

# Center for American Progress



**A PANEL DISCUSSION ON:**

**“INFLUENCE AND AMERICAN POWER:  
IMPROVING U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE  
PUBLIC IN THE MUSLIM WORLD”**

**MODERATOR:**

**MICHAEL MCCURRY, PARTNER,  
PRINCIPAL OF PUBLIC STRATEGIES GROUP, LLC;  
FORMER WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN (1995–98)**

**FEATURING:**

**JODIE T. ALLEN,  
SENIOR EDITOR, PEW RESEARCH CENTER; CO-AUTHOR,  
*ISLAMIC EXTREMISM: COMMON CONCERN FOR MUSLIM AND  
WESTERN PUBLICS***

**DR. CRAIG CHARNEY, PRESIDENT, CHARNEY RESEARCH; CO-  
AUTHOR, *A NEW BEGINNING: STRATEGIES FOR A MORE  
FRUITFUL DIALOGUE WITH THE MUSLIM WORLD***

**DUNCAN MACINNES, DIRECTOR, FOREIGN PRESS CENTERS;  
MUSLIM OUTREACH COORDINATOR, BUREAU OF PUBLIC  
AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**8:30 AM – 10:00 AM  
TUESDAY, JULY 26, 2005**

**TRANSCRIPT PROVIDED BY  
DC TRANSCRIPTION & MEDIA REPURPOSING**

MR. : – national Security team at the Center for American Progress. It's a pleasure to invite you to our program this morning, a first in a series of panels on the global image of the United States in public diplomacy. The Center is organizing a series of publications and panels with the aim of enriching our country's dialogue on key national security questions. I think in today's highly polarized political environment here in America, it's far too easy for leaders and organizations to oppose without offering constructive ideas and to resort to partisan attacks without contributing new ideas on the challenges that face our country. The Center's national security team is proud of its efforts to add new voices to the debate on national security questions. This panel exemplifies the type of work that the Center for American Progress seeks to do in fulfilling its mission of providing nonpartisan research and finding progressive and pragmatic solutions to international programs.

Before introducing our moderator this morning, I would like to draw your attention to an event that we're organizing tomorrow on dirty bombs. It's in your packets. Tomorrow morning we'll be doing an event at 9:30 with Larry Korb, a senior fellow here at the Center; Andy Grotto; Margaret Hamburg from the Nuclear Threat Initiatives; and Benn Tannenbaum, a senior program associate. The topic is on radiological weapons and the threat of dirty bombs and if you have opportunity to come, we welcome your participation.

It's an honor to introduce our moderator this morning, Michael McCurry. Mr. McCurry is currently a partner in Public Strategies Group, a public affairs and strategic communications firm. He has a long and distinguished career in public service and working as a political strategist and spokesman for numerous progressive leaders. From 1993 to 1995, he was a key figure in articulating America's foreign policy vision to the world as spokesman for the Department of State, so he has strong personal experience in dealing with the challenges that our panel will address this morning. From 1995 to 1998 he served as White House Press Secretary to Bill Clinton during a very tumultuous time in his presidency.

Before I hand it over to Mike, I just ask that if you have a cell phone or a pager, please turn it off. Look forward to the panel. Mike McCurry.

MICHAEL MCCURRY: Good morning and the other thing you could have said, I am not Scott McLellan these days, knowing what those tumultuous times can be like, but welcome to all of you. This is an important topic and one that I think we will gain a lot from the expertise on the panel this morning. I would like to start with maybe a popular cultural reference. Those of you who remember the movie, *Cool Hand Luke* will recall that scene where the jailer reaches over and grabs Paul Newman by the neck and listen up, and says, "What we have here is a failure to communicate." I think in so many ways public diplomacy in the post-Cold War era is characterized by a failure on the part

of the United States to effectively communicate both ideals, values, principles to the rest of the world and indeed a great deal of misunderstanding in the rest of the world about the intent of U.S. policy and U.S. goals. But there's no question at the spread of extreme anti-American sentiment in Muslim countries – Muslim-majority countries is now a major national security problem for the United States because of its impacts on many things, including what used to be called the global war on terror; now to be called, I guess, the global struggle against extremism.

Since the war in Iraq, negative attitudes towards the United States from across the world have increased dramatically. They had been chronicled by the PEW studies that Jodie will talk about in a second, but the hostility generated by this anti-American sentiment has also aided those who are recruiting terrorist networks. They clearly have had some positive impact on the efforts of al Qaeda in the world. And understanding that better and understanding the sources of that anti-American sentiment is, I think, a requirement if we are going to get policies that move us in the right direction. And so, with that in mind, the panel that the Center has assembled this morning are really experts on exactly these attitudes of public opinion and what we can actually do about them as we try to spread a different image of the United States in the world.

Let me introduce the panel and then we will get right to their presentations maybe some discussions, and then your questions.

Jodie Allen is the senior editor of the PEW Research Center. She joined the PEW Center from *U.S. News and World Report*, where she was managing editor and business editor and also wrote a biweekly column on the political economy. She came to *U.S. News* from *Slate* magazine where she was Washington bureau chief. Before that, many of us remember her as the editor of the *Outlook* and the Sunday commentary section of the *Washington Post*. She has also been an editorial writer and a business columnist for the *Post* and proves that the revolving door produces some good things. Previously she held positions in government, including deputy assistant secretary of labor for policy and also she served in private organizations, including Chrysler, Mathematica, the Urban Institute, and the Brookings Institution.

Dr. Craig Charney is the president of Charney Research and has two decades of experience as a pollster and political scientist along with a Ph.D. in comparative politics from Yale University. Author of several scholarly and journalistic publications, he recently co-authored *A New Beginning: Strategies for a More Fruitful Dialogue with the Muslim World*, which we'll hear about much more this morning, focused on the research that Craig did in Egypt, Indonesia, and Morocco.

Duncan MacInnes is the director of foreign press centers and the Muslim outreach coordinator for the Bureau of Public Affairs of the U.S. State Department, a place that I'm quite fond of. He manages the Department of State's three foreign press centers, which are located in Washington, New York, and Los Angeles. Those centers are really the front lines of some of America's public diplomacy since it represents a place where the most engagement with foreign journalists stationed here in the United States occurs.

As the coordinator of the Muslim – (unintelligible) of the Muslim outreach activities for the Bureau of Public Affairs, Duncan joined the Foreign Service in 1984, served in a variety of posts throughout the region that we'll be discussing primarily this morning, but also in Australia and elsewhere. From 2002 to 2004, he served as the director of press and public diplomacy for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs followed by a year as senior advisor on Iraq public diplomacy. And in 2004, he received the Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Public Diplomacy.

Jodie, I think, we'll start with you because you've got some data and a presentation that really goes right at the heart of what are the current attitudes in the Muslim-majority countries about the United States.

JODIE ALLEN: Thanks, Mike. I will have to go through these slides pretty quickly because there are fair in number of them, but if any of you are more interested in seeing the data in detail, it's all on our website at [pewresearch.org](http://pewresearch.org). The complete two reports that we put out on the basis of this poll as well as the polling data themselves. So, this is a 17-nation survey that we did in April and end of April and during May. Morocco was done in June. And as you can see, while we had many European countries as well as the United States and Canada, we also included several predominantly Muslim countries, and in those predominantly Muslim countries, we had additional questions that we asked that were especially relevant to Islam and to its role in the world, and most of what I will talk about today will focus on those countries.

We'll start off looking at responses to the question "Do you have a very or at least somewhat favorable opinion of the United States?" As you can see, the levels are pretty low, but the bad news is somewhat offset by the good news, which is that in recent years – in the last couple of years, we have seen an uptake in favorable opinions in four of these countries; especially striking in Indonesia – more than a doubling of favorable responses, although you will notice that 2003 was sort of the nadir of opinion – favorable opinion about the United States. That was right – those polls were done right after the invasion of Iraq. But in Morocco a big bounce back; Lebanon a bounce back too and at least – only in Turkey had favorable opinions declined.

Just some bright points. I won't go into the demographics much, but particularly noticeable were the young people in Morocco and, in general, young people in most of these countries tend to have more favorable views of the United States, which is hopeful. Indonesia: across the board boost. In general, Muslim women express fewer opinions in total, but when they do – I mean, they are more likely to answer no response or don't know, but when they do they tend to hold somewhat more favorable views of the United States than men do.

As you can see, opinion of Americans as distinct from America are considerably better, higher ratings, but they have been declining in Europe, but not necessarily in the Muslim world. As you can see in Lebanon, you've got two-thirds of Lebanese saying that they have a favorable view of Americans; same thing in Morocco. You will notice that – although this is not on the question of Muslims, that uniformly India now has the

highest view both of the United States and of Americans among any country in the world. Why? When we ask respondents “What makes you like Americans? What do you think positively about them?” pretty much everybody agrees, and especially in Morocco, that we are hardworking and that we are – except to Chinese, they are the only group and perhaps actually because of their own high standards – that we are inventive.

And the question of honesty, we do pretty well in Europe, but not at all well in the Muslim world, and in Turkey very dire views are taken of our honesty in dealings. Even in Indonesia, those are distressingly low levels. When we ask about negative characteristics, here we had a great deal of agreement that we are greedy, although nobody thinks we’re greedier than we do, but that seems to be a point of agreement throughout the world.

Violence is another characteristic on which we rate very high. Rudeness, especially that is cited in Muslim countries. And, interestingly, immorality. Now, there is an interesting sidebar here: the rest of the Europeans and the Canadians think that Americans are too religious by and large. The Muslim world thinks exactly the opposite. They think we are not religious enough. This in some sense poses a problem for us because it may be a question of how we espouse our religion or whatever, but we are going to find it very hard to please all the people on this subject.

On the question of “does U.S. foreign policy consider other interests?” as you can see throughout Europe, most people don’t think that it does and in general even lower ratings than in previous years. But in part of the Muslim world, especially Indonesia, but also Lebanon and Pakistan, there has been an increase and in the case of Indonesia to a very high level in those believing that the United States does consider other countries’ interests. We asked them specifically in countries – the interests of countries like yours, so there is some improvement there.

When we come to who influences American foreign policy, this is quite revealing. In general, I think Mike will be amused to see how much credibility people in the United States accord to the news or at least power to news media. Those of us who are in the news media may doubt that, but the news media are frequently cited, as are business corporations, in the Western world. In the Muslim world, however – in Morocco, the military – the U.S. military are cited as and the most influential. And as you might expect, in Lebanon and Jordan, Jews are considered to be very important influences on American foreign policy. Christian conservatives do not rate very high and liberals seem to have the lowest influence as judged by the rest of the world. Ordinary Americans don’t rate it very high either.

With regard to the U.S.-led war on terror, here support has waned throughout the Western world, including in the United States, but not so in the Muslim world. And here is – we will see more about this in the later slides; that countries that have themselves experienced terrorism – Indonesia, Morocco, Pakistan, and Lebanon – have maintained or even increased their support for the U.S.-led war on terror.

Did the war in Iraq make the world safer? Nobody, including the United States – and in no country does the majority think that. And you can see that in the Muslim world, the levels believing that are very, very low. Here we have differing reactions: the tsunami relief effort was part of a big plus for the United States, including in two Muslim countries, obviously in Indonesia – 79 percent said that made the – the tsunami relief made them hold more favorable views of the United States and so in Morocco; not so in Turkey or Pakistan. The reelection of George Bush, on the other hand, was a downer across the board, not just in Europe. Canada actually had the most negative reaction of any kind – no, Germany, I guess, but it was not a popular result in the Muslim world either.

The Iraq elections. One might have expected a more positive response here and indeed in Europe – in certain parts of Europe it did elicit a positive response, but in general it does not seem to have resulted in positive reaction, and certainly not in the Muslim world and not in much of Europe.

President Bush's calls for Mid-East democracy. Again, while it elicited positive responses in Germany and the Netherlands and also in Canada, it had very little resonance in the rest of the world. However, when we ask the question, "Do you think that democracy is coming to the Middle East?" we do get positive – higher levels of positive response, especially in Lebanon. And we see that pluralities, and in the case of Indonesia and Morocco, do say that the United States opposes democracy in their own countries – I mean, favors democracy in their own country. So – and moreover although I don't have a slide on this, there continues to be strong belief in the Muslim world that democracy is not just for the West; that while a stronger role for Islam is favored in these countries, that that is not incompatible with democracy per se and with the specific features of it.

Here we see a very interesting phenomenon and that is a rise in concern throughout the countries – predominately Muslim countries that we surveyed, a greater worry about Islamic extremism. We use that term after consulting with experts and also doing pre-testing of questions, it seemed to be the term that had the most uniform resonance among these countries. And you can see that Morocco with its experience in Casablanca bombings, Pakistan, Turkey, Indonesia – and among Christians in Lebanon, although not among Muslims and not in Jordan, we do see rising concerns about Islamic extremism. Why? Well, for the obvious reasons – the same reasons that would be cited in the West: it's violent, it leads to fewer personal freedoms, it divides the country, sets back economic development, and so on.

We do see this ambivalence about Islam in politics and we've seen this repeatedly in our surveys. A greater role for Islam in public life is welcomed, yet there are worries about extremism and those worries tend to be highest among those who see Islam playing a large role. I mean, ambivalence is the only way to describe it. In Turkey, you have different and somewhat more consistent views: the seculars worry more about extremism and there is greater questioning of a role for Islam in political life, but overwhelmingly, except in Turkey, most people – and remember this is a cross section of people – say that

it is a good thing. Where they – those who say that Islam is playing a good role overwhelmingly think it's a good thing, except in Turkey. And among those who say Islam is playing a lesser role, that is generally regarded as a bad thing.

We do see some other positive trends. Confidence in Osama bin Laden: we asked them, "Do you have confidence in Osama bin Laden to do the right thing in world affairs?" Obviously, in the West, the positive responses were in the small digits including zero, but it's much higher levels in some Muslim countries, notably Jordan where actually support for bin Laden has increased. It has also risen in Pakistan, but in Indonesia a big decline in support for bin Laden. Ditto in Morocco. In Turkey, it was already very low and it's even lower level. Lebanon there's virtually no support for bin Laden now.

Ditto for suicide bombings. The question asked, "Do you think that suicide bombings and other violence against civilian targets are justified in defense of Islam?" And we – except in Jordan, very low and very declining. Look at the drop in Lebanon and Pakistan. And even in Jordan when we rephrased the question for a portion of the sample and asked the same question, but with respect to your own country, in Jordan support for terrorist activities fell very low, too. And I might mention that yesterday I was on a program on Al Arabia where they were talking about Kofi Annan's effort to come up with a definition of terrorism that would be broadly acceptable. This is a pretty tough definition and you find broad support for it.

So, just to conclude, the U.S. image remains quite negative in the Muslim world, but there were positive reactions to tsunami aid. You might conclude from this that actions speak a great deal louder than words and to that I might add that you can see if you look at the broader survey and look at the very positive responses you get from India now on almost any question, prosperity is the best medicine. We do find receptivity to the idea of democracy, especially if it's not labeled as a U.S. export, and we find shared and growing concerns about extremist terrorism.

So I will stop there and let Craig tell you more. I think it's very interesting. You'll find that while these surveys were done – I mean, their focus groups were done somewhat before our latest poll and were conducted among elites, whereas ours were a broad cross section, you'll find great complementarity, I think, between what we find and what Craig finds, and he will be able to give you a little more texture than we could.

MR. MCCURRY: Craig?

DR. CRAIG CHARNEY: Thanks, Mike. You know, I'm always a little worried when someone introduces me as Dr. Charney because I'm the sort of doctor who cannot cure what ails you and can't even get you a better seat in a restaurant, in fact. Nevertheless, let me speak about what I can talk about.

Picture this, if you will, you're watching behind the glass in a focus group room, a smoky room full of older Egyptian men who have been ranting about the United States

There are three keys to this, we discovered. These include a humbler tone, a stress on respectful partnerships and local initiatives for change and democracy, and a willingness to make a sustained effort with substantial resources, but if we do these things, we found it can make a difference. Now, these conclusions were based on a series of focus groups we did in December and January in three key Muslim countries: Morocco, Egypt, and Indonesia.

What we learned in those groups is that Muslims do not hate us for who we are or what we do. Indeed, we found – and I can at greater length on this if you wish – that they aspire to the sort of prosperity and democracy that we enjoy. It is truer to say that they are critical of what we have done in certain places, but it would be more accurate still to say they are critical of what they perceive that we do. Perceptions matter and it is how those perceptions are formed and shaped – what goes into them and what is silenced and does not go into them – that helps to shape the context of opinion in which we're operating.

Now, it will not come as any surprise, especially after Jodie's data, that we found a great deal of hostility to the United States. People were critical of America, they were critical of Americans, nobody liked President Bush, the hostility was starting to spill over into American corporations, brands, and so forth as well, and there was ambivalence about American popular culture. However, we also found that there were a lot of things that Muslims still like about America, if grudgingly. These include the American economy, American science and technology, the American educational system, American business ethics, the rule of law in America as well. In fact, interestingly enough, people contrasted on the one hand the abuse of Abu Ghraib and on the other hand the protection of human rights in the American legal system. What we are dealing with, in other words, is not a case of the rejection of American values per se, but rather of disappointment – a perception that we are not living up to them in our dealings with the Muslim world.

What's also significant is that precisely the areas where America is most strongly rated; namely, economy, education, science, healthcare, law, are exactly the areas which Muslims said their own countries need the most help in, are weakest in, and most desired assistance from the United States.

In short, what we saw was a longing for a different kind of relationship with America. When we asked people to fill in mock postcards to President Bush, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, and tell him what they thought he should be doing in their countries, and the answers were revealing. The stress was on respect and development

assistance. For example, an Indonesia woman wrote, “Dear President Bush, we really need help with our economy, but please let us run our country.” There is a real sense, in other words, that we need to have more respect, but also more aid, and these are the things which the U.S. can in fact provide.

What was also striking though in the findings of the result of this research, and this is my second major point today, is that people in the Muslim world knows very little about what the U.S. is doing in terms of aid despite the skyrocketing aid figures of recent years. Take Egypt, for example, the largest recipient of U.S. aid. When we asked people in the groups there how much they thought their country had received from Egypt in development assistance in the last decade, the answer was generally a few million dollars, and this from groups that were entirely composed to college educated people. They literally could not believe it when we told them that the correct figure is over \$7 billion. “Where has it gone?” they asked. Well, it wasn’t so surprising when we asked them about specific projects. For instance, the clinics that have saved and helped the lives and health of and helped hundreds of thousands of women and children. “Weren’t those Mr. Mubarak’s doing?” they said. The low-polluting buses that have helped reduce air pollution in Cairo: “Didn’t the Japanese give them to us?” In Indonesia, likewise, nobody knew that the U.S. had spent \$75 million to help make Indonesia’s first democratic elections in 1999 a success, but everybody knew Japan had supplied the ballot boxes because the rising sun was printed on the bottom of each box.

Now, part of the reason why people don’t know about these things is their information sources. In the Arab countries where we surveyed, we found it was satellite TV, especially Al-Jazeera and other stations that aren’t going out of their way to present favorable stories out of the United States. Yet it is also clear that what we’re talking about here is a major failure of American public diplomacy as well. We have not gotten our story across. In fact, I think it would be fair to say that in the information war, the U.S. has unilaterally disarmed.

It is possible, though, to do some things differently and to have a more successful public diplomacy. This is the third key finding and something that came through very clearly in our results. For instance, in Indonesia and in Morocco we found that what the U.S. had done made a difference when people heard about it. In Indonesia, for instance, tsunami relief had a big impact when we did groups before and after the tsunami. In Morocco, we found that Morocco women were the only ones in the survey who told us that America’s message to them was democracy and not force, and Morocco was the country where America has worked most vigorously for women’s right, including the renewal of the family code. We discussed these findings, in fact, with Andy Kohut before he went into the field with the surveys this year and we’re very pleased, and Jodie has shown, to see that the quantitative research that PEW did has verified these findings.

Similarly in the focus groups, we found that when we presented other information about U.S. aid programs in the areas of health, education, the economy, and so on, it made a real and tangible difference in the attitudes of Muslim world towards the U.S. As an Egyptian woman said, “If this were all true, we’d thank them.” However, we also

learned in the groups that it's not just what we say, but how we say it that makes the difference. This is because communicating differently with the Muslim world is not just a question of PR. It's a question of building a different kind of relationship. There is a real need to be perceived as listening more; not to present the U.S. as an agent of change, but rather as supporting local initiatives.

And there is also a need to agree to disagree over contentious security issues like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine. As soon as we tried to defend the U.S. positions on these things, we found a set of bars dropped between us and the focus group participants. They just weren't interested and wouldn't even talk about aid to their countries. On the other hand, when we tested a message that focused on the idea of agreeing to disagree – in fact, it was based on ideas that have worked for the global interdependence initiative in this country – we found that there was a warm response. As a Moroccan man put it, there are things we can agree on and there are things we'll have to disagree on. In that context, people were willing to talk about aid. So it may come – this may come as a surprise, but as much as Moroccans or Indonesians care about Iraq or Palestine, they care about Morocco or Indonesia even more. People are open to a dialogue about their countries if we're willing to conduct that dialogue in the right way.

So in conclusion, our findings may come as a surprise to some in this room who think that the only appropriate diplomatic posture for the – public diplomacy posture for the U.S. would be send President Bush out in sackcloth and ashes. However, that's not our view, nor is it our view that more successful public diplomacy would require major changes in policy on Iraq, Afghanistan, or Palestine. Rather, we began this study before we knew who the next president was going to be, last September, and on the assumption that we'd be help – try to be helpful to whoever the next president was. I have to tell you that I am convinced that even if John Kerry were president, our findings would have been largely similar. We'd still be in Iraq, we'd still be in Afghanistan, people still wouldn't know about our aid programs. I think the only thing that might have been different would have been comments on the president's hairstyle.

But I think it is important to note, as the PEW findings also underline, that we have a window of opportunity to make some changes now. There is a new team in the under secretary for public diplomacy. There is also a series of developments which have helped in terms of attitudes in the Muslim world ranging from American support for change in Lebanon, in Egypt, our support for its tsunami relief, the elections in Iraq, and so forth. We believe that these things create a context in which although favorable attitudes towards the U.S. remain low, they are at least moving in the right direction and where it's possible to advance them further.

The key to doing this is going to involve winning over people like one of the women – a younger woman we saw in one of our focus groups in Egypt. She said, “You know, the U.S. is like this great guy who every once in a while does something stupid and you start to hate him.” She was mad when she said it, but she was smiling too.

Thanks.

MICHAEL MCCURRY: Thanks, Craig. Duncan, with the arrival of Karen Hughes as the new undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, it probably is a good occasion to assess what the State Department is doing. I can imagine that you don't feel like you've been waving the white flag of surrender and unilaterally disarming in this contest for shaping perceptions in the Muslim world. Tell us what the State department does do and maybe some of the things that it could do.

DUNCAN MACINNES: Okay, yes, Mike. Thank you. Actually, I found it very illuminating – both Jodie's and Craig's presentation. What was most interesting to me, particularly in Craig's presentation is much of what he says is what people who work in public diplomacy in the field know is true. He has more empirical data and Jodie has even more empirical data, but any public diplomacy officer working overseas conducts continuous focus groups with everybody he meets in the sense he is asking them for – or she is asking them for feedback.

And the results that have come out of these two studies were accepted by most public diplomacy people on the basis of anecdotal – and many of the findings on how to proceed are those that we identified several years ago and have started to implement. Karen Hughes in her testimony said we have been – you know, she didn't say we need to start again. She said a lot of things are going on; we need to just redouble our efforts, and I would agree with that.

I would also particularly agree, and it's something we identified quite a while ago, that one of the major problems is that the U.S. is no longer seen as an agent of positive change in the world today. This is something we had in the '50s and '60s and it is something that we have lost and it is an intangible quality that we need to recapture, and it's extremely important to do that.

The message of the global war on terrorism is not one that makes you be seen as an agent of positive change. The message that the president has put forward and is being implemented on democracy and freedom is a message that rings positively with people overseas. It is something that harks to what they view as the basis of America's positive view – positive force in the world today, and it is something we can build on and it is the same kinds of positive messaging that we had in the '50s and '60s. And as we've seen from the polling, it is something that people desire. They desire a partnership, they desire a dialogue, and we are trying to provide that.

We do this through media outreach, intensively, through educational and professional exchanges, and through our humanitarian assistance programs. I couldn't agree more that we need to highlight our humanitarian assistance programs. Margaret Tutwiler, when she came in as our undersecretary, the first thing she said is we need to have labels and we need promote our assistance programs in the world because people don't know what we are doing. And there are ways to do this and one way is just to tell people; one way is to get them involved.

To get them involved – let me give you an example of how we have done that to an extent that needs to be repeated more often. AID often used to do videos of their programs and then try to place them on television overseas. That doesn't work very well; it's an American quality video. It looks like propaganda. We did something called television cooperatives, so in Egypt, for instance, we worked with a local television station, provided them with transportation and even some camera support for them to do a series of programs about U.S. aid activities from an Egyptian point of view, without the Americans being even on the screen. When those ran, they got very positive views. The quality was some – was not particularly good, but it was the quality of what that television station was putting out, so it was integrated and it was their product.

We have expanded that by bringing groups to the U.S. from television stations around the world – Indonesia, Central Asia, Middle East – to do stories about the United States from their point of view; not us doing a documentary and shipping it off and saying “Put this on your television.” And those have been very successful. We need to do a lot more of that.

The information war is particularly difficult these days for two reasons: one, the information providers have expanded dramatically; and, two, as a bureaucracy, the federal government will never be as nimble as the private sector media people are. And even if we did everything exactly right in public diplomacy, we would probably be less than 20 percent of what people see about the United States because the other 80 percent comes from commercial television. And if people are worried about our morals and other things, it may be because it's what they are watching through popular entertainment, which we know is fantasy, but they may see as reality, and that's important.

Prediction is very difficult, especially about the future, Niels Bohr once said, so I don't want to actually go into what Karen Hughes might be doing and – but I can say that I'm sure that she will promote the president's message of democracy, the secretary of state's message of transformational diplomacy, by which she means focusing on doing things rather than – and getting tangible results rather than just exchanging views at a diplomatic level, and that's what public diplomacy does anyway. Public diplomacy is an active diplomacy and it's not a passive diplomacy, and we need to get back to doing more active diplomacy. We do a lot, but we need to redouble our efforts.

We need to coordinate better. This has come up many times in many studies because AID needs to coordinate its message of public diplomacy just like the military does. In many findings, the military, particularly in Europe, has – the U.S. military has a very negative view or military in general does, whereas the United States view – you know, (is viewed?) positively. And something like tsunami, where the military participates in humanitarian aid, helps correct the view of what the U.S. military's role in the world today is.

Organizational solutions and changes are not really at the heart of the issue. Edward R. Murrow, who ran the U.S. Agency for – Information Agency after a career in media – a distinguished career – talked about “the last three feet of public diplomacy,”

which is where you are talking to the individuals and that is where we're most effective. We need to do more of that and we need more people in the field to do that. We need to have all diplomats in to doing that, whether they are public diplomacy specialists or not.

I'm just going to quickly run down – when we looked at outreach to the Muslim world, we came up with a goal, which was to expand outreach to moderate Arabs and Muslims, particularly women and youth, through a full range of programs in order to build close relationships and counter extremism, and to enhance the credibility of the United States and promote its role as an agent for positive change. Some of our – we had eight assumptions – there are many more, but eight basic ones which track, again, with what Craig and Jodie said. Changing negative attitudes is a long-term goal and requires sustained U.S. government and coordinating U.S. government efforts. The focus should be mainstream Islam and the vast majority of Muslims who are committed to integrating Islam into the modern world.

Positive attitudes are strongest among those who know and interact with Americans directly. Private citizens, particularly Arab and Muslim Americans, are often more effective at portraying the U.S. than official spokespersons. Television is the primary media – medium for information in news around the world today. Education is the key. We can effectively change attitudes towards – of youth through educational and women's programs. The media affects opinion, but basic attitudes are acquired at home and in the classroom; that's why working in education and with women is so important.

And lastly, the radical Islamists and extremists have shown remarkable skill in using television, internet, and what we call the new small media to communicate and to piggyback their message onto nationalistic messages, pan-Arabism, and we need to address that issue particularly.

We talked about TV co-ops. For educational exchanges, last year the State Department had dedicated 25 percent of its educational exchange budget to the Arab – Middle East and South Asia. That's a new high. It included monies for high school students come to the United States, some 480 from Iraq and Afghanistan and the rest of the Middle East. For the coming school year, we're looking at getting 1,000 high students to the U.S.

Another major initiative was English. English is seen as the key way of being able to communicate and to convey values, so we have a micro-scholarship program that has provided some scholarships in region for some 3,500 young students to take English. In Syria, for example, where English has been a major component for a number of years, the embassy had said that have trained 9,000 of the 13,000 English teachers in the country.

At that level you are actually starting to have an impact. Some of it is scale. When you are dealing with youth – and we need to deal with youth because they are over half the population in all the countries in the Muslim world – you have to be – you have

to work on a different way than we did it in the past when we looked at working with influence leaders. Youth require bigger programs, more widespread, but they are crucial.

I think with I'll stop so we can have a discussion.

MR. MCCURRY: Let me – it's a fun role for me to be in to ask questions instead of having to answer them, so let me start with this: I'm struck in your presentations that there are – in looking at these negative impressions of the United States and Americans that there are two things at work. One is a body of bad information, misinformation, or misperceptions in the Muslim world, and then a failure for us to put forward a more positive story about the generous things that we are doing and the real aims of U.S. foreign policy. If you were trying to balance this two, which is more important: advancing the positive story that we need to tell better, or working harder to correct the bad information that's out there? Anyone?

DR. MACINNES: I'll just start. I think we have to do both things. There is a lot of bad information. One of the problems of bad information is if you do not swat it down quickly it becomes real information. I mean, it becomes – if a story gets out, for instance, that the U.S. – this was during the Iraq war where we were particularly worried. The U.S. bombed a mosque and there was a story that the U.S. bombed a shrine in Iraq that was very significant for the Indonesia population. It ran in an Indonesian newspaper that we had bombed this mosque of a revered Muslim saint for the Indonesians. We were – the longer it takes to answer that story, the less likely you are going to have any effect on how (inaudible). Once it's out reverberating around the internet and other places, even your rebuttal doesn't matter.

So on that particularly story we got out very quickly – they got photos from the – from DOD and provided them to the newspaper Indonesia, which ran a retraction the next day. Unfortunately, there is many times when we have been slower in doing that and that's crucial to – the cycle is so fast that it's really crucial to get something on the misinformation out.

But I think more important – because, again, we're talking about attitudes – is getting people back to the point where they trust the intentions of the United States, and we have lost that. And I think we do that, as Craig had said, through a number of ways and promoting our assistance programs is part of it. Being serious and being – following through on democracy programs is equally important.

DR. CHARNEY: I would like to make a couple of comments if I might. At the PR level, it's very important to respond to every story within the same news cycle. That's clear. On the other hand, at the larger strategic level I think that the key priority has to be putting out a positive story about what America is doing in the world. But it's not just putting out a story, it's what we do and how we do it. For example, at this point civil society actors or others have very little say over the distribution of USAID funds in Muslim countries.

Now, in Egypt, interestingly enough, there has been a major innovation. Until now the Egyptian government has said how we can spend our democracy money, which might help explain why there hasn't been a lot of democratization for it, but this year thanks to an amendment put through interestingly enough by a Republican senator, Sam Brownback, the Congress has said that there is going to be an advisory council created of civil society and democracy activists who are going to have input on how that money is going to be spent. We tested this idea separately in the focus groups and we found that it went over very well. So, in other words, not just what we say, but what we do in terms of building a partnership is extremely important.

There is one other area, though, where combating misinformation is important and that is a set of stereotypes of about the making of U.S. foreign policy. One of the surprises for us in this research was – though we hadn't asked about it, we kept hearing in the focus groups that the Jews ran U.S. foreign policy and, as Jodie showed you, the empirical work that the PEW group did confirm this. It reached the point (inaudible) where we finally sent in a note to the moderator saying “Ask them how many Jews they think there are in America” and the answers were illuminating. The low end estimate was 10 percent; the high end 80 percent.

Now, this may sound funny to everybody here but it's not to them and for a simple reason: there is nobody denying this stuff out there, there is no interlocutor who is saying actually the proportion of Jews in the U.S. is two percent. Instead, they have major media like Egyptian national TV airing a 41-part series which treat the – *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the classic anti-Semitic (canard?), as fact. I kid you not. This was on Egyptian TV.

Now, obviously it doesn't make sense to have a U.S. government program saying the Jews don't run the U.S. government. That would obviously backfire. What may make sense, though, is for civil society actors like universities, schools, exchange programs, journalism faculties, and others to conduct exchanges, visits, video (inaudible) and so forth on how U.S. foreign policy is made, on religious diversity in the United States, on what are the factors that shape legislation, and so forth.

Obviously a lot of this has to do with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a lot of this won't get better until the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved. However, I do think it's worth thinking about how this particular piece of misinformation can be addressed in nongovernmental public diplomacy, for the simple reason that if people think that the Mossad flew planes into the twin towers it's awfully hard to have a serious conversation with them about U.S. foreign policy.

MS. ALLEN: Two things that I would add, first off, in getting out information about America. There is one aspect that gets very little discussion but we have lot of polling data on it, and that is while the world now appears to think that America is bent on global determination – that we are very aggressive and violent – in fact, Americans for better or worse are almost totally disinterested in the rest of the world. When we have asked – you know, we like our democracy, we believe in our values, but when we have

asked questions about – you know, how important is it for America to sell its values overseas or to – you know, which should have priority – we’ve asked these questions in a lot of ways. Andy Kohut is going to – about to come out with the book looking and American exceptionalism. We are different from other countries, and one of the ways that we are different is we really are not proselytizers at heart at all. Now, there are two sides to that and we probably ought to be more interested in foreign policy, but somehow this is an enormous misconception in the world that we are determined to spread our Coca-Cola civilization to every corner of the globe.

So the second thing that jumped into my mind as I was listening to Craig, although I think Duncan offered some interesting examples of how one gets around this, and that is while we want to get credit for our aid and apparently do not, at the same time there is resistance to assistance that is too clearly labeled with a flag and – because it feeds into that stereotype that Americans just want to put their stamp on the world. So I was very interested in the examples that Duncan offered like the one in Egypt where while we let the Egyptians make the TV documentary about American aid, I think that that is an avenue that we might want to pursue more aggressively, but quietly. I mean, essentially – I guess the moral is to walk softly and carry a big gift. (Laughter.)

MR. MCCURRY: Jodie, I want to pick up on your first point about American exceptionalism. I think part of our difficulty has always been getting support in the United States for these efforts that help America put a better foot forward in the world, and the problem is a lot of Americans probably sit back and say, “Well, I don’t really care what the Muslim world thinks about us. As long as they don’t try to kill us, let them think what they think.” Make a case – all of you make a case why the American public ought to be alarmed, concerned, interested in this kind of data. What does it matter to people here in the United States?

MS. ALLEN: Well, I think that the most obvious answer that people now are worried about is the (inaudible) attack the World Trade Center or set up bombs in our subway. It’s not very elevated reason for concern, but it has certainly – and we see that – one of the things that PEW does is poll on the news interest index. There was – obviously, at the top are the terrorist attacks, but there was another interesting thing and that is the foreign policy story that most engaged the United States, even more than the death of Princess Diana, which was another peak, was the tsunami. That really did engage – it rose right to the top of the news interest index, and that’s a healthy sign that we are responding to something that’s not just a direct or indirect threat to us, but there is no question that the potential for terrorism on our own soil is suddenly making people think about the rest of the world. (Inaudible.)

MR. MACINNES: I’d agree with everything Jodie said, but there is another point – because we also do domestic polling – and this is – just as there is misinformation in the Muslim world about the level of our aid effort, so there is in the United States. While Muslims think we are hardly giving them anything, Americans think on average that we are spending about 30 percent of the federal budget on foreign aid. Now, what this points to is the lack of an interlocutor on this point, too. Just as there is nobody in the

Muslim world saying, “Well, actually Jews don’t run America,” there is nobody in our country who is lobbying very effectively for foreign aid. I’m very struck by this. There is a defense lobby. There is an ethanol lobby.

When I was in Washington not long ago, I even discovered the office of the National Association of Nurse Anesthetists. I think the lobby may be our meetings will really put you to sleep. (Laughter.) But in any case, the nurse anesthetists have an address. They have a lobby. They have a political action fund. International development doesn’t. And I think one of the issues that needs to be thought about in terms of raising the salience of these kinds of issues actually is not necessarily just a Muslim world initiative, but working to better inform the American public and creating the instrumentalities that can do this, because there is nobody in international – there is no aid AIPAC of international development; nobody who can punish its enemies and helps its friends.

MR. MCCURRY: I would be remiss if I didn’t waive my white wristband and put in a plug for one.org. The one campaign is a consortium of groups that are actually doing exactly that: trying to build a public constituency here in the United States for international development assistance and we’re making some headway through the goodness of Brad Pitt and Bono and a lot of other folks.

MR. MACINNES: I would just mention on why Americans should care about what foreign policy is and views of the U.S. is the importance on the on the economic and business front. I mean, we have seen restrictions and difficulties for businesses working overseas because of the attitudes towards Americans. These are – that means jobs in the United States, so there is a direct economic benefit to a positive view of United States that I think people would understand and is an important part of this plan.

MR. MCCURRY: And I think that also is a story that probably needs to be developed in more – (a little?) more proactively. It’s the custom here at the Center for American Progress to ask any members of the media who are present to get a first crack at answers, so I would ask if there are any members of the working press who are here who have a question?

Yes? Way in the back. We have got a microphone and I think given the size of the crowd if you don’t mind identifying yourself and your affiliation and try to keep the questions questions and not polemics. Thank you.

Q: My name is Nicholas Studiak (ph). I’m with the Saudi Press Agency. My question is, essentially, is it a fair estimation of what you have said that really we don’t fundamentally need to change our policies, it’s more a question of packaging of those policies?

DR. CHARNEY: No, I don’t think that’s a accurate characterization. What I said is that we need to build a new relationship, not just engage in a PR exercise. At the same time, our findings don’t suggest a reversal of U.S. policy in Iraq, Palestine, or

Afghanistan is required. What is required are three things: a humbler tone, a focus on a supportive partnership and local initiatives for development and change, and a willingness to make a sustained effort with substantial resources behind it.

MR. MACINNES: I would also add – you know, it is – we are not going to change our policy because of public opinion overseas, but what – the most important thing we do in public policy is to explain our policies so they actually are reacting to what they really are rather than what somebody is defining them to be. And this is one of the problems with Al-Jazeera and others where you have non-Americans pontificating about what our policy is and isn't, and that's why we made major efforts and try to get U.S. officials on the air every day in the Arab and Muslim media to talk about what the policies really are. It's – as Craig said, it's okay – in fact, it's part of the dialogue – to agree to disagree on certain issues and people are happy to do that as long as you respect their views and as long as there – as long as you're disagreeing on what's really happening and not some made-up fantasy.

MR. MCCURRY: Is there another – did you have a follow-up on that?

Q: (Off mike.) So how would you respond, then, to the notion that we have been changing or policies? That armed intervention, preempted strikes, invasions of foreign lands don't seem to be working very well and that slowly we now are talking about more effective public diplomacy, backtracking a little bit, providing scholarships instead of fighting wars.

DR. CHARNEY(?): I don't know if it's a question of doing one or the other, nor do I know if it's necessarily a case, as you seem to suggest, that our policies are failing across the board. When we took a poll in Afghanistan last year – the first in post-Taliban Afghanistan – for instance, we found not only was the American – the favorability rating in the – for the U.S. was about 70 percent. We also found that President Karzai's job performance score is considerably higher than that for President Bush. So I think I would be more careful before I jumped to the conclusion that there was (simply?) failure across the board. Obviously, there are policy adjustments that are making – that are being made. And I want to say, I don't say this as any spokesperson for the administration because I am not, nor am I a Republican. I'm a democrat. What is important, though, is to understand what is going on and I think that you need to be clear on that in order to understand what the possibilities for public diplomacy are.

MR. MCCURRY: Do we have any other media questions? Yes.

Q: Thank you. Spencer Ackerman with the *New Republic*. I'm not sure if I understood your – Craig, your point about agreeing to disagree in some of the countries you surveyed on more of the contentious issues you mentioned; Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel, Palestine. Are you saying that basically when it comes to public diplomacy we have to sort of move the question away from the war and kind of pretend we are not fighting it? And if not, what do you think is a useful – and Mr. MacInnes, if you could weigh in on

this as well – a useful and pragmatic and important and effective strategy for dealing with that?

DR. CHARNEY: Obviously, in a world where the war in Iraq and the other contentions issues are important policy issues, they are always going to be discussed. The question is whether debating them should be the principal additional focus of U.S. public diplomacy efforts. What we are suggesting is that they should in part be about changing the conversation. It's not a question of pretending the war doesn't exist; it's that if you are talking to Moroccans or Indonesians or Egyptians, we should be talking about – about Morocco or Indonesia or Egypt and what the United States is doing with them. The simple fact is that Moroccans, Indonesians, and Egyptians care even more about their own countries than they care about what is happening in Palestine or in other places. They are deeply involved in their own lives and we saw in the focus groups that they respond to information about their own countries.

The way we tested this was twofold: one was that we presented different messages. One that tried to defend U.S. policies generated uniform hostility. On the other hand, one that simply said the U.S. ought to try to build supportive partnerships et cetera, et cetera, and has to recognize that it will have to agree or disagree about contentious security issues like the war on terrorism, Iraq, et cetera, got very positive responses. And when we presented information about U.S. aid programs after that, it was much better accepted.

By the way, I should have mentioned before if you like to see this or any of the other things that I mentioned in more detail, the full report can be downloaded from our website, which is [www.charneyresearch.com](http://www.charneyresearch.com).

MR. MCCURRY: Lets open it up to other questions. Ambassador Babbitt, I saw you had a hand up.

Q: Thank you very much. I have two points. One to Dr. Charney who originally was talking about a kind of generosity of the United States as exemplified by \$7 billion of aid given to Egypt and sort of a suggestion, I thought, maybe that if we relabeled or labeled better our aid we would get more positive response. And if you look at Egypt and you look at Colombia, which Colombia used to be the third largest recipient and it may have dropped to fourth now with Iraq, but aid in Egypt – most of that \$7 billion has gone not to the Egyptian people, but to the sort of pharaonic endeavors of the Mubarak government.

And in Columbia, it is mostly for fighting the narcotraffick and it's aerial spraying, it's not building greater economic opportunity for Colombians. So I think you've begin to answer that in the sense of the new initiative in Egypt to say we are going to – may have switched the decision-making process to Egyptian people. So but it's not – it's a little disingenuous to talk about the generosity and not acknowledge that the significant percentage of the aid that doesn't – that goes to purposes other than those that our freedom loving, democracy seeking friends in Islamic world would celebrate.

And one point that I wanted to respond to with regard to Duncan's suggestion about the bringing of moderate Islamic representatives to the United States for study and so forth, my experience in both at State and at AID leads me to believe that the best money we ever spend is on education and educational exchanges. The tweak I would give to yours – your suggestion is from some Iraqi woman with whom I met on Friday, the Iraqi minister of women's affairs and five woman lawyers who said, "Look, you all bring over people like us all the time. We are moderate folks in the Islamic world." The real problem is among those who are not moderate and who have no experience outside of the narrow confines of, in their case, Iraq. We all thought that if there was a quota of women for the new Islamic political structure, that that would be helpful to the cause of women's freedom in Iraq, and in fact most of the women who got on the constitutional drafting committee and are in the – and I wonder if you all have considered and rejected the idea of bringing over the extremists who are the – or whether you – how you have come to the conclusion that bringing over the moderates is the solution.

MR. MCCURRY: Or whether they would be allowed in the country in the first place.

DR. CHARNEY: With respect, while I don't know what proportion of foreign aid to Egypt is wasted because I'm not an expert on that subject, I do think we ought to at least we will be getting for the part that is not wasted. For example, Cairo's air is notoriously foul. One of the major sources of that was an enormous lead smelter which was in a central neighborhood of Cairo. The U.S. paid for the removal of that lead smelter – the largest single-point source of pollution in Egypt – lock, stock, and barrel – well outside the city limits. That happened. That was no pharaonic project, but nobody in Cairo knows about it.

Likewise, we provided a large number of low-polluting liquid natural gas buses. Nobody knows that either, but everybody knows the Japanese gave them the opera house. It seems to me that similarly there's been an extremely successful primary healthcare program, which has produced measurable results in terms of improving the health of hundreds of thousands of women and children. Certainly, improvements in the administration of foreign aid are both possible and desirable, but it does seem to me that we at least ought to claim and get credit for the good that we do.

MR. MACINNES: If I could add one thing on the aid thing before I talk about the other. We've seen an initiative that started several couple of years ago called the Middle East Partnership Initiative that moves in two directions: one is to be more of a partner in these activities, to bring in local NGOs and local institutions into the process of the aid, and to focus the aid on activities that provide opportunities and education and in political life and in economic growth. So those programs are avoiding the pharaonic type of – and are avoiding working basically as aid to support a government, to go to the point of the aid to support the kinds of the changes that the Middle East needs in order to become more viable region and provide economic and political opportunity for its own people.

On bringing over extremists, what I like to – what we would like to do is bring the people before they become extremists. In other words, those at one point who might be populations in jeopardy or populations who are vulnerable to the extremists' message – that's what we are focusing on. Extremists themselves are rarely able to – once they have settled their minds on it – to change and so that's one thing that we tend not to do. We have brought – for instance, we had a program to bring Saudi imams over – Saudi religious leaders – and we brought religious leaders from Indonesia and other places to come. And they're moderate in a sense that they are not espousing – what my definition of moderate is: not espousing the use of violence to promote your goals, okay, so that means we don't bring them over. They can have views that are not – they can be anti-American to a high extent, as long as they willing to have a dialogue on it.

MR. MCCURRY: Yes, right here in the front.

Q: Ali Abuzakuk (ph), program officer of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy. I thank the panelists and (unintelligible) the center.

We work in the Middle East and in Muslim Africa and the area. Most of our programs are supported by the United States government, (unintelligible) and other things. And we had seen the question of being Americans how they treat us, but since we are American Muslims, there was a communication. There a bridge that we were able to communicate many of the issues that others were not able to. A point of order: I think when even in the PEW research, there is no Islamic extremism; there are Muslim extremists. That is a dangerous semantics when we use Islam as a religion being extremists. I know we meant those who are (interpreted?) as extremists.

The other issue is that I'm so happy that there are communications between our policymakers and moderate Muslim groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and the others in the Arab world and others. This should be more encouraged.

The other point that which I have seen that (there may be?) grants, for example in Tunisia, cannot be given to the civil society unless it is approved by the state. And Bin Ali and government, which is an example – I'm not just – they would not allow free civil society organizations be sanctioned or be given. So we are in a problem. I'm glad that there is now a move to change that that the acceptance of the government is not there.

My question here: even though we are having the problem with the Muslim world and Muslims (masses?) and other things, there is, I mean, a missing link. How can we fix that using the potential of American Muslims here in these processes and many ways?

MR. MACINNES: Good question. I would agree that there is no more powerful voice than American Muslims to articulate the kinds of things that the U.S. is doing and committed to doing. It is – you know, I can – as a government official I can say many things, but much is discounted. As an American Muslim, you can say things and you have a natural link. In addition, as American Muslims in a democratic society, you not

only have the ability, you have the duty to talk about how Islam can thrive in a democracy and how democracy and Islam are working together.

And American Muslims have stepped forward. The number of Muslim organizations in the U.S. since 9/11 has increased and they have become much more effective and they actually are speaking out a lot, and I think it's important and I think that not only do they have the ability to communicate, but they understand the issues overseas and understand how to do the dialogue better than non-Muslims often do.

MR. MCCURRY: Yes?

Q: Mahdi Bray, executive director of the Muslim-American Society Freedom Foundation. I want to kind of come back. My question (unintelligible) Mr. Abuzakuk's question. My question would be from the governmental aspects and also from the general aspect, why is it – or what seems to be the impediment of using American Muslims as a bridge to the Muslim world and why aren't we more actively in State Department recruiting Muslims to be and to work in State Department to be ambassadors and things of that nature? What seems to be the impediment in terms of using the mainstream American Muslims and their organizations as a bridge to the Muslim world?

MR. MACINNES: Two things. One, on the State Department we have an active recruitment of – diversity recruitment that recruits not just Muslims, but different ethnic groups and we don't have a lot of Muslims in the State Department. Some of it's because perhaps we need to reach out even further. It takes time also. We have many more younger Muslims than ambassador level. But I would say we do meet regularly with Muslim groups at the State Department and my message to them is generally this: you work best if you work not through the federal government, but on your – but directly. You know, the private sector – you know, privately you have more – you know, sometimes an embrace by the federal government is a kiss of death overseas and we don't want to embrace too closely those who are carrying messages that are important and positive. We want to be supportive, but not directive on it and I think that's – we are expanding our dialogue. We are talking more with Muslims groups and we need the feedback you provide.

MR. MCCURRY: Craig and Jodie, quick question to either of you. Did any of your research focus on who is the more credible voices would be in the Muslim world representing the United States? Did you test –

MS. ALLEN: No. We didn't – we haven't tested that either this year or to my knowledge in earlier, more extensive surveys. But there is something this year: we will be going out with a multi – 40-nation survey and a longer questionnaire and that's something that we should enquire about.

DR. CHARNEY: Only a little bit and we have found some indications that people, say involved in local NGOs, have benefited from American largesse, that people

have received scholarships to America, or local executives from American multinationals might be good spokespeople about corporate social responsibility efforts.

MR. MCCURRY: Yes, on the aisle right there. Right behind you.

Q: Thank you. Joe Onek, Open Society Institute. A somewhat related question: have you asked any questions or received any feedback concerning the perception of the U.S.'s treatment of Muslims here in the United States post-9/11? For example, post-9/11 thousands of Muslims have been deported and many have left voluntarily, particularly from Pakistan. And I'm wondering whether there were any comments overseas about how the U.S. is treating Muslims here since 9/11.

MS. ALLEN: We did not ask specifically that question, but we do ask a question that I think is extraordinarily interesting and we actually have a new update on it. We are about to put that release out, too. And that is attitudes towards Muslims – I actually have, I think, an interesting slide on this point and that is that Western nations, including the United States, generally have favorable views towards Muslims, and this includes Muslims in our own country. And it's very interesting, we ask the question again in a survey that we did starting the night of the London – the first London bombings starting on July 7<sup>th</sup>, and we found that there was no change in positive attitudes towards Muslims.

Notice that attitude towards Muslims in the West are much more favorable than are attitudes in the Muslim world towards other religions, so that in some sense there – it's important to keep that in mind – that, in general, Western countries are more tolerant than are Muslim countries of differences.

So we were very pleased to see that even in – and I actually went and looked at the – (since the?) polling post-London bombing went on over several days, we looked to see whether there was any trend among the days, and while there was heightened concern about terrorism per se right in the couple of days afterwards, attitudes towards Muslims did not change. But we did not specifically ask the difference between Muslims in the United States.

One problem is Muslims are still a very small portion of the population in the United States and a much larger proportion of the populations in Europe. France I believe has the highest proportion. So that it's a good chance that people, you know, wouldn't know how to respond simply because they wouldn't know any Muslims or not even be aware that some of their friends are Muslim.

Q: The question was, in Muslim countries how do they perceive how the U.S. is treating its Muslims?

DR. CHARNEY: We looked at this issue. We found that it is a concern, but a secondary concern. The biggest concerns were the U.S. use of force overseas, spontaneously – particularly Iraq, as well as perceptions that the U.S. was interested in dominance and did not consider the interest of other countries. After that came double

standards about treatment of the Palestinians and treatment of the – anti-Muslim bias in the U.S. since 9/11. But those were the second tier of concerns. It seems to me that's one of the reasons that explains why the short-lived advertising campaign that focused on treatment of Muslims in the United States, which the government paid for in some Muslim countries, didn't do very much for the image of the U.S.

MR. MCCURRY: Let's take may be one or two more. We have got about five minutes left. Yes, right in the – closest to the microphone.

Q: Yes, Eric Alafita (ph), a graduate of George Washington. You mentioned the greater need for interaction with individuals getting out and about, diplomatic personnel. Yet it seems in recent years the ever increasing concerns of security seem to be counteracting that. In Saudi Arabia, there's certainly less getting out and about of our personnel given the security concerns of terrorism there. I believe in Cairo our embassy is starting a little more and more like an armed fortress. In the green zone in Iraq, in Baghdad, I've heard that they have been building concentric circles of so many Texas T-walls that it's starting to actually affect the sewage and water system underground from the crushing weight. How do we close this three feet that you mentioned from behind ten feet of concrete?

MR. MACINNES: You have identified a problem that all public diplomacy practitioners overseas face, and it's a serious one and it's very serious. One way, and it's not the ideal way, is to bring people to United States because there – we can interact here without the security concerns. The other is a problem that's ongoing. We tried to come with ways – one way that we have increased the interaction with Americans is we used to have centers like libraries and centers under the embassies, but the security situation makes those impossible. We've created an alternative concept called American Corners where we put into a local institution a room in a library or room in a think-tank that provides material on the United States, video connections, DVC hookups so that people can interact with Americans in a non-official setting.

It is not ideal. We are doing a lot more in the web. We are doing all these – but, again, nothing – there's nothing like the conversation you can have between you and an individual. I mean, I'll throw out just a quick example. When I worked in Yemen during the first Gulf War, there was a lot of negative stuff in the newspapers, but I had developed relationships with the editors, so I could go and say this is a really – I'm really disappointed in you for putting this article in. And for two or three days we would get better press. But it's a personal relationship that did that, not – he didn't agree with me, but that personal relationship allowed me to actually have an influence that I couldn't have had otherwise.

You have identified a very hard point though. It is extremely difficult with the security situation these days to get out and there is no easy solution to it.

MR. MCCURRY: Look, we have reached the end of the time that we've allotted for this conversation, but it is obvious that given its importance and given that we only

scratched the surface that the Center for American Progress will continue this dialogue. I think it's an important one.

I was supposed to give you all a chance to have a last word, but let me just throw one last question to you by way of the closing or a conclusion. In your work and your research is there anything that surprised you or stood out or gave you some hope or caused you to stop and say, well, that's not what I would have expected from the research, the data, the work that we are doing? Anybody?

DR. CHARNEY: The surprise and the disappointment was the findings of – on stereotypes about the making of the U.S. foreign policy. The hope came from the responsiveness of people to new and reliable information and their shared aspirations with the U.S.

MR. MCCURRY: Duncan?

MR. MACINNES: I think the biggest surprise is that there still is a reservoir of goodwill towards United States, and even underneath the cynicism and anger there is a belief that the United States is a democracy and could – should be – should be a positive force.

MR. MCCURRY: Jodie?

MS. ALLEN: I think the most interesting and hopeful finding that we have had in all our research is the strength of support for democracy and the level of understanding throughout the world on what it involves, so that it's not just elections. Very strong support for independent judiciary, even for a free press. I think that's the most heartening thing that one sees in all our data.

MR. MCCURRY: Well, that's a great introduction to this topic. Please join me in thanking the panel for a great conversation. (Applause.) And I think – do you – does anyone from the Center have any parting announcements or words? Well, thank you very much; pleased to have you here at the Center and please return. (Applause.)

(END)