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# Theorizing Mediated Public Diplomacy: The U.S. Case

Robert M. Entman

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The field of public diplomacy has lacked theoretical frameworks to guide research and practice. This article is an attempt to supply a potentially useful theoretical model. The cascading network activation model, developed to explain the spread and dominance of different framings of U.S. foreign policy in the American media, is extended here to the international communication process. The article focuses on how to theorize about the success and failure of efforts by the U.S. government to promote favorable framing of its policies in foreign news media. The success of these efforts, termed “mediated U.S. public diplomacy,” depends most importantly on political cultural congruency between the United States and the targeted nation, as well as on the strategy, power, and motivations of foreign elites to promote positive news of the United States in their own media. The article explores the difficulties faced and the (less numerous) opportunities enjoyed by the U.S. president and administration to attain their objectives. The model proposed is generalizable to other countries’ efforts to engage in mediated public diplomacy as well.

**Keywords:** *public diplomacy; media and foreign policy; cascading network activation model; public opinion and foreign policy*

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The literature on public diplomacy lacks a theoretical infrastructure. Most American writings appear to analyze successes, shortcomings, and failures of public diplomacy in practice (see e.g., Defense Science Board 2004). Lord (2005, 2; cf. 2007), an exception that does apply theory, reports fully thirty such evaluation reports in recent years. Inspired by the familiar Kurt Lewin aphorism that “there is nothing so practical as a good theory,” this article advances a conceptual framework designed to help build theory in the study (and practice) of U.S. public diplomacy. Unfortunately, no theory yet fully explains how media coverage and other forces influence elite and public opinion toward American foreign policy *within the United States*. Still less, then, do we

have a theory of whether and how messages from the United States activate and spread through other political communication systems. The central goal for theory (and practice) here is to understand the conditions under which foreign support for American foreign policies can be stimulated by U.S. public diplomacy initiatives that employ mediated communication.

Gilboa's (2002) six-fold taxonomy of communication in diplomacy, another of the few theoretically inclined studies, differentiates public diplomacy from media diplomacy. "Public diplomacy" in Gilboa's view, typically uses media communications along with interpersonal and other tools (brochures, courses, cultural exchanges). It is oriented to longer term cultivation of favorability toward the practicing country (here, the United States) among foreign publics. Media diplomacy involves "uses of the media by leaders to express interest in negotiation, to build confidence, and to mobilize support for agreements" (Gilboa 2002, 741). The concept used here, *mediated public diplomacy*, differs from public or media diplomacy as just defined in that it involves shorter term and more targeted efforts using *mass communication (including the internet) to increase support of a country's specific foreign policies among audiences beyond that country's borders*.

Several caveats must immediately be registered. First, as already suggested, theory building in this area, which involves understanding communication paths linking the U.S. government and media to foreign elites, media, and publics, is hampered by the absence of a widely accepted theoretical understanding of the relationships within the United States. Although the literature offers some fairly robust generalizations, we neither know exactly what forces, under which conditions, shape the domestic media's coverage of U.S. foreign policy, nor how that coverage interacts with other factors to shape the American public's responses. And there is no consensus about the impact "public opinion" (an imprecise term itself) has on U.S. foreign policymakers. These lacunae make application of theoretical models to the even more complex communication paths linking other nations' reactions to U.S. policy a highly tentative enterprise. Readers are forewarned.

Second, much of the writing on public diplomacy seems to assume that if only foreign elites and publics had better information, they would become more supportive of the United States generally and of specific American policy decisions. Yet foreign opposition and resistance to U.S. positions may be grounded in accurate information, not in ignorance or in failures of public diplomacy. Where American policies threaten the widely perceived national interests of another country—something we can expect a major superpower regularly and sometimes justifiably to do—its publics and elites may well reject even the most sophisticated U.S. public diplomacy initiatives.

Third, providing more factual information does not necessarily persuade. Publics might not be irrational, but that does not mean they are fully rational or guided purely by cognition in processing information (see e.g. Edelman

1988); nor for that matter are elites (cf. Jones and Baumgardner 2005). If new facts provoke dissonance with longstanding opinions and feelings, audiences may disregard them. Survey findings suggest the difficulties confronting American public diplomacy. Anti-American sentiments appear to be the modal responses of foreign publics throughout much of the world, and especially so in the more developed or literate countries. In a 2006 BBC World Service Poll, for instance, majorities in the following countries rated America's global influence as predominantly negative: Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Britain, Spain, France, Russia, Germany, Finland, South Korea, China, Iraq, and Iran. France, Japan, Britain, "Europe," and China all garnered significantly higher positive ratings around the globe; only Russia rated nearly as negatively as the United States.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there is some evidence that exposure to Western or U.S. media reports can help to reduce misperception. Gentzkow and Shapiro (2003) found that Muslims exposed to CNN were more likely than those not watching CNN to reject the otherwise widespread belief in their countries that the 9/11 attacks were *not* carried out by Arabs.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, although the term implies a concern with mass publics, public diplomacy might better be conceived as designed ultimately to shape elite opinion and action. Elites in some countries might be moved by changes of mass opinion, but in others public opinion might hold little sway. Even in the United States, evidence suggests that public opinion has only marginal effects on elite decision makers (Entman 2004; Page 2006; Sobel 2001) who in any case often badly misperceive majority positions (Kull and Destler 1999; Kull and Ramsay 2002; Page 2006). Furthermore, it is far from clear that American foreign policymakers *want* U.S. public opinion to exert significant influence on their decisions (Entman 2004). This suggests that U.S. officials would care about foreign *mass* publics' opinions mainly when those views demonstrably affect their government's decision makers. Any attempt to theorize the media's place in public diplomacy must therefore make clear distinctions between elite and mass publics. Again, unfortunately, this is not exactly an area that offers well-developed theoretical frameworks even in a domestic context.

To gain greater theoretical purchase on this topic, let us define mediated U.S. public diplomacy more specifically as the organized attempts by a president and his foreign policy apparatus to exert as much control as possible over the framing of U.S. policy in foreign media. Presidents often enjoy substantial success in controlling frames of foreign policy in U.S. media (e.g., Bennett 1990; Bennett et al. 2007; Mermin 1999) though it is by no means always a "slam dunk," as Presidents Carter (Entman 1989) and Clinton (Entman 2004) found repeatedly. And although George W. Bush dominated framing of his Iraq war early on, real world events and some journalistic enterprise created a somewhat more even framing contest as the war dragged on with few indicators of success (cf. Entman et al. forthcoming; Feaver and Gelpi 2004).

### Frame Contestation Continuum:



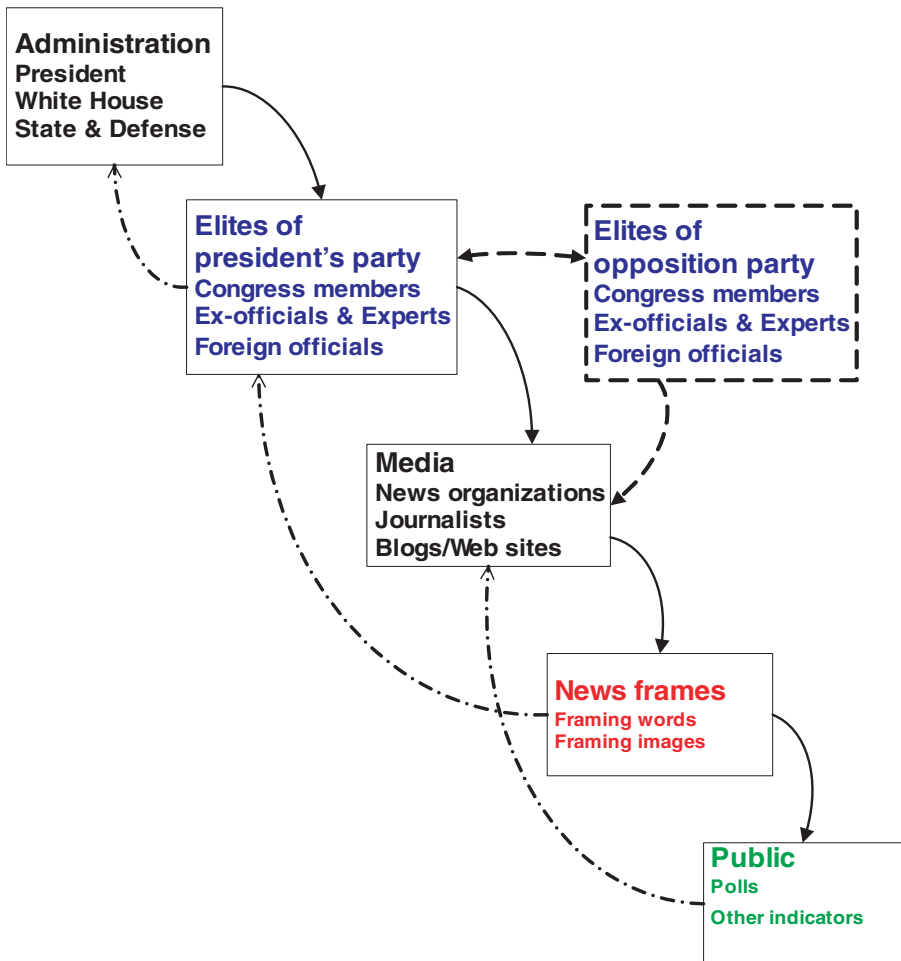
**Figure 1**

The Continuum of Frame Contestation

Framing is defined as selecting and highlighting some aspects of a situation to promote a particular interpretation. The interpretation generally comes through a narrative that encompasses an interrelated definition of the policy problem, analysis of its causes, moral evaluation of those involved, and remedy (Entman 2004). If presidents cannot always control the framing of their foreign policies in the U.S. media, it stands to reason they will have a far harder time of it when it comes to the media of other countries. Many of these nations are hostile to the United States almost on principle, and many others are neutral to skeptical.

Control of domestic media frames is subject to contest and for illustrative purposes we can array the possibilities along a continuum as illustrated in figure 1. In domestic politics, at least by some versions of free press and democratic theory, the optimum point on the spectrum is toward the right end, where attention to the administration's framing of the foreign event, issue or policy is balanced by equivalent attention to an opposing interpretation. Empirically, however, most foreign policy coverage falls somewhere between the left end and the middle. On some matters the president and his administration completely dominate the framing to the exclusion of other interpretations, whereas on others the White House frame faces some challenge (as confirmed by Bennett 1990; Bennett et al. 2007; Entman 2004; Mermin 1999; and Robinson 2002). Only rarely do we see conditions of frame parity, though as previously suggested, since Vietnam (i.e., since President Carter) Democratic presidents seem typically to face more vigorous frame challenges than Republican presidents (Entman 2004).

Elsewhere I have developed a model designed to help explain whether and why frame contestation develops in U.S. media coverage of American foreign policy. Figure 2 depicts the hierarchy of networks through which mental associations on foreign policy activate and spread. The *cascading network activation* model traces the diffusion of frames from the president and administration through the networks of elites outside the administration who also serve as media sources; to the networks of news organizations and within and across them; to the networks of journalists; on to the textual networks of connected and repeated keywords, themes, and visual images and symbols published in media texts; and finally to the networks of associations activated in citizens'



**Figure 2**  
Cascading Network Activation in Domestic U.S. Media

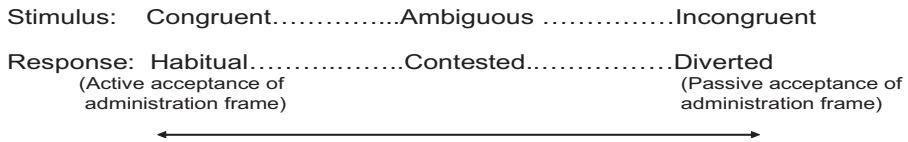
minds. The president and members of his administration have the greatest power to initiate these associations, but each succeeding level also has some potential impact, and important feedback loops exist. Rather than asserting a static structure of influence over foreign news, the cascade model takes into account the potential for variation in degree of White House control that depends on specific presidents, issues, and political conditions. It also illuminates how self-reinforcing feedback frequently does enable a single dominant framing to emerge as the only politically viable and widely publicized interpretation of a foreign event or issue.

Hierarchy characterizes each level as well. Not all players on a network participate equally in spreading activation and acceptance of a frame. Although there is little empirical research, it is certainly a commonplace among scholars and other observers, for instance, that stories in the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* are far more likely to have an impact on other media, and ultimately on elite and mass opinion, than stories in regional or local newspapers. Similarly, an item on the late-night ABC News "Nightline" or early morning "Good Morning America" programs has smaller audiences and less clout in activating and spreading new mental associations than a story on ABC's "World News Tonight."

Within each media outlet there is also a hierarchy; a page sixteen story in the *Washington Post* is apparently less likely to generate attention and follow-up even on the *Post*'s own editorial page than a story on page one (see findings on editorialists ignoring facts published in their own newspapers in Entman 2004, 93-4; cf. Entman, Livingston, and Kim forthcoming). Almost any nontrivial act or speech by the president becomes page-one news in major newspapers and makes the TV networks' nightly news shows. That is a major reason the White House occupies the top of the cascading network hierarchy. At the same time, dissent at the top level of the system, within an administration, can spark the spread of anti-White House framing since (among other reasons) journalists regard disunity as highly newsworthy.

The model includes four factors that together explain frame diffusion: *Motivations* and *cultural congruence* work internally to "pull" counter-framing (in the United States, antiadministration framing) mental associations into the thinking of individual elites and citizens. *Elite power* and *elite strategy*, on the other hand, operate from the outside to "push" consideration within the United States of antiadministration frames through the cascading system. Of these factors, *cultural congruence* is perhaps the most important determinant of whether those occupying the first or second level of the cascading system mount a challenge to the framing desired at the apex, by the country's leader and closest aides. When we extend the model to U.S.-foreign communication, cultural congruence takes on even more importance.

As suggested in figure 3, situations may present stimuli that run the gamut from congruent with dominant political culture through ambiguous and on to incongruent or dissonant. Where the plain facts (apparently) cohere with a common understanding in the political culture, the response of elites and publics alike tend to converge on a single interpretation. For example, when Korean Air Lines Flight 007 was shot down over the Soviet Union in September 1983, U.S. media almost universally portrayed the incident as a "brutal" act of murder by an evil communist power. That narrative cohered with the dominant Cold War understandings of U.S. elites and publics. Although it turned out to be factually inaccurate, it readily propagated throughout the American political communication system. Americans actively and emotionally embraced



**Figure 3**  
Cultural Congruence Key to Elite, Media, and Public Responses

the familiar demonization of the Soviet Union and all aspects of the administration's framing (problem definition, causal analysis, moral evaluation, and remedy). Anyone who might have challenged the frame would have faced hostile reactions from the important players in their own networks and on the networks above and below them in the hierarchy.

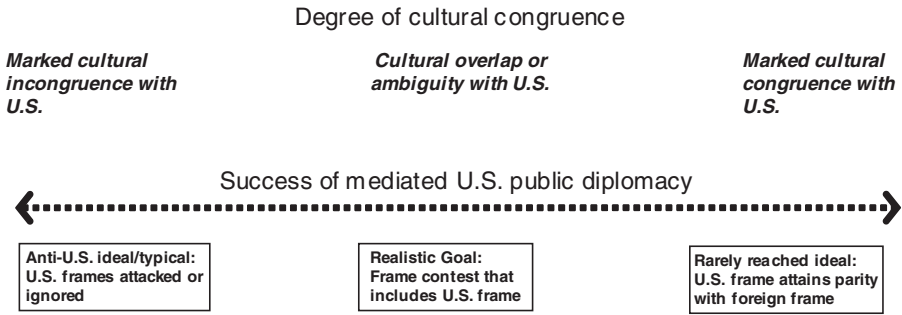
Five years later a U.S. naval vessel shot down a civilian airliner from Iran. That act was dissonant with American self-images as a humane power occupying a wholly different moral universe from the heartless Soviet empire. Rather than engaging with affect-arousing causal analysis and moral judgment, media coverage focused on neutral technical details and the event received far less, and far less emotional, treatment than the KAL incident. The story did not undermine surveyed support of the U.S. policy that produced the tragedy (Entman 2004). At such an extreme of incongruity, we can expect responses to be diverted from active and emotional grappling with the implications of the incident, a blockage of thinking and affective engagement because of the dissonance. And again, those who shape media frames, political leaders and journalists, have little incentive to mount quixotic challenges to the dominant reactions. Passive acceptance of the administration frame is thus the norm.

However, where the implications of the situation are neither obviously consonant nor manifestly dissonant—and relatively few instances occupy either extreme of the spectrum—cultural ambiguity creates more promising conditions for frame contestation, more political slack. Elites can dissent from the White House line without courting political suicide. All things equal, this establishes greater potential for diverse treatment in the media. Beyond this core question, there is variation across administrations and opposition party elites in degree of relative power and strategic skill, and in motivations. For the purposes here, this is enough background on the original cascade model.

Building on the preceding discussion, we can extend the model to mediated public diplomacy (cf. for other applications of the cascade model, Justus and Hess 2006; Le 2006). The cascade model suggests some requirements for spreading activation of pro–United States frames within foreign media. We can conceive the situation in terms indicated in figure 4. Activating and spreading pro–United States counterframes in foreign nations requires a degree of



Spreading activation of pro-U.S. counter-frames versus typically dominant anti-U.S. frames in foreign media as a function of cultural congruence with the U.S.



**Figure 4**  
Frame Contestation in Mediated Public Diplomacy

congruence between the target nation's dominant political culture and the facts of U.S. policy, or cultural overlap or ambiguity at minimum.

Consider as an example the contrast between European reactions to the American-led interventions in Iraq during 1990-91 and 2003-present in most European countries. The first *responded* to an apparently unprovoked invasion of a peaceful sovereign nation by a vicious dictator. Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait resonated deeply with European experiences of fascist aggression. Habitual and active though by no means consensual support of the Gulf War followed. It was relatively easy to gain elite, public, and media acceptance when the first President Bush framed the Kuwait invasion as a problem and Hussein as morally outrageous, with the remedy being United States and allied intervention. On the other hand, the *pre-emptive* war that the United States launched in 2003 without direct provocation clashed with Europeans' historical memories. It seemed to evoke habitual negative reactions and rejection of American policy through much of the continent (BBC World Service 2006).

This is not the venue for a comprehensive analysis of European media reactions or public opinion toward the U.S. policy in Iraq, of course, and the forces in play are complex and vary across the countries. The Iraq example merely illustrates the importance of cultural congruence in establishing more or less promising conditions for mediated public diplomacy.

As indicated by Iraq, and by the proposed extension of the cascade model, both developing a theory and successfully practicing mediated public diplomacy present great challenges. Figure 4 labels the goal of mediated U.S. public diplomacy a rarely attained ideal. It is difficult to conceive of parity in a foreign

country's media treatment where the framing favored by their own ruling elites clashes with the framing favored by the U.S. government. If the foreign elites favor a single framing that happens to coincide with the White House frame, of course, the United States is in luck.

Foreign elites and citizens often see the United States as a self-interested superpower, a perspective greatly at odds with Americans' self-images as altruistic supporters of universal human values such as democracy, freedom, and peace. In fact, because of the conflict between the U.S.'s self-image and its common images abroad, the very conditions amenable to favorable habitual framing in the American media may yield more *unfavorable* habitual framing in foreign countries. When the United States intervenes in foreign lands, most Americans tend to see the purpose as altruistic (Dallek 1982) and if convinced of the policy's prudence and success, will support it (Feaver and Gelpi 2004; Jentleson and Britton 1998). Foreign publics (and many foreign leaders) give the United States no such benefit of the doubt. To the extent that many other nations' political cultures are generally more congruent with oppositional framings of American policies, it complicates the task of foreign political elites who do support the United States. Facing little prospect of success, those leaders have weaker political motivations to actively promote America's views in their own countries. In these circumstances they also must possess more power and exercise skillful strategy to make themselves heard by their media. And those media themselves have little incentive to antagonize their audiences and elite sources by supporting the United States when America's words and actions conflict with the domestic political culture.

At the level of the mass public, these conditions reduce the likelihood of a self-reinforcing cascade of pro-American media coverage. Ideally, at least from the U.S. perspective, mediated public diplomacy stimulates favorable treatment of the United States in the foreign media, yielding more favorable mass opinion. This sentiment feeds back to foreign elites who then feel freer to support the United States when acting and when speaking to their press, which feeds further positive media coverage, and so forth. In practice, the opposite may be more common: foreign "allies" of the United States remaining silent (if not actively opposing) U.S. policy, rooted in a political culture of habitual skepticism toward U.S. activities and rhetoric among elites, journalists, and publics. This engenders less favorable media framing of the U.S. position, which feeds further opposition and negative coverage.

Figure 5 illustrates a very rough typology of conditions for media U.S. public diplomacy, organized around two axes. The four cells are not rigidly separate categories but, as indicated through the dotted lines, loose tendencies. The horizontal denotes a continuum between countries with open and pluralistic media systems on the one end and a tightly controlled press on the other. The vertical axes marks systems in which the dominant political culture

	Media system pluralistic and relatively free from central controls	Media system government or centrally controlled
Political culture generally favorable to neutral toward US and its foreign policy	II. Promising conditions	I. Most promising conditions
Political culture generally neutral to hostile toward US and its foreign policy	III. Less promising conditions	IV. Least promising conditions

**Figure 5**

Typology of Baseline Conditions for Mediated U.S. Public Diplomacy

runs from more congruent with and thus favorably inclined toward the United States, to less so.

Quadrant I is no mere hypothetical. Those countries where the mainstream political culture favors the United States and elites exert tight control over media provide the most hospitable environments for pro-American frames to penetrate. This does not render active mediated public diplomacy by Americans unnecessary, only more likely to succeed, at least with the leadership stratum. In many countries, we might predict, however, that the reigning political culture and governing elites oppose exertions of U.S. power as a default position, and in many of those states, the elite position will control the media's frames. Some of the Muslim countries of greatest interest to U.S. foreign policy in the twenty-first century arguably fall into quadrant IV. On the other hand, political cultures and media systems vary widely, and in those countries with more pluralistic and open media systems—those falling within quadrants II and III, which encompass a large proportion of the world's population—skillful mediated public diplomacy should have some potential for yielding greater representation to the U.S. government's frame.

At a given level of cultural congruence, the degree of success depends on such forces as the following:

The strength of foreign elites' motivations to promote positive framing of American policies, determined in major part by their party leaders' and informed publics' substantive positions on the specific U.S. policy in question.

Active support for U.S. policy among those foreign elites who wield effective power in their government. Which particular leaders openly voice support (or opposition) makes a difference, as those with the most power have the most

newsworthy opinions. Marginal parties' elites have correspondingly less influence on their country's media.

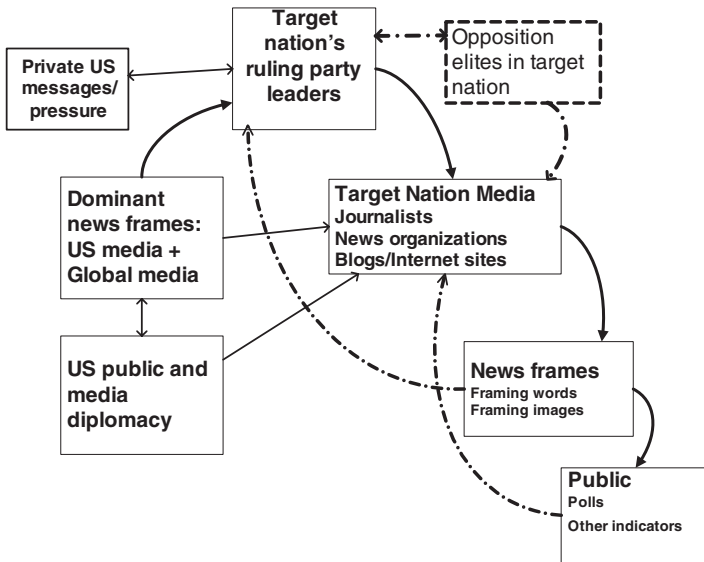
Supportive foreign elites exerting skillful strategy to advance positive framing of U.S. policy.

Foreign publics possessing the motivation and the capacity to seek out, attend to, and believe mass media and Internet sources of pro-United States framing.

As in the United States, there are hierarchical relationships among components in other nations' cascading systems of public discourse. Some media are more influential than others; some display positions (e.g., page one or evening national television newscasts) are more likely to receive notice and acceptance; some elites exercise more influence than others over media content; and some members of the public are more susceptible than others to favorable framing of American policy and more likely to exert opinion leadership. All these elements could become variables in empirical research seeking to predict or explain the success of mediated diplomacy initiatives.

Figure 6 displays in admittedly complicated graphic form what an extension of the cascade model to mediated public diplomacy might look like (cf. Justus and Hess 2006; Le 2006). Assuming again that the specific goal of mediated public diplomacy is to have favorable framings of U.S. policy penetrate the media of foreign countries, the figure duplicates the elite-media-public cascade system shown in figure 2, but with the addition of external forces that interact with the political communication system in the foreign nation. These external influences include those arising from private communications (diplomatic feelers, informal and formal negotiating stands, threats, and the like) between U.S. leaders and the foreign country's elites; coverage of the U.S. policy by the global media (including the U.S. media) which influences foreign elites and journalists (cf. Paterson 2000); and U.S. longer term public diplomacy as well as narrower mediated diplomatic efforts to shape the foreign political communication system's outputs.

As with the domestic cascade system considered in isolation from its international context, the process is full of feedback loops, and these pose continual threats and opportunities for mediated American diplomacy. To take the opportunity side of the ledger: If a particular framing theme beneficial to the United States seems to resonate with the journalists or the publics of a country, American officials and diplomats could conceivably help to heighten the presence of that specific theme in the country's media by emphasizing it when discussing the policy. A positive public reaction in the foreign country reinforces incentives for journalists and elites there to employ the same ideas and a virtuous circle (from the U.S. perspective) could ensue. However, depending on the variables discussed above, it is easy to imagine a vicious circle that helps to reduce or banish pro-American frames.



**Figure 6**  
Cascading Activation Applied to U.S. Mediated Public Diplomacy

## Conclusion

This attempt to conceptualize mediated public diplomacy more systematically suggests many empirical issues meriting research. The conclusion discusses a few of the more pressing. It also addresses normative concerns. First, some of the empirical issues.

What is the relative influence on foreign media of official U.S. government statements and frames (which might be influenced by conscious mediated public diplomacy analyses and strategies) versus the impact of the most globally influential U.S. media organizations themselves? If the president and administration exert only imperfect control over media framing of U.S. foreign policy even within the United States (as most democratic theorists would say is perfectly appropriate), how realistic is it to expect even a strategically informed, coordinated, and mediated public diplomacy program to succeed?

How frequently and consequentially do contradictions between domestic communication and mediated diplomacy arise? Often what is a useful framing device for domestic U.S. audiences may be counter-productive for mediated diplomacy efforts and vice-versa. George W. Bush's May 1, 2003, landing on an aircraft carrier might have boosted domestic support as it undermined

foreign. The machismo images of American power might have played in Peoria, comforting Americans in dire fear of terrorism (cf. Edelman 1988 on threat and reassurance), but many foreign publics could interpret the images as symbolic of unilateral American militarism. The same held for the U.S. government's active promotion of pictures of the disfigured, dead alleged leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al Zarqawi. Though perhaps a dose of positive news for American audiences, the disrespectful treatment of a deceased Muslim probably offended many whose hearts and minds U.S. leaders presumably wanted to win (Justus and Hess 2006).

How can mediated public diplomacy work in a world of instant global communication, a world that just happens to be as politically fragmented as ever? Political cultures, public opinion, and media systems differ significantly across different countries, even those Americans often lump together, such as "Muslim" or "Arab" or "Western European" countries (cf. Gentzkow and Shapiro 2003). This means messages that resonate with some target audiences might repel others. Just as presidential candidates often get into trouble for saying one thing to audiences in South Carolina and another to those in California, so practitioners of mediated diplomacy face the dilemma of crafting messages that work across vastly varying geographical and cultural boundaries.

Exactly what role is played in the responses of foreign elite and public opinion by the substance of U.S. policy and the readily verified facts on the ground? Considerable evidence suggests that similar sets of facts can be framed in very different ways; skilled domestic media management can yield positive domestic political benefits even when policies or events could readily be interpreted as failures (e.g., Entman 2004; Entman et al. forthcoming). Facts are likely less responsive to adroit presidential spin management when the targets are foreign media.

What is the role of the globalized entertainment media? Television entertainment programs and Hollywood films may contribute, however unintentionally, to the spread of pro- or anti-U.S. beliefs. The Internet offers a multitude of opportunities for individuals to interact with information and with each other across national boundaries, both through explicitly political Web sites and through online chat rooms and gaming communities that can encompass thousands of people in dozens of countries. The effects of such nontraditional or nonjournalistic media on the cascade of information and opinion merit more scholarly attention.

It is important to acknowledge the normative conundrum at the heart of mediated U.S. public diplomacy. If it is not desirable that the president exert total hegemony over America's media frames, why should scholars and policy-makers even implicitly call for U.S. presidential control over messages sent to

foreign countries? If the possibility of unwise presidential decisions helps to justify press freedom in American democracy, would we not desire vigorous foreign media critique of U.S. actions for the same reason? After all, within the United States there is a widespread (though certainly not universal) assumption that a degree of domestic democratic input into U.S. foreign policymaking—aided by independent media reporting and commentary—can help avoid or ameliorate presidential foreign policy mistakes (for instance, Vietnam, Beirut 1983, Somalia 1993, and perhaps Iraq 2003). Might it therefore not also be true, given the potential contribution of foreign elites in the domestic cascade system (figure 2), that Americans should welcome a degree of foreign criticism and opposition to U.S. policy—especially but not only from normally allied countries?

Moreover, according to modern public relations theory, organizational goals are best accomplished through symmetric rather than asymmetrical communication—active engagement and empathy with audiences, rather than simply making pronouncements to them. Analogously, the goals of mediated public diplomacy might better be conceived not as promoting unconditional support of the United States but rather *mutual* understanding. Such two-way communications do not inherently conflict with a realist approach to global power politics and American self-interest. As Nye (2002; cf. Hopf 1998) might suggest, *au contraire*. When for example a president makes decisions that arguably damage overall U.S. security, listening to rather than stifling foreign opposition might actually serve American national interests. On the other hand, American policy may simply threaten factions within a foreign country's ruling elite, which then portray the peril to their own parochial interests as undermining the entire nation's interest. In such instances, if U.S. views can penetrate foreign communication channels, mediated public diplomacy could contribute to U.S. and foreign interests simultaneously.

Addressing these matters further transcends the scope of this article, which is merely an initial foray into conceptual clarification. The article illustrates one approach to developing more conceptually refined, theory-driven empirical study of the media's role in public diplomacy. Drawing on interdisciplinary research into the relationships among U.S. media, foreign policymakers, and public opinion as well as on international relations and diplomatic theory (cf. Lord 2005, 2007) will help fulfill this objective.

## Notes

1. BBC poll ([http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home\\_related/168.php?nid=&id=&pnt=168&lb=hmpg#US](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home_related/168.php?nid=&id=&pnt=168&lb=hmpg#US)). See also Wike 2007.
2. One poll found 61 percent of Muslim respondents saying they do not believe Arabs were responsible for the terrorist attacks on 9/11 (Lord 2005, 10).

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