people received Twitter messages, and rallied non-users to the street—evidence of this media’s ability to mobilize. Moreover, messages out of Tehran allowed Western news outlets and individuals to receive information on what was happening in Iran, whereas in the past, without this

\(^{13}\) Ibid.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 53.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
new form of media, the story would have been told very
differently, and perhaps detailed reports of what really
happened would have taken months, if not years, to surface,
making this information dated and thus not as relevant. It
was after all because of these messages got out that the
United States was able to respond to the situation,
communicating directly with demonstrators.

Even if the "Twitter Revolution" of Iran did not have
much of a transformative effect on the actual revolution
itself, its stories of success were certainly a catalyst
for other revolutions that were to follow. In December
2010, responding to a 50-year dictatorship, youth took the
streets to protest life in Tunisia. Facebook and Twitter
posts related to the deaths of then little-known Tunisian
citizens Mohamed Bouazizi and Lahseen Naji. Bouazizi died
by setting himself ablaze in the town of Sidi Bouzid
because his vegetable and fruit stand was confiscated by
the government due to a lack of a license and Naji killed
himself by touching an electric cable wire while shouting
"No for misery, no for unemployment!" After their deaths a
number of Facebook pages were created, dedicated to the
memory of these men with members encouraged to take their
anger at the government to the streets. Initial protests were small, only a few hundred, in the number of only but a few hundred, and several police and other government officials began to disperse these crowds as they formed. Reports of attempts to quell the demonstrations flew around the Internet and caused the demonstrators to increase in number out of anger and frustration. The Tunisian government responded by replacing personnel in various government posts and making policy changes in the areas of jobs and trade. As the voices of protestors grew louder, Ben Ali’s rule was coming to an end, and after he fled on January 26th to Saudi Arabia when his plane was not permitted to land in Malta, the government’s Interior Ministry underwent a significant restructuring. As the world watched from its television and computer screens, the United States government capitalized on a prime opportunity to join the digital dialogue, speaking with the people of Tunisia, and perhaps increasing its influence with an audience that may soon be in power. The U.S. State Department’s Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, P.J. Crowley, tweeted “The people of Tunisia have

spoken. The interim government must create a genuine transition to democracy. The United States will help.” This tweet was a clear message sent to both new government officials and the people of Tunisia. It was public affirmation of the United States’ support for those who had stood up for their rights and an olive branch of assistance for the new government. Years ago, it would have been impossible for the State Department to so seamlessly communicate with citizens of another nation during such a critical time, and it was surely a way for the United States to build a bridge with the people of a new Tunisia.

The events in Tunisia certainly set the cornerstone in place for the following uprising in Egypt. The Internet had, for some time, been used as a vehicle to expose horrible acts of police brutality in Egypt, particularly by Egyptian blogger Eael Abbas. What sparked the January 2011 revolution in Egypt, however, was the result of Internet outcry at the death of Khaled Said in Alexandria. Said was beaten by plainclothes police officers in public. After he succumbed to his injuries, many throughout Egypt and the world were set into action after seeing how callous Egyptian police were. Post-mortem pictures of his face circulated by way of Twitter and Facebook, sparking
demonstrations. Egyptian activist and blogger Ahmed Maher, when asked about organizing political movements online, said, "We can't have a proper headquarters. It's not like we can just rent an office [...] on the net there are groups like ours meeting 24 hours a day." The Internet provides for a quick and cost-effective way of mobilizing. Because of this, it is important for governments to adapt and meet people in their new digital headquarters.

The United States was able to increase its soft power with the Egyptian people by communicating directly with those among them on the medium they were using, showing support for a nation usually skeptical of the U.S. given its allegiance to Israel. Early in the conflict, Crowley tweeted "The government and people of #Egypt face consequential choices in the coming days. We hope they choose a path of dialogue and reform." While Crowley did not explicitly take sides, it is very obvious from his tweets that Crowley was calling for peaceful negotiations and a path of change from the Egypt of old. He continued to show support for the protestors by saying that "As

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18 Ibid.

19 Twitter, @PJCrowley Twitter, http://twitter.com/#!/ PJCrowley/status/31151804326608896 (accessed July 20, 2011).
President #Obama said, ideas in #Egypt cannot be suppressed. The people want change and the government must respond to that aspiration. "20 Finally, in another show of support, Crowley tweeted the words of the President, tweeting "President #Obama speaking now: There must be an orderly transition in #Egypt and it must begin now. The U.S. will be a partner."21

Despite Morozov’s skepticism on the effectiveness of social networking sites in Egypt, he does, however, make an important point:

The revolts were driven by people who had economic grievances and were politically oppressed. They turned to the Internet to publicize their grievances and their resistance. The fact that new media and blogs were present probably set a different tempo to the revolts. If the Internet were not around, the regime might be tempted to crack down in a much more brutal way. The revolts themselves would be taking a different shape, and they may have happened three to six months later.22

Although both television and radio are instantaneous forms of communication, they are very one-sided and do not allow for instant response from the receivers of those messages, adding a delay to the United States’ ability to

20 Twitter, @PJCrowley, Twitter, https://twitter.com/#!/PJCrowley/status/31154688866563328 (accessed July 20, 2011).

21 Twitter, @PJCrowley, Twitter, http://twitter.com/#!/PJCrowley/status/32586160672870400 (accessed July 20, 2011).

show support for a cause. Is it not better to side with someone before he/she come to power than after? The constant reaffirmation of the protesters' actions was positive for the United States because those about to take power would know exactly where the United States stood the entire time, and would be more likely to cooperate with the United States in the future.

Twitter has also been credited with placing a check on abuses by governments during revolutions. In a November 2011 article for The Atlantic, Anne-Marie Slaughter chronicles the story of Egyptian-American blogger and columnist Mona Eltahawy's detention at the Egyptian Interior Ministry.23 According to Slaughter, Eltahawy sent a tweet that read "beaten and arrested in Interior Ministry." Within minutes, Slaughter received word from a colleague Andy Carvin of National Public Radio informing her of Eltahawy's detention. This prompted Slaughter to contact people she knew at the State Department, and after some time, the hashtag #FreeMona had begun trending24 on Twitter.

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24 According to Twitter’s support page, "Twitter’s Trending Topics algorithm identifies topics that are immediately popular, rather than topics that have been popular for a while or on a daily basis, to help people discover the 'most breaking' news stories from across the world.
With so much public outcry for her release, she was released a few hours later from the Interior Ministry alive, albeit with two broken bones and as the victim of a sexual assault.

As technology evolves, and social networking sites become more of the norm in political dialogue, there still are critics who do not value what these technologies can do. Some, including Bill Keller, Executive Editor of the New York Times, claim the Internet, and social media sites in particular, dumb down the populace, making it unable to concentrate for long periods of time on information. According to Keller, human beings will become so dependent on these devices that they will be unable to think for themselves. As a result, it may not be a good idea to put so much emphasis on this medium.\textsuperscript{25} There is evidence, however, to suggest that this line of thinking is false.

According to Maryanne Wolf, Director of the Center for Reading and Language Research at Tufts University, human brains were never “wired” to read, and it is something that the human race had to evolve into being able to do so. The

same is true for how the brain processes streams of information from Google searches, websites, and social networking sites.\textsuperscript{26} According to a 2008 study by UCLA professor Dr. Gary Small, social networking sites, and the flood of information Internet users experience, "is rewiring their brain's neural circuitry, heightening skills like multi-tasking, complex reasoning and decision-making."\textsuperscript{27}

Political dialogue should not only occur in the digital realm. Today the demographics in the world are too diverse to concentrate on any one modality. Having said that, it is evident that social networking sites have grown at an extremely fast rate in the last decade, and are providing a fast and cost-effective way of reaching people compared to any other technologies. Social networking sites minimize the delay between communications, and allow for average citizens to communicate with governments and other people, thereby supplementing the conversation. In some cases, such as in Iran, Tunisia, and Egypt, protestors used social networking sites not to communicate with their


governments, but instead with each other in order to protest against the authorities. If examining youth trends points to the direction of technology, social networking sites are the future of communication. As such, the U.S. government ought to be placing more emphasis on social networking communication strategies to reach international youth to increase the country's soft power, and perhaps pull away from more antiquated forms of communication.
CHAPTER IV

SOFT POWER THROUGH THE BLOGOSPHERE

According to the Knight Digital Media Center, an organization that trains journalists in new media, defining a blog is not easy because the medium is constantly evolving. Today, however, blogs are generally considered online platforms that allow an author, regardless if he is associated with a particular organization, to write posts containing information or opinion, or a combination of both. According to Jason Calcanis, the former CEO of Weblogics, "There are three main features of a blog: the first is [posts listed in] reverse chronological order, the second is unfiltered content -- the second somebody filters or edits the author it's no longer a blog -- and the third is comments."¹ Despite the fact that this description of a blog dated from 2005, and that blogs are still evolving, those three characteristics are what blogs have in common today. Many popular blogs exist as their own independent websites, but allow registered users of the website, and guests who just happen to log on, to interact with that blog by connecting posts with social networking websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, in order to easily share the

content they create. According to Adam Singer of LEWIS PR, a global public relations communication agency specializing in digital technology and consumer PR, 2 77% of all active Internet users read blogs. With such a high percentage of use on the Internet, it’s no wonder that the U.S. government has begun to use blogs in its day-to-day communications strategies. 3

Communicating on the blogosphere is similar to that of social networking sites. Unlike Facebook though, one does not have to specifically “register” to view most content, and the blogosphere offers nearly no limit to the amount of content that can be generated. On Facebook and Twitter, authors are limited on what they are able to write to 500 and 140 characters, respectively. 4 Blogs, however, are not as restrictive with original posts, one of their defining characteristics being the comment feature which can allow for registered users, and sometimes non-registered guests, to express views which can spark a discussion.

According to the Information Management section of the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual, State

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4 This figure is accurate as of September 5, 2011. In the past, Facebook has increased the text limit for its posts. Since Twitter’s founding, it has not altered its text limit.
Department employees are encouraged to responsibly use social media as long as its "consistent with current laws, policies and guidance that govern information and information technology." These social media sites include blogs, where personnel are permitted to post entries visible to the public as long as the entries do not "claim to represent the Department or its policies, or those of the U.S. government...."\(^5\) If using a non-official social media site, personnel must not disclose nonpublic information. Based on the policy, it would appear State Department personnel are permitted to maintain their own blogs for non-official use. The government does have an official blog known as DipNote.

DipNote was founded in September 2007 by the U.S. State Department.\(^6\) According to its website, "[DipNote] offers the public an alternative source to mainstream media for U.S. foreign policy information. This blog gives the opportunity for participants to discuss important foreign policy issues with senior Department officials." One of DipNote’s first entries on September 25, 2007 by State


Department spokesman Sean McCormack articulates the blog’s purpose when he writes:

With the launch of Dipnote, we are hoping to start a dialogue with the public. More than ever, world events affect our daily lives—what we see and hear, what we do, and how we work. I hope Dipnote will provide you with a window into the work of the people responsible for our foreign policy, and will give you a chance to be active participants in a community focused on some of the great issues of our world today. With Dipnote we are going to take you behind the scenes at the State Department and bring you closer to the personalities of the Department. We are going to try and break through some of the jargon and talk about how we operate around the world. We invite you to participate.\(^7\)

At the beginning of the Tunisian revolution, Secretary Clinton’s statements were posted on DipNote, making clear the United States’ support of the protesters. In it, she called for the Tunisian government to “respect the right of its people to peacefully assemble and express their views.”\(^8\) She asked that the Tunisian government look to “build a stronger foundation for Tunisia’s future with economic, social, and political reforms, and call for free and fair elections in the near future that reflect the true will and


aspirations of the Tunisian people." Secretary Clinton specifically mentioned the role of youth in the Tunisian revolution, saying that "Young people especially need to have a meaningful role in the decisions that shape their lives. Addressing these concerns will be challenging, but the United States stands ready to help." And finally, Secretary Clinton made it clear that the United States stood with the people of Tunisia when DipNote posted an entry summarizing her phone call with Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi. In the post, Secretary Clinton states the "United States stands ready to assist the Tunisian people to meet the challenges ahead, and assured the Prime Minister that the United States will stand with them as they chart a new course for their country." "

From January 30, 2011 to February 10, 2011 there were ten posts pertaining to Egypt, all of which articulated the United States' position on the current state of its government and protestors in the streets. DipNote's first post on the matter was a statement from Secretary Clinton supporting "an orderly transition." She also called for the

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
Egyptian authorities' acknowledgement of the public's grievances instead of a "takeover that would not lead to democracy, but to oppression and the end of aspirations of the Egyptian people." She supported President Obama's charted path that "calls for no violence, that supports the aspirations and human rights of the Egyptian people, [and] that stands behind concrete steps towards democratic and economic reform." These were obviously statements with Egypt in mind, but it was also a reaffirmation of American values that the Administration wished to push globally. In a later post, President Obama's statement was included.

...[The United States stands] for universal values, including the rights of the Egyptian people to freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and the freedom to access information. Once more, we've seen the incredible potential for technology to empower citizens and the dignity of those who stand up for a better future. And going forward, the United States will continue to stand up for democracy and the universal rights that all human beings deserve, in Egypt and around the world.¹³

The United States' posts on Tunisia and Egypt were carefully crafted messages aimed at people, not directly to governments, although doubtless some officials read them.

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One major political movement was absent from the pages of DipNote: the 2011 Iranian revolution. The State Department did not post anything about it until a year later, on the anniversary of the disputed elections. The United States was relatively mum on the revolution, and when commentators questioned this silence, President Obama responded that "It is up to Iranians to make decisions about who Iran’s leaders will be," and that the United States "[respects] Iranian sovereignty." It is clear that the State Department chooses which events it will comment on, both in the traditional media but also on news outlets such as DipNote.

Much like State Department-sponsored tweets and Facebook posts, there is probably a very rigorous vetting process for messages that are to be posted to make sure it accurately represents the position of the United States government, despite the fact that DipNote claims to “not represent official U.S. Department of State communications.”\(^{14}\) To say that DipNote is a completely free forum to discuss any topic is naïve—DipNote states that it has very strict rules for what it will post from the public. On the “About DipNote” page, it notes that “[DipNote] is a moderated blog. That means all comments

will be reviewed before posting." The question remains, however, what is the process for "reviewing" posts? Despite these restrictions, however, it remains true that DipNote is a strategic communications method for the United States to conduct 21st century public diplomacy and is successful because it allows for a substantive and interactive discussion between U.S. officials and ordinary citizens on important issues of policy.

DipNote does not just post on major world conflicts, but also contains entries on social values that the United States government wishes to comment on or clarify. One major theme has been women, specifically women's issues and their global role. The State Department used the first DipNote post of 2010 to write about this issue, specifically what the U.S. had done in the past and where it aimed to go in the future. What this post showed was the United States in a positive light, such as mentioning that in April 2009, the State Department created the Office of Global Women's Issues and appointed Melanie Verveer its Ambassador-at-Large; that in May 2009 Ambassador Verveer testified before a U.S. Senate subcommittee on rape and sexual violence in conflict zones; and that two of her testimonies in October 2009 "on the global costs and

15 Ibid.
consequences of violence against women" and "the incidence of violence against women, and about possible solutions." According to the post, the Office of Global Women's Issues would do the following:

... [promote] women's economic opportunities (from which other rights and freedoms often follow), and working to ensure that women around the world are safe from gender-based violence (without which safety other rights and freedoms are often impossible).^16

In a February 8, 2010 post, Ambassador Verveer made it clear that the protection of women's rights was an American foreign policy priority. In it, she highlights a non-exhaustive list of common gender-based violence against women, including "sex-selective abortion and infanticide, to inadequate healthcare and nutrition given to girls, to genital mutilation, child marriage, rape as a weapon of war, trafficking, so-called 'honor' killings, dowry-related murder, and the neglect and ostracism of widows."^17

Ambassador Verveer confirmed the United States' commitment to its position on protecting women, and challenged other countries to follow suit, saying that "Addressing violence

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against women is the responsibility and imperative of every nation. In terms of its moral, humanitarian, economic, and international security consequences, violence against women and girls is one of the major impediments to progress around the globe."

After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, DipNote reminded the world not to forget women in its relief efforts. It even specifically called for people to donate to MADRE, a humanitarian organization that supplies not only general aid, but is also "specifically concerned with preventing the upsurge in violence against women that can occur in the aftermath of large-scale disasters." The post closed by praising Haitian mothers, daughters, sisters, grandmothers, and aunts as the backbone of Haitian society.

At a time when the United States aims to draw down forces in Afghanistan and end its armed involvement there, DipNote (January 25, 2010) highlighted the important role of women in that country. While for now Afghanistan does require strong security and military forces in place, the United States also has what DipNote calls a civilian

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18 Ibid.

strategy concentrating on "economic and social development, good governance, rule of law, and human rights." These four issues have women as central to all of them.\textsuperscript{20} According to DipNote, investing in women's education and getting them more involved in the agricultural sector "doubles the human capital available to Afghanistan. It boosts family incomes, [decreases] the incentives for participation in illicit activities, and [diminishes] the power of Taliban financial inducements to their husbands and sons."\textsuperscript{21}

In a post-9/11 world, Muslim extremists have characterized the United States as an anti-Muslim country, painting its wars overseas and domestic policies as anti-Islam. The theme of the U.S. as anti-Muslim, when repeated over and over, can have damaging effects on the United States' soft power in the Middle East. To offset the view that the United States is biased against Muslims, the U.S. government has been hosting Iftar dinners, and its recent celebration of an Iftar dinner at the U.S. embassy in Kabul was placed on the front page of DipNote's website. The post stated that the embassy "welcomed prominent Parliamentarians, including several women, and other Afghan


\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
partners. Guests and hosts alike reflected on the meaning of Ramadan and the importance of sharing a meal together."

On August 30, 2011, DipNote highlighted the President's statement that "Michelle and I would like to send Eid greetings to Muslim communities in the United States and around the world. Ramadan has been a time for families and communities to share the happiness of coming together in intense devotion, reflection, and service." 22

Relations between the United States and Russia have been, for many years, quite tense. In March of 2010, the U.S. invited 22 young Russian basketball players to the United States to participate in a sports exchange between the two countries. This exchange involved lessons on gameplay and exhibition matches during a two week stay in Washington, DC under the State Department's SportsUnited Program, which is an "international sports [program] designed to help start a dialogue at the grassroots level with non-elite male and female athletes ages 7-17. [It helps] youth discover how success in athletics can be translated into the development of life skills and

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achievement in the classroom." The exchange was a success, according to DipNote:

...their impressions of the United States and some of their amazing experiences, such as shooting hoops with President Obama and meeting U.S. Congressman Delahunt, running drills with professional basketball players, eating dinner at the home of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy Judith McHale, and even serendipitously running into professional basketball player Shaquille O'Neal on the streets of Georgetown.24

A year later, American sports diplomats went to Russia, where they "experienced Russia through the prism of basketball and culture." The American athletes "explored iconic Red Square, took a boat ride on the Moscow River, visited local churches and monasteries, and perused the treasures of the Hermitage and the luxurious Peterhof estate, [and filled] their stomachs with borsch, blini, and pelmeni along the way."25

Sports exchanges are not always as harmonious as the US-Russian one. In August of 2010, Vice President Joe Biden traveled to China to meet Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping. During his remarks, Xi said that "It is the joint

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24 Ibid.

desire of the people of China and the United States and elsewhere in the world to stay in constant cooperation." Biden later went on to say that "Our commitment to establishing a close and serious relationship ... is of the utmost importance to my country." Georgetown University’s basketball team also traveled to China during the same time to play an exhibition game against several Chinese teams, akin to “ping pong diplomacy.” During one such game against the Bayi Rockets, a squad made up of members of China’s People’s Liberation Army, a widely publicized fight broke out between the two teams, which, as Austin Ramzy reported, “[undermined] the façade of cooperation their nation’s leaders sought to portray just hours before.” DipNote did not comment on the fight, most likely to protect the United States’ image and to not further damage Sino-U.S. relations.

DipNote offers end-users many ways to personalize their experience and view content that is of interest to them, allowing them to view the “normal” page with all recent posts displayed in reverse chronological order, posts pertaining to a particular geographic region, popular posts with their own listed sub-category, and an archive of every DipNote entry since 2007.
Shortly after DipNote’s debut, commentators began to question the blog’s effectiveness in sparking conversation and engaging publics, both foreign and domestic. Graig Hayden, assistant professor in the International Communications program at American University’s School of International Service, writes in a USC Center on Public Diplomacy blog that DipNote was a “necessary if not crucial step towards making the State Department more relevant to its U.S. constituents, and providing a means for foreign publics to voice their opinions directly to somebody in the U.S. government." Hayden underscores that most of DipNote’s popular discussion-based posts are the controversial ones. He says these posts “are not only a way to invite more participation in the foreign policy conversation; they are a means for the State Department to gauge global opinion in a way that moves beyond polling.” Further supporting the value of posts on DipNote, Hayden notes:

Polemical posts, reasoned arguments, and impassioned responses show the logic of how controversial issues are understood, what counts as evidence, and how arguments are put together into a coherent world view. In other words, reading the arguments could give the public diplomacy wing of the State Department some

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clues as to how to respond to its critics, where to intervene rhetorically, and understand the logic of opposition to U.S. policies. Insights from arguments in the comment field are a window into how to be rhetorically responsive, rather than tone-deaf to global opinion. [...] world-views and forms of reasoning found in the comments field can be a valuable insight to public diplomacy and, in theory, policy formation.27

Discussion on DipNote, according to Hayden, is substantive. He cites analysis by Steven R. Corman and Kris Acheson, writing for the Consortium for Strategic Communications Journal, that says that the blog "exhibits signs that conversations within the comments field are constructive and collaborative - the comments are responsive to each other [...] In other words, people are listening to each other."28 And, according to Hayden, there is evidence that the State Department is actually listening to what is being written in the comments field. A comment regarding who should possess nuclear weapons later turned into a DipNote "question of the week," according to Corman and Acheson.29

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27 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
One of the most important results of DipNote is that it shows that the United States government listens to foreign audiences. According to Hayden, DipNote offers a more “humanized” version of U.S. foreign policy, with actual State Department officials conversing with the public.\(^\text{30}\) The usage statistics for DipNote are only increasing. In March of 2008, there were 10,000 daily DipNote views. A year later, that number doubled.\(^\text{31}\)

Although DipNote is a major vehicle in the State Department’s practice of Statecraft 2.0,\(^\text{32}\) its selectivity in posts makes one question how serious of a venue it is intended to actually spur discussion. DipNote should address all major developments in international relations, whether or not the United States’ position is controversial. Its silence on the 2011 Iranian revolution, for example, should never have occurred. Although DipNote is certainly a form of U.S. propaganda, the State Department runs the risk of people seeing this propaganda as incomplete or inaccurate information if it neglects to

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\(^\text{32}\) Please refer to page 29 to further understand this.
deal with major issues. DipNote's seriousness as a venue for discussion is further questioned when one examines its process for approving posts made by users—in order to truly function as a legitimate forum, DipNote should make it a policy not to censor any post contributed by its readers.

Despite these criticisms, DipNote has emerged as a legitimate element in the United States' public diplomacy strategy and serves as yet another new vehicle to move the United States' soft power in a favorable direction. It is a blog that has shown it encourages substantive dialogue between U.S. government officials at the State Department and audiences (including the young) both foreign and domestic, and if its user base continues to go up, the blog’s relevance in the day-to-day world of your average foreign citizen will follow.
CHAPTER V

SOFT POWER THROUGH VIDEO, AND OTHER FORMS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Video sharing websites make it possible for anyone with an Internet connection to view videos of world events. Moreover, these websites empower people to create their own videos, with free uploads onto its servers for quick sharing. The most popular video sharing website today is YouTube,¹ and the U.S. government uses YouTube in many ways to conduct public diplomacy and increase its soft power.

YouTube was created in 2005 by three co-workers from the online company PayPal as a video sharing site, and its purpose has not change.² YouTube grew extremely fast in popularity because before its existence, there was little place online where one could upload and view a video so relatively quickly and easily. In 2010, YouTube was the third most frequently visited website on the Internet, behind Google and Facebook.³ On average, 2 billion videos are watched on YouTube per day.⁴ In a 60-day period, more


³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.
content is uploaded to YouTube than all three major U.S. television networks have created in 60 years.\(^5\)

Once on YouTube, a video’s website address can be linked to any Internet user for quick view, and can be commented on, as is the case with FaceBook. Unlike a blog, however, one must register for the website in order to post comments. Unique to YouTube is the ability to comment to a post by recording your own video and posting a “video reply.” It is one of the best examples of a social networking websites due to the amount of sharing and interaction that occurs with videos posted on the page.

YouTube videos can be easily integrated into other social networking websites. For example, if a video is uploaded on to Facebook in the form of a post, that video gets integrated into that Facebook post in such a way that you can view and comment on the video without leaving Facebook at all.

YouTube has become one of the world’s most important venues for civil activism and political expression. While writing for the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University, Steve Grove, who once served as YouTube’s News and Political Director, portrayed YouTube’s effectiveness when he wrote that it, unlike other traditional forms of

\(^5\) Ibid.
media, is so powerful because there is no “middleman” controlling what gets distributed to the world. He says that “average citizens are able to fuel a new meritocracy for political coverage” in “the world’s largest town hall for political discussion.” Unlike other traditional forms of media, YouTube makes it so that “politics is no longer bound by traditional barriers of time and space. It doesn’t matter what time it is, or where someone is located—as long as they have the means to connect through the Web, they can engage in the discussion.”

Revolutions in the Middle East did not occur simply because of social networking sites. In a 2010 article for Public Relations Tactics, Ed Schipul and Daniel Keeney write that what social networking sites did contribute, however, was “helping movements gain critical mass among a relatively small and highly connected segment of the population.” Thus, the primary “role [of social media] was to show the rest of the world what was happening.”

Social networking sites, and websites such as YouTube, allowed anti-government demonstrators to communicate,

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7 Ed Schipul and Daniel Keeney, “War of Words: Social Media’s Role in Provoking Revolutionary Change,” Public Relations Tactics, 2011.
served as a catalysts and inspiration for change for those eager for it. Social networking sites like YouTube also served as a vehicle for the United States to attempt to increase its soft power. Many government institutions, such as The White House and the U.S. Department of State, maintain their own websites that have on them sections where users can visit and watch videos that have been uploaded by those various entities. Videos on these websites are highly controlled and do not allow for commenting, or any of the other typical functions of a website that has integrated social media. These government entities do, however, recognize the power that YouTube has and have their own YouTube pages (called channels) where they post content meant for the public to comment on.

The White House did not have its own dedicated YouTube page until the inauguration of President Barack Obama. This was a confirmation of his commitment to working with social networking outlets. On the White House’s official YouTube page, it posts a variety of videos, including press conferences, the President’s weekly radio address, speeches, and statements from upper-level Administration officials. Similar to the White House’s Facebook posts and tweets on Twitter, these videos serve to announce or clarify White House positions on domestic and foreign
policy. Many like statements used by the White House on Facebook and Twitter, it also posted videos related to revolutions in Iran, Tunisia, and Egypt in an attempt to increase its influence on protestors in the Middle East.

On February 11, 2011, the White House posted a video on its YouTube page titled “President Obama on a Historic Day in Egypt.” In clear support of the people of Egypt, Obama called for the military to ensure a transition that is “credible in the eyes of the Egyptian people.” He went on to say that it was imperative that the transition lead to “protecting the rights of Egypt's citizens, lifting the emergency law, revising the constitution and other laws to make this change irreversible, and laying out a clear path to elections that are fair and free” in an attempt to “bring all of Egypt’s voices to the table.”

The video was seen by tens of thousands, and for the United States having made publicly known its position on protecting the rights of ordinary citizens and advancing democracy certainly had a positive impact on the United States’ soft power with countries in the Middle East, and elsewhere as well.

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9 Ibid.
Another example of the effective use of YouTube is a March 20, 2009 video of President Obama directed to Iranian citizens. This video sent greetings after Iranians' New Year, known as Nowruz, and in it he called Iranian culture great and celebrated Iran's art, music, literature and innovation. In his statement, Obama first hoped to win over Iranians, and then sent a message to their government—a message stressing the United States wished to improve US-Iranian relations. He said that unlike previous administrations, his was committed to diplomacy. The President said the United States wanted honest engagement grounded in mutual respect with hopes to assist Iran reach its rightful place in the "community of nations." The video featured Farsi subtitles and him closing it with a phrase in Farsi.

Connecting with the Iranian people is being seen as an important diplomatic objective, and in October 2011, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton announced that the United States would create a virtual embassy in Tehran for Iranians to explore since the U.S. has not had one there for over 30 years.

In December of 2011, the United States announced that it would "open" a virtual embassy in Tehran. In a blog post on DipNote, the U.S. Department of State announced that the virtual embassy would establish, but unlike a traditional embassy, "it is not a formal diplomatic mission, nor does it represent or describe a real U.S. Embassy accredited to the Iranian Government."\(^{11}\) On the embassy’s main page, Secretary Clinton says in a welcome video that the site would be "a platform for us to communicate with each other - openly and without fear - about the United States, about our policies, our culture, and the American people."

It did not take long for the virtual embassy to gain its share of critics. According to a blog post on The National Interest, a magazine specializing in foreign policy and international affairs, Virtual Embassy Tehran reflects "an outmoded conception of the global public sphere."\(^{12}\) Unlike the past when the United States launched programs like as Voice of America, the publics it targeted had few alternatives for information. Today, Iranians have illegal satellite dishes and access to Virtual Private


Networks (VPNs) to circumvent government attempts to censor the internet. Therefore, why would Iranians choose to get their information from a United States government sponsored website, especially since the United States doesn’t have a history of being trusted.\textsuperscript{13} Since the September 11 attacks, “U.S. public diplomacy [...] has been widely seen as self-serving rhetoric, a cover for unilateral efforts to pursue the war on terror and expand U.S. influence in the Middle East.”\textsuperscript{14} Despite the many sources of information for the Iranian people at their disposal, a lack of trust for the U.S., and their perceived intentions for the United States, Virtual Embassy Tehran is a worthwhile move for the United States, even if the Iranian government has begun blocking it, and if many Iranians won’t choose to get their information from the website. Virtual Embassy Tehran allows for the United States to broadcast its official positions and communicate directly with the Iranian people.

In the summer of 2009, President Obama went on a tour of the Middle East in an attempt to improve relations between that region and the United States. On June 4, 2009, the White House uploaded a video of the President speaking

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
to an audience of students at Cairo University.\textsuperscript{15} The speech opens with Obama stating that he carried with him the "goodwill of the American people, and a greeting of peace from Muslim communities in my country: assalaamu alaykum."

Obama opened his Egyptian speech explaining the strains between the United States and the Muslim world, noting "that violent extremists have exploited [American and Middle Eastern] tensions in a small but potent minority of Muslims." Of course, the most evident example of Muslim extremism for Americans were the September 11 attacks which, as Obama put it, sparked "some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights. This has bred more fear and mistrust." The President reaffirmed to the Muslim and Egyptian people why he went on his Middle Eastern tour in the first place, which was to "seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect; and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition." He went on to say that the United States and Islam "share common

principles - principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings."

As mentioned before, the White House did not have its own YouTube channel until 2009, but recognizing the important role YouTube could play in public diplomacy, the U.S. State Department has maintained a YouTube channel since 2007. On its page, similar to its tweets and Facebook page, the State Department is able to articulate U.S. policy in a less formal, more personal fashion, and often comments on major international relations issues of the day.

In a September 16, 2009 video, Secretary of State Clinton spoke to the Muslim world drawing parallels between the Muslim faith and America.\textsuperscript{16} Clinton said that during Ramadan, Muslims reflect on the "values of Islam - charity, community, cooperation, compassion," adding that those same values are ones that are held dear in America. She called for Muslims to maintain the "spirit of community" that Ramadan provides throughout the year to achieve common goals of "peace, prosperity, and stability."

While on official U.S. government websites videos are not posted with the option of directly commenting on them

\textsuperscript{16} Secretary Clinton's Eid-ul-Fitr Message, YouTube, September 16, 2009, Flash video file, http://www.youtube.com/user/statevideo#p/u/14/1SZUenzxiAI (accessed September 17, 2011).
or being integrated with YouTube, the government has extensively employed the use of video to communicate with foreign citizens. It is highly interactive and allows people to watch something and see it with their own eyes rather than relying on the report of a commentator. There are a number of other modalities that the United States government uses to conduct effective public diplomacy in an attempt to increase its soft power.

Among these new media is podcasting. According to the GSA’s Office of Citizen Services & Innovative Technologies, podcasting is a “way of publishing [digitally converted] audio files on the web so they can be downloaded onto computers or portable listening devices, such as iPods or other MP3 players.” It is similar to recorded radio broadcast, but one can store many more broadcasts on these devices, which makes them much more convenient than other traditional forms of audio recording, such as cassettes. Podcasts allow for the United States to either rebroadcast videos from video sharing websites into audio-only formats, or to create podcast-only content for users to download. One can comment on a podcast, but it is not common to do so. Podcasts are effective because, according to the GSA, millions of people own iPods, and other mp3 players. Adopting this communication method is relatively simple and
inexpensive and "leads to better communication with the public." The White House has an extensive lineup of podcasts, including uploads of every official White House speech, weekly radio address, and the daily press briefing. The U.S. Department of State has similar podcasts as well, disseminating the Department of State Daily Press Briefing, speeches from the Secretary of State, and even its own series geared towards Middle Eastern relations known as the Department of State Middle East Digest. Adding to the effectiveness of podcasts is amplified by their ability to automatically download to a user's device.

In a world dominated by videos, one classic method of diplomacy has certainly not died, and that is the still picture. There are a number of social media photo sharing websites, such as Flickr, that the U.S. government, specifically the White House and U.S. State Department, upload photos onto which allow public commentary.

The United States has also used less-popular forms of social media to connect with foreign publics. One example is the State Department using Second Life. According to its website, Second Life is "a free 3D virtual world where

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users can socialize, connect and create using free voice and text chat." The U.S. State Department has on a number of occasions hosted seminars on Second Life, even having its then Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, James Glassman, appear as an avatar on Second Life to take questions from student journalists from Cairo, Egypt in 2009.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

For much of history, hard power was how countries wielded much of their influence, but with the costly nature of war, and as economies and countries inextricably become more connected, it is in the national interests of the United States to increasingly support soft power, in order to attain smart power. According to Joseph S. Nye Jr., in *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, "smart power means learning better how to combine our hard and soft power."\(^1\) The United States must employ a smart means of communicating with the world by more traditional forms of public diplomacy (e.g. face-to-face interaction, printed materials, radio, television), but also by using more technologically appropriate methods in line with the 21\(^{st}\) century.

In a February 2011 U.S. State Department video on YouTube,\(^2\) Secretary Clinton said: "...the region is being battered by a perfect storm of powerful trends. A growing majority of its people are under the age of 30 [...] and they are more connected with each other and with events\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Nye, *Soft Power*, 32.

\(^2\) "Secretary Clinton on the Situation in the Middle East: 'The Status Quo is Simply Not Sustainable'" YouTube, February 5, 2011, Flash video file, http://www.youtube.com/user/statevideo#p/search/19/Rm4sB6f1w2M (accessed September 28, 2011).
occurring around them because of technology." It is clear that social media is the future of communication, in large part because it is being embraced by youth across the world.

Social networking sites, such as Facebook, are certainly the most popular of social media used in the U.S. government's implementation of statecraft 2.0, which "[complements] traditional foreign policy tools with newly innovated and adapted instruments of statecraft that fully leverage the networks, technologies, and demographics of our interconnected world."³

The current administration is one that recognizes the challenges of the 21st century and the world's advances in technology and is ready to meet them head on. In a statement on 21st century statecraft, Secretary Clinton said To meet these 21st century challenges, we need to use [these] tools," and that now, "we find ourselves living at a moment in [history] when we have the potential to engage in these new and innovative forms of diplomacy and to also use them to help individuals be empowered."⁴


The current Administration has continued to host programs and maintain policies that are consistent with advancing the Internet as a legitimate forum for dialogue. On February 23, 2011, Secretary Clinton participated in a "Social Media Dialogue" with Dr. Ahmed Ghanim of the Egyptian newspaper *Masrawy*. Over 6,500 questions from Egyptians were asked of the Secretary. During the interview, the Secretary spoke of the power of the Internet to connect Egyptian youth in digital real-time with the U.S. Secretary of State, something that ten years ago would have been impossible. Clinton said that "The connectivity of social media may be one of the great tools, not just for organizing protests, as we saw in Tahrir Square, as we saw even before that in Tunisia, but I think it’s also a way for people to break down stereotypes and divisions between them."

It is the position of the U.S. government to urge policies that advance a free Internet for all. According to U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Daniel B. Baer, the Internet is a "powerful tool with which to exercise human rights and fundamental freedoms. In turn, ensuring Internet freedom helps create the space for people to use

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technology to 'know and act upon' their rights." Most recently, at a December 2011 European security conference, the U.S. and over two dozen other nations called for "the adoption of a declaration of freedoms in cyberspace." Interestingly, this proposal is stalled from Russia and other countries that "view the Internet as a threat to their political systems."

Recognizing the power of the Internet, and in particular social media, has been a significant policy priority for the Obama administration. As of September 21, 2011, there were over 1.1 million subscribers to the White House Facebook page and almost 100,000 on the U.S. State Department's Facebook page. Twitter pages for both the White House and the U.S. State Department follow a similar pattern, as there are currently 2.4 million followers of the White House Twitter page, and a little over 150,000 followers of the State Department's Twitter page. Having numerous followers makes it very easy for the U.S. government to transmit a message en masse, which can certainly be a positive for the government trying to convey

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a position especially if followers share that message with their friends. But—and this shows the limitations of the new social media—there is also very little evidence of how much “interaction” is had between followers of these websites and the officials that run them. The new social media may be powerful, but they are not all-powerful, and certainly can be improved on as tools of communication. Unlike social networking sites, the blogosphere as employed by the U.S. government to influence foreign audiences, has significantly less impact, but its audience is nevertheless increasing. Social networking sites and the blogosphere attract different demographics. According to comScore, a leading online marketing research company, Facebook users are primarily 18-34 years old, and Twitter users average between 18-24. Visitors to these social networking sites are typically bombarded with a flash of information. Blog posts are usually much longer, and thus its replies, it can be argued, are more articulate. To participate in blogs takes a greater amount of effort than on a social networking site. Just as traditional forms of communication cannot be totally neglected in the internet age, the blog should not be dismissed as being completely anachronistic.

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A third form of social media employed by the government is video, an extremely social platform that allows users to interact with content in many ways by easily sharing, replying in the form of text, or by creating one’s own video reply.

The United States has done a lot to develop its use of the new social media, and has made a strong distinction between domestic and foreign audiences, even if it’s universally accessible on an Internet without barriers. This is important as other forms of public diplomacy become increasingly anachronistic in the 21st century. Traditional diplomacy has by no means disappeared and neither are older forms of public diplomacy, such as the use of radio broadcasts. It is important, however, that the U.S. government realize that these new forms of public diplomacy have proven effective in reaching foreign audiences, and their relevance will only increase as the population takes its cue from the younger generation. The United States must develop an effective public diplomacy strategy based on soft power through social media if its diplomacy strategy is to be as good as it can be in the future.
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