DEMOCRACY PROMOTION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: US EFFORTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE PEOPLES OF THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The United States. (US) intervened in Afghanistan and Iraq in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, and the resulting policies tarnished its image more than ever before. While fighting terrorism, the US also sought to engage with people in the Middle East to promote democracy in the region. In addition, public diplomacy proved to be an effective method of promoting democracy. However, the image of the US among the peoples of the region remained negative. This article discusses the role of public diplomacy as an important tool for democracy promotion and attempts to explain why this approach alone has not improved America's image in the Middle East. It first defines the concept of democracy promotion and then analyses the potential role of public diplomacy in this context. Finally, it analyses US public diplomacy efforts up to 2005 and discusses the effectiveness of these strategies.

Keywords: Democracy Promotion, Public Diplomacy, United States, Middle East

Jel Codes: F50, N12, N42

DEMOKRASİNİN TEŞVİKİ VE KAMU DİPLOMASİSİ: ABD'NİN 21. YÜZYILIN İLK YILLARINDA ORTA DOĞU HALKLARIYLA İLETİŞİM ÇABALARI

ÖZ

ABD, 11 Eylül 2001 saldırıların ardından Afganistan ve Irak'a müdahale etmiş ve bunun sonucunda ortaya çıkan politikalar imajını her zamankinden daha fazla olumsuz etkilemiştir. Terörizmle mücadele ederken, ABD aynı zamanda bölgede demokrasiyi teşvik etmek amacıyla Orta Doğu halklarıyla ilişki kurmaya çalışmıştır. Buna ek olarak, kamu diplomasisi, yeni iletişim kanallarını kullanarak bölge halkına ulaşma hedefiyle demokrasinin teşvik edilmesi için etkili bir yöntem olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bazı teoriler bu yaklaşımı mantıklı bir seçim olarak görmektedir. Ancak 21. yüzyılın ilk yıllarında

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ABD'nin imajı bölge halkları arasında olumsuz olmaya devam etmiştir. Bu makale, demokrasinin teşvik edilmesinde önemli bir araç olarak kamu diplomasisinin rolünü tartışmakta ve Orta Doğu'daki Amerikan imajının neden sadece bu yaklaşımla iyileşmediğini açıklamaya çalışmaktadır. Bu amaçla, öncelikle demokrasinin teşviki kavramı tanımlanmakta ve ardından kamu diplomasisinin bu bağlamdaki potansiyel rolü analiz edilmektedir. Son olarak, 2005 yılına kadar ABD'nin kamu diplomasisi çabalarını analiz etmekte ve bu stratejilerin etkinliğini tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Demokrasi Teşviki, Kamu Diplomasisi, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Orta Doğu*

Jel Kodları: *F50, N12, N42*

1. INTRODUCTION

The promotion of democracy is arguably one of the most significant foreign policy objectives following the events of 9/11. In the aftermath of the attacks, the United States (US) was understandably concerned about the threat posed by radical Islamists and believed that democratisation of the Middle East could help to address this security concern (Nye, 2004). Democracy promotion was previously employed as a tool against the 'Communist threat' during the Cold War, but its utilisation against the Middle East in the context of the 'War on Terror' introduced a number of new considerations. The concept of public diplomacy is not a novel one for the US. Indeed, there were numerous public diplomacy strategies employed against the Soviets, the majority of which were propaganda campaigns designed to influence public opinion, particularly in Europe and beyond. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the US faced a negative image among Middle Eastern populations thanks to the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, which posed a challenge to democracy promotion efforts. Public diplomacy, therefore, emerged as a potential avenue for rectifying this situation.

The US may wish to consider public diplomacy in the Middle East as a strategy for repairing its post-9/11 image. Two theoretical approaches, communicative action theory and social constructivism, may lead to the conclusion that these efforts of the US may have positive results. However, from a Gramscian perspective, it can be argued that these efforts of the US may have the opposite effect. Therefore, this article will briefly discuss these approaches and their relationship with public diplomacy.

This article will initially examine the effectiveness of democracy promotion in the context of post-9/11 U.S. policies in the Middle East. To this end, the concept of democratic peace theory will be discussed, the nature of U.S. democracy promotion will be defined, and its relation with the Middle East will be emphasized. Secondly, the paper will define public diplomacy and assess its efficacy as a strategy for promoting democracy in the Middle East. While theories such as communicative action theory and social constructionism can be effective in explaining this strategy in a positive light, the Gramscian approach focuses on the negative aspects of these efforts. The article will conclude by describing the

public diplomacy strategies employed by the US to promote democracy in the Middle East until 2005 and assess the effectiveness of these strategies. In doing so, it will make use of some surveys that attempt to measure the perception of the people of the region towards the US.

2. Democracy Promotion

The concept of democracy promotion is inherently complex, as the term "democracy" itself is a contested subject (Jahn, 2012: 689). There are numerous forms of democracy, yet it can be posited that democracy promotion policies are designed to foster the establishment of new liberal democracies. The concept of democracy promotion is not a novel one for the US. As Powell (2009: 59) notes, there have been previous instances of democracy promotion strategies in the US foreign policy. He posits that following the First World War, Woodrow Wilson sought a peaceful future and democratic states were seen as an integral part of achieving this goal. After the Second World War, the scope of the US foreign policy was broadened, with the introduction of programmes such as Marshall Aid, which placed an emphasis on a liberal economic system as well as democracy in order to achieve a more peaceful world. Moreover, the promotion of democracy was employed in the aftermath of the Cold War, and following the events of 9/11, it became a central tenet of the Bush administration's foreign policy in order to combat terrorism (Powel, 2009: 59).

The US foreign policy approach to democracy promotion in the Middle East in the 21st century is influenced by two agendas: the first is the liberal agenda, which is influenced by democratic peace theory in the 1990s, and the second is the neo-conservative agenda, which emerged after the 9/11 attacks (Powel, 2009: 60). Both George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton invoked democratic peace theory during their terms in office in order to justify the democratisation of the Third World, including Haiti (Owen IV, 2005: 123). However, George W. Bush appealed to the theory in order to garner public support for the Iraq War in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

The democratic peace theory, which posits that democratic states are less likely to engage in conflict with one another, has been a source of contention between liberals and realists since the 1980s. The theory makes two claims. It asserts that democracies do not engage in warfare with other democracies. and it maintains that the use of force is illegitimate for democracies. Consequently, when they come into conflict with another democratic state, they rarely threaten to use force (Layne, 1994: 8). The theory posits two key features. Firstly, there are institutional constraints, as democratic governments must answer to their citizens in the electoral process. Secondly, there are features of democratic institutions, such as executive selection, political competition, and the pluralism of the foreign policy decision-making process, which represent checks and balance systems in the democracies. A further feature is that democratic norms, culture, perceptions and practices cause compromise and peaceful resolution of conflicts without violence. This is because states externalise their domestic values, thereby creating mutual trust and respect between democracies. Consequently, it can be said that if there can be

more democratic states, there would be more peaceful world because of these features of democratic peace theory (Layne, 1994: 9).

This theory has been the subject of considerable criticism, particularly from those who espouse a realist perspective. Rosato (2003) has identified flaws in both the normative and institutional logics of the theory. He asserts that the former does not operate as promised because the trust and respect mechanism between democracies is not as efficient as anticipated. Shared democratic values do not guarantee that states will feel trust or respect for one another. Instead, states will pursue their interests when there is a serious conflict of interests. There is also little evidence to support the institutional logic of the democratic peace theory (Rosato, 2003: 592). The latter also has flaws. Rosato (2003: 596) asserts that the public is not as affected as the theory predicts. The majority of the public remains unaffected by wars, and moreover, democratic publics are likely to embrace war when national interests and honour are at stake. Therefore, it can be argued that institutional constraints do not support the idea that democratic states do not wage war against each other. Nevertheless, liberals do not espouse the view that liberalism is inherently pacifist. As Kinsella (2005: 453) notes, liberalism has "strengthened the prospects for a world peace established by the steady expansion of a separate peace among liberal societies." Consequently, it is crucial to acknowledge that liberals believe that democracies can engage in warfare as readily as undemocratic states, provided that their opponents are not democratic.

Although there is no consensus among scholars on the efficacy of democratic peace theory, the majority of academic research indicates that democracies have created a separate peace. Additionally, some studies suggest that democracies are more likely to sign international agreements and become more interdependent in economic matters (Owen IV, 2005: 123). Furthermore, it can be argued that following the events of 9/11, the Bush administration employed this theory to justify their war on terror. They sought to achieve a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Muslim world through the democratisation of the region. They believed that the only way to provide security was to promote democracy in Middle Eastern countries. This included the ambition of changing the tyranny of Saddam Hussein with a democratic state in Iraq (ibid.). Nevertheless, it can be contended that the promotion of democracy has never constituted a primary objective of US foreign policy. Instead, the US has consistently supported authoritarian regimes in the region, rather than pro-democracy movements, in pursuit of its geopolitical interests (Powel, 2009:59).

At this juncture, it can be argued that the compatibility of democracy and Islam is a disputable issue. This is because the promotion of democracy in the Middle East is unlikely to succeed. However, there are numerous objections to this argument, which claim that Islam and democracy are compatible and that there are many common points between Islam and democracy. For instance, Esposito and Piscatori (1992: 434) claim that *shura* (or consultation) represents a consultation process and can be accepted as a parliamentary system in democracies. In addition to the concept of *shura*, there are two

other key elements of Islamic thought that are often cited as evidence of the compatibility of democracy and Islam: *ijma* and *ijtihad*. The former refers to the process of reaching a consensus, while the latter is the practice of independent reasoning. These concepts are often presented as evidence that Islamic teachings permit the implementation of democratic principles.

The US' approach to democracy promotion in the Middle East can be divided into three levels. The first level is the enforcement of democracy, which is an integral part of US interventions in the Middle East. This can be seen in the invasion and occupation of Iraq, which was justified by the pre-emptive war and the main goal of finding weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). However, democratisation of Iraq is also an important part of the intervention, as stated by Dalacoura (2005: 965). The second level is the creation of projects designed to support civil society organisations and facilitate the reform of state institutions through the encouragement of democratic change in collaboration with international organisations such as the Middle East Partnership Initiatives (MEPI). MEPI identified three key deficits in the Middle East: political freedom, women's empowerment, and knowledge. Additionally, the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Partnership Initiative sought to foster closer ties between G8 countries and Middle Eastern governments (ibid.: 964-965). The third level of US democracy promotion is traditional and public diplomacy, which includes the speeches of the highest government representatives, such as Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell, about democracy promotion. Additionally, the establishment of media agents, such as Radio Sawa, Al Hurrah, or Voice of America, is employed to initiate them into American values and win their "hearts and minds." This is also discussed in greater detail in the latter sections of this essay (ibid.: 964).

Nevertheless, the credibility of US democracy promotion in the Middle East has been contested by Middle Eastern populations. In his 2005 work, Ottaway identifies three primary arguments put forth by Arab commentators. The first is that the US call for democracy is merely a ruse to deflect international scrutiny, while the true agendas of the US remain opaque. The second argument asserts that the US lacks credibility in its pursuit of democracy, given its past support for authoritarian regimes in the region. The third argument challenges the US' right to interfere in the domestic affairs of Middle Eastern countries. The US has been accused of supporting authoritarian governments in the region and of having a flawed democracy of its own, with the death penalty still permitted in some US states. Furthermore, the US has been criticised for interfering in the domestic affairs of Middle Eastern countries without justification. Also, the relationship between the US and Israel has the potential to undermine the credibility of the US's democracy promotion agenda. In the past, the US has been complicit in Israel's mass killings and systematic destruction of Palestinian life. Many Arabs now believe that the US cannot be a promoter of democracy in the region while it is waging a war against Arabs in many countries through its support of Israel (Ottaway, 2005: 180). It can also be argued that the US' policies are not entirely consistent, which undermines the credibility of its democracy promotion agenda. For instance, Roosevelt was more

interested in promoting democracy in France than in supporting democracy in Poland, while Reagan was more focused on forcing democracy into Communist states than in promoting democracy in African states. Similarly, Bush was passionate about promoting democracy in Iraq but was not as supportive of democratic movements in Russia or Pakistan (McFaul, 2004: 158). Consequently, it can be argued that unless the US promotes democracy in a uniform manner across all countries, its credibility in the region will be severely compromised.

3. Public Diplomacy and Democracy Promotion

The emergence of Western democracies did not occur in a short-term period. In his 2012 work, Rosa Brooks asserts that the development of American democracy was not the result of external assistance or technical support from international actors such as the World Bank. Rather, it was the culmination of a long-term process that began in ancient Greece and continued through the Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence. She posits that although the American democratic process is lengthy, it is not without flaws. It is unreasonable to expect other societies to transform into democracies overnight. In the current era, the advent of sophisticated communication and transportation technologies has made the process of transformation or transition more straightforward. However, In his 2012 publication, Brooks (2012: 23) presents findings from a World Bank study, the World Development Report of 2011, which indicates that the 20 fastest-performing countries collectively spent an average of 27 years addressing corruption, 36 years achieving basic government effectiveness and 41 years developing a basic rule-of-law culture. Consequently, it can be argued that the promotion of democracy should not be hastened; rather, it should be approached in a gradual manner.

In addition, Nye (2004: 120) asserts that "democracy cannot be imposed by force." He puts forth the proposition that there should be policies enacted to facilitate the opening of regional economies, the reduction of bureaucratic controls, the stimulation of economic growth, the improvement of educational systems, and the encouragement of political changes. Furthermore, Nye (2008: 98) asserts that public diplomacy played a pivotal role in undermining the credibility of communism during the Cold War. The collapse of the Berlin Wall, he argues, was a testament to this assertion, as it ultimately resulted from the combined efforts of hammers and bulldozers, rather than military force. However, some scholars have expressed reservations about the efficacy of public diplomacy. This section of the article will seek to elucidate the concept of public diplomacy, before offering a rationale for its efficacy in light of communicative action theory and social constructivism.

3.1. Public Diplomacy and Different Approaches to Public Diplomacy

As previously stated, public diplomacy is not a novel concept. During the 20th century, when diplomacy came under the scrutiny of the media and public opinion, it attracted the attention of numerous states, particularly during the Cold War, when superpowers employed it to achieve their

international goals (Gilboa, 2008: 55). Following the events of 9/11, a new phase of public diplomacy emerged, with the objective of countering the activities of Islamist fundamentalists (ibid.: 56).

The term "public diplomacy" is defined as "the process by which direct relations are pursued with a country's people to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented" (Sharp, 2006: 106). Tuch defines public diplomacy as "a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies" (Melissen, 2006: 11). The term public diplomacy is defined as a process in which an international actor engages with foreign publics with the intention of achieving foreign policy objectives (Cull, 2008). These actors can be governments, private individuals or groups, and they seek to influence public attitudes and opinions, which may have the potential to shape foreign policy decisions (Nisbet et al. 2004: 15; Snow, 2020: 8). This distinction between actors emphasises the traditional and "new" public diplomacy. The "new" public diplomacy includes not only states and their apparatuses, but also proposes new actors such as NGOs or non-state actors and new technologies that create new media channels (Hartig, 2016: 7). According to this new public diplomacy, then, non-state actors can also have the ability to shape a country's foreign policy not just governmental organisations.

The characteristics of public diplomacy have evolved since the Cold War period. Ross (2002: 76) identifies two significant developments that have transformed the nature of public diplomacy. The first is the proliferation of actors in the international system. In the past, governments were the primary actors engaged in public diplomacy. However, the advent of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and individuals has expanded the scope of public diplomacy, with these entities pursuing their agendas in public forums worldwide. The second significant development is in communication and transportation technologies. Currently, as a result of these developments, people are more mobile, and there has been a proliferation of media outlets, including television, radio, and newspapers. Furthermore, the Internet and social media represent one of the most significant developments in communication technologies. Their role has increased, becoming a central hub for information and influencing public diplomacy strategies through facilitating the exchange of ideas about world affairs among states, NGOs, communities, firms, and individuals (Gilboa, 2008: 56). Nye (2008: 104) additionally posits that the Internet's flexibility and low cost enable it to be utilized in regions where authoritarian governments block traditional media. Furthermore, it is important to note that although Nye (2008: 104) asserts that only elites can access the Internet in poor regions, Dutta-Bergman (2006: 113-114) indicates that there is a high prevalence of Internet usage among the youth in the Middle East. The youth are more receptive to creative thinking, and the Internet access is likely to increase openness to American values.

As outlined by Nye (2004: 107), public diplomacy encompasses three distinct dimensions. Each of these dimensions necessitates direct government information and the establishment of long-term

cultural relationships. The first dimension, which is the focus of this discussion, is the dissemination of information on a daily basis. This information is intended to elucidate the context of domestic and foreign policies. The second dimension, strategic communication, involves the development of a set of simple themes that are employed in a political or advertising campaign. An illustrative example of this is the US campaign to influence European states to deploy missiles in Europe against the Soviets. The third dimension of public diplomacy is the development of long-term relationships with key individuals through a variety of means, including scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences, and access to media channels. For instance, after the Second World War, numerous key figures, such as Margaret Thatcher and Anwar Sadat, participated in American culture through academic and cultural exchanges (ibid.: 109). Furthermore, it is imperative to underscore that these interactions have involved more than 200 incumbent and former heads of state. Notably, over half of the leaders in the coalition against terrorism have previously participated in both academic and cultural exchanges (ibid.: 109-110).

At this point, the theory of communicative action can contribute to the public debate on democracy. According to Habermas, communication is symmetrical interactions characterised by "reciprocal expectations regarding the truth, appropriateness, and sincerity of statements" (Dutta-Bergman, 2006: 104). One of the fundamental tenets of communicative action is that all participants are open to the possibility of persuasion through the communication process. In the absence of these conditions, it is not possible to engage in dialogue between the parties involved (Dutta-Bergman, 2006: 104-105; Goodall et al., 2006: 7).

Habermas also asserts that in the process of communication, three characteristics are of paramount importance: truth, rightness, and sincerity, which facilitate consensus between actors (Zöllner, 2006: 168). Therefore, communicative action necessitates that actors be on equal terms and possess the capacity for mutual criticism in order to coordinate their actions through an agreement or negotiation (Zöllner, 2006: 168). Nye (2004: 111) also asserts that effective public diplomacy is a "two-way street." It is based on shared values and hearing, and understanding target audiences is also crucial, as is sending the message. Consequently, he posits that exchanges are more effective than mere broadcasting in the long term.

In other words, according to Gilboa, public diplomacy is defined as "direct communication with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking, and ultimately, that of their governments" (Nisbet et al., 2004: 15). Therefore, it can be said that effecting foreign publics' opinion is crucial. Nevertheless, some academics and policymakers maintain that public opinion is of limited significance in the Middle East due to the prevalence of autocratic regimes. Instead, the opinions of national governing elites are deemed to be of greater importance. For instance, although the majority of Arabs were opposed to the Gulf War, several Muslim countries supported it due to their close ties with the US and the national elites in those countries (Nisbet et al., 2004: 13).

It is nevertheless an overly simplistic view to assert that public opinion does not play a role in Middle Eastern affairs. Indeed, there is considerable evidence to suggest that public opinion had a significant effect on the so-called Arab Spring, which took place after the period covered in this article. However, the channels through which it exerts influence on governments are different from those in Western democracies. They are more informal and less visible than in the West (Nisbet et al., 2004: 13). Moreover, it can be argued that Muslim public opinion may lead to an increase in the need for greater repression in order to sustain power and expenditure of more coercive resources. This is due to the fact that Muslim public opinion may threaten the legitimacy and support of these autocratic states. This was also the case during the Arab Spring.

Another theoretical approach that can be employed to demonstrate the potential for democracy promotion through the positive interaction of public diplomacy with publics is social constructivism. Wendt (1999: 104) asserts that ideas, norms, identities, perceptions, culture, and ideologies play a pivotal role in shaping foreign policies. Shared ideas, ideology, norms, and so forth shape state perceptions and their identities and interests (Wendt, 1999: 104). Realism assumes that all states are egoistic and pursue their own interests, whereas constructivism assumes that identities of states are variable and depend on historical, cultural, political, and social context (Van Ham, 2002: 261). Therefore, according to constructivism, it may be claimed that states' perceptions, identities, and ideologies can be affected by other states; shared knowledge, ideas, and norms can change the state identities. However, Van Ham (2002: 261) notes that constructivism offers little insight into the manner in which international norms and ideas are disseminated within the domestic sphere. At this juncture, it can be posited that public diplomacy strategies may serve to bridge this gap, acting as a conduit for the transmission of one state's ideas, values, and norms to another.

Identification is also a crucial aspect of constructivism. Shared knowledge enables states to identify each other in a negative or positive manner, which in turn determines the nature of future relations between those states. If states identify themselves negatively, there is a high probability of conflict between them. Conversely, if they identify themselves positively, there is a strong likelihood of close relations between them (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2003: 20). According to constructivism, there is a systemic process that plays an important role in the emergence of collective identity (ibid.: 21). Two systemic processes are identified: the first is the rising economic interdependence among states, which makes them more connected to each other; the second is the transnational convergence of national values, including political and cultural values, which increases the similarity between nations and facilitates positive identification (ibid.: 21). As a consequence of this positive identification, as Wendt (1999: 354) notes, the distinction between democratic and authoritarian states may diminish, thereby enhancing the alignment of state interests.

Then, it can be argued that constructivism and public diplomacy are closely related. In public diplomacy, the main objective is to influence ideas through shared values, cultures, or identities. The consequences of these concepts and the role of individuals in this process constitute an important part of the theory and provide an explanatory framework for public diplomacy.

It is, however, necessary to mention an approach that is sceptical of public diplomacy or, more generally, of soft power. This is Gramsci's approach. Antonio Gramsci's writings and ideas have been utilised by various disciplines, including the leadership of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall in British Cultural Studies. In the 1970s and 1980s, communication and cultural studies applied Gramsci to their works. In the 1980s, a group of scholars from International Relations approached the discipline from the perspective of Gramsci, utilising his theory of hegemony. Gramsci's writings offer little insight into world politics. Nonetheless, IR scholars such as Robert W. Cox (1983), Stephen Gill (1993, 2008, 2012), Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton (2004) and William I. Robinson (2005) applied Gramsci's theory and his concepts to the fields of international relations and International Political Economy. For example, Cox (1983) drew upon Gramsci's concept of hegemony to gain insight into the complexities of the world order. He observed that Gramsci acknowledged the state as the primary actor within the international system, yet proposed that it encompasses the social foundation of the state. This implies that a change in international power relations or world order can be traced back to a change in social relations (ibid.: 169). Cox (ibid.: 171) further developed Gramsci's ideas on this subject by stating that "a world hegemony is thus in its beginnings an outward expansion of the internal (national) hegemony established by a dominant class". The dominant mode of production in a state over time will inevitably become established as a dominant mode of production internationally, permeating other states and linked to other modes of production through complex international social relations connecting the social classes of different states. Following the Second World War, the American mode of production and culture expanded to other countries and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the US established its hegemony in the world. Neoliberal values, thoughts and norms were developed in the aftermath of the Second World War and subsequently disseminated from the West to other regions of the globe. These neoliberal ideas, values and norms have remained unchallenged. The promotion of democracy can be evaluated within this context.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony posits that both political society and civil society are of equal importance (Gramsci, 1971). The exercise of hegemony necessitates a mutually balancing combination of force and consent, with the overarching principle being that consent must be freely given. In this way, the ruling class must utilise civil society to justify and maintain its domination, and in turn, requires the active consent of the subordinated class. In the Gramscian sense, the political and civic realms are inseparable. The concept of hegemony is disseminated through various social, economic, cultural, gender, ethnic, social, and ideological structures (ibid.: 87). The private realm, including religious

institutions, the media, and educational institutions, becomes a conduit for the functioning of hegemony (ibid: 92). Accordingly, Gramsci posits that hegemony is "intellectual and moral leadership whose principal constituent elements are consent and persuasion rather than coercion" (Fontana, 1993: 140). In this conceptual framework, Gramsci postulated that intellectuals occupy a distinct role in the formation of a system of knowledge and values, with a particular focus on the transformation of these concepts into universal principles (ibid.). The intellectual position lies between the ruling and subordinated classes. In addition to being creators of a particular mode of life and worldview, intellectuals also serve as interpreters, translating the interests and values of a social group into general principles that apply across society.

These intellectuals act as guardians of society, and it is possible to develop and sustain hegemony through cultural production by these forces (Alexander, 2021: 14). Soft power and public diplomacy can be evaluated within this approach. As Gramsci and Nye suggest, consent is as crucial as coercion. Gramsci emphasises the role of intellectuals in creating consent, while Nye believes that popular figures can also create soft power. The integration of neoliberal values into the consciousness of the general public is facilitated by the efforts of public diplomacy and Western intellectuals (ibid.: 13-14). Ultimately, public diplomacy serves as a tool that enables an international actor and its values and ideas to be perceived as beneficial within the international system (ibid.: 17). This enables the international actor to exert influence over foreign publics, persuading them to endorse its foreign policy. In other words, in the Middle East case, public diplomacy strategies comprising official or unofficial institutions and new media tools can be understood to signify the establishment of US hegemony. The following section will analyse the US public diplomacy efforts in the Middle East at the beginning of the 21st century.

4. US Public Diplomacy and its Effect to Democracy Promotion in the Middle East

Following the events of 9/11, the US altered its foreign policy towards the Middle East. President Bush's advocacy for democracy in the Arab world was a notable manifestation of this shift. In particular, following his second election, this call became more pronounced. For example, in his second inaugural address, he employed the terms "freedom" 25 times, "liberty" 12 times, and "democracy" or "democratic" three times (Fukuyama and McFaul, 2007: 23). Furthermore, discussions of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and even terrorism were supplanted by a focus on the promotion of democracy (Rugh, 2006: 184).

However, the image of the US among the peoples of Middle Eastern states was not particularly positive, and the speech was not particularly persuasive for many Arabs because of the negative American image. A poll conducted in seven Islamic states in 2002 revealed that less than 35% of respondents expressed disapproval of American ideas of democracy, while less than 15% were in favour of the spread of American ideas and customs (Nye, 2004: 42). Additionally, another study found that

the favourable view of the US among the populations of six Middle Eastern countries declined from 2002 to 2004. Notably, in two countries, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which are traditionally considered allies of the US, the approval rating dropped from 12 to 4 percent and from 15 to 2 percent, respectively (Rugh, 2006: 185).

One of the strategies employed by the US to promote democracy is public diplomacy. However, the Bush administration made several missteps during its first term, and the image of the US in the minds and hearts of the global community did not change as a result of these missteps. Firstly, the US invested in the media, establishing Radio Sawa and TV Alhurra, which broadcast in the region. These media outlets were established with the intention of changing the the image of the US in the region. However, they were unsuccessful because many people believed that these media instruments were not objective and that they were actually propaganda stations (El-Nawawy, 2006: 189-192). This unsuccessful initiative can be explained by the theory of communicative action, which was previously discussed. According to this theory, for a successful communication, truth is one of the crucial features. However, the subjectivity of these stations hindered this. Therefore, since people did believe that these stations were credible, it cannot be claimed that they were effective strategies for public diplomacy.

Secondly, and most importantly, the primary failure of US public diplomacy is the inconsistency between US foreign policy and public diplomacy. While US government officials were advocating for democracy in the region, the US was engaged in a war against Iraq and was also supporting Israel against Palestine (Kennedy and Lucas, 2005: 321). However, foreign policy and public diplomacy are interconnected, and what affects the US image is its foreign policy. A report published in 2004 revealed that the majority of Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE, held positive perceptions of several US values, including education, technology, movies and television, and freedom and democracy (Amr, 2004). A survey conducted in 2003 and shared in the same report indicated that 81% of participants in Kuwait expressed a positive view of US education. Nevertheless, only 14% of respondents in Egypt, 3% of respondents in Saudi Arabia, and 11% of respondents in the UAE expressed an overall favourable view of the US (ibid.).

In the second term of George W. Bush, after 2005, the public diplomacy strategies underwent a significant shift. The Bush administration's intentions included the necessity for a long-term strategy, the importance of listening as much as speaking, and the fostering of a sense of common interests and shared values between Americans and the people of different countries, cultures, and faiths. The objectives of public diplomacy were to foster a sense of common interests and values between Americans and the people of different countries, cultures and faiths. In addition, the promotion of democracy, the isolation of extremists and the strengthening of shared values and common interests were also goals of public diplomacy (Scott-Smith and Mos, 2009: 234). In order to achieve the aforementioned goals, four strategies have been identified: the first is engagement with the US and

foreign media; the second is exchange programmes to build lasting relationships; the third is education for Americans to learn other languages and for others to learn English; and the fourth strategy is to empower US citizens and NGOs to utilise the resources at their disposal to a greater extent, as in some situations government officials may not be as effective or credible as individuals such as American Muslims (Scott-Smith and Mos, 2009: 234).

Then, following the events of 2005, the US initiated a series of diplomatic strategies with the objective of enhancing its reputation in the Middle East. However, a Gallup (2009) study conducted between 2006 and 2008 revealed that the US leadership was not favourably regarded in the Middle East, with only 15% of respondents approving of it. However, following Barack Obama's election as President of the US, he initiated direct communication with the populations of the region. For instance, he gave an interview to Al Arabiya television in which he stated that his objective was to restore the US' reputation and credibility and that he would endeavour to communicate with the region in new ways (ibid.). Subsequently, Obama closed the detention camps at Guantanamo Bay and withdrew the military forces from Iraq. This actions now more credible when they are compared to the actions of Bush administrations. People in the Middle East also responded well. For instance, while 64% of Egyptians indicated that the US' withdrawal from Iraq would enhance its global reputation, 59% of Saudis and 56% of respondents from other countries similarly believed that the closure of the Guantanamo Bay detention facility would have a positive impact on the US' image.

It is important to reiterate that public diplomacy strategies cannot become credible unless they are compatible with foreign policies. This is exemplified by the case of the Middle East. The US interventions in the Middle East after 9/11 defined it as a hegemonic power and damaged its image. Consequently, it can be seen that the American image does not improve in the short term, even though it uses soft power or public diplomacy strategies and tools. In particular, the foreign policy decisions of the Bush era prevented the US from establishing links with the peoples of the region through public diplomacy. From a Gramscian perspective, radio and television channels and their 'intellectuals' may have been seen as part of American hegemony. However, it is only with the Obama era and the change in US foreign policies that has had an impact on the positive change in the American image among the peoples of the region. Thus, it can be argued that public diplomacy, which has the potential to enhance the American image and thereby serve as an invaluable instrument for the promotion of democracy on behalf of the USA, has instead become a tool that has the opposite effect.

5. Conclusion

Following the events of 9/11, the US experienced a sense of insecurity, which it believed could be alleviated by the democratisation of the Middle East. As a result, the promotion of democracy became a key objective of US foreign policy. However, the US government soon realised that the people of the Middle East held negative views of the US. It was therefore hypothesised that improving the US image

in the eyes of the Middle Eastern public might facilitate the process of democratisation. To this end, public diplomacy strategies were employed to influence people's opinions.

Some scholars contest the efficacy of public diplomacy, arguing that it is an overly optimistic approach. However, two theoretical frameworks, communicative action theory and social constructivism, offer insights into the potential effectiveness of public diplomacy in democracy promotion. Conversely, from the Gramscian perspective, public diplomacy or soft power can be perceived as the US public diplomacy strategies are not as 'soft' as they appear to be, and as if the US is not promoting democracy, but rather establishing its hegemony.

As a result, the initiative was ultimately unsuccessful due to two key reasons. Firstly, there was a lack of effective communication strategies. Secondly, there was a discrepancy between the public diplomacy strategies employed and the foreign policy objectives. Although there are commonalities between Islam and democracy, the Middle Eastern peoples' perception of the US has led to both its public diplomacy efforts and its democracy promotion efforts to remain fruitless. The negative image created by coercive US hegemony has led to the US not being seen as an actor trying to bring democracy to the Middle East. Consequently, in the early years of the 21st century, a public diplomacy that diverged from the tenets of US foreign policy was pursued, which had a detrimental effect on the promotion of democracy.

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