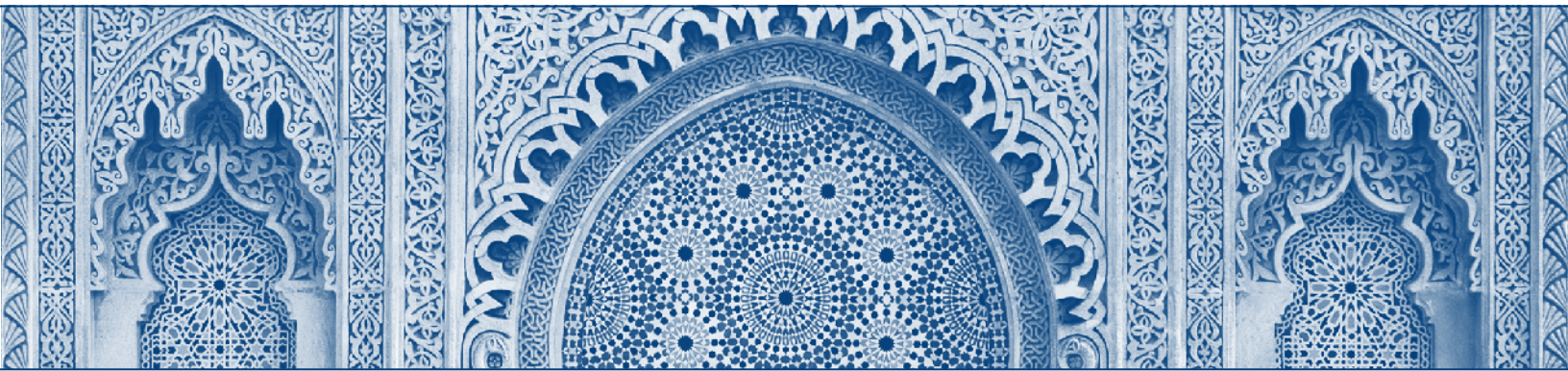


THE BROOKINGS PROJECT ON  
U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD



June 2008

# MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD:

Arts and Culture in the  
U.S.-Muslim World Relationship

Cynthia P. Schneider

Kristina Nelson



at BROOKINGS

With Research by Mohammed Yousri



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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

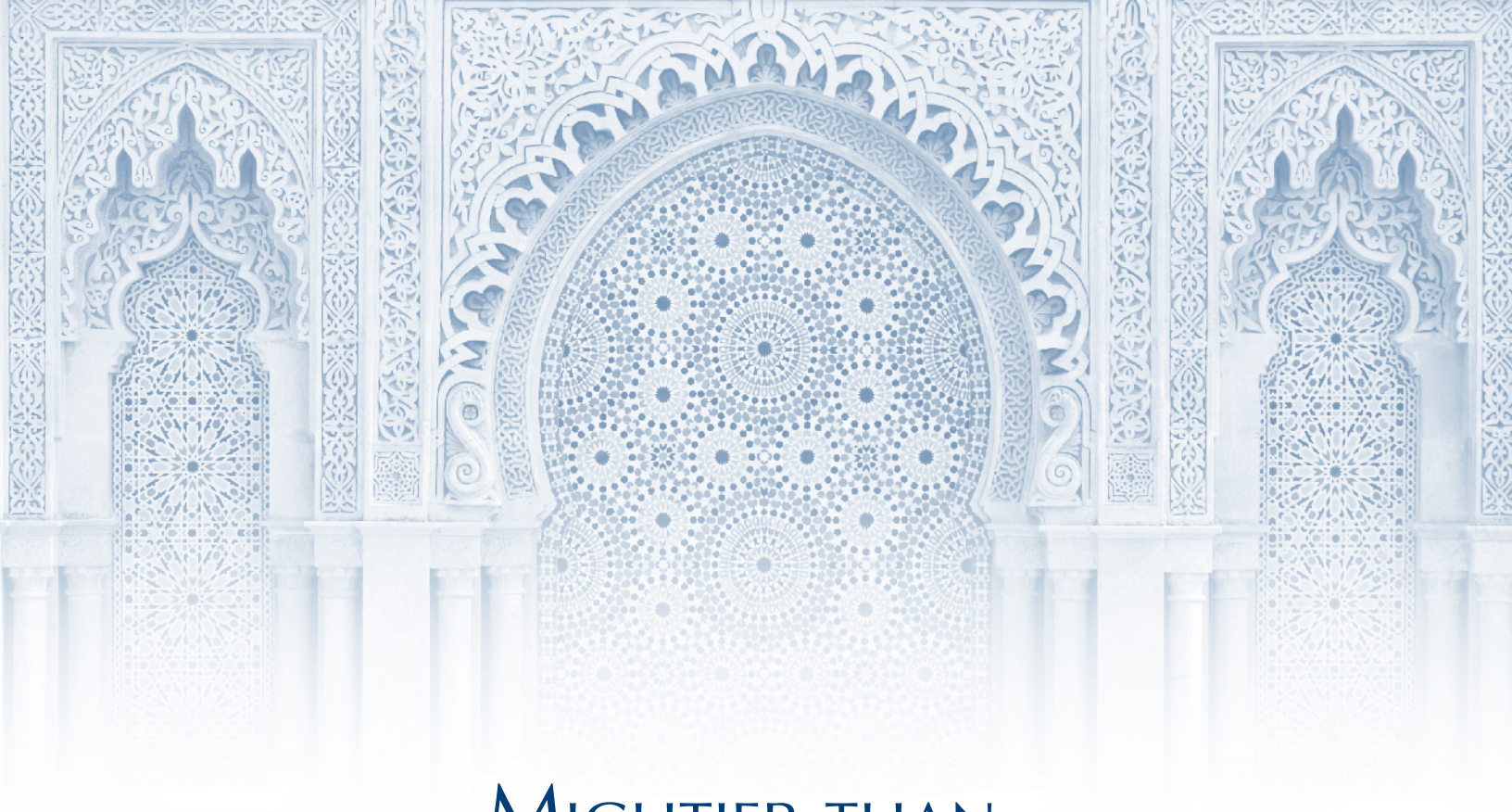
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# MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD:

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## METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

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The work towards this paper began with a bold experiment: the invitation of a group of arts and cultural leaders from the United States and the global Muslim community to the 2006 U.S.-Islamic World Forum.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Pakistani rock musician Salman Ahmad, Yemeni film director Bader Ben Hirsi, actress Jane Alexander, and novelist Amy Tan, among others, joined leaders such as Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia, and Egyptian scholar and dissident Saad Eddin Ibrahim in discussions of the relationship between the United States and the Muslim world. A special session devoted to examining how the power of arts and culture might be harnessed to increase understanding across cultures generated considerable interest and momentum. As a result, a project was developed, the Arts and Culture Initiative, to explore the topic through a series of meetings in the U.S. and the Muslim world and through a strategy paper. The Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art (an operating foundation of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation) has generously funded the writing of this paper and the convening of a portion of the meetings.

Research for this paper was conducted in the United States and in the Muslim world. It included over forty interviews with individual artists and employees of arts organizations, representing a dozen countries, including the United States. Eight fields to include literature—film, theater, music, dance, new media, visual arts, and cultural preservation—were covered in the interviews. Discussions in meetings

in the United States and the Muslim world organized under the auspices of the Brookings Institution contributed additional ideas and perspectives. The Arts and Cultural Leaders Seminar has met three times, with different participants, at the annual U.S.-Islamic World Forum in Doha in 2006, 2007, and 2008. Designed to bring together key leaders in the fields of politics, business, media, academia, civil society, science and technology, and the arts from across the Muslim world and the United States, the U.S.-Islamic World Forum seeks to address the critical issues in the relationship by providing a unique platform for frank dialogue, learning, and the development of positive partnerships between key leaders and opinion shapers from both sides. In addition, further discussions on the potential impact of arts and culture on the growing divide between the U.S. and the Muslim world were held at the regional meetings of arts and cultural leaders convened in New York and Los Angeles in 2006-2007.

In partnership with other organizations, the Arts and Culture Initiative convened three meetings in L.A. in 2007.<sup>2</sup> At a dinner hosted in June 2007 by Haim and Cheryl Saban for over 100 guests, a panel presented different perspectives on the state of U.S. relations with the Muslim world before opening the floor for discussions at each table of what role arts and entertainment have played in addressing other tough issues, and what role they might play in this context. The following day, a smaller group of about 50 people met to strategize about next steps

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<sup>1</sup> Now in its fifth year, the Forum is a global leaders conference co-organized by the Brookings Institution and the Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Doha Forum, <[www.thedohaforum.org](http://www.thedohaforum.org)> (accessed June 10, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Unity Productions Foundation has collaborated on all three meetings; the Center on Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California partnered for one meeting, and the Gallup organization partnered on another.

in several different working groups, each representing a target of opportunity—cross-cultural icons; technology/new media; music and literature. At a subsequent meeting in November, plans were developed for creating an online “resource center” to facilitate more frequent and more diverse portrayals of Muslims and Islam in popular culture. Another idea raised at the June meeting was to hold occasional meetings with the entertainment community to present speakers or to discuss a topic of interest related to the Muslim world. At the first of these such meetings, a luncheon co-sponsored by the Gallup organization, Egyptian televangelist Amr Khaled spoke to a group of guests from film, television, and the performing arts about his outreach to the youth population in the Muslim world.

Two meetings in Cairo also contributed significantly to ideas in this paper. At the first, held in April 2007, Kennedy Center President Michael Kaiser, in partnership with the League of Arab Nations, convened over 120 leaders from throughout the Arab world for an arts management seminar. The discussion illuminated many of the challenges facing arts organizations in the Arab world. In addition, in October 2007, the authors vetted ideas for this paper before six participants representing the for-profit and nonprofit sectors, and including the film, new media, theater, and music industries.

In sum, a combination of one-on-one interviews with arts and cultural figures from the Arab and Muslim worlds and the United States, plus discussions in groups of arts and cultural leaders in Los Angeles, New York, Doha, and Cairo, all have contributed to this paper.

## DEFINITIONS

Two terms, “public diplomacy” and “cultural diplomacy,” often used interchangeably, dominate

the literature on arts and culture in the context of international affairs. For the purposes of this paper, public diplomacy refers to all a nation does to explain itself to the world and involves explanation and contextualization of policies.<sup>3</sup> Cultural diplomacy, on the other hand, includes both public and private sectors and both states and individuals. Usually cultural diplomacy is considered to be a subset of public diplomacy, but here it stands as the term for all manner of outreach and engagement involving creative expression.<sup>4</sup> Cultural diplomacy has received relatively little attention since 9/11, although its activities sometimes are implicitly included in the much more numerous discussions of public diplomacy.

“Islamic world” is an admittedly imperfect label intended to denote the broad geography that encompasses Muslim populations. For lack of a better term, in this paper it is used interchangeably with “Muslim world,” as well as with more unwieldy terminology such as “countries or communities with majority Muslim populations” or “Muslim societies.” The terms Muslim or Islamic world have several connotations. Culturally, these names describe the worldwide community of Muslims, adherents of Islam. In a historical or geopolitical sense, the terms usually refer collectively to majority Muslim countries, or countries in which Islam dominates politically.

Numbering roughly one-fifth of the world population or 1.3 to 1.5 billion people, the Muslim community spans the globe with significant populations throughout the Middle East, in parts of Africa (especially in the north and west), in Asia (especially India, Pakistan, and Indonesia), as well as in Europe and the United States. The worldwide Muslim community is also known collectively as the *ummah*.

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<sup>3</sup> For a complete discussion of the various definitions of public diplomacy see <[http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/index.php/about/whatis\\_pd](http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/index.php/about/whatis_pd)>.

<sup>4</sup> “Cultural Diplomacy and the National Interest: in Search of a 21st Century Perspective,” The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy at Vanderbilt, 2004, <<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/curbcenter/culturaldiplomacy>> (accessed June 10, 2008).

The problem with all these labels is that they define people through faith, which might be appropriate for some, but not for others. Furthermore, these appellations imply a universality of faith that obscures the diversity in many majority Muslim countries. As Iranian filmmaker Bahman Farmanara commented during the 2007 U.S.-Islamic World Forum, “I am a Muslim and I am a filmmaker, but I am not a Muslim filmmaker.” The authors recognize the inevitable shortcomings of these labels, and, as such, have used them as judiciously as possible.

This paper focuses on the Middle East or the Arab World and also includes Pakistan and Iran. Travel to

Asia was not included in the scope of this project. For this reason, and because few artists from Asian Muslim populations attended the Doha Forum, the authors do not discuss in depth the potential role for arts and culture in the relationship between the U.S. and Muslims in Asia. Furthermore, the cultural “ecosystems” of the Asian countries with significant Muslim populations, most notably that of Bollywood in India, differ so dramatically from those of the Arab world that the subject merits another, separate study. Discussions are underway with the Asia Society, which has launched the “Creative Voices of Islam in Asia” project, about collaborating on such a study.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Arts and culture, with their capacity to move and persuade audiences and to shape and reveal identities, have untapped potential for increasing understanding, knowledge and respect between the United States and the global Muslim community. Artistic and cultural representations—whether they take the form of a play, a T.V. reality show, a novel, or hip-hop music—challenge traditional stereotypes associated with another culture and humanize “the other.” Thus, investing in arts and culture has the potential to ameliorate the disintegrating relations between the United States and the Muslim world.

The United States, with its unique expertise in creative commercial products, has much to offer the Muslim world, whose distinguished cultural history and production is little known in America. Yet, despite the U.S.’s global dominance in music, film, T.V., and new media, and the pervasive influence of American culture in the Middle East, neither the public nor the private sector in the U.S. has engaged with the Muslim world in any significant, coordinated way in the field of arts and culture. Although there exists a plethora of Bridging the Divide Initiatives and studies of public diplomacy, the United States lags behind European donors and governments in the quality (episodic) and the quantity (about \$11 million for global cultural programming from the State Department; less than 5% globally of private philanthropy for arts and culture in the entire Muslim world), of which less than one per cent targets arts in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>5</sup> Less than one tenth of one percent of total international philan-

thropic dollars is dedicated to arts and culture in the Middle East and North Africa. Equally important, only a tiny percentage of the creative production of the Muslim world reaches American audiences. This is especially regrettable since Islam’s rich traditions of music, dance, literature and poetry, and storytelling would help to present it as a civilization and not an ideology and thus broaden the perspective of the media coverage that focuses on the Iraq war and terrorism. Artistic expression reveals the inherent spirit of openness that is an important part of the Islamic civilization but unfortunately is rarely exposed or recognized in the West.<sup>6</sup>

The United States’ lack of support for arts and culture is surprising given the premium it places on fostering freedom of expression and other democratic principles. In the Muslim world, as elsewhere, artists characteristically challenge and criticize the status quo and promote alternatives to monolithic perceptions and concepts, generally attempting to cultivate a climate of tolerance and pluralism. By its very nature, creative expression encourages experimentation, initiative, and risk-taking. Artists habitually lead the way in critically examining the world around them; they are “the canaries in the coal mine” of free expression.

Our research and interviews indicate a hunger for cultural connections with American artists and cultural leaders among their counterparts in the Muslim world. In turn, meetings with the creative community in the United States have revealed a keen awareness

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<sup>5</sup> For the explanation of these figures, see the more complete discussion on p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> These observations reflect the discussion at the Arts and Culture Initiative Workshop at the 2008 U.S.-Islamic World Forum.

of the critical role arts and culture plays in perpetuating or reversing negative stereotypes (such as those associated with Arabs and Islam in American popular culture) and a desire to contribute positively to increasing understanding across cultures. Finally, the burgeoning cultural sector in the Muslim world—including ambitious initiatives in the Gulf and the growth of new networks and media throughout the Middle East—offers new possibilities for non-traditional, public-private, cross-cultural partnerships, as well as new models of sustainability for nonprofit arts and media organizations.

In order to take advantage of these opportunities, increase understanding, and build connections with the global Muslim community through arts and culture, our research suggests the following recommendations:

- Recognize that the lack of support for artistic and cultural interactions with the Muslim world and the lack of integration of arts and culture into policy and agendas represent lost opportunities. At the core of the U.S.-Muslim world divide is a lack of understanding and respect. The arts have the potential to persuade and alter stereotypes through their emotional impact. Both historically and today, arts and culture have played a critical role in shaping identity in the Muslim world and in providing an outlet for freedom of expression, especially dissent and criticism of authority.
- Use the arts as a component of diplomacy to better understand the historical perspectives and current attitudes of other cultures, and, equally importantly, use the arts where diplomacy fails. Artistic expression opens windows onto societies and cultures and can facilitate discussion of difficult issues where policy makers cannot or dare not tread.
- Value art for art's sake and also as a "post-9/11" bridge builder. Activities that build

partnerships and strengthen arts and cultural institutions within civil society will ultimately take us further than words or "dialogue."

- Support artists and cultural figures in the Muslim world. U.S. public and private institutions can assist by translating, exhibiting, and distributing these artists' work, as well as by inviting them to speak and work in the United States.
- Focus on long-term partnerships. Top-down approaches, where U.S. artists or experts "parachute" in for a performance or a training workshop, tend to have limited effect in terms of building capacity, although they can ignite creative sparks for individual artists. Partnerships and exchanges that are implemented collaboratively and adapted to the local context tend to leave a more lasting, sustainable footprint.
- Combine cultural outreach with capacity building. Successful models of partnerships that combine training in various aspects of media with cross-cultural productions, such as the collaboration behind the animated series *Ben and Izzy* (Layalina Productions, a U.S. nonprofit media company; Fat Rock Entertainment, a U.S. distribution company; Rubicon, a Jordanian animation company), should be leveraged and replicated. Engage the private sector; one of America's strengths is its expertise in commercial artistic and cultural production. Through mentoring and exchanges of knowledge and personnel, the U.S. private sector can help build the capacity within the Muslim world to produce commercially viable music, literature, theater and film. Equally important, the U.S. private sector can support the development of creative talent, in the broadest sense, within the Muslim world. International filmmakers seek not only new voices and stories but also new

sources of less expensive digital production. New technologies are unhampered by geography and can “work” anywhere.

- Support artistic production in the Muslim world online. New media technologies hold tremendous potential for artists in the Muslim world to be able to share their work with the rest of the world and generate revenue. The development and strengthening of the music and film industries in the Muslim world through online production and distribution not only holds the potential to generate much needed jobs and income among youth in the region but also creates possibilities for co-productions and collaborations with young artists in the United States in areas of common interest, such as hip-hop and poetry. Islamic artists and entrepreneurs face the same challenges as their American counterparts do: how to harness and monetize the internet, cell-phone based entertainment, and other alternative formats. The huge hurdles (monetary and political) hampering production of conventional media, such as films and T.V. programs, have led to extraordinary creativity in the Muslim world in exploiting the potential of new media.
- Support local filmmakers. As Palestinian filmmaker Hany Abu Assad has demonstrated with his award-winning *Paradise Now*, there are many talented young filmmakers in the region with good stories to tell—the American film industry should help these filmmakers bring their stories to the world.

As a first step, successful mentoring models, such as the Sundance Middle East Screenwriters Lab (of which Assad is a graduate), should be replicated and expanded to include more participants and to cover the full range of film production. In addition, local film communities who could work on foreign films in production in the Muslim world should be encouraged and nurtured. The first film school in the region, the Red Sea Institute for Cinematic Arts, will begin to supply a talent pool for this purpose.

- Leverage the potential of cross-cultural icons. Celebrities, such as Pakistani rock star Salman Ahmed and Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid, have the ability to work across cultures, thereby challenging negative stereotypes and broadening knowledge of “the other.”

Implementing even a fraction of these recommendations will require, at the least, a significant infusion of funds from both the public and private sectors. It will also require a restructuring of support for arts and culture in diplomacy efforts within the U.S. government, and greater coordination between the government and the private arts and culture sector. This process needs to begin with a recognition of the importance of arts and culture in shaping the perceptions the United States and the global Muslim community have of each other. The deepening divide between the United States and the global Muslim community is a cultural problem that could be responsive to cultural solutions.



# INTRODUCTION

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“I look at a situation which I’m sure is on the mind of everybody here, the Middle East, where the issue really is one of a very profound demonization of conflicting parties. And I wonder what kind of a role culture, the presentation of the ‘other’ in humanized terms, can play in a situation where politics, diplomacy, appears to fail; where it is the peoples who need to talk to one another, who need to be assisted to talk to one another, rather than the leadership talking between themselves.”<sup>7</sup>

During the Revolutionary War, American founding father Thomas Jefferson exhorted the prominent essayist Thomas Paine to, “Go on then in doing with your pen what in other times was done with the sword.”<sup>8</sup> In Islam, the phrase evokes the *hadith*, or saying of the Prophet Mohammed, “The ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr,” often paraphrased as “the pen is mightier than the sword.”<sup>9</sup> Although Jefferson focused on the persuasive power of the pen, and the Prophet emphasized scholarship and learning, both point to the power of creative expression to move and persuade an audience. Artistic and cultural productions, whether they take the form of film, television, music, theater, or literature, break down stereotypes and reveal the humanity behind the faces of an unfamiliar culture.

Although Americans and Muslims historically have valued the power of the pen, neither side has harnessed

the potential of arts and culture to affect positively their critically important relationship. Given the significant role perception, as well as policy, plays in that relationship, neglecting the component of arts and culture has serious consequences. This paper will examine those consequences and will explore how, through strategic approaches, creative expression could help people from the United States and the global Muslim community better understand each other’s similarities and differences, and ultimately, their common humanity.

Today, opinion of the United States—its people and its policies—has sunk to an all-time low among Muslims worldwide.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, in the United States, the percentages of people who view Islam and Muslim populations unfavorably, or who say they know nothing about the religion or the people, have increased since 9/11, despite numerous initiatives and efforts to increase understanding.<sup>11</sup> Data from

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<sup>7</sup> Wole Soyinka, White House Conference on Cultural Diplomacy, November 2000.

<sup>8</sup> John P. Kaminski, ed., *The Quotable Jefferson*, (Princeton, New Jersey and Oxford, England: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 158, quoting from a letter dated June 19, 1792 to Thomas Paine.

<sup>9</sup> This translation kindly conveyed to me by Prof. Akbar Ahmed, American University (correspondence, Jan. 2, 2008). On *hadith*, see John L. Esposito, *Islam: the Straight Path*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 81-82, 253, where they are defined as “narrative report(s) of the Prophet Muhammad’s sayings and actions.”

<sup>10</sup> Richard Wike, “Widespread Negativity: Muslims Distrust Westerners More Than Vice Versa,” Pew Research Center, <<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/625/widespread-negativity>> (accessed June 10, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Peter W. Singer, “The 9/11 War Plus 5: Looking Back and Looking Forward at U.S.-Islamic World Relations,” The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper, Number 10, September 2006, p. 2, <<http://www.brookings.edu/fp/saban/analysis/singer20060901.pdf>> (accessed February 8, 2007); Pew Research Center of People and the Press, “Changing Perceptions of Islam,” <<http://peoplepress.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=726>> (accessed February 8, 2007); Dalia Mogahed in speeches in Doha (U.S.-Islamic World Forum, Feb. 17, 2007) and Los Angeles (Brookings Institution event, June 19, 2007) analyzing Gallup poll data on American attitudes toward the Islamic world. See Dalia Mogahed, “Americans’ View of the Islamic World,” February 8, 2006, <<http://www.galluppoll.com/contents/Default.aspx?ci=21349&version=p>> (accessed June 10, 2008); Frank Newport, “Complex but Hopeful Pattern of American Attitudes Toward Muslims: Little Change in Opinions Since 2002 Survey,” March 22, 2006, <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/22021/Complex-Hopeful-Pattern-American-Attitudes-Toward-Muslims.aspx>> (accessed June 10, 2008); Lydia Saad, “Anti-Muslim Sentiments Fairly Commonplace,” *Gallup News Service*, August 10, 2006, <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/24073/Anti-Muslim-Sentiments-Fairly-Commonplace.aspx>> (accessed June 12, 2008). For more information on American attitudes toward Muslims, see the Muslim –West Facts Initiative website, <<http://www.muslimwestfact.com/>> (accessed June 12, 2008). On attitudes of the Muslim world, see John L. Esposito & Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam?* (Gallup Press, 2008).

the 2006 Gallup poll, one of the most extensive polls of Muslims worldwide, found that cultural factors—a sense of humiliation and a perceived lack of understanding from the West—underlie the schism between the West and the global Muslim community.<sup>12</sup> Among Americans, when asked what they admire most about the Muslim world, the two most frequent responses were, “Nothing,” followed by “I don’t know.”<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, the assets for sustaining a dialogue outside government circles, such as cultural and educational exchanges and programs, have dried up, and the private sector has not stepped forward to fill the gap. At present, only a small fraction of post-9/11 foundation funding goes toward international art and cultural exchanges and projects.<sup>14</sup> If, as the 9/11 Commission found, a “failure of imagination” prevented elements of the U.S. government from “imagining the worst,” a similar failure is preventing others in the public and private sectors from imagining constructive solutions, whereby the United States and the Muslim world seek to understand each other better by listening to the “humanizing voices of culture.”<sup>15</sup>

As the gap between the West and the global Muslim community widens, the arts offer a way to bridge the divide by presenting a window into different societies and belief systems. Films, music, theater and books shape conceptions and influence the way we view ourselves and others. Take, for example, *The*

*Kite Runner*. This narrative brings to life the sights, the smells, the family, the society, and the politics in Afghanistan for millions of people. If it were not for Khaled Hosseini’s novel, many people would know Afghanistan only as a T.V. news byte, a war zone populated by oppressed citizens and extremists. Art can transcend borders and boundaries to change personal realities where other media cannot.

The Gallup findings also demonstrate the fallacy of the question posed so frequently in the last seven years, “Why do they hate us?” In fact, Muslim views toward America were shaped not by what they think of Americans but rather by “what they think Americans think of them.”<sup>16</sup> This new framing of the issue puts the onus on how attitudes toward other cultures, particularly those in the Muslim and Arab worlds, are projected from the United States. Viewing America through that prism poses a challenge that cannot be solved through political and security channels alone. Rather, the perception that Americans neither understand nor respect Muslims or their religion stems from multiple factors, which run the gamut from the Bush administration’s foreign policy to attitudes detected in media and popular entertainment. Similarly, given the negative stereotypes of Muslims and Islam that can be found at all levels of American culture, and the dearth of countervailing information available to the general public, the ignorance of, or antipathy toward, the Muslim world is hardly surprising.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Esposito and Mogahed, 2008, pp. 91, 159-160. John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, “Battle for Muslims’ Hearts and Minds: The Road Not (Yet) Taken,” <<http://www.muslimwestfacts.com/content/26866/Battle-Muslims-Hearts-Minds-Roads>>, <<http://www.muslimwestfacts.com/MWF/26650/default.aspx>> (Accessed June 19, 2008). From her study of terrorists, Jessica Stern (*Terror in the Name of God*, Harper Collins, 2003) had earlier posited that they were motivated by a sense of humiliation.

<sup>13</sup> Dalia Mogahed, “Americans’ View of the Islamic World,” Feb. 8, 2006, <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/21349/Americans-Views-Islamic-World.aspx>>.

<sup>14</sup> Frank Hodsoll, “Towards a More Consequential Cultural Diplomacy,” unpublished, p. 10, drawing upon Andras Szantos, *A New Mandate for Philanthropy? U.S. Foundation Support for International Arts Exchanges*, Center for Arts and Culture, Cultural Diplomacy Research Series, 2003 (6.5% of foundation international funding goes towards arts and culture, of which 6% is targeted to the Middle East). The Robert Sterling Clark Foundation is addressing the need for more current data on funding for international cultural activities.

<sup>15</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, “Executive Summary,” *The 9/11 Commission Report*, July 2004, p. 9., <[http://www.9/11commission.gov/report/9/11Report\\_Exec.htm](http://www.9/11commission.gov/report/9/11Report_Exec.htm)>. (Accessed on June 10, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Dalia Mogahed, remarks, February 17, 2007, Doha, Qatar.

<sup>17</sup> Lydia Saad, “Anti-Muslim Sentiments Fairly Commonplace,” Gallup Poll, August 10, 2006, <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/24073/Anti-Muslim-Sentiments-Fairly-Commonplace.aspx>> (accessed June 12, 2008); Singer 2007, pp. 2-3.

## OUTLINE OF PAPER

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Despite the ubiquitous presence of American popular culture in the Middle East and the important role of culture and media in shaping and expressing identity in the Arab and Muslim world, the use of arts and culture as a means to bridge the gap between the United States and the global Muslim community has been neither studied nor actively engaged. This analysis paper will critically examine the nature and scope of arts and cultural interactions—both positive and negative—between the United States and the Muslim world today and will suggest directions for future support and initiatives. The paper will

begin with a review of the nature and root causes of the deteriorating relationship between the United States and the Muslim world and of the potential of arts and culture to affect it. The aim is not to be encyclopedic but rather to elucidate trends, best practices, and roadblocks that need to be overcome in order to improve relations between the United States and the Muslim world. Two final sections, a summary of “Lessons Learned” from the research, interviews, and meetings during the course of this project and a list of “Recommendations” will conclude the paper.

## DEFINING THE PROBLEM(S)

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Since 9/11, the United States' relationship with the Muslim world has rapidly deteriorated. Surveys by Gallup, the Pew Research Center on People and the Press, and the BBC all report that the image of the United States has declined steadily over the last six years and that U.S. citizens are increasingly viewed in the same negative light as U.S. policies.<sup>18</sup> As the United States has pursued policies that contradict the values it attempts to spread through public diplomacy, respect for the U.S. has been replaced by cynicism and anger.<sup>19</sup> In equal measure, the attitudes of Americans toward Muslims have worsened. Despite the various post-9/11 efforts by NGOs and, particularly, by Muslim American groups to foster dialogue and understanding, the percentage of Americans polled who claim to know nothing about Islam has not changed since 2001.<sup>20</sup> What is more, the number of people in the United States who view Muslims favorably has declined since September 2001. An increasing number of Americans believe that Islam is more likely to encourage violence among its followers than are other religions.<sup>21</sup>

American misunderstanding of Islam is hardly surprising in light of data that show that media

content covering Muslims is more than forty times more likely to be negative than positive.<sup>22</sup> Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Muslims—both foreign and American—have replaced Russians as the “bad guy *du jour*,” resulting in overwhelmingly negative portrayals of Islam and Muslims in American popular culture.<sup>23</sup> In addition, because so few cultural products from, or even about, the Muslim world achieve distribution in the United States, there is little to counter these predominantly negative stereotypes or to inform American audiences about positive aspects of Islam and the Muslim world.

However tarnished the United States' image may be among Muslims, there are aspects of American society and life that Muslim populations have admired consistently over the last eight years. Although many Muslims resent American popular culture for its “sexual and cultural promiscuity” and “ethical and moral corruption,” one Pew survey revealed that sizeable numbers in Muslim countries, including majorities in Indonesia, Malaysia, Kuwait and Lebanon, hold positive views of U.S. movies, television, and music.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Esposito and Mogahed 2007; Pew 2007; BBC World Service Poll, Jan. 23, 2007, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/23\\_01\\_07\\_us\\_poll.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/23_01_07_us_poll.pdf)> (Accessed June 19, 2008); Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes. *America against the World* (New York, NY: Owl Books, 2006): 27-29.

<sup>19</sup> Kevin Sullivan, “Views on U.S. Drop Sharply in Worldwide Opinion Poll,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 23, 2007: A14. “The thing that does come up repeatedly is not just anger about Iraq, Kull [Steven Kull, Director of the Program on International Policy, which did the poll] said, adding that the BBC poll is consistent with numerous other surveys around the world that have measured attitudes toward the United States. The common theme is hypocrisy. The reaction tends to be: ‘You were a champion of a certain set of rules. Now you are breaking your own rules, so you are being hypocritical.’”

<sup>20</sup> Frank Newport, “Complex but Hopeful Patterns of American Attitudes Toward Muslims: Little Change in Opinion since 2002,” March 22, 2006 <<http://www.galluppoll.com/content/default.asp?ci=220-21&pg=1&version=p>> (Accessed June 19, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Peter Singer, “9/11 Plus 5: Hope not Hate?” Brookings Institution website, posted Sept. 7, 2006, <<http://www.brook.edu/views/op-ed/fellows/singer20060907.htm>> (accessed Feb. 8, 2007); Pew Research Center of People and the Press, “Changing Perceptions of Islam.” <<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=726>> (accessed Feb. 8, 2007); Peter Singer, “America, Islam, and the 9/11 War,” *Current History*, December 2006: 416.

<sup>22</sup> Speech by Dalia Mogahed, Los Angeles, California, June 19, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, New York, 2001, and the documentary based on the film released in 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Dinesh D’Souza, “War on Terror’s Other Front: Cleaning Up U.S. Pop Culture,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Feb. 2, 2007; Pew Research Center’s of the People and the Press, “Global Unease with World Powers and Leaders,” <<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/524/global-unease-with-major-world-powers-and-leaders>>, p. 6 (accessed Nov. 12, 2007).

## VIEWS OF AMERICAN EXPORTS

	<i>Positive views of...</i>			<i>Positive views of...</i>			
	U.S. movies music & TV %	U.S. science & tech %	Spread of U.S. ideas* %	U.S. movies music & TV %	U.S. science & tech %	Spread of U.S. ideas* %	
Canada	73	74	22	Kuwait	53	88	10
Argentina	50	51	10	Lebanon	71	74	38
Bolivia	49	71	19	Morocco	42	55	12
Brazil	69	74	23	Palestinian ter.	23	67	3
Chile	58	67	24	Israel	72	73	56
Mexico	53	62	23	Pakistan	4	36	4
Peru	50	78	29	Bangladesh	14	81	25
Venezuela	71	76	37	Indonesia	50	84	11
Britain	63	74	21	Malaysia	54	83	16
France	65	71	18	China	42	80	38
Germany	62	65	17	India	23	64	29
Italy	66	74	25	Japan	70	81	42
Spain	72	61	16	South Korea	49	85	38
Sweden	77	73	28	Ethiopia	58	92	54
Bulgaria	51	67	25	Ghana	54	88	43
Czech Republic	58	56	20	Ivory Coast	86	97	79
Poland	65	71	23	Kenya	51	87	45
Russia	38	32	14	Mali	68	88	45
Slovakia	61	58	23	Nigeria	59	86	51
Ukraine	47	46	20	Senegal	62	88	32
Turkey	22	37	4	South Africa	70	80	41
Egypt	39	69	13	Tanzania	29	63	12
Jordan	50	68	12	Uganda	54	75	45

\*\*"Good that American ideas and customs are spreading here."

Gallup polls indicate that at least half of moderates and politically radicalized publics alike in the Muslim world associate the West with “producing enjoyable films and music.”<sup>25</sup> The popularity of cable packages that include series such as *Friends* and *American Idol* provide anecdotal evidence to back up the survey findings.

More is known about general attitudes of Americans and Muslims toward one another than about the impact of arts and culture on those views. What is behind the stated resistance to the expansion of American ideas and customs? Alternatively, are Muslim audiences conscious of the messages about American ideals in films and music, but choose to

<sup>25</sup> Esposito and Mogahed 2008, p. 88.

watch and listen anyway for enjoyment? Does the appreciation of Western/American popular media, alongside the distaste for “promiscuity and moral corruption” simply reflect the diversity of opinion represented in the Muslim world, as in the United States? What is the nature of the impact of popular culture on how Muslim audiences understand America? The anecdotal evidence is contradictory.

A young Egyptian woman explained her positive feelings about the United States, despite her abhorrence of its policies, with one word: *Friends*. She explained that because of the TV show, she and others felt that they “knew Americans because they had lived with them.”<sup>26</sup> Does the positive response of this young Egyptian outweigh the negative reactions to the perceived degradation of women in music videos and other films? We know that the negative stereotypes associated with Muslims and Islam in Western popular culture also provoke resentment, but the potential impact of more positive, or at least, neutral images of Muslims in Western culture has not been studied. To date, there has

not been enough data available. More survey data is required on attitudes toward American popular culture in the Arab and Muslim worlds, as well as a better understanding of the basis on which local values are shared.

If, as the Gallup findings suggest, the West’s misunderstanding of Islam is at the heart of Muslim antagonism, then framing the U.S. response as a “war to win the hearts and minds” of those in the Muslim world is not likely to produce successful results. Although the relationship with the global Muslim community is often framed as a “war of ideas,” we need a new approach that moves beyond the old Cold War paradigm.<sup>27</sup> Addressing the twin problems of the real lack of knowledge about Islam and Muslims in the United States and the perception in the Muslim world that the United States does not respect Islam or Muslims requires a more subtle and more complex strategy. Arts and culture, with their emotional appeal that is not constrained by political categories, have the potential to engage positively in such a strategy.

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Dalia Mogahed, Senior Analyst and Executive Director, Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, May 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Satloff, “How to Win the War of Ideas,” *Washington Post*, 10 Nov. 2007: A17.

## WHY ARTS AND CULTURE?

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“Culture doesn’t stop at times of conflict. Culture pervades in ways that politics do not. Artists have continued to collaborate. People have continued to read American literature and see movies.”<sup>28</sup>

An opening exists for arts and culture as a means to foster understanding across cultures, build mutual respect and trust, find common ground and transcend political differences. For example, author Amy Tan learned on a trip to Georgetown University’s Doha campus that her novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, which describes the struggles of a young woman growing up between cultures as a Chinese-American, had helped young women from Qatar and Palestine understand and cope with difficult issues in their own identities.<sup>29</sup> It did not matter that the students had never visited China. The challenge of living between two different cultures resonated for the young Muslim women. The Qatari student had wrestled with adjusting to conservative traditions when she moved to Doha as a teenager from London, while the Palestinian student grappled with her affiliation to a homeland she had never visited. Tan’s experience demonstrates that if we can relate to each other on a cultural basis, there is hope of transcending political differences.<sup>30</sup>

During the Cold War, the United States adopted a strategy of cultural diplomacy that sent jazz musicians, abstract expressionist painters, writers and actors around the globe to promote the United States and freedom of expression. Although the paradigm of cultural diplomacy from that period differs from the challenges of today, when the en-

emy is an amorphous group of extremists scattered throughout the globe, the Cold War cultural initiatives nonetheless offer valuable lessons. Cultural diplomacy succeeded during the Cold War in part because it allowed, and even fostered, dissent. Secondly, arts and culture, then as now, offer a window into the United States, separate from politics, a reminder that the American people are not defined by their government. Just as during the Cold War, the jazz tours did not aim to convert the Politburo, so today’s cultural initiatives are not likely to dissuade extremists. However, they can affect the environment that may tolerate or support them, by promoting engagement, which has as its aim not a competition for influence but to build understanding across cultures.

In a relationship as fraught as the one between the United States and the Muslim world, arts and culture offer a way to discover people independent of their governments’ policies and to bring people together in neutral spaces. The creative experience, whether for audience or actor, will not, however, compensate for failed or unpopular policies on either side of the divide, but it can reveal other dimensions of a people or a region.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, a deeper understanding of the past and present of another region or country should inspire policies that are more enlightened.

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<sup>28</sup> Mohammed Yousri, Cairo meeting, Oct. 21, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Public Lecture by Amy Tan, sponsored by Georgetown University; Doha, Qatar; Feb. 16, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, “Cultural Diplomacy, Lynchpin of Public Diplomacy,” U.S. Department of State., <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/54374.pdf>>, p. 12 (accessed July 15, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Borzou Daraghi, “Ozomatli on State Department Tour,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 1, 2007.

# THE “CANARIES IN THE COAL MINE” OF FREE EXPRESSION

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Artists, actors, musicians and writers in any culture act as the national conscience, reflecting on society’s good and bad points and challenging the status quo. They are the “canaries in the coal mine” of free expression. Jazz’s power as a cultural ambassador stemmed from the inherent tension created by black musicians traveling the globe trumpeting American values during the era of segregation. The musicians themselves did not shy away from exposing this hypocrisy.<sup>32</sup> When summoned to the State Department for a pre-tour briefing, Dizzy Gillespie declined, noting, “I’ve got three hundred years of briefing. I know what they’ve done to us and I’m not going to make any excuses. I liked the idea of representing America, but I wasn’t going to apologize for the racist policies of America.”<sup>33</sup> Musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker brought abstract concepts of liberty to life by democratizing their concerts and insisting that ordinary people, not just elites, be allowed to listen.

Later, rock n’ roll became the musical symbol of freedom. Andras Simonyi, former Hungarian Ambassador to the United States and himself a rock musician, commented, “Rock and roll was the internet of the ‘60s and early ‘70s. It was the carrier of the message of freedom...Rock and roll, culturally

speaking, was a decisive element in loosening up communist societies and bringing them closer to a world of freedom.”<sup>34</sup>

That the United States permitted critical voices as part of government-sponsored performances and emissaries astonished audiences everywhere, particularly behind the Iron Curtain. When, during a visit to the Soviet Union, American author Norman Cousins was asked whether U.S. writers would not be punished for openly criticizing the government, he surprised his Soviet interlocutor by countering that any government official who complained about their criticism would be more likely to encounter difficulties.<sup>35</sup> Another American writer recalled the impact of the exchanges as follows:

“What I sensed they got out of visiting American writers was, to them, our spectacular freedom to speak our minds. I mean, there we were, official representatives of the U.S.—sort of the equivalent of their Writers Union apparatchiks—who had no party line at all...and who had the writers’ tendency to speak out on controversial issues... In other words, the exchanges enabled Soviet writers, intellectuals, students et al. to see that the ‘free world’ wasn’t just political cant.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> P.M. Von Eschen. “Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz, Race, and Empire in the Cold War.” *Here, There, and Everywhere: the Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture*. Ed. Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May. Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000: 168.

<sup>33</sup> Von Eschen 2000, p.170.

<sup>34</sup> Bill Nichols. “How Rock n’Roll Freed the World,” *USA Today*. Nov. 6, 2003.

<sup>35</sup> Schneider, Cynthia P. Schneider, “Culture Communicates: U.S. Diplomacy that Works,” *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, ed. Jan Melissen. Palgrave, 2005. 152. See also Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003) 158. On Soviet reactions to encounters with American freedoms, see Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: the Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).

<sup>36</sup> Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), p. 154, quoting Ted Solotaroff.



More recently, the contradictory messages emanating from the United States continue to demonstrate the subtleties of freedom of artistic expression and its practice. The Dixie Chicks made international news when their criticism of President Bush in 2003 earned them boycotts from radio stations and hate mail from former fans. Their later vindication, in the form of a Grammy award for their defiant hit song “Not Ready to Make Nice,” did not garner the same attention. In interviews, we often encountered ignorance of, if not disbelief in, the diversity of American opinion about administration policies (i.e., that sizeable numbers actually disagreed with the President). Lately, though, the State Department has begun to send to the Muslim world artists who disagree with Bush administration policy, such as the hip-hop group Ozomatli. Perhaps this shift will begin to communicate the diversity of opinion in America to those outside the elite circles of the highly educated and well traveled.

At the very least, the Ozomatli tour acknowledged the tremendous potential of hip-hop for building

connections between the United States and the Muslim world. Like jazz, hip-hop has resonated throughout the world, with singers and groups from Amsterdam to Almaty integrating the basic beat of American hip-hop with their own traditions and language. A genre conceived as outsiders’ protest against the system, hip-hop resonates with those marginalized from the mainstream. From the suburbs of Paris to Palestine and to Kyrgyzstan in central Asia, hip-hop music reflects the struggle against authority.<sup>37</sup> Hip-hop originated in African American communities in the inner city; some of its early pioneers were American Muslims. They carry on an African American Muslim tradition of protest against authority, most powerfully represented by Malcolm X. The role of Islam within the African American community, best known through hip-hop artists such as Mos Def, represents a dimension of American cultural life that is little known in either the United States or the Muslim world.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> David Brooks, “Gangsta, in French,” *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 2005, op-ed.

<sup>38</sup> Jennifer Mayortena Taylor (Specific Pictures) is producing a film *New Muslim Cool* (2008 release) that explores this subject through the life of an African American Muslim hip-hop artist in Pittsburgh.

## ART DISTURBS AUTHORITY

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“Staying silent is no longer an option. Art disturbs and artists have no choice but to listen to their conscience.”<sup>39</sup>

Dissent and criticism of authority in the global Muslim community also frequently take the form of creative expression. In the Muslim world, as in the United States, artists, writers, filmmakers and actors exert influence as public figures. But in the words of Joe Goode, a theater and dance company director who worked with an Egyptian company in the United States and Egypt over a three year period, “They have an inherently different approach than in the West, where art is seen as a diversion and artists see themselves as renegades.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, the Egyptian artists take themselves seriously as political beings; they know that their art could have a significant impact and that it involves some level of personal risk.

Creative expression offers an escape valve for dissent and criticism of authoritative regimes intolerant of direct opposition. Bahman Farmanara, legendary Iranian filmmaker, and Alaa al Aswany, author of the acclaimed novel *The Yacoubian Building*, both believe that analogy and metaphor elude government censors. After having had ten scripts refused by the censors, Farmanara succeeded with *Smell of Camphor, Scent of Jasmine*, a script about a man planning his funeral because he does not want to live in a society which forbids the making of films.<sup>41</sup> In chronicling the lives of the residents of the Yacoubian apartment building in Cairo, Alaa al Aswany inserted biting criticisms of the government, the fundamentalists, and the pervasive system of corruption in Egypt. Not only has the book been published in multiple

languages but it was also the basis for the most popular original Arabic film of 2006 (and the most expensive ever). In a paradox in which pride in the film must have overcome unease about the subject matter, Egypt submitted the film *The Yacoubian Building* as its official entry in the 2006 Academy Awards.

Authoritarian regimes, such as those in Egypt, regularly allow the odd performance, film or book to make it into the public domain. The critical tone of the *Al-Ahram Weekly*, the English-language version of the Egyptian state-owned newspaper, is rarely censored, allowing the State to point to such examples of “freedom of the press” and “freedom of speech”—what one artist calls “the tree that hides the forest.”<sup>42</sup>

The very nature of the creative process, perhaps even more than in the audience’s experience of the creative product, involves critical thinking and questioning. The processes of experimentation, exploring alternatives, taking risks and critiquing and challenging the status quo—all of which are inherent to creative artistic expression—are the attitudes and approaches to life that foster pluralism and tolerance. As such, the creative process can be considered a model for promoting democratic practices and attitudes. Where promotions of democracy fail is in focusing on structures and procedures and neglecting the underlying attitudes necessary for these structures to work. Creative expression inherently promotes the independence of thought essential for democratic systems to function.

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<sup>39</sup> Salman Ahmad, Open Letter to Bilal Musharraf (son of President Musharraf), November 30, 2007: <<http://www.teeth.com.pk/blog/2007/12/01/open-letter-from-salman-ahmed-to-bilal-musharraf>> (accessed June 12, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Joe Goode, November 1, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> “Smell of Camphor, Fragrance of Jasmine,” New Yorker Films, 2000, New Yorker Films, June 12, 2008, <[http://www.newyorkerfilms.com/nyff/t\\_elements/smell/smell\\_pk.pdf](http://www.newyorkerfilms.com/nyff/t_elements/smell/smell_pk.pdf)>.

<sup>42</sup> Kristina Nelson, from conversations with artists in Cairo, September 2007.

# BREAKING DOWN STEREOTYPES, HUMANIZING THE OTHER

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“Nothing is more effective than media in bringing people together because you have a multiplier effect. Not only are the people involved affected, but the impact spreads to millions of viewers.”<sup>43</sup>

In addition to their capacity to reflect critically on aspects of politics and society, arts and culture are also valuable for their ability to reveal differences in ways that humanize, rather than threaten. Recently, television programs in the United States and the Middle East have taken on issues of cultural and ethnic diversity. Programs such as *Aliens in America* in the United States and *Arab Work* in Israel break new ground by presenting characters and situations that have not previously been seen on TV or film—an ordinary Muslim teenager trying to adapt to life as an exchange student in the United States or Arabs living and working in Israel.<sup>44</sup> An American NGO, Search for Common Ground, has partnered with the largest satellite network in Egypt, Cairo Video SAT, to jointly create the reality series *The Bridge* in which two Egyptians—a camel driver and a radio talk show host—host two Americans (an African American businesswoman from Atlanta and a farmer from Alabama) in Egypt and then visit them in America. It aired on the Hallmark Channel in the United States reaching a “middle America” audience not usually targeted by cross-cultural

initiatives. Creative expression and its products, including these TV programs, have the potential to shape and validate a sense of nationality, of religion, of ethnicity, and of history, with both positive and negative results.

Further, new technologies now make it possible to leverage these and other programs so that millions experience them or get to know someone who lives on the other side of the globe. This capacity is changing the media landscape as public opinion, comprised of millions of individuals having their say, blurs traditional distinctions between reporters and their audiences and impacts the ideas and opinions of individuals as never before. *Hometown Baghdad*, a web-based series produced by Chat the Planet, brought post-war Baghdad home to millions of viewers who followed the lives of three Iraqis and their families through the daily episodes and through email correspondence. The program also fostered two-way communication; the three Iraqi subjects were available online to answer questions about the films and their lives.

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<sup>43</sup> John Marks, President, *Search for Common Ground*, at a screening of *The Bridge*, Aspen Institute, Washington D.C., Dec. 17, 2007.

<sup>44</sup> “Aliens in America,” *The CW Television Network*, 2008, CWTV, <<http://www.cwtv.com/shows/aliens-in-america>> (Accessed June 10, 2008); “Airtime for Israel’s Arab,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 23, 2007, LA Times, <<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-arabtv23nov23,1,6068697.story?coll=la-headlinesworld&ctrack=1&cset=true>> (Accessed June 10, 2008).

# RESPECT THE PAST, EARN RESPECT IN THE PRESENT: CULTURAL HISTORY AND IDENTITY

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History, including its cultural components, has been interpreted selectively and sometimes exploited by political leaders. For a variety of reasons, traditional arts in some communities have been passed over in favor of Western media. Some contemporary artists, however, such as Reza Abedini in Iran, are reviving and transforming earlier traditions—in his case, incorporating Persian calligraphy into contemporary graphic designs.<sup>45</sup> In his workshop in Tehran, students learn cutting edge techniques alongside the history of Persian art, something they do not learn elsewhere. “Iranian students know everything about photorealism in the West and nothing about Persian calligraphy,” commented Abedini at the Arts and Cultural Leaders Workshop of the 2007 U.S.-Islamic World Forum.

Artists and NGOs engaged in reviving texts, songs and cultural artifacts from the ancient to the early modern period have the potential to disrupt the monolithic or self-interested conceptions of history often promoted by authoritarian regimes. For example, in the first part of the twentieth century, Egypt experienced a period of cultural flowering, when Copts, Muslims and Jews collaborated in music and in writing. Mohammed Hassan has established a new website, *Ana l Masry* (“I am the Egyptian”), that collects and makes available the

cultural products of this period in an effort not only to preserve and disseminate this cultural heritage but also to demonstrate that the values of pluralism and social equality have indigenous roots and are not only a Western import.<sup>46</sup>

Demonstrating esteem for the history of a country or a people powerfully communicates respect for the present, but the reverse is also true. In the wake of the U.S. invasion, the images of the Baghdad Museum being looted, juxtaposed against those of the tank standing guard outside the Oil Ministry, conveyed a total disregard for Iraq and its extraordinary civilization. Secretary Rumsfeld’s quip, in response to the repeated images of “some person walking out of some building with a vase”—“My goodness, were there that many vases?”—only added fuel to the fire.<sup>47</sup>

There is evidence that the United States has learned a lesson about the importance of Iraq’s historical sites and artifacts. Decks of cards with images of sites and antiquities on one side and instructions on how to treat them on the other have been distributed to soldiers in the field.<sup>48</sup> More seriously, becoming a signatory to the Hague Convention would indicate a real commitment by the United States to protect and preserve cultural heritage. On a smaller scale, the Ambassador’s Fund, a program begun in

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<sup>45</sup> Reza Abedini, June 10, 2008. <<http://www.rezaabedini.com/>>.

<sup>46</sup> June 18, 2008. <<http://www.analmastry.com>>.

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, News Transcript, DoD News Briefing, April 11, 2003, 2:00 PM, <<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2367>>.

<sup>48</sup> Tom Leonard, “U.S. issues deck of cards on Iraq’s archeology,” *Telegraph.co.uk*, June 21, 2007, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/06/20/wirq120.xml>> (accessed June 12, 2008).

2000 and expanded since then, enables American Ambassadors to express their respect for the history and culture of their host countries by distributing grants for local restoration projects. Among the scores of activities in the Muslim world are preservation of mosques in West Africa and Bosnia and Herzegovina, preservation of Islamic architecture in southern Thailand and in Cairo, preservation of traditional music in Egypt and digitizing projects involving manuscripts and music from Africa and the Middle East.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, "Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation," 2008. U.S. Department of State. June 10, 2008, <[http://www.exchanges.state.gov/culprop/afcp/project\\_listings/index.cfm?PageNum\\_rs\\_cultureprev=26](http://www.exchanges.state.gov/culprop/afcp/project_listings/index.cfm?PageNum_rs_cultureprev=26)>.

# THE POWER OF FEELING AND SEEING: THE IMPACT OF THE ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE

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“Even if you know the facts, it takes you on an emotional and spiritual journey.”<sup>50</sup>

One of the strengths of arts and culture is their ability to tap into emotions, communicate on more than the rational level, and precipitate alternative ways of understanding the world.<sup>51</sup> This occurs, especially powerfully, through narratives that create an emotional response, such as Heather Raffo’s one woman show, *Nine Parts of Desire*, portraying various Iraqi women affected by war.

Recent neurological findings indicate that emotions drive our thought processes to a greater extent than has been previously recognized. Drawing on neuroscience, psychology, and behavioral science, Dr. Drew Westen has argued that associations driven by emotions play a far more significant role in decision-making, including political decision-making, than has previously been acknowledged.<sup>52</sup> He concludes that the dominant model of political decision-making—rationally weighing the evidence—bears no resemblance to how the mind and brain actually work. Westen’s clinical research provides the scientific proof for something we all know: the politician who appeals to the emotions trumps the politician who relies on reason and factual arguments.<sup>53</sup>

His findings have implications for this study. Arts and cultural experiences have the capacity to move audiences to see and understand “the other” in a more positive or empathetic way. Westen’s study showed that emotional arguments succeed where eloquent presentations of facts fail in changing even strongly held political views. For this reason—their emotional resonance—artistic experiences can have an impact on mutual perceptions, even across communities divided by deep political differences.

The implications of Westen’s findings are further reinforced by a research project at the Harvard School of Public Health, which is investigating how the brain responds to visual images.<sup>54</sup> It is well known that the experience of seeing an image, a theatrical performance or a film can be both informative and moving. The Harvard project, building on earlier research conducted by Dr. Nicole Argo and Dr. Jay Winsten, is investigating this type of “emotional journey” to discover exactly how it operates. It builds on research in cognitive neuroscience that demonstrates the potency of visual images, which initially register in the brain the same way as do actual experiences.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Heather Raffo, interview November 7, 2007.

<sup>51</sup> John Lahr, *New Yorker*, June 10, 2008, <<http://www.heatheraffo.com/press.html>>.

<sup>52</sup> Drew Westen, “The Political Brain: the Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation,” *Public Affairs*, 2007, esp. pp. ix, 69-88, 417-420.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. x-xv.

<sup>54</sup> “Alliance of Civilization Media Fund: The Research,” *Alliance of Civilization Media Fund*, June 10, 2008 <<http://www.aocmediafund.org/research.php>>.

<sup>55</sup> See Katya Mellman, “E-Motion: Being Moved by Fiction and Media? Notes on Fictional Worlds, Virtual Contacts, and the Reality of Emotions,” *PsyArt: An Online Journal for the Psychological Study for the Arts*, 2002. The Images, Humiliation and Violence Project, at the Harvard School of Public Health, funded by the Alliance of Civilizations Media Fund <<http://www.aocmediafund.org/research.php>> (Accessed June 19, 2008), currently uses psychophysiological measures to gauge how individuals respond—emotionally and cognitively—to seeing images of group members in conflict situations <<http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~wbm/>> (Accessed June 19, 2008).

In other words, in its initial response, the brain does not distinguish between something seen and something experienced. This helps to explain how films can haunt us and can affect our understanding. The implications of this research are far-reaching given the global penetration of films and television. As negative perceptions on all sides contribute to the U.S.-Muslim world divide, slowly, over time, arts and cultural experiences have the capacity either to deepen the divide or contribute to mutual understanding and improve those perceptions.

The emotional potency of creative expression, together with the critical role of arts and culture within Arab and Muslim societies, underlines their importance within the context of relations between the United States and the global Muslim community. But creative expression can also be a double-edged sword. Art can be used as much to fuel hatred as to increase understanding. The classic example is the 2006 Danish cartoon scandal. Five months after a Danish newspaper printed cartoons that portrayed Mohammed with a bomb in his turban, riots erupted in cities from Copenhagen to Calcutta. Buildings were burned, Danish products were boycotted at the cost of billions, and over one hundred people died in the riots. The perceived lack of respect for Islam provided the backdrop for a crisis that gave vent to widespread resentment of the West.<sup>56</sup> The cartoon crisis offers a reminder of the volatility of images, their susceptibility to misuse, and the viral nature of the negative emotions they can spark. The same can be said of other forms of creative expression, from film to blogging and rap videos—all

of which have been used equally to bring people together and to divide them. Just as the violent reactions to the cartoons, published months before, spread within days across the globe, so videos urging vengeance and hatred reach thousands through the internet within days of their release.<sup>57</sup>

Popular culture can perpetuate and deepen negative stereotypes as well as debunk them. When Professor Ellen Seiter sought to “temper the culture clash between America and the Arab world” by bringing students from the United States and from the Muslim world together on the USC campus to view and discuss American and Egyptian films, she was disappointed that for some American students, the films only reconfirmed their negative stereotypes, a fact she attributed partially to their lack of knowledge about the history and culture of the Middle East.<sup>58</sup> Negative stereotypes of Americans in recent films from the Arab and Muslim worlds are less well known but are present as well. In 2006, the most popular films in Turkey and Egypt portrayed different responses to the Iraq war. *Valley of the Wolves*, the most expensive film ever made in Turkey, drew record crowds to watch the “bad guy” Americans abuse and massacre civilians. The wife of the Prime Minister even attended the opening. The film plays out the fictional vindication of Turkey’s wounded pride over the humiliating, true incident of the arrest by the American military of Turkish Special Forces in northern Iraq.<sup>59</sup> The most popular film in Egypt in 2006, *The Night Baghdad Fell*, satirizes an imagined U.S. invasion of Cairo, complete with a fantasy sex scene featuring a Condoleezza Rice look-alike.

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<sup>56</sup> Esposito and Mogahed 2008, pp. 143-44.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Moss and Souad Mekhennet, “An International Jihad Aims at U.S. Viewers,” *International Herald Tribune*, Oct. 14, 2007.

<sup>58</sup> Waleed Nasser, Egyptian facilitator for the *Soliya* program, which facilitates online conversations and collaborative work between students in the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East <[www.soliya.net](http://www.soliya.net)> (Accessed June 19, 2008). See Appendix.

<sup>59</sup> Valley of the Wolves Iraq, <<http://www.valleyofthewolvesiraq.com/high/main.html>> (accessed June 12, 2008). Peter Singer, “America, Islam, and the 9/11 War,” *Current History*, December 2006: 415-422 – also, the article is available online: <[http://www.currenthistory.com/org\\_pdf\\_files/105/695/105\\_695\\_415.pdf](http://www.currenthistory.com/org_pdf_files/105/695/105_695_415.pdf)> (accessed June 12, 2008).

# CULTURAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE GLOBAL MUSLIM COMMUNITY TODAY:

## THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE FOR ARTS AND CULTURE IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

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“The majority of exposure comes by way of consumerist pop culture. You can’t control what people get exposed to now. The problem is that pop culture doesn’t represent the true diversity and depth of either culture.”<sup>60</sup>

The environment in which cultural interactions between the United States and the Muslim world take place today differs dramatically from the traditional Cold War paradigm in which the U.S. government sponsored tours and exchanges of artists. While the old model of not-for-profit arts organizations supported by Western foundations still exists, commercial culture, including the explosion of satellite TV in the Muslim world and increased access and distribution through the internet, has transformed the landscape of cultural interactions between the United States and the global Muslim community. Now, the most dynamic, sustainable initiatives and enterprises on both sides partner with the private sector and build audiences. Today, the role of the American public and philanthropic sectors has diminished, and the lines between the public and private sectors in the Muslim world have become blurred. This new environment offers rich potential, which a variety of actors from the United States and the Muslim world, sometimes in unconventional partnerships, have begun to seize. There are tremendous opportunities for American funding and engagement, whether from the public, private or nonprofit sector, but “business as usual”

(i.e., nonprofits receiving grants) may not present the most effective model—for donor or grantee. Whether and how the U.S. government can redeem its standing as a promoter of cross-cultural understanding through the arts is a subject for another study. The answer involves not only levels of engagement and funding but also policy and politics, both domestic and international.

The new media environment, combined with the spread of the internet and with it blogs and YouTube, has vastly increased the “public space” for creative expression.<sup>61</sup> Although suppression of critical voices has continued under authoritarian regimes from Morocco to Iran, the viral nature of the internet and the popularity of TV shows and films often insulate them from the censors.<sup>62</sup> The exponential growth in satellite channels, as well as the prodigious black market for DVDs and the facility of illegal downloads, means American popular culture can be accessed even in conservative societies.

The unique situation in the United States, where creative industries and media are privately driven and managed, complicates how American popular

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<sup>60</sup> Waleed Nassar, Egyptian facilitator for the *Soliya* program ([www.soliya.net](http://www.soliya.net)), interview with Mohammed Yousri, November, 2007. *Soliya* facilitates online conversations and collaborative work between students in the US, Europe, and the Middle East.

<sup>61</sup> Among the many studies of this phenomenon, see Lynch 2006 on the media; Hammond 2007 and *Transnational Broadcasting Studies I and II* on popular culture.

<sup>62</sup> Jackson Diehl, “Egypt’s YouTube Democrats,” *Washington Post*, December 17, 2007: A21 ; A Moroccan blogger was jailed and beaten for setting up a Facebook profile of a member of the royal family <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/ft/-/2/hi/africa/7258950.stm>> (Accessed June 10, 2008).



culture is perceived in the Muslim and Arab worlds. In the Muslim world, markets targeted by American popular culture—including “informal” markets reached by bootleg CDs, DVDs and downloads—are often managed by the state. It is, therefore, often counterintuitive for foreign audiences to understand, while watching a rerun of *Friends* or *Baywatch*—or, alternatively, a culturally sensitive production of *Sesame Street*—that the decision to broadcast was entirely a private one, with no influence from the U.S. government. In the Middle East, where governments largely control the media, even sophisticated consumers of culture expressed skepticism that the U.S. government did not in some way control cultural exports. Like it or not, the United States’ largely profit-driven popular culture is understood by much of the world, including majority Muslim populations, to “represent” the United States.<sup>63</sup>

The widespread distribution of American commercial culture in the Muslim world does not extend to the nonprofit sector, nor is it reciprocated in terms of penetration in the U.S. of cultural groups and products from the Muslim world. Funding for cultural programs from both public sources and private philanthropy has been so severely diminished that nonprofit arts companies’ performers are rarely seen in the Muslim world (or anywhere else, for that matter). When the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks orchestra traveled to Egypt in February 2008, they were greeted enthusiastically by a general public who had no experience of jazz, as well as by the jazz band from the Cairo Opera House, who had never heard this music live before. Both the American and Egyptian musicians gained tremendously

from their encounter: the Americans learned from the Egyptians’ questions and observations, while the Egyptians’ playing style was transformed by experiencing live performances.

Many believe jazz is America’s single greatest contribution to world culture; the music is transcendent, infectious, and through its unique combination of improvisation and harmony, embodies essential characteristics of the American ethos. Yet, because of a lack of funding, no American jazz band (as opposed to individuals and small combos) had visited Egypt since the tour of Louis Armstrong in the 1950s. One incident illustrated the power of a live performance and of the cross-cultural connections that can be made through music. Louis Armstrong’s *It’s a Wonderful World* quickly became a favorite among the Egyptian audiences. At the final performance, conductor Dave Baker encouraged singer Delores Williams to improvise the line “Egypt is a wonderful world.” The full house rose to a standing ovation and left talking excitedly about the American orchestra that sang about their country.

The discussion below will first examine the changing role of the U.S. government as a sponsor of cultural activities before turning to an analysis of the changing roles of popular culture, government-funded and private sector cultural initiatives, and the NGO sector in the Muslim world. In this context, we will look at the exciting and challenging new landscape for arts and culture in the Muslim world, focusing on activities in the five areas of film, TV, music, visual arts and new media and examine both present and potential roles of private philanthropy in the Muslim world today.

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<sup>63</sup> The same applies to private contractors in Iraq such as Blackwater. NPR, Morning Edition, December 17, 2007, “Iraqis see Contractors, U.S. Troops the Same,” <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17307607> (12/19/07)> (Accessed Dec 19, 2007).

# MISSED OPPORTUNITIES, MISPLACED PRIORITIES: U.S. GOVERNMENT AND ARTS AND CULTURE IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

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“I don’t know why the American embassy is not as active as its European counterparts are. This breeds a lack of interest in collaboration. I’ve worked with artists from Switzerland, Italy, and Germany but not the U.S.”

“The Goethe Institute ten years ago was only focusing on film screenings, music concerts and lectures. After the war on Iraq, they wanted to understand more about the region but also deliver messages and ideas about their own culture. This is obviously not just for our sake; it’s a mutually beneficial process. They began to focus more on artistic and cultural exchanges in an attempt to redefine themselves and change perceptions of Germany all the over the world.”<sup>64</sup>

The statements above captures the two principal comments about U.S. government involvement in culture that we heard in our interviews with arts and cultural figures from the Arab and Muslim world: 1) “Where are you? Where is the cultural presence of the United States?” and 2) “Why is it that in comparison to European funders, the U.S. government tends to adopt a top-down approach, rather than listening and learning about the local context and adapting to it?” The comments reflect the expectation that the United States, as one of the most dominant cultural presences in the world, should be at least as, if not more, visible as other countries. Since the United States has no Ministry of Culture or analogous body for international outreach, such as the British Council, La Maison Française, or the Goethe Institute, the American Embassy then becomes the face of the country abroad. Quite apart from the impression conveyed

by the new fortress-like embassies being constructed in response to post-9/11 security assessments—a subject that falls outside the scope of this study—the “human face” of American embassies in the Muslim world, as manifested through arts and cultural outreach, has been largely invisible.

Understanding why the U.S. government, specifically the Office of Public Diplomacy in the State Department, failed to seize the opportunity offered by the post-9/11 surge of interest in public diplomacy requires a brief summary of the demise of U.S. cultural diplomacy in the 1990s. Following the fall of the Berlin wall and the breakup of the Soviet Union, the United States Information Agency (USIA), founded in 1953 as an instrument of the Cold War, suffered a decline in funding and reduction in personnel. The USIA fell victim to a “perfect storm” of adverse factors: Foreign Relations

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<sup>64</sup> Mahmud Hamdy, File Club Graphic Studio and Club/I-Catalyst, interview by Mohammed Youstri.

Committee Chair Senator Jesse Helms' pressure to reduce government spending and the number of agencies; his opposition to any government funding for culture and the arts; and a general sense that without an enemy (the Soviet Union), the need to spread American ideas through culture had evaporated. When the USIA was absorbed into the State Department in 1999, the ceremony felt like a funeral to career cultural officers. Despite Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's description of public diplomacy as a "national security imperative" at the ceremony, spending on cultural diplomacy (cultural programming and exchanges, not educational exchanges) had dwindled to less than \$2 million per year by 2001.<sup>65</sup> Walter Laqueur's prescient words in 1994, arguing in favor of saving public diplomacy, went unheeded.

"Nor can it seriously be argued—as some have—that these tools of U.S. foreign policy are no longer needed now that the Cold War is over and America no longer faces major threats...far from being on the verge of a new order, the world has entered a period of great disorder. In facing these new dangers, a re-examination of old priorities is needed. Cultural diplomacy, in the widest sense, has increased in importance, whereas traditional diplomacy and military power...are of limited use in coping with most of these dangers."<sup>66</sup>

Dismantling the USIA and crippling the funding for cultural diplomacy left the United States unprepared for the post-9/11 world, in which understanding different cultures, particularly those of the majority Muslim countries, has assumed unprecedented importance. The response to this tremendous challenge on the part of the U.S. government

has taken several forms: 1) establishing new media outlets in the Middle East (notably Radio Sawa and the television station Al Hurra), 2) increasing funding and activities involving cultural outreach and exchanges to the Muslim world, and 3) studying the problem.

Since 9/11, the bulk of public diplomacy funding has gone toward worldwide broadcasting, with the \$670 million plus budget for the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) in 2007 dwarfing the \$11 million budget for cultural programs and exchanges. Outreach to the Muslim world dominates the broadcasting agenda, with the two post-9/11 U.S. government media outlets, Radio Sawa and Al Hurra, claiming around \$100 million per year. To put this into context, the total funding for global cultural programs and exchanges amounts to just over one month of Al Hurra's budget.

Critics both inside and outside the government have questioned the value of financing Radio Sawa and Al Hurra.<sup>67</sup> It would appear that Middle Eastern audiences do not respond well to broadcasting branded by the U.S. government. The failure of Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy Charlotte Beers's 2002 television spots extolling life as a Muslim American is another case in point. At a cost of \$15 million, or twice the total amount dedicated to cultural programs today, the video spots failed to gain traction in the Middle East, where they were not picked up by TV stations. By contrast, NGO *Layalina's* reality show *On the Road in America*, produced at a cost of less than \$1 million per year, has aired on the largest network in the Middle East (MBC1) to audiences totaling over 20 million viewers.<sup>68</sup> As was true of the internet in the United

<sup>65</sup> Cynthia P. Schneider, "Culture Communicates: Diplomacy that Works," *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, ed. Jan Melissen, (Palgrave MacMillan Studies in Diplomacy and International Relations, 2005) 156.

<sup>66</sup> Walter Laqueur, "Save Public Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs* 93 (1994): 20.

<sup>67</sup> "Boos for Al-Hurrah," *Opinion Journal*, May 11, 2007, <<http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110010063>>; Alvin Snyder, "Eulogy to Rebirth? U.S. International Broadcasting Struggles to Find its Way – With the Help of Al Jazeera," "The Real (Arab) World: Is Reality TV Democratizing the Middle East," *Transnational Broadcasting Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2005, pp. 160-169; Glenn Kessler, "The Role of Radio Sawa in Mideast Questioned," *Washington Post*, Oct. 13, 2004, p. A12.

<sup>68</sup> Discussions with Mark Ginsburg (April 2007) and Leon Shahabian (Nov. 8, 2007).

States in the early 1990s (large platform, little content), the true potential of the satellite networks in the Middle East will not be realized until the breadth and depth of content matches the platform. Another alternative to the billions that have been spent establishing U.S. radio and television stations would have been to commission content for Middle Eastern stations from filmmakers, journalists and artists. At this point, the privatization of Radio Sawa and Al Hurra might improve their credibility and reach larger audiences.<sup>69</sup>

Although the funding for cultural programs and exchanges has increased under the Bush administration—to a total of \$11 million in 2007, up from a nadir of \$1.4 million in 2001—the presentation of the rich diversity of American culture, as opposed to pop culture, pales beside what was offered in the Cold War period and what European countries offer today. Without significant increases in funding from the government or infusions from the private sector, accompanied by a shift in approach, the United States will not be able to play a constructive role in cultural life in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

With the increase in spending for cultural programming have come shifts in strategy, with generally positive results. In an effort to reach out to the predominantly youthful populations in Muslim countries, the State Department has funded tours of hip-hop musical and dance companies. Most notably, the hip-hop fusion band Ozomatli toured to great acclaim in the summer of 2007.<sup>70</sup> Previously, the U.S. government had not tapped the power of dissent as a component of public diplomacy, but with Ozomatli, they put on tour a band known for its participation in anti-war concerts. “I’m totally

willing and wanting to give a different image of America than America has given over the last five years,” declared Bella, lead singer of Ozomatli, before the group’s concert in Cairo in July of 2007. The global language of hip-hop, which has been adopted throughout the Muslim world, also resonates in Iraq. In July 2007, John Ferguson and his NGO, American Voices, brought over three hundred Iraqis from all regions and sects to Irbil, Iraq, for a ten-day dance and music workshop. Children and teens exchanged hip-hop moves, while musicians of all ages joined together for big band and symphonic concerts.<sup>71</sup>

Both Ozomatli and American Voices adopted a formula with a history of success: performance plus workshops, and, in the case of American Voices, a collaborative final production. Noting the value of artistic collaborations and workshops, Nimet Naguib, cultural attaché for over thirty years at the American Embassy in Cairo, observed, “Once there is contact, things change.”<sup>72</sup> She considered the joint Egyptian/American production of the play *Our Town* in 2003 to be “the most successful project” of her career. The ingredients of success were: collaboration and partnership, appeal to a local audience (performances were in Arabic), and the absence of a policy connection.

At current funding levels, the United States will only be able to “parachute in” with performances—collaborative or otherwise—and workshops, but will not be able to build on past successes, such as *Our Town* or the American Voices workshop, with a sustained, reliable presence in the cultural life of Muslim majority countries. Nor will it be possible to begin to repair the cultural infrastructure that was dismantled in the 1990s, notably the closing

<sup>69</sup> Suggested by Hady Amr and Peter Singer 2007, “Engaging the Muslim World: A Communication Strategy to Win the War of Ideas,” 2007, <[http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/0411islamicworld\\_singer\\_Opp08.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/0411islamicworld_singer_Opp08.aspx)> (Accessed June 19, 2008).

<sup>70</sup> Daraghi Borzou, “Ozomatli on State Department Tour,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 2007.

<sup>71</sup> “Iraq: Unity Performing Arts Academy in Erbil July 14 – 22,” Welcome to American Voices Association, 2008, American Voices Association, June 10, 2008, <<http://www.americanvoices.org/projects/2007/unity/>>.

<sup>72</sup> Comment at a meeting to discuss this paper, Cairo, Egypt, Oct. 21, 2007.

down of the “America Houses” and libraries built in the decades following World War II. Germany and Japan received most, but not all, of these institutions. The American Center in Hyderabad, India, once housed the largest library of American books outside the United States but now has fallen into neglect and disrepair. Lamenting the closing of U.S. libraries and cultural centers, Samer Shehata, Georgetown University Assistant Professor and specialist in Arab Studies, recalled that “The American Cultural Center in Alexandria [Egypt] was where I learned about Jefferson and Lincoln.”<sup>73</sup> Despite the recommendation of the 9/11 Commission that “The United States should rebuild the scholarship, exchange, and library programs that reach out to young people and offer them knowledge and hope,” no libraries or cultural centers have opened in the last seven years.<sup>74</sup> Instead, making the best of limited funds and heightened security, the State Department has opened “American Corners” in local libraries and cultural institutions in many countries. Although the “Corners” extend the reach of the United State’s official presence beyond the capitals—an essential component of diplomacy—their success has varied, and the comparison with actual cultural centers hosted by other countries is not felicitous. The consensus that is developing around the need for America to re-engage on a cultural level around the world, and particularly in the Muslim world, does not yet extend to a consensus for significantly increased funding for the State Department. With Defense Secretary Gates’s recent call for a boost to the State Department budget, perhaps it may soon.<sup>75</sup>

As part of the Global Cultural Initiative launched by Laura Bush in September 2006, the State De-

partment, in partnership with the Kennedy Center, has begun programming in the area of arts management in the Muslim world.<sup>76</sup> A component of the fragile fabric of civil society in the Arab and Muslim world, arts organizations often suffer for lack of basic management skills, including marketing, fundraising, grant writing, and budget management. The Kennedy Center hosts groups of arts and cultural practitioners from the Arab and Muslim worlds and arranges seminars and workshops for them. Building on his successful arts management workshops in Mexico, the indefatigable Michael Kaiser, Director of the Kennedy Center, led a seminar in April 2007 at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo that convened over 120 participants from the Arab world. Even before it started, the seminar was a success because it brought so many actors in the arts together for three days of networking—a rarity for a variety of reasons, including the difficulty of travel among Arab states. While participants valued the information and the conversations, some felt that the top-down approach of lectures might not have made the best of this opportunity. Furthermore, arts operators from the Muslim world often have difficulty applying the advice of American arts managers because of the dramatically different contexts. Interviewees frequently commented on the need for foreign experts to truly understand the context in order for their advice to be relevant and applicable.

Programs initiated under the Global Cultural Initiative in film and literature, as well as museum management programs (Museum Community Collaborations Abroad), also have the potential to affect communities in the Muslim world. But they are not specifically targeted toward them.

<sup>73</sup> Comments at a speech at the conference *Communicating with the World: Diplomacy that Works*, held at Georgetown University, April 30, 2003. One of the few cultural centers that has remained operational, if on a shoestring budget, the Alexandria Center runs well-attended programs on American literature, using local American Studies faculty. With more funding and a greater infrastructure for cultural diplomacy in Washington, Justin Siberell, cultural attaché in Alexandria, believes he could begin to meet the enormous demand for American culture there.

<sup>74</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Acts upon the United States*, New York, 2004.

<sup>75</sup> Shanker, Thom. “Defense Secretary Urges More Spending for U.S. Diplomacy.” *Washington Post*. Nov. 27, 2007: A6.

<sup>76</sup> “Mrs. Laura Bush Launches ‘Global Culture Initiatives’ to enhance U.S. Cultural Diplomacy,” Sept. 25, 2006, U.S. Department of State, June 10, 2008, <<http://www.state.gov/t/pa/prs/ps/2006/73078.htm>>.

In addition to launching media outlets and cultural programming, the U.S. also has devoted untold hours and dollars to studying the challenges of public diplomacy in the post-9/11 world. Forty-odd reports have produced the consensus that public diplomacy is in a crisis.<sup>77</sup> Most focus on improving process and structure at the expense of content and tend to neglect the role of arts and culture, with the exception of the commendable, but largely ignored, *Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy* and the *Cultural Diplomacy and the National Interest* report of the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy at Vanderbilt.<sup>78</sup> Another set of studies, many from the U.S. GAO (Government Accountability Office) all concur that the U.S. government and private sector lack a coherent, inter-agency, cross-sector strategy of communication and public diplomacy.<sup>79</sup> The Curb Center report emphasizes the challenges of effectively incorporating culture into diplomacy without an independent cultural agency in the government. Although only

the Curb Center report discusses arts and culture specifically, theoretically, creative expression would have a role in any broad-based outreach strategy given the importance of private sector cultural products and exports.

In summary, with the exception of official broadcast channels, which have met with mixed reviews, U.S. initiatives in arts and culture in the Muslim world in the last decade have had some success, but those successes have yet to be integrated into a reliable and sustainable presence. The positive response of Muslim artists and audiences to performances, workshops, and exchanges suggests a strong desire for contact with counterparts in the United States. But this interest is tempered by a wariness of motives and a desire to protect the integrity of artistic expression. It should be noted that the Iraqi participants in the American Voices Unity Academy voiced no such reservations; they were grateful to be “remembered” and to be able to “feel normal again.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> For a summary of the reports and their recommendations, see Susan B. Epstein and Lisa Mages, “Public Diplomacy: a Review of Past Recommendations,” CRS Report for Congress, 2005. Particularly relevant is the Djerijian report, although it also gives scant attention to arts and culture (*Changing Minds and Winning Peace, Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World*, Edward P. Djerijian, Chairman, Oct. 1, 2003). See review by John Brown, “Changing Minds, Winning Peace: Reconsidering the Djerijian Report”, *American Diplomacy* vol. IX, no. 3, 2004. See also articles by Brookings scholars Hady Amr and Peter Singer (Amr and Singer 2004; Singer 2006; Amr and Singer, “Engaging the Muslim World” 2007); and two recent reports with specific recommendations for the State Department *The Embassy of the Future* (of which I was a Commissioner) *CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America*, <[http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/071106\\_csissmartpowerreport.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/071106_csissmartpowerreport.pdf)> (Accessed Aug. 11, 2007). They recommend the following: 1) a more flexible approach to public outreach; 2) greater and more imaginative use of technological tools, emphasizing building long term, people-to-people relationships, particularly among youth; 3) playing to America’s perceived strengths in higher education and technology by increasing educational exchanges.

<sup>78</sup> Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, “Cultural Diplomacy, Lynchpin of Public Diplomacy,” U.S. Department of State, <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/54374.pdf>> (accessed July 15, 2006); Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy, *Cultural Diplomacy and the National Interest: In Search of a 21st-Century Perspective*, by Heather Hurburt and Bill Ivey, <<http://sitemason.vanderbilt.edu/files/jxoZIk/CDfor%20web.pdf>> (accessed Sept. 26, 2007).

<sup>79</sup> GAO, U.S. Public Diplomacy: Interagency Coordination Efforts Hampered by the Lack of a National Communication Strategy, April 2005; U.S. Public Diplomacy: Actions Needed to Improve Strategic Use and Coordination of Research, July 2007; Seven R. Corman, Angela Trethewey, Bud Goodall, A 21st Century Model for Communication in the Global War of Ideas, April 3, 2007, report 0701, Consortium for Strategic Communication, Arizona State University.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with John Ferguson, Executive Director, American Voices, Nov. 14, 2007, <<http://www.americanvoices.org/>>.

# UNITED STATES NONPROFIT FUNDING AND ACTIVITIES

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“Americans need to move beyond simply reacting to 9/11. We need to have serious attempts at intercultural dialogue that is not reactive to 9/11. We need to develop real links. One way is to help artists from the Arab world have residencies in the U.S. (and vice versa).”<sup>81</sup>

Given the many calls for action to repair the divide between the West and the Muslim world, the miniscule amount of private (non-commercial) and foundation funding dedicated to artistic exchanges, collaborations and partnerships with the United States is disappointing. This is particularly true in light of the hunger expressed for these partnerships from artists and arts organizations in the region, as reflected in our interviews.

In the competition for private philanthropy in the United States, health, education, the environment, and poverty alleviation have tended to take precedence over the arts, with only a handful of foundations making substantial grants. For international artist programs and exchanges, the number of donors narrows even further. An overall increase in international philanthropic dollars since 2002, especially in the area of global health (Gates Foundation), has not benefited the arts, which received less than 5% of the \$2.8 billion donated to international causes in 2004.<sup>82</sup> Of the total international donations, about one third went to regions with majority Muslim populations, with less than 7% of these funds targeted for cross-border projects in North Africa and the Middle

East.<sup>83</sup> In other words, about \$54 million, or 1.9% of the \$2.8 billion dedicated to international giving, went to projects in the Middle East and North Africa. Based on the overall international philanthropy figures, it is safe to assume that less than 5% of the \$54 million for the Middle East and North Africa was given to the arts, which amounts to less than one tenth of one percent of private international philanthropy for arts and culture in the Middle East and North Africa. According to another estimate, grants for art exchange programs amounted to less than 1% of total foundation spending.<sup>84</sup> While foundations and NGOs recognize the challenge of the U.S.-Muslim world divide, most have tended to focus on dialogue and bridge-building programs, without including an artistic or cultural component.<sup>85</sup>

However, a handful of American foundations are active in the area of arts and cultural engagement with the global Muslim community. To date, the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, One Nation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Skoll Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation have supported American institutions working in and with the Muslim and Arab world. Smaller groups, such

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<sup>81</sup> Comment from participant at workshop convened by author, October 21, 2007; Cairo, Egypt.

<sup>82</sup> Loren Renz and Josie Atienza, *International Grantmaking Update*, The Foundation Center, Oct. 2006, pp. 2 and 5. <[http://www.cof.org/files/Documents/International\\_Programs/2006%20Publications/IntlUpdateOct06.pdf](http://www.cof.org/files/Documents/International_Programs/2006%20Publications/IntlUpdateOct06.pdf)> (accessed June 12, 2008).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* p.4.

<sup>84</sup> Andras Szanto, *A New Mandate for Philanthropy? U.S. Foundation Support for International Arts Exchanges*, Center for Arts and Culture, *Cultural Diplomacy Research Series*, 2003, pp.1-3, <<http://www.culturalpolicy.org/issuepages/culturaldiplomacy.cfm>> (accessed June 12, 2008).

<sup>85</sup> Hady Amr is preparing a survey of post 9/11 projects to bridge the U.S. Muslim world divide to be published by the Saban Center on Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution in 2008.

as ARTEEAST and Al Aswan, both located in New York City, present cross-cultural events involving artists from the global Muslim community, thereby providing them opportunities to perform in the U.S. The Sundance Institute, supported by some of the above foundations, collaborates with the Royal Jordanian Film Commission in organizing a highly respected screenwriter's lab once a year in Jordan, where new filmmakers are invited to work with more seasoned experts, some of whom, but not all, are from the U.S. The eight spots for Arab screenwriters are highly coveted. The Ford Foundation funds regional artists and organizations, including two Arab-based arts nonprofit organizations, Al Mawred Al Thaqafy and the Arab Fund for Culture and Arts (ACAF), the region's most ambitious nonprofit grant-making organization for the arts. The Open Society Foundation moved its focus from Eastern Europe to the Middle East, where it funds a number of arts programs, including most recently, a substantial grant to ACAF.

With more than fifty years of experience in capacity building in the Middle East, and more than thirty years in the arts, the Ford Foundation is in a class by itself. The Ford Foundation mission stands alone among American foundations for its holistic approach to supporting the arts in the Arab and Muslim worlds. "Without the Ford Foundation, there would be no independent art scene in Egypt and Palestine," commented Tony Sfeir, founder of the self-sustaining independent music label Incognito, reflecting the fundamentally important role played by the foundation in supporting nonprofit institutions in all fields. Ford has helped to strengthen the infrastructure for arts and culture in the region by moving from funding individual artists and productions to funding large organizations, such as the Young Arab Theater Fund, which provides production funds and travel and touring grants. It concentrates on institution and capacity building, relying on the aforementioned Arab cultural foundation

grantees (Al Mawred and AFAC), to disperse grants to individuals.

A question for private philanthropy is whether to focus exclusively on exchanges and partnerships or whether also to support regional arts and culture players. The latter would demonstrate respect for the integrity of local cultural production as opposed to categorizing it merely as an instrument of furthering U.S.-Muslim world dialogue. European public and private donors currently dominate support for the creative component of civil society in the Muslim world, along with Al Mawred and AFAC. Still, the sector is under-funded, and the circles of donors and grantees are not expanding to capitalize upon new possibilities in the arts and media.

Donors and projects focused on the American Muslim community, or involving Americans working to change and improve perceptions and understanding of Muslims and Islam, form a new category. The key donors and organizations all have developed in the post-9/11 period. To date, the most significant contributor to these causes is the One Nation Foundation, which supports the production of documentary films (e.g., *Prince Among Slaves* and *Mohammed*, both by United Productions Foundation) and other initiatives to increase understanding in the United States of the global Muslim community. One Nation also provides a clearinghouse and resource center on all issues pertaining to the American Muslim community and sponsored [winners were announced in February] a short film contest, "One Nation, Many Voices."<sup>86</sup> Funding from One Nation has helped to support the Hollywood Engagement Project, a collaborative effort being developed by the Arts and Culture Initiative at the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, One Nation, and United Productions Foundation, with the goal of working with leaders in the creative community in film and television to encourage more varied and nuanced portrayals of Muslims and Islam in popular culture.

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<sup>86</sup> One Nation, June 10, 2008, <<http://www.onenationforall.org>>.



## “AMERICAN” AND “EUROPEAN” DONOR MODELS

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In contrast to the relative absence of U.S. foundations in the cultural field in the Muslim world, European donors—some private sector, a few government sponsored—are very active. While not all have regional offices, the European donors habitually spend considerable time in the region in order to meet the players and expand their knowledge of the context. Some of the most important European donors include: the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), a private donor committed to working in partnership with Mediterranean and Balkan artists to build the field of culture; the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, also a private donor, committed to supporting new work in the Middle East and Africa with grants and annual prizes; Triangle Trust and the Mondrian Foundation, two private organizations supporting the visual arts through exchanges and regional programming; the Roberto Cimetta Fund, established to facilitate mobility of artists, not only between the Mediterranean region and Europe but within the region as well; SIDA (the Swedish International Development Agency); the European Union, through its film programs such as the Euromed Audiovisual Program; the Royal Netherlands Embassy; and the many national cultural centers, such as the British Council, Pro-Helvetia, the French, Italian and Spanish cultural centers and the Goethe Institute. Many of these institutions are part of an active network and meet regularly to coordinate (and often collaborate on) programming and exchange knowledge and expertise. Representatives of these organizations also make regular visits to the region. The ECF is particularly conscientious in monitoring the changing context as it is affected by wars, migration and media issues. Most recently, the ECF held a

series of six meetings over a period of 18 months to reflect and learn how they can better respond to realities on the ground. It is the coordinating, monitoring, desire to understand and learn, and commitment to collaboration that distinguishes much of the work of these institutions and earns them credibility in the region. By contrast, most of the sparse arts programming of the United States, both public and private sector, is couched in the rhetoric of “bridging gaps,” “understanding” and showing that “we’re not all that bad.”

The UN’s Alliance of Civilizations Media Fund, led by Americans Omar Amanat and Suhail Rizvi, provides a different model. It promises to offer that desperately needed commodity—funds for the production of films that contribute to cross-cultural understanding. The Media Fund aims to make feature films that reach broad and diverse audiences. Backed by research that points to the power of images in shaping perceptions, the founders of the UN Alliance of Civilizations Media Fund believe engaging narratives can subconsciously alter negative stereotypes and foster more inclusive views of other cultures. An unknown is whether the Fund will use its resources to support filmmakers from the Muslim world and spur the development of film industries there, as well as support films made in the United States.

The United States, with its deep experience with for-profit culture and all it entails—notably marketing and audience-building—is well-poised to create another, more positive “American donor model” by helping the independent arts sector become more sustainable. This assistance could take the form of expertise and mentoring as well as funding. The

high level of unemployment in the region, particularly among youth, makes it imperative to incorporate sustainable money-making opportunities and skills into philanthropy so that the arts provide opportunities for income generation. One of the aims of such a model would be to avoid singling out the Arab/Muslim as a victim, poor and oppressed, and to find ways to address his/her needs. In the area of poverty alleviation, the United States is well placed to make a difference, yet no one has developed a model to communicate and share these private sector skills in commercially viable culture and entertainment into the context of international philanthropy. This points to a larger problem: the relative lack of integration of arts and culture into development strategies and agendas.

Projects and organizations that do communicate and share these private sector skills are few and serendipitous. Among these is the Future of Music Coalition (FMC; [www.futureofmusic.org](http://www.futureofmusic.org)), which bills itself as a nonprofit collaboration be-

tween members of the music, technology, public policy and intellectual property law communities. The FMC seeks to educate the media, policymakers and the public about music/technology issues, while also bringing together diverse voices to devise creative solutions to some of the challenges in this space. The FMC also aims to identify and promote innovative business models that will help musicians and citizens benefit from new technologies. Another organization, Freemuse ([www.freemuse.org](http://www.freemuse.org)), focuses on music censorship stimulating discussion on issues of music and Islam, for example, through interviews with prominent musicians. In a local initiative and with European funding, many young Egyptian bands were brought together in a workshop hosted by the Alexandria Library in 2006 to learn the basics of music promotion and marketing. Layalina and the public-private coalition that produced the TV reality show *The Bridge* provide models of how training in marketable skills in film and television can be successfully done, as discussed below.

# NEW, INTERNATIONAL, MULTI-SECTOR ARTS AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

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In the Arab and Muslim world today, as in the West in the past, new patronage systems and environments for the production of art have catalyzed new forms and uses of art. When, in the 17th-century Dutch Republic, middle-class citizens replaced traditional art patrons—the church and the state—new genres of landscape, still life, and scenes of everyday life emerged to meet the demand for paintings for domestic consumption. Today, in much of the Arab and Muslim world—where the lines of private and public are not as clearly demarcated as in the West—new coalitions of donors; unorthodox partnerships between public, private and nonprofit organizations; and the advent of new media are redefining arts and culture and their role in society. This new landscape has profound political, social and economic implications.

To explore this new cultural terrain, we will first examine its regional political implications. Then we will look at examples of different regions and countries where culture has become a national priority and that have developed leading models for public, private and public-private support of the arts. Finally, we will delve deeper and look at commercial and not-for-profit cultural activities, examining the following areas: film and television, international festivals, visual arts, theater and dance, literature, music, and new media.

In the Middle East, popular media production is succeeding where political vision and will have failed, as satellite channel programming, video

clips, pop music and films are replacing politics and language as a unifying factor in the region. The internet—specifically blogging, Facebook (Turkey is the 5th largest Facebook user), and personal and organizational websites—has created communities, constituencies and affinity groups of Copts, Muslims, intellectuals, artists, religious conservatives and extremists. These associations transcend national borders and national identities, reaching out beyond the region to the global community. Furthermore, popular culture has succeeded where political institutions, such as the Arab League, have failed in creating a sense of an Arab identity.<sup>87</sup> “I am an Arab,” (*Arabiyyun Ana*), sung by an Armenian-born Lebanese singer, topped the charts in 2001.<sup>88</sup> The downside to the unifying power of satellite TV in the Arab world is that, as Hisham Sarabi describes, it has “crystallized hostility to the American presence in Iraq.”<sup>89</sup>

At the same time, Arab satellite television distributes a steady diet of American popular culture—or of Arab knock-offs of American icons, such as *Mama, I Want to Be a Millionaire 2004*, based on the *American Idol* formula. Afghan Idol, another of the many *American Idol* take-offs in the Muslim world, fostered a sense of national unity as the whole country watched and voted. Gender (a woman reached the final three in Afghan Idol) and ethnic background mattered less than talent did, creating a climate that overcame traditional divisions of class, gender, and ethnicity.<sup>90</sup> The company with the highest viewer ratings is the London-based

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<sup>87</sup> Andrew Hammond, *Popular Culture in the Arab World*, Cairo/New York, 2007, pp.14-15.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p.15.

<sup>89</sup> Hammond, p. 213, quoting Hisham Sarabi.

<sup>90</sup> Website: <[www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-afghan\\_idol\\_numar13,0,3594198.story](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-afghan_idol_numar13,0,3594198.story)>.

MBC (Middle East Broadcasting), offering a four-channel package of 24/7 Hollywood films (MBC2), American sitcoms, soaps, game shows and contests, such as *Friends*, *Days of Our Lives*, *Jeopardy*, *So You Think You Can Dance* (which has a copycat in Turkey) and *American Idol*.

But the apparent “Americanization” can be deceptive. Local culture and tastes are adapting American models, such as *Idol* contests and reality shows,

to their own purposes. For example, after *Pop Idol* and *Big Brother* flopped, the Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority launched the most successful TV contest in the Arab world, *Poet of the Million*, in which contestants competed in the field of *Nabati* poetry, the traditional Bedouin style of verse. The television show formed part of a general revival of Bedouin identity, which has young people in the Gulf wearing long hair and traditional clothing.

## ARTS AND CULTURE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

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Outside the commercial sector, a plethora of independent artists and cultural entities form part of the fabric of civil society in the Muslim world. The development of NGO culture varies from country to country. In Tunisia, civil society activists are restricted to using government channels, and the number of restrictions is increasing. Once the backbone and spearhead of Palestinian society, NGOs are increasingly seen as agents of the West who have aligned themselves in opposition to Islam and Islamic institutions. Egypt and Jordan have both gone through revisions of the NGO law that have resulted in giving the government more control, including the requirement for government permission to accept foreign funds. For this reason, a number of NGOs have chosen to seek international registration. Ironically, government restrictions punish success. If a nonprofit builds an audience to the point that it attracts foreign funds, the NGO then faces increased requirements for permission from the government to accept the monies. The relationship of civil society to the public sector is not so much a partnership in which the state establishes space for non-governmental actors and coordinates complementary activities as it is a standoff—an uneasy truce in which the government seeks increasing control.

The relationship with foreign donors is ambivalent. Although most players in the region are open to the West and wary of Islamic extremism, they remain skeptical of the West, its foreign policies and its fixations on democracy, transparency and accountability. Yet, at the same time, most NGOs in all fields are dependent on European and American funding and, with few exceptions, fail to develop strategies for sustainability. This dependency has

serious impact on the wider community. Funding creates competition where there should be networking; institutional survival tends to prevail over programming vision as a *raison d'être*. NGO culture is further hindered by local contexts that discourage cooperation, solidarity, transparency and initiative, but breed suspicion and territorialism. In these contexts, activism, advocacy and just plain networking can be challenging, if not dangerous. Another danger of this funding culture is that the West is perceived primarily as a moneybag and NGO culture as a creation of the West. Long-term funding directed towards sustainability and infrastructure building, rather than discrete events, would help, as would encouraging networking regionally and internationally.

The few examples of self-sustaining nonprofit cultural organizations merit study so that others may apply their “lessons learned” to achieve greater freedom of action. Tony Sfeir’s successful independent music store and label Incognito began with a music shop featuring jazz and classical music in a remote Lebanese town, where CDs were unknown. After his clientele grew, Sfeir moved to Beirut, opened a music store and purchased independent music from all over the world. Before long, Incognito, the only serious music shop in the Arab world, carried over 25,000 titles. Over time, Incognito’s music aficionados became musicians. Incognito developed a music production capacity, opened a second shop, and expanded its distribution network. Sfeir declined a purchase offer from Virgin Records, although he distributes his music through Virgin stores. He has expanded further into Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and the Gulf, with Syria—where he has a separate company called Majal, now his largest market. Sfeir also

publishes and sells DVDs and books at another branch store, the Cinetheque. To battle piracy, he lowered the price of CDs to just above the street price for bootleg CDs, and then added a demo CD for free. By undercutting pirated CDs in value for money, he defeated the pirates at their own game. What sets Incognito apart from arts and culture groups that rely on outside funding is the attention to developing a constituency and marketing products to it. How to inculcate these skills more broadly in the arts and culture community in the Muslim world, so that more organizations can achieve sustainability and/or profitability, remains a challenge.

# NEW REGIONAL AND NATIONAL APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING ARTS AND CULTURE

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“This is not just about tourism; it also has global cultural dimensions. We believe the best vehicle for crossing borders is art. And this region is in need of such artistic initiatives.”<sup>91</sup>

From Morocco to the Gulf, leaders in the Arab world are turning to the arts and culture for economic development, often through tourism, and “to put themselves on the map.”

Nowhere is there more cultural activity today than in the Gulf, where the arts are taking on a new meaning as the oil- and gas-rich capitals of Doha, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah compete to become the cultural mecca of the region. State-sponsored universities, museums, exhibitions and film festivals are sprouting up, often following American models. Under the patronage of HRH Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser al-Misned, Education City has been established in Doha.<sup>92</sup> This pioneering experiment in international education offers American curricula to students from all over the world (primarily, but not exclusively, Muslims) in fields ranging from agriculture to design to international affairs. The campuses (Texas A&M, Virginia College of Design, Cornell Medical, and Georgetown University) are branches of the American universities with faculty drawn largely from their main campuses in the United States. The schools offer many of the same classes, adhere to the same standards, and have the same admissions standards as their home universities.

The Emirates and Qatar are looking beyond today to the time when their oil and gas reserves will no longer sustain them. Each in its own way is building the foundation for other job and revenue sources, whether through tourism or by attracting the top minds of the Muslim world. The degree to which the enormous infusion of capital into the arts will benefit regional artists and the infrastructure for culture remains to be seen, but new Gulf-based foundations with funds for arts and culture offer promise. Chief among these are the Emirates Foundation in Abu Dhabi and the Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum Foundation in Dubai.<sup>93</sup> There, government leaders see an important role for arts and culture as a source of societal cohesion for the diverse nationalities, religion, and ethnic groups that live and work there. With the \$10 billion endowment of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Foundation, the leadership of Dubai has signaled its commitment to education, of which culture is a part. After twenty years of economic boom, attention is turning to fostering a healthy, harmonious society.<sup>94</sup> Abu Dhabi aspires to develop cultural institutions to nurture creativity and peaceful co-existence within its society. The centerpiece of an impressive array of new museums is the pro-

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<sup>91</sup> Mubarak Muhari, an Abu Dhabi tourism official.

<sup>92</sup> Tamar Lewin, “In Oil-Rich Mideast, Shades of the Ivy League”, *New York Times*, Feb. 11, 2008, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/11/education/11global.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/11/education/11global.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)> (accessed June 12, 2008).

<sup>93</sup> For an overview of philanthropy in the Arab world, see Barbara Ibrahim’s *From Charity to Change: Trends in Arab Philanthropy*, John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement, The American University in Cairo. Authors include: Mona Atia, Barbara Ibrahim, Mahi Khallaf, Hadeel Qazzaz, Karim Shalaby, Fadi Sharaira, Dina Sherif.

<sup>94</sup> Conversation with Saeed al Nabouda, Executive Office, Dubai, Feb. 12, 2008.

jected Museum of the March of Man, which will emphasize the unity of humanity.<sup>95</sup>

The new museums sprouting up attest to a boom in the visual arts in the Gulf. On Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, celebrity architects Frank Gehry, Jean Nouvel, and Tadao Ando will erect museums that will include a branch of the Louvre and the Guggenheim Museums. Joining the western celebrity architects is Iraqi-born Zaha Hadid, who will design the performing arts center. The contemporary art scene also is flourishing. Sharjah hosts an international art biennial, curated by Jack Persekian, which invites artists to create works that make use of the local environment and landmarks. With a building designed by I.M. Pei, Doha will soon open the only new museum in the Gulf to focus on Islamic art—a notable development given the relative lack of knowledge in the Arab world of Islamic artistic traditions.<sup>96</sup> The new museums present opportunities for training in museum practice. Roger Mandle, an American museum director with a distinguished pedigree (RISD, Minneapolis Museum of Art), explained that he was eager to take his post at the new Islamic Museum in Doha because the region offered an open field to which he could apply all the principles of museum practice acquired during his lifelong career.<sup>97</sup>

Turkey and Morocco present different models for the support of the arts within society. Both countries recognize the value of cultural tourism and have developed public-private funding mechanisms to support cultural attractions. In Morocco, these include festivals of film, music, and theater, most notably the famous Sacred Music Festival in Fès as well as the Festival of Sufism. The creator of the

Fès festival, Faouzi Skali, has taken a leading role in making Fès a conference and holiday destination of choice, where historic houses and palaces have been transformed into hotels.<sup>98</sup>

Turkey has the most highly developed system for private support for the arts. Both sides of Turkey's cultural identity—a rich cultural heritage and a thriving modern art scene—are largely supported by the private sector, including not-for-profit foundations spun off from private corporations. This represents a shift from the dominant (but limited) public-sector funding of the arts, which was the norm until the 1990s.<sup>99</sup> The economic boom since then has ushered in a new class of donors, which include private families, such as the Eczacıbasi (Istanbul Museum of Modern Art) and Sabancı (Sakıp Sabancı Museum), as well as corporations and banks that have opened their own art galleries. In keeping with the hip contemporary music scene in Istanbul, the new arts developments include innovative experiments such as Santral, a multinational cultural and educational center housed in the city's original power station and supported by an international coalition of foundations and institutions. As the designated European Cultural Capital for 2010, Istanbul will benefit from a €64 million infusion of funds. The cultural spotlight on Istanbul will force two previously separate entities to work together: the socially conservative city government and the hip, cosmopolitan arts and culture groups. Recognizing the power of culture to shape and foster understanding of identities, the head of the 2010 campaign said that it would "... help Turkey to indicate the common roots of culture between Turkey and Europe."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Conversations with Dr. Sami el-Masri, Director of Strategic Planning Office, Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority, Feb. 13, 2008.

<sup>96</sup> David Nasser Khalili, a private collector of Islamic art, commented on the lack of familiarity with traditions of Islamic art at the 2006 Arts and Cultural Leaders Seminar, U.S.-Islamic World Forum, Doha.

<sup>97</sup> Conversation with Bloomberg journalist Lindsay Pollock, April 2, 2008.

<sup>98</sup> Fès Festival of World Sacred Music, <<http://www.fesfestival.com/en07/index.htm>> (accessed June 12, 2008). Faouzi Skali now runs the Festival de la Culture de Sufism, which was held for the first time in April, 2007.

<sup>99</sup> Pelin Turgot, "Ancient City is Modern Cultural Destination," *Financial Times*, November 21, 2007, <[http://search.ft.com/ftArticle?queryText=Pelin+Turgot&aje=false&id=071121000195&ct=0&nlick\\_check=1](http://search.ft.com/ftArticle?queryText=Pelin+Turgot&aje=false&id=071121000195&ct=0&nlick_check=1)> (accessed June 12, 2008).

<sup>100</sup> Turgot, *op.cit.*



# CURRENT TRENDS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF ARTS AND CULTURE

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## FILM AND TELEVISION

“We all have our own countries, but no one country has one image. Programs like [*The Bridge*] help us to understand the complexity.”<sup>101</sup>

The demand for television content, sparked by the plethora of new satellite channels in the Middle East, has led to innovative public-private partnerships that present new models of sustainability and that reach new audiences. Search for Common Ground, an American NGO that pioneered soap operas for social change, has partnered with Video Cairo SAT, one of Egypt’s largest satellite channels, to produce and distribute *The Bridge*, a reality show in which Americans and Egyptians trade places and learn through experience about each other’s cultures. The production was funded by a combination of public and private, Egyptian and American funding sources, including the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Skoll Foundation, and commercial broadcast entities, the Hallmark Channel in the United States and Video Cairo SAT in Egypt. This international, public-private model has two distinct advantages: 1) as a commercial product, it will reach a broad audience and will not just “preach to the converted”; 2) as an international commercial production, it offers employment and training for those involved with the production.

Layalina, a not-for-profit film and television production company, has created reality shows in-

volving Arabs traveling to America and Americans visiting the Middle East, as well as an animated time travel series for children, *Ben and Izzy*. The latter will be produced by Rubicon, a Jordan-based studio, and distributed through MGM.<sup>102</sup> In addition to content that challenges stereotypes, Layalina provides technology training and capacity building by working with filmmakers and animators from the Middle East on the latest techniques in computer-generated technology. MGM was so impressed by the standards set by the Rubicon animation studio in Jordan that it outsourced work on the *Pink Panther* cartoon show to Jordan. Layalina is a nonprofit, but that does not prevent its programs from having commercial success. Its productions are funded by a combination of grants and donations, venture capital and revenue from air time on MBC.

In the Muslim world, as anywhere else, the finances and logistics of filmmaking are daunting, and the opportunities for training do not begin to keep up with the demand. Annually, the Sundance Film Lab brings veteran screenwriters to Jordan to mentor about eight to ten filmmakers from the Muslim world (or those with stories about the Muslim world). Craig Bolotin, a mentor, found that the work of the regional writers was “...much more interesting than 90% of what I see in LA.” An underlying premise behind the Lab is that in order to succeed internationally, a film should shed some of its local idioms and adopt international

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<sup>101</sup> Nabil Fahmy, Egyptian Ambassador to the United States, at the screening of *The Bridge*, Aspen Institute, Dec. 17, 2007.

<sup>102</sup> Ali Jafaar, “Mideast shows cartoon mojo,” *Variety*, Oct. 25, 2007 <<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117974749.html?categoryid=2817&cs=1>> (accessed June 12, 2008).

(not necessarily American) standards of narrative clarity and sustained character development.<sup>103</sup> Regrettably, the Jordan Lab is not funded beyond the week of script writing. Even with the perfect script, the filmmakers have little chance of their film ever being produced. The Sundance workshop in Utah, which has room for only three international filmmakers, achieves an astonishingly high 50% film to production ratio. It is structured and funded differently than is the Jordan workshop, with a stipend that enables the filmmaker to concentrate exclusively on producing the film and offers continued contact with the workshop mentors. The Euromed Audiovisual Program's MFD (Media Films Development) project presents another worthwhile model: writer/producer teams meet with mentors for multiple sessions over a period of one year, with continuous email contact in between. Participants learn every aspect of filmmaking, from script writing to budgeting to "the pitch."<sup>104</sup>

The hard reality is that the American film market is tough enough to penetrate for Americans, much less people from the Muslim world. Sony CEO Michael Lynton's optimistic picture of a diverse, globalized world stretching from "Bangalore to Barcelona" with a "rich and dizzying array of cultures, all of them allowing thousands of movies and television shows to bloom" applies less aptly to the Middle East than it does to India, the other country with a highly developed commercial filmmaking industry.<sup>105</sup> Only one filmmaker from the Muslim world has cracked the Hollywood code: Sundance graduate Hany Abu Assad, whose 2006 film *Paradise Now* won the Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film, has settled in Los Angeles and is now making a feature film there.

While the goal of producing significant numbers of commercially viable films from the Muslim world may entail a lengthy uphill battle, the interim goal of training commercially viable talent is more practical and more likely to succeed. Distribution of foreign films in the United States presents almost as great a challenge as production. The flooding of the global market with American popular culture has no counterpart from the Muslim world. Films or exhibits originating from Arab and Muslim regions can occasionally be seen on either coast, but the penetration into and around the United States occurs far less frequently, except on university campuses.<sup>106</sup> Even within the Muslim world, cultural products generally tend to travel to Europe (especially from North Africa) and rarely to neighboring countries. This situation highlights two principal problems: 1) filmmakers from the Muslim world lack the funding, experience and expertise to make films for the global market, and 2) the United States remains "...one of the most insular societies—a society which actually knows very, very little about the outer world" without more exposure to the "voices" of artists and filmmakers from other countries, particularly those of the Muslim world.<sup>107</sup>

A pipeline for talented writers and film makers into the foreign film markets, including the U.S., is lacking. Two promising new ventures might begin to address this problem. The establishment of a film school in Jordan—developed in collaboration with the USC School for Cinematic Arts and opening in September 2008—hopefully will help to address this problem. Equally important will be the advent of new sources of funding, such as the Alliance of Civilizations Media Fund.<sup>108</sup> But, funding alone will not suffice. Knowledge-sharing, mentoring and the cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences

<sup>103</sup> Interviews with Craig Bolotin and Alesia Weston, November 2007.

<sup>104</sup> Euromed Audiovisual II. <<http://www.euromedaudiovisuel.net/general.aspx?menu=1&treeID=84&lang=en>> (accessed June 12, 2008).

<sup>105</sup> Michael Lynton, "Globalization and Cultural Diversity," *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 4, 2007, p. A17.

<sup>106</sup> Examples are the annual Arab film festival in Washington D.C., Richard Peña's Lincoln Center film festivals which frequently feature artists from the Islamic world, and Feri Daftari 2006 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, "Without Boundary."

<sup>107</sup> Wole Soyinka, White House Conference on Cultural Diplomacy, November 2000.

<sup>108</sup> Alliance of Civilization Media Fund, June 10, 2008, <<http://www.aocmediafund.org/>>.

through exchanges would all help to develop filmmaking in the Muslim world to a level that matches the quality of the stories.

For now, the Sundance Institute presents a good model for supporting and nurturing filmmaking in the Muslim world, but it is seriously under-funded. To have an impact, these types of programs would require not only financial support but also a more comprehensive, “soup to nuts” approach, with continuous mentoring, along the lines of the Sundance Film Labs held in Utah.

This challenge could potentially be taken up by the film festivals in the region. These range from long-standing festivals, such as those in Cairo, Beirut and Tehran, to the more glitzy “newcomers” in Dubai and Abu Dhabi (Dubai International Film Festival, DIFF, founded in 2004, and Middle East International Film Festival, launched in Abu Dhabi in 2007.)<sup>109</sup> Although international celebrities (mostly American) garner more attention than do regional filmmakers at the festivals, there are signs that these gatherings are increasingly focused on their role as a springboard and showcase for films from and about the Middle East. Both the Abu Dhabi and Dubai festivals include categories of short films to encourage and spotlight young filmmakers. The Dubai festival partnered with UNICEF to sponsor “OneMinutesJr.” video production workshops for youth in Cairo, while the Abu Dhabi Festival includes the Hayah Film Competition for movies made under 5 minutes and open to film-

makers throughout the U.A.E. and the Middle East region.<sup>110</sup> Finally, the newest arrival to the Festival scene, the Gulf Film Festival, is the first to spotlight films by Gulf nationals.<sup>111</sup> In order to help emerging talent “make the leap into feature filmmaking,” Festival Director Massoud Amralla Al-Ali is including digital filmmaking in the festival’s offerings. “We want to see these young artists make a film, and there is no longer any need to wait for a 35 mm budget. Digital is the future of independent film, and the GFF is the future of Khaleeji (Gulf) cinema.”<sup>112</sup>

Despite all the hurdles to filmmaking in the Middle East, incredible progress has been made in the last few years. Independent feature films have been produced for the first time from Yemen, Oman, and Bahrain. These new ventures have received varying degrees of government support. The first Yemeni film, *A New Day in Old Sana’a*, written and directed by Bader Ben Hirsi, was produced in 2005 against all odds; making the film entailed shipping nine tons of equipment from Beirut; finding and training Yemeni actors; fending off angry onlookers, a hostile press, and the Ministry of Culture; and a public defense before the Parliament.<sup>113</sup> It took Khalid al Zadjali, writer, producer and director of the first Omani feature film, *Al Boum*, more than twenty years to complete the project. Even though this story of urbanization confronting rural traditions was selected for screening at the Arabian Sights film festival in Washington, D.C., it was difficult to attract audiences in Oman, where there is

<sup>109</sup> On the Dubai and Abu Dhabi Film Festivals, and the healthy rivalry between them, see <<http://www.dubaifilmfest.com/>>; <<http://www.meiff.com/index.aspx>> (accessed June 12, 2008); <<http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=Cannes2007&jump=story&cid=1061&articleid=VR1117965177>> (accessed June 12, 2008).

<sup>110</sup> “Dubai International Film Festival Workshop Draws to a Close with a Cairo Session,” *Dubai International Festival 2008*, Mar. 23, 2008, Dubai International Film Festival, June 10, 2008, <<http://www.dubaifilmfest.com/en/media-center/press-room/press-releases/dubai-international-film-festival-workshop-series-draws-to-a-close-with-cairo-session-2.html>>; Hayah Film Competition, June 10, 2008, <<http://www.hayahfilm.com>>.

<sup>111</sup> “Dubai puts new Gulf film Festival in spotlight,” *ArabianBusiness*, November 13, 2007, *Arabian Business*, June 19, 2008, <<http://www.arabianbusiness.com/503932-dubai-announces-gulf-film-festival>>; “‘Four Girls’ opens Gulf Film Festival,” *Variety*, April 6, 2008, *Variety*, June 19, 2008, <<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117983586.html?categoryid=13&cs=1&nid=2562>>.

<sup>112</sup> “Gulf Film Festival ‘Bytes’ Into Filmmaking,” *Bahrain’s Filmmaking Rebels*, Apr. 7, 2008, *Bahrain’s Filmmaking Rebels*, June 10, 2008, <<http://rebels.gulfbroadcast.com/2008/04/07/gulf-film-festival-bytes-into-filmmaking/>>.

<sup>113</sup> Conversations with Bader Ben Hirsi in February 2006. The cast bonded so completely through these tribulations that no fewer than five marriages were celebrated among actors and members of the crew.

no market for local films (only American and Bollywood ones).<sup>114</sup> Whether these pioneering films will be “one offs” or will begin a trend remains to be seen, but Bader Ben Hirsi, for one, is skeptical of being able to make another film in Yemen, despite his desire to “counter the sensationalist coverage of the Arab world” and to enable viewers to “go behind the walls and [find] out a bit more about the women, the men, the culture, customs, and traditions” of Yemen.<sup>115</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS

Festivals offer exceptional opportunities for interdisciplinary, cross-cultural interactions. The festivals studied for this paper range from the avant-garde One Hundred Live: Electronic Music Festival (Cairo and Alexandria) to the renowned Fès Festival of World Sacred Music to forthcoming interdisciplinary festivals for 2009 at the Kennedy Center and at the Asia Society.<sup>116</sup> By their very nature, festivals encourage experimentation and cross-cultural fertilization of ideas and art forms. They also offer important venues for non-commercial as well as commercial artists.

The location of a festival can play a critical role in setting the stage for out-of-the-ordinary encounters and experiences, as is the case with the Fès Sacred Music Festival in Morocco, which makes use of the beauty of medieval Fès, or the Beiteddine Festival in Lebanon, set in a magnificent castle. The potential impact of festivals has not always been realized; a tremendous amount of work goes into an event that lasts a few days. Now, however, with the tools of new media, the magic of festivals can be more broadly shared through videos and blogs.

Festivals offer the possibility of an integrated platform, involving intellectual, artistic, and commu-

nity elements. This is the model of the Fès Festival, which combines a colloquium on a different theme every year with musical performances. This combination of discussion with performance leverages the transformative capacity of an artistic experience, such as listening to music, and carries it beyond the performance itself. Experiencing a performance can facilitate discussions on topics that might otherwise be difficult to broach. A collaboration between New York University’s Center for Dialogues, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the Asia Society, the Illuminating Islam Festival, scheduled for June 2009, aims to educate American audiences about Islamic culture and society and to connect different cultures together to discover points of common ground. Illuminating Islam will involve the larger New York community by inviting leading Muslim Americans as well as experts in various aspects of Islam to lead discussions. Engaging the diaspora has also been an important component of previous international festivals at the Kennedy Center, which will host Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World from February 23 to March 15, 2009. This festival will present both contemporary and historical traditions of Arab culture in the areas of music, dance, theater, as well as film, and the visual and literary arts, and will include collaborative American-Arab works created for the Festival. The Kennedy Center Festival organizers are holding discussions with other Washington institutions, including Brookings, about planning symposia and panel discussions in conjunction with the performances on topics such as the role of the arts in various Arab societies. As the nation’s theater, the Kennedy Center wields great influence. With prior festivals, such as the Chinese or the African Festivals, the Kennedy Center, in effect, educated America about these cultures and peoples. Given the negative stereotypes about Muslims and Islam, the festivals in Washington and New York have the potential to answer a serious need for a deeper expo-

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<sup>114</sup> Conversation with Khalid al Zadjali, Nov. 5, 2007.

<sup>115</sup> Bader Ben Hirsi, Arts and Cultural Leaders Seminar, U.S.-Islamic World Forum, Doha, Feb. 19, 2006.

<sup>116</sup> See Appendix.

sure—beyond the daily news—to the multiple dimensions of Islamic cultures and societies. Because the “information” will be conveyed through the arts, it will be widely accessible.

Festivals hold promise for introducing audiences to the full texture of “the other” and to alleviate the misunderstandings and misconceptions that underlie the relationship between the U.S. and the Muslim world. The Kennedy Center’s experience with the China Festival demonstrated that these events can have a 360 degree effect. That Festival was widely covered in the Chinese press, with a press conference announcing it and daily stories filed back to China describing the performances and the audience reaction. Given the fact that the dynamic of what people in the Muslim world think we think of them underlies the divide in the relationship, celebrating the arts and culture of the Muslim world in two major festivals could have a significant positive impact.

Festivals also have unrealized potential to “break out of the box” and move beyond “preaching to the choir.” Over time, festivals create their own audiences. The One Hundred Live: Electronic Music Festival grew organically to the point that its founder, Mahmoud Refat, was able to start an independent record label for the music from the Festival, which was not available anywhere else. The Beiteddine Festival has established such a strong reputation and loyal audience that it is sustainable, fully supported by private donations and corporate philanthropy. If festivals developed a system of cross-fertilization, of trading artists, then audiences would be introduced to new, unanticipated forms of artistic expression. For example, if established festivals, such as the JVC Jazz and Folk Festivals, interspersed artists from the Muslim world into their programs and shared their artists with festivals in the Muslim world, audiences would be exposed to

an unexpected, and possibly mind-changing artistic experience.<sup>117</sup> At present, there is no mechanism or financial support for such exchanges.

## VISUAL ARTS

Like festivals, art exhibitions can also have a 360 degree impact. That is to say, viewers can be affected by the interaction with the works of art, and their experience of seeing the art can, in turn, impact another audience. Simply hosting an exhibition of art from the Muslim world at a major American museum, such as, for example, *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking*, held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2006, already sends a message of respect. Curator Feri Daftari noted that the exhibition “helped the self-esteem of viewers from the Middle East and encouraged many young students to pay attention.” Observing that there could be a fine line between spotlighting artists from the Muslim world and “ghettoizing” them, Dr. Daftari described how she avoided the latter by including a couple of works by American artists, “to point out the reductive nature of a rubric such as ‘Islamic art.’” Bill Viola’s video works, influenced as they are by Sufi philosophies, fit comfortably into the show, even though the majority of artists were women from the Muslim world.<sup>118</sup>

Contemporary visual artists of international repute, such as Reza Abedini (Iran) and Shahzia Sikander (Pakistan), accomplish a dual purpose in broadening understanding of the Muslim world: in their art, they both revive historic visual traditions, often neglected in contemporary Muslim societies (as noted at the 2006 Doha Forum by renowned art collector Nasser D. Khalili) and re-interpret them with an individualistic modern sensibility. Thus, Shahzia Sikander’s paintings, such as *The Illustrated Page #1* (2005-2006), recall Persian and Indian miniatures but is also distinctly modern.<sup>119</sup> Reza Abedini

<sup>117</sup> “The Festival Network LLC,” *Festival Network*. 2008, The Festival Network, LLC. June 10, 2008, <<http://www.festivalnetwork.com/events.php>>.

<sup>118</sup> Feri Daftari, Curator, Museum of Modern Art, interview conducted November 14, 2007

<sup>119</sup> Sikander’s painting was chosen by feminist art historian Linda Nochlin to illustrate her article on contemporary feminism in art. (*Art News*, Feb. 2007, p. 177).

manages a large graphic design workshop in Tehran, where he first introduces his students to the rich traditions of Persian art and calligraphy and then helps them transform what they have learned into modern designs. As with film and literature, a challenge is to discover how to leverage the power of contemporary art in the U.S. and abroad by touring exhibitions beyond the major cities and also through the internet.

Simply the existence of a contemporary art scene in the Muslim world shatters stereotypes of this part of the world as conservative and opposed to modernity. In the Muslim world, as elsewhere, art galleries are gathering places for people involved with the arts. Clusters of galleries, such as in Courtyard in Dubai, designed by Iranian architect Dariush Zandi, not only provide venues for artists but also points of contact for artists and their patrons, an essential component of a healthy art environment. In Baghdad, one of, if not the only, cultural locale that has remained open throughout the conflict is the Attitudes Society of Arts and Culture. Owner Hassan D. Nassar stays open at all costs, offering a hospitable environment for exhibitions, screening, readings, and discussions.

## THEATER AND DANCE

“The minute there is contact, there is change.”<sup>120</sup>

While film and television can be leveraged through technology to reach the broader public, the power of theater and dance comes from their direct contact with audiences and the intense experience of creating and executing a live performance. Over the course of a three-year collaboration in Egypt and California that included living together in the same space, cooking for each other, showing each

other their work and exploring possibilities for collaborative work, dancer/choreographer Joe Goode learned from an Egyptian theater company a renewed respect for every detail of movement. Simultaneously, his more intimate approach, designed to break down the barriers with the audience, affected the delivery of his Egyptian collaborators, Al Warsha Theater. Members of the Egyptian theater troupe became acquainted with a group of American artists representing diverse religious and social backgrounds, including a Laotian immigrant. One of the Egyptian stick dancers, introduced to contemporary dance for the first time, has gone on to become a critically acclaimed contemporary dancer and choreographer. As Joe Goode explains,

“It was a very mutual interest in each other’s work that brought us together, and I don’t think for a minute that that has changed, but the circumstances have changed... One of the sad outcomes of 9/11 was that it was harder for organizations like Al Warsha to keep close contacts with Western companies. It became difficult for them to be seen as an organization that has a close association with an American entity.”<sup>121</sup>

Political and practical circumstances have conspired to make the type of intensive, long-term collaboration that took place between the Joe Goode Company and Hassan Geretly’s Al Warsha theater group in Cairo difficult to replicate today. Politically, Muslim and Arab groups may come under fire for close associations with American companies. Geretly’s company, which is engaged with the politically and culturally sensitive area of resurrecting ancient texts central to the Arab identity, was criticized as being an instrument of the West during its collaboration with Joe Goode. Since 2001, the two groups have not worked together, despite their mutually fruitful and produc-

<sup>120</sup> Nimet Naguib, former Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy in Cairo, at a meeting in Cairo to discuss this paper, Oct. 21, 2007.

<sup>121</sup> Joe Goode, artistic director, Joe Goode Performance Group, interview conducted on Nov. 8, 2007.

tive collaboration. One reason that extends beyond politics is that Arts International, an organization that funded and facilitated such cultural exchanges, folded. The vacuum that it left behind has yet to be filled. While the Ford Foundation also contributed financially to the Goode-Gerety collaboration, its focus has changed from supporting individuals to institutional initiatives. Furthermore, it has always relied on other organizations (primarily the now defunct Arts International) to handle the logistics and administration of exchanges, as do the individual artists. Given the difficulties of procuring visas for visitors from the Arab and Muslim world, the administrative burden has become even more daunting (see the discussion of this broader issue under “Roadblocks”). Reconstituting Arts International, or creating a new organization from scratch, might require a coalition of donors and players. But without a sufficiently endowed entity to handle administration and logistics, it is difficult to imagine how the full potential of exchanges, residencies, and partnerships can be realized.

“When we are talking about the arts, access to politics can be entirely different.”<sup>122</sup>

For plays with political content, the intimate relationship between performers and audiences in live theater opens the possibility for frank dialogue on difficult subjects with diverse communities. Meena Natarajan and her husband Dipankar Mukherjee, who left his position at the Guthrie Theater to found a community-based political theater, commission and produce plays that deal with issues of conflict, often involving the Muslim world. Their mission extends beyond the performance, to panel discussions afterwards representing a full range of viewpoints. For example, following a production of *Love from Ramallah*, they had policemen and immigration officials as well as academicians lead a discussion on immigration and assimilation. By en-

gaging different sectors of the broader Minneapolis/Minnesota community—including people broadly interested in human rights and social justice, as well as Muslim issues—their production company, Pangea has created a following, and they have become new philanthropists for the arts.

Pangea represents just one example of the potential of the arts, specifically the performing arts, to engage audiences in issues as well as in entertainment. The lack of funding, both within the United States and internationally, to support politically engaged theater, not to mention the practical hurdles involved in exchanges and partnerships, mitigates its potential impact. The funding community writ large has yet to understand, as Pangea has, the potential of creative expression to engage difficult issues and to illuminate similarities and differences on the path to deeper understanding.

Within the policy realm, arts and politics seldom mix, despite the capacity of creative expression to illuminate the lack of respect and understanding at the heart of the divide between the U.S. and Muslim world. When the Brookings Institution has invited its traditional audience to cultural events, such as film screenings followed by panel discussions, the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Yet, the number of institutions in the U.S. or in the Muslim world that regularly harness the potential of the arts to shed light on politics and society are few. One exception is the Asia Society, which frequently combines culture and politics in its events, perhaps reflecting the more seamless integration of the two in much of Asia.

## LITERATURE

“...you know the soul of the society, the soul of the city, the soul of [Afghanistan] is books. In any country...”<sup>123</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Meena Natarajan, *Pangea* Theater, Minneapolis, MN, interview conducted Nov. 9, 2007.

<sup>123</sup> Afghan bookseller Shah Mohammed Rais, “Morning Edition,” NPR, Nov. 27, 2007 <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16626180>> (Accessed June 19, 2008).

Until recently, the United States and the Arab world jointly held the dubious distinction of translating the fewest books from other languages into English and Arabic, respectively. That will change, for the Arab world at least, with the advent of Kalima, an ambitious translation project launched by the Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority. Kalima promises to translate 100 “classic, contemporary, and modern titles from around the world” into Arabic.<sup>124</sup> Without private interventions, such as that of Kalima or the substantially less well-funded NGO Words Without Borders, market forces dominate in literature—as in the film and music industries—determining which books will be translated and into which languages. Far fewer books are translated into English than from English every year, with negligible numbers translated from the Muslim world.<sup>125</sup> NGOs such as Words Without Borders, which published the successful anthology *Literature from the Axis of Evil*, step in to fill the breach, but still, opportunities are missed.

For example, given the phenomenal popularity of poetry in places such as Iran and the Gulf States, a poetry translation project would introduce truly vital dimensions of the Muslim world—past and present—to America. Similarly, translating American poetry into Arabic would fill a gap. At a poetry reading in Doha in 2007 featuring Robert Pinsky and four Qatari poets, the Qataris were asked about their favorite English language poet. Not a single name was mentioned. Why? Because few poems are translated from English to Arabic. Robert Pinsky’s Favorite Poem Project provides a model that could be adapted to the Arab world or Iran.<sup>126</sup> Pinsky asked Americans to send him their favorite poem with an explanation of why they chose that poem. The poems, submitted by

Americans of all ages and backgrounds, were published in three volumes, on a DVD and website. A variant of this project, which had favorite Arabic poems translated into English and favorite English poems translated into Arabic, might truly bridge the two cultures.

Kuwaiti businessman Naif Al-Mutawa of Teshkeel Media Group has adapted a popular form of children’s “literature” to the Muslim world in an effort to imbue in young people around the world the stories and ideas of Islam. Comic books with superheroes embodying the 99 qualities of Allah are conveying Islamic values to young people from Berkeley to Bali through its action-packed stories. Conservative Muslim Majid Al-Refai, the CEO of Unicorn Capital, one of the largest and most influential Islamic investment banks in the region, has invested in Teshkeel because he appreciates the way the comic series communicates core Muslim values.

## MUSIC

“It was a shock for me to be recognized in a U.S. university campus in San Francisco when I had never been there before, or when an American youth came to me after my performance in New York and sang one of the song lines to me in Farsi! He had listened to my music many times and memorized a couple of lines. I really saw that the language barrier was gone and I was face to face with a normal American friend my age.”<sup>127</sup>

There is an explosion of new music in the Muslim world, ranging from hip-hop to contemporary

<sup>124</sup> “Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage: Kalima,” Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage, June 12, 2008. <[http://www.cultural.org.ae/projects/awards-festivals/kalima\\_en.html](http://www.cultural.org.ae/projects/awards-festivals/kalima_en.html)>.

<sup>125</sup> While translated books make up about 25%-45% of books published annually in many countries, in the United States, only 3% of publications are translated according to *Publishers Weekly*.

<sup>126</sup> Favorite Poem Project, June 12, 2008, <<http://www.favoritepoem.org/>>.

<sup>127</sup> YAS, Iranian hip-hop/rap artist, interview conducted Oct. 13, 2007.



versions of more traditional music (Marcel Khalife) to a thriving independent music scene that presents new artists through independent labels (Incognito) and festivals (Fès Festival of Sufism, 100 Copies). With new technologies, artists can record online and no longer need a record label contract. This opens up new possibilities for collaboration, including across geographical borders. Magnatune (an independent record label that licenses music online, [www.magnatune.com](http://www.magnatune.com)) hosted an online remix contest featuring Pakistani rock musician Salman Ahmad that not only introduced Ahmad's music to people all over the world but also offered musicians the chance to jam "with" him. Ahmad posted a clip of his music on the Magnatune website; anyone could download it and then record his or her own remix. In Palestine, online collaboration is a matter of survival. When roadblocks prevent members of hip-hop groups, such as Ramallah Underground and Dam, from reaching the recording studio, they record at home and send the clip via Skype to the studio, where the others cut the final recording "with" them.

The potential for new types of cross-cultural musical collaborations—recordings, concerts, and videos—is huge, and, at present, unrealized. As with film, there is a significant role for for-profit expertise: How can online recording be leveraged to generate revenue for artists in the Muslim world? Thousands download Iranian rapper YAS's music, but because he lives in Iran, there is no mechanism for him to receive revenues from these downloads. This challenge extends beyond the realm of arts and culture, but with the United States' knowledge and expertise in technology, intellectual property, and music, it should be possible to tackle these problems. Finding ways to generate revenue from cultural products would make an important contribution to the youth unemployment problems afflicting the region. Crossover concerts could help to generate

exposure for musicians and audiences on both sides and could lead to collaborations.

Hip-hop, a global musical language, can be found everywhere from the cover article in *Foreign Policy* (November/December 2007); to the Sundance Film Festival, where *Sling Shot Hip-Hop*, a film about Palestinian hip-hop, will premiere; to Kenya, where a former child soldier from Sudan, Emmanuel Jal, raps his story; to Sudanese refugee camps in Cairo, where hip-hop offers both a refuge from violence and a chance for dialogue; to Iran, where the hottest star, YAS, raps about social issues. Giving voice to alienated youth in the Muslim world presents a tremendous challenge. Groups such as the Palestinian groups Dam or G-Town the Palestinian Hip-Hop Makers express their frustration but also their ideals for a better future through hip-hop, which is really just poetry—a time honored art in the Muslim world—put to a beat. Whether they sing in Arabic, Turkish, French or English, today's hip-hop musicians speak a common language.

Russell Simmons's Hip-Hop Summit Action Network has shown that hip-hop can be used to engage youth in discussions of serious issues, such as civic and financial responsibility.<sup>128</sup> The Hip-Hop Summit formula of a summit featuring hip-hop stars as speakers could be adapted to dialogues involving the Muslim world. The breadth and depth of hip-hop in the Muslim world is little known in the United States; similarly, the importance of Islam to the roots of hip-hop in America is an undiscovered aspect of American cultural history.<sup>129</sup>

Although in the U.S. hip-hop can be associated with extreme wealth, misogyny, and violence, these negative aspects have not been translated to the Muslim world, where instead, the tradition of hip-hop as the language of the outsider or the disenfranchised prevails. Muslim American music star Ali Shaheed

<sup>128</sup> Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, June 12, 2008, <<http://www.hsan.org/Content/Home.aspx?pageId=241>>.

<sup>129</sup> Jennifer Mayortena Taylor's upcoming film *New Muslim Cool* will illuminate this aspect of hip-hop.

Mohammed of the group A Tribe Called Quest put it best: “People identify with the struggle. It doesn’t really matter where you come from; we all have the same story.” Inspired by early rappers, such as Tribe and Tupac Shakur, as well as the underground stars of today, such as Talib Kweli, artists throughout the world have adapted hip-hop to their own language and situation. The Ozomatli tour and the hip-hop dance sessions led by Havi Koro, as well as the hip-hop dance concert created at the American Voices “Unity Academy” workshop in Iraq, have been among the most successful programs funded by the State Department. The discovery of a “common language” in hip-hop naturally creates a feeling of affinity, but, equally important is the sharing and discovery of new variations of the common language that each artist or dancer or region brings. It may be that the negative images of commercial hip-hop in the United States have discouraged greater exploitation of this natural connector to the Muslim world, but the tremendously positive response to the modest ventures by the State Department suggests that more could be done.

## NEW MEDIA

Internet and cell phone technologies now facilitate the production and distribution of music, film, visual arts and design in the Muslim world where, previously, limited access to the commercial sector or censorship prevented artists from reaching the public. In the Muslim world, cell phone technology is often more advanced than it is in the United States, and artists and musicians are finding inno-

vative ways to take advantage of this new platform. Egyptian theater artist Tarek Said’s successful cell phone drama, produced for the media company Techno Wireless, sold particularly well in Saudi Arabia, where cell phones are becoming the most important means of entertainment as well as communication. I-catalyst, an online international design association with 1,200 members, emerged from the felicitous combination of a group of graphic designers without time to meet in person and a presence on Facebook. I-catalyst’s activities run the gamut from commercial design to an online contest to recreate the Egyptian flag to the introduction of graphic graffiti—personal statements and designs—in Cairo. Taking advantage of online music production and distribution, independent music labels such as 100 Copies make a wide range of music available, enabling musicians to reach out to the public outside conventional commercial means. Our interviews indicate that these online ventures in creative fields in the Muslim world were taking place without collaboration or assistance from the United States.

Dialogue projects, such as Soliya or Chat the Planet (producers of *Hometown Baghdad*), have developed excellent models for using technology to bring people together across geographic boundaries. Virtual worlds, such as Second Life, also have potential in this respect, although participation from the Muslim world is still relatively low (about 1% of Second Life’s membership). The field is open for cross-cultural projects involving the Muslim world in creative expression using web technology.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> See appendix.

# ROADBLOCKS TO CULTURAL INTERACTIONS WITH THE MUSLIM WORLD

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“In the name of security, multi-cultural artistic expression is being stifled.”<sup>131</sup>

The roadblocks to realizing the potential of cultural interactions with the Muslim world fall into several categories: 1) language, 2) lack of funding, 3) organizational and structural challenges, and 4) visas. The real language barriers, operating in both directions, make it difficult to understand the contemporary art scene in parts of the Muslim world and to be in contact with artists. Similarly, for artists in the Muslim world who don't know English, exchanges or interactions with the American art scene are difficult (although not impossible). Establishing meaningful long-term relationships between artists from the U.S. and Muslim world or, from the perspective of funders, with artists in the Muslim world, is greatly complicated by language barriers. The second two items are interrelated. Arts and culture, as organized by both the public and private sectors, affect the U.S. relationship with the Muslim world, but currently there is neither an overall strategy involving both sectors nor even a mechanism to develop one. This reflects the core problem of the relative absence of arts and culture from policy and development agendas and strategies. With the current low levels of funding from the public sector and private philanthropy, it will be difficult to capitalize upon the opportunities afforded by new developments in arts and culture in the Muslim world or to address the pressing needs. There are fundamental differences in the nature and goals of commercial culture, government-funded cultural diplomacy and private philanthropy for international programs involving culture. Although the three entities tend to operate separately, each would benefit

from greater cooperation and information sharing. The new public-private partnerships in television content provide models from which each side stands to gain. Most significantly, arts and culture would have greater potential to impact positively U.S. relations with the Muslims if there were greater coordination and cooperation between the U.S. private commercial sector, the private philanthropic sector and government.

In addition to the lack of funding and coordination between sectors, further hurdles facing those working on arts and culture involving the Muslim world include the aforementioned problems with visas and the lack of an administrative infrastructure to handle the travel, logistics, and visa requirements of artistic exchanges. Following the demise of Arts International, the Kennedy Center—in collaboration with Africa Exchange and 651 Arts—stepped into the breach with the publication in 2001 of a handbook for arts administrators who want to bring artists from Africa to the United States. The information is comprehensive, informing potential presenters of the sensitivities African artists can face when they travel and return to their home countries, covering technical information on contracts, visas and travel, as well as providing tips for the kind of promotion that best help audiences to contextualize what they see and hear. Even so, neither foundations nor arts organizations on either side have the capacity to undertake the bureaucratic work required for an artistic exchange of any size. The idiosyncrasies of the visa process also sabotage festivals and exhibitions.

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<sup>131</sup> Interview with Dore Stein, *The Tangents Turkey Music Tour*, Dec. 3, 2007.

## CONCLUSION AND FIRST STEPS

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Our research, interviews, and meetings with arts and policy leaders over the last year have led to several conclusions about best practices in arts and culture interactions between the United States and the Muslim world and about interdisciplinary initiatives involving arts and cultural figures and policy makers. First, the Brookings Institution's experiment in engaging the arts in bridging the divide between the United States and the Muslim world has demonstrated the value of bringing different perspectives to bear on a common problem. The meetings of the Arts and Cultural Leaders Seminar at the U.S.–Islamic World Forum in Doha in 2006, 2007, and 2008 and regional meetings of arts and cultural leaders in Cairo, New York, and Los Angeles have energized policy makers and artists alike, have led to the development of project proposals and have fostered collaborations and innovative uses of new platforms and technologies.

In order to realize the potential of this informal network of arts and cultural figures and policy makers, the Brookings Institution intends to seek funding to establish the Arts and Culture Dialogue Initiative, in partnership with Georgetown University, and operational in Washington, D.C. and Doha, Qatar, where both Georgetown and Brookings have branches. The primary activities of the Initiative will include conducting research, convening meetings, hosting events, and, through these gatherings, sparking the development of projects. The Arts and Culture Initiative Workshop at the annual U.S.–

Islamic World Forum would remain the “beating heart” of the initiative, with new members and alumni mixing every year. In addition, the Initiative also would host regional meetings, along the lines of those held last June in Los Angeles, sometimes on particular topics. Future meetings might also include a convening of Asian arts and cultural leaders at the Kuala Lumpur Forum.

The Initiative will serve as a convener and a catalyst, spinning out projects rather than managing them. It will shape the expanding network of bilateral partners, established through prior meetings, into a multilateral coalition of partners working toward the shared, broad goal of maximizing the potential of arts and culture to increase understanding between the United States and the global Muslim community.<sup>132</sup> A Board of Advisors, made up of U.S. and Muslim world leaders in arts and culture will be formed to oversee the Initiative. It will be drawn primarily from among past participants in the Doha Arts and Culture Initiative Workshop or in other meetings, as well as partners of projects that evolve from the Initiative.

Building on the success of the L.A. event in 2007, the program will launch a Hollywood Engagement Project, which has been developed in partnership with Unity Productions Foundation, and with the support of One Nation for All Foundation. The Project will establish an Information Resource Center, with an online presence backed by administrative

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<sup>132</sup> Organizations that have expressed interest in supporting the work of the Initiative (or who already support it) include the following: the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; One Nation for All Foundation; the Qatar Foundation; The Creative Artists Agency Foundation; the Writers Guild of America; the Paley Center for Media; the Kennedy Center; the Asia Society; the Festival Network; Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage; The Executive Office, Dubai; and Home Box Office.

staff and live experts to advise Hollywood producers, writers, agents, and show runners on all things regarding Islam and Muslim. To be housed at the Paley Center for Media (the former Museum of Radio and TV), the Hollywood Engagement Project also will convene meetings and host speakers on a bi-monthly basis for the Los Angeles creative community on topics related to the Muslim world.

Our research and the meetings organized by the Brookings Institution have identified the following areas and ideas as promising next steps for arts and culture activities related to America's relationship with the global Muslim community:

- **Hip-hop:** Hip-hop holds great promise for engaging youth in the United States and the Muslim world. One next step would be an intercultural jam session with artists from the United States and the Muslim world. Another would be a hip-hop summit, modeled on Russell Simmons and Ben Chavis's Hip-Hop Action Summit. Both would offer opportunities to investigate ways to apply a new model of American philanthropy, one that would share knowledge and expertise in music recording and production, with the aim of helping artists in the Muslim world to gain greater distribution and earn revenues.
- **Poetry:** Robert Pinsky's Favorite Poem Project provides an excellent model for beginning to build intercultural connections through an art form that is beloved in much of the Muslim world. Arabic and Persian-speaking publics would be asked to submit their favorite poems. The translated versions (English into Arabic and Persian; Arabic and Persian into English) would introduce the poetry and the people of the different regions to each other.

- **Virtual Worlds:** Although participation in virtual worlds is minimal at present in the Muslim world, the technology offers the possibility over the long term of lectures, dialogues, discussions, concerts, screenings and other performances that could break down barriers of geography and incorporate "audiences" from different parts of the world. Contests, such as the remix contest with Salman Ahmed's music, increase distribution and engagement with diverse types of music. At the 2008 U.S.-Islamic World Forum, the Brookings Institution, in collaboration with Dancing Ink Productions, held a virtual world panel discussion featuring Howard Gordon (executive producer of *24*) and Nashwa al Ruwaini (CEO, Pyramedia) and attended by people (via their avatars) from the U.S., South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. The session concluded with a freestyle hip-hop concert featuring top Iranian rapper YAS in Farsi and, in Arabic, Palestinian Muhammed Mughrabi, the leader and co-founder of the G-Town the Palestinian Hip-Hop Makers group in Jerusalem that had all the participants' avatars dancing.<sup>133</sup>

These ideas represent targets of opportunity we have discovered in our research. They are presented as examples but are not meant to be definitive.

## KEY FINDINGS:

In addition, our research has suggested the following general recommendations to policy makers, funders, and arts and culture leaders:

- Recognize that the lack of support for artistic and cultural interactions with the Muslim world represents a lost opportunity. At the core

<sup>133</sup> "Dancing Ink TB Hip-Hop for a New Global Culture," *Youtube*, Feb. 19, 2008, Youtube, June 12, 2008. <<http://youtube.com/watch?v=la3DfdFoU0s&feature=user> (hip-hop video)>; "Live from the Doha Forum," *Youtube*, Apr. 01, 2008, Youtube, June 12, 2008. <<http://youtube.com/watch?v=LBHiHGQ9mcM>>. (Second Life panel).

of the U.S.-Muslim world divide is a lack of understanding and respect. The arts have the potential to persuade and alter stereotypes through their emotional impact. Both historically and today, arts and culture have played a critical role in shaping identity in the Muslim world and in providing an outlet for freedom of expression, especially dissent and criticism of authority.

- Value art for art's sake, as well as a "post-9/11" bridge builder. Activities that build partnerships and strengthen arts and cultural institutions within civil society will ultimately take us further than words or "dialogue."
- Support artists and cultural figures in the Muslim world. U.S. public and private institutions can assist by translating, exhibiting, and distributing these artists' work, as well as inviting them to speak and work in the United States.
- Support local filmmakers. As Palestinian filmmaker Hany Abu Assad has demonstrated with his award-winning *Paradise Now*, there are many talented young filmmakers in the region with good stories to tell—the American film industry should help these filmmakers bring their stories to the world. As a first step, successful mentoring models such as the Sundance Middle East Screenwriters Lab (of which Assad is a graduate) should be replicated and expanded to include more participants and to cover the full range of film production. In addition, local film communities who could work on foreign films in production in the Muslim world should be encouraged and nurtured. The first film school in the region, the Red Sea Institute for Cinematic Arts, will begin to supply a talent pool for this purpose.
- Combine cultural outreach with capacity building. Successful models of partnerships

that combine training in various aspects of media with cross-cultural productions, such as the collaboration behind the animated series *Ben and Izzy* (Layalina Productions, a U.S. nonprofit media company; Fat Rock Entertainment, a U.S. distribution company; Rubicon, a Jordanian animation company) should be leveraged and replicated. Engage the private sector. One of America's strengths is its expertise in commercial artistic and cultural production. Through mentoring and exchanges of knowledge and personnel, the U.S. private sector can help build the capacity within the Muslim world to produce commercially viable music, literature, theater and film. Equally important, the U.S. private sector can support the development of commercially viable talent, in the broadest sense, within the Muslim world. International film makers seek out not only new voices and stories, but also new sources of less expensive digital production. New technologies are unhampered by geography and can "work" anywhere.

Our research and interviews indicate a hunger for cultural connections with American artists and cultural leaders among their counterparts in the Muslim world. In turn, meetings with the creative community in the United States have revealed a keen awareness of the critical role arts and culture plays in perpetuating or reversing negative stereotypes (such as those associated with Arabs and Islam in American popular culture) and a desire to contribute positively to increasing understanding across cultures. Finally, the burgeoning cultural sector in the Muslim world—including ambitious initiatives in the Gulf and the growth of new networks and media throughout the Middle East—offers new possibilities for non-traditional, public-private, cross-cultural partnerships, as well as new models of sustainability for nonprofit arts and media organizations. Muslim artists and entrepreneurs face

the same challenges as their American counterparts: how to harness and monetize the internet, cell phone-based entertainment, and other alternative formats. The huge hurdles (monetary and political) hampering production of conventional media such as films and TV programs, have led to extraordinary creativity in the Muslim world in exploiting the potential of new media.

# APPENDIX

NAME	INTERVIEWEE/INSTITUTION	FIELD	COUNTRY	WEBSITE
International Visitor	State Department	Cultural Exchange	USA	<a href="http://exchanges.state.gov/education/ivp/overview.htm">http://exchanges.state.gov/education/ivp/overview.htm</a>
Kennedy Center Arab Arts Festival	Alicia Adams	Dance/Theater/Film/Music/ Multimedia	USA (D.C.)	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/27/AR2006042702369.html">http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/27/AR2006042702369.html</a>
Projecting Culture	School of Cinematic Arts, USC, Ellen Seiter	Film	USA (Los Angeles)	<a href="http://www.specificpictures.com">http://www.specificpictures.com</a>
"Nobody's Enemy"	Neda Sarmast	Film	USA (New York)	<a href="http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&amp;friendID=121457463">http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&amp;friendID=121457463</a>
Specific Pictures	"New Muslim Cool" Jennifer Taylor	Film	USA (San Francisco)	<a href="http://www.specificpictures.com">http://www.specificpictures.com</a>
Alliance of Civilization Media Fund	Mahnaz Anwar Fancy, Omar Amanat, Suhail Rizvi	Film	USA (New York)	<a href="http://www.aocmediafund.org/">http://www.aocmediafund.org/</a>
Layalina Productions	Leon Shahabian, Amb. Marc Ginsberg	Film	USA (D.C.)	<a href="http://www.layalina.tv/">http://www.layalina.tv/</a>
Search for Common Ground	Leena El-Ali, Susan Koscis, John and Susan Marks	Film	USA (D.C.)	<a href="http://www.sfcg.org/">http://www.sfcg.org/</a>
Sundance Writers' Lab, Sundance Institute	Alesia Weston and Craig Bolotin	Film/Screenwriting	USA and Jordan	<a href="http://www.sundance.org/festival/insider/2008-01-21-FOF-middle-east.asp">http://www.sundance.org/festival/insider/2008-01-21-FOF-middle-east.asp</a>
Words without Borders	Alane Salierno Mason	Literature Reaserach and Translation	USA	<a href="http://www.wordswithoutborders.org">http://www.wordswithoutborders.org</a>
American Voices	John Ferguson	Music/Dance	USA (Based in Thailand)	<a href="www.americanvoices.org">www.americanvoices.org</a>
Chat the Planet	Laurie Meadoff	New Media	USA (New York City)	<a href="http://www.chattheplanet.com/">http://www.chattheplanet.com/</a>
Soliya	Liza Chambers	New Media/Internet	USA	<a href="http://www.soliya.net/">http://www.soliya.net/</a>
Nine Parts of Desire	Heather Raiffo	Theater	USA (New York)	<a href="http://www.heatherraifo.com/9parts.html">http://www.heatherraifo.com/9parts.html</a>
Pangea Theater	Meera Natarajan, Depak Mulcargi	Theater	USA (Minnesota)	<a href="http://www.pangeaworldtheater.org">http://www.pangeaworldtheater.org</a>
Joe Goode Performance Group	Joe Goode	Theatre/Dance	USA (California)	<a href="http://www.joegoode.org">http://www.joegoode.org</a>
Arts of the Islamic World	Mahnaz Anwar Fancy	Visual Arts	USA (New York)	<a href="http://www.artsoftheislamicworld.org/a/w.html">http://www.artsoftheislamicworld.org/a/w.html</a>
Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking	Feri Daftari	Visual Arts	USA (New York)	<a href="http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2006/15_ways.html">http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2006/15_ways.html</a>
Asia Society/BAM "Illuminating Islam"	Karen Hopkins	Visual Arts/Festival Music	USA (New York)	<a href="http://www.asiasociety.org/">http://www.asiasociety.org/</a> ; <a href="http://www.bam.org/">http://www.bam.org/</a>
File Club	Mahmud Handy	New Media /Design	Egypt	<a href="http://www.fileclub.org/index.html">http://www.fileclub.org/index.html</a> ; <a href="http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2239707003">http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2239707003</a>
100 Copies	Mahmoud Refat	Music/Festivals	Egypt	<a href="http://www.100copies.com">http://www.100copies.com</a>
Mohammed Hassan	Independent Film Maker	Film	Egypt	
Tarek Said	Independent Producer	Theater/Cell Phone Production	Egypt	
Ana Al Masry	Mohamed Ashour	Music/Cultural Preservation	Egypt	<a href="http://www.analmasry.com/">http://www.analmasry.com/</a>
Our Town Collaborative Production	Nimet Naguib (U.S. Embassy Cairo)/Seth Gordon (Cleveland Theatre Collective)	Theater	Egypt	<a href="http://www.clevelandtheater.com/our_town_in_cairo_april_21.asp">http://www.clevelandtheater.com/our_town_in_cairo_april_21.asp</a>



Adham Hafez	Adham Hafez/World Concert Global Brain Sounds	Music/New Media	Egypt	<a href="http://www.openstudiocairo.com/hafez">http://www.openstudiocairo.com/hafez</a>
Open Studios 2006	Town-House Gallery	Visual Arts	Egypt	<a href="http://www.thetownhousegallery.com/">http://www.thetownhousegallery.com/</a>
Fathy Salmi	Fathy Salmi	Music	Egypt	
Student Action for Refugees	Nida Ghouse	Music/Hip-Hop for violence prevention	Egypt	<a href="http://www.artfacts.net/index.php/pageType/instInfo/inst/3840">http://www.artfacts.net/index.php/pageType/instInfo/inst/3840</a>
Open Craft	Karim Rateb	New Media/Open Source IT	Egypt	<a href="http://www.open-craft.com">http://www.open-craft.com</a>
Bibliotheca Alexandria	Ismael Serageldin	Visual Arts/New Media/Literature/Cultural Preservation	Egypt	<a href="http://www.bibalex.org">http://www.bibalex.org</a>
YAS	YAS	Music/Hip-Hop	Iran	<a href="http://www.myspace.com/yaspersian2">http://www.myspace.com/yaspersian2</a>
Reza Abedini	Reza Abedini	Visual Arts	Iran	<a href="http://www.rezaabedini.com/">http://www.rezaabedini.com/</a>
Partow Hooshmandrad	Partow Hooshmandrad	Visual Arts/Cultural Preservation	Iran	
Attitudes Society of Arts and Culture	Hassan D. Nassar	Visual Arts	Iraq	<a href="http://www.artniraq.org/">http://www.artniraq.org/</a>
Red Sea Institute of Cinematic Arts	Elizabeth Daley	Film	Jordan/USA	<a href="http://www.rsica.com/">http://www.rsica.com/</a>
Teshkeel Media "The 99"	Naif Al Mutawa	Comics (Literature)	Kuwait	<a href="http://www.the99.org">http://www.the99.org</a>
Betaddin Festival	Betaddin Festival Wafa Saab	Music/ Festival	Lebanon	<a href="http://www.beitcedine.org">http://www.beitcedine.org</a>
Incognito	Tony Sfeir	Music Distributor	Lebanon/Syria	<a href="http://www.incognito.com.lb/">http://www.incognito.com.lb/</a>
MFD	Euromed Audiovisual Program	Film Making Workshop	Morocco	<a href="http://www.delwbg.ec.europa.eu/en/whatsnew/lanch.htm">http://www.delwbg.ec.europa.eu/en/whatsnew/lanch.htm</a>
Fes Festival (Festival de Fès des Musiques Sacrées du Monde)	Faouzi Skali	Music Festival	Morocco	<a href="http://www.fesfestival.com/2008/index.php">http://www.fesfestival.com/2008/index.php</a>
Ministry of Culture	Khaled Al Zadjali	Film	Oman	<a href="http://www.filmfestdc.org/arabiansights/filmView.cfm?passID=1">http://www.filmfestdc.org/arabiansights/filmView.cfm?passID=1</a>
Junoon	Saiman Ahmad	Music	Pakistan	<a href="http://www.junoon.com/home2.htm">http://www.junoon.com/home2.htm</a>
Sabreen	Said Murad	Music	Palestine	<a href="http://www.sabreen.org/">http://www.sabreen.org/</a>
IF Istanbul AFM International Independent Film Festival	Pelin Turgot	Film Festival	Turkey	<a href="http://2008.ifistanbul.com/en/">http://2008.ifistanbul.com/en/</a>
Light Illumination/ Electricity	Santroni Istanbul	Music/New Media	Turkey	<a href="http://santralistanbul-ile.blogspot.com/">http://santralistanbul-ile.blogspot.com/</a>
Tangents	Dore Stein	Music/Travel	Turkey	<a href="http://www.tangents.com/">http://www.tangents.com/</a>
Kalima	Karim Nagy	Literature, Research and Translation	UAE	<a href="http://www.kalima.ae/eng.php">http://www.kalima.ae/eng.php</a>
Bader Ben Hirsi	Bader Ben Hirsi	Film	Yemen	<a href="http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0478213/">http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0478213/</a> ; <a href="http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117929170.html?categoryid=31&amp;cs=1&amp;p=0">http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117929170.html?categoryid=31&amp;cs=1&amp;p=0</a>

## PROJECT ON U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD

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THE PROJECT ON U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD is a major research program housed within the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. The project conducts high-quality public policy research, and convenes policy makers and opinion leaders on the major issues surrounding the relationship between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project seeks to engage and inform policymakers, practitioners, and the broader public on developments in Muslim countries and communities, and the nature of their relationship with the United States. Together with the affiliated Brookings Doha Center in Qatar, it sponsors a range of events, initiatives, research projects, and publications designed to educate, encourage frank dialogue, and build positive partnerships between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project has several interlocking components:

- The U.S.-Islamic World Forum, which brings together key leaders in the fields of politics, business, media, academia, and civil society from across the Muslim world and the United States, for much needed discussion and dialogue;
- A Visiting Fellows program, for scholars and journalists from the Muslim world to spend time researching and writing at Brookings in order to inform U.S. policy makers on key issues facing Muslim states and communities;
- A series of Brookings Analysis Papers and Monographs that provide needed analysis of the vital issues of joint concern between the United States and the Muslim world;

- An Arts and Culture Initiative, which seeks to develop a better understanding of how arts and cultural leaders and organizations can increase understanding between the United States and the global Muslim community;
- A Science and Technology Initiative, which examines the role cooperative science and technology programs involving the United States and the Muslim world can play in responding to regional development and education needs, as well as fostering positive relations;
- A “Bridging the Divide” Initiative which explores the role of Muslim communities in the West;
- A Brookings Institution Press Book Series, which aims to synthesize the project’s findings for public dissemination.

The underlying goal of the Project is to continue the Brookings Institution’s original mandate to serve as a bridge between scholarship and public policy. It seeks to bring new knowledge to the attention of decision-makers and opinion-leaders, as well as afford scholars, analysts, and the public a better insight into policy issues. The Project is supported through the generosity of a range of sponsors including the Government of the State of Qatar, The Ford Foundation, The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories, and the Institute for Social Policy Understanding. Partners include American University, the USC Center for Public Diplomacy, Unity Productions Foundation, Americans for Informed Democracy, America Abroad Media, and The Gallup Organization.

## THE SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY

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THE SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY was established on May 13, 2002 with an inaugural address by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan. The creation of the Saban Center reflects the Brookings Institution's commitment to expand dramatically its research and analysis of Middle East policy issues at a time when the region has come to dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

The Saban Center provides Washington policymakers with balanced, objective, in-depth and timely research and policy analysis from experienced and knowledgeable scholars who can bring fresh perspectives to bear on the critical problems of the Middle East. The center upholds the Brookings tradition of being open to a broad range of views. The Saban Center's central objective is to advance understanding of developments in the Middle East through policy-relevant scholarship and debate.

The center's foundation was made possible by a generous grant from Haim and Cheryl Saban of Los Angeles. Ambassador Martin S. Indyk, Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies, is the Director of the Saban Center. Kenneth M. Pollack is the center's Director of Research. Joining them is a core group of Middle East experts who conduct original research and develop innovative programs to promote a better understanding of the policy choices facing American decision makers in the Middle East. They include Tamara Cofman Wittes, a spe-

cialist on political reform in the Arab world who directs the Project on Middle East Democracy and Development; Bruce Riedel, who served as a senior advisor to three Presidents on the Middle East and South Asia at the National Security Council during a twenty-nine year career in the CIA, a specialist on counterterrorism; Suzanne Maloney, a former senior State Department official who focuses on Iran and economic development; Stephen R. Grand, Fellow and Director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World; Hady Amr, Fellow and Director of the Brookings Doha Center; Shibley Telhami, who holds the Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland; and Daniel Byman, a Middle East terrorism expert from Georgetown University. The center is located in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings, led by Brookings Vice President Carlos Pascual.

The Saban Center is undertaking path breaking research in five areas: the implications of regime change in Iraq, including post-war nation-building and Persian Gulf security; the dynamics of Iranian domestic politics and the threat of nuclear proliferation; mechanisms and requirements for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; policy for the war against terrorism, including the continuing challenge of state-sponsorship of terrorism; and political and economic change in the Arab world, and the methods required to promote democratization.

