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Can Arabs Represent America? The Performativity of U.S-Arab Mediated Public Diplomacy

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Can Arabs Represent America?

The Performativity of U.S-Arab
Mediated Public Diplomacy

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Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

A curious man was passing by three masons carving stones at a construction site. He asked each what they were doing. Disengaged, the first said he was carving stones. Engaged, the second said he was building a church. Actively engaged, the third said he was propagating Christianity." (Anonymous)

Dedication

To my late father, Nagib, and perpetual warrior mother, Laila. On his death bed in 1969, Dad told Mom to sell the land we owned if she had to in order to provide us with a good education. She did not sell the land.

To my late younger sister, Rudaina, who endured an unfortunate life since her birth. She was my unforgettable first teacher. I was told in my early childhood that she suffered poor health because it was God's will. A good crash-course lesson for a child to start believing in the Almighty. She passed away after two months in a coma.

To my late eldest sister, Juhaina, who decided with me that both of us would go for our PhDs at a later stage in our lives. Instead, she had to fight cancer for the five-year-duration I was working on my degree.

To my sons, Wajd (*passion*) and Ramz (*symbol*), both of whom *symbolize* the *passion* for the ideals I hold in my life.

Acknowledgements

I also want to thank the Alhariri Foundation, which in 1988 refused to give me a PhD scholarship for the Agricultural Economics program in which I was accepted at the University of Kentucky. They first claimed that the University of Kentucky was not accredited. When I reapplied showing them it was, they refused again, telling me that I would not succeed in a doctorate. Those rejections merely served to fuel my motivation and determination to venture forth.

Also, thanks to my colleagues at Gallup for their moral support while I was both working and studying full-time. At Gallup I had the great opportunity to direct large-scale media research surveys for Alhurra and the Voice of America in the Middle East and other countries in Asia. Despite the importance of these surveys, more in-depth data was lacking, especially with respect to how Arabs at Alhurra negotiate between themselves the U.S.

This thesis is in part a token of appreciation for America. When I was struggling with my intermediate education, always underperforming in math and sciences, a director of one school I was at told my mother in front of me, "Madam Laila, you told me that Jihad's uncle wants to send him to study in America; no university in America will accept him if he does not do well in math and the sciences." Back the 1970s, "real men" were not supposed to study social sciences. I did eventually go to America and worked my way through university. America gave me a second chance.

However, I have always been frustrated by the fact that neither Arabs could talk to America, nor could America talk to Arabs. Yet, there is so much for us to talk about, and I had written several reflective articles to that effect. This thesis is an invitation for the need to reflect and find an intellectual space to learn how to talk with each other.

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Abstract

America, with its Voice of America radio and its short-wave sister stations that pierced through the thick Iron Curtain until it disintegrated in the late 1980s, found itself voiceless in countering the narrative of those who perpetrated the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Using the Cold War communication as its model, the U.S. government launched Alhurra TV in spring 2004 in order to reach out to Arabs. Perpetually underperforming, there was a sudden change in Alhurra's top American leadership in the summer of 2017. Evaluated by its new president as having been producing 'garbage,' about one-half of its staff were dismissed and replaced with new staff who were expected to be ideologically 'more aggressive' and able to make Alhurra 'more American'—the two components he believes to be a prerequisite for recapturing lost audiences.

While there is no shortage of reasons for Alhurra's failure, explanations based on established theorization are in short supply. Given the *intentionality* of the communication and given the contestation over the purpose of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, the thesis adopts Max Weber's *social action* theorization for exploring both the meaning Alhurra Arab journalists attribute to their mission and who their perceived audiences are.

The study found complete disharmony in the Alhurra Arab journalists' interpretations of their mission and their audiences. A comparable lack of cohesiveness in Alhurra's perceived mission and audiences is also evident in its top American management. Realizing that the explanation of Alhurra's failure may go beyond the mere actions of its Arab frontline communicators, a Max Weber conceptualization of *ideal type*, an ideal type mediated public diplomacy was constructed that took into consideration micro and macro conditions that secure successful mediation. Built into this ideal type is the conceptualization of *performativity* of both the sender and frontline communicator in terms of their credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the receivers.

All conditions of Cold War communication by the US demonstrate a perfect correspondence with those of the ideal type. East European émigrés, whether coming from those already settled in the US or from the constant flow of dissidents, acted as legitimate speakers and representors on behalf of both America and its ideals, as well as their audiences behind the Iron Curtain who yearned for those ideals. American policy towards the Communist Block was consistent and did not undermine its claims for espousing democratic ideals.

By contrast, virtually none of the ideal type conditions are present in the US-Arab mediated public diplomacy. Aside from the incoherent meaning of all involved in the communication process and the confusion as to who their target audiences are, Arab communicators hired by Alhurra neither see their role as representing America and promoting its ideals, nor as representing or speaking on behalf of any Arab segments. Rather, these communicators see their *performativity* as dependent on fulfilling Alhurra's mission statement of providing objective reporting of news and information. Hence, given a choice between the journalistic representation of the news and its ideological component, they totally distance themselves from the latter.

Should America claim that it is promoting secularism and democratic ideals, its past and current polices in the region undermine this claim. While it was once convenient for America to support Islamists in pursuit of defeating Soviet Russia in Afghanistan, it continues to support authoritarian Arab regimes in defiance of claims to spread democracy. In addition, America itself has been undergoing a serious ontological transformation since the election of Donald Trump, which may defy representation by its own communicators, let alone by Alhurra Arab journalists with little or no first-hand experience. Arabs hoping to represent America under such conditions are bound to find themselves working in *contradictory* scenarios that undermine their performativity.

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Chapter One
Introduction

1.1 The Research Problem

The 9/11 attacks in 2001 posed many robust questions to America, but the resulting answers were very weak. One was why would a group of nineteen Arab Muslims, fifteen of whom were from ██████ ████████ one of America's closest allies in the Middle East—commit such a violent crime against peaceful Americans? In a speech to Congress on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush asked a very pertinent question to which he gave a very weak answer. "Americans are asking, 'Why do they hate us?' They hate what we see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government... They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other..." (Cited in Nichols 2002, p. 66).

Live & Gine (2007) argue that President Bush framed the whole 9/11 affair as a struggle between good and evil, in which the exceptional good America was under attack by the evil Islamists whose aim is to annihilate America. Nevertheless, perhaps more intriguingly, was that during this intense struggle, Bush attributed this hate to 'misunderstanding' or what came to be known later, 'they hate us because they do not know us.'

> "You know, I'm asked all the time—how to respond when I see that in some Islamic countries there is vitriolic hatred for America? I'll tell you how I respond: I am amazed that there is such misunderstanding of what our country is about, that people would hate us. I am—like most Americans, I just can't believe it. Because I know how good we are. And we've got to do a better job of making our story" (cited in Live & Gine 2007, p. 586).

The reported extent of surge in 'hate' took even Americans with extensive knowledge of the region by surprise. After a fact-finding tour of the Muslim World immediately after the attacks, Edward Djerehjian[1] (2003) was perplexed by the extent of antagonism towards America in countries where he had spent much of his diplomatic career, especially since for him America has no 'imperial interests' in the region and only wants its nations to enjoy the same liberty and prosperity

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[1] Edward Djerehjian was a former U.S. ambassador to a number of Middle Eastern and other predominantly Muslim countries. He led a team of experts in the Muslim worlds.

Americans enjoy. J. Baran and D. Davis (2003) expressed similar surprise as they attributed this presumed hatred to the masterful use of propaganda.

> "On television screens, we saw the faces of masses of angry people in cities across the Muslim world. Propaganda was clearly inflaming their passions. … We face an enemy skilled in using propaganda to promote a religious ideology that most Americans find incomprehensible because it is so fundamentally opposed to their way of life. Yet, this ideology clearly had a strong appeal in many parts of the Islamic world. In the new war that we will be waging for years to come, media are likely to be among the most important weapons" (p. xv).

Nearly two decades since the 9/11 attacks, there are still no answers to whether 'they' 'hate us' because they 'do not know us' or because 'they know us.' Or is it as Bill Maher once observed, "They hate us because we don't know why they hate us"? (Cited by Innocent 2011). When I was part of a Gallup team, I asked a senior American official after the release of the findings of the first Gallup Muslim Countries Poll in spring 2002, why the U.S. government was so oblivious to the Arabs' attitudes towards it, his response was, "We were monitoring the Arab governments." Not the people, that is. While the two notions, that they hate us because of who we are and that they hate us because they do not know us are contradictory, the U.S. government ended up adopting the *miscommunication* notion. The counter strategy was yet another weak response. The response was calls for more effective communication 'through public diplomacy' which would re-affirm America's exceptionalism against the evil enemy (Live & Gine 2007). Effective communication came to be understood as having a high volume of communication, a strategy believed to have been fundamental to the success of the Cold War (Zahrana 2005). Nancy Snow (2007) described the mentality that prevailed within the Bush administration as, "…*If* we can just get our message out there, make it louder, make it stronger, make it bolder, then we'll be on our way to repairing miscommunication problems" (p. 163). Fixated with the centrality of media, or more specifically propaganda, in this ideological war, Baran & Davis (2003) claim that, "A propaganda battle for the hearts and minds of people will be waged. An understanding of *media theory* will provide crucial insights to this new war" (p. xv; emphasis added).

Scrambling for communicating America's ideals and values, the White House invited Hollywood executives and producers in 2001 to contribute to the creation of communication ideas to be implemented in this war of ideas and images (Baran & Davis 2003). The notion that America lagged behind in defining its image was also echoed by then Secretary of Defense, Robert M. Gates, (2007) who remarked[2], "Public Relations was invented in the United States, yet we are miserable at communicating to the rest of the world what we are about as a society and a culture, about freedom and democracy, about our policies and our goals."

In what was seen by many in the U.S. as basically a 'battle of images and nation branding,' the prevailing sentiment was that the U.S. had many advantages stacked in its favor, and the only thing it needed was to communicate its values and ideals to Arabs. Colin Powell, then George W. Bush's Secretary of State, believed that it was time to mobilize all media energies and place them at the disposal of the U.S. government to *sell* America to apprehensive Arabs. Addressing a gathering in D.C. of mostly State Department staff, he declared in November 2001, "What are we doing? We're selling a product. That product we are selling is democracy; it's free enterprise system, the American value system. It's a product very much in demand. It's a product that is very much needed" (Cited in Kuzman 2011, p. 98). In October 2001, hoping to make use of the PR potential of Madison Avenue in promoting America's ideals, the U.S. Congress confirmed Charlotte Beers, former President of the multi-national advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather, as the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy. When Powell was asked about Beers' credentials for leading America's mediated public diplomacy efforts, he said that in her former advertising job, Beers had convinced him to buy Uncle Ben's rice, a comment that was highly criticized for its irrelevance, "You can't sell Uncle Sam like Uncle Ben's" (cited in Zaharna 2010, p. 45).

The appointment of Beers prompted some observers to ask if this signaled the policy of giving priority to marketing over diplomacy. For Beers the challenge was how to transfer successful communication know-how from the private sector to public diplomacy. She noted, "but we are not as comfortable at what it takes to influence others—especially when the audience is hostile. The effort to influence requires persuasive communication, which we had to master in the private

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[2] Remark as delivered at the Landon Lecture (Kansas State University) November 26, 2007;
http://archive.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199)

sector—or be left behind."[3] The high hopes pinned on the position of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy were short-lived. It has been near to impossible to keep track of the high turnover of Under Secretaries of State for Public Diplomacy since this position was created in 2001. In short, the U.S. government was not seeing its policies in the region as having anything to do with the Arab publics' apprehensions towards it, it was more of an inability to expose and 'explain' to Arabs its policies, values, and ideals.

1.2 Alhurra's Contested Objectives

In order not to be 'left behind,' with 'the need to do better job of telling our story,' and to cut short Islamists' efforts to 'define America,' Alhurra TV was launched in Spring 2004. That came one year after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003, during which the Bush Administration realized that it had no Arabic-speaking media of its own that could 'explain' America to Arabs. Worth noting here that up until 9/11 2001, America's international broadcasting that targeted the Arab world was barely a 5-hour-a-week-radio-broadcast on short-wave. In this section I will limit what Alhurra sought to achieve for its two successive Chief Operating Officers/Directors, formerly Brian Conniff who served from 2004 till 2017, and the current director, Alberto Fernandez, who took office in summer 2017[4]. The respective excerpts are answers to the question: 'What is the mission of the Middle East Broadcasting Network …?"

In an interview with C-SPAN (15/11/2011) Brian Conniff responded as follows:

> "... Alhurra, in addition to practicing good journalism, has a role to describe America. America is really grossly misunderstood, American culture. American values, American society. ..."[5]

Correspondingly, in an interview with Albert Fernandez in the online publication, *Providence,[6]* we read the following:

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[3] https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/us/15912.htm

[4] Presenting these two perspectives is meant to use them in latter chapters as a benchmark against which Alhurra Arab journalists' own perceptions of the mission of their work at Alhurra will be compared with in the empirical chapters eight through ten.

[5] **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tURES0b3Tvw&t=96s**

[6] https://providencemag.com/2018/10/robert-nicholson-middle-east-policy-middle-east-broadcasting-networks-mbn-alberto-fernandez/

'MBN's mission is to expand the spectrum of ideas, opinions, and perspectives available in the media of the Middle East and North Africa, provide objective, accurate, and relevant news and information, and accurately represent America, Americans, and American policies. Through our multimedia outlets, MBN seeks to inform and engage with the region's people in support of universal freedoms. … The role of public diplomacy in Middle East policy is to communicate with the public with the aim of informing and influencing audiences overseas for the purpose of promoting our national interest and advancing our foreign policy goals."

While in certain instances Conniff's and Fernandez' perspectives converge, they completely diverge in others. Both seek to present objective news and information about America, the Middle East, and the world. Both believe that the Arabs are genuinely interested in knowing the 'American democratic show.' Nevertheless, their agreement ends there. Fernandez takes off his media gloves to expose his raw ideological motives and objectives while Conniff had remained low-key on the political objectives of the station. Before joining Alhurra as its Director, Fernandez was the President of Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) a media-monitoring online organization that was founded by a former Israeli security officer. In his farewell OpEd article as President of MEMRI,[7] titled *More Than Half The Battle: On Broadcasting And Ideology,* Fernandez, he seemed to have considered his position at Alhurra as an extension MEMRI's role rather than what Alhurra had already started with.

"As successful as MEMRI has been for almost twenty years, it can't and doesn't cover everything, but it covers some of the most important developments in the region, in the original words and voices of its people.

"As I move on in the near future to take on the task of U.S.-funded Arabic-language broadcast media, as President of Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), this is a good time to reflect on the challenge of media and ideology in the region, not just for MBN or for the United States, but for the region itself" (Fernandez 2017).

However, should a picture be worth thousand words, the visual that accompanied Fernandez' OpEd article does exactly that. It is an image of a handheld movie camera fed into it a strikingly visible belt of bullets of submachine capability. The image could not have been more revealing in its representations of how Fernandez must be interpreting the conflicts that America is presumed to be engaged in in the Middle East; half of which are ideological, and the other half are armed conflict. For Fernandez, however, both are intertwined when engaging the U.S. mediation with the Arab world. Indeed, it is a strikingly different perspective from that held by his predecessor Brian Conniff, who saw his job as largely a journalistic representation of events rather than an ideological representation.

Figure 1 Source: https://www.memri.org/reports/more-half-battle-broadcasting-and-ideology (No copy rights are mentioned)

One of Fernandez' key reflections on why Alhurra underperformed was, "The challenge of U.S.-funded broadcast media is, in my opinion, not that it is American but that it is not American enough." (Fernandez 2017). As soon as he took his job as Alhurra's president, Fernandez spared no time in lambasting his predecessor's 'lack of imagination' as being one reason that led to its failure, with the other being lack of knowledge of both cultures, Arab and American. Furthermore,

he accused him of lack of 'aggressiveness,' but his final judgment on Alhurra was, "You can't market garbage, right?" (Fernandez 2108a).

The contestation over the objectives of Alhurra in specific as illustrated by the differences in the perspectives of its two successive directors is only a sample of the contestation over the meaning of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy in general. However, while we know a lot about what the sender—the U.S. government—wants from this mediation, we barely know anything about what Alhurra Arab journalists want from this mediation, an aspect that brings us to the crux of the main research question of this thesis.

It worth noting however, that till fall 2019, the time of submitting this thesis, the U.S. mediated public diplomacy had operated under three different presidential administrations: George W. Bush, Barak Obama, and Donald Trump. Brian Conniff served as the president of Alhurra under these three administrations until he was replaced by Alberto Fernandez in the summer of 2017. Conniff's media appearances were very rare; this is in contrast with his successor Fernandez, who spared no opportunity to outline his vision for the revival of Alhurra, which for him was a failed project under the leadership of Conniff. However, for this thesis, the vociferous public statements by Fernandez had provided fresh material which could not be ignored— however late they appeared in the research process. More importantly, their relevance is to the research topic in terms of the meaning the new Alhurra president had given to its mission. Much of this new material is incorporated in the published documentary empirical analysis, particularly in Chapter Seven, since it provided a continuous flow of materials as the work on this thesis moved into the analytical part of the of the empirical findings based on published literature. It is worth noting that the intention of focusing more on Alhurra during the periods of the George W. Bush and Donald Trump administrations, with rare reference to the period under the Barak Obama administration, was not to ignore the relevance of the Obama administration's policies on Alhurra and its performance. This is more due to the fact that the performance of Alhurra during Obama's tenure was seen largely as an extension to its performance under Bush, which continued at same pace under the Trump administration, that is, until summer 2017. It is worth noting however, that from an overall public diplomacy perspective, President Obama seemed to have presented a more conciliatory tone towards the Arab and Muslim worlds than his predecessor. This was very evident in what was

termed as Obama's Cairo speech, which he delivered in June 2009 at the American University of Cairo, when he promised a new outreach towards the peoples of the Arab and the Muslim worlds.

1-3 Main Research Question: Rationale

With the statement by former president George W. Bush, "*We have to do a better job of telling our story*" in mind and given that nearly a decade and a half after the launch of Alhurra, which was supposed to tell Arabs America's story, I drafted the original title of my thesis as *The U.S.-Arab Mediated Public Diplomacy: Concept, Sender, Messenger, Message and Audiences*. All components were to be interpreted from the perspective of the Alhurra Arab frontline messengers. Comprehensive as it is, the title appears adequate but lacks a central purpose. My intention for adopting a research question itself as the title of the thesis—*Can Arabs Represent America*—is multi-purposed. Firstly, it shifts the research attention from the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy to the centrality of the actual day-to-day producers and messengers of the communication—that is, the Alhurra Arab frontline communicators. Secondly, I believe that the role of Arab frontline communicators in the representation of America to Arabs is an aspect totally overlooked in this mediation. Since America cannot represent itself, it has, implicitly, had to rely on hired Arab communicators to represent it and to 'explain' its worldview to a particularly apprehensive Arab audience. Thirdly, there is no established sociological knowledge about how a group of journalists from one social collectivity (Arabs in this case), can represent another social collectivity (America in this case) in which the representors not only come from a very different social collectivity, but they are expected to represent a social reality that they themselves do not know. Fourthly, U.S. public diplomacy officials go as far as claiming they are 'bad messengers for America's message' when it comes to reaching Arabs. But who is the messenger being referenced: America itself, the Arab frontline journalists who interface with the Arab public, or both? In short, who is the bad messenger in this case? Fifthly, not only are Alhurra Arab journalists expected to convey America's message, they are also expected to influence how Arabs view America—an expectation which may well go beyond the mere task of journalism.

As such, the expectations from Alhurra Arab communicators can only increase, and under Alhurra's new president, they are expected 'to make Alhurra more American.' In short, there is much that is known about what is expected of Alhurra messengers, yet, there is practically nothing known about what they themselves desire to achieve from working for Alhurra. Almost all existing

research on Alhurra's performance is conducted from the audiences' reactions to the station. The only exception is the content analysis on the production side conducted and published by Annenberg School of Journalism (2008)[8]. Inspired by Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding **Model**, my aim in this research is to refocus attention on the production moment of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy. The basic assumption that drives this entire research is the notion that in order to represent the *other*, the primary step is to generate knowledge about that *other*. In other words, Alhurra Arab journalists must *decode* what America is, or how it wants itself to be seen, in order to *encode* it in their messages sent to Arabs. However, all this ought to happen in the absence of these journalists' first-hand knowledge about America. As such, my aim is to contribute to bridging this critical knowledge gap, which is achieved in part by asking Alhurra Arab communicators themselves about the meaning they give to communicating on behalf of America to their fellow Arabs via Alhurra. The aim is to provide empirical answers to the thesis' main research question: '*Can Arabs Represent America?*'

I am very aware of the potential methodological concerns I will be asked to answer in adopting a research question that starts with 'can,' as opposed to one that starts with 'what', 'how' or 'why'? This is especially the case since when put in the context of research questions; each of the latter three terms belongs to its respective theory-laden paradigm. By contrast, a research question starting with 'can' may require more research to find which theoretical grounding may adopt it: inductive, deductive, abductive, or possibly action research. Martin (2017) notes that "… we can't do good research unless we ask good questions. … a question is something we do not know the answer for" (p. 16). One condition for good research questions is, "Clearly spelt out and focused; the terms are defined; they are answerable; the project is 'do-able'" (Wellington 2010, p. 133). Martin also suggests that in order to find out if a researcher has a viable research question is to simply, 'ask it'. "Does it start with who, what, where, how, when, or why? When you say it loud, does it come out with a raised pitch at the end? If not, you have a problem. Now there's nothing necessarily wrong with having some big agenda, whether theoretical, personal, or political" (p. 17).

At the resonance level, I have strong confidence that my main research question meets the condition of having a definite high pitch at its end, and more significantly it meets Wellington's conditions; and more so when broken down, it meets at least three of Martin's conditions of *what*, *who* and *why*. In order to answer this main research question, two subsequent research questions arise. Firstly, *what* meaning do Alhurra Arab journalists attribute to their work at Alhurra? Secondly, *who* are the audiences they target in their communication? And since it is expected that adopting a research question of this nature— "can"—will require providing an answer that it equally straightforward, along the lines of 'yes' or 'no,' it brings me to answer the third question, '*why*' they can or cannot represent America? However, as the empirical findings presented in Chapters 7-11 show that while the answer to latter research question '*why*' is only partly dependent on the answers to the first two questions, it is equally dependent on the conditions that America's Middle East policies create. Similarly, answering this research question could not have been accomplished in the absence of finding answers to whether America is itself representable in light of the seemingly ontological transformation it has been undergoing since the election of Donald Trump as the President of the USA in 2016.

1-4 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the research approach followed in answering this question is what is proposed by Crotty (2015 [1998]) which, basically, contends that there are four inter-related social sciences, each informing the subsequent one. These components are: 1) the epistemological-philosophical frame of reference, 2) the theoretical perspective, 3) methodology, and 4) method. In brief, Crotty suggests that social science research must pose and answer four questions: 'What *epistemology* informs this theoretical perspective? What *theoretical perspective* lies behind the methodology in question? What *methodology* governs our choice and use of methods? What *methods* do we propose to use?' (p. 2; emphasis by author). The following is an outline of the thesis.

Chapter Two lays out the case for the adoption of the interpretative approach in the study of mediated public diplomacy. In addition to reviewing the current literature related to lack of theorization of public diplomacy, the chapter borrows from media and social theorization aspects that have the potential through which mediated public diplomacy can be studied. Similarly, and given that this type or mediation requires journalists from one society to represent a society they

themselves have not had first-hand experience with, literature on the representation of *the other* is visited.

Chapter Three constitutes a critique to the positivist approach Alhurra adopts in the perceived representation of America as an exceptional society that the Arabs presumably do not know. The chapter outlines and critiques the conceptualization on which Alhurra bases its communication about America for positioning itself as being able to mirror the social reality of America through journalists who do not know America. The second part of the chapter delves into issues Alhurra had to struggle with as it failed to perform its mediation between America and the Arabs.

Chapter Four sets the stage for the research based on the interpretative ontological assumptions proposed in Chapter Two. In this chapter I put forward the case for the abductive research versus either the inductive or the deductive approaches. I argue that from a methodological perspective, the social action theorization fits appropriately with the abductive approach in allowing us to understand the meaning Alhurra Arab journalists give to their mediation. The methodological approach is the ideal type which allows the explanation of the conditions for an ideal type public diplomacy mediation. This chapter concludes by outlining the research methods adopted in the thesis.

Chapter Five constructs the conditions that ought to secure the success of public diplomacy mediation that could be established in the form of an ideal type. Hence, the chapter constructs the conditions that secure its success. But rather than analyzing its construction with no frame of reference in mind, the chapter evokes the notion of performativity as initially conceptualized by J. L. Austin, who puts the legitimacy and credibility of both, the frontline communicator as well as the sender, as the necessary conditions for the success of this type of mediation. This conceptualization considers that for the communication to achieve its aim, the other conditions it must meet are not merely the proper identification of the audience but identifying with them, knowing that this is a political communication that not only seeks to inform audiences but to influence them as well.

Chapter Six takes the conditions constructed in the ideal type mediation as the template and then projects it on the conditions that prevailed during both the U.S- Cold War communication and the U.S.-Arab communication. While it compares both with the ideal type, the analysis compares the two. For the U.S- Cold communication, this comparison is done for the purpose of presenting a more systematic understanding of the conditions that led to its success, while at the same time sheds some light on the reasons for the failure of the latter.

Chapter Seven uses Weber's social action theorization to lay the ground for understanding who the Alhurra Arab journalists perceive their audiences to be, as well as the meaning the journalists attribute to their mission in working at Alhurra. The first part of the chapter outlines the findings related to the different perceptions they have towards who they think their audiences are. This is followed by presenting the variations in the meanings Alhurra communicators attribute to their work.

Chapter Eight takes the findings presented in a well-defined theoretical frame in Chapter Seven and explores their meanings in the context of Weber's theorization of the social action and ideal type. However, in order to optimize the full analytical potential of the findings, I incorporated into the analysis other media-related literature that allowed further extrapolation of their possible practical implications.

Chapter Nine is in part an extension of the analysis of the findings in Chapter Eight. However, the conceptualization of performativity of Alhurra Arab journalists is elaborated upon in the context of the expectations that they would, among other things, be performing two key tasks. One is the voice of America; the second is the voice of voiceless Arabs –proclaimed by Alhurra's top American management. It is based on the empirical findings, in relation to the participants' own interpretation of their mission at Alhurra, as well as their perception of their colleagues. The chapter provides the research findings on the extent to which they see themselves as representing America in specific.

Chapter Ten, the concluding chapter, attempts to tie together several components of the thesis' conceptualizations and findings into one single narrative where I take into account what initially

prompted the research, the approaches I adopted, as well as a presentation of a short preview of the findings, but more importantly is the analysis of the implications of the findings in answering the main research question: *Can Arabs Represent America?* In congruence, and since this research work has in effect been a witness to *transformational* changes that were taking place in America's national identity since the election of President Donald Trump in 2016, and at the same time the complete overhauling in the management and staff of Alhurra, the corresponding research question that forcefully posed itself is: *Is America itself representable*?

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Chapter 2

The Social Production of Mediated Public Diplomacy

This chapter lays the philosophical foundation established in this thesis and supports the rationale for adopting the interpretative approach. Starting with a brief justification of the ontological stance appropriate for the study of mediated public diplomacy, the chapter situates the urgency of the research question as whether Alhurra Arab journalists can represent America, in the overall interpretative approach given that its goal is the representation of the social reality of America. This is followed by a review of selective aspects of the literature related to the attempts at theorizing public diplomacy. The chapter proceeds to locate mediated public diplomacy within the more established materialist-idealists theorizations of media. In line with the interpretative approach, the chapter consults theorizations on the social production of media in general and argues for its relevance to the production of mediated public diplomacy.

In addition, since this type of mediation is primarily concerned with the representation of America by communicators who have no first-hand experience with America, literature on the representation of the *other* is consulted. Finally, since the representors must first generate knowledge about America in order to represent it, the thesis takes the stance that the generation of such knowledge could only be done by these communicators using their own cultural lens, which may, in effect, generate knowledge about America that is more likely to be from the perspective of the Arab journalists—that is assuming that they believe that they are hired by Alhurra to represent America in the first place.

The final part of this chapter borrows heavily from Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model, where I argue that since the Ahurra journalists and Alhurra owners come from different social realities, and also given the intentionality of the mediation, the notion of decoding of intentions of Alhurra by its Arab journalists is bound to take place well at the early stage of the media production process. Well before they encode these intentions into the messages, they communicate to their presumed audiences. This thesis is concerned with the negotiation process that takes place at this early stage of the communication.

In short, what this chapter seeks to achieve is to examine existing theorization on the social production of mediation within one society for the purpose of inferring the possible limitations of effective public diplomacy mediation.

2-1 The Case for the Interpretive Ontological Perspective

Before delving into the theoretical assumptions adopted in this research, it is useful to start by defining the overall philosophical conceptual meaning of ontology and its relevance to public diplomacy mediation. It is important to be mindful, nevertheless, that whatever ontological stance underpins this research, it may remain a mere abstraction, with limited directional value, unless it establishes how intertwined it is with public diplomacy mediation. Similarly, however, in order to establish this interconnection between this phenomenon and an ontological stance, it is imperative that public diplomacy mediation is deconstructed into possibly a more meaningful phenomenon and the objectives it serves. In its plainer meaning, ontology pertains to the assumptions we make about social reality and what can be known about it, or what reality is, or whether it is "… related to the existence of a real and objective world" (Porta & Keating (2008, p. 21).

This chapter argues that the primary nature of public diplomacy mediation is the 'social construction' of the 'object' the mediation is concerned with. In other words, and in the context of the U.S. mediated public diplomacy, the object of mediation is America itself. The objective of this mediation is the representation of the social reality of America. Hence, public diplomacy mediation may take on two, or possibly more, forms of representations. One is the representation of America's worldview to the target audiences. The other is representation in the sense of speaking for itself, or on its behalf, or promoting its worldview.

With the object or the subject matter of the U.S. mediated public diplomacy being America itself, a legitimate question becomes: What is the social reality of America? The answer or answers, to this fundamental research question will depend on the ontological perspectives availed in social science, which are primarily "… whether or not social reality exists independently of human conceptions and interpretations; whether there is a common, shared, social reality or just multiple context-specific realities; and whether or not social behavior is governed by 'laws' that can be seen as immutable or generalizable" (Snape & Spencer 2003, p. 11). The nature of 'social reality' in

these senses is correspondent with the nature of the 'social entity' in question. For Alan Bayman (2008), the social ontological question becomes "… whether social entities can and should be considered entities that have a reality external to social actors or whether they are constructions built upon from the actions of social actors" (p.28). Similarly, for Piergiorgio Corbetta (2003), the ontological question is about 'what' this social phenomenon is and the world it is situated in. "It asks if the world and social phenomena is a real and objective world endowed with an autonomous existence outside the human mind and independent from the interpretation given to it by the subject. It asks, therefore, if social phenomena are 'things in their own right' or 'representations of things'" (Corbetta 2003, p. 12).

These two foundational ontological perspectives translate broadly into objectivist and subjectivist perspectives respectively. Nevertheless, there is no unanimity over the labels of either these perspectives, which are also philosophical stances, theoretical frames of reference, or even paradigms. For instance, objectivism is also referred to positivism, realism, or essentialism just to mention three. Similarly, subjectivism is also referred to constructionism, interpretivism, or relativism. Indeed, this interchangeability of labels may partly stem from minor variations in the definitions of the respective frames of reference. Besides, this interchangeability in labeling is pervasive with respect to their respective epistemological approaches. In short, the core differences between the two perspectives are the 'certainty' with which objectivism sees the world, on the one hand, and the 'more informed understanding' of reality with which subjectivism sees the world on the other. A. Sumner and M. Tribe (2008) sum up the reality in the positivist approach as objective, accessible through sensory experience, measurable, unambiguous, and where there is "independence between the 'reality,' the researcher and the instruments of research" (p. 11). By contrast, they sum up subjectivism as emphasizing the social construction of meaning dependent on our experiences, where multiple intangible realities exist, social reality is local and specific in nature, meaning is constructed not discovered, and the construction of reality is jointly done through the interaction between the researcher and the researched. This chapter is an elaboration of these interpretive aspects of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, and it is based on theorizations not used before in this context but can be of promising use in guiding the research process. The next chapter amounts to be a critique of what I argue to be the positivist prism through which America sees itself that is at same time the approach Alhurra adopts in its mediation.

2-2 Subcontracting the Representation of America

Edward Said prefaces his seminal book, *Orientalism* (2003 [1978]), by quoting Karl Marx. "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented." The quote is taken form the book *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* in which Marx contends that the peasants of that French region were economically, socially, and politically too fragmented to have the power to represent themselves. He added that some other political entity must represent them—should they want to have a political voice. Said has, however, given this quote a life of its own where in the absence of the Orient being able represent itself, it was the West that assumed that role and constructed a perceptual social reality of Orient conceptualized in the notion of *Orientalism*. For Said, *orientalism* is not just a perceptual construct of the Orient by how the West perceives the Orient. For him *orientalism* is a "… Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient" (Said 2003 [1978], p. 3). Orientalism seeks to influence the way Orientals perceive and know themselves. By the same token, or rather ironically, it is America's turn now, which had been largely successful in constructing a prism through which it wanted the world to perceive it as the exceptional country and the leader of the democratic free world, which post 9/11 found itself unable to *represent* itself when talking to Arabs.

A decade before *Orientalism* was published, Berger and Luckmann (1966) started their yet another seminal book *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966) by discussing the centrality of language in the generation and accumulation of the social stock of knowledge within a society. Through language, a society can learn about itself, but for this self-realization to maximize its full potential "… men must talk about themselves until they know themselves" (p. 53). As such language assumes the function of being a "… repository of vast accumulation of meaning and experience..." (p. 37). A society accumulates this through 'conservation' which sustains, transforms, and reconstructs a society's 'subjective reality' (p. 152). Perhaps no other nation in the world is as self-aware as America is, nor does any other country perceive the uniqueness of its social stock of knowledge as much as America does. This is a vivid illustration that Americans must indeed be 'talking about themselves' a lot for that matter. During the prime of the neo-conservative tide during the George W. Bush presidency, Karl Rove articulated what America perceives itself to be. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality — judiciously, as you will — we'll act

again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do" (Suskind 2004).

Michael Schudson (2011) sees a serious fallout in Rove's claim on media's [the U.S. media presumably] capacity for constructing "… news according to their own biases. … As chilling an assertion of political power as this is, it confirms that journalists seek to portray the world as it is. What it—this pronouncement of a Goliath sneering at David—fails to acknowledge is that a slingshot can fell a giant and what we call reality, for lack of a better term, can sometimes exact revenge on the supposed power of images" (Schudson 2011, p.11). A slingshot seems to have already hit the American giant but in another perceptual battlefield. In its 'war of ideas' or 'war on terror' against radical Islamism, the U.S., has barely been able to talk about itself to Arab audiences. Former Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Richard Stengel, has gone as far as acknowledging, "*We're not the best messenger for our message*" but without indicating who the messenger is: America itself, those it subcontracts to do the representation on its behalf, or both.

Placed in the context of Berger and Luckmann, 'talking about themselves' and being 'able to represent oneself' are two totally separate matters. This thesis contends that the reported failure of the U.S. mediated public diplomacy in reaching out to Arabs seems to confirm that in this perceptual war, Americans '*cannot represent themselves*' and as such, '*they must be represented.'* And in effect, the U.S. government does so by hiring Arab communicators to do the frontline representation on its behalf; however, it does so without acknowledging their role. Implicit in the expectations of this representation is that these Arab communicators can internalize and effectively communicate the American cultural and political narrative to Arab publics as if America was doing the representation itself, not by proxy representation. Hence, a main concern of this thesis is what sociological prism do Arab journalists hired by Alhurra use to generate knowledge about America, which in turn they use to 'talk about America' to their fellow Arabs?

From a mediated public diplomacy management perspective, the 'war of ideas' is all but a competition between whose construction of reality of the other prevails in the Arab world: the one that favors America's narrative or the one that opposes it? Hence, the main concern ought to be how to manage expectations from a mediated activity in which the 'represented' and the

'presenters' come from two different social stocks of knowledge. That is in addition to the obvious fact that the two speak two very different languages. The existing surplus in prescriptive literature about the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, on the one hand, and the deficit in theoretical frameworks that guide, inform and explain mediated public diplomacy on the other, has done very little in terms of guiding effective public diplomacy mediation. There is, however, extensive sociological knowledge that has been largely kept untapped. This could be used for informing the U.S. public diplomacy management on how to manage the expectations from sub-contracting communication on someone's behalf to a group of communicators who come from a different collectivity and knowledge corpus. While plowing through related literature on the representation of *the other,* it is important to keep in mind the central question that this research project seeks to answer: What is the epistemological possibility of *knowing the other*, even before the actual representational act takes place—that is assuming that those contracted for performing the representation are in effect aware of this expectation and are at the same time willing to perform it?

In the context of the U.S.–Arab mediated public diplomacy, a main question this thesis seeks to answer is rather simple: Can Arab journalists working for the U.S. mediated public diplomacy narrate to Arab audiences the same perspective America desires to have it depicted about itself as if America itself was doing the communicating? The question could become more complex if approached from a sociological perspective: Can Arabs working for the U.S. mediated public diplomacy, who themselves have a different set of ideals, as in identity and ideology, effectively narrate to Arab audiences the identity and ideology and foreign policy perspective of the U.S.? The related sociological and media literature reviewed and analyzed in this chapter would be illuminating in informing us about the potential opportunities, challenges, and constraints on such mediation.

2-3 Taking Stock of the Existing Theoretical Literature

In a paper on "*The State of Public Diplomacy in 2014,*" Craig Hayden and Emily Metzgar (2013) mapped the methodologies of about 600 peer-reviewed articles on public diplomacy published between 1996 and through mid-2013. They termed the existing literature as "largely atheoretical, which might surprise some of you. Theoretical frameworks are important for studies because they

give us a basis from which to assess claims and measurements, ways to make evaluations about public diplomacy. And yet, largely, a lot of this work is atheoretical. There is no theoretical framework. Not surprisingly, soft power was listed as a common theoretical framework. But as Joseph Nye himself has argued, soft power is not a theory. So where are we?" Their answer to this question is, "Now public diplomacy scholarship is not a clear demarcated field of scholarship, there is no discipline that owns it. There is no home in political science or international relations or communications. So how does that impact the scholarship and its utility for public practitioners and policymakers and what we've done so far?" In this thesis I take the position that this absence of a 'clear demarcated field of scholarship' should provide new intellectual opportunities where existing media and sociological theorization can be used for venturing into this un-demarcated field without being inhibited with what might have been already considered as established frames of references where venturing outside of them may involve high scholarly risk.

One of the very few media scholars who ventured into the mediated public diplomacy theoretical terrain is Robert M. Entman (2008), who reflects that there isn't yet a theory that, "… fully explains how media coverage and other forces influence elite and public opinion toward American foreign policy *within the United States.* Still less, then, do we have a theory of if and how messages from the United States activate and spread through other political communication systems. The central goal for theory (and practice) here is to understand the conditions under which foreign support for American foreign policies can be stimulated by U.S. public diplomacy initiatives that employ mediated communication" (Entman 2008, p. 87-88; emphasis by author). Entman's (2008) Cascading and Activation Model, initially proposed in the context of how the White House framed its post 9/11 political and war agenda against Iraq was one such theoretical attempt. In principle, the model attempts to explain how the mediated public diplomacy seeks to generate favorable reactions towards the U.S. by influencing the elite in a targeted country, in the expectation that those targeted would in turn exert pressure on their respective governments to react favorably to the desired policies of the sender.

In his much-quoted article "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy," Eytan Gibloa (2008) notes that the knowledge gap in public diplomacy may find its roots in what he refers to as the nature of the public diplomacy literature itself, which he describes as largely 'historical accounts' that cover the U.S. public diplomacy in specific. He also notes that a significant portion of it is

'anecdotal' as opposed to 'analytical.' He observes that contributions to the development of theory and methodologies remain inadequate despite the innovations in the communication technologies and the completely different nature of audiences and actors with which the U.S. public diplomacy has to engage. Gibloa provides a thorough review of the academic literature that attempted to provide theoretical framework for understanding and theorizing public diplomacy. For him, the bulk of these attempts fall short of taking public diplomacy practitioners to theoretical safety shores. He notes that media theories such as priming, framing, or agenda-setting are rarely incorporated into the public diplomacy studies.

The title of Gibloa's article and the sequence of his analyses give readers the impression that his destination was proposing a theoretical framework for studying public diplomacy. However, disappointingly, he does not. Instead he tells his eager readers that, "A scholarly field is established when several minimal requirements are met. It must be clearly distinguished from other fields; … A major breakthrough could be achieved if public diplomacy research is expanded to other disciplines" (p. 75). Gilboa identifies a total of thirteen such fields: business administration marketing, media effects, public opinion, rhetoric, cultural studies, computer science technology, psychology, sociology, political science, international relations and diplomacy strategy, history, and public relations branding (p. 74). Extensive as it is, the list overlooks a fundamental component of mediated public diplomacy, which is the *production* of public diplomacy mediation. Nor does he engage in how these different macro factors can all be intertwined into one theoretical frame that explains the dynamics of these social phenomena.

Focusing on broad macro variables that affect public diplomacy activities across a number of countries, Ivan Rasmussen (2009) conjures a public diplomacy regression model in which this activity is dependent on a host of variables such as: population size of the sending country, its international prestige, wealth, development, stability of democracy, years of membership in the UN, technological capacity, and freedom level. While a macro analysis of variables that affect public diplomacy activities may enhance our understanding of the process, however, these variables remain exactly what they are: independent external variables operating outside the immediate accessibility of those who have to manage and execute the mediated public diplomacy itself.

It is worth noting that the literature referred to thus far is largely concerned with public diplomacy in general with mediated public diplomacy taking a marginal space. However, ignoring the production component of the mediated public diplomacy amounts to taking this component *as a given*; even Hayden and Metzgar (2013) overlook this aspect when recommending future research possibilities. Rasmussen (2009) does, nevertheless, mention the role of journalists in public diplomacy communication but he sees them as 'sharing the experiences' of the sending countries rather than *representing* the sending country, which is the focus of this thesis. The urgency of studying the production side of mediated public diplomacy stems from at least three broad origins. First, the sender (U.S. government) and messengers (Arab journalists) come from two different stocks of knowledge, where the Arab journalists are contracted to represent America. Second, in the absence of being able to manage macro components that affect public diplomacy, there is at least a stronger possibility of being able to manage certain aspects at the micro-agent level. Third, amid highly contested meaning of the concept, a basic minimum for securing effective message articulation is that all engaged in the articulation process of the mediation are in some sort of agreement on the meaning, possibilities, expectations and limitations of what their communication can achieve.

2-4 Lessons from Existing Media and Social Theories

Although put in a different context, the importance of studying the production component is stressed by Simon Cottle (2003), who maintains that understanding media entails the study of media organizations and production regardless of the contexts in which they operate, be they global or national. He stresses the need to understand how media producers "… manage creativity and constraints within these organizational settings and, more importantly, with what consequences for the forms of representations produced" (Cottle 2003, p. 3). Given the unique and complex nature of mediated public diplomacy, all these aspects are of extreme relevance although they are rarely accounted for in the study of this type of mediation.

The possible rationale for not accounting for the production component of mediated public diplomacy can be inferred from two settings. First, is the U.S.-Cold War communication, where despite its reported success and the availability of the literature of the news production component of the communication, it is rarely, if at all, studied in a theoretical frame of reference that can

explain its success and at the same time guide the study of such mediation that targets other countries. Similarly, despite the extensive literature on the vital role of the Russian and Eastern European émigrés in the success of this communication, reference to their role remains sparse and again un-theorized. These knowledge shortcomings can be partly attributed to the fact that since the U.S.-Cold War communication was an acclaimed success, the role of the frontline communicators had been taken for granted. This aspect seems to have spilled into the study of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy.

The other, rather more distant, setting could be found in Stuart Hall's (2009 [1973]) Encoding/Decoding Model in as far as accounting for the relative 'unconscious' alignment within the media institution between the communication professionals and the owners on the what he refers to as the 'professional ideology' of the media organization.

> "It must suffice to say that the professionals are linked with the defining elites not only by the institutional position of broadcasting itself as an 'ideological apparatus' [citing Louis Althusser], but also by the structure of *access* (that is, the systematic 'over- accessing' of selective elite personnel and their 'definition of the situation' in television. It may even be said that the professional codes serve to reproduce hegemonic definitions specifically by not overtly biasing their operations in a dominant direction: ideological reproduction therefore takes place here inadvertently, unconsciously, 'behind men's backs' [citing Stuart Hall]. Of course, conflicts, contradictions and misunderstandings regularly arise between the dominant and the professional significations and their signifying agencies" (p. 37).

It is hence assumed that a news or media organization derives its discourse from what is agreed upon by convention. But should this be the case for news or media organizations that originate and operate within a one society, there is little evidence that agreement on the intended discourse, by convention, would work equally well in the case where communicators and news organization owners each come from two totally different socio-cultural backgrounds, let alone from two different societies. The assumption here is that before the intended discourse is encoded in the articulated message, the foreign frontline communicators must be aware of the intended discourse and are willing to endorse it in the hope that they will encode into the messages they articulate and circulate to their intended audiences. Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model will be instrumental in guiding the analysis in a subsequent section. Before reaching that far, however, there are

promising theoretical prospects of attempts to situate mediated public diplomacy production in the existing social theoretical literature on media. Karl E. Rosengren (1981), also cited by Denis McQuail (2010, 80-82), provides a useful succinct summary of the sociological theoretical frames of reference. Rosengren outlines different theoretical frames of whether changes in the social structure cause or are caused by changes in culture. Since mediated public diplomacy is a transnational media, narrated by a group of journalists coming from same social reality of the targeted publics, the frame of reference presented by Rosengren may allow us to situate this type of mediation in a more familiar construct.

Rosengren identifies four possible scenarios of the relation between society and culture (or media contents) as illustrated in the subsequent chart where the bulk of the mediated theoretical inquires have centered on either *materialism* or *idealism* options, the *interdependent* and the *autonomy* in specific – have generated a limited 'distinctive theoretical' interest (McQuail, 2010). While in either the *materialist* or *idealists* zones it is evident what factors provoke changes and impact the other (culture or society) with an ever-dominance of one over the other, in the *autonomy* scenario culture or society are intertwined, that is, where one might initially set off change in the other, the dynamics of evolution of a resultant phenomenon will not give supremacy of one over the other (i.e. culture or society). In short, while in the *idealism* scenario, media acts as a 'molder,' media acts as 'lagging mirrors" in the *materialism* scenario, whereas they could be either molders or mirrors in the *interdependent* scenario, or neither in the *autonomy* zone (Rosengren 1981, p. 252).

Social Structure Influences Culture

		Yes	No
Culture Influences Social Structure	Yes	Interdependence (two-way influence) Media as molders and mirrors	Idealism (strong media influence) Media as molders
	No	Materialism (media are dependent) Media as mirrors	Autonomy (no causal connection) Media as neither mirrors nor molders

Figure 2 Four Types of Relationship between Culture and Social Structure (Rosengren 1981, p. 249 & 252 and MacQuail 2010, p. 82)

Without delving into detail about what both the *idealism* and *materialism* options represent, McQuail contemplates that perhaps the more problematic—from a theorizing perspective—is option of *autonomy,* where it holds the assumption that society and media can 'vary independently up to a point,' or in other words demonstrate rather limited "interaction" between them. This relative 'autonomy' of the media and society lends support to the controversy over the prospects of media overall in terms of having influence on ideas, attitudes, values, and the behavior of receivers. It is in essence the zone where impact of mediation is uncertain regardless of whether it originates from within the same society or from outside it. Although possibly outdated now, Rosengren gives U.S.-based examples of mediation intended to *instigate change*, but the change is reported to have taken place independently of that intended mediation. McQuail maintains that, "Today, the various influences are bound together that neither mass communication nor modern society is conceivable, without the other, and each is a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition for the other. From this point of view, we have to conclude that media may equally be considered to mold or to mirror society and social change" (p. 81).

For this thesis, however, what is particularly relevant is McQuail's contention that cultural imperialism may well fall in the *autonomy* zone, which may give support to the assumption that so would mediated public diplomacy, since both originate from outside the target country. This is likely to be the case since "the autonomy position would suggest that imported media culture is superficial and need not significantly touch the local culture. It follows that cultural imperialism is not likely to happen simply by chance or against the will of the culturally 'colonized'" (McQuail 2010, p. 82). The possible implication here is that mediated public diplomacy must struggle the most as a media originating from one collectivity and trying to reach, engage, and impact audiences of another collectivity. But this need does not mean that cultural imperialism is not seen as a powerful cultural force in terms of evoking social changes in the receiving societies. The same applies to the U.S.-Cold War broadcasting which is reported to have been very impactful in societies behind the Iron Curtain.

It may be worth taking note of the possible confluence between the presumed unintended and elusive cultural aims of cultural imperialism, on the one hand, and the intended cultural and political aims of the U.S. public diplomacy, on the other. Cultural imperialism seen a carrier of Western liberal capitalist ideals and lifestyles does not propagate the US public diplomacy political

objectives as such, at least not explicitly. Nevertheless, apprehensiveness towards cultural imperialism is partly due to the assumption that it is providing a 'free ride' to the U.S. public diplomacy's ultimate objective. Inadvertently, however, some maintain that by providing this presumed 'free ride,' cultural imperialism is seen to be damaging the prospects of effective U.S. public diplomacy. Marc Lynch (2008) cites Monroe Price saying that globalization of media is "virtually synonymous with a tendency towards depoliticization" (p. 26). As an illustration of such cannibalization effect, Lynch quotes Lance Bennett who maintains that the international market-oriented media are inclined to "increase generic programming in both entertainment and public affairs" creating "a reconstructed space that excludes much of the local politics, citizen activism, public policy analysis and deliberation" (Lynch 2008, p 26-27).

Positioned by the U.S. government as a 'surrogate' TV channel, Alhurra (Epstein & Mages 2005) would hence make it fall into the *autonomous* zone. This take-out finds support in the consensus that U.S. public diplomacy is by its nature a one-way asymmetric communication in which the sender is not expecting the targeted audiences to engage in restructuring the communication contents by providing their feedback. "The monologic nature of American international broadcasting lies in the requirement that it advances American foreign policy – a topic that Arab audiences would generally prefer scrutinized and discussed critically" (Youmans 2009, p. 53). As such, this study seeks to identify the zone in which Arab journalists working for the Alhurra see themselves operating; the zone they would ideally want to be in, should they want to maximize the effectiveness of their communication, *vis-a-vis* where Alhurra is perceived to be positioned by its management. The assumption here is that the *autonomy* zone amounts to being situated at the periphery of the social, political, and cultural life of a society. Re-positioning itself in the *interdependent* zone may not be an easy transition for mediated public diplomacy but remains ideal, nevertheless. Arab communicators working for Alhurra, speaking the tongue of their target audiences and accessing them in their homes, could present an opportunity for the potential to create a sort of a hybrid zone or at least a bridge to cross-over from *autonomy* to *interdependent.* Knowing that such prospects cannot be considered in isolation of the overall political contexts of the U.S. mediated public diplomacy efforts in the Arab world, this is a prospect my research seeks to explore further.

2-5 The Social Production of News

In comparison with the much more cited Hall Encoding/Decoding Model (2009 [1973]), which focuses primarily on the consumption of media messages, Hall *et al.* (2009 [1978]) in their paper titled *The Social Production of News* focus on the production component of the mediation process. Although put in the context of media dynamics that operate in free economies and democratic societies, its relevance to mediated public diplomacy is the theoretical construct it develops for securing effective mediation. Alternatively, many aspects of this frame of reference could be generalized and open new opportunities of knowledge that could guide in understanding the possible limitations of public diplomacy mediation that take place between two different societies.

Hall *et al.* (2009 [1978]) contend that the moment of news production of an event may in effect be determined by factors that do not necessarily directly emanate from the event itself but is socially determined by at least two broad aspects. One aspect stems from the 'bureaucratic organization' of the media that produces the news. It is related to the nature or the types of news on which they typically focus. Selecting "those that are felt to be of interest to the reader. … is where the professional ideology of what constitutes 'good news' – the newsman's sense of news values— begins to structure the process" (p. 648-649). The second crucial aspect, although the 'less obvious' one, 'is the moment of the *construction* of the news story itself,' where for the message to be comprehensible to the target audience, it must meet several conditions. The messenger must have reasonable assumptions about the audiences: how identifiable they are, who they are, and whether the message relates to them or not. All of this must take place in a specific "… social context (i.e. placed within a frame of meanings familiar to the audience)" (p. 649). For the authors, the identification and social context in which the mediation takes place are of primary importance in the production of 'common meaning' about the event covered. "An event only 'makes sense' if it can be located within a range of known social and cultural identifications" (p. 649) that forms the 'cultural map' which both the messenger and the audiences must share for the production and consumption of common meanings of events that are newsworthy only because they are continually changing, unpredictable or conflicting. Had they been otherwise, they would not be news anyway, for they would have been familiar, and their shared meaning would have been taken for granted. A shared cultural map harmonizes the understanding of events that are newsworthy in nature.

"The social identification, classification and contextualization of news events in terms of these background frames of reference is the fundamental process by which the media make the world they report on intelligible to readers and viewers. This process of 'making an event intelligible' is a social process – constituted by a number of specific journalistic practices, which embody (often only implicitly) crucial assumptions about the society is and how it works" (Hall et al. 2009b [1978], p. 649).

The main implication here is that there are a number of conditions for the news production process to be free-flowing and aligned with the '*maps of meaning'* prevailing within a society. The first is the 'consensual nature' of the society: the process of signification – giving social meanings to events – *both assumes and helps to construct society as a 'consensus.'* But nevertheless, this consensus assumes its own preconditions:

"We exist as members of one society because – it is assumed – we share a common stock of cultural knowledge with our fellow men: we have access to the same 'maps of meanings'. Not only are we all able to manipulate these 'maps of meaning' to understand events, but we have fundamental interests, values and concerns in common, which these maps embody or reflect. We all want to, or do, maintain basically the same perspective *on* events. In this view, what unites us, as a society and a culture – its consensual side – far outweighs what divides and distinguishes us as groups or classes from other groups. …" (p. 650).

But this presumed 'consensual' viewpoint need not mean that different individuals or groups in a society are always in complete harmony in terms of how news on events is depicted or framed; nor should it mean that different groups have or share the same interests and perspectives on same events, and it affects them as individuals or as groups, be it politically, economically, or culturally. Disagreement does exist, but by convention they are reconciled by the political system itself. "Wherever disagreements exist … The 'free market' in opinions and in the media is supposed to guarantee the reconciliation of cultural discontinuities between one group one group and another" (p. 650). Differences in opinions that are bound to arise in a free market mediation environment remain in the realm of different explanations or interpretations of what the authors refer to as same dominant culture or ideology; all are done within the same consensual central value system. It is implied, however, that this need not mean that people live in a sort of unrealistic pluralist society

where all competing worldviews are equally represented. "The media define for the majority of the population *what* significant events are taking place, but, also, they offer the powerful interpretations of *how* to understand these events" (p. 651; emphasis by authors). Notice here that the authors do not use the 'interpretation of the powerful,' which could carry more direct reference to the dominant ideology. 'Powerful interpretation' seems to imply that 'routine structures' of the news production would inherently "*reproduce the definition of the powerful,* without in a simple sense, in their pay" (p. 651; emphasis by authors). In this case, those with more access to the media become the 'primary definers,' which could mean that they assume this status from being both the makers as well as the interpreters of events reporters resort to for information. They are the accredited representatives of the different major political, social, and economic institutions. Their power stems from the fact that they "*set the limit* for all subsequent discussion by *framing what the problem is*" (p. 653 [emphasis by authors]).

As such, "the media, then, do not simply 'create' the news; nor do they simply transmit the ideology of the 'ruling class' in a conspiratorial fashion. … but their structured relationship to the power has the effect of making them play the crucial but secondary role in the reproduction of the definitions of those who have privileged access, as a right, to the media as 'accredited sources'" (p. 653). Where does all of that leave us with the much controversial issue of the media being an explicit subordinate to the ruling ideology? In their concluding statement, the authors maintain that the media's reproduction of the dominant ideology is implicitly inherent in how the professional practice of it ensures that the media 'effectively but objectively' play this role.

The above theoretical frame of reference for social production of news within the social setting of one society, one language, and one central value system, or more specifically, has one consensual 'map of meanings.' Outlining it here is intended to provoke questions about what the likely 'social production of frame of reference' for mediated public diplomacy news would be where the government of one society is attempting to communicate with the people of another society. This question becomes more critical, especially when major structural differences exist in their respective value systems, political systems, religions, ideals, ideologies, national interests, with invariably different 'maps of meanings,' worldviews, and different languages. Asking such a question is not meant to rule out the possibilities of effective mediated public diplomacy mediation between the U.S and the Arab world—given that the two are ontologically vastly different. The

intention is rather to rescue the production process of the mediation from being taken-for-granted without taking into consideration the full socio-cultural contexts within which this type of one-way communication takes place. More importantly, it is to rescue the reported failure of the U.S. public diplomacy communication from blaming it merely on either the message, the messenger, the sender, or simply on the oppositional view receivers take in decoding the message.

The take-out from Hall *et al.* is that the frame of reference for the social production of news can be summarized as follows: the effectiveness of a message ought to be evaluated in reference to what it is culturally capable of being loaded with -- within the societal context of the receiver-- not simply in reference to the mere desires of the sender. It can be assumed that practically most, if not all, of the key components that pave the way for a 'common' frame of social reference within a society, are 'uncommon' in the context of mediated public diplomacy production—given that the mediation production must take place within two different cultural frames of reference.

2-6 The Case for the Interpretative Approach for Studying Mediated Public Diplomacy

Theories on journalism and media production in mainstream media could be relevant in shedding light on the dynamics of mediated public diplomacy, but only to a limited extent. Contestation over what mediated public diplomacy is, be it public relations, propaganda, publicity, etc., constrains attempts to borrow theorization to understand mediated public diplomacy journalism from the mainstream media. The polysemy of public diplomacy, or the different meanings those concerned with this activity attach to it, could be one major factor that undermines its effectiveness. The absence of a minimal level of inter-subjectivity over the meaning of the concept compels a key research question: What *meaning* do Arab journalists executing the frontline communication give to their mediated work? Although taken from a different context, John Hughes and Wesley Sharrock (1997, p.104-105) suggest that the starting point for empirical social science research is the observation of what those engaged in a social action do or say they do. Hughes and Sharrock believe that "An essential aspect is of the observations the description of the phenomena. Actions must be classified and categorized. Decisions must be made, for example, about whether a man carving a piece of wood is doing something economic, religious, political, artistic, or whatever. What is also certain is that the man himself would have a sense what he is doing. … More

generally, what difference does the fact, that social actors assign meaning to their social reality, make for the study of social life" (p. 105). Citing related literature Michael Schudson (2010) reminds us that "journalists make news just as carpenters make houses and scientists make science" (p. 165) adding that the circumstances in which this manufacturing is done is equally important:

> "Although I still think that economic, political, social, and cultural forces structure news production, it is important to acknowledge that they do not produce news out of nothing. They act on 'something' in the world. … The forces of journalism act on these things but do not (necessarily) produce them. … They shape them, but they do not shape them just as they choose. Michelangelo created David, and there are political, economic, social and cultural factors that would help explain how he did so. But Michelangelo did not create the statue out of nothing. He made it out of marble. And even though he carefully selected which marble to use, he was in some measure the servant of what marbles and its distinctive features, the marble's own properties placed limiting conditions on what the artist could do and so influenced in essential ways what he arrived at" (Schudson 2010, p. 164-165).

Hence, in short, just as a news story is shaped by its objective being an event occurring independently of the journalists' perspectives on its interpretation, it is shaped by the ideological stock from which the journalists come. Schudson's reference to the structure of economic, political, social, and cultural forces that structure news production is all set in the context of one society setting, as in one country or state. But what if, as in the case of mediated public diplomacy, this *structure* stretches to become two different structures, caught between America—as one state and society—and a multiple of Arab societies? This question is evoked simply because the producer of mediated public diplomacy news is constituted of a *sender* coming from one society and the *messengers* coming from another. Existing media theories have scarcely, if at all, depicted the dynamics of this dual societal structures in which mediated public diplomacy operates. My contention in this thesis is that a necessary condition for maximizing the prospects of effective mediated public diplomacy is establishing an understanding of what these circumstances are within the societies they live and operate in, and more importantly, how they *navigate* between them.

2-7 Lessons from the Representation of *the Other*

There is a possibility that should Alhurra Arab journalists believe that their job is, in effect, to *navigate* between two social realities, as is the expectation of this type of mediation, they would be influenced to a large degree by how people typically view *the other* social reality that they have no firsthand experience with but are still expected to represent. Hence, given that mediated public diplomacy presents itself as an outstanding example of a mediation, it must be very carefully encoded with a political discourse that depicts the perspective of the sender. Literature on the representation of the *other* has predominantly been about representation of the *other* within the same society, be it one's own social group or different social groups within same society. Literature on the representation of 'others,' as of other societies as a news coverage, is scarce. Philo Wasburn (2002) investigates political representation of the *other* in the news from two perspectives: first, how the U.S. media presents other states, friends, and foes; and secondly, how selected foreign media, again in U.S.A's friend and foe countries, present the United States. Wasburn bases his work of representation on Alfred Schutz' thesis that the stock of knowledge of a people is what provides the frame of reference or orientation with which they interpret objects, events, and other people.

> "For Schultz, our stock of knowledge *is* our reality. It is experienced as the objective world existing "out there," independent of our will and confronting us as facts. This stock of knowledge has a taken-for-granted character and is seldom the object of conscious reflection. It is understood by us in a common-sense fashion as reality itself. … According to Schultz, we rely on *typifications*, or "recipes" for action that exist in our culture. … Our statements are meaningful to others who have learned the same stock of knowledge of which the typifications are a part" (Wasburn 2002, p. 9-10 [emphasis by author]).

The notion of typification is a closely linked consensual 'map of meanings' as suggested by Hall et al. (2009 [1978]) above, which Berger and Luckmann (1966) refer to as 'objectivation' of knowledge. Berger and Luckmann maintain that "[since] knowledge is socially objectivated *as* knowledge, that is, as a body of generally valid truths about reality, any radical deviance from the institutional order appears as a departure from reality. … What is taken for granted as knowledge in the society comes to be coextensive with the knowable, or at any rate provides the framework within which anything not known will come be known in the future" (p. 83).

Another type of representation of *other* foreign societies is done by Elfriede Fursich (2002), who studied mediated representation by Western journalists of developing societies at the socio-cultural level as presented in documentaries or travelogue-type mediation. Referring to Paul Watzlawick's often-cited dictum, 'journalists cannot not represent,' Fursich maintains that "The question is, how is the 'Other' constructed if 'We' becomes an unpredictable category?" (p. 60), adding that, "…journalists have to adopt new professional routines to defuse the complex situations of representing others" (p. 58). The issue of the unpredictability of 'We' becomes more relevant when for instance Alhurra Arab journalists will have to negotiate not only within and with their own Arab culture(s), but also with the American culture, which they are expected to represent.

John L. Caughey, in *Negotiating Cultures and Identities* (2006), hints that this 'unpredictability' referred to by Fursich may be caused by the cultural system itself even before interacting with the 'other.' This is presumably caused by the dual function of a social system. "Cultures are systems of meaning that allow us make sense of the world 'out there.' But cultures also enable and constrain us in our attempts to understand who we are" (p. 44). Caughey maintains that this unpredictability may be compounded when people belong to and experience dual cultures, where "each broad societal culture has its own self-conception system …Such people have to negotiate constructions of self and identity. And so does everyone else" (p. 46).

The above observations may have relevance when Alhurra Arab journalists are expected to represent the American culture as the 'other' with which they have no first-hand experience. However, it can be argued that representation in a mediated public diplomacy context is invariably different from the representation depicted above, for it also crosses into the territory of *speaking on one's behalf*, not just representation as in portraying. Now whether the Arab journalists contracted by Alhurra for this task are themselves aware of this expectation and whether they also see it as their task is something for this research to establish.

Invariably, how the Arab U.S. media public diplomacy journalists may perceive America is of great importance given that the core conceptual construct of this thesis can be captured in the Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 55b "We do not see things as they are; we see things as we are." This *self*-perspective lens through which a people reconstruct the reality of *others* seems to have preceded any formal theorization on the sociology of knowledge about the *other*, and it had possibly been one of the main sources of human conflicts. In addition to the wide American-Arab

cultural divide that the represented and the presenter in the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy must deal with, it is worth noting that there is also the Arab-Arab divide that structures the ideological worldview of different Arab peoples of whom the Arab journalists are a part.[9]

Representing America is not a humble task for Arab public diplomacy journalists, be it those living in the different Arab countries—some or many of whom may not know the English language or have ever stepped foot in America. This lack of knowledge poses a few epistemological issues. One is the possibility of Arabs knowing all these fundamental components of America's ideals and ideology. Secondly, if a degree of comprehension is possible, through what sociological lens would these journalists reconstruct the social reality of America, especially its foreign policy narrative? This fundamental epistemological question comes to mind well before these journalists even attempt to articulate and communicate America's perspective to the targeted Arab audiences. This leads yet to another research question about the possibility of 'presenting' or 'representing' the 'other' on behalf of the latter in a mediated context irrespective of whether the context is public diplomacy or any other. What America *is* as depicted above is a construction of its own reality by Americans, some of whom may consider this depiction to be the reality rather than their own social construction of it.

In the context of media and the construction of reality, it is worth reminding ourselves that the focal point in the knowing dynamism is the agent or unit of research, which according to Stefan Weber (2012) could be "a person, an observer, a brain, as social system, on various forms the whole society, the media as a whole, etc. …" (p. 11). Of relevance here is the 'creation' versus the 'depiction' of a social reality and whether the agent is influenced by it or influences it. "Realism starts from the position that is *more likely* that it is reality or is only reality which has an effect on the agent (and not the reverse); while constructivism asserts that it is more likely or only the agent that, in the act of perceiving reality, creates it" (Weber 2002, p. 11; emphasis by author). Weber poses a number of epistemological questions: "Is reality a discovery or an invention? Do media

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[9] There is a growing belief that regional Arab differences exist and are fundamental in shaping a more differentiated character of each Arab region, usually broadly regrouped as the Levant (historically known as the Fertile Crescent), the Arab Gulf, Egypt (or Nile Valley) and the Maghreb.

reflect reality (exactly or distortedly) or do they construct it in the first place? Is the world a projection or a design? Do we represent something, or are we (and always have been) constructs? Do we depict reality or build it?" (Weber 2002, p. 12).

In *Orientalism*, Said begins his argumentation "… with the assumption that the Orient is not an inert fact of nature, is not merely out *there*, just as the Occident is not *there* either" (2003 [1978], p. 23 [emphasis by author]). Said proceeds in reminding us of the Italian philosopher Giovanni Battista Vico's (1666-1718) observation "that men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography: as both geographical and cultural entities—to say nothing of historical entities—such locales, regions, geographical sectors as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made. Therefore, as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other" (Said 2003 [1978], p. 23).

Said's citation of Vico's observation is pertinent here; it evokes issues related to the possibility of Arabs journalists *knowing* America which they have not themselves *made*. It may become irrelevant whether Arab public diplomacy journalists are presenting the American worldview of an America (as an ideal) that is 'just there or not just merely out there.' What matters is that they are expected to reconstruct the social reality of another society they themselves have not created, let alone having first-hand experience of it. Getting a glimpse of potential gaps in the conflicting perspectives and interpretation of Arab and the American cultures can be conjured when taking into consideration such potential conflicts likely to take place within the same society as depicted by Robert K Merton (2005 [1973]) with an adjustment for the fact that we are referring to two vastly different cultures. What Merton does is that he alerts us to the potential threats of increasingly fewer social, cultural, political, and economic and value commonalities that prevail in a modern society on the extent of social trust. People reach a point of not being able to take into consideration the validity of the others' points of views or values. They become incompatible with theirs.

However, this state of perpetual divisions within a society needs not mean that these divisions are not kept under check or regulated; they coexist, nevertheless. For although they reflect power

struggle within a society, conceptually, democracy is seen to regulate this struggle with each side having a public space for expressing and contesting it where one or the other will prevail but in a democratic contestation (Hall et al. 2009 [1978]). A similar point is made by Jostein Gripsrud "Journalists regulate much of what they get to know about the world they inhabit, and this activity is vital to a functioning democracy" (cited by Schudson 2011, p. 6). Hall (1977) seems to indicate that such regulation by a political system had been proceeded by the common 'code' of social mapping, people of the same society have a common understanding of what it is perceived to be. But should there be so many mechanisms for regulating potential societal divisions internally, that is, within a society, what are the mechanisms for regulating such divisions amongst different societies, as asymmetrical as America and the Arab world?

The assumption here is that Arab journalists working for U.S. mediated public diplomacy could not be sociologically immune from these cultural differences through which they need to navigate. International relations mechanisms ought to act as a regulator of such potential divisions amongst different societies. Conceptually, nevertheless, public diplomacy is one such mechanism where one state initiates communication to disseminate knowledge about itself to other nations in the hope that it can at least regulate some of what the people of other societies get to know about the sender of this communication. In the case of U.S. public diplomacy for instance, America believes that the Arabs' antagonism towards it is largely due to the lack of knowledge for what America stands. It is because either Arabs are not aware of its values and ideals, or they are prevented from accessing such knowledge about America or those who envy America for possessing them. Hence conceptually, public diplomacy could be construed as the intentional construction of a grid for filtering or channeling through knowledge about America into the Arab consciousness. Weber (2002) considers 'intentional' representation to be 'conscious constructivism.' But both Weber (2002) and Said (2003 [1978]) concur that representation of any type does not operate in an ideological vacuum. For Said, this is especially so if the representation of knowledge is of a political nature.

The fact that public diplomacy engages in the dissemination of political knowledge about the country sending information is common knowledge. Hence, the question becomes about what ideological factors influence the construction of the contents of articulated knowledge about America. In attempting to answer this question, it is impossible to discard the American-Arab

ideological divide through which Arab public diplomacy journalists will need to navigate in constructing the *preferred* version of the social reality of America— preferred in the sense of what America desires to convey about itself. This ideological divide includes every social, cultural, political, economic, values, religious and language details. Subsequently, the follow up question becomes about what *version* of the final U.S.-Arab public diplomacy mediation is it possible to reproduce. Is it a U.S.-centric, Arab-centric, or a hybrid of both versions?

2-8 Relevance of Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model

Absence of related theorization on the constraints of mediation between different societies needs not mean that we are totally left out without any theoretical road maps. One such possible road map is Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model [2009 (1973)]. It is mostly used in the context of how consumers of mediated messages decode or react to mediation vis-a-vis the process by which media producers encode their ideology in their mediation. The model is critical of the behaviorist communication model, which considers audiences to be passive receivers as opposed to being active consumers of media who, according to Hall's model, are in the process of consuming the mediation are exposed to 'give meaning' to it. This 'meaning making' could vary from being aligned with the intended dominant meaning, presumably encoded by the producers, to a negotiated meaning or code, all the way to an oppositional meaning or code. Hall's model is seen as shifting the power of meaning making from media producers to the audiences (Davis 2004). Hall sees the structure in which mediation is produced and consumed through four linked yet distinctive 'moments': production, circulation, distribution/consumption, and reproduction. Each phase has its own operating system and characteristics and is subjected to conditions that are only partially determined by the preceding phase. Hall is most interested in the potential lack of 'asymmetry' between the first and the last phase. The codes encoded by in the production phase in the language or the televisual text of the message may or may not be decoded in the same way by the audiences. Messages are produced to 'mean' something, the output of the 'meaning' consumed – as in interpreted by audiences -- could be similar or different.

The reported novelty of this model is that it considers the processing of media output to be heavily entrenched in a social context. Similarly, the production process is just as heavily entrenched in an ideological context. "The content of media is *encoded* ideologically. The meaning of what appears in the media is determined by the nature of the production process, which operates according to

institutional constraints and professional codes and practices to produce the preferred meaning in media messages for the audiences to understand. … Hall … argues there is one dominant message coming from the media's tendency, consciously or unconsciously, to reproduce the meaning preferred by the most powerful groups in society" (Williams 2003, p. 195-196 [emphasis by author]). Processing takes place in the context of the existing social operating system that exists independently of the audiences' actions or behaviors, which Hall refers to as 'maps of social reality.' In another work cited by Helen Davis (2004), Hall refers to this 'social mapping' as 'recognitions' which means, "That in order to recognize something, we must have encountered the object or the relation in a previous encounter. … The difficulty with the relationship of the seer to the seen is that there is a tendency on the part of the seer to always to try to fit the seen object or relation within an existing cognitive framework or map" (Davis 2004, p. 42).

Placed in the context of the mediated public diplomacy, the most relevant moment of the Encoding/Decoding Model is the encoding one. Should Hall's model be concerned with how the dominant narrative seeks to encode its ideology in the media, a similar attempt is sought out in the U.S. mediated public diplomacy in its attempt to encode America's official narrative. Hall's model is developed in the context of one society whereas (already indicated earlier in this chapter) Hall believes that both journalists (agency) and the media organization (structure) have at least an implicit understanding of adherence to a common professional code (Hall 2009 [1973], p. 36-37). Hall is not oblivious to the relative 'autonomy' of the professional journalists in production of meaning, thereby alluding to possible conflicts or contradictions with the 'ideological apparatus,' but these conflicts are thought to remain within expected limits drawn by the dominant ideology. For Hall, the production process functions in a well-structured way that adheres to a set of social production relations, professional, organizational and technical routines. Although much less cited in the literature of the impact of the social structure on the media production, as compared to Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model, is the work of Hall et al. (2009 [1978]) on "The Social Production of News," cited in an earlier section, which does in many ways complement the production moment of the Encoding/Decoding Model. In the Encoding/Decoding model, however, Hall elaborates on the institutional structures and professional routines of the production component. Placed in the context of television production, Hall articulates the process as:

"The institutional structures of broadcasting, with their practices and networks of production, their organized relations and technical infrastructures, are required to produce a programme. Using the analogy of *Capital*, this is the 'labour process' in the discursive mode. Production, here, constructs the message, so in one sense the circuit begins here. Of course, the production process is not without its discursive aspect: it, too, is framed throughout the meanings and ideas: knowledge-in-use concerning routines of production, historically defined technical skills, professional ideologies, institutional knowledge, definitions and assumptions, assumptions about the audiences and so on frame the constitution of the programme throughout this production structure. Further, though the production structures of television originate the television discourse, they do not constitute a closed system. They draw treatments, agendas, events, personnel, images of the audience, definition of the situation' from other sources and other discursive formations within the wider socio-cultural and political structure of which there are a differentiate part" (Hall 2009 [1973]), p. 30).

Projecting Hall's already complex media encoding production process on the production of mediated public diplomacy would pose a different, if not even more complex, set of theoretical and practical challenges. Hall's theoretical frame of reference is set in the context of one society, one dominant culture. By contrast, in the mediated public diplomacy context, the obvious fact that both the foot soldiers of the mediated public diplomacy (agency) and the sender of the message come from very different societies would provoke the need for accounting for the social effects on mediation production emanating from two very different social, ideological, and political structures. The main thrust of this chapter has been to understand possible socio-cultural constraints on the construction of mediation that is expected to represent the other. These constraints are expected to be a de facto condition for representing the *other*, no matter how explicit the agreement between the *messenger* and the *sender* on the ideology to be encoded. The socialization process of Arab journalists into the Alhurra organization will need to consider these structural differences in 'the frames of reference,' an aspect that will be further discussed in the next chapter and will eventually form a core aspect of the research objectives. James D. Halloran (2009 [1998]) discusses the 'unpackaging' of certain social aspects a *messenger* will need to go through when initiated into a news organization. Placed in the context of Hall's encoding moment of production, this socialization is expected to secure a degree of agreement on what is to be

encoded into the intended message. From a policy perspective, how communicators at Alhurra perceive their role within both their societal and institutional environments remain critical. Although stated in a very different media context, what Halloran states seems exceptionally instructive and relevant to the core objectives of this proposed thesis. Studies on the limitations of 'unpackaging the professional unconscious,' especially in the case of journalists from one culture working for a news organization from another, appear to be rare at most.

> *"Far more attention had been given to reception by audience that to the production process, or to the operations of professional procedures. It is essential that, in our work, we should question basic assumptions and policies, challenge professional mythologies and prevailing values, enquire about existing structures, external pressures, and modus operandi, and where appropriate suggest alternative policies.*

> "Central to this concern is the need to study what is known as professional socialization. New members are socialized into their profession, and this means that they have to be on a range of beliefs, values, basic assumptions and understandings as well as sets of occupational routines in order to be accepted as qualified and successful. Much of this adoption and adaptation goes on at the unconscious and sub-conscious levels—hence the need to 'unpackage the professional unconscious' if we wish to know how they really operate. If the unpackaging does not occur, then we shall still have to contend with media mythologies which are often expressed as tautologies" (Halloran 2009 [1998], p. 217).

Just as I ventured in this chapter to propose the relevance of Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model to public diplomacy as a possible basis for studying the limitations on Arab public diplomacy journalists in their attempt to encode the U.S. narrative in communicating with their fellow Arab public, I want to venture into proposing the possible relevance of the *decoding moment* of Hall's model with respect to how Arab mediated public diplomacy journalists might negotiate or react to the U.S. narrative they are expected to encode. Before being journalists working for the U.S.-Arab public diplomacy apparatus, these Arab journalists are audiences. Working for Alhurra need not necessarily mean that they subscribe fully to the U.S. narrative has about itself. In effect, there is hardly any research about the extent of 'symmetry' or 'fit' between the codes embodied in the U.S. narrative about itself, on the one hand, and how these messengers *decode* the intended *code,* on the other. Subscribing to Hall's notion that 'meaning is social production' and is a 'practice,' it is

then not a farfetched notion that these messengers, before they joined Alhurra or even after joining it, would not also fall across the three codes identified by Hall: the dominant, the negotiated, and the oppositional codes. This is knowing that the use of the 'dominant' code may not be totally appropriate here since it is a far more complex matter to be shared across two very different social, cultural, and political structures.

Existing research on the extent of engagement by Alhurra Arab communicators may give clues to the extent of how 'fit' or rather 'lack of fit' depicts them as demotivated, with a degree of cynicism about what they do or the objectives of the communication efforts of their organization (Youmans 2008). However limited the number of Alhurra Arab staff interviewed in Youmans' analysis, the insights he presents provide traces of discrepancies between the discourse desired by the U.S. soft power and the discourse perceived by Arabs who are assigned the tasks of communicating with Arabs, especially with respect to the inadequate resources available to them for performing these tasks. Compounding these discrepancies is the perception that their '*preferred meaning*' or '*preferred understanding*' is not in-sync with the Arab general publics' discourses that are invariably anti-U.S., with apparent tremendous communication challenges to bridge this gap.

Youmans' analysis sheds crucial light on the centrality of the Arab staff working at Alhurra in different programming production capacities, who in turn have to negotiate and manage their own job expectations *vis-a-vis* a host of other interrelated components: 1) expectations set by their own organization and the resources available to them; 2) the U.S. overall public diplomacy objectives in the Arab world; 3) the U.S. polices in the region; and 4) the attitudes of Arab people towards the United States. Possibly more important is the perspective presented by Youmans that knowledge which U.S. Arab public diplomacy produces is treated with cynicism by the producers of this knowledge themselves, who in effect would be expected to impact their own self-perception of their legitimacy.

Arab journalists working for U.S. public diplomacy are expected to present the U.S. narrative, not only represent it. The key question then becomes: Does this representation/presentation require a degree of belief in what is being represented? If the answer is yes, the other question becomes how to generate or acquire adequate knowledge about the represented. For Hall (1997b)

"Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent the world meaningfully, to other people" (p. 15). A key research query to be addressed in this thesis is how it is possible to generate effective 'exchange' of meaning between two people of different cultural stocks on invariably controversial political and cultural matters, all the while bearing in mind that the meanings of objects, people, events, ideas in the world are more than likely to be shifting as we navigate from "… one culture to another, one language to another, one historical context, one community, group or sub-culture, to another" (Hall 1997a, p. 7). In representing America, Alhurra Arab journalists, in addition to having to navigate through all the aspects noted by Hall, have another dimension since the election of Donald Trump in November 2016. It is the changing social reality of America itself which has become strikingly evident.

A cartoon published in *The Economist* on January 6, 2017, depicted former U.S. president Barak Obama in track shorts approaching the newly elected president Donald Trump in a relay race. He hands him a baton with Trump dressed in a kingly outfit, looking sideways at Obama, carrying his own baton, his own height, fitted with a carving of Trump's head on top, telling Obama, "No, thanks. I have my own baton." In the same *Economist* issue another cartoon showed Obama wearing white gloves carefully holding the globe just pulled out a cartoon box labeled "fragile." Standing next to him is Trump nonchalantly bouncing the globe on the floor as if he were dribbling a basketball. Similarly, many other British and U.S. print media ran cartoons that depicted the ostensible 'transformation' of America rather than the 'transfer' of power from one president to another as stated by *The Financial Times*. BBC referred to it as "Two Americas in 24 hours … President Trump's supporters came feeling they've just taken their country back. The protesters on the women's march feel they have just lost theirs. It is that stark. … But the underlying message was clear - liberal America has just been shoved out of power" (January. 21, 2017). This seemingly structural transformation in the social reality of America seems to provoke fundamental ontological and epistemological questions about the approach of how to study the U.S. public diplomacy posing the question of the possibility of representing America, who's being the leader of the democratic world was its main selling point to the extent that an entire human era was labeled as the 'America Century'.

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Chapter Three

U.S.-Arab Mediated Public Diplomacy: The Epistemological Doubt

Against the interpretative backdrop proposed in the previous chapter on how to approach the study of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, this chapter presents analysis and critiques the apparent positivist perspective America adopts in its mediated public diplomacy. This positivist approach is apparent in at least three ways. First is the belief that America's values and worldview are merely social facts of which Arabs are not aware, and hence, Arabs would only need to know about America for them to start appreciating it. Second, these facts can be *mirrored* as they are in its public diplomacy mediation. Thirdly, Arab journalists who come from a totally different social collectivity can successfully mirror America's worldview unfiltered.

The build-up to illustrating how this positivist perspective is extremely evident in the U.S. public diplomacy mediation is presented in the relevant theoretical literature that illustrates these positivist tendencies. Manifestations of such tendencies are then illustrated in the actual practices or expectations from this mediation. The outcome is an invitation for reflecting on the viability of this epistemological stance for the purpose of a better management of expectations and possibilities such a mediation can deliver.

3-1 Tacit and Explicit Knowledge about America

This section focuses on two concerns: firstly the identification of the competing epistemologies adopted in studying knowledge and secondly the contextualization of American-possessed mediated knowledge within these different epistemologies. To begin with, rather than revisiting the philosophical origins of what knowledge is, the approach adopted here relies heavily on how Donald Hislop (2005 Chapters 2 and 3) examines the competing conceptualizations of the epistemologies of knowledge. For although Hislop's book *Knowledge Management in Organizations: A Critical Introduction* was written primarily for the purpose of knowledge management in organizations, there is much to learn from it in terms of how America's exceptionalism, as a form of knowledge of America about itself, is conceptualized and communicated. Hislop starts by making a distinction between knowledge and information or data.

Data can be expressed in numerical figures, images, or other symbolic materials. Information, on the other hand, is data but presented, classified, or arranged in a more organized or systematic manner. Knowledge, however, is how this data and information is analyzed, given meaning, interpreted; and among other things, what implications it might have on both senders and receivers. A main aspect of this interpretation is that it could be based on prior knowledge, a system of beliefs, or values; and more importantly, it could lead to the generation of further knowledge— hence, the circular function of knowledge. Knowledge is not static but is in a constant state of regeneration. Existing knowledge interacts with the additional data and information that are added to it. Consequently, given that knowledge is culture-centric "people with different knowledge bases may develop different interpretations of the significance of the same events/results" (Hislop 2005, p 17).

Hislop details two epistemological perspectives on the nature of knowledge: the objectivist and the anti-objectivist or practice-based. He defines objectivist knowledge as being objective, factual, derived from a good/entity/commodity, the result of an intellectual process. It is knowledge that people possess. It is part of an objective reality; it exists independent of how people interpret it; it is codifiable and measurable. The alternative epistemology is what Hislop refers to as the practice-based perspective. Here, knowledge is seen as socially constructed, embodied by the people who produce or practice it; it is cultural-bound as well as disputed. This sub-section will primarily discuss the positivist perspective on knowledge, primarily because there is a robust case for arguing that the U.S. mediated public diplomacy has strong tendencies in adopting this perspective. Manifestations of such positivist inclinations abound, a selection of which will be outlined in this chapter along with their implications on the representation of America in such mediation. The anti-positivist perspective is what was already presented in the previous chapter as the more viable interpretive alternative for the realist perspective that the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) mediation seems to adopt. It will be further discussed in the subsequent chapter on the research design as part of the interpretative philosophical foundation of the representation of America in U.S.-Arab public diplomacy mediation which will be studied in the context of social action theory.

For the purpose of this thesis, the most relevant aspect of the positivist epistemological perspective on knowledge is that it distinguishes between two types of knowledge: explicit and tacit (Hislop

2005, p. 18-19). Explicit knowledge is codifiable, can be expressed or represented in more concrete forms: it is objective, impersonal, context-independent, and can be shared or transferred. Alternatively, tacit knowledge is regarded as intangible, if not inexpressible, subjective, personally constructed but can also be group-owned; it is very much dependent on one's own value system, "and is difficult, if not impossible to articulate, it may be even subconscious" (Hislop 2005, p. 19). The main differentiating properties between tacit and explicit knowledge is the lack of transferability of the former and the ease of the transferability of the latter. Communicating or transferring tacit knowledge is considered 'difficult, complex, and time-consuming.'

Marian Adolf and Nico Stehr (2017) note that because of the difficulty in acquiring or transferring implicit knowledge, different social scientists have labeled it as *sticky*, *inert,* or *hidden* knowledge. It is implicit in the sense of being "… difficult to acquire and transfer stocks of knowledge, cognitive skills and personal experience strongly reduce the mobility of knowledge, facilitate control over it and thus reduce the necessity of legally protecting such forms of knowledge" (Adolf and Stehr, 2017, p. 137). By contrast, since explicit knowledge can be codified, it is defined by its communicability. For Hislop, the ease of communicating explicit knowledge evokes the conduit sender/receiver model which presumes that the sender, isolated from the receiver, can codify the explicit knowledge and transmit it with the expectation that it can be received by the receiver largely intact without loss of intended or expressed meaning. Built into this positivist model is the optimistic possibility of converting tacit knowledge, to a large extent, into explicit knowledge. "This means that the difficulties of sharing tacit knowledge can be ignored or downplayed because once tacit knowledge has been made explicit, it is regarded as being relatively straightforward to then share and manage it" (Hislop 2005, p. 23). The model is depicted as:

(Sender) $\rightarrow$ [Codified explicit knowledge] $\rightarrow$(Receiver)

So, what do such properties of explicit versus tacit knowledge and the potential transferability of tacit knowledge have to do with U.S. public diplomacy mediation? A similar question can be asked about the relevance of the sender-explicit knowledge-receiver communication model in the context of public diplomacy mediation. This sub-section attempts to answer these two questions, but in doing so, the intention is to present a critique of the apparent positivist epistemological stance on

which the U.S. public diplomacy seems to be basing its mediation efforts (Pamment 2014). I proceed with this critique by pointing out to a host of what can be regarded as manifestations of such positivist perspectives in the practice of U.S. public diplomacy mediation. Two intertwined aspects of American exceptionalism and mediating it are strikingly evident once considered in the context of tacit knowledge and the possibility of mediating it. The nature of American exceptionalism has many properties that makes it exceptionally tacit knowledge. American exceptionalism is U.S.-owned—rooted in the American values and national identity, the society's belief in its presumed unique human experiment—a melting pot. "Ours is the only country deliberately founded on a good idea" (John Gunther). "Not merely a nation but a nation of nations" (Lyndon B. Johnson). "As we look around the world at how difficult it is for democracy and freedom to take hold and flourish, America seems like a political miracle" (Helle C. Dale). These are only a few of dozens of statements adulating the 'American Experiment' that typifies the tacit nature of how Americans see themselves.

It is worth remembering that the basic motive for the U.S. to communicate with the Arab world post 9/11 was that Arabs were prevented (by their respective governments) from being exposed to America's soft power and to its foreign policy narratives. Hence, the launch of Alhurra was meant to circumvent this intentional blockage of 'knowledge' about America. Janice B. Mattern (2005) notes that Joseph Nye was quick to realize that unless the target audiences of America's international communication were aware of America's soft powers, such 'knowledge' remained a sort of powerless soft power. Consequently, the primary need was to communicate the knowledge to targeted audiences who were presumably unaware of America's soft power. As noted earlier, Nye seemed to have originally taken a positivist position in how 'others' may react to America's soft power. This was demonstrated by his certainty that once disseminated, knowledge about America was bound to generate positive reactions—given that America amounts to being the best possible version of human societies that people in less fortunate societies desire to experience for themselves.

With time however, Nye (2011) tended to soften his strictly positivist stance on the potential outcomes of communicating America's soft power by suggesting that for a transaction of this sort to take place, there needs to be a degree of inter-subjectivity between the sender and the

receiver on the meanings attached to the contents of that soft power. For him, for an impact on attitudes or behavior of the receivers to take place, receivers' interpretations must be accounted for, "… with soft power, what the target thinks is particularly important, and that the targets matter as much as the agents. Attraction and persuasion are socially constructed. Soft power is a dance that requires partners" (p. 84). Or as Adolf and Stehr (2017, p. 12) note, unless there is a congruency in assigning the same meaning to the knowledge circulated, it can be concluded that no 'transaction' of knowledge has taken place. Nye (2008) states that 'attractiveness' of a county's values and policies are the pre-requisites for producing soft power. "Public diplomacy tries to attract by drawing attention to these potential resources through broadcasting, subsidizing cultural exports, arranging exchanges, and so forth. But if the content of a country's culture, values, and policies are not attractive, public diplomacy that 'broadcasts' them cannot produce soft power" (Nye 2008, p. 95).

Nevertheless, this need not mean that American exceptionalism, as tacit knowledge, defies communicability. Former President Ronald Regan stated in 1981 that "Our Declaration of Independence has been copied by emerging nations around the globe, its themes adopted in places many of us have never heard of." For the U.S. mediated public diplomacy, nevertheless, the dividing line between tacit and explicit knowledge seems to be blurred. The main objective of this mediation is the communication of visibly tacit knowledge with the assumption that even those with no first-hand experience in generating this knowledge ought to be able to narrate this knowledge with the view to:

> "[1] Expand freedom of information and expression. [2] Communicate America's democratic experience. Both of these strategic goals serve to further the BBG mission of supporting freedom and democracy. The purpose of communicating America's democratic experience is not merely public diplomacy or "moving the needle"; rather, by presenting a case study in the American experience, we seek to help other countries navigate their own governance challenges" (*BBG 2015 Fiscal Year Performance and Accountability Report,* p. 26)[10].

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[10] https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/reports/1-fy-2015-2016-performance-plan-fy-2014-performance-report/pprfy15-16.pdf

Similarly, the conduit transmitter/receiver model, which is closely embedded with the communication of explicit knowledge, is also a reminder of the behaviorist media effects models. Both types share the same assumptions about the transferability of the mediated messages as intended by the senders. In the case of media effects models in specific, it is assumed that "[t]he meanings of messages themselves … are assumed to be distortion-free and universally transferable" (Laughey 2007, p. 61). In turn, any failure in communication must be due to distortion by mechanical or human interference and has less to do with the contents themselves or how target receivers react to or decode the received media content.

It is worth remembering here that the initial objective for launching Alhurra in 2004 was to circumvent the perceived blockage of U.S. perspective from reaching Arab audiences by Arab governments—ironically most of whom are solidly allied with the U.S.—but whom the U.S. believes prevent Arab audiences from receiving the U.S. worldview and perspective on its Middle East policies. Hence, Alhurra was meant to act as a direct conduit through which Arab audiences can receive U.S. official perspectives, undistorted. In an interview with the *Middle East Quarterly,* spring 2008, Daniel Nassif, then News Director of Alhurra, articulated the rationale for the U.S. need to reach Arab publics directly:

> "What we want to provide the Middle East with Alhurra are accurate, objective news stories with no distortion, no disinformation. This is the best way again to counter propaganda in the area and, at the same time, we want to cover American policy in clear terms. Nothing less, nothing more. We are not there to spread propaganda for the United States. We are here to tell the Arab World what Washington is thinking."

Positivist tendencies in the public diplomacy scholarship are also evident in what Pamment (2014) refers to as the adoption of explanatory theories of knowledge represented specifically by realist theories such as the Excellence theory used in Public Relations. "The Excellence approach prefers positivist, explanatory modes of analysis which take the view that there is an objective reality that can be explained by universal laws" (Pamment 2014, p. 51). Similarly and also according to Pamment (2015), the other manifestation of such a positivist perspective in public diplomacy practice and scholarship is apparent in its overlap with the development communication

(Devcomm) theories and practice. Both, according to Pamment, were an offshoot of the Cold War efforts to exemplify the benefits of adopting Western style of democratic governance and free market economy practices. Both were meant to counter USSR communist ideology. Pamment notes that public diplomacy practice eventually outlived Devcomm theorization and survived the end of the Cold War. Both are believed to have had ambitious aims to instigate profound ontological transformation in the lives of the targeted populations, be it with respect to their thinking, attitudes, or behavior, with media seeking to play a critical role in this transformation. This was based on the assumption that media not only informs the targeted publics about the benefits of modernity, but it also showcases what had been already achieved by the Western nations.

The probabilistic assumptions about the transformational influence of media on modernization are also echoed by W. Schramm. "The more information they get, the more they are interested in political developments. The more education they have, the more they seek information." (Cited by Pamment 2015, p. 193). Inadvertently, similar probabilistic assumptions resonate in various BBG publications about the desired outcome of promoting the U.S. democratic experience, especially in societies where there is a strong sentiment of anti-Americanism. The assumption is that if only other people would think like America, potential conflicts would fade. In other words, democratic societies with free press and freedom of expression are more likely to appreciate the U.S. worldview and its foreign policies. Implicit in this realist assumption is that America can secure understanding and appreciation for what it stands for and its foreign policies from societies that are democratic, prosperous, and share America's ideals. Such assumptions are summarized in a BBG document titled: *Achieving Strategic Impact: BBG Strategic Plan 2014-2018.* The following appear under the sub-title Overarching Strategic Goals (p. 4):

> "The BBG's mission is supported by two overarching strategic goals: (1) expanding freedom of information and expression and (2) communicating America's democratic experience. … Both of these goals serve to further the BBG mission of supporting freedom and democracy. Free press and free expression are universally acknowledged as key to free, open, democratic societies. Communicating America's democratic experience serves the same purpose. In covering the U.S., we open a window onto democracy in action

through which our audiences can see reflected their own struggles to forge freedom and democracy…. Free, open, democratic societies tend to be more peaceful and prosperous than nondemocratic societies and seldom threaten their neighbors or harbor extremists. That is why they are critical to U.S. national interests and foreign policy, and why BBG's role in supporting their development matters."

3-2 Measuring the Impact of BBG International Reach

Similarly, the behaviorist tendencies in the practice of U.S. mediated public diplomacy are equally evident in both its eventual objectives that seek to create impact as well as in the methods used to assess these impacts. Hayden (2015) stresses that, "Much of the ferment in the study of public diplomacy is driven by questions about the measurement of *effect*. Is there some correlation between a specific practice of persuasion or engagement that yields attitude or behavior change …? Or, how does public diplomacy contribute to obtaining foreign policy objectives" (p. 3) emphasis by author). What Hayden states is illustrated in the 'Impact Model' BBG created and adopted for measuring the impact of its mediated public diplomacy efforts on target audiences.

As part of its accountability towards the U.S. Congress, which is the government entity that finances BBG mediated activities, in addition to carrying out audience surveys to estimate its reach in the different countries worldwide, it also measures the impact of exposure to its media. More specifically the Impact Model seeks to measure the 'success of BBG media.' It is also part of BBG's efforts to 'hold itself accountable.' It constitutes a "… set of quantitative and qualitative metrics derived from and informed by BBG's audience and market research program as well as a range of supplemental indicators, including anecdotes. The aim is to have a basket of measures, some core and some optional, that can be matched to widely differing market circumstances to relate impact over the short, medium, and long term within three sectors -- our audiences, the media, and the governments in our target markets" (Reported in *Achieving Strategic Impact: BBG Strategic Plan 2014-2018,* p. 6). Measuring the impact is conducted on a specific cyclical basis. In a separate short document referred to as *Impact Fact Sheet,* these measures are reported to cover various aspects, including "Audience loyalty, content credibility, whether and how content is shared, how much audiences engage with content and whether actions (such as a policy change or a cultural shift) take place after consuming BBG content are some of the more than 40 indicators

available in the research tool." The Core items of the Impact Model are reported in *Achieving Strategic Impact: BBG Strategic Plan 2014-2018,* pp. 24-27)[11]. The four variables below illustrate how a selection of typical impact questions is asked as reported in the *BBG 2015 Fiscal Year Performance and Accountability Report.* These impact questions are asked to weekly audiences of BBG media channels. They are reported along with their respective estimated audience figures for the different targeted regions of the world. They are:

"**Program Credibility**: … the survey question about trustworthiness of news and information of … The answers are registered on a four-point scale – Trust a great deal, Trust it somewhat, Do not trust it very much, Do not trust it at all" (p. 31).

"**Program Uniqueness**: … how much of the information provided by the entity is also available from other sources on the radio, TV, or Internet. The answers are registered on a four-point scale – All of it is available elsewhere, some of it is available elsewhere, very little of it is available elsewhere, none of it is available elsewhere" (p. 34).

"**Understanding of American Society**: … whether the broadcasts have "increased their understanding of American society." The answers are registered on a four-point scale – a great deal, somewhat, very little, or not at all" (p. 48).

"**Sharing of Programming**: … how often they share news that they have heard, seen, or read from a BBG entity with friends or relatives, or with their social network. The answers are registered on a five-point range – Daily or most days per week, at least once a week, at least once a month, less than once a month, never" (p. 52).

In addition to fitting in squarely within the administrative media models (Pamment 2014, 2015), the effects aspects of the U.S. mediated public diplomacy invite an entirely new discussion of the extensive literature, which discounts the possibility of what Devcom media had contemplated

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[11] https://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2015/04/BBG-Strategic-Plan-2014-2018-rev-4-28-15.pdf

achieving. However, literature critical of BBG international communication in the context of limited effects theorization is scarce, if it at all available. This contrasts with the extensive literature critical of the modernization thesis that reached its limits during the height of the Cold War. However, eventually the modernization thesis was intellectually laid to rest, partly because international communication failed to take into consideration the political and socio-cultural context of the targeted societies. In a way, public diplomacy seeks to assume a new lease of life for this type of the modernization thesis (Pamment 2014). The intention here, however, is not to go as far as to make claims that BBG international communication totally ignores the political and socio-cultural contexts of the targeted societies in designing its communication. Nevertheless, there are intimations that there are BBG propensities for judgment rather than an attempt to understand the Arab societies it targets.

In an interview with the *Middle East Quarterly* in April 2008, Daniel Nassif frequently hinted at harboring such tendencies. "Don't forget that there are closed societies in the Middle East. Most people have orthodox views. They are born into societies with these views, and they grow up and die with these same views. At Alhurra, it is our job to show that there are other opinions that they should consider." Also, in the same interview Nassif states, "In the Middle East, you are talking about an area where women do not have rights. In ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮ they are not even allowed to drive a car. We have another program called *Musawat*—Arabic for "equality"—which gives women a voice to challenge traditional views about them—for instance that a woman's place is in the house raising children." It is a mere coincident that at the time Nassif is quoted in this analysis, the ▮▮▮▮ government announced lifting the ban on women driving in ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮ to be effective June 2018. But then Nassif, a Lebanese-American, generalizes about his adopted country, the one he is hired to represent. For instance, he thinks that average Americans are apolitical. "The Middle East is not like here. In the United States, the average American does not care about politics. Sometimes, only 30 or 35 percent of eligible voters actually cast ballots. In the Arab world, people are political. When they see each other, the first thing that they talk about is politics, sometimes before they ask about the health of their families." A research objective is rather to learn whether Arab communicators working for Alhurra are aware of any aspects of the Impact Model; and if they are, how they see their role in fulfilling its desired mission, which is stated to be "To inform, engage,

and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy"? Similarly, do they think they should be held accountable for fulfilling this task as mandated to BBG?

3-3 Mirroring or Representing America's Social Reality

Possibly strongly built into the positivist perspective of BBG mediation is the presumed passive nature of its foreign communicators, who communicate on behalf of America to their fellow people America's 'great experiment' and the U.S. government's perspective. The rationale for terming their role as passive will be discussed shortly, but what this invites consideration for is the almost complete silence on their existence as communicators and their role in the U.S. public diplomacy mediation. As already alluded to in Chapter 2, the reference to 'messenger' is never used in any specific reference to who that messenger might be, an American or a foreigner, although it is implied that it is the former. The reference to messenger and journalist by S. W. Hook (2011) typifies that vagueness of who these two actors are in the public diplomacy mediation. "In effect public diplomacy goes "over the heads" of foreign leaders by appealing directly to the citizenry. The messengers of public diplomacy whose ranks have included diplomats as well as scholars, artists, and journalists are uniquely positioned to project the nation's cultural values and demonstrate the vitality of its civil society" (Hook 2011, p. 260). The extent to which such statement about what public diplomacy could perform, be it normative or actual, is secondary; of more relevance is the realist manifestations implied in the act of *projecting* America's values by the messengers in their different capacities as mentioned by Hook. For although the notion of *projecting* is rarely used in such context, the use of *mirroring* is equally rare, but the use of *mirroring* the social reality of America in America's international communication yet illustrates an objectivist perspective with respect to both, the social reality of America as well as how it is communicated to others -- as perceived by BBG.

> "VOA and MBN, which particularly report on America, cover the U.S. in all its complexity. They are a *mirror*, not a mouthpiece, *showing* our country's democratic trials and tribulations so that the people we target overseas, struggling to nurture or sustain their own democratic systems, might see their stories reflected in ours.

"*Conveying* and *critically assessing* official U.S. policy – what it is, which parts of our government make and articulate it, and how there are at times sharp policy differences – is a key component of America's story. U.S. leadership in the world depends in part on global audiences knowing where the United States stands on the issues of the day." (Emphasis added)

In principle, the tasks of *mirroring* or *conveying*, on the one hand, and *critically assessing* U.S. official policy, on the other, may be based on different journalistic epistemologies. Each may have a different mediated function due the nature of what it can perform. It is difficult to judge if the use of these different terms in such close text proximity in a high profile BBG official document is the outcome of well-thought-out reflections on their use or merely marketing rhetoric. The reason for making this observation is also Daniel Nassif's claim that accurate and objective reporting is constituted by the U.S. law. "Our mission by law is to provide accurate and objective news to the region. Alhurra's role is to report U.S. policy accurately to an audience that has often not received accurate and objective reports, but our role is not to advocate policy. We provide context and analysis so that viewers can make informed decisions." These terms adding to them 'reporting' further illustrates the contested nature of the U.S. mediated public diplomacy.

It can be argued that the epistemological underpinning of the *mirror* claim conjures manifestations of a realist stance whereby BBG seems to presume that its articulation of the social reality of the U.S. is nothing more than impartial, truthful deflection of what that actual social reality is. Inadvertently, Voice of America (VOA), as a name, may echo such epistemological certainty. Built into the notion of 'voice' is that regardless of the hundreds of foreign communicators who work for BBG media channels and who come from a multitude of countries, nationalities, and cultures worldwide, all are supposed to voice America's worldview in one unified, coherent voice.

The assumption that the U.S. laws regulating the work of BBG require them to *reflect* the social reality of America accurately and objectively implies such epistemological certainty. Most probably, the *mirror* concept is used by BBG in a metaphorical sense. However, it really does not matter if such a term is just used casually since it is only one of the many of such realist manifestations. Nevertheless, it captures the entire realist mediation perspective in one single

powerful term. However, the first thing car drivers read on their side door mirrors is a cautionary note that says, "Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear." An Arabic text may read, "Images appearing in the mirror are not real." The basic take-out here is the nature of the material the mirror is made from determines how the objects reflected in the mirror would look like.

Projected on media representation, the nature of the material composing a mirror translates into the social context in which representation is being performed. The notion of mirroring remains contentious in the mainstream media theorization. Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) main thesis is that media does anything but mirror reality. Their preface to the second edition of their book starts with an emphatic statement: "The mass media does not simply mirror the world around them" (p. ix). Their justification is that how an event is reported in media is largely determined by the social, cultural, economic, or political stance of either that media organization or the people working in it. They illustrate their thesis by surveying how different media may differently report the same event, with each one projecting either a somewhat or entirely different perspective. Shoemaker and Reese outline a selection of theoretical perspectives on content research (p. 6; emphasis by authors):

> First: "*Content reflects social reality with little or no distortion.*" This perspective on content research presumes that mass media mirrors, "conveys an accurate reflection of social reality…"

> Second: "*Content influenced by media workers' socialization and attitudes*" is presented as 'communicator-centered' approach to content research, which contends that a host of psychological, social, political, professional, personal factors come to play in determining the perspective social reality is depicted in media content.

> Third: *"Content is influenced media routines."* Known as the organizational routines approach, it argues that much of the media content is largely determined by preset work routines established by the media organizations.

Shoemaker and Reese base their argument on the assumption that media content does not reflect or mirror reality since different media organizations or their communication workers have different perspectives of reality to begin with. Projected on the U.S. public diplomacy mediation, the argument against the mirror concept gets its intellectual fuel from the fact that within the same news organization, the communication workers doing the frontline communication themselves come from a very different socio-cultural collectivity whereas the news organization itself not only comes from a different socio-political setting but also has its own political agenda. The extent to which all these different factors still work in unison to mirror, project, or reflect an accurate depiction of America's social reality constitutes a main objective of this thesis.

3-4 U.S. Mediated Public Diplomacy as a Social Fact

By positioning BBG journalism as a *mirror representation* of the implicit and explicit knowledge about America, one take-out suggests that even the most extreme tacit ontological aspects, unique to America's national identity, can be converted to become explicit, objectified, and hence communicable irrespective of the language used or the social collectivity communicators assigned to represent America. Such a potential take-out evokes Emile Durkheim's conceptualization of 'social facts' in which case both the social reality of America itself and its representation have all the bearings of realist epistemological foundations. While the idealism about how America thinks of itself as the ultimate human social reality is rarely referred to as a Durkheimian social fact, Lawrence Friedman (1990) suggests that "undeniably, national cultures, if not national characters, are social facts. American society has always struck European visitors as peculiarly different: American exceptionalism goes back to the republic, or even earlier" (p. 201). The projection of Durkheim's social fact conceptualization on America's soft power could also, to a large extent, apply to the act of representing it, should we consider the *mirror* notion of what BBG refers to as *BBG journalism*. Incidentally, the term BBG journalism was first used in *BBG 2015 Fiscal Year Performance and Accountability Report.* Google search for this newly coined term has yielded just over a handful of sites. A quick outline of how Durkheim defines social facts will shed some light on why, from the perspective of BBG, both America's soft power and BBG journalism are well-grounded in a positivist epistemological perspective; where America's soft power is considered a social fact, a thing, BBG journalism can then mirror it.

From a realist perspective of depicting social reality, the mirror conceptualization of BBG journalism may have intimations from the organizational approach to journalism, where the organizational structures and work routine seem to be major contributors to news production, if not in effect predetermining the nature of that output. Both BBG journalism and organizational approach to journalism seem to imply that the respective types of journalism are assumed to exist before a journalist joins the news organization. Klaus Atmeppen (2009) describes how structured the organizational approach to journalism is.

> "When journalists start their daily work, many parts of their job are already predetermined. The internal structure of the newsroom … is fixed; journalists know what is involved with gathering and selecting news in their roles as reporters or editors; they know about their work routines in respect to the criteria of news selection and investigation; …

> "News coverage is not the result of the work of individual journalists, as early findings in journalism research suggested. It depends much more on the specific organizational details in the newsroom, on the inherent structure determined by the goals of the journalistic organization, on the influences of the various technologies and on the repercussions of media markets … Even though, for example, the individual level and the analysis of the role perceptions are important, the individual journalist is always embedded in the organizational patterns which, as prearranged structures influence the journalist's work and behavior in every newsroom" (Atmeppen 2008, p. 52).

The influence of the 'prearranged structures' on journalists highly resonates with how Durkheim defines social facts since they exist independently of the actor herself or himself. Social facts are not created intentionally even though humans may have contributed to their creation. However, such contribution does not mean humans can exercise their will over them. The structuring aspect of social facts is also evident in their coercive power, which discretely imposes itself on the actors.

> "When I perform my duties as a brother, a husband or a citizen and carry out the commitments I have entered into, I fulfil obligations which are defined by law and custom and which are external to myself and my actions. Even when they conform to my own

sentiments and when I feel their reality within me, that reality does not cease to be objective, for it is not I who have prescribed these duties; I have received them through education. Moreover, how often does it happen that we are ignorant of the details of the obligations that we must assume, and that, to know them, we must consult the legal code and its authorized interpreters! Similarly, the believer has discovered from birth, ready fashioned, the beliefs and practices of his religious life; if they existed before he did, it follows that they exist outside him. The system of signs that I employ to express my thoughts… the practices I follow in my profession, etc., all function independently of the use I make of them" (Durkheim 1982, p. 50-51).

Projected on the work of Arab journalists recruited to work for Alhurra, published literature does not seem to be as clear about the criteria or the expectation for the recruitment, especially with respect to representing America's worldview. It is not a valid assumption to claim that these are considered to be *de facto expectations* on the part of the Alhurra management. Published literature tends to depict very limited requirements for a job that seems to be there for an Arab to take on. Nevertheless, the controversy over how Alhurra Arab journalists are seen to perform or underperform, *vis-a-via* a set of seemingly controversial criteria and expectations, points to possible gaps in the epistemological assumptions about their work.

3-5 U.S. Mediated Public Diplomacy in Search for a Field

Since social functions precede the actor's existence, an existing function is performed through learning and socialization. Durkheim's concept of preexisting social facts that have specific social functions independent of the actor who performs them does, in certain aspects, indeed intersect with Pierre Bourdieu's field theory (2005; 1999 [1993]). At the heart of the field theory is the assumption that the positions or posts in a field do largely, but not totally, exist independently of those occupying them. Thus, a primary concern of field theory research is the study of the properties of these posts or spaces in the context of the interrelationship with their occupants who seem to be in a continuous struggle for positions within a field. From an epistemological perspective, field theory in the context of BBG journalism is evoked because of the partly positivist assumption it embodies about the positions the Alhurra management assumes it fills in with Arab journalists regardless of their habitus "With *field*, Bourdieu was able to map objective structural

relations" (Grenfell 2008, p. 4; emphasis by author). But Bourdieu's field theory becomes equally pertinent to this thesis since the study of these positions is expected to be done, partly or mostly, from the perspective of their occupants in conjunction with their own habitus. M. Grenfell notes that Bourdieu sought to show us "… how such objectivity was constructed by individual subjectivities, constituted by their *habitus*… (Grenfell 2008, p. 4; emphasis by author). This sort of subjective interpretation of one's own journalistic occupation at Alhurra will be presented in the empirical findings chapters as the anti-positivist alternative for understanding how Arab journalists internalize their roles at Alhurra. For now, however, it is worth exploring further what Bourdieu meant by his field theory and its relevance to the BBG journalism field. Bourdieu stresses such objectivist tendencies on more than one occasion.

" … [A] field is a field of forces within which the agents occupy positions that statistically determine the positions they take with respect to the field, these position-takings being aimed either at conserving or transforming the structure or relations of forces that is constitutive of the field" (Bourdieu 2005, p. 30).

"Fields present themselves synchronically as structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose properties depend on their position within these spaces and which can be analyzed independently of the characteristics of their occupants (which are partly determined by them). There are general laws of field: fields as different as the field of politics, the field of philosophy or the field of religion have invariant laws of functioning" (Bourdieu 2009 [1993], p. 94).

Bourdieu refers to the 'laws' that govern the functioning of a specific field, adding that each 'newly founded field' will have specific characteristics that are unique to it. For already existing fields or fields that are in the making, there is a struggle between the established occupants and the newcomers. Each will defend his/her territories and gain or lose new ground. Indeed, one of the aims of this thesis is the identification of the properties of the BBG journalism field from the perspective of its Arab occupants. The challenge expected in such a research endeavor is how to define the properties of a U.S. mediated public diplomacy field that is not yet acknowledged. Hayden and Metzgar (2013) addressed this problematic research question head-on. "Now public

diplomacy scholarship is not a clearly demarcated field of scholarship, there is no discipline that owns it. There is no home in political science or international relations or communications. So how does that impact the scholarship and its utility for public practitioners and policymakers and what we've done so far?" Insisting that BBG journalism ought to have the same field properties as America's mainstream journalism may amount to having to embody it with properties that are squarely owned by another field.

Now there is a strong intellectual temptation for projecting the social facts conceptualization on the mirror conceptualization of BBG journalism. Such temptation is provoked by the near certainty that both the implicit and explicit knowledge the U.S. can be codified and communicated by professional communicators, irrespective of their relationship with the origin or ownership of that knowledge. It is evident however that no matter how huge and powerful a news organization is, its relationship with its own society remains of paramount importance. Atmeppen (2008, p. 53) identifies three levels of interest in the organizational approach to studying journalism. One is the nature of the relationship between individual journalists and the newsroom. Second is the relationship between the news organization and its competitors in the market. Third is the relationship between the news organization and the society as a whole and, conversely, the society's influence on journalism in that society in general. Inadvertently, all three levels of analysis would apply equally to BBG journalism, but the under-researched aspect of this type of trans-national, state-funded journalism becomes: What society are we referring to: Arab, American or both? In short, what is the social context of this type of media?

3-6 *Imported* Arab Journalists Failing American Journalism 101 Tests

Little do we know about the public diplomacy mediation dynamics of state-funded media, like BBG, where its journalists are 'imported' and who in turn are expected to perform the type of mediation that is entirely different from what they used to do in the countries from which they are imported. The notion of 'imported' journalists appears in a 2008 CBS-60 Minutes/ProPublica joint investigation about the performance of Alhurra. It was used in the context of the frustration by Larry Register, a former CNN executive, who encountered it when he was brought into Alhurra to "clean house" in 2006. In a 2008 CBS-60 Minutes/ProPublica joint investigation authored by Dafna Linzer, we read:

"But Register says he found his staff of Arabs, *imported* from the region, divided along religious, ethnic and political lines. Asked what state the channel was in when he first walked in the Al Hurra newsroom, Register tells Pelley, "Dysfunctional, extremely dysfunctional." (Emphasis added)

"Words like militias were thrown around," he explains. "There was this militia that was in charge of this, and this militia was in charge of that."

"It felt like you were living in the Middle East. It felt like somebody had picked up the Middle East and brought it to Springfield, Virginia, of all places," Register remembers.

The notion of 'importing' journalists seems to amplify the implications of the research question of this thesis: How would *imported* Arab journalists, who join Alhurra with their entire raw political and socio-cultural bafggage, be able to *mirror* America's worldview to the Arab world—as their American counterparts would have done had they been able to communicate America's perspective to the Arabs? Linzer (2008) quotes James Glassman, who was the Undersecretary of Public Diplomacy at the time CBS/ ProPublica report was released in June 2008, saying, "Our idea with Alhurra was to create a network that provided high quality, professional journalism with American standards," Glassman said. The aim, he said, was "balance, objectivity, *which really did not exist in the Middle East*" (Emphasis added). In short, Alhurra's self-claimed prerequisite for this mirror-journalism is professionalism, balance, impartiality, and objectivity. Implied in the CBS/ProPublica Report as reported by Linzer, Alhurra expects that all these American standards of journalism to be embodied in the values and practices of journalists who come from a journalistic ontology that is perceived to have a sheer deficit in each of these prerequisites. Ironically, this invokes an Arabic adage, "One cannot give what one does not have."

Glassman's apparent frustration is not just with the Alhurra Arab journalists who did not pass the American professional journalism test; it is the Arab's journalistic professional ideology from which they graduated that fails the American accreditation test. This U.S. official perception of an Arab media that stands at the opposite of what American media represents was also voiced by

Alberto Fernandez in an interview with the Arabic newspaper, AlSharq Al Awast, on July 24, 2017. Fernandez frets that "The Arab media has reached a dead end that is overwhelmed by sectarianism and political heckling and red tape. There is a media vacuum that must be filled out by someone …"

While ignoring the structural changes that took both the Arab media and Arab journalists by storm, when Al Jazeera spearheaded these changes in the mid-1990s (Moller 2007), both Muwafaq Harb (Alhurra's first News Director) and Alberto Fernandez (its current President), although differing on the station's strategies and many other things, hold the same epistemological perspective when it comes to the 'dysfunctional' nature of the Arab media. Muwafaq Harb, like his immediate successor, Daniel Nassif, both Lebanese-Americans, inadvertently unleashed their criticism of the Arab media in the harshest terms. Harb, however, spares those who had a professional brush with Western media from this stigma but who go back to their roots once they work for Arab media.

> "Unfortunately, the proliferation of Arab satellite networks has done little to improve the quality of Arab media. These new media organizations have at times been provocative and unethical in their reportage, indulging the emotions of the "Arab street." Such distortions do not reflect the biases of Arab reporters, most of whom have worked in Western media, but are an extension of the dysfunctional Arab political system upon which these networks remain dependent" (Harb April 4, 2003, OpEd in *The Washington Institute*).

That much we know about the 'infuriation' voiced by Americans in the top management of Alhurra in its early years towards Arab journalists who operated with no 'adult supervision,' which for Khalil (2006) "is absence of an American supervisory role" particularly the bilinguals of them. Little is known, however, about how the Arabs at Alhurra view their work or their American colleagues in top management. Nevertheless, Linzer (2008) did hit a raw nerve by hinting at the ontological and epistemological divide between Alhurra Arab journalists and their American counterparts.

> "The ProPublica/60 Minutes examination of the Springfield, Va.-based Alhurra and Sawa found an untrained, largely foreign staff with little knowledge of the country whose values

and policies they were hired to promote. There appeared to be little oversight of the daily operations.

"During a visit to Alhurra's studios in June, reporters, producers, cameramen and technical staff were busy preparing broadcasts for an audience half-way around the world. [Brian] Conniff, who is the President of Alhurra and Radio Sawa, stood outside an editorial meeting but could not understand it – his Middle Eastern staff discussed the day's stories in Arabic and no one offered Conniff a simultaneous translation.

"There is no adult supervision there by people who know what is on the actual broadcasts," said William Rugh, who served as U.S. Ambassador in Yemen and the United Arab Emirates. "You need bilingual managers who understand both languages and cultures and understand journalism"" (Linzer 2008).

William Rugh's suggestion of having American bilingual managers was adopted in July 2017 with the appointment of Alberto Fernandez, a veteran State Department Arabist. In a UAE newspaper report, *The National*, August 5, 2017, Joyce Karam notes that Fernandez was aware of Alhurra's shortcomings, which included stale programming and the inability to serve the interests of the United States. Karam says that Fernandez's "vision for the station is simple: to accomplish what his three predecessors did not and make Al-Hurra relevant." However, Karam wonders if this is possible should "the old habits of the Arab world and of Springfield, Virginia, Al Hurra's headquarters" persist. Karam does not clearly qualify what she means by the 'old habits at Springfield.' but she quotes claims and counterclaims by former senior Alhurra staff that seem to have been cited from already published statements rather than based on interviews for the purpose of her report. She mentions, nevertheless, that Daniel Nassif, the director of the news for over twelve years, resigned the same day Alberto Fernandez took over as head of MBN. Old habits of journalism at Alhurra are also voiced by Glassman, who lambasts it as being deficient in balance and objectivity, as opposed to a news organization that adheres to 'professional journalism with American standards.' Linzer (2008) does, nevertheless, note that a socialization process did take place to train them in the form of crash-courses. "A recent report by the State Department's Inspector General noted that Alhurra now has a functioning assignment desk, holds regular editorial meetings, and has hosted mini-training sessions with journalism professors."

Mouafac Harb, airing his frustration with the Arab media standards, said on more than one occasion that practically Alhurra had to reformat the mind-set of Arab journalists joining Alhurra so that they become more aligned with 'respectable' journalistic standards. In an interview with Newshour (PBS) January 21, 2003, Harb tells his program host, "We use terms widely used by respectable media organizations and news organizations, and people compare it to what they hear in the Arab world. We de-emotionalize the news. We do not take sides when reporting the news. We differentiate between news and opinion, which is something [that] also may sound like Journalism 101. But again, we're dealing with the Middle East. … We're training Arab journalists to do it that way, the American broadcasting techniques, and people are perceiving it."

Similarly, in his testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on International Relations on November 10, 2005, Harb reassures committee members that American journalistic standards are abided by as stated by the law that regulates the U.S. international broadcasting. "Our distinct role in seeking to accomplish these goals is to be an example of a free, professional press in the American tradition." In the same testimony, Harb tells committee members that some Arab journalists coming from the Arab state-owned media tradition may qualify for joining the ranks of Alhurra even in the early stages of the recruitment process by simply asking if it is possible for a state-owned media to be free. "Everyone we've hired shares our sense of journalistic values. In fact, during the first round of interviews, many of them asked me if Alhurra could really be free if it was funded by the government. My answer, of course, was yes. And if they were astute enough to be concerned about this, they had just passed a major test for getting the job."

Inadvertently, however, the 2008 CBS-60 Minutes/ProPublica report acted as a Report Card on the performance of Alhurra Arab journalists who may have passed the American designed Journalism 101 course Harb refers to but not the higher-level courses. For Magdi Khalil (2006), however, not only do Alhurra Arab journalists lag behind in comparison with their counterparts at Al Jazeera or Al ▮▮▮▮ their poor command of the English language limits their exposure to knowledge about America which, for him, results in the obvious, "… not surprising that they did such a poor job relaying America to the Arab World.' Equally obvious for Khalil is Alhurra's Arab journalists' inferior qualifications compared to their American counterparts. "It goes without saying that they are so far behind their American peers."

According to Harb, the prerequisites that make a 'good journalist' are rather stiff if imposed on Arab journalists; it is living in a 'democratic society' (Cited by Wise 2005), or at least a journalist must 'believe in democracy.' Moreover, for Harb, if an Arab journalist is not lucky enough to live in such a society, the minimum good journalistic requirement is believing in democracy. "We have a journalistic mission too, and I think that journalists who don't believe in democracy are simply hack writers. … I cannot be a good journalist unless I live in a democratic society. And that's why we are objective. .... I'm informing people so you can make a better choice, and this is the core of democracy" (Cited by Wise 2005).

Being fixated with the epistemological superiority of American journalism compared to that of Alhurra Arabs' journalism raises several unanswered questions. Given the entirely different objectives of these two types of journalism, is it feasible to compare the two other using the score tests that apply primarily to the American mainstream journalism? This seemingly paradoxical expectation for Alhurra Arab journalists may amount to an oxymoron which U.S. international media observers have addressed on several occasions. Monroe Price (2003) notes that finding such a 'harmony' had been a struggle for VOA and its various media channels sisters ever since U.S. international broadcasting was established in the early years of the Cold War, stating, "This dilemma is commonplace in international broadcasting governance…" (p. 84). According to Youmans (2008), it is an 'existential dilemma.' However, it is worth noting that the notion of impartiality is not without its critics. Price, for instance, quotes former influential *The New York Times* columnist William Safire saying that in events like the suicide attacks on the U.S., balanced and objective journalism is the 'wrong voice,' and it should not be entertained. Circling back to Bourdieu's concept of *field*—invoked earlier—it can be concluded that such a dilemma is the result of forcing one public diplomacy journalistic field to act as if it can function in a mainstream journalistic field with American standards.

3-7. An Invitation to Epistemological Doubt

In addition to the epistemological complex requirement of infusing American journalism standards into the practice of imported Arab journalists, the current President of Alhurra thinks that one of the main reasons for Alhurra's failure was that it is not American enough in communicating its values and worldview aggressively. As such, Fernandez's stance on America's communication

with the Arab world becoming more American-centric appears to represent a hardened positivist perspective on the expectations from Alhurra. This seems to amount to more expectations from Alhurra and its Arab journalists, irrespective of the epistemological possibilities or capabilities the organization and its Arab communicators can absorb or decode and encode. At the heart of this thesis is that as the expectations from Alhurra continue mounting almost at intellectual and political leisure of those who want to impact the Arab public. It is time to take pause and reflect on the different epistemological possibilities of this type of mediation. Typical expectations with no cap in sight are evident in Khalil's (2006) assessment reported to have been "… made at the request of some members of the Congress and senior executives who wish to steer the network back to its original course." Khalil suggests:

> "First and foremost, Alhurra must remain true to the fundamentals of journalistic integrity and independence…. Second, one of the goals of Alhurra, as an American channel, should be to advance American and Western values and objectively introduce them into the homes of a part of a turbulent part of the Arab world. … Third, as an American channel, Alhurra should reflect U.S. political and cultural values through interviews with American icons, including politicians, academics, writers, artists, entrepreneurs, and intellectuals… In brief, the channel should transmit a genuine and comprehensive image of American life. …."

Neither Fernandez nor Khalil identify who 'should transmit a genuine and comprehensive image of American life' because the frontline communication being carried out by Arabs is turning out to be more a communication that reflects how Arabs see themselves, a dilemma which Khalil (2006) concluded his report saying:

> "Alhurra is supposed to "explain" America to the Arabs and bridge the gap that exists between the two; if it mostly acts like a *mirror* for the Arab viewer to see the reflection of his own image, then it has lost its purpose. Unfortunately, that's what Alhurra has been doing, joining the same league as the Arab news channels. Therefore, I think that the majority of the programs should be broadcasted from the headquarters of the network in Washington, which would also remove it from the potential influence of the Arab regimes and safeguard it against the infiltration of intelligence services." (Emphasis added).

Khalil, like Fernandez (but possibly for different reasons), proposes shifting the heavy presence of Alhurra Arab communicators from the Arab World to America because he fears their infiltration by Arab regimes intelligence services. In thinking so, Khalil may have missed out, however, that as *imported* Arab communicators, their epistemological background, *infiltrates* them naturally whether they are in Washington or in any other Arab city. Hence, this thesis is an invitation for epistemological doubt regarding the premise in which U.S.–Arab mediated public diplomacy is grounded to move towards a more realistic management of expectations for the possibilities of this transmission, mirroring, reflecting, deflecting or explaining America to the Arabs by Arabs.

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Chapter Four
Research Design

Following Crotty's (2015 [1998]) proposition for conducting social research, the preceding two chapters built the first two levels of the theoretical scaffolding: the ontological as well as the epistemological foundations of this research. In line with the interpretative approach outlined in Chapter Two on the production of mediated public diplomacy, this chapter sets the stage for outlining and justifying the abductive methodological approach to be adopted in order to understand how Alhurra Arab journalists interpret their work.

Two methodologies, both of which will be justified, are adopted jointly: Max Weber's social action concurrently with his ideal type frame of reference. Then the chapter justifies the two methods used in generating the new knowledge about the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy; one is documentary, and the second is in-depth interviewing. The final section outlines who was interviewed for this research and the justification for approaching them.

In this chapter, as across the whole thesis, I adopted the notion of the unity of the social sciences, in the sense that in order to optimize the possibility of the generation of new knowledge about the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, there is a need for adopting more than one approach, and consequently more than one research method.

4-1 The Case for an Abductive Approach

In deciding on the methodological approach to be adopted in the thesis, I found myself at a methodological crossroads. Hayden and Metzgar's (2013) conclusion that despite the massive literature on public diplomacy the field remains largely 'atheoretical,' seemed valid enough for adopting a down-up approach for studying the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy through Grounded Theory. However, adopting Grounded Theory—as was initially intended for this thesis— could have meant missing out on the capitalization of a number of sociological theoretical frameworks whose use has given this thesis an intellectual bloodline that I had not initially contemplated. Similarly, while it is true that there is an utter lack of theorization about the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, the massive related literature, my personal knowledge, and my professional engagement in research into this phenomenon, as well as my personal knowledge of some of the

players themselves, have all shaped the direction in which this research has evolved. D.E. Gray (2016) reminds us that lack of theorization about a particular social phenomenon needs not preclude us from studying it by the adoption of social theories not intended for that specific social phenomenon. My reference here is specifically to the sociological theorization around the production of knowledge spearheaded by Berger and Luckmann (1967) in their book *The Social Construction of Reality*. Its relevance stems from the assumption that a prerequisite for a group of Arab communicators to communicate America's worldview to their fellow Arab audiences would first require generating knowledge about America.

Starting with an acknowledgement of the failure of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy in reaching and influencing Arab audiences, the urgent research question could have been *why* this communication has failed. While this question could be answered in part based on a review of existing literature, the research focus shifts instead to a more fundamental one: *It is the possibility of a group of communicators from one social reality to represent another social reality of which they have little or no knowledge*. In attempting to answer the main research question '*Can Arabs Represent America*?' the object of the research is U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, but the subject becomes the Arab actors themselves who are tasked with constructing meaning and an understanding of America and communicating it to their fellow Arabs for the purpose of impacting their attitudes towards America.

Thus, instead of the focus of the research being on mediated public diplomacy at its macro level, equal focus is given to the communicators themselves in terms of how they perceive their work. This approach is mainly inspired by Weber's interpretative approach that gives centrality to the actors as they construct the meaning of their actions. It amounts to understating the macro-social phenomena from how the actors see it. In our case, we have two actors: first, the U.S government itself as the sender of the communication, and secondly, the Arab journalists who do the front-line communication on its behalf. We have extensive knowledge about what the U.S. government wants from this communication, but we know very little, if anything, about what motivates the Arab journalists in engaging in this communication. By contrast, for instance and for comparative purposes only, we know far more about what motivated Russian and East European émigrés to engage in the U.S.-Cold War communication that targeted the Soviet Block than what motivates

Alhurra Arab journalists. The case for understanding the actor's motives finds resonance in the case stated by R. Dickinson (2013) for studying media production from Weber's interpretive sociological perspective.

> "The case I want to make is for renewed attention, within media sociology, to the socially-situated nature of news production and to the sociology of journalists. In the changed and changing contemporary media context, the need to study *journalists* rather than *journalism*, that is, to study social actors and their occupational practices rather than simply their outputs and impacts, is once again urgent and important. Weber's twin commitments to, on one hand, the analysis of small-scale processes and the uncovering of meaning among socially situated actors and, on the other, the importance of social structure and organization in the shaping of social action, alluded to earlier, offer an obvious theoretical foundation for this work" (p. 14-15; emphasis by author).

Before outlining the qualitative research methodological approach I will adopt in conducting the empirical research, I will first outline what I have referred to above as a methodological crossroads. N. Blaikie (2010) and N. Blaikie and J. Priest (2017) advise social researchers that once they have decided on the ontological and epistemological *paradigms* on which they establish their research, they must decide on which broad methodological strategies they ought to adopt. They propose four strategies: *deductive*, *inductive*, *abductive*, and *retroductive*. Indeed, the more commonly used research strategies are the first two, with barely any reference to abductive and hardly any to retroductive. Broadly speaking, a deductive research strategy is used when the research seeks to explain the dynamics of a social phenomenon. The research assumptions are based on existing theoretical frames of reference whereby the collected data is meant to test specific research hypotheses. This type of research seeks to "Test theories, to eliminate false ones and corroborate the survivor" (Blaikie 2010, p. 84). It is a 'top-down' approach to research. It could be either explanatory or descriptive research or both.

By contrast, inductive research is a 'down-up' approach to research. The study of a social phenomenon could be initiated with no or limited scientific knowledge about the dynamics of that social phenomenon or certain aspects of it. In short, no theorization precedes the study; the

objective is "to establish description of characteristics and patterns" (Blaikie 2010, p. 84), which may or may not lead to the construction of theorization or generalizations about the phenomenon, depending on the objectives of the researcher. In the context of studying the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, and more specifically how Alhurra Arab communicators interpret their work, lack of theorization about the subject matter would make inductive research the natural methodological strategy. However, the analyses I had engaged in thus far in the previous chapters lead me to classify my approach as abductive. Blaikie (2010) notes that an abductive research strategy stands at a crossroads between deductive and inductive approaches. "Whereas the inductive research strategy can be used to answer 'what' questions, and the deductive and retroductive strategies can be used to answer 'why' questions, the abductive research strategy can answer both types of questions. However, it answers the 'why' question by producing understanding rather than an explanation, by providing reasons rather than causes" (Blaikie 2010, p. 89). Central to abductive research is the interpretation that social actors provide about the actions in which they are involved. The actors' own interpretation of their experiences forms the basis for the broader understanding of the social phenomena.

> "The Abductive research strategy incorporates what Inductive and Deductive research strategies ignore – the meanings and the interpretations, the motives and intentions, that people use in their everyday lives, and which direct their behavior – and elevates them to the central place in social theory and research. As a consequence, the social world *is* the world perceived and experienced by its members, from the 'inside'. The social scientist's task is to discover and describe this 'insider' view, not to impose an 'outsider' view on it" (Blaikie 2010, p. 89).

Indeed, the quote above succinctly captures the spirit and objectives of this thesis. More specifically, it captures the epistemological interpretative stance adopted in this thesis, given that while the focus is on the actors' interpretation of their work, this interpretation is developed in relation to the structural context within which the action takes place. As such, in abductive research, the structure is not just a context (Tavory & Timmermans 2014). It also acts as a prelude to certain aspects of Weber's theorization on social action. Before I move on to introduce the next section on social action, I would like to allude to yet another crossroads which is my personal

empathy, or rather knowledge with the U.S-Arab mediation as an activity, my personal perspective on it as expressed in a number of professional articles I had written, as well as my personal relationships with some of the actors themselves and Alhurra, for which I conducted dozens of large scale audience surveys as part of my work at Gallup.

4-2 Weber's Definition of Sociology

Weber does not mince his words in defining sociology. It is "a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby a causal explanation of its course and consequences. We shall speak of "action" insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior - be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is "social" insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (Weber 1978, p. 4). Central to his sociological thesis is the concept of *'verstehen'* which, is reported not to have an equally capturing equivalence in English. A few translate as 'empathy' but the vast majority of the English-speaking sociologists translate it as 'interpretative understanding' or "understand interpretively." For Weber 'meaning' could be of two different kinds. One may refer "to the actual existing meaning in the given concrete case of a particular actor, or to the average or approximate meaning attributable to a given plurality of actors" (Weber 1978, p. 4). The second meaning may refer "to the theoretically conceived pure type of subjective meaning attributed to the hypothetical actor or actors in a given type of action" (Weber 1978, p. 4). For Weber neither case refers to what can be considered as "correct" or "true" meanings. The likely absence of both aspects is what prompts the notion of interpretation that underlies his conceptualization of sociology.

Similarly, Weber distinguishes between two types of actions: the "meaningful action and merely reactive behavior to which no subjective meaning is attached" (Weber 1978, p. 4). He subdivides each of these types into two further types. The first type of meaningful action is the 'means-end rational,' 'instrumentally rational,' or 'purposive rational' type. This type is "determined by expectations as to the behavior of objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as 'conditions' or 'means' for the attainment of the actor's own rationally pursued and calculated ends" (Weber 1978, p. 24). The second type of meaningful action is termed v*alue rationality,* which is the action that is "determined by a conscious belief in the value for its

own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects for success" (Weber 1978, pp. 24–25). By contrast, reactive behavior has no subjective meaning and is either the affective-oriented action, largely dependent on the emotional circumstances the actor undergoes; or the traditionally oriented action, which is largely determined by the actor's habits or traditional ways of behaving. Reactive actions are of a very marginal concern to Weber.

In short, the core components of this definition of sociology are the following: it is 'scientific,' the 'interpretative understanding', 'social action' and 'causal explanation'; all are interlinked in a systematic way. As such, sociology's focus is not necessarily the study of social action exclusively, but social action emerges to be a central component. The objective of the researcher is the interpretative understanding of the motives of the actor:

"Since human beings are 'meaningful' actors, scholars must aim at discovering the meanings that motivate their actions rather than relying on universal laws external to the actors. Subjective meaning is at the core of this knowledge. It is therefore impossible to understand historical events or social phenomena without looking at the perceptions individuals have of the world outside. Interpretation in various forms has long characterized the study of history as a world of actors with imperfect knowledge and complex motivations, themselves formed through complex cultural and social influences, but retaining a degree of free will and judgement" (Porta & Keating 2008, p. 24-25).

According to Weber, in addition to the *meaning* an actor gives to her or his action, for an action to fulfil the characterization of a social action it needs to be *oriented* towards the behavior of some other entity engaged in the social relationship. While at its basic level the actor is an individual, the actor could eventually be a group of individual actors who may supposedly give comparatively the same meaning or even different meanings to their same actions. This social actor could, in effect, be as large as an organization or even a state. Similarly, the social entities a particular social action is oriented towards could vary in their nature. They could be known or not known to the social actor regardless of the nature or the duration of the social relationship that the social action is aiming at establishing. Ira J. Cohen (1996) summarizes these prospective entities some of

whom, could be in current day terms, could be real, virtual, existed in the past, or likely to exist in the future.

> "The term "others" encompasses a multiplicity of possible orientations. Social action may be oriented to the behavior of one person, or of several individuals, or to the conduct of an indefinite plurality that may include vast populations or organized groups. These others may be contemporaries, ancestors, or members of future generations. The actor may be personally acquainted with others to whom action is oriented, or the others may be unknown" (Cohen 1996, p. 77).

Cohen argues that the nature of social relationship Weber is referring to is subjected to a similar multiplicity of interpretations between the actor and the entities towards which an an action is oriented. It seems that the social relationship holds even if the entities theoretically engaged in this relationship do not share comparable interpretations or meanings of the same social action.

> "A relationship exists when several actors mutually orient the meaning of their actions so that each, to some extent, takes account of the behavior of the others. Again, a simple concept masks a world of empirical contingencies. One of the most important is that actors may or may not reciprocally agree on their interpretations of one another's behavior. For example, two generals may misunderstand their counterpart's tactics yet conduct a sustained battle; a couple may agree to marry, yet one may understand the engagement as a final commitment, while the other may still have some reservations" (Cohen 1996, p. 77).

These various degrees of reciprocity in the interpretations of social relationship to some extent do remind us of the level of 'equivalence' in decoding the meaning Hall (2009 [1973]) discusses in his Encoding–Decoding Model. In its representations of social reality, media encodes certain representations where it could be argued that the media encode the degree of inter-subjectivity between what the sender encode, and what the audiences decode is a manifestation of a social relationship of some sort. Weber's conceptualization of the social relations referred to above is in reference to the orientation of a social action; a social relation is part and parcel of the full conceptualization of social action. The proposition for studying mediated public diplomacy in the

context of social action would not hold up if the social relations component cannot be forged appropriately into it. This proposition finds support in the role of mass communication overall since one of the roles is the mediation of social relations and experiences within a specific social setting (McQuail 2010). McQuail notes that by its nature, mediation connotes a 'specific' form a 'relationship'—'specific' in the sense that mass media may not be direct or interactive. In other words, it mostly resembles a one-way communication, which in effect is what the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy is critiqued for. "Relationships that are mediated through mass media are likely to be more distant, more impersonal and weaker than direct personal ties. The mass media do not monopolize the flow of information we receive, nor do they intervene in all our wider social relations, but their presence is inevitably very pervasive" (McQuail 2010, p. 83).

A viable question might arise about the relevance of social action theorization to the production and the communication of the mediated public diplomacy. McQuail (2010, p. 282) offers a helping hand by noting that "Most organizations have mixed goals, and rarely are all openly stated. Mass media organizations are no exception, and they may even be particularly ambiguous in this respect." In the case of the U.S. mediated public diplomacy, its objectives are anything but ambiguous. These objectives are captured by Ensor's (2015) title of his discussion paper '*Exporting the First Amendment: Strengthening U.S. Soft Power through Journalism,*' which also sums up the gist of VOA's (and BBG's for that matter) mission statement. It is the conviction that America's worldview is an *exportable* commodity. Inadvertently, if this thesis were to be given an alternative title other than *Can Arabs Represent America?* it could appropriately be *Can Arabs Export the First Amendment?*

4-3 Mediated Representation as Social Action

The extent to which Arab journalists working at Alhurra would consider their work to be, at least in part, a representation of the social reality of America—which was already discussed in earlier chapters—is something to be investigated in this research. It is worth noting the complexity of the term *representation*, extensively discussed in the English language, has no equivalent meaning in Arabic. This has more to do with the very limited use of word *representation* in Arabic. Jen Webb (2009) notes that the English language puts many limitations on the use and meaning of representation, where one word is supposed to stand for a number of situations or meanings that

can only be construed from the context in which the term is used. By contrast, Webb notes that the German language is by far more versatile and has words that capture the unique instance of different circumstances of representations.

> "Some of the complexities of the concept of representation—what it can mean, where it can mean, the limits on its meaning—come about because representation is a slippery term, particularly in English. The German language allows more carefully delineated senses of the word: *Darstellung* (making present), *Vertretung* (speaking for and standing in for), *Wortvorstellung* (representations of words), and *Sach-* or *Dingvorstellung* (representations of things) allow fairly precise uses of the term. But in English we have just one word for all these forms and modes – and, indeed, even to talk about representation itself … This raises a further problem because unless we have a very clear understanding of what the word means … it is very difficult to get any practical sense out of it. The limits of the English language mean that we are using just one word to do multiple duties, and to mean a variety of things" (Webb 2009, p. 7).

Should this be the comparative extent of limitations on the use of representation in the English language *vis-à-vis* the German language, the Arabic equivalent for the English word representation is even more constraining. In Arabic 'representation', *tamtheel*, has primarily two meanings: standing for (representing or acting on behalf) and acting (in the theatrical sense). Should the Arabic word for representations (*tamtheelat*) be used, it is extremely unlikely that it would be construed to mean the same as the corresponding English term. Moreover, if at all used in such a context, it is bound to be more likely construed as conveying fake, fabricated depictions of reality. Moreover, if used in academic writings, which is rare, readers may entirely miss the context in which it is used unless they can relate it to its English language origins. Another possible Arabic word for representation could be *tasweer,* the back-translation of which could be photographing or drawing. Hence no Arabic word for representation would convey what the word may generally mean in English as defined by (Webb 2009), "Representation is, in short, how we experience and communicate ourselves and the world we inhabit, how we know ourselves, and how we deal with others" (p. 6).

The Arabic word for representation will certainly fall short of the definition by Kidd (2016) that stresses the construction aspect or the intentionality of the representation that cannot escape being ideological. "The study of representation concerns itself with the construction of meaning. At its most basic level, meaning is constructed through language, signs and symbols, but these processes are never value-free. The decisions we make about which word-signs, images, and forms our representations take matter, those decisions being infused with intent, ideology and bias" (Kidd 2016, p. 4). The bottom-line here is that should the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy be a form of representation, or a construction of meaning of America, on the part of Arabs working for Alhurra, these communicators may not find the Arabic words to express their experience as such. Hence, does the absence of such an Arabic word hinder how they perform their work or their articulation of the meaning they give to their work at Alhurra? It is not expected that it will, but it may mean that this is not how they would express what they do, at least not in Arabic. Indeed, had this analysis been thought of and narrated in Arabic, it may not even be possible to conceptualize and articulate it as it is narrated in English now.

Here one can raise the question of whether at the overt level of the motives of Alhurra Arab journalists there could be an expression gap between the role expectations from them and what they think they are doing. The bottom-line of this brief analysis on the corresponding word for representation in Arabic is that it does not exist in the mind of Arab journalists working for Alhurra. Should this analysis be done in Arabic with no knowledge of the English language, much of the analysis stated above would not cross a researcher's mind since the Arabic language does not accommodate such thoughts.

If we were to define the ultimate objective of the U.S.-Arab mediate public diplomacy, it is in part to change how the Arab audiences view America. Instead of changing any aspect that some Arab audiences may not like about America, this type of mediation seeks to *adjust the representations* of America in the hope that Arabs' perceptions about it would change. In the context of this research, the *intentionality* of representation—or the intentional social construction aspect of it— oriented towards the Arab audiences propels the viability of studying this type of mediation from a social action perspective. The objective of the research is to establish the extent to which Alhurra

Arab journalists give comparable meanings and orientation to their mediation action as that sought by their employer, Alhurra that acts on behalf of the U.S. government.

4-4 Social Actors and Structures

Cohen (1996) notes that "Weber insisted that social scientists respect the social actor's inalienable right to define what his or her social action means for himself or herself" (p. 75). Taken at face value, this statement might mean that there is little or no room left for social scientists to interpret the meaning of the social action actors may give to their actions. On the contrary, and according to Cohen, Weber cautions against the literal interpretation of what is meant by the 'inalienable right' of the actors. This is so since actors are prone to give multiple meanings to their actions, not to mention that some may not even be aware of that meaning, to the extent that there is no clarity about the ultimate motivations of the actor. Implied from the writings of the Fritz Ringer (1997), the respect of these rights ought to be guarded neither by resorting to the actors themselves as the source of information or interpretations of their motives, nor by what can be presumed to have motivated them. Instead, "It is the agent's *actual* motive that the investigator must seek to identify, since it was the true cause of the action that has to be explained" (Ringer 1997, p. 96; emphasis by author). But does that mean that actors are always aware of the meaning of what they do? Cohen (1996) says that Weber himself is aware of the likelihood of such a social action scenario but accounting for it is the task of the social scientist who ought to uncover the meaning hermeneutically through the construction of ideal types' scenarios that also take into consideration the context in which the action has taken place.

For Weber, the social scientists want to know the motives of actors, but they do not need to empathize with or live the experience of the actors themselves. This is illustrated by Weber's commonly cited phrase "One need not have been Caesar in order to understand Caesar." Weber's solution is found in the concept of *'verstehen*,*'* which combines both *understanding* and *interpretation* of the social action. The uniqueness of the *'verstehen'* method is that it is all-encompassing, in the sense that it does not attempt to understand and interpret a social action in isolation of the context within which it is carried out. The motives of the actor can only be accurately understood and interpreted within the structures in which the action takes place. Also, for an action to be social, it must be oriented or directed towards others, either as one individual,

a group of individuals—known or unknown to the actor—or it could be oriented towards the structure itself. H. J. Helle (1985) refers to the structures as the material aspects that are possibly more accessible to the understanding of the researcher than the motives of the actors. Each one acts as one strip of the zip, the zip is locked once an understanding of both is established.

> "For Max Weber, the notion of *'verstehen'* revolves around the concept of social action. If the I orients its activity towards the You, this becomes social action by definition. The investigation of social reality requires *'verstehen'* as a method, which assists in rendering intelligibility to action. In the action process, material phenomena, the surfaces of which are easily accessible, become joined to the intended context of meaning, like the two parts of a zip when it is pulled shut" (Helle 1985, p.18).

What are the variables that zip the social action together? Stephen Kalberg (2003) notes that the interpretation process of one's action takes into consideration a multitude of socio-cultural factors. In performing an action, social actors, "… are endowed with the ability to actively interpret situations, interactions, and relationships by reference to values, beliefs, interests, emotions, power, authority, law, customs, conventions, habits, ideas, etc." (Kalberg 2003, p. 142). Similarly, Hughes and Sharrock (1997, pp. 105-106) divide these factors into two groups: one is referred to as 'dispositional' or 'motivated' factors and includes aspects such as 'attitudes, motives. feelings, beliefs, personality'; the second group is referred to as 'role expectations,' or 'sanctioned expectations' factors, or 'rule-governed' factors. In the case of the Arab Alhurra communicators, the job or role expectations are what is publicly stated by organization's broad objectives. As such, they may be considered as 'social facts' in the terminology of Durkheim, but as I argued in an earlier chapter, role expectations could be theoretically viewed as media organizations that operate within a specific society. In the context of public diplomacy, however, since ownership in media organizations such as Alhurra belongs to one society and the communicators and the target audiences come from another, the whole dynamics of mediation could no longer be considered as a mere 'social fact'.

More importantly, much of the mainstream media theorization could no longer be used as a frame of reference for studying public diplomacy mediation. A specific case in point could be Barbie

Zelizer's thesis (2017) of journalists as an interpretative community. Zelizer contends that journalists usually use an existing societal stock of cultural, political, and journalistic knowledge as a reference point in their interpretation and reporting of events. This is also how they reflect on their lives' experiences, not only in the journalistic reports they produce every day, but also through the host of other reflective publications and public appearances in which they engage. The different variables are sifted through and then combined to form the frame of reference for the journalist's 'shared interpretation of reality.' This interpretation seems to be a reminder of the factors Hughes and Sharrock (1997) classified as the external and dispositional factors of social action. However, in the case of Zelizer, these two sets of factors seem to display a minimum differentiation between them, or at least they are intricately intertwined.

At any rate, both the concept of the interpretative community as well as differentiation between the role expectations and disposition factors remains relevant to the U.S.-Arab public diplomacy mediation. For Zelizer, journalists are the interpreters of their own community. In the case of Alhurra Arab journalists, the challenge or rather the dilemma, could be: how as interpreters of their own (Arab) community, can they use that *shared interpretation* of their own reality to interpret the social reality of America and to communicate it to Arab audiences and influence them at the same time?

What we do not know, however, is the degree of correspondence between the role(s) these communicators perceive for themselves *vis-à-vis* what is expected of them by both the Alhurra organization and their Arab audiences. Similarly, we know very little, if anything, about their motivation for performing the role expected from them or the meaning they give to their role as actors. Similarly, Hughes and Sharrock (1997) note that the job of the researcher is to understand and interplay between the two different types of actors. "The job of the researcher is to discover precisely the pattern of the contingent relationship between rules, motives, situations, social relationships and behavior and formulate them as regularities, bringing them under a theory which explains why they have the form they do" (p. 107).

Paul Ransome (2010) notes that for Weber the interaction between the two broad types of factors are critical for predicting and understanding the behavior of the actors who themselves may not be

able at times to explain the motivations of their behavior. The ability to understand the actor's behavior depends on its context. "Human action is much more contingent than this in the sense that nobody can predict what all of the circumstances and contexts of action will be. If you cannot specify the context, then there is little chance of foreseeing the action that will take place within it. This basic inability to specify what will happen next also applies to the consequences of action, many of which are quite unintended. Just because social actors hope that things will turn out in one way rather than another does not guarantee that they will" (Ransome 2010, p. 107). Andreas Glaeser (2016) notes that for Weber attempting to understand both the social action and its context amounts to being engaged in a 'double hermeneutics.' "According to Weber understanding the subjective meaning imbued in the action is tantamount to understanding the action in its causes and effects, sociology becomes a discipline engaged in a double resolution hermeneutics: that of the actor and that of the wider context of actions" (p. 75).

The extent of interplay between the importance Weber gives to the meaning an actor gives to one's action and towards whom the action is oriented in a wider social context has given rise to questioning whether or not Weber is committed to methodological individualism, a perspective in which his sociological theorization is believed to be well-grounded. George Ritzer (2010, p. 241) poses such a question: "At the individual level, Weber was deeply concerned with meaning, and the way in which it was formed. There seems little doubt that Weber believed in, and intended to undertake, a micro-sociology. But is that, in fact, what he did?" The preceding analysis about the interplay between the actor and the structure falls in line with the answer to this question. But no matter how Weber's social action theorization is oriented towards methodological individualism, in this research the adoption of the social action approach should not imply an across-the-board endorsement of methodological individualism, which is central to Weber's conceptualization of the centrality of the individual as the generator of the meaning of one's action. Or at least, methodological individualism does not apply in the conceptualization of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy since it is an activity initiated by the U.S. government that is saturated with multitudes of international political relations and its foreign policies. In this activity, the aggregate activities of all individuals do not constitute the full U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy activity.

4-5 Double or Triple Hermeneutics?

In addition to the 'double hermeneutics' mentioned above, a third layer of hermeneutics could be added: the researcher's own interpretation of the social phenomena, which is in itself grounded in certain ontological and epistemological backgrounds as well as her or his research agenda. "Interpretation works at two levels. The world can be understood not as an objective reality, but as a series of interpretations that people within society give of their position; the social scientist, in turn, interprets these interpretations. In a further reflexive turn, social scientists' interpretations feed back to the people through literature and media, influencing them yet again in what Giddens … calls the 'double hermeneutic'" (Porta and Keating (2008, p. 23).

Unlike the positivist approach to social science research, in the interpretative approach the relationship or the perspective that the researcher holds towards the researched social phenomena seems to carry an almost comparative weight on the outcome of the research findings as the way that the social actor interprets her or his social action. The complexity of the interplay between the researcher and the social actor or the social phenomena studied is highlighted upfront, for it sets the theme of this chapter on methodology as articulated by Alfred Schultz (1976). The fact that Schultz refers to the social actor as the 'forgotten man' is very much a reminder of the Arab communicators mediating the U.S.-Arab public diplomacy whose presence and the meaning they give to their work are rarely acknowledged.

> "As the social world under any aspect whatsoever remains a very complicated cosmos of human activities, we can always go back to the "forgotten man" of the social sciences, to the actor in the social world whose doing and feeling lies at the bottom of the whole system. We, then, try to understand him in that doing and feeling and the state of mind which induced him to adopt specific attitudes towards his social environment.

> "In such a case the answer to the question "*What does this social world mean for me the observer*?" requires as a prerequisite the answering of the quite different questions "*What does this social world mean for the observed actor within this world and what did he mean by his acting within it*?" In putting our questions thus we no longer naively accept the social world and its current idealizations and formalizations as ready-made and meaningful

beyond all question, but we undertake to study the process of idealizing and formalizing as such, the genesis of the meaning which social phenomena have for us as well as for the actors, the mechanism of the activity by which human beings understand one another and themselves. We are always free, and sometimes obliged, to do so" (Alfred Schultz 1976, p. 210; emphasis added).

If there were to be two categories of how distant or familiar a researcher is with the existing knowledge about the social phenomena subject to study, I would classify myself as familiar to the extent I am empathetic to the mediation role being performed by Alhurra Arab communicators. However, I could equally claim that I am just as empathetic with the intentions that the United States sought from this communication. Similarly, I am also an audience to that communication. I cannot escape the fact that I have a stake in the improvement of the cross-communication between the United States and the Arab world. In effect, having such a stake is the initial driving force of engaging in this research. This engagement is what is inspiring my sociological imagination to approach the study of U.S-Arab public diplomacy from the perspective of the Arab communicators with whom I am familiar. This extent of empathy need not be considered a disadvantage to the research. If at all, and according to Weber's conceptualization, "the more radically they [actors] differ from our own ultimate values, however, the more difficult it is for us to understand them empathically" (Weber 1978, p. 5-6). Having stated my extent of empathy with the different stakeholders in the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, I am less convinced of the claim made by Ransome (2010, p. 105) that "What we know is essentially what we want to find out," a claim that Weber is well aware of, and he uses this methodological approach to safeguard the research process.

To safeguard against the arbitrary interpretation by researchers or observers of the meaning social actors may have given to their actions, Weber created what he referred to as the *ideal type* of social action. The primary manifestation of the ideal type is expressed in the four typologies of the action already addressed in an earlier section. The next section provides a brief description of what the *ideal type* conceptualization refers to and an outline of its relevance to this research, both of which will be used in the final analysis.

4-6 Research Method: The Case for the Ideal Type

Weber's proposition for the construction of the ideal-type in analyzing a social phenomenon serves several objectives. A brief definition is provided before a presentation of the objectives.

> "An ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct . . . In its conceptual purity, this mental construct . . . cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality" (Cited by Kalberg 2003, p. 146; emphasis by original author).

Cohen (1996) reminds us that Weber is aware that actors do not necessarily always understand the meaning of their actions. That, however, need not hinder the researcher's effort to understand these meanings. On the contrary, and in order to counter this overt knowledge gap, Weber "…maintains his hermeneutic interest in action by constructing ideal-types as if actors ascribed clear and unambiguous meanings to their acts" (Cohen 1996, p. 76). George Ritzer (2011) notes that the contention of the ideal type conceptualization of a social phenomenon is the establishment of the ideal prototype or a template of it. In turn, "The researcher looks for divergences in the real case from the exaggerated ideal type. Next, the social scientist must look for the causes of the deviations" (Ritzer 2011, p. 119). Citing a number of Weber scholars, Ringer (2008) notes that an ideal type is seen as 'a measuring rod' or 'yardstick,' which, in addition to being used to determine the extent of deviation or correspondence with empirical or actual reality, is also used to 'understand and explain' these deviations or correspondences 'causally' (Ringer 2008, p. 119). This entails delving into the study of the 'causes' of deviation in specific from the constructed ideal type.

It is generally argued, however, that as a default method, concepts are constructed after examining the historical reality they are supposed to represent or study, something which scholars agree Weber had done so diligently in studying many social phenomena. In the case of studying any historical phenomenon, Weber was not content to account for that phenomenon in one society or one era but sought to examine a diversity of them so that he could account for multiple reference

points and scenarios. "Thus, in order to produce ideal types, researchers had first to immerse themselves in historical reality and then derive the types from that reality" (Ritzer 2008, p. 120). This allowed them to account for the maximum possible dimensions, and hence the broadest possible generalizations about the social phenomena under study to the extent that the depiction of its ideal type steps into the realm of idealization. However, such idealization should at no time mean that it represents the best possible depiction of that social phenomenon. Ideal types represent the best-case scenarios in terms of encompassing ideal types; hence, they may become unreal, somehow imagined, utopian scenarios but not to the extent of becoming incoherent, illogical or fanciful in their assumptions.

At *prima facia* consideration, ideal types may seem to be a sort of a slippery ball one cannot grip firmly, given the range of descriptions offered to illustrate what it is, be it those offered by Weber himself or by the different scholars on Weber, where one conceptualization of the ideal type may find a counterclaim by another. Weber himself stated that it is incomplete, but most scholars remain convinced that the pros far outweigh the cons of what an ideal type is supposed to offer in studying a social phenomenon. Possibly, that because of this slipperiness of the ideal-type concept representation, researchers seldom use it (Swedberg 2017). However, for the purpose of this thesis, ideal-type conceptualization is deemed useful for several reasons. First, we know that the U.S. mediated public diplomacy targeting the Arab world had fallen short of the U.S. expectations. The conceptualization of this communication continues to use the Cold War communication as its 'ideal type' but in the sense of having seen the ultimate illustration of successful mediated public diplomacy. My intention in this thesis is to demonstrate that the circumstances that led to the success of the Cold War communication model are entirely different from those that exist when communicating with the Arab audiences. However in doing so, my intention is not to construct the ideal-type of mediation from scratch along the lines proposed by Weber. Based on the rationale of how BBG conceives and articulates its objectives, several issues need to be taken into consideration. First, it has already conceptualized an extreme ideal type of mediated public diplomacy—extreme in the sense that it is comprised of multitudes of objectives that the communication seeks to achieve. Secondly, in doing this, BBG may have saved us the need to reconstruct a cohesive conceptualization of the ideal type a U.S. mediated public diplomacy as seen by those who are concerned the most with this communication phenomena. However,

considering the myriad of conceptualizations suggested in the related professional and academic literature, a reconstruction of an ideal type would have proven more difficult given how contested the concept is. In short, the ideal-type of U.S. mediated public diplomacy maybe summarized below:

> "The BBG's 2014-2018 strategic plan continues an ambitious roadmap to refine and expand the reach and impact of U.S. international media in support of U.S. strategic interests. … The mission … remains to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. … The purpose of communicating America's democratic experience is not merely public diplomacy or improving America's image; rather, by presenting a case study in the American experience, we seek to help other countries navigate their own governance challenges. … All of the performance indicators supporting the strategic objectives come from the BBG impact model."
>
> (Broadcasting Board of Governors Fiscal Year 2016 Performance and Accountability Report)

The drawing below, adopted from Ringer (2008, p. 115), depicts graphically what I intend to establish in the empirical component of this research. The dashed line (A-B) depicts how an action would have progressed or evolved had the actor behaved or acted as postulated in 'progression' of behaviors that *would have* occurred if the agent had acted as stipulated in the ideal type scenario. The line (A' -B') is meant to depict the actual, practiced behaviors or actions. In the empirical research, A and B will represent both the ideal-type as well as the Cold War Communication. This congruence or correspondence between the two is based on the understanding that since it had succeeded, the Cold War communication model had established itself as the ideal-type. By contrast, A' which is depicted here as the U.S.-Arab model had entirely deviated from its desired objectives, progressing towards B'. "The positing of the ideal type allows the investigator to 'compare' (A'-B') with (A-B) and thus to 'measure' the *deviation* (B-B') that must be causally attributed to the *difference* between (A), the 'motives' hypothetically ascribed to the ideal typical agent, and (A'), the 'motivation' of the real agent or agents involved. (Ringer 2008, p. 116).
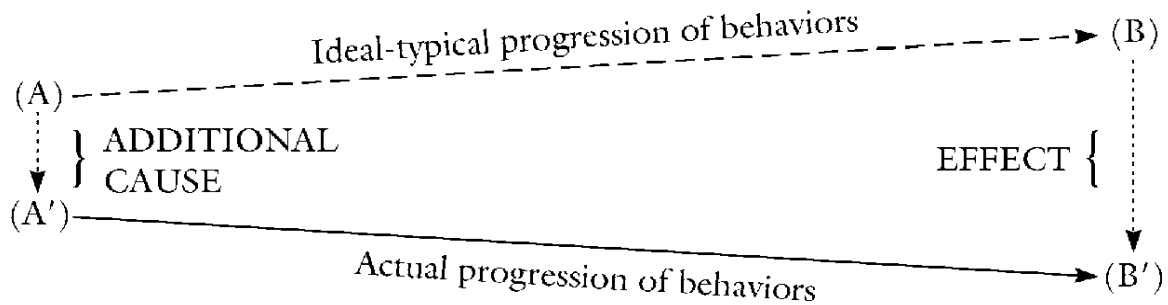
Figure 3 Progression of behaviors

4-7 Research Method: The Case for Documentary

Should mainstream social research methods books rarely, if at all, regard Weber's ideal type or social action approaches as possible research methodologies, reference to documentary as a research method in such books historically fares only slightly better but has more recently gained increased recognition. Silverman (2013) reminds research students that qualitative research should not only be occupied by the subjective experiences of the actors. "Why not work with visual data or documents?" (p. 326). Literature on documentary as a research method on par with the other types of data collection, such as questionnaires and interviews, is more likely to be found in very few stand-alone books on documentary methods or as chapters in edited handbooks on research methods. Documentary methods have been seen as a research method used mostly by historians rather than by sociologists to examine and question the events of an era (McCulloch 2004). Yet authors like Prior (2003) think that documentary analysis has been the bread and butter of sociologists' work but perhaps lacking the credit this method deserves.

The debate over the advantages and disadvantages of the documentary method is whether the primary source of studying a social phenomenon should be representations of that phenomenon through documents with no premeditated intention to represent or explanations as intended by the researchers analyzing these documents, on the one hand, and the meaning primary actors give to that phenomenon with direct reference to it, on the other (May 2011 [1993]). Precisely because of this debate, and in order to optimize the use of the secondary and primary sources of information for analyzing the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, a mixed-methods approach is implemented: documentary, interviewing, and interrogating sociological or media-related literature for the purpose of optimizing the explanation of the U.S.-Arab mediated public

diplomacy. Moreover, and for the purpose of not potentially entangling the analysis in both main methods, each method is used to deal with the empirical findings separately in the different chapters.

Hence, the documentary method is primarily used, along with existing related literature, to understand how much variance exists between the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy and the ideal type constructed in the next chapter. The in-depth interviewing is used to explore the meaning Alhurra Arab journalists attribute to their work at Alhurra. However, the analysis of implications of the in-depth interviews is done by first presenting and analyzing the findings, on their own; however, those implications are analyzed in conjunction with existing sociological and media literature as well as with reference to selected material that could fall under documents.

Although I initially envisaged that the in-depth interviews would be the primary research method for carrying out the empirical analysis, two things prompted the use of the dual method. One is the relevance of the ideal type as a methodological approach, which I realized only at a later stage of my progress in searching for the most viable approach for studying the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, as failed story, especially in comparison with the success story of the U.S.-Cold War communication. Secondly, the unexpected developments at the top leadership of Alhurra that came halfway through the research work have given additional justification for the documentary method in this research. As he took over Alhurra as its President, Alberto Fernandez gave many interviews to different American and Arab media, along with OpEd pieces and a major speech he gave in which he thoroughly outlined what he saw as reasons for the failure of Alhurra and elaborated his vision for revamping the TV station. Should the in-depth interviews provide an insight into the meaning Alhurra Arab journalists attribute to their mediation, the documents available provide insights to the meaning the top American management, previous and current, give to the objectives of Alhurra. In effect, documents and the interpretation of their meaning have already been adopted in the different chapters, with a striking illustration being the image of the handheld camera that has a submachine gun built into it.

It is generally agreed that while qualitative research has relied heavily on individual interviewing as the primary source of data collection, such an overreliance has had its limitations in terms of the knowledge that can be derived from one data source. The argument is that the interpretative researchers ought to consider a range of possible alternatives, one of which is documentary

analysis, for the purpose of expanding the knowledge on a social phenomenon through the triangulation of different perspectives rather than relying on only one. G.A. Bowen (2009) notes that triangulation serves the purpose of reducing biases of researchers and respondents.

Citing humanist sociologists, Lindsay Prior (2003) notes that, "the most obvious point to enter into the study of fields of action is, of course, through the world of human agents, … The emphasis that social scientists commonly place on human actors manifests itself most clearly in the attention that they give to what such actors say and think and believe and opine" (p. 3). Prior also observes that social science methodological material on how to study and interpret agents' thoughts, actions and behavior abound; this contrasts with the visible lack in methods on how to interpret and study documents. He also notes that documents are products manufactured by human beings to serve a function. The functions of documents precede the intentions the researcher has in studying them, and most importantly, they are produced within specific social settings. Hence, their contents should not be studied independent of those factors.

According to Bowen (2009), documents could serve five functions: "provide background and context, additional questions to be asked, supplementary data, a means of tracking change and development, and verification of findings from other data sources" (pp. 30-31). All five uses fit appropriately with their application in this thesis. First, they provide context within which the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy is situated as well as providing the meaning Alhurra management give its mediation, an aspect against which the in-depth interviews with Alhurra Arab communicators seek to learn more about the corresponding meaning they give the same action. This leads to the second function of documents, which is suggesting the questions be asked to these communicators. Thirdly, and in addition to providing the context, documents have been instrumental in providing insights into the intentions, positions, and goals of U.S. government mediation with the Arab world. This leads us to document's fourth use, which is tracking changes and developments pertaining to the social phenomena itself, which again, is an aspect that applies squarely to U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy as it allows researchers to re-track the changes in the perspectives of the top American management at Alhurra. This aspect has critical implications on the meaning that the successive administrations of the channel have attached to the ultimate function and objectives of the channel. Lastly, "documents can be analyzed as a way to verify findings or corroborate evidence from other sources" (Bowen 2009, p. 30), which in the

case of this study is used less for such purposes but as we have seen in earlier chapters, U.S. government documents and public official statements on the goals of public diplomacy have mostly contributed to the contestation over the meaning of this mediated activity.

Tim May (2011) notes that it is important to take into consideration the audiences of a text, as different meanings may be intended for different audiences. Indeed, if we take a close look at the speeches and interviews or OpEd pieces by Alhurra's current President, while at times it is evident that he was addressing an American audience, in others, it was equally evident that he was addressing an Arab audience. Yet, at times it is not as clear whether he was addressing both or one more than the other. For instance, as we will see in a subsequent chapter where in one speech, while elated by his fascination of what America represents for him, the way he compares it with the Arabs could be offensive at best. However, again in that instance, he was addressing an American audience. Had he been addressing an Arab audience, he might have been more cautious. However, the question remains: does it really matter if the audiences are Arab only, Americans only, or both? From a research perspective, it does, given that the one of the objectives of analyzing Fernandez' utterances is to interpret how he constructs the social realities of both, America and the Arab world.

Typical documents used in his research are speeches, OpEd pieces, TV or print interviews, and statements made by Alhurra top American management or by BBG. Photo images or even a post of a 'like' on a Facebook post are also used as supporting documents, for they connote a public stance made by Alhurra top American management towards topics relevant to the subject under study.

4-8 Research Method: In-depth Semi-structured Interviewing

It was noted earlier that for Weber, asking actors directly what any action they perform means to them may not be the ideal approach for generating knowledge about how they interpret their actions. One of the reasons could be that they themselves may have not consciously thought about it. Hence, clues about how they may interpret their actions could be inferred or interpreted from the context in which these actions take place or from related events in which they participated. In this thesis, while the original intention was to generate knowledge about how Alhurra Arab journalists interpret their mediated action, how Russian and East European émigrés who worked

for VOA and RFL interpret their mediation has evolved into becoming a critical component of this research. This importance stemmed from the success of their mediation being considered an ideal type in its success by the U.S government.

As such, we have two separate mediation actors belonging to two different eras and worlds for this research to interpret the meaning they assign to their work. In this thesis, how Russian and East European émigrés had interpreted their work will be examined through the study of existing literature, much of which is written in different analytical contexts from Weber's social action theorization. As for Alhurra Arab journalists, and primarily in the absence of published materials from which we can infer such meanings, in-depth interviews with the target journalists is deemed appropriate for achieving the research objectives.

By their nature, semi-structured in-depth interviews fall in line with the interpretative research approach adopted as the philosophical stance adopted in this thesis. Surpassing the other reasons for this contention is that such an approach allows participants in the research to reflect openly about the meaning they give to their actions, with very limited structuring of the nature of the responses on the part of the researcher who frames the questions. At the heart of this research approach is that as much as the pre-formulated questions asked may sound constraining, they are only intended as triggers for letting respondents narrate the meanings they give to their experiences of the subject matter (May 2011 [1993]). "This is said not only to provide it with an ability to challenge the preconceptions that the researcher may bring to the interaction, but also to enable the interviewee to answer questions within their own frame of reference. Some might regard this as a license for the interviewee simply to talk about an issue in any way they choose" (May 2011 [1993], p. 136). Similarly, and true to the nature of abductive research, semi-structured interviews are recursive by nature. The discussion is not constrained by a sequence of questions but allows reverting to questions posed at some early stage of an interview, so a researcher may realize that for new insights to emerge, earlier questions need to be revisited.

The success of this approach is that an interviewing environment can be created so that respondents are able and willing to reflect on their experiences without inhibitions. This aspect is particularly relevant in a study of this nature where there are multiple factors coming into play in performing the mediation between America and the Arabs by Arab journalists. For just as there is a journalistic component of the action itself, it can also be shaped by many cultural and political aspects.

Evidently, the more complex the topic becomes, and given who the target participants of the research are, the more likely they become more reflective of their experience and more so about the entire Alhurra operations.

There is, however, a concern among some research scholars that in such instances the interviewees themselves become the analysts. Counter to this claim, I would argue that it would be ideal if in research we can reach this stage as long as the insights the participants provide enrich the analysis rather than marginalize the role of the researcher in interpreting the insights interviews provide. In such instances, insights of such potential richness should only lead to more in-depth exploration of the topic under study. Indeed, and when appropriately combined with the wider research findings as well as with other existing related materials or theorizations, the outcome ought to allow a true generation of new knowledge on the topic under study. Such interrelationships between the different generators of knowledge on the researched topic should give abductive research its full potential.

> "Here is the iterative–excursiveness so characteristic of abductive reasoning. It is iterative in that the same logic of inquiry is repeated over and over again. It is recursive in that we perform abduction within abduction, as one "discovery" leads to another—much as a hermeneutic circle-spiral might suggest. The different kinds of engagements in the research setting took place "at the same time"—some of them within a single day, others within a single week or, at times, month. It is only in retrospect that the learning process can be described in what sounds like a very patterned way" (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012, p. 32).

In the environment of a semi-structured interview, the interactivity between the interviewer and the interviewee provides an opportunity for the interviewer to seize upon the immediate exploration of experiences and meanings that had never before been anticipated. This could be entirely different from one interviewee to another even though they perform the same work or belong to the same organization with its well-stated public mission. These potential variations in meanings attributed to the same work will inevitably require follow-up questions that may vary entirely from one interviewee to another. In qualitative interviewing, it is reported that there "… are opportunities for data to emerge from the social interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (Adler and Clark 2011, p. 252). The possibility of this joint construction of social

interaction increases with increased background that the researcher has about the topic under study. Similarly, the more engaged interviewees may feel in the exploration of their own experiences, two outcomes may emerge: first, the surprise element to the interviewee, no matter how much background she or he may have about the researched topic, and second, the interviewer may simply become a mere facilitator for the interviewee to construct his or her own meaning entirely.

It must be noted that the surprise element may not be evident immediately as the interviews are taking place but will be noticed when the full collected data is analyzed in within a pre-specified theoretical frame of reference. A more complete, and possibly a more surprising, picture should emerge when the incoming data is analyzed in conjunction with other related material that has never been taped into in that context. In effect, just as much as in a semi-structured interview environment, the interviewer should establish rapport with the interviewee (Adler and Clark 2011) to create an environment conducive for exploring the interviewees' own experiences freely and in-depth; the realization of the full implications of the findings can only be made possible if they can trigger the sociological imagination of the researcher.

4-9 Interviewing Alhurra Arab Journalists

The initial intention of this thesis was to interview current Alhurra Arab communicators in different capacities with a mix of those in different Arab countries as well as at Alhurra's Head Office in Springfield, Virginia. I had hoped that because of my knowledge of some senior personnel I know at Alhurra through the work I had directed for Alhurra and VOA in the Middle East through survey research commissioned to Gallup, I would have relatively easy access to the target segment I expected to interview. Initial response was very promising. I also shared with them the broad topics I intended to discuss in the research. That was in the spring of 2018. However, at the time that I hoped I would get the management's approval for Alhurra journalists to participate in the research, there was a sudden change in Alhurra's top American management.

Greatly disappointed with the performance of his predecessor, Brian Connilly, the new president, Alberto Fernandez, labeled the previous management as 'lacking imagination.' Fernandez stated his vision as:

"My agenda is that MBN, including Al-Hurra, needs to stand for a specific worldview, one that highlights the diversity and fullness of the American experience and that stands only for those humanistic, universal values America has always championed…" (Interviewed by Englisharabiya.com Oct 25, 2017).

With this vision in mind, he embarked on a complete structural change of Alhurra by firing dozens of its staff at different layers of the organization and in different capacities and replacing them with fresh blood. Unconfirmed reports state that more than half of the original staff were dismissed from their positions. This 'transformational' move must have had its implications on the willingness of the new Alhurra management to cooperate with me in granting its staff the permission to share their experiences in a formal, academic research project. Disappointing as it was, it is understandable, nevertheless, especially since Fernandez had labeled the entire former work of Alhurra as 'garbage.' As such, it can be inferred that from the perspective of the new management, 'garbage' is just garbage. Hence, there is no point in even evaluating it.

When I approached one of the former Alhurra talk show hosts for the possibility of participating in the research, he told me that all of those who were laid off had to sign a confidentiality agreement that they would not disclose any of their previous experiences at Alhurra in public. Plan B was remote, but I had to activate it when I had to approach former Alhurra communicators in different capacities. I had already known a few whom I approached to be interviewed to refer me to their former colleagues. Of the eight interviews I succeeded in conducting, seven were by referral. Six were recorded and transcribed in full; two preferred not be recorded, and I could only take notes on key points. Two were done via Skype, and six were done face-to-face. All are Lebanese except for one participant, a Sudanese currently residing in Canada, who reflected on his experience while he was based in Sudan. The extent of their experience with Alhurra varied from just over a year, to as long as the inception of Alhurra in 2004 till the exact same day the new Alhurra president assumed his new position. The interviews were extremely rich since the research participants worked in different capacities at Alhurra ranging from its first news director who was tasked with the launch of the channel in 2004, to a producer, a coordinator of news reporters, producer, news presenter, political talk show hosts, cultural talk show host, a former news director, and vice-president.

I had aimed for at least 12 to 15 respondents, a target that proved to be unreachable. However, as I demonstrate in the last three chapters dedicated to the presentation of the empirical findings, analysis and their implications, additional interviews may have only reconfirmed the findings generated from the interviews I succeed in holding. As the findings illustrate, when put in the context of the social action theorization on the meaning actors give to their actions and towards whom their actions are oriented, I believe that findings turned out to be totally surprising in their diversity, orientations, and depth. The richness of the generated findings illustrates that shortage in the number of cases studied could be compensated by the depth of the information generated and the extent to which it can achieve the objective of the research, which is the meaningful contribution to the body of knowledge on the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy.

Finally, the way the interviews proceeded illustrated one key advantages of qualitative interviewing, where no matter how informed the researcher is about the research topic, which he or she should since it allows an informed conversational flow of the interview (Babbie 2008), the progress in an interview is equally challenging and engaging to both the interviewer and the respondent. Reflecting post-interviewing on how Babbie described this interactive process, I came to realize how well it depicted the experience through which I went.

> "Although you may set out with a reasonably clear idea of what you want to ask in your interviews, one of the special strengths of field research is its flexibility. In particular, the answers evoked by your initial questions should shape your subsequent ones. It doesn't work merely to ask preestablished questions and record the answers. Instead, you need to ask a question, listen carefully to the answer, interpret its meaning for your general inquiry, and then frame another question either to dig into the earlier answer or to redirect the person's attention to an area more relevant to your inquiry. In short, you need to be able to listen, think, and talk almost at the same time" (Babbie 2018, p. 336).

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Chapter Five
Constructing the Mediated Public Diplomacy Ideal-Type

In this chapter, the intention is to construct the conditions that secure effective and viable mediated public diplomacy in the form of an ideal type based on Weber's ideal type conceptualization. While there is debate over whether the ideal type involves constructing a theory or just a definition of the social phenomena under study, in the absence of any theorization about the mediated public diplomacy, I adopt or invoke several social theories as a guide for constructing the ideal type mode. One such theorization is the notion of performativity as initially conceptualized by J. L. Austin (1962) in his book *How to Do Things with Words* as the steppingstone for building the case of performativity of the actors who perform the U.S. public diplomacy mediation.

However, since Austin builds his theorization independent of the intentionality of the actors towards their actions, Bourdieu's work on performativity seems to fill in the gap in the context of the intentional mediation of public diplomacy. In Austin's theorization, performativity of the actor is more related to how suitably one performs an action within a particular situation. For Bourdieu, the notion of legitimacy becomes central, especially in the eyes of towards whom the action is oriented.

5-1 Relevance of Performativity

> "As competent speakers, we are aware of the many ways in which linguistic exchanges can express relations of power. We are sensitive to the variations in accent, intonation, and vocabulary, which reflect different positions in the social hierarchy. We are aware that individuals speak with different degrees of authority, that words are loaded with unequal weights, depending on who utters them and how they are said, such that some words uttered in certain circumstance have a force and a conviction that they would not have elsewhere" (Thompson 1991, p. 1).

The above statement by John B. Thompson appears at the beginning of his Editor's Introduction of Pierre Bourdieu's book, *Language & Symbolic Power* (1991). It seeks to situate the utterance of language in the context of social relations, or more specifically in the context of the symbolic power possessed by those that are party to a communication exchange. Since this is its original intended context, one might ask what implications it might have on the utterance of communication in the context of U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy. True, there could be little relevance, especially when the communication is viewed within the context of 'different positions in the social hierarchy,' but these 'different positions' do nonetheless remind us of the alleged ontological and epistemological differences, if not inequalities, believed to exist between America and the Arab audiences that America's mediated public diplomacy seeks to reach and impact. Even if one does not subscribe to the notion that such ontological differences or inequalities do in effect exist, from the perspective of the receivers, the *authority* with which the speakers performing this communication are endowed remains a necessary condition for the performativity of this communication. The term *authority* is used here less in the context of whether they are the right people to communicate to Arab publics on behalf of America and more in terms of the *legitimacy* or the *credibility* of the entire communication, be it what the sender stands for, which in this case is the U.S. government, or its frontline communicators, being the Arab journalists working for Alhurra.

The aim of this chapter is not to propose a set of parameters for an ideal type of mediated public diplomacy *per se*. It is, rather, to construct the parameters or conditions that could be conducive to the performativity of mediated public diplomacy. Ideally, it would have been sufficient to adopt one of the more comprehensive definitions currently circulated about mediated public diplomacy. However, that does not adequately address the issue—firstly because of the contestation over the definition(s) of the concept, and secondly because different authors tend to use a particular definition as a one-size-fits-all situations regardless of the circumstances in which mediated public diplomacy is implemented, be it the Cold War or that targeting the Arab World. The conceptualization that drives this chapter is that the persistent adoption of mediated public diplomacy concept of one-size-fits-all, such as that of the U.S.-Cold War model, has led to a dead-end, especially when used in the context of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy.

Understandably and because of its success, it is generally believed that much of the current U.S. mediated public diplomacy initiatives find their origins in the U.S.-Cold War communication. Its success had naturally situated it as the ideal type mediation to be emulated. However, it is reported that its emulation continues well into the post-Cold War era regardless of how comparable or far-off the conditions that made that communication successful apply to different situations. In this chapter, while the construction of the mediated public diplomacy ideal type is meant to be setting the criteria for performative mediated public diplomacy, whether communication is performative should depend primarily on the circumstances in which that mediation takes place. In order to illustrate the importance of circumstances as key determinants of the performativity of the mediated public diplomacy, I will present in subsequent sections respectively the circumstances which were conducive to the reported success of the Cold War mediated public diplomacy. This will be followed by an outline of the entirely different circumstances that continue to frustrate the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy. The intention is not to propose the construction of a U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy ideal type, as a Performa for a best practice, but rather to contribute to explaining why it differs from the ideal type, in general, and from that of the U.S-Cold War mediated public diplomacy more specifically.

 5-2 The Legacy of the U.S. Cold War International Broadcasting

Historically, other than the dozens of ideal type case studies Weber himself analyzed, the use of ideal type conceptualization of social phenomena has been both sparse and infrequent. It is more of a methodology that is mentioned rather than adopted for the purpose of empirical research (Swedberg 2017). Confusion abounds between the more common usage of the term ideal type, as the ideal or best possible scenario, *vis-á-vis* Weber's conceptualization that is concerned with the construction of an ideal type scenario of how a social phenomenon may function under reasonably optimal circumstances, but only for the purpose of mapping existing social phenomenon against it. In contrast to the more common use of the ideal type that may underline a 'value judgment' of some sort, Weber's ideal type can be applied to the study of any social phenomena—even those that may not have social acceptance, such as prostitution or bank robbery.

> "The much-discussed 'ideal type,' a key term in Weber's methodological discussion, refers to the construction of certain elements of reality into a logically precise conception. The

term 'ideal' has nothing to do with evaluations of any sort. For analytical purposes, one may construct ideal types of prostitution as well as of religious leaders. The term does not mean that either prophets or harlots are exemplary or should be imitated as representatives of an ideal way of life" (Gerth & Mills 1959, p. 59).

There are two reasons as to why the research potential Weber had pinned on the use of the ideal type conceptualization had fallen below expectations, especially for either the purpose of comparing social phenomena with an abstract, pure ideal type one, or comparing different experiences with each other. Swedberg (2017) contends that two reasons had been behind the rare use of Weber's ideal type in empirical research. Firstly, Weber himself was not too clear about what he meant by the concept. Secondly, students of Weber have shown limited enthusiasm for using it. This has led to surrounding the concept by an "… air of difficulty and unresolved theoretical questions, something that has made the average social scientist confused and unable to use Weber's concept in his or her own research" (Swedberg 2017, p. 1-2). Despite such discouraging perspectives about the viability of the ideal type approach, there are many compelling reasons that justify its adoption in the study of U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy. There is no shortage of literature that explains why this mediation has not fulfilled its promise. It was pointed out in Chapter Two that the 'atheoretical' characteristic of the massive literature opened the door for an array of arguments as to why it has failed. In short, we neither have a conceptual frame of reference that explains why the U.S.-Cold War mediated public diplomacy proved its worth, nor do we have one that explains why the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy failed. The ideal type approach seeks to construct one single conceptual frame of reference against which both can be mapped out and still be compared.

The proposed objective of the construction of the ideal type contrasts with that suggested by Robin Brown (2012), who constructs four different ideal types of public diplomacy, each depicting a different pattern of public diplomacy practices. Brown even uses a more ambitious term to describe his scenarios; he refers to them as 'paradigms.' His reference to Weber is very casual. "The paper that follows develops four ideal types of foreign communications activities (Weber 1949)" (p. 3), which gives the impression that these four ideal types were indeed constructed by Weber himself rather than adopted as his conceptual approach for constructing ideal types of public diplomacy.

The four 'paradigms' Brown proposes are public diplomacy: 1) as an 'extension of diplomacy' 2) as a 'matter of national projection' 3) an 'external communication for cultural relations,' and 4) an 'external communication as political warfare.' Using these scenarios as a benchmark, Brown maps against them practices of countries like UK, U.S., and Germany, regardless of whether or not one 'paradigm' performs better than the other. In contrast, the intention in this chapter is to identify the characteristics of the conditions of the performative ideal type of mediated public diplomacy that can be used as a benchmark for assessing the reasons for the performance of the practiced ones.

The Cold War communication was a success regardless of the minority perspective that suggests that the claims for its total success is possibly overstated and hence must be subjected to more scrutiny. However, its legacy is inescapable when studying the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy that has been given many labels, all with much broader implications such as War of Ideas or Ideological War, to mention only two of them. Scholars and observers overwhelmingly concur that the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy is deeply rooted in the Cold War model. Most concur that this model is no longer viable, and therefore not to emulated, and some claim that the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy has failed precisely because of the adoption of the Cold War model. By contrast, a minority view attributes this failure to the inappropriate adopting of the Cold War model. In other words, the model remains viable if it is followed faithfully, but being considered a successful *model,* it must by default, have many, if not all of the characteristics that an ideal type communication model must have. As such, its legacy is inescapable when constructing the conceptualization of the ideal type model.

Public diplomacy scholars like Philip Sieb attribute the success of the Cold War model to two main attributes. The publics behind the Iron Curtain desperately needed information about themselves and the rest of the world; furthermore, the information was both timely and credible. The U.S.-Cold War communication met both of those needs, and in doing so it secured its historical legacy. Simo Mikkonen's (2010) research shows that not only did the U.S.-Cold War communication fill that public knowledge gap, it in effect exerted 'monopoly' over its supply, to the extent that the Soviet government would employ staff to monitor the broadcasts in order to emulate certain aspects of it when they could. In the case of reaching the Arabs, existing research has consistently

shown how Alhurra lagged far behind other main Arab satellite TV channels even compared with those that are owned by governments friendly to the United States.

> "Unlike *Al-Jazeera*, *Al-Hurra* was never the "channel to go to" for the majority of Arabs. Not only did it fail to challenge *Al-Jazeera*'s supremacy, but it also lagged behind other Arab channels. Subsequent results of Zogby's and the University of Maryland's poll (2008, 2009, and 2011) showed that *Al-Jazeera* remained the most watched news channel for Arab viewers. In 2008, the polls found that after five years of being on air, *Al-Hurra* was the preferred news channel for only 2% of Arab viewers" (Samei 2016, p. 55).

For Sieb (2010), putting aside the credibility of the news and information Alhurra provides, the Arab audiences are anything but information hungry, an aspect which, for him, should have compelled the U.S. mediated public diplomacy to meet other needs.

> "The task for governments is to find a way to use the tools of public diplomacy consistently and systematically. For the United States, this requires breaking away from the Cold War approach of a broadcasting-oriented public diplomacy that was successful then but is woefully archaic today.

> "Al Hurra was derived from a Cold War model. During the Cold War, the United States found that its broadcasts on Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and other such venues were well-received by large audiences, particularly in Eastern Europe. The principal competition was Radio Moscow and its close relatives – news providers that enjoyed little trust among their audiences. The American broadcasts were welcome because in the absence of trustworthy indigenous news sources, they provided the best obtainable version of the truth.

> "That situation bears no resemblance to the state of affairs in the Arab world today. During the Cold War, the Eastern European audience was desperately hungry for news, even from outsiders. No such vacuum exists today in the Middle East. Al Jazeera is just one of many

channels on which Arab correspondents are reporting to Arab viewers about Arab events. Outsiders are not needed, wanted, or trusted" (Sieb 2011).

By contrast, proponents for the literal adoption of the U.S.-Cold War communication model see that its legacy still lives on. The McCormick Tribune Foundation, which hosted the McCormick Tribune Conference Series (2007), contends that this legacy is valid, not just because the U.S. international broadcasting then had a clear strategic mission, but because it implemented it successfully. "The key to this success was our understanding of two distinct aspects of our communications policy: public diplomacy—telling the world our story; and surrogate broadcasting—giving other countries the opportunity to openly discuss themselves" (p. 4). "The first—promoting America and "telling its story"—fell naturally to the Voice of America. Surrogate broadcasting that served as "local" broadcast stations in the target regions was handed to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty … These were never seen as competing missions; rather, they were intended to be, and in fact became, broadly complementary ... According to VOA Director Henry Loomis, "the two stations were like the blades of a scissors, each working together to produce an effective cutting edge." At various points and times, the missions overlapped. But the distinction was never lost" (p. 7). The report contends that the failure of the U.S. international broadcasting targeting the Arab world is because this distinction had been blurred from the start by the launching of Radio Sawa and Alhurra. The reported lessons for the half-century of Cold War communication were 'lost.' The contention is that the media dedicated to broadcasting about the U.S. is no longer differentiated from that broadcasting 'for them' and 'about them,' nor could they differentiate themselves for the competing media available to Arab audiences.

> "Once the centerpiece in America's arsenal for fighting the war of ideas through their trenchant and focused programming, American international broadcasting in recent years has lurched in the direction of becoming just another competitor in the crowded field of commercial broadcasters purveying a menu of entertainment, popular culture and news. As one seasoned observer noted recently, "[t]he war of ideas has been demoted to the battle of the bands"" (McCormick Tribune Conference Series (2007, p. 7).

During the Cold War, the Iron Curtain was not merely a virtual reality. It was a concrete curtain that was continually fortified with technological and physical barriers in the hope of blocking the U.S. international broadcasting. By contrast, Alhurra can virtually reach any Arab house, unhindered, through digital satellite broadcast platforms that could cost an Arab household less than 50 USD to invest in a satellite receiver capable of accessing hundreds of free to air TV channels. Internet is yet another cheap communication platform that is accessible to well over half of the adult Arabs through their mobile phones or other devices. In a curtainless Arab region, Alhurra has bureaus in a handful of Middle East capitals: Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Jerusalem, and Dubai. It has a special feed called Alhurra Iraq with programming that targets the Iraqi population.

But do the contrasts in the challenges and performances of each of the two media war scenarios provide adequate explanations for the reasons why the U.S.-Cold War communication represents an ideal type in its success, on the one hand, while the U.S. War of Ideas communication is fighting for its life, on the other? The answer which I plan to elaborate on in this chapter is: no. Instead, I will argue that the primary driver for the success of an international political communication war lies in the performativity of the *messenger*; not only on the part of the sender, which in this case it is the U.S. government, but its frontline communicators be them the Russian and East European émigrés in the Cold War era, or the Arab journalists working for Alhurra in the presumed War of Ideas. Performativity in this context is not limited to the message itself, the narrative that is communicated. It fundamentally encompasses the entire set of ideological ideals held by all of those involved and how coherent they are with the policies pursued by the sender as well as the messenger, in the past or the present. I will argue in subsequent sections and in the next chapter that the coherence in the narrative of the U.S.-Cold War communication was a key driver for its 'happy' performativity, using the terms of J. L. Austin (1962). By contrast, incoherence is a main characteristic of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy which has resulted in its 'unhappy' performativity, or 'misfiring.'

5-3 The Mediated Public Diplomacy Ideal-Type

The relationship between the ideal type of mediated public diplomacy and the U.S.-Cold War communication is not a chicken or egg situation. The reported success of the latter makes it an ideal candidate for a historical ideal type of such communication; it was once successful and is

believed to be a viable template whose life-cycle has not expired. But if there ought to be a set of necessary and a set of sufficient conditions for meeting the ideal type conditions of what had attributed to the success of the U.S.-Cold War communication, they seem to fall mostly under the *sufficient* conditions, a few aspects of which I highlighted in the previous sections. The construction of the ideal type is more concerned with the *necessary* conditions, without which the performativity of the communication could subject itself to great uncertainty. In turn, the objective is to identify what made the U.S.-Cold War communication performative *par excellence*. Similarly, it is to identify what undermines the desired performativity of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy.

While performativity of language in general and communication in specific has found its place in the sociological analysis, its application in analyzing journalism has remained rather limited. One of the more cited works on the performativity of journalism is that of Marcel Broersma (2010) although as indicated from the title of his article, Broersma analyses the performativity of journalism in the context of the *form* and *style* journalists use in their construction of the social reality, which for him has become the primary task of journalists. Their performativity as journalists comes primarily from the trust bestowed upon them by the public as they construct this social reality. Performativity is thus the authority they possess as the so-called *Fourth Estate*, which is mutually agreed upon with the general public that journalists serve. The form and style they employ in their retelling of the news stories become the bloodline for maintaining the authority the public has entrusted in them, or in other words, the approach they use to institute their performative power. For Broersma this re-enforcement of their performativity usually abides by social codes that are mutually agreed upon with the public and is understood by both on equal terms. "In other words, journalists write their stories according to culturally determined genre conventions and are aware readers are familiar with these. As such, genres represent an unspoken agreement between the journalist and the reader about what to expect" (Broersma 2010, p. 22).

Most importantly, however, Broersma comes very close to identifying the features that constitute the ideal type of the performative journalism, where the public, because of the faith and the trust they have in journalists, not only expect them to reconstruct social reality as they narrate the news to them, audiences act upon how this social reality is constructed. "An article is a convincing

representation when it successfully establishes a feeling of truthfulness. By doing so it transforms an interpretation into truth—into a reality on which the public can act" (Broersma 2010, p. 17). What matters for Broersma is not just the competence of the journalists to produce narratives of the social reality in proper language; it is the *entitlement* journalists possess to produce this narration. Broersma cites Seymour M. Hersh and *The New Yorker* as typifying *authority.* Hersh, in 2004, published a series of articles that revealed, according to anonymous sources, that the U.S. Defense Department had already known about the Abu Ghuraib sexual misconduct and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners even before it was revealed by the *CBS Sixty Minutes* program in 2004.

> "The authority of a news item is established through the way it is represented in language, the reputation of the journalist, the medium the item is published or presented in and the profession as a whole. When Hersh, for example, was asked why people should believe his articles, which were based on anonymous sources, he replied, referring to what Bourdieu would have called the reporter's and the magazine's cultural capital, "Yes, you have to trust *The New Yorker* and me. However, we have built up a track record in the past decades and we deserve some credit for that"" (Broersma 2010, p. 19).

Two important take-outs can be deduced thus far from Broersma's seemingly accidental construction of the ideal type journalism: first, the *cultural capital* journalists must possess which constitutes a necessary condition for journalism's performativity, and secondly, the speaker-audience relationship, where it is expected that both necessarily share a *common social code* that journalists use to construct social reality with the audiences decoding it symmetrically. The common social code referred to by Broersma is very much a reminder of the 'cultural map' referred to by Hall et al. (2009b [1978]), as we have seen in Chapter Two on the social production of mediated public diplomacy. Similarly, in this regard, Bourdieu's *cultural capital* conceptualization is a critical component for the speaker's performativity, which along with the speaker-listener relationship can be considered to be the sufficient conditions for the performativity of mediated public diplomacy. This is an aspect that I will be elaborating on further as I proceed in the construction of the features of the ideal type mediated public diplomacy. Competence of communication can then be considered as necessary conditions.

For reasons to be elaborated on shortly, in the context of the mediated public diplomacy it can be argued that *political capital*, with the broader connotations it carries, may be more appropriate to consider than 'cultural capital' *per se*. It is true that while the War of Ideas is partly a cultural conflict between America and its presumed antagonists in the Arab world, it is a political conflict *par excellence*. Limiting it to being a mere cultural conflict may overlook many aspects of the conflict and hence miss out on bringing to the discussion many historical events that have depleted America's political capital in the eyes of many Arabs: Islamists and secularists alike. Indeed, the political and cultural capital America perceives itself to have as its soft power has yet to overweigh, in the eyes of its antagonists in the Arab world, its historical political legacy in the Arab world which depletes the performativity of the legacy it has about itself.

The speaker-listener relationship noted above was evoked originally by Noam Chomsky's (1965) conceptualization to the ideal speaker-listener, where Chomsky was more concerned with the linguistic competence of the speakers rather than with the performativity of their utterance. Chomsky sought to construct what might constitute the ideal type speaker in terms of competency. The focus is more on the textual structure of the communication which requires in-depth knowledge of the language used for communication and in its cultural context. A prerequisite for the ideal speaker-listener scenario is that the communication must happen 'in a completely homogeneous speech-community,' for only then can full competency be guaranteed. Indeed, in the context of U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, this condition does not exist. The fact that the U.S. hires Arabs to communicate on its behalf with their fellow Arabs may amount to be an attempt at representing some semblance of 'homogeneous speech-community' of sorts, but not a 'complete' one since the *speakers* are speaking on behalf of someone else who is in this case the United States. But beneath this semblance lies what has been referred to in earlier chapters as the ontological differences between the U.S. and the Arab audiences. In the case of Chomsky, we are talking about the ideal speaker who knows the linguistic and cultural depth of the language of the people the speaker is addressing. However, the more looming question remains: how much of comparable knowledge does an Arab journalist have about the language, culture and the social reality she/he have about America she/he is supposedly representing? Now, the extent to which homogeneity between speakers and listeners in the U.S.-Cold War communication will be

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subjected to more scrutiny in a subsequent section, an aspect which, may have contributed to the performativity of the Cold War communication in the first place.

Closing the full circle for the performative conditions that must exist in the ideal speaker-listener relationship, Thompson (1991) critiques Chomsky's focus on the competence of the speaker rather than on performative utterance. Thompson notes that what is more crucial for speakers is "[t]heir practical competence not only the capacity to produce grammatical utterances, but also the capacity to make oneself heard, believed, obeyed, and so on. Those who speak must ensure that they are entitled to speak under the circumstances, and those who listen must reckon that those who speak are worthy of attention" (Thompson 1991, p. 7-8). While Thompson's statement is put in a broad context of performative communication, it recaptures what Broersma (2010) has in mind when describing performative journalism. Similarly, Thompson's statement equally encapsulates the core characteristics of mediated public diplomacy. It is particularly relevant in the U.S.-Arab case, where Alhurra and its Arab journalists are struggling, to borrow from Thompson's statement, to have 'those who listen' to 'reckon that those who speak are worthy of attention.' Hence, the struggle is for asserting their performativity. In democratic societies, mainstream journalism has its performativity mutually agreed upon as an institution known as the *Fourth Estate*. As such, mainstream journalism is a field in its own rights, to borrow Bourdieu's term. Mediated public diplomacy, or more specifically 'BBG journalism' has yet to establish itself as a field, let alone realize what constitutes the foundations of its performativity, at least in the eyes of Arab audiences. Its performativity aspect is very pertinent since it is used as a weapon in the War of Ideas. Reconsidering the notion of performativity in the next section may help us better come to terms with the core features of performative mediated public diplomacy.

In his assessment of the War of Ideas, seventeen years after it started in full force before the dust of the 9/11 attacks on U.S. had settled, Stephen Marche (2018) argues "… the terrorists have definitively won the battle for the American mind." In comparative terms, the U.S.-Cold War communicators were less concerned with this struggle for the American mind, which allowed them to focus on the communication rather than on their credibility in the eyes of their target publics in Eastern Europe.

Thompson's observation on the struggle of social actors to gain legitimacy was in relation to Bourdieu's (1991) theorization about the dynamics of the struggle social actors engage in their struggle for social change. This is a struggle between opposing visions or representations of the social reality within a society, which is the space for that struggle. In the case of U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, it is supposedly a struggle between two visions of the world: that of America (which we have seen in earlier chapters is in a state of ontological flux), on the one hand, and that held by those America is fighting against in the Arab world. In this thesis, it is assumed, until proven otherwise, that the Arab communicators at Alhurra are the frontline actors in this struggle, at least from the perspective of the U.S. government.

According to the perspective of the U.S. mediated public diplomacy, their reporting of events comprises accurate descriptive statements about social reality, or more specifically, true and objective representations of social reality, which is in line with its positivist approach it adopts in the representation of itself as analyzed in an earlier chapter. But if there is a dispute over such a representation of social reality on the part of its target audiences, the notion of the performativity of this representation is inescapable.

5-4 Mediated Public Diplomacy: Constative, Performative Utterance, or Both?
J. L. Austin (1962) is generally considered to have given the concept performativity a life of its own. Austin differentiates between two types of utterances: the constative and the performative. The constative are statements that are descriptive in nature, they say something about the state of affairs of the subject. They state what things are, which could be true or false. Performative utterances are statements that connote action through the uttered words; a statement is itself an action. And here the statement, rather than being true or false, is either appropriate or inappropriate. For it to be appropriate, a statement has to meet certain conditions or conventional procedures, such as the circumstances in which the utterance takes place, the appropriateness of the speaker who utters it, i.e. whether the speaker is endowed with the authority to utter it, and the appropriateness of those addressed by the statement. Depending on whether all the conditions are met, the utterance could be felicitous or infelicitous; happy or unhappy (miss-fires). The examples Austin gives about performative utterance are now in wide circulation. For instance, anyone can smash a bottle of Champaign on a ship and claim it to be anointed as Queen Mary, but is this

announcement made by an authorized speaker? Similarly, in the case of U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, which claims to promote freedom of speech, democracy, and liberal ideals in the Arab World, are the promoters of such ideals credible or legitimate speakers so that their Arab target audiences will take them seriously? The same thing could be said about the 'ship' itself, which in this case is the U.S. Does it embody all the political or cultural capital so that this self-claim becomes legitimate in the eyes of the Arabs it seeks to target in the communication?

In developing his argument about the differentiation between constative and performative language, Austin (1962) adds more dimensions to what constitutes each one. The differences can be identified by defining what each utterance is: locutionary, illocutionary, or perlocutionary acts. Briefly and for the sake of highlighting key aspects of the performative utterance, Austin defines a locutionary act as "the act of "saying something"" (p. 94); an illocutionary utterance is the "performance of an act in saying something" (p. 99), which essentially means that the words are an act in themselves. The difference between the two is the "… performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to performance of an act *of* saying something …" (p. 99; emphasis by author). Lastly in the case of perlocutionary utterances, Austin notes that they "will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects" on the targeted others (p. 101). Indeed, it can be argued that the locutionary dimension of language is relevant to mediated public diplomacy since its primary goal is to 'inform.' Similarly, since its goal is to influence others in one way or another, the perlocutionary dimension takes precedence. Austin notes that a primary element of perlocutionary utterance is "… what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading" (p. 108).

The contrast between locutionary and perlocutionary dimensions of the speech acts takes us back to the difference between the constative and the performative utterances. Here, scholars who analyzed Austin's conceptualization of speech acts note that as Austin progressed in his lectures, which were the origins of his book, *How to Do Things with Words*, he came to realize that the two are not totally distinct but do in some instances intersect. This intersection questions the original assumptions about the differentiation between constative and performative utterances—one that describes states of affairs and one that creates a social reality with no relation to a pre-existing state of affairs, but one that could be as compelling to readers to engage in its events, characters

and conceptualizations of the imagined social reality. J. Culler (1997) refers to this intersection as a 'tension' between the two.

> " … the constative is language claiming to represent things as they are, to name things that are already there, and the performative is the rhetorical operations, the acts of language, that undermine this claim by imposing linguistic categories, bringing things into being, organizing the world rather than simply representing what is. We can identify here what is called an 'aporia' between performative and constative language. An 'aporia' is the 'impasse' of an undecidable oscillation, as when the chicken depends upon the egg but the egg depends on the chicken. The only way to claim that language functions performatively to shape the world is through a constative utterance, such as 'Language shapes the world'; but contrariwise, there is no way to claim the constative transparency of language except by a speech act" (Culler 1997, p. 100-101).

Allegedly, the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy is not immune to the presumed tension between the constative and the performative, which literary works struggle with, for not only does this mediation seek to inform its Arab target publics, but it also concurrently claims that its utterance is true, objective, and unbiased representation of the social reality of America and the world at large. Built into such constative aspect of U.S. mediated public diplomacy language is the positivist perspective America holds about itself, as analyzed in a previous chapter.

> "Alhurra and Radio Sawa, provide America an undistorted line of communication with the people of the Middle East. They deliver *accurate* and *objective* information about America, American policies and people with a broad range of perspectives and an open exchange of ideas on issues of importance to the audience. Alhurra and Radio Sawa also present in-depth discussions that are not addressed in the Arabic-language media, such as human rights and freedom of speech and religion." (https://www.linkedin.com/company/middle-east-broadcasting-networks/; Retrieved 23/9/2018; emphasis added)

America thinks is its primary weapon in its communication arsenal in its War of Ideas is its claim that its communication is the 'truth.' From the perspective of America, Arab media is seen to

distort the true representation of America with its good will and intentions in the Middle East and is not interested in *explaining* America's worldview and foreign policy to Arab audiences as Alhurra presumably would. At the same time, this mediation ought to be evaluated by how performative it is in influencing its intended audiences, an aspect that ought to constitute the core component of ideal type mediated public diplomacy. In short, this type of mediation should be evaluated according to what it *says* and what it *does* concurrently. Built into what this type of communication *does*, or expected *to do,* the communication itself is not independent of the actual actions of the actors themselves in the past or current state of affairs that the communication is supposed to represent. The *tension* comes into play when the actions of the sender undermine the performativity of the mediated public diplomacy utterance. By contrast, harmony or coherence between the constative and the performative utterance should theoretically induce felicitous outcomes of the mediated public diplomacy. As such, the *tension* or *coherence* between the constative and the performative utterance ought to constitute a feature of ideal type mediated public diplomacy. As will be analyzed in a subsequent chapter, the U.S.-Cold War broadcasting produced the desired outcome because of the *coherence* feature of the communication, whereas the failure of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy can be partly attributed to the seemingly perpetual presence of the *tension*.

The relevance of literary discourse on performativity, as outlined by Jonathon Culler (1997), to the study of mediated public diplomacy is because both are mostly about what they *say* and what they *do*. It is expected that evoking this comparability may enable us to compare the notion of performativity, however different the two utterances may be, as well as allowing us to analyze and explain mediated public diplomacy from a perspective not discussed previously. Both mediated public diplomacy and literary language depict actors who act upon social realities where the former is real and the latter is imagined. In each case, the role of the actors and the meaning they project on their respective social realities vary greatly. Culler sums up the dynamics of the performative utterance in literary discourse as:

> "Literary critics have embraced the notion of the performative as one that helps to characterize literary discourse. Theorists have long asserted that we must attend to what literary language *does* as much as to what it *says*, and the concept of the performative

provides a linguistic and philosophical justification for this idea: there is a class of utterances that above all do something. Like the performative, the literary utterance does not refer to a prior state of affairs and is not true or false. The literary utterance too *creates* the state of affairs to which it refers, in several respects. First and most simply, it brings into being characters and their actions, for instance. … Second, literary works bring into being ideas, concepts, which they deploy. … In short, the performative brings to centre stage a use of language previously considered marginal – an active, world-making use of language, which resembles literary language – and helps us to conceive of literature as act or event" (Culler 1997, p. 96; emphasis by author).

What is of relevance here is that literary utterance creates realities from scratch; they have no pre-existing nature; they are, hence, neither true nor false. The performativity of the literary utterance is evident from the fact that the ideas, concepts, and the characters they create could even live on in the imagination of generations to come. Moreover, there is strong evidence that many great literary works fit this characterization. By contrast, however, the performativity of mediated public diplomacy operates very differently. The nature of the state of affairs, pre-existing or constructed out of imagination, is just one major difference between literary work and mediated public diplomacy. Mediated public diplomacy is a *representation of an existing state of affairs.* What propels the need for mediated public diplomacy is the dispute over what that state of affairs represents to those engaged in the communicative action— whom it benefits and whom it inflicts damage upon. More importantly, a crucial difference between the two utterances is the role and the meaning actors bring into (or do not bring into) their actions. Culler notes that in literary works the acts actors perform are not determined by their *intentions.*

"In principle at least, the performative breaks the link between meaning and the intention of the speaker, for what act I perform with my words is not determined by my intention but by social and linguistic conventions. The utterance, Austin insists, should not be considered as the outward sign of some inward act, which it represents truly or falsely. If I say 'I promise' under appropriate conditions, I have promised, have performed the act of promising, whatever intention I may have had in my head at the time. Since literary utterances are also events where the intention of the author is not thought to be what

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determines the meaning, the model of the performative seems highly pertinent" (Culler 1997, p. 97).

Put outside the context of literary work, "If language is viewed as action, then the criteria for evaluating it is no longer grammatical (although this is a component of the locutionary act). Instead, to perform these acts successfully (or felicitously) requires the meeting of relevant situational requirements, including having the requisite beliefs and attitudes" (Holtgraves 2008, p.180). Here again, and in contrast with literary works, the performativity of mediated public diplomacy revolves, or as hypothesized in this thesis ought to revolve, around the meaning communicators put into their action. The *intentionality* and the *meaning* of their actions ought to be inseparable in the construction of ideal type mediated public diplomacy. Theoretically, the *intentionality* aspect ought to be construed as a default factor. Should mainstream media be engaged in the construction of social reality without prior specifications for what it ought to look like, because of its presumed objectivity, the U.S. mediated public diplomacy has a prescribed template: America's worldview – however it may have changed since the ascendency of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency since 2016. Hence, the *link* should form a core component of the ideal type performative public diplomacy mediation, for it is a precondition for whether its outcome is 'felicitous' or 'infelicitous.' Placed in Weber's frame of reference as proposed in this thesis, this *link* assumes a critical component for studying it in the context of *social action* theorization and the meaning Arab Alhurra communicators give to their work at Alhurra.

5-5 Authority of the *Speakers* in the Ideal Type Mediated Public Diplomacy
It is worth remembering that what prompted the study of the motivations of Arab journalists working for Alhurra is that since mediated public diplomacy is essentially a contested concept, with BBG continually piling up its expectations from the communication, one way to tame this contestation is by exploring the meaning that frontline Alhurra Arab communicators themselves give to their work. We know the objectives of BBG, but do its Arab workers share the same *intentions*, and ultimately, even if they do, are they the *authorized* speakers to perform this mediation performatively? Indeed, the primary purpose of the construction of the mediated public diplomacy ideal type is to allow us to reach a better understanding of answers to such questions. Needless to say, however, is that when individual actors engage in a supposedly *intentional* action,

even if the intentionality is only stated as such at the organizational level, studying this action within the social action conceptualization becomes more feasible, if not inevitable. Hence, in the context of Weber's social action theorization, the construction of mediated public diplomacy ideal type would require making a number of assumptions that are independent of the social phenomena understudy. Swedberg (2017, p. 7) reminds us of these assumptions as stated by Weber himself:

"#1 That the typical actor acts in a rational way;
2 That the typical actor has complete information;
3 That the typical actor is totally aware of what he/she is doing; and
4 That the typical actor does not make any mistakes."

Swedberg notes that these extreme assumptions are not always realistic; for instance the actor may not necessarily have complete information or is not always fully aware of his or her actions. Many things, internal or external to the actor herself of himself, may therefore interfere in causing a deviation from these assumptions, which could lead in effect to 'making mistakes.' However, despite these possible deviations, Swedberg contends that,

> "It should be pointed out that the ideal type also plays a role in the process of assigning causality in Weber's interpretive sociology, and that this has implications for its construction. How to interpret what Weber says on this point is contested in the secondary literature but is fairly straightforward in my view. In brief, the ideal type should be constructed in such a way that the effect of the social action it describes is clearly linked to the motivation of the actor. This way, so-called "causal adequacy" is ensured (*kausal adäquat*). To phrase it differently, what is meant with causal adequacy is that if the typical actor carries out some action, it should lead to the sought effect in a probable and decisive way. The action, in brief, should be of such strength that it leads to the intended result" (p. 8).

It is important to remember, however, that although many of the elements being incorporated in the construction of the ideal type mediated public diplomacy are related to the individual actors, the effectiveness of mediated public diplomacy is only partly dependent on the action they perform as frontline communicators. In merging the conceptualization of the ideal type with that of social

action, we come to know that as Weber contends, the actors themselves are not always the best source of information about the meaning they give to their actions. Thompson (1991) notes that Bourdieu contends that while agents pursue certain goals, these goals are not always based on rational deliberations. It is their habitus that often plays a key role in determining their orientations.

The assumptions Bourdieu makes about the extent to which actors are conscious of their motivations are made in the context of their struggle to provoke social change. It can be implicitly assumed that many of the factors these actors engage with are internal and self-contained within their own societies. They are struggling on behalf of other groups within their own societies to change the state of affairs. This immediate bond between the actors and their own society puts the notion of performativity of action in a very different context compared with that suggested by Austin. It is noted that Austin was more concerned with the linguistic context of the utterances whereas Bourdieu is reported to have rooted the performativity of the utterance in its social origins. "Where analytic philosophy was concerned with what Austin called constative utterances, assertions that could be evaluated as true or false, pragmatics focused on a different category of utterance: the performative. By this Austin meant speech that performs the action it describes, as in 'I bet' or 'I name this ship.' This idea that words could do things – that communication is a mode of action – was to prove hugely influential. It was also to give rise to one of the main fault-lines dividing contemporary theories of performativity: between those treating performativity as a formal property of language and those treating it as a social or cultural practice" (Lloyd 2011, p. 270).

The fact that Austin believes that there should not be a *link* between the intentions of the speaker and the action itself may amount to considering the speaker as a mere authorized 'carrier' of the utterance, no matter whether it is constative or performative, and regardless of his or her belief or commitment to its eventual outcome. In fact, the objective of this thesis is to explore whether this may or may not apply to the Arab Alhurra communicators as well as to their counterparts who were engaged in the U.S.-Cold War communication. By contrast, in the ideal type U.S. mediated public diplomacy, the assumption is that non-American communicators working for Alhurra, given its long list of objectives, must theoretically be self-conscious of their actions, especially since they are working for a political entity that is external to their own societies and has an explicit

agenda that is intended to influence people in their own societies. We are reminded of the full scale of the expected impact in the following BBG statement.

> The BBG's 2014-2018 strategic plan continues an ambitious roadmap to refine and expand the reach and impact of U.S. international media in support of U.S. strategic interests. … The mission … remains to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. … The purpose of communicating America's democratic experience is not merely public diplomacy or improving America's image; rather, by presenting a case study in the American experience, we seek to help other countries navigate their own governance challenges. … All of the performance indicators supporting the strategic objectives come from the BBG impact model.
>
> (*Broadcasting Board of Governors Fiscal Year 2016 Performance and Accountability Report*)

For Alhurra in specific, in addition to these BBG strategic objectives, is tasked with the mandate of fighting Islamic extremism, commonly known as Jihadism. With the above complex and extensive list of objectives, one is compelled to ask whether we are assigning these tasks to journalists of the normal type or to journalists who are asked to push the limits of their ideal type to being closer to an 'epistemic community' that seek to provoke a fundamental socio-cultural change in the Arab that emulates the American experience. Alberto Fernandez notes, "My agenda is that MBN, including Al-Hurra, needs to stand for a specific worldview, one that highlights the diversity and fullness of the American experience and that stands openly for those humanistic, universal values America has always championed..." (Interviewed by Englisharabiya.com October 25, 2017).

Deconstructing BBG objectives into its separate interconnected components could allow us to find a match with the qualifications of an epistemic community which is reported to constitute the beliefs and the goals they share, all of which are oriented towards their own societies. Going that path of matching may be time consuming, but in the case of the U.S. mediated public diplomacy, it is meant to be an invitation for reflecting on what BBG journalism can realistically achieve *vis-*

à-vis the grand stated objectives. More importantly, this brings us to the last components in the construction of the ideal type mediated public diplomacy and where these communicators get their *authority* from—firstly, to speak on behalf of America, and secondly to be credible and legitimate speakers on these matters in the eyes of their target audiences. Dealing with this aspect brings us back to the source of the authority of the communication. Is it merely from the uttered language itself or from its social components? And if it from the latter, are the social components coming from the U.S. itself as the presumed sender of the communication, i.e. America, or from the Arab World which the communication targets its people? Put differently, where do the Arab Alhurra journalists generate their legitimacy from: the sender, which is America, or their prospective audiences?

Bourdieu (1989 and 1991) poses this critical question in the context of the social struggle where social actors lead the social change on behalf of others. For Bourdieu, the legitimacy of the actors come from the audiences they are supposed to lead. "… [T]he authorized spokesperson is only able to use words to act on other agents and, through their action, on things themselves, because his speech concentrates within it the accumulated symbolic capital of the group which has delegated him and of which he is the *authorized representative*" (Bourdieu 1991, p.109-111; emphasis by author). One critical component here is the *symbolic capital* that empowers the speaker to take-on a mutually agreed upon social task—with those whom the actor is supposed to act both, towards them and on their behalf; it is socially internal not external to both, the speakers and of those whom they talk on the behalf. The dilemma the U.S.-Arab public diplomacy may thus face is that the 'accumulated symbolic power' with which the *speakers* are presumed to be empowered does not belong to them nor to those they are supposed to impact in their communication or on whose behalf they are talking.

As indicated in the previous chapter on social action, the ever-mounting objectives of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy makes it closer to being a praxis than just a mere representation of America—praxis in the sense that Alhurra Arab journalists are expected to be promoters of democratic ideals on behalf of both America as well as the presumed Arab audiences who are desperately seeking democracy but of which they are deprived. All these expectations are now stated explicitly but without knowledge of whether they are shared by the Arab Alhurra journalists

themselves. We know, however, that they were once shared by U.S.-Cold War frontline communicators who met the conditions of legitimacy as succinctly stated by Bourdieu below and who were truly engaged in an ideological battle between communism and democratic ideals. It was a struggle between two clearly defined visions whose frontline proponents gained their legitimacy from those who were behind the Iron Curtain. As for the U.S., it seems that it thinks the same scenario is being replicated in its mediated public diplomacy with the Arab world.

> "To change the world, one has to change the ways of world-making, that is, the vision of the world and the practical operations by which groups are produced and reproduced. Symbolic power, whose form par excellence is the power to make groups … rests on two conditions. Firstly, as any form of performative discourse, symbolic power has to be based on the possession of symbolic capital. The power to impose upon other minds a vision, old or new, of social divisions depends on the social authority acquired in previous struggles. Symbolic capital is a credit; it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition. In this way, the power of constitution, a power to make a new group, through mobilization, or to make it exist by proxy, by speaking on its behalf as an authorized spokesperson, can be obtained only as the outcome of a long process of institutionalization, at the end of which a representative is instituted, who receives from the group the power to make the group" (Bourdieu 1989. p. 23).

As I conclude this chapter, it is worth noting that the conceptualization for the ideal type mediated public diplomacy evolved only out of urgent need to find explanations for the success of the U.S.-Cold War communication against the failure of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy. The ideal type allows for the comparison using one unified template against which both can be evaluated using the same criteria. Evoking the conceptualization of performativity of not only the communication on its own, but that of the sender and the messenger—all in relation with target audiences whom this type of political communication is being for them and, on their behalf— should open previously unexplored opportunities for understanding each from the same perspective.

It is also worth referring to the debate among scholars as to whether Weber's ideal type is, in effect, a theoretical frame of reference or a descriptive definitional statement that could eventually lead to the generation of a hypothesis about the phenomena under study (Hendrick and Peters 1973). Hence, if I were to consider what I have done in this chapter as having constructed a theoretical framework for mediated public diplomacy ideal type, I may be critiqued as putting the cart before the horse, since it is expected that in qualitative research it is the generated data that leads to theorization about social phenomena under study rather than the reverse (Blaikie 2010). However, having constructed the ideal type of mediated public diplomacy, not from abstract conceptualization but rather from a number of social theories, with Austin's performativity theorization forming one main theoretical membrane that ties the past and present actions and the intentions of the different players into one frame of reference, may amount to being by far more than just a descriptive definition for the ideal type. The construction of the ideal type was equally inspired by the actual practices of the U.S.-Cold War and U.S.-Arab experience combined, where I found myself intellectually negotiating between them and what might have caused the success of one and the failure of the other. Weber himself contended that the ideal type is neither fully theoretical nor definitional, but 'vacillates' between the two (Hendrick and Peters 1973).

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Chapter Six

U.S.-Cold War and U.S.-Arab Mediated Public Diplomacy:
A Comparison with the Ideal Type

This chapter presents the empirical findings on the extent of correspondence between the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy and the ideal type in addition to the comparison with U.S.-Cold War communication. The analysis is primarily based on my interpretation of Alhurra's top American management perception of its mission, especially that of its new president who took over the helm of Alhurra at the time I started working on the construction of the mediated public diplomacy ideal type in the previous chapter. His speeches, interviews and OpEd pieces, and other public stances he took towards events, such as the murder of ███ ██████████ all provided rich material that directly relate to the performativity of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy. Other materials with direct bearing on the topic are testimonies at the U.S. Congress, including at least one book by Hillary Clinton. As for the comparison with the U.S.-Cold War communication, I relied wholly on relevant published literature.

Since "Ideal types are useful when they accurately capture the values of actors" (Lebow 2017, p. 62), this chapter probes heavily into two aspects. First, the presenting and analyzing, from the perspective of the new President of Alhurra, of what he sees as having caused the failure of Alhurra being the lack of the meaning that Alhurra Arab journalists gave to their work. Deviation from his prescribed meaning that Alhurra Arab journalists ought to have had about their mission at Alhurra led him to carry out a mass firing of hundreds of them who were replaced with new communicators. This factor appeared extremely relevant as I began writing the chapter, thereby practically compelling me to rework many parts in order to accommodate the new flood of valuable material. The second aspect that I cover in this chapter is an analysis of how the Russian and Eastern European émigrés interpreted their communication with their target audiences during the Cold War era.

An equally important component of this chapter is how Alhurra and BBG publicly available literature identifies Alhurra's audiences as contrasted with how Russian and Eastern European émigrés perceived and related to their audiences. Findings of how Alhurra Arab journalists

themselves perceive their role and audiences (*vis-à-vis* the ideal type) are presented and analyzed in the subsequent chapters.

The chapter concludes with yet another totally unexpected input, which is the murder of ███████ ████████ in Istanbul on Oct 2, 2018. His murder and the reactions to it by the Trump administration, as well as the President of Alhurra in specific, both unexpectedly served as fresh materials for demonstrating how the U.S. policies towards the Middle East undermines the performativity of its mediated public diplomacy.

6-1 Desperately Seeking Arab Journalists Warriors

In the midst of my attempt to find a theoretical frame of reference for how best to study what meanings Alhurra Arab journalists give their job as mediators between America and the Arabs, changes in the top management of Alhurra in the summer of 2017 seemed to have made my entire research redundant since even before he assumed his role at the new President for Alhurra, Alberto Fernandez, trashed out Alhurra in its entirety. The most condemning statement came in a speech Fernandez delivered at the Westminster Institute in Washington DC under the title: *Reinventing an American International Broadcasting Network to the Arab World,* June 6th, 2018, in which he summarized his position as, "So we have an identity problem. We also have obviously a brand a marketing problem as well. But for me that I said the way I saw it is you need to fix the content before you can market. You can't market garbage, right?" (Frenandez 2018b). This assessment formed a critical juncture for me, and the question I asked myself was: have I all along unknowingly been studying and analyzing 'garbage'? Distressing as it may appear, I inferred from Mr. Fernandez' statement two things. He was telling Alhurra audiences that for nearly the past decade and a half, they were deceived for they were watching 'garbage.' Secondly, his statement amounted to an acknowledgement of the channel's under-performativity. Although he positioned himself as the savior of Alhurra by prescribing what he would do to save it, I decided that Alhurra's past experience should not be simply dismissed, for those who do not learn from history are bound to repeat the mistakes earlier actors made.

For Fernandez, given the allegedly despairing condition of the Alhurra he inherited, he tells his audience at the Westminster Institute that he either had to land the seemingly auto-piloted 'plane,'

shut down its engines, and reengineer it from scratch, or reinvent the plane while in mid-flight. Having chosen the latter, he needed to introduce altogether new concepts and parts by throwing away old equipment, bringing on board new equipment, ditching old staff, and bringing onboard new staff. For him all these changes done mid-air were an 'air raising experience.' A newly refurbished plane started cruising over the Arab skies in the fall of 2018. Still, Fernandez was not totally sure if the 'Arab masses' would respond favorably to a plane with a refurbished 'American identity' of Alhurra, flown in by an American commander who knows the Arab terrains, speaks fluent Arabic, with Arab co-pilots and Arab crews reaching out to the 'Arabic speaking Middle East' –that is sandwiched between despotic regimes and Islamic fundamentalists—liberal political ideas, and 'aggressively' 'crossing regional red lines' that neither Aljazeera, Alarabiya or other Arab media dare to cross. This was unlike his predecessor, Brian Connilly, who knew no Arabic.

Exactly at the same time Alberto Fernandez was signing the contract with BBG for commandeering Alhurra, John Lenczowski, Founder and President of *The Institute of World Politics*, presented a testimony before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on June 14, 2017, entitled *How to Fight the War of Ideas Against Radical Islamism.* That the timing of the publication of Lenczowski template for recruiting *'warriors of ideas'* to fight the ideological war against Jihadism fits that of Fernandez' vision is nothing more than a sheer coincidence. For Fernandez, his entire career in the U.S. diplomatic communication in the Middle East amounted to a prelude for making him the perfect fit for the job of running Alhurra. "Will running a news channel like Alhurra be more challenging than government diplomacy?" asked the reporter in an interview published by *Arab News* newspaper on July 27, 2017. Fernandez' answer was, "Yes, because in diplomacy there's a lot that you yourself can do as an individual. You can make changes by the specific actions that you take, by who you meet and what you say. To change a network, to influence a network, or an organization with 800 people, it's like moving a ship you want to turn around, and it's very slow and cumbersome".

Lenczowski's testimony amounted to a white paper that should secure victory on the condition that, "The Cold War lesson in ideological warfare must inform our war against radical Islamist Jihad. As in the formation of any strategy, the first question that must be asked is: what constitutes victory? What is the political result that we would like to achieve?" (Lenczowski 2017, p. 6).

Lenczowski was nevertheless less optimistic that either was attainable because "[t]he U.S. government is intellectually, culturally, and organizationally unprepared to combat both elements of the radical Jihadist threat and fight a true war of ideas. There is no agency of the government charged with ideological warfare. *There is no agency that hires warriors of ideas. There is no agency that trains its personnel to conduct such a war*" (p. 14; emphasis added). Lenczowski contrasts this perceived ideological void to the U.S.-Cold War ideological media war where the U.S. Information Agency was in full charge of that war until 1999 when it was largely dissolved into other less ideologically potent agencies in the Department of State.

Lenczowski's cry for igniting an ideological warfare with Jihadists echoed what former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in her Congress testimony (cited by Weed 2013) when she slammed the 'defunct' BBG for being the reluctant messenger of U.S. international outreach and for 'abdicating' the ideological struggle which secured the ideological victory in the Cold War. Similarly, in her memoir *Hard Choices* (2014), Clinton states that both the Congress as well as the White House were equally reluctant to adopt her international communication agenda, which as a Secretary of State she wanted to pursue with the 'country's smartest media executive,' Judith McHale, the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (2009-2011). For Clinton, America is dealing with a skeptical world. The Jihadists are merely one of those skeptics. She also attributes America's failure to explain its policies to two reasons: being behind in adaptation to the changing technology and 'market landscape' as well as having an ideologically reluctant White House and Congress.

> "In that capacity she [Judith McHale] helped us explain our policies to a skeptical world, push back against extremist propaganda and recruiting, and integrate our global communications strategy with the rest of our smart power agenda. … During the Cold War, this was an important part of our outreach … But we had not kept up with the changing technological and market landscape. Judith and I agreed we needed to overhaul and update our capabilities, but it proved to be an uphill struggle to convince either Congress or the White House to make this a priority" (Clinton 2014; p. 179-180).

It is only fair to say that for such an ideological struggle to be fought, it would need ideological warriors to fight it. And in this struggle, it takes two to tango: the sender–America—as well as the

frontline messenger of the mediated public diplomacy communication, be they Eastern European and Russia émigrés (in the case of the Cold War) or Arab Alhurra journalists (in the case of the U.S.-Arab War of Ideas). This tango becomes more relevant since the sender must rely on *hired* foreign communicators to perform the frontline communication on its behalf. For Lenczowski the gap is in the assumption that no agency that hires warriors of ideas or trains its personnel to conduct such wars. Built into Lenczowski's assumption is that there must be somewhere a pool of Arab '*warriors of ideas'* who can be tapped into or are waiting to be *hired* and *trained* to conduct this presumed ideological warfare on behalf of America. There is ample literature which indicates that during the Cold War the duo in the communication tango, the U.S. government as well as the Russian and Eastern European émigrés who did the frontline communication on its behalf, were equally ideologically motivated for taking on that war to its final victory.

Against that highly charged ideological front, several central questions regarding the current state of the U.S.-Arab public diplomacy communication pose themselves. Who is more ideologically motivated: the sender, the messenger, both, or neither? Secondly, can an ideologically charged media organ of the U.S. government be created from an ideological void that seems to prevail at all levels of the U.S. government, U.S. civil institutions or the American society at large? Does the ideological Cold War that gripped America for over four decades against communism, which manifested itself in every cultural, social, economic, educational, media, political and religious aspect of American life, have anything comparable in the fight against Jihadism in terms of its ideological intensity? While communism seemed to have posed an existential threat to America and the West in general, does Jihadism pose a comparable ontological threat? I think all of these are critical questions must be asked by those who call for activating an ideological war whose fuel is not as evident, but was clearly critical during the Cold War. Reflecting on these questions will provide a better understanding of the reasons for the U.S.-Arab public diplomacy. In that case, the blame for its failure may fall well beyond Alhurra.

6-2 The ▉▉▉▉▉ Test for U.S. and Alhurra Performativity

A job announcement posted on LinkedIn summer 2018 for a 'Writer, Alhurra News' said that the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN) "… is seeking a journalist to write scripts for Alhurra News at the Headquarters office in Springfield, … in support of US diplomacy." The first broad job description said, "The writer translates material from English into Arabic and works closely

with MBN's editorial personnel." It was followed by a detailed description of the job requirements for a professional journalist. Against that seemingly standard news writer-journalist-translator concept of a job, however, the series of public statements made by Alberto Fernandez amounted to outlining his ideal type version of an Alhurra Arab journalist. In short, in addition to the standard job requirements of a professional journalists, current and new Alhurra staff must be warriors – journalists, carriers of ideas that instigate change and to transform the Arab World whose people, he sees, as having two choices. "The political lineup in the region is either regimes or Islamists-Jihadis," Fernandez told Guy Taylor in an interview with the *Washington Times* on Oct 17, 2017. Moreover, the "U.S.-supported media has to amplify the voice of the voiceless. Giving space to Arab and Muslim liberals, secularists, reformers and freethinkers is one thing MBN has to do." For Taylor, "These days Mr. Fernandez sounds more like a battle-hardened information warrior than the president of a media company." Taylor quotes Mr. Fernandez saying:

> "Just as we have to be empowered on the [actual] battlefield, we have to be empowered on the media battlefield."
> "We need to be more aggressive."
> "We're going to do more of that, but we're also going to challenge the worldview that exists in the region."

Additional elaboration on the ideal type characteristics, that for Fernandez presumably were lacking in Alhurra Arab journalists, is found in an interview with the Al Arabiya English online service, August 3, 2017. The report begins with, "American broadcaster Al Hurra will "cross" regional "red lines," warned new Al Hurra chief, Ambassador Alberto Fernandez in an interview with Al Arabiya English. "This means a network that can question authority – in the East or the West – and the dominant narrative of oppressive regimes, and of extremists like ISIS/Al-Qa'ida and the Ikhwan and of sectarian groups supported by Iran."

The 'crossing red lines' requirement features prominently in Fernandez' Alhurra's Arab journalist ideal type. Shining examples of how investigative reporters cross red lines are Western journalists. In an interview reported in the *Arab News* (2017), the reporter asks Mr. Fernandez, "When it comes to investigative reporting, Alhurra journalists have faced many threats, so how will you ensure the

safety of your staff while also ensuring you get those stories from the field?" According to Fernandez, the consequences for crossing the red lines are part and parcel of the job of 'brave' journalists. His answer was, "Well, how does Western media get those stories? You have things you have to do; but you're right, the margin of freedom, of safety, varies from place to place. .... This is a threat, but journalism is a profession for the brave, for people who believe in the truth."

However, just as Fernandez demarcated the red lines that must be crossed, he also outlined those that cannot be crossed. There are no red lines when it comes to representing America or the voiceless in the region whom he considers to be the minority groups. Correspondingly, there are lines that ought not to be crossed when it comes to regimes that are friendly to America.

> "We need to be aggressive in doing that doesn't mean we're anti… We're not anti-Egypt government, we're not anti-Jordan government, we're not anti… well we are anti-government, some governments, we're anti-Iran, we're anti-Hezbollah or anti-Hamas. We're anti-quiet or anti-jihadism. We're anti all those but the states which the United States has relations with, we're not anti-them but if somebody is- who is marginalized is thrown in prison in some country in the region, we should speak up for them." (Fernandez 2018b).

However, it would not have been imaginable for Fernandez to state how Alhurra would react in the event that somebody is ███████████████████████████ America, other than just being 'thrown into prison.' Nevertheless, four days into the reported ████ ████ █████████ by a █████ state security hit squad, Alhurra website wrote Oct 6, 2018, "████ █████████ *tweeted outside the flock and vanished.*" The equivalent English proverb would be closer to *strayed away from the herd.* The explanation for why Alhurra strayed away from the U.S. media herd that furiously condemned his █████ was quick to find. The following day of the murder, on Oct 3rd, Nervana Mahmoud, a contributor to the OpEd section of Alhurra.com posted on her Facebook the following statement, "#█████ ██████ should not hand its Islamist enemies an easy victory. █████ █████████ is a charlatan, do not make him a hero." Mr. Fernandez, Alhurra's president, who, as cited earlier, would not stand quiet if someone was unjustly 'thrown in prison,' was quick to post a 'like' to Mahmoud's post on the same day. Mr. Fernandez's endorsement that Mr. █████████ was a

'charlatan' rather than a 'hero' seems paradoxical, for if an Arab ventures into crossing red lines, as ████████ did, he is bound to be condemned rather than endorsed by Alhurra.

Minor as it is in terms of the space it occupied and may have passed the attention of history, the 'like' posted by Fernandez could, however, have major implications on the performativity of Alhurra as the self-claimed voice of the voiceless Arabs. ████████████████████████ ████████████████████████████ ████████████ ████████████████████████ ████████████████████████████████

> █Today I am inviting the international community to take serious and practical steps to reveal the truth and to prosecute those involved in a court of law. And to deliver Jamal's body, which is still missing, to his loved ones.
>
> "If the democracies of the world do not take genuine steps to bring to justice the perpetrators of this brazen, callous act – one that has caused universal outrage among their citizens – what moral authority are they left with? Whose freedom and human rights can then credibly continue to defend?
>
> "We are now going through a test of humanity. And it requires leadership. …
>
> "So I invite the leaders of all European countries and the US to pass this test. …"
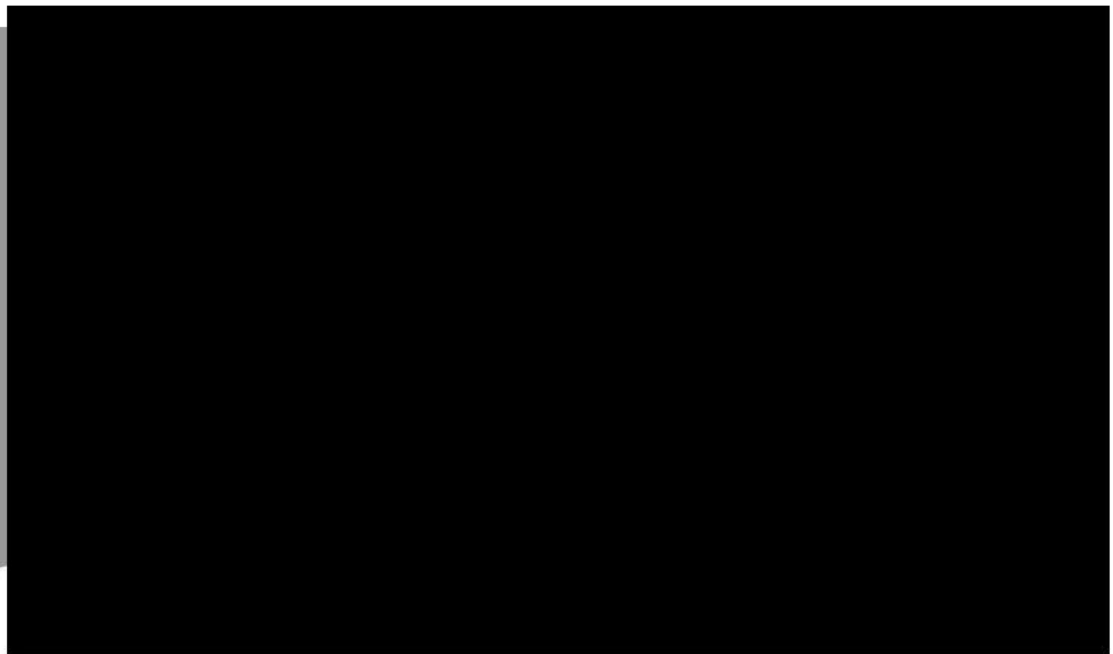
Metri Altwal
4 mutual friends

Add Friend

Jack Shahine
37 mutual friends

Add Friend

Ahmad Al-Rashid
32 mutual friends

Add Friend

Raed Hafeez

Alberto Fernandez
48 mutual friends

Add Friend

Umar Khayyam
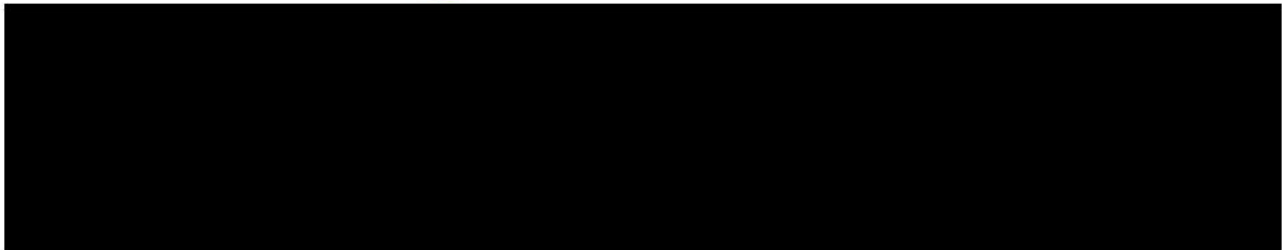
"Here the Trump administration – which has the most power to effect change – has much
to answer for. It has said nothing.

6-3 America beyond Representation

This stance by the Alhurra president came against the background of what is supposed to be Alhurra's core value and mission. "So, you know, and actually that's part of the BBG mandate that we should be — in addition to presenting the voice of the United States, the United States government, and America, American society and culture as a whole." (Fernandez 2018b). But then this is not the only time the new President of Alhurra failed the test. In the following incidence, failing the performativity test may have been a slip of the tongue, but once a statement is made public, it enters history.

The cultural context of one ontology communicating with another was discussed in Chapters Two and Three, which were concerned with the sociological factors that constrain knowing and representing the *other*, especially if there are fundamental ontological and epistemological differences between what Edward Said (2003 [1978]) refers to as 'the unequal.' Fernandez correctly captures a pre-requisite for performative mediated public diplomacy: the management must be 'comfortable' in the knowledge of both ontologies. As a Cuban American who also knows Arabic, he is able to make this claim. Yet at the same time, he goes one step beyond the alleged ontological inequality between the Arab World and the West, or more specifically America. As the President of Alhurra, he tells his Arab staff that for them to know America is an impossibility because America and the Arab world are ontologically and epistemologically incomparable.

> "We have to kind of find our identity [Alhurra] within first of all embracing the American dimension but not the American dimension of the clichés our audiences view of us which is known as a mouthpiece of the US government but know that our American identity is *we represent this amazing country, this which is diverse and dynamic and open and freer that than anything that anyone in the Arab world could dream of*. And we need to communicate that dynamism and that freedom and that diversity of American society,

culture, government, etc. in a way which is compelling. … So we have to embrace the American identity, okay?" (Fernandez 2018b; emphasis added).

Addressing this latter requirement of Fernandez' Alhurra Arab journalists' ideal type of 'embracing the American identity,' sociological literature provides very few clues - if any - on how journalists of one stock of knowledge could represent to their own people the worldview of another people with a supposedly totally different stock of knowledge. What is not at all known, though, is how Arab journalists would be able to represent a country that is as '*diverse and dynamic and open and freer that than anything that anyone in the Arab world could dream of*?" Does the fact that since Arabs cannot even dream of what America is would make it an entity that is 'beyond representation'? That is, what America is cannot be articulated by Arab journalists since they come from a collectivity that has no access to it not even by imagination?

In his book *Understanding Representation,* Jen Webb (2009), tackles the issue of the representations of entities, events or notions that are outside the experiences of some people or of people in general. Webb gives two examples of what could be 'unrepresentable.' He cites Theodor Adorno claiming that "'To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric'" (p. 4). For Adorno the scale of the action itself defies any possible representation. Webb notes that for some, God is a typical example of being "… beyond representation, so much so that the divine name cannot be spoken or written. This seems to rest on a combination of the incapacity of human language to capture the divine, and the last of respect that would be implied by simple chatting about God" (p. 4). We know that for Muslims in specific, for although the Quran states ninety-nine descriptors of God, He remains beyond representation based on Al-Ikhlas verse [112], "Say, He is Allah, [who is] One. Allah, the Eternal Refuge. Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

Inadvertently, however, the alleged impossibility of envisioning America by Arabs poses a critical epistemological dilemma for generating knowledge about America as a pre-requisite for representing it by Alhurra Arab communicators. For they must represent America's universal ideals 'boldly' and 'aggressively' otherwise they will be fired, yet they are told they cannot represent America for it defies representation—since they are Arabs in specific. This apparent catch-22 situation that Alhurra Arab communicators may find themselves in implies that their imperformativity in representing America is inherently epistemological; it emanates from

America's self-perception before it can be blamed on apprehensive Arab audiences. But regardless of this epistemological impossibility, Alhurra Arab journalists must march 'boldly' on in representing America and be at the same time be mindful of failing to produce solid results; otherwise, the mediation will not be value for money for the American taxpayers paying their salaries, and because of those Fernandez accepted taking on the job of leading Alhurra. But in case they underperform, they will be fired; there is no secure job for them.

> " … I think I was pretty clear [at] my first town hall meeting about the same thing. I told them. I said, you know, some very harsh things. I mean I tried to be nice but, you know, I said some difficult things that sometimes have to be said like this is not a government job. You are not guaranteed a job. You don't have tenure here, you know. We need to focus on results. We need a better product. We have been, in a way, a marginal force in the region in many ways. Even our successes haven't been the successes that we really need for, you know, … *for the sake of the taxpayer and so I took this on in 2017"* (Fernandez 2018b; emphasis added).

To whom Alhurra Arab journalists are accountable remains an open-ended question, knowing that in any media conceptualization the media is primarily accountable to its audiences, not to those who finance it. Stipulating the latter as a condition defies for whom these journalists are presumably leading the ideological struggle, that is assuming they are in this kind of mind-set. In the ideal type mediation, they should be the people who are leading the fight on their behalf, that is their Arab audiences, not the American taxpayer.

6-4 Representing America

It would indeed be worth investigating the job insecurity Alhurra Arab journalists would be in when they are clearly hired to represent America and who at the same time are told that they cannot do so because they cannot imagine it, so they will be fired anyway. Investigating this likely dilemma is beyond the scope of this thesis, but much closer to the nature of the mediation Arab journalists are engaged in is addressed by Naomi Sakr (2007) when she discusses the dilemma Arab communicators are 'caught in between' when mediating between America and the Arab

World or the other way around. She cites Hafez al Mirazi, former Al Jazeera's Bureau Chief in Washington, saying:

> "When you talk to the Arab world you give the impression that you are pro-American or biased against Arabs, but you're trying to bring reason to the discussion. … and when you talk to the Americans you're trying to do the same thing. You end up sounding like an Arab. But … you find that in the Arab media we go out of our way to … present their [US] views. But look at what they do. They have Arab English speakers, they don't even need translation. And they don't host them. They bring in someone from a so-called Middle East think-tank that is flagrantly biased. … And they have these people talk about us, never with us" (cited by Sakr 2007, p. 63).

This is the reported dilemma Arab *communicators* are caught in while working for an Arab media organization. This research seeks to establish the nature of dilemma—if at all—Arab *communicators* encounter when working for an US Congress-financed media organization that targets Arabs. According to Saker, Al Mirazi alludes to how in such instances Arab communicators end up going out of their way to present the US perspective. A. R. Johnson and G. W. Shultz (2008) allude to a similar dilemma which émigrés from Eastern Europe were caught in between working for VOA or Radio Free Europe during the Cold War era. For Johnson and Shultz, "The participation of émigrés in broadcasts was handled carefully. This was no simple task because émigrés frequently exaggerate both positive and negative news" (p. 8). In comparative terms, however, these Russian and Eastern European émigrés did not experience the same epistemological mediation trap in which their Arab counterparts find themselves. The pool of Russian and Eastern European communicators was a mix of émigrés who had already settled in the U.S. or Europe for one generation or more, complemented by the continued influx of dissidents whose numbers were on the rise since the detente from the 1960s onward. Each group performed a critical component of the communication. Those who had established America as their home, provided first-hand knowledge about America which was communicated with conviction across the Iron Curtain. As such, and unlike their 'imported' Alhurra Arab counterparts, they did not need to imagine what America is; they lived it. With many of them being prominent figures in many cultural, social, political and media fields, they were already influential social actors contributing the continued re-creation of America.

The knowledge about America that was communicated across the Iron Curtain did not need to be translated for them. In effect, since the mediated public diplomacy was in part representing America's worldview, they were instrumental in doing so given their first-hand experience with America. Correspondingly, the new émigrés provided insights about what was being played out on the other side of the Iron Curtain and hence allowed them to perform more effective communication towards their target audience back in their original home countries. Similarly, no less important were the visitors from East Europe and the Russia who provided invaluable input about insights into these countries which formed raw information about the conditions within these countries that were recycled back into broadcasts.

Literature on the instrumental role of the Russian and Eastern Europeans émigrés played in the narration of anti-Soviet communication is well documented, though not put in the context of Weber's social action theorization or Austin's or Bourdieu's performativity conceptualization. Arch Puddington (2000) presents a glimpse of the nature and the roles of both segments.

> "Ironically, RL's [Radio Liberty] American managers developed a preference for Russian émigrés of the older generation as opposed to those who had come West after the war. The older exiles were better educated, spoke a purer and more literary form of Russian, were more likely to speak English, and were more democratic in their personal dealings with colleagues and more moderate in political outlook. Many of the older Russians were knowledgeable about Russian history and culture. This was an important asset, since a major theme of RL's broadcasts was communism's suppression of Russian culture and its systematic rewriting of Russian history" (Puddington 2000, p. 165).

> "More important … to RL's future was the wave of emigration the Brezhnev regime permitted as a concession to the United States during the early years of détente. Quite unexpectedly, tens of thousands of Soviet citizens were allowed to leave for the West. Many of the émigrés were educated, and a few had a journalism background. The migration included well-known cultural figures—writers, singers, musicologists, artists—as well as

authorities of Soviet science, economists, and others of the technological intelligentsia" (Puddington 2000, p. 170).

"Several of my colleagues were brilliant analysts of the American political scene. Karl Reyman, who was in effect political director of the New York bureau, had been a Social Democrat in Czechoslovakia and fled after the 1948 Communist coup. Karl was a shrewd observer of world events and was capable of writing trenchant essays on political affairs in three languages: Czech, English, and German" ((Puddington 2000, p. vix).

The analysis thus far tends to inform us that the comparability of the U.S. Cold War broadcasting to the ideal type mediation had more to do with the ontological and the epistemological conditions or settings of the communication than with the nature of the communication itself. As noted earlier, Alberto Fernandez made it a condition that to achieve successful public diplomacy mediation the top management must be familiar with the two corresponding cultures. This is a characteristic which Fernandez himself possesses but not his frontline Arab staff, given their lack of knowledge of America. By contrast, in the Cold War scenario, the opposite prevailed; while the top management was made up almost totally of Americans with their first-hand experience knowledge mostly limited to America, frontline communicators knew both.

6-5 Alhurra's Perceived Audiences

A key component of Weber's social action theory is that in addition to assigning a meaning to the action performed, the action must be oriented toward specific others. There is one condition, however, and that is it is not a one-sided orientation. In other words, there ought to be at least a degree of interpretation by the actor of how those towards whom the action is oriented may reciprocate. In the context of mediation, a basic requisite for performative mediated public diplomacy is not a degree of knowledge of who the audiences are on the part of the communicator, but more important is with whom they identify. For just as much as the mediation targets them, it is also done on their behalf, for their own good. In the case of Alhurra and BBG literature, a variety of descriptors are used for stating who Alhurra targets are; all are variation of the same theme; they are 'Arabic speaking':

"MBN provides news and information in Arabic to the Middle East and North Africa."

"MBN is a non-profit, multimedia broadcaster that provides news and information to audiences in the Middle East and North Africa …"

"MBN's mission is to broadcast accurate, timely and relevant news and information about the region, the world and the United States to a broad, Arabic-speaking audience."

https://www.bbg.gov/who-we-are/our-leadership/management-team/alberto-m-fernandez/
16 Aug 2018
"Muslim and Arabic-speaking viewers."

"MBN is a private, not for profit, multimedia corporation funded by the BBG that provides news and information to the 22 Arabic speaking countries across the Middle East and North Africa." (www.prnewswire.com)

'Arab Middle East' is seldom used. Rarely, if at all, the presumed audiences referred are to as 'Arabs,' 'Arab masses,' or 'the Arab world.' For Arabs, however, the term 'Arabic speaking' is problematic— mainly because it is not a term which they use to refer to themselves. A comparative analysis of the marketing material of Alhurra and Aljazeera (Fakhreddine 2005) notes that while Aljazeera hits the Arab nationalist cord, for Alhurra its audiences are defined by the language they speak which could be seen as a dilution of their identity. But within this broad fluid target segment of target audiences, Alberto Fernandez refers to a dozen or so sub-groups, whose voices, according to him, are not represented in the mainstream Arab media that adhere to the Arab regimes' line and for whom Alhurra is the only haven. "If an American broadcaster would not be the preferential place of refuge for the region's striving and hard-pressed liberals, reformers, secularists, and free thinkers, who would?" (Fernandez 2017). There are also others like minorities, women, the oppressed, and those who do toe the official line (Fernandez 2018b). Inadvertently, missing from Fernandez list are the primary targets of mediation in the first place; and these must be the Islamist fundamentalists whom the mediation seeks to convert into an audience with more favorable attitudes towards the United States.

However, this seemingly rather obvious detachment by Alhurra from well-defined audiences is in contrast with what was observed during the U.S.-Cold War media, or even what could currently

be observed at BBC Arabic TV, and more specifically BBC Arabic radio. For instance, in total contrast to the 'Arabic- speaking' audiences for Alhurra, BBC Arabic Radio announcers, especially the older ones, could be often heard saying 'to our listeners in our grand Arab homeland…' (*ila mustami'eena fi al alwtan Al Arabi al kabeer*…). For although this is rhetoric from the Arab nationalism era during the post-independence and the Cold War, it is very much a reminder of a mediation that is a perfect fit with Weber's social action conceptualization of an action that has specific orientation towards specific audiences whom the communicator identifies as belonging to 'the Arab homeland.' It is also a reminder of the U.S. Cold War mediation orientation where announcers would address their audiences in Eastern Europe as 'us' or 'our homeland' which made the mediation seem at times to have amounted to being a *call*, a *project*, that, while Radio Liberty was initiated by the United States to serve its own national interests, these interests overlapped with those of the Russian and European defectors, dissidents, exiles and émigrés who lived in the West in addition to those who kept streaming into it. For instance, as a surrogate media, Radio Liberty, owed its existence to the Russian émigrés who were reported to have taken full ideological ownership of the radio station; it was their own project. "One final factor to consider in using the material produced by RL is that it was essentially a political weapon … RL was ostensibly a *Soviet émigré project*, but one funded by the CIA, and its work constituted part of U.S. foreign policy objectives." (Mikkonen 2010, p. 779; emphasis added).

By the same token, while VOA was largely considered to be about 'us' as America that showcased itself to the people behind the Iron Curtain, RL was about 'them' as people behind the Iron Curtain. It was evident however that RL radio announcers converted the 'them' to 'we' or 'us.' True, they were broadcasting from behind the Iron Curtain, and the broadcasters succeeded in crossing that curtain to become part of their audiences, speaking *with* them rather than *to* them and "on their behalf' as if they were from within them.

> "Under the guidance of Boris Shub, prominent anti-Bolshevik ... Shub stressed that blatant propaganda would merely repulse the average Soviet citizen. Instead, RL needed to speak candidly about the difficulties of daily life in the Soviet Union while articulating hope for a better future. RL broadcasters sought to bridge the gap with the listener by identifying

themselves with their audience, using "our country" or "our homeland." (Hoover institution 2004, p. 8).

"The use of "we" and "us" spoke to the audience and made the audience feel that RL was involved in their daily lives—it spoke the language that was understandable to the people of the country and related to them." (Hoover institution, 2004, p. 9).

It may also be fair to assume that in the ideal type scenario, the ideological disposition of the social actors who are at the forefront of any political communication activity would be directly related to the intensity of the ideological conflict itself. Alternately, possibly their motivation is directly related to what is at stake for them at the personal and national levels, be it their personal freedom, political, intellectual, social, economic being, or physical security. With this conjectural baseline in mind, which frontline communicators would be comparatively more motivated to consider their work at American state-funded international media to reach audiences in their respective countries, as an ideological struggle: the Russian and East European émigrés who worked for the U.S. Cold War media, or their Arab Alhurra counterparts reported to be U.S. government to be involved in a War of Ideas? Similarly, were the Russian émigrés conducting the war of ideas solely on behalf of America or on behalf of both, themselves and their own compatriots back home who shared with them the same ideals and aspirations?

That is to say, was the U.S. Cold War media a platform that these émigrés capitalized upon to fight their own ideological war, or were they *hired* and *trained* by U.S. political, diplomatic and media departments to fight America's ideological war *on par* with what Lenczowski (2018) wanted the U.S. to do when hiring Arabs to represent America? Richard Cunnings (2009) may have succinctly captured the balance between the converging interests of both parties to this ideological war, where both, the sender and the frontline communicator more or less formed a joint ideological venture in which the frontline messenger was also the sender. Cunnings cites an announcer addressing his compatriots in Romania and Czechoslovakia a few days into the launch of Radio Free Europe, summer 1950, saying:

"You are not forgotten.

> "This is the purpose of Radio Free Europe ... to remind you that you are not forgotten ... that you are not alone. … We will bring to you the voices of your friends and compatriots ... voices you already know ... voices you come to know.
>
> "Thus, to speak for freedom, Americans and the democratic leaders exiled from Eastern Europe have united to bring you the voice of Radio Free Europe". (Cunnings 2009, p. 10-11).

Put in the context of Weber's social action conceptualization, in addition to their shared common objective, for Russian and East European émigrés who did the frontline communication, the main drive was ideological: the subversion of the communist ideology and regimes. It is the convergence of a self-conscious conviction of these universal values of the action, independent of the chances of achieving the goal, which took over forty years to accomplish. In parallel, the instrumentally rational social action is equally relevant because of the conviction that what was fought for was achievable under certain conditions. Similarly, placed in the context of the legitimacy of the *speakers* evoked by Bourdieu's conceptualization of performativity, the Cold War frontline communicators seemed to have gained their legitimacy from their audiences, both of whom were engaged in the same ideological struggle which crossed path with the U.S. interests in fighting communism. "The activities of RL, … were built around the specific use of Soviet émigrés; it spoke only to the Soviet people, using the Soviet experiences of the émigrés, and it dealt with Soviet internal affairs" (Mikkonen 2010, p. 773).

6-6 The ▮▮▮▮▮▮ Effect

I was half-way through writing the first draft of this chapter when ▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮ was mutilated at the hands of a ▮▮▮ government hit squad at the ▮▮▮ consulate in Istanbul, October 2, 2018. It occurred as I was in the thick of exploring what might have caused the under-performativity of both the U.S. and the U.S-Arab mediated public diplomacy. It is only ironic that Khashoggi's long journalistic history of close to forty years; he started as a correspondent for a ▮▮▮ newspaper in Afghanistan in the 1980s and was reported to be one of the first few reporters to interview Osama bin Laden, the founder of Al Qaeda. That was the time the U.S., hand in hand with ▮▮▮ ▮▮▮ were inadvertently nurturing the eventual rise of Islamic fundamentalism. As noted by Khashoggi's fiancé, Hatice (2019), "He was a former man of the palace" but also, "a man who

exemplified the dedication to openness and fidelity that his profession demanded." The other irony is that practicing what 'his profession demanded' did very little in dispelling the reported claim of his having Muslim Brotherhood leanings, nor did it spare him the wrath laid upon him by Alhurra's president as being a 'charlatan.' But perhaps the most ironic, and something that is at the core of this chapter, is what he wrote in his last OpEd piece, which appeared in the *Washington Post,* two weeks after his death. It contained a judgment condemning the existing U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy. This judgment seemed to have gone unnoticed since those who referred to the article made reference mainly to the part related to the suppression of the freedom of speech in the Arab world. In this last OpEd piece, ▉▉▉▉▉ called upon the U.S. to provide a transnational media platform for dissident Arab voices, like what the U.S. did during the Cold War.

"The Arab world is facing its own version of an Iron Curtain, imposed not by external actors but through domestic forces vying for power. During the Cold War, Radio Free Europe, which grew over the years into a critical institution, played an important role in fostering and sustaining the hope of freedom. Arabs need something similar. In 1967, the New York Times and The Post took joint ownership of the International Herald Tribune newspaper, which went on to become a platform for voices from around the world.

"My publication, The Post, has taken the initiative to translate many of my pieces and publish them in Arabic. For that, I am grateful. Arabs need to read in their own language so they can understand and discuss the various aspects and complications of democracy in the United States and the West. If an Egyptian reads an article exposing the actual cost of a construction project in Washington, then he or she would be able to better understand the implications of similar projects in his or her community.

"The Arab world needs a modern version of the old transnational media so citizens can be informed about global events. More important, we need to provide a platform for Arab voices. We suffer from poverty, mismanagement and poor education. Through the creation of an independent international forum, isolated from the influence of nationalist governments spreading hate through propaganda, ordinary people in the Arab world would be able to address the structural problems their societies face" (▉▉▉▉▉ 2018).

Inadvertently, Khashoggi's proposal is exactly what Alhurra claims to be, especially under president Alberto Fernandez, 'a voice for the voiceless Arabs.' But Khashoggi's proposal also amounts to a public statement that Alhurra does not exist, or at best is ineffective; otherwise, why would he have called for a Cold War media type in Arabic? In the same OpEd, ███████ also claims, "The Arab world is facing its own version of an Iron Curtain, imposed not by external actors but through domestic forces vying for power." But what he may have missed out was that these internal actors vying for power managed to continue doing so mostly by the sustained protection and approval of main Western governments.

On the positive side, the horrific death of ███████ seemed to have made the West realize that it may be time for an ethics reality check and to start putting their support for human rights and freedom of speech into practice. On October 18, 2018, Gary Younge of *the Guardian* captured how the U.S. has been a perpetual party to what is now called double standards. "Trump is crude on ████ ██████ but he's simply continuing US policy: US presidents have been appeasing brutal dictatorships for years. Trump merely does it with appalling and brazen clarity." The fact that for America, cozying authoritarian Arab regimes had been a normal practice, apparently, an aspect which Alhurra American top management ignores totally while it preaches the spread of democracy in the Arab world. Furthermore, Alhurra' president still expected his Arab staff to carry the banner the freedom of speech and cross the red lines, just like it is a standard practice for their Western counterparts, and when the red lines are braved, not only the killers are pardoned, the victim becomes the villain.

In such a contradictory scenario, the question that may pose itself is why would Arab Alhurra journalists risk crossing red lines that new Alhurra American management wants them to cross, if they may end up meeting their fate on their own, if not condemned? Such a question would have never crossed the mind of the U.S.-Cold War frontline communicators who fled the communist rule and fought against it alongside America. But for some scholars, manifestations of such contradictory scenarios are innate to the West in general. Lebanese-French public intellectual, Amin Maalouf, captures the predicament the previously colonized world finds itself in with respect to the West. Maalouf observes:

"Contrary to the received idea, the perennial fault of the European powers is not that they wanted to impose their values on the rest of the world, but precisely the opposite: it is that they have constantly renounced their own values in their dealings with the peoples they have dominated. As long as this misunderstanding remains, we will run the risk of falling into the same error" (Maalouf, 2011, p. 40).

This moral paradox was expressed as strongly by Baoventura De Sousa Santos (2014) in his book *Epistemologies of the South* when he raised many 'strong' questions about how the West views the South, for which the West has 'weak' answers for. One such question is for him:

"… confronting our time is the following: What degree of coherence is to be required between the principles, whatever they may be, and the practices that take place in their name? This question gains a particular urgency in contact zones between the global North and global South, or between the global West and the global East, because it is that the discrepancy between principles and practices tends to be the highest. … The ideological investments used to conceal such a discrepancy are as massive as the brutality of such practices" (Santos 2014, p. 22).

As the Russian and East European U.S.-Cold War frontline communicators performed their mediation, none of the above contradictions and incoherencies between principles and practices by America or the West crossed their minds. By contrast, these contradictions and incoherencies are the principal cause for undermining the performativity of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy. More fundamentally, the two mediators were mediating under very different circumstances. The U.S.-Cold War frontline communicators were reaching out the general public behind the Iron Curtain to pressure the Communist regimes to change their behavior, or more bluntly to force them out of power. In the case of Alhurra Arab communicators, the mission is not as clear, other than the U.S. wants Arabs to change their attitudes towards it; and assuming that the promotion of democracy is a genuine desire, when it was presented by the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ 'test', it opted to stand by an authoritarian regime.

In short, the U.S.-Cold War frontline communication was performative because of coherence between the mediated messages that target the audiences in Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia, on the one hand, and the official U.S. policies towards the governments of these countries, on the other. By contrast, the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy suffers from incoherence because

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while its communication is supposedly meant to disseminate democratic ideals, America cozies up to authoritarian Arab regimes that suppress democracy and freedom of speech. Similarly, while America claims to be fighting Islamic fundamentalism, it had reinforced it as an instrument for fighting communism during the Cold War.

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Chapter Seven

Alhurra's Perceived Audiences and Mission

This next three chapters present and analyse and implications of the empirical findings that emerged from the in-depth interviews with former Alhurra communicators. This chapter presents the findings analytically but stops short of delving into their full implications, which are presented in the subsequent chapter, where the findings are read through the lenses of Weber's social action theory, J.L. Austin's performativity, and Bourdieu's field theory. The last analytical chapter pertains to the perceived performativity of the Alhurra Arab communicators in representing America and the promotion of its liberal and democratic ideals vis-à-vis their belief in the journalistic mission they consider themselves to have been hired to perform.

This chapter is divided into two broad parts: the first section pertains to presenting the findings of Alhurra perceived audiences. The second part is on the meaning that Alhurra Arab journalist gave to their work. However, given the extensiveness of the findings, each perceived meaning is presented in a sub-section.

7-1 Alhurra's Perceived Audiences: as Diverse as They Can Get

For Weber's social action conceptualization to run its full course empirically, the action performed by the actor needs to be oriented towards other human beings, be they known to the actor or not. It is they who the action targets, and it is the actor's interpretation of their reactions to the initiated action that may lead to the re-orientation of the action itself for it to have its desired outcome. In the first section, I report the findings on how different former Alhurra Arab communicators perceive their target audiences. In the subsequent section I analyze and interpret the findings in the context of Weber's social action theory with respect to its broad stated objectives. The journalists' perceptions of Alhurra audiences are also compared against the public statements made by BBG or other U.S. government officials where they could range from the 'Arabic speaking', 'the voiceless' Arabs, 'the minorities', to 'the women'—to mention but a few. But in my mind, I cannot escape the echo of the 'they' in former U.S. president George W. Bush asking 'why do *they* hate us?' In my mind, that ought to be the primary target of Alhurra in the hope of countering their narrative and subsequently impacting their attitudes or the attitudes of their supporters of the U.S.

When I asked one former news presenter from Lebanon who worked for Alhurra in its first year what audiences he used to visualize when he looked at the camera, his spontaneous response was 'No one!' His rationale was that being in Springfield, Virginia detaches him from his audiences who are hundreds of miles away. For him, unless he could interact directly with his audiences, he saw himself literally talking to himself. By contrast, for him, when he presents the news on TV in Lebanon, his audience's reactions are immediate. The same or the next day someone whom he does not know may come up to him at a gas station, a supermarket, or a coffee shop and weighs in on what he discussed the night before and how he engaged the people he hosted on his program whereas at Alhurra he was totally detached. Reflecting on the presenter's inability to visualize audiences may also have to do with several possible factors. One is the shift from sitting in front of a TV camera of a TV channel that targets audiences confined to a small territory as that of Lebanon, with known target audiences, to sitting in front of the screen that supposedly targets audiences spread across the Arab world, but whom a program host has never thought of before, or let alone conceive who they are or how they think of him or the station. As indicated by others interviewed, different time zones between the U.S. and the Arab region is not without some sort of disorientation of its own. As noted by one respondent, it is good morning in America but already good afternoon or good evening in different part of the Arab world. Also, as indicated by different research participants, Alhurra had not then made good use of social media which could have expanded the interaction Alhurra presenters could have had with their audiences.

Lack of interaction with audiences and the perception that there are no audiences are echoed in the 2010 U.S. Senate report titled *Is anybody listening*? The fact that the 25-million-audience-figure for Alhurra is in circulation need not be that convincing to an Alhurra former employee who coordinated the work of reporters stationed in one Arab country for over ten years. When asked how a reporter sees as audiences, his answer echoed, equally spontaneously, 'No one!' When asked why, his response was because Alhurra has no audiences to be begin with. The perception that Alhurra has no audiences came about when discussing the differences between Alhurra reporters and other pan Arab TV channels such as Aljazeera or Al ███████ How would an Alhurra reporter feel in such a situation?

> "The reporter at Alhurra feels that he is an employee more than anything else; the other thing is that he get paid in dollars and that's it. No devotion because Alhurra is bland. … He gets [his] salary in dollars, does that specific report; he does it, but because Alhurra is

itself bland … has no audience base, he is not excited because no one knows him like the reporter at Aljazeera or Al ▉▉▉▉▉

The perception that Alhurra has no audiences is repeated by one other respondent who claims that no matter where he goes in the Arab world, he is under the impression that Alhurra is inaccessible to audiences. Perception of lack of audiences or accessibility is put in the context of the perceived fuzziness of the objectives of Alhurra which according to a former talk show host:

> "… as a consequence, what vision the Americans have put to execute in this TV channel that is 15 years old and not seen in any place, not in Egypt, I go to Kuwait I can't find, not in hotel, I go to Abu Dhabi I can't find, I go to Dubai I can't find,… here at my home not available, Cable Vision [TV distributor in Lebanon] does distribute. … I say bring me cooking [shows] better than [Alhurra]."

Moving on to a middle-ground perception that Alhurra targets specific audiences, as opposed to both extremes of everyone or none at all, there is one perception that those targeted are Arab liberals regardless of which Arab country they come from. But according to a Lebanese talk show host who worked for six years at Alhurra, it was more of a desired audience rather than an audience that existed and were watching Alhurra. These were Arab liberals who may have had the desire for political change in the Arab world, but for him this was not seen as the official policy of the channel but more as a result of the frustrated desires of some of the Lebanese who joined Alhurra partly in reaction to the authoritarian rule of the Syrian regime in Lebanon, which among many things it did, was the imposition of censorship on the Lebanese media that culminated in 2002 in the closure of the privately owned TV channel MTV. The 'liberal' inclination of the presumed target audiences was hinted at by a producer interviewed for this thesis, which was no more than a mere notion that was discussed at the periphery of coffee chats at the initial discussions of his recruitment; but as to whom Alhurra would target was left to his personal interpretation.

> "The discussion about the vision was not in the context of a formal discussion as much as it was in a broad contextual sense, that is to say, that at the present there is a new track in the American foreign policy that all of these [Arab] regimes will disappear … and Alhurra is part of this mediated propaganda; and for making this happen [Alhurra] will be directed mainly at the *liberals* in the Arab world. But this talk was not in the context of a professional talk, more as chatting over coffee."

Such a discussion on the nature of the target audiences had never evolved into a formal discussion or policy that was put in the context of creating programs that target selected audiences that Alhurra was supposed to reach. Not having specific audiences in mind was expressed by another participant who was a talk show host on cultural affairs. His assumption that Alhurra audiences were progressive, liberal Arabs, evolved out of his own mindset, whom as a liberal thinker himself, he assumed that he must be talking with like-minded audiences who came from the different parts of the Arab and Muslim world. For him, the target audiences he had in mind were intertwined with the meaning he gives to his mediation action. "My audience was the entire Arab world, the Muslim world." But when asked if there were any specific groups or demographic, social, economic, intellectual segments in mind, he replied:

> "No. I never thought that way. Instead I was thinking when addressing all of Lebanon, the Lebanese audience and would go up and talk the same way I think, with the spaciousness of the poet that is in me, with the freedom a child will have, the only child [in the family] who is pampered, gets whatever he wants, and says whatever he wants to say, with rebellion against God but who respects religions, and respects the believer, but debates Jesus, … who says at times I am agnostic and at other times I am an atheist, but I know the differences when I say this in a poem that targets may be 200 or 500 persons and when I say something on TV that targets millions of people …"

For this talk show host, it was at times difficult to figure out whether it mattered for him what TV station he worked for as long as he could express himself. "… I had always had space [distance] from the overall political line or values held by the channel. I was always a free person, and this was a win for them; it brought them [Alhurra] audiences and credibility but at the same time they were not able to tolerate me that long." To him, however, Alhurra was the station that 'tolerated' his disposition to touch on more culturally sensitive issues than the earlier TV channels he had worked for. More importantly, he had the tendency to refer to the audiences of his program more than to the audiences of the channel overall. He believed the objectivity of his program in specific and Alhurra overall, was very important to draw in audiences from different political tendencies. To him, this was evident from the fact that Arab nationalists who initially expressed doubts about the political intentions of Alhurra soon realized that the channel was actually objective, an aspect that was evident in their willingness to appear on his program. In other words, the audiences of Alhurra may not be known in more concrete terms to a talk show host, but a reflection of them

could be manifested in the variety of the guests the program is able to host. "This program was a hit on the Arab street, and it gave a balanced image and objectivity to Alhurra. Arab nationalists and leftists had boycotted Alhurra in the early years; they used to appear only on my program; they found it trustworthy".

In contrast to no audiences or to selected specific audiences, there is a perspective that Alhurra has in mind a wide spectrum of audiences, as stressed by first news director of the station interviewed in this research. "All Arabic speaking people watch Alhurra in the Arab world; this is your audience. But you are aware that when your audiences watch you, they know that you are an American station. And consequently you [as an Arab journalist] are merely a cultural translator, a conveyor, not an interpreter, so you use all your professional skills as a journalist in order to convey the message of an American station. It [Alhurra] is American in its working style. Norman Pattis[12] used to say, 'free press the American way; for the British it is free press; for the French it is free press …". When the question of the target audience surfaced again in this interview he articulated a more refined target audience: "Commercially … when you marry the mission [of Alhurra] to the market and when they come and tell me that 65 to 70 percent of the Arab people are under 25 years; it is only natural that I seek to attract this largest segment, just like any media project."

The notion that Alhurra's audiences are a wide net that potentially encompasses all Arabs across the Arab world may ultimately be an ideal goal for those who are in the top management, but when it comes to those doing the actual frontline communication, for them to see no audience at all, or to see only particular segments, or to see anyone as a potential audience, could hint at a disharmony in the articulation of the goals of the station. It may also raise a series of questions about the profile of the 25 million Arabs continuously referred to as being Alhurra's weekly audience base. What audience size is a measure of success? What is the benchmark? Furthermore, why would Alhurra be marked as an utter failure by its current president, Alberto Fernandez, if it had consistently maintained an audience base of that size? As an observer, I had all along suspected that Alhurra audiences would be visualized in the context of what prompted its launch in the first place: *they* hate us because they do not know us, or *they* hate us because of who we are had been the ongoing contention. These are the ones Alhurra wants to engage with, if at all, and influence their attitudes

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[12] Norman Pattis is reported to be driving force for the launch of Alhurra, and previously its sister Radio Sawa. He is the founder of a U.S. radio network Westwood One.

towards the United States. There is consensus amongst participants about what prompted the George W. Bush to launch Alhurra in 2004 given that the U.S. found itself voiceless in the Arab world, but there was hardly any spontaneous reference that the main target audiences are the 'they' in 'Why do *they* hate us?'.

7-2 Perceived Mission: Ranging from Changing Nothing To Changing the World

Long before I realized the feasibility of studying the subjective meaning Alhurra Arab journalists attach to their work within Weber's social action theorization, I had set this as a primary research objective in light of contestation over the meaning of mediated public diplomacy in the context U.S. efforts to reach the Arab world. The contestation became more urgent when it became very clear, as we have seen in the first chapter, how the two successive presidents of Alhurra see their mission from different perspectives; the new president seeing it as intensely ideological goes hand in hand with the armed struggled, as was evident in the image of the camera-built into it a submachine gun in Chapter One. In the case of reaching the Arab world, in addition to its contested meaning or expected role, the expectations from this mediated activity keeps mushrooming with no realistic ceiling in sight. The latest came from the incoming Alhurra president Alberto Fernandez for whom "The goal is to provide a voice for Arab audiences that is distinctively American, enlightened, brave and reform-minded" (Fernandez 2018). The assumption was that all concerned with the mediated activity could articulate the concept the way they wish, but ultimately the Alhurra Arab frontline communicators are the ones who articulate and deliver the final message. Hence, one of the primary research objectives is how these communicators interpret their work independently of what BBG, Alhurra top American management, media professionals, or academics conceptualize their own versions of mediated public diplomacy. Martin (2017) reminds us that in our life overall and in sociology in specific, concepts are very useful; they help us organize our thoughts, process and communicate "commonalities and differences among real things" (p. 9). Martin notes that "The problem comes not when we construct concepts, but when we let them do heavy lifting that they aren't capable of" (p. 9).

The potentiality of expecting the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy to carry more than it could is a concern for this thesis. This is what prompted the need to revert to Alhurra Arab journalists themselves who do the actual frontline communication to tell us their version of how they perceive their mediation work. Hence, the resulting research question became about the meaning Alhurra Arab communicators give to their mediation. Is it just independent and objective journalism? Or spreading of democratic ideals and freedom of speech which America sees itself as the ideal type representation of it? Or 'explaining' America to apprehensive Arab audiences? Or serving the 'national security interests of America' by 'influencing' Arab audiences by providing them with an American perspective of the news? Or "… to provide a voice for Arab audiences that is distinctively American, enlightened, brave and reform-minded"? (Fernandez 2018a). Or any combination of two, more, or all the objectives?

The presence of such weighty questions evoked the justification of studying Alhurra journalism within the social action theorization especially when viewed in the context of its claimed *intentionality* and the objectives it seeks to achieve at the stated official level. Furthermore, going as far as influencing audiences by changing their perceptions of America, all the way to the extent of reshaping their own political ideology or even their political behavior, all combined may be termed as stepping far beyond the mere *social action* into possibly *praxis*. "All social action is geared toward either maintaining or transforming preexisting small or large-scale structures. Examples of social actions or events would include marriage ceremonies, court hearings, traffic offences, divorces, race riots, acts of prostitution, and juvenile delinquency. Based on the preceding stated objectives, we are indeed put in the mindset of hoping to cause structural transformation, not only in terms of how Arabs perceive America, but also in terms of how they ought to restructure their life by imitating America's democratic experience. Anthony Giddens (1993) defines praxis as, "… the involvement of actors with the practical realization of interests, including the material transformation of nature through human activity" (p. 59). Bob Stone reminds us that praxis is what defines Marx's entire social action orientation where "… praxis – purposive actions in the world – over reflection and thought, however complex, in truly making a difference" (2008, p. 84).

In the context of mediated public diplomacy, the notion of *praxis* may depict the most extreme case of intentional communication, one that may typify the intentionality of the Cold War U.S. communication Russian émigrés who may have seen themselves being involved in, given that the change in political regimes was their ultimate goal. Correspondingly, this section will present and analyze the findings that pertain to the extent to which Alhurra Arab communicators may see themselves engaged in treading into the praxis terrain of the communication action, vis-s-via doing journalism for its own journalistic values with no specific bearings in mind. In the following sub-sections I present a range of meanings that have emerged from the findings with a concluding section. Each meaning will be presented in a sub-section on its own for the purpose of their respective clear identification.

7-2-1 Journalism for Its Own Sake

When analyzing the target audiences towards whom Alhurra communicators orient their mediation, we learned that for one segment, the notion of targeting no audiences is an actual reality. Such a scenario seems to be derived from a journalistic action that is devoid of any specific intention in mind. For such a perspective, the motivation for mediation does not come from the objectives of the station itself, which are not in any case known to them, but from the audiences with whom a reporter is supposed to be interacting. But perceived absence of audiences for Alhurra dilutes the mediation to a 'mere job' that 'pays in dollars.' When I asked what feeling a reporter might have about his self-image when he thinks he has no audiences, the impact is reported to be near to self-destruction. "Of course, it impacts his morale very much, it impacts his performance, and his creativity … No one sees you. It is all done with; it becomes all the same. Had you had a wide audience base, you will work harder, you will fear making errors. But in this case what would be the specific motivator, an instigator that instigates an Alhurra reporter? The answer is an open-ended one. "I cannot specify. I do not think there is an instigator. I know them, they were lazy, and all they wanted is the [financial] return." But was the salary adequate, and how motivating it is? "Of course [the salary was adequate]. The salary was not an issue. He does what it is expected of him and it ends there. You know one of the points was that there was no involvement … I used to call him [reporter] an extension of the newsroom [in the U.S.] in the country …" However, this is not how he sees himself, where in effect he sees himself as operating in a vacuum.

Hence, the perceived absence of audiences has detrimental consequences not only on the meaning attributed to such a journalistic job, but it also has equally destructive consequences on morale. It impedes self-fulfillment and creates low self-confidence. For this respondent, hindrances to self-fulfillment is accentuated with what Alhurra represents for him: an entity that lags far behind in the media race. The sense non-existence of self contrasts with their counterparts at Aljazeera, Al ▮▮▮▮▮ or BBC who are seen to be able to experience high public visibility. For some participants in this research, the high engagement of Aljazeera or Al ▮▮▮▮▮ journalists stems primarily from three factors. First, these media organizations are seen to be politically charged with visible political missions. Secondly, journalists not only share the same political leanings as the TV stations they work for, they are also seen to be indoctrinated and receive journalistic training towards that orientation. Thirdly, the journalistic entry requirements are demanding. As one other participants to this research noted, the entry tests to BBC 'make knees shiver," which an Arabic description of having to face a tough challenge.

Interestingly, however, while Aljazeera and Al ▮▮▮▮▮ are seen as having engaged journalists committed to the station's respective missions, they are only taken as ideal types as far as they engage their journalists but certainly not as ideal type media organizations. The feeling here is that their outspoken political orientations are not something Alhurra can endorse. They fear that the moment a station's political identity is revealed, it immediately crosses into the propaganda zone. This is a zone where the participants in this research neither see themselves party to nor do they see Alhurra wanting to go that far despite its public image that it is American TV station as indicated by some.

7-2-2 Changing Self, Not the World

Should Aljazeera have been in this instance a TV channel that has politically engaged journalists, one executive producer interviewed for this research left it for Alhurra because it was not engaging enough for him at the professional growth level. After a rewarding experience at MBC as a producer, he was offered a job at Aljazeera which to him was rich in content but fell short on esthetics. His stay at Aljazeera was short-lived. Burdened with heavy travel schedules with work limited to directing programs, he soon lost interest. The offer from Alhurra at the time of its inception was opportune. He saw a career opportunity in a new station that was starting from

scratch. He wanted to engage in a new professional adventure in which he could experiment with new programming ideas. He was thirty-three years old when he joined Alhurra; to him it was an age at which he could afford to start afresh in a new country and new media organization that promised him an opportunity to create a wide variety of programs, fewer news-oriented programs and more educational and infotainment types. With all these motivations for joining Alhurra, he was primarily seeing the elevation of his own personal career as the center stage. All the broad objectives of then infant Alhurra were of relevance to him, but only in as far they could promote his own personal interests in expanding his career in TV. In short, working for Alhurra meant more an opportunity to improve his life rather than promote the broader objectives of Alhurra. The possibly of changing the world was enticing, but he would not go out of his way to achieve it.

I wanted to find more about where the stated objectives of Alhurra fit within his understanding of his own work, especially about the socialization process; for instance, whether or not the objectives of Alhurra and the worldview these programs were expected to convey were talked about. As evident with all participants in this research, Alhurra's perspective on things was not discussed within the work context as much as it was within the broad context that was there was a new direction in the U.S. foreign that the Arab regimes will disappear and that Alhurra will be part of the media promotion for achieving this.

> "This had no importance for me. Jihad, for me things were simpler than this. For me things were [gaining] experience in America, a new perspective, in directing and producing programs. For me it was a job opportunity and perspective. I was not looking at it from a complete political mission. I was looking at it from own interest, myself as [name of respondent] and at that time my aim was not to change the world, my aim was to change myself. … Now if by changing myself I could change anything that would be great, I would not say no but this was not my purpose; my purpose was personal, professional and that's it."

Question: Did you at any time imply this to them?

> "It wasn't necessary. All were the same, but they did not say that. No one was there for the mission for itself. Whoever tells you that [there is a mission] would have been a liar. Now you had people there who were close to thinking of that mission, I mean they had no problem with what was about to happen. Yes, there are people who went to America

[because] they like the United Sates and they like the American lifestyle, at ease with themselves, but there were many people who were employed who were burning America's flags on the Awkar Road[13]".

The tenure of this participant at Alhurra that extended for a good decade which he spent between Washington and Beirut, allowed him to witness the rise and fall of Alhurra. I shall share a selection of his perspective on the lifecycle of Alhurra in a latter section, but what is important to the understanding of the meaning he gave to his work at Alhurra is his realization that the lifecycle of his career at Alhurra had reached a dead-end. According to his narrative about his experience at Alhurra, the growth of his career, as well as its eventual stagnation, were correlated with the performance of Alhurra itself. His decision to bail out of a seemingly sinking ship was for self-preservation and the protection of his personal capital in the media industry. So, what was his feeling when he left Alhurra?

"I left Alhurra in mind a year before my actual departure when Alhurra became for me a hopeless case. The last year I was working with a feeling of sorrow. When you reach a point you feel that you overstayed in this place and the result will be worse" …

"The result is your professional asset about yourself and towards the others. Frankly speaking I felt that the faster I leave the more my status within the media community stronger and the longer I stayed before leaving the more negative the impact on me as a media professional." …

"*Allow me to tell you, at the time I joined Alhurra I said I did not join in an ideological context, I joined on a pure professional basis.* That is, I did not join to change the world I joined to change myself professionally and socially. As consequence when I realized that there wasn't anything professionally left for me to acquire and there was nothing socially for me I could take from this experience."

For this respondent, many others in the organization were there with the personal benefit as an over-riding drive but lacking the passionate motivation for serving the overall political goals of the organization.

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[13] The name of the road that leads to the American embassy compound East of Beirut

"Even though the mission of Alhurra is pivotal to my life even before I joined Alhurra I was not waiting for Alhurra for me to have these four pillars [he referred to them earlier as] as the basis for my life. It was not alien thing for me to engage in such a mission but when I left Alhurra I was 40 to 41 years old and I still had time to re-launch with a big career and this is what happened. Whereas had I remained at Alhurra I would have become nothing, which means I am doing something my work without any professional context that is opening up something new for me. At Alhurra [this] was annulled, that is there was no added value. Now [that was] the wrong thing that happened in the management that existed, now the management had changed so has the perspective. There is a new blood, it is possible, everything is possible, but I am talking based on the time I knew before. If today you come and tell there is a new mission in Washington for a new TV like Alhurra but it will launch in a better way and stronger now I have the experience if this is right or wrong and would you as [name of respondent] repeat it, I would say yes."

7-2-3 Changing the Arab World through Head-on Political Collision

Should joining Alhurra with the intention of changing self be one meaning Alhurra a group of Arab communicators give to their work Alhurra, a few others were driven by the motive to change the political regimes in the Arab world. As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, some of the Lebanese who formed first core staff of Alhurra were politically driven by their opposition to the Syrian heavy-handed military and political presence in Lebanon. As evident from the interviews of two respondents interviewed, Alhurra constituted for them a platform for venting their opposition to the Syrian regime in Lebanon. However, for them this expectation never materialized. From all the interviews I conducted regarding the discussions with Alhurra management at the recruitment stage, there is a general consensus that the issues that were stressed the most were the professional journalistic guidelines that govern objective and unbiased reporting. While some mentioned that there were hints about the broad political objectives of the channels, they amounted to no more than being the type of coffee break talks.

For this segment, their political objective was to shake up the muddy political and cultural waters across the Arab world. This was to be done by raising the bar of the public debate of issues that had been historically considered off-limit to Arab media, which according to them, was controlled by the Arab regimes. A shake up of the Arab regimes was most certainly on the mind of the Alhurra

management, but not to extent that Alhurra was going to be a vanguard for heralding their eminent fall on par with the fall of the Iraqi regime in 2003. Similarly, evident from the interviews was that at no time did the management of Alhurra seek to single out any specific Arab regime as its target. Inadvertently, should these be the broad guidelines of the Alhurra management, some of the Lebanese journalists who joined Alhurra either had different interpretations or had apparently joined Alhurra with very different expectations that were not on Alhurra's agenda; or perhaps they were, but the expectations did not match reality; hence, their experience at the channel was a frustratingly sour one. According to a veteran talk show host who is now in his late sixties but who remains exceptionally outspoken with the desire to have each statement he said about Alhurra recorded and made public, the gap between expectations and reality was shocking in every aspect of Alhurra operations.

> "My ambition was to quake all the despotic regimes. In my view, our job was to search for places hidden in Syria, pull out and expose them; same for Mubarak and all Arab regimes. I mean you search where despotism exists and project a spotlight on it. Where there is an issue of derogation of human rights of women or children; where there is torture in any prison in any place; how demonstrations are crushed in Iran … What we were saying that this TV has the ability and confidence to say what other Arab TV channels does not talk about. This is its role and if you do not play that it becomes pointless. It means that your main news is supposed to what is not talked about in the news in the Arab world. The ceiling of your talk shows must be higher than any Arab TV channel."

When asked how prevalent this rebellious outlook was within the Alhurra staff, the answer was that they were very few, if any at all. He named less than a handful of Lebanese staff who were at that early life of Alhurra but were leaving the station anyway because of a gap between the expectations set by Alhurra and their own. "I stayed on board neutral; we were stormed by all the others—either the emasculated or the Iranians." The term 'emasculated' was used in reference to the many staff who did not have the guts to engage in more aggressive political rhetoric against some of the Arab regimes. This talk show host was livid about his experience at Alhurra and about the people in managerial positions or everyone else. He named many of them and accused Alhurra Arab seniors and talk show hosts of being pro Iran, Hezbollah, and Syria who were preaching the virtue of their politics within Alhurra which interfered directly with what could or could not be

said about these regimes on main news or questions asked in talk shows. It must be noted, however, that this is the only participant to the research who cited heavy handed interference in the editorial of Alhurra, either from within the top management or from others Washington establishments Alhurra must answer to.

"It means that there is here the ruled and ruler system; emasculated, positively or negatively, they do not have an opinion. That is to say, today the management wants this so we'll do it that way; the earlier management wanted it that way we will do it that way [as well]." …

"Alhurra was handcuffed fearing four or five sources. The Congress is the financer; we don't want to anger it. The White House may monitor us and gets irritated from us, we have to be cautious. The State Department is the supervisory party through the Board of Broadcasting Governors. And also, we have to be mindful of the CIA, it may [text not clear] we have relations with some. As a consequence, it could not create an independent media that works in United States. Is it not written that Alhurra is not in the service of the Republicans or the Democrats? … You have to come out and talk with all, your job is to promote American values … what else do you want other than saying I want to promote American values and burn down the religions of the sisters [an Arabic curse slang] of the [Arab] regimes. What better than that did you want, but there was mismanagement."

Reflecting on the motives of Lebanese joining Alhurra to fight the Syrian regime seemed to have amounted to an unplanned political war based on assumption of might happen rather on a well-planned politically mediated operation. For them, the staff at Alhurra was not more than a mosaic of journalists from different Arab nationalities and religious and political backgrounds shipped to Springfield in a rush with mix of assumptions and expectations of the ultimate of motives of Alhurra. This seemingly arbitrary assembly of Arabs with a few Americans did little to construct a new unique identity for the organization, an aspect that will be discussed in greater details in a subsequent section. According to this perspective, Alhurra acquired very little, if any, of the reported positive values of America making Alhurra look like an Arab media organization saturated with the worst of Arab and American cultures. Hence, if any meaning could be generated in such a scenario, it is that of a false political promise that was somehow inflated by both, those who joined Alhurra with this promise in mind and equally what the organization or possibly the

U.S. government had hinted about a more powerful meaning around which it could rally Arab journalists seeking to promote political change in the Arab world.

> "What shocked me was that eventually it was confirmed to me that this oasis, this place that exist in Springfield [head office of Alhurra] has nothing to do with America; does not resemble America. My wife works for an American company and tells they [Alhurra] are not related to America. … You cannot judge your work in America or judge America based on my stay at Alhurra. You can talk about your experience at Alhurra but not related to America because America is not like that. … Second worst thing though is that I cannot tell people that I worked in America; I worked at Alhurra. Working at Alhurra does not mean that I worked in America. I know America for other personal reasons; I have been going to America throughout my life; I worked for a third of my life in America. … This organization is not related to American values.

7-2-4 Changing the Arab World through Poetry

It is common for national and pan-Arab news TV channels to have poets and cultural critics as talk show hosts discussing cultural and literary topics. The cultural talk show host interviewed for this study had been headhunted and offered a job to go the U.S right at the start of Alhurra in 2004 to present a current affairs talk show program. Realizing that from the $110,000 annual package he was offered back in 2004, about thirty-percent would go to taxes. Hosting five shows a week, he was better off remaining in Lebanon and presenting one talk show a week earning a comparable pay after taxes. More importantly for him, he would remain engaged in the intellectual domain for which he already had established a name for himself in Lebanon. Nevertheless, current affairs thrilled him only as far as it is affected or could affect the literary and cultural issues dear to his heart. As we have seen in an earlier section, this same respondent had set his own editorial line, which may or may not totally always be in line with the editorial polices of the Lebanese TV channels he had worked for before joining Alhurra. Thus, Alhurra did not present him an intellectual space that was unavailable for him in the Lebanese TV channels. Lebanon had already established for itself a comparatively high ceiling of freedom of speech that was not available in most other Arab countries. The only potential difference was that now he could interact with a

wider circle of Arab intellectuals, artists, poets and writers, as well as potentially have a wider pan-Arab audience.

In reference to the meaning he gives to his work at Alhurra, his in-depth responses to my questions have in many instances spared me the intellectual effort to interpret what he has to say. In short, unlike some of his frustrated and despairing Lebanese Alhurra current affairs talk show host counterparts, he does not blame Alhurra for not doing its part or failing him in the efforts to dismantle a seemingly stagnant Arab political system. For him, the articulation of the meaning for his work at Alhurra had its roots in the richness of the intellectual experience of humanity overall with its vast contributors in both the Arab world and the West. The talk shows he presented were a manifestation of this vast intellectual experience in which America figures on par with intellectual capitals of other regions to which he is exposed, all the while bearing in mind that since he is French educated, he is particularly steeped in the French intellectual experience.

> **"**I consider myself the son of the Western philosophy, the Western literature and the Lebanese literature and also the old Arab, Islamic and Christian cultures, starting with the [early] Arabic poetry passing through Abi Nuwas, Abi Tamam, Al Mutanabi, all the way to the Renaissance poets, going through the Applo school in Egypt, also the Iraqi experience, and the Sufism of Ibin Arabi, Alhalaj and Ali bin Abi Talib. I am the son of all these and the son of the Lebanese poetry and the Poetry Magazine in the sixties, and the son of Lebanon's society in which Muslims and Christians live. …

> "I am the son of Lebanon, the son of freedom, as well as the Lebanese media and especially the cultural and political media. We had Annahar and Assarfir [once two prominent newspapers] … and although [Lebanon] is small … there is multiculturalism and there is multiculturalism there is freedom …

> "America was for me freedoms, culture, America that took Arts from Paris, the torch was transferred from Paris to New York; America and is intellectuals, Chomsky, and others; I did not have illusions that it is the shepherd of the free world but at the same time I did not have hatred towards America. I am French educated, I am a Francophone, my education is French and had a great influence on me, but I know the importance of America and even to the French. I mean that people like Derida and Michel Foucault … when the French universities they went to America, they were welcomed by American universities … In my

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mind this is America. I entered [Alhurra] not thinking about America's policies, I was against the war [on Iraq].

Indeed, for an Arab to join Alhurra at the time of its launch and being at the same time either indifferent to the U.S. regional policies or opposing the war on Iraq, presents a perspective whose implications are worth noting, especially since the whole point for the U.S. government to launch Alhurra was that it needed a media through which it could convey its perspective on regional policies to Arabs as well as promote democratic change. The fall of the former Iraqi regime was seen as a part of this presumed change in regimes, but the opposition to the war was because of the uncertainty of its eventual outcome. So, what comes to his mind when America talks about the promotion of democracy?

> "I believe that the grand American values that America produce are appropriate values and of course America is full of intellectuals, poets and artists who are for sure in this path of renaissance. Of course, the American policies are different, I mean when for example America was against the *Tripod Attack on Egypt* [the Arabic for the Israeli, French and British attacks on Egypt in 1956] America was in this path [renaissance], same for demanding the withdrawal of the Syrian Army from Lebanon. This is how you should consider [America], not as a wholesale, but as individual [policies]. Of course, it has its own interests that it wants to serve in the first place, but these policies could at times serve you and sometimes they do not. And you also need to have a lobby in America [and] you also need to be strongly deep rooted in your country, so that if America supported you, it can benefit from you … The issue is complex, not that it is the dream that will save me. I have to work on myself." …

Therefore, from this perspective, what differentiated Alhurra from other Arab TV channels this respondent had worked for? Could he have given the same program in any other station regardless of who owns it, and would he have the freedom that Alhurra provided him with? In other words, does Alhurra have a specific political and ethical role in the Arab media scene?

> "True, true! In all of the stations that I worked in there was always a distance between myself and the [editorial] line of the channel and my success and objectivity and the viewership. I had from the elites to my programs as guests and viewers, also the audiences I had from the general public used to give the station credibility, and used to make them

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succeed, that is, we [TV channels] we have such a program, which means we [TV channels] are balanced in other programs regardless whether this was true or not true." …

"For me it is possible to present the program on the former stations that I worked at in Lebanon. The difference is that Alhurra let me present for seven years. The other stations tolerated me for four episodes, Lebanon's official TV channel, the NBN a private TV … tolerated me for nine months …"

As far as the implied meaning this participant would give to working at Alhurra, it is evident that it has more to do with the meaning he gives to his intellectual work, regardless of the media platform he uses for presenting his talk shows. As we have seen from the preceding perspective on the meaning for Alhurra, it was initially perceived to be a platform for spouting political ideology against Arab regimes but with great immediate disappointment, which resulted in adverse reactions towards the channel. But for this participant, and although he was critical about the overall performance of Alhurra for failing its mission, there was nothing personal towards it. For him the only added value it might have had for his work was it tolerated him much longer than any other Lebanese TV for which he had worked.

7-2-5 Changing Arab's Attitudes towards America with Objective Journalism

This fifth and last meaning scenario is of significance especially since it is articulated by a respondent who reflects back on Alhurra, where he had worked for over twelve years with candor, as if he was still engaged with it right now. His candor is manifested by the fact that much of the experience at Alhurra he narrated for this interview was in the present tense, giving the feeling that he was still attached to it. The meaning scenario I have chosen to label experience as *changing the Arabs' attitudes towards America with objective journalism* is not just a metaphorical phrase; it does to a larger extent capture the meaning that the most senior Arab at Alhurra gave to a media organization he co-launched in 2004. He had not only helped launch Radio Sawa 2001 as part of the Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN), but he also proposed the name Alhurra (The Free). For him, the meaning that went into the name of Alhurra was meant to manifest what the channel itself is supposed to represent: independent and objective news reporting, financed by U.S. taxpayers' money, as opposed to the more common notion of being financed by the state or the government. According to him, Alhurra operates under the concept of 'public money with the mindset of private sector,,' which meant that media operating with such mindset was not

answerable directly the U.S. government but more directly to the U.S. Congress which followed a different dynamics given that the Congress is made up of both political parties where the administration is made up of the political party in power. Since he was one of the first few who established the channel, one of my questions was about its mission statement and the identity of the initiator for the idea of the channel.

> "It was a BBG idea; President Bush liked the idea and sponsored and declared that this was a part of the war on terrorism and he realized that being present in the media scene and provide important information and clarify to people the policies; this is a war on terrorism; and this what had happened and it is part of the mission of American international broadcasting other than the military [broadcasting]. … To promote freedom and democracy around the world".

That in addition to another thing which is explaining America's foreign policy, I interjected, as based on existing BBG literature.

> "*Presenting*, not *explaining*. … By presenting you explain but there is a differentiation between presenting and explaining. You provide a platform and you bring people from the State Department to explain their product. … I am a journalist, the one who can explain the American foreign policy is he the maker of the American foreign policy. I build the platform and we bring someone for the State Department, and he talks, and I am obliged to present the policy and the debate around it because you are financed by the Congress and the Congress is made out of Republicans and democrats. You are not a state media; the Democratic Party were in the opposition. I was summoned to the American Congress to make sure that Alhurra was saying there was no MWD in Iraq and the narrative of the Democratic Party that opposed President Bush was present in Alhurra. No one knows this; you are obligated to cover the policy and to present it—not to promote it. This is very important that you differentiate between presenting and promoting."

Acting on this differentiation was never an easy task, according to him, mainly because putting it into practice requires journalists who believe in the same journalistic values, and the Arab journalists hired to perform the communication had come from an Arab journalistic culture that does not practice the same values espoused by the 'American journalistic tradition,' which he himself had acquired by working for American media before joining MBN. The challenge of

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channeling Alhurra's intended values to Arab journalists is expressed at various times during the interview, especially when it comes to the practice of differentiation between presenting and promoting.

> "When you want to present, and you have a journalistic mission you bring journalists but when you want to promote you bring diplomats … you bring American and Arab journalists but because it is an Arabic speaking [channel] we were forced to bring Arab journalists. Now, with the Arab journalists you will need to train because the come from media channels that does not share with Alhurra which is an American Arabic speaking channel and is not an Arabic channel which means the style of working in it is different, the writing is different. Now, how much were there talents that could absorb with a disposition for meeting these expectations is another topic. This was the great challenge which we knew all along and will remain so because you are bringing on board journalists who do for media organizations that do not have the same criteria that you are trying to apply therefore you will need to train and always make sure that there is a always a margin since the journalist may or not err, but the most important thing is that you want to implement Western American criteria: free media in the American tradition in the private sector …"

How do you implement these criteria in a channel that is owned by a state and financed by a state? I asked.

> "It is not financed by the state; it is financed by the Congress, financed by the taxpayer, which means public money. It is public money that is implemented as if in the private sector. …. BBG did what is called fire-wall which is the guard that acts by preventing the state from interfering in it. For instance, it was forbidden for the American State Department or [any] American institution to contact any journalist; they cannot, they have to pass through the BBG and BBG will determine if he hast the right to talk with you or not and that for the sake of protecting the journalistic identity of the organization."

A follow up question was about the socialization, which takes place when an Arab journalist who is coming from a totally different environment and you tell him you are coming to me, do you agree with him? What are the broad lines for him to fit in, train, change, modify?

"The first thing is the objective of the creation of the channel which is to promote freedom and democracy through providing trustworthy and objective information, and you are coming here to promote freedoms and democracies in the world. How do you promote it? Through the citizen, the viewer, and media consumer being informed so that he could make up his opinion scientifically. If I, a journalist, I wanted to serve freedom, it is my duty to provide trusted and objective information about any topic. And if the journalist believes what I believes in, I tell him, in principle, you are welcome! …

Infusing Alhurra's core values, which he was 'entrusted with' in the practice of Arab news presenters and journalists who traditionally would start their main news by saying 'the president said so …' was only one challenge. The more ominous challenge was to keep the main stakeholders in the various U.S. government branches to adhere to these same principles. He had to keep steering Alhurra away from the propaganda path. According to him, for instance, the State Department was kept at bay by having BBG as a firewall. That firewall was perceived to have allowed Alhurra to do the job it was entrusted with; and that is journalism in the private-sector mentality where ratings matter. "When you come from the State Department background you would think of promoting policies, I do not want to say propaganda; this is the difference [with] Norman Pattis' philosophy that [believes] in public money and private efforts." This mix is believed to create a sort of media independence which someone coming from the State Department cannot maintain. Here reference to the incoming new Alhurra president, Alfredo Fernandez at the time of conducting this interview was inevitable. So in practice was there a conflict or harmony?

"As far as I was concerned in those days, when the main management was entrusted with the message, I had no conflict. We were always fortified with the firewall when the State Department or the White House would interfere, we say, hold on for a moment, let's go back to the fundamentals, … the importance of Alhurra or the international American international broadcasting is that it abides by the law based on which you are financed and you are always accountable to a part of the state with respect to finance and management. In the private sector there is no law that changes at will … this is the distinctiveness of public money financing private organizations … that is [to say] there is accountability. Where is there an organization which its management board is asked to verify that you are faithful to your mission, for example during President Bush days before the war on Iraq we

received queries and we were obligated to respond to the Congress to provide them with evidence that in our main news we are presenting the other perspective that says there was no WMD in Iraq. Is there an institution in the Arab world that asked its [media] organization any evidence for verifying that all opinions are presented because this is how we can serve the interests of America not through propaganda do we serve the interests of America; propaganda does not serve anything and that's it."

However, reading many of the statements and the expectations discussed in Congress and other think tanks and academic literature about Alhurra, its role, and about its role as an arm for America's foreign policy and the preservation of America's national security, is any of the Alhurra staff aware of them?

"Yes, these are political statements. We understand the politicians, but the question is how do you serve the interests of America? I am with the principle that no one [country] finances something not for its national security. Why the United States would want to take money from the taxpayers and finance an organization it is because there is a national security interest? The disagreement with others or other perspectives is that I believe that through providing media content that is characterized with objectivity and the trust of the viewer or the listener, I would be contributing to bringing about the respect to the United States and henceforth the support to the interests of the United States in the long run. …"

Continually playing this balancing act of protecting the national interests of the U.S. by demonstrating the neutrality of Alhurra's reporting of the internal politics of the U.S. was for him a daily struggle. As much as it seemed to have to do with showcasing the democratic process in Washington, sharp political differences between the Democrats and the Republicans and those who opposed the White House policies wanted to make sure that their views are given an equal airtime on Alhurra according to this executive. And since the budget of Alhurra is determined by the executive branch of the government and Congress must approve it, this amounts to having to serve two 'masters' who happen to oppose each other, and Alhurra is expected to report to them on how it is covering both equally.

"Should the policies of the Republican Party, as is happening today … the policies of Trump is what is being executed in a blunt and clear, ok, where is the presence of the Democrats who oppose Trump? [If so] then we have become an organization similar to

organizations of the totalitarian Arab states, unipolar in thinking. You are obligated to present the opposite of that; this way you serve America. [If] You wanted people to love America, you show them the American model by presenting on your screen all ideas and the controversies that takes place in the United States. That is, when the Syrian and the Iraqi sees on the station that is financed by the American Congress that there is an American congressman who opposes the policy of the White House, he will respect you. Respect is the basis."

In responding to the question on how relevant such a presentation of the internal political system is to the Arab audiences and how or why should it impact them as long as it is all related to the internal politics of the U.S., his assumption is that as long as Arabs are deprived of witnessing democracy in action, this would result in the admiration of America and its democratic system, "… Tell the world about America, the most important thing America provides to the world is freedom and democracy." Again, the question was "What is the implication of this on the Arab view? The persistent rationale was, "If you see this on the screen wouldn't you respect the channel? That is wow, they are presenting someone who opposes America's policy." Again, "How relevant? The answer is, "As an Arab you will observe in it the respect; you will want to respect the American station; it will expand your horizons; it will show how the American policy is created. … When you go to a restaurant why is it these days it is common you show case the kitchens, it is because the one sitting in the restaurant when he sees the kitchen he will see how clean it is, and similarly when you show how I make policies [the viewer] will trust you and stops thinking that there is something hidden."

As such, the meaning given to Alhurra in performing this role is a screen through which Arabs can see the American political kitchen, unfiltered, and unedited. Accordingly, should the desired outcome of the meaning scenario of raw exposure be summed up in one word, according to this respondent, it would be 'respect.' By respecting the viewer, he believes that the viewer will reciprocate by respecting the channel. Hence, securing respect becomes the ultimate goals of Alhurra.

"I respect you, you respect me because there is no love without respect; but when there is hate, I try to replace hate with respect. It takes time [to establish] love. Don't love me but respect me. I believed when President Bush asked 'Why they hate us? which was the base

for doing something in which we tell the world that you cannot move from 'why do they hate us' to love us' … there should be something in between. We go for respect; mutual respect is the base. Respect me, I respect you, afterwards we move on to a more developed stage in thinking."

Securing respect is sought for both Alhurra as an objective news organization as well as the United States itself as a democratic system. This former Alhurra Arab executive has no illusions that it is America's foreign policy in the Middle East which is the main agitator of Arabs' antagonism towards it. But since Alhurra cannot change policy and it should not promote it at the same time, all it can and should do is act as a buffer zone by holding this antagonism at bay. This is presumably achieved by exposing Arabs to the democratic process in which policies are debated and take shape, and perhaps paradoxically exposing them to how the policies that antagonize them take shape. From this perspective, Alhurra acts an independent media if not indifferent to the nature of the policy process itself and its implications. It is a media that does not relate to the policy itself, one that has 'a margin of freedom,' a characteristic that Arab media does not enjoy. The assumption here is that Alhurra, with the freedom it enjoys and the provocative programing it airs, ends up at times antagonizing the Arab regimes more than the Arab audiences. "I cannot go into details, but the State Department used to get complaints from these [Arab] regimes about Alhurra. When you say the goal of Alhurra is the promotion of freedom and democracy in the Arab world, it means that you have recruited twenty-two regimes to hate you. This is something I said in Congress. Your power as any media channel is that you have to fight for what you believe in …". According to this perspective, what becomes problematic is whom do Arab regimes and Arab audiences have problems with: America or Alhurra?

"This is a [critical] question. What do you do? They used to tell us if you do not change the policy, you cannot do anything. Ok, what do you do, wait? I seek through cooling and lowering the temperature to reduce as much as possible the agitation as long as you do that, there is a problem between the Arab world and America as a foreign policy and for many reasons there are generators for hatred which have their reasons regardless of who is to blame for it, you have to work on the sidelines. That's why I always say the promotion to this policy increases hatred. This is a reason why I spoke about presenting the policy, not promoting it. You have an organization that is supposed to reduce agitation and have them

like you and respect you, for if you conduct polls every day and these polls show that the Arab world has problems with the United States because of its policy, [if] I go on every day and bombard him [the viewer] with the foreign policy he will hate me more."

Is this what is happening? I asked.

"It is happening now, during our days it wasn't. … . I challenge anyone to say that when I was responsible for managing the two organizations (Alhurra and Radio Sawa] we were propaganda and the mouthpiece of the American foreign policy. The proof is that there was no [Arab] in opposition [of American policy] other than a terrorist who had not launched his career from Alhurra and there was a space for him. All of those in the Arab Spring appeared [on Alhurra] and talked about the Arab Spring. Who was giving them a platform all the way from ▇▇▇ ▇▇▇ Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, [all the way] to Egypt? Where did they used to appear?"

For this meaning given to the role of Alhurra, the channel has potentially two antagonists in the Arab world towards the U.S.: the Arab people and the regimes. In this instance, and for comparative purposes, my question was, "How different is the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy from that of the Cold War communication targeting the Soviet Block?"

"The only difference is that journalists there [Cold War] you were talking [targeting] about the Soviet Union; the regimes hated the United States and people eager for opening up towards the United States and the West. In the Arab world the regimes like the United States and the people hate it."

So, is your problem with the people or with the regimes? I asked?

"In the Cold War your problem was with the regimes, now your problem is with the publics, not with the regimes. …

"True, but it was discovered later on that you have a problem with the regimes because if the regimes were given the choice between remaining in power and working against the interests of America, [they will] hit at America's interests in order to stay in power and for that some regimes financed terrorists."

Hasn't America financed terrorists? I asked.

"Here we enter into a different argument."

The significance of this meaning scenario where Alhurra is seen as acting as a buffer zone tempering Arab public agitation against America is that it comes from the person who co-launched Alhurra, as well as someone who had recruited the other respondents who participated in this research to work for Alhurra. The extreme variations in the meanings are very compelling in the sense that the intensity of the meaning he gives to the what he considers to be the mission of Alhurra is barely reflected in any of the meanings voiced by those whom he had personally recruited and presumably agreed upon with—at least in the broad the mission of Alhurra. Perhaps of equal significance is that while the other participants in the research have invariably very different meanings about their work at Alhurra, all of them agree that most 'others' who were working for Alhurra had joined with no apparent personal convictions in Alhurra's mission, that is, if at all the channel is perceived to have a mission they rally behind. When I asked Alhurra's most senior Arab executive to personify Alhurra at the time of his tenure, he saw it as a person who is 'open minded, appreciates others, and seeks to gain the respect of others, not their love. …" The rationale of respect preceding love (or more accurately liking) is critical if the latter is not easily achievable.

Correspondingly however, listening to the different participants' volunteered perceptions of the 'others' at Alhurra, be they Arab or American staff, we visualize them as people who do not at all resemble Alhurra being 'open-minded' persona just identified. Instead the 'others' are seen as Arabs who had travelled thousands of miles from Arab homelands to the U.S. carrying with them cultural baggage that an ideal type Alhurra would not allow them to enter into with these values being still part and parcel of them—nor would America allow them in as well. The senior Arab Alhurra executive interviewed considered it to be a major struggle but noted that 'we had inculcated the lads' Alhurra's values which he personally espouses. But for other former Alhurra Arab communicators, most of whom were recruited by this former executive, it is not clear how successful that "inculcation" was.

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Chapter Eight

Contestation over Alhurra's Audiences and Mission

In line with the sequence in which I presented the findings on Alhurra's perceived audiences and meaning of mission in the preceding chapter, the Sections 8-1 and 8-2 analyze the implications of each of the two components of Weber's social action, with both Weber's theorization and other related theories or perspectives. The aim is to expand the potential of studying the implications of each component of Weber's social action theory – to which Alhurra communication is oriented as well as the subjective meaning given to the mission—into untapped practical horizons. More precisely, the aim is to demonstrate that media, as well as social theories, can be deployed hand in hand for the purpose of understanding the dynamics of mediated public diplomacy. For instance, I will demonstrate that just as perceiving that there are no audiences for Alhurra could be detrimental to its potential performativity, so can the perception of targeting everybody. Section 8-3 attempts to fit Alhurra's journalism within one of Weber's ideal type social action, be it the value rational or the instrumental rational, if at all that is possible, but always with the aim of understanding the motives behind how Alhurra Arab communicators perceive their mission.

Section 8-4 seeks to identify, or rather to situate, the meanings these communicators give their work at Alhurra with the broader ideological settings in which they themselves, as well as America. find themselves. Comparison with the Cold War ideological experience that Russian and East European émigrés were in is introduced for the purpose of demonstrating that it is futile to continue being nostalgic about the success of the Cold War communication compared to the underperformance of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy. Very different ideological eras or causes had produced very different effects.

8-1 Implications of Incoherent Perceptions of Alhurra Audiences

Discussed in the context of translation, Nord (2018) differentiates between the *addressee* and the *receiver* of the text where "The addressee is the prospective receiver seen from the text producer's standpoint; the receiver is the person, group, or institution that actually reads or listens to the text after it has been produced" (p. 21). Such a differentiation may well apply to TV audiences where we could identify the broad targets of Alhurra and its core audiences. For Nord and others, this differentiation is of extreme importance in the conceptualization of the objectives of the translated

text. On the perceived intentionality of the translated text, he says, "The definition of the intended target-text receiver should be part of the translation brief …" (Nord 2018, p. 21). The research findings indicate that there was hardly a proper brief on who Alhurra addressees or its receivers are.

Starting first with the implications of the perception that an Alhurra Arab communicator may not be targeting any audiences at all, be it because they have no sense of who they are or because there are none to begin with, two theoretical frames of reference can be provoked: Hall's Decoding/ Encoding model and Weber's social action theorization. In his four 'moments' of media articulation—production, circulation, distribution/consumption, and reproduction into consideration, Hall (2009 [1973]) argues that for media consumption to take place, a meaning must be experienced by the target audiences. As such, 'meaning' is in effect both a necessary and sufficient condition for consumption to take place, regardless of how congruent the perceived meaning is vis-à-vis the intended meaning the sender has encoded in it the messages. "If no 'meaning' is taken, there can be no 'consumption.' If the meaning is not articulated in practice, it has no effect" (p. 29). In the context of Alhurra, the critical point here is that for this segment of its Arab communicators, there are no perceived audiences even to consume the contents produced, much less having viewers who can assign any meaning to what is produced. Perceived absence of audiences makes Jason Toynbee's (2008) contention of equal relevance, and although he does not make any reference to Hall's Decoding/Encoding Model, he argues that there must be two components to the media production and consumption: production and audiences, once one of the two is dropped out, the whole mediation ceases to exist.

> "A transcendental argument is one in which the following question is asked: 'What are the pre-conditions for the possibility of *x*, here *x* is a more or less widely accepted phenomenon?' If we take the media as *x*, then it quickly becomes apparent that the presence of the audience, just as much as production, is a necessary condition for media to be possible. Remove either of the moments and we no longer have anything that would qualify as the media. Looking more closely, it becomes clear that what is at stake here are *relations* between moments. In other words, production and reception acquire their constitutive character as media moments through their mutual orientation" (Toynbee 2008, p. 266; emphasis by author).

Combining the two concepts of no consumption owing to a lack of audience on the one hand and no production owing to a lack of audiences on the other is bound to turn Alhurra mediation into a kind of double-jeopardy. While actual media contents are physically produced and aired, journalists are, in effect, knowingly talking to themselves. Indeed, Toynbee's argument about the necessity of orientation between media production and audiences fits squarely in with Weber's social action conceptualization, where for an action to embody a 'social' characteristic, in addition to assigning a subjective meaning to it, it must be oriented towards others. These others are not just physical entities; more critically, the actor's action must be oriented towards them based his/her interpretation of their expected behavior. In the case of this segment of Alhurra Arab communicators, one component of their presumed social action is, hence, literally lost in action. The aim of this conclusion is not to test the fit between Weber's social action theorization and actual practice as much as to use the theory as a guide for understanding whether all of the critical components in the actual mediation practice are well in place for the proper functioning of the communication. We now know that at least for one segment of these communicators are communicating aimlessly.

Moving on to the opposite extreme, we realize that Alhurra Arab communicators perceive their audiences to be a very wide cross-section of Arabs with a possible leaning towards the younger generation, which is believed to constitute the largest age group. In analyzing the implications of media, targeting literally everybody as opposed to nobody can be informed by Bourdieu's work *On Television* (1998). In one paragraph Bourdieu captures the full spectrum of not only the implication of such targeting but also outlines the editorial approach to be adopted, should a media outlet pursue such a path. In short, reaching everybody does not only mean having to provide media content that meets the needs of wide segments; more importantly, its editorial line must be take all political dispositions into consideration—that all are pleased, none is offended, and hence all can identify with it. Bourdieu made his observation in the context of the main evening news on French TV in the1990s. They were able to reach the mass audiences; one nightly news episode could have ratings equivalent to the readership of all mainstream newspapers in France combined.

> "For example, the evening news on French TV brings together more people than all the French newspapers together, morning and evening editions included. When the information supplied by a single news medium becomes a universal source of news, the

resulting political and cultural effects are clear. Everybody knows the "law" that if a newspaper or other news vehicle wants to reach a broad public, it has to dispense with sharp edges and anything that might divide or exclude readers (just think about *Paris-Match* or, in the U.S., *Life* magazine). It must attempt to be inoffensive, not to "offend anyone," and it must never bring up problems-or, if it does, only problems that don't pose any problem. People talk so much about the weather in day-to-day life because it's a subject that cannot cause trouble. Unless you're on vacation and talking with a farmer who needs rain, the weather is the absolutely ideal *soft* subject. The farther a paper extends its circulation, the more it favors such topics that interest "everybody" and don't raise problems. The object—news—is constructed in accordance with the perceptual categories of the receiver" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 44; emphasis by author).

In such a scenario and in the context of Toynbee's 'mutual orientation' concept, media production must be oriented to the media consumption needs of a wide range of audiences. Similarly, in the context of Weber's social action theory, and given the intentionality of reaching an audience, the communication must be articulated and presented in such a way that takes into consideration the needs of all of these potential audiences. Of specific relevance in Bourdieu's observation is the assumption that in order to reach the widest possible audiences, a media must, in effect, not only dilute its contents, but it must also water-down its perspective on issues to the extent that it does not at all raise a problem that could potentially 'pose any problem' to any segments of its audiences. Such a prerequisite for reaching all possible audiences raises many critical questions, especially when put in the context of the declared core objectives of Alhurra as a TV channel engaged in an 'ideological war' or 'war of ideas' with whoever the presumed antagonist might be.

It can be safely assumed that in an all-out ideological-war, the main job of the actors in this ideological struggle is to assemble all possible editorial content to overwhelm the presumed antagonist(s). By contrast, bending over backwards to please a mass audience may eventually mean a total dilution of the editorial content, where all audience segments have content they can identify with. This is typified by *Life* magazine as identified by Bourdieu, and the same could be said about *Reader's Digest*. By contrast, Alhurra, positioned as a *surrogate* media weapon, must be bold, hard-hitting, and going into mediation turfs other Arab media may never venture into

because of self-imposed or Arab governments' censorship. In short, if as a 'law' a medium must 'curve all edges,' a surrogate medium must sharpen them in line with its intentionality of achieving its political objectives. Similarly, should a medium raise 'only problems that don't pose any problem,' theoretically, a surrogate medium ought to raise problems that do indeed pose problems to the presumed antagonists in favor of the entity initiating such a communication assault. It can be argued that Alhurra Arab communicators who perceive themselves targeting a wide cross-section of Arab publics, as expressed its former news director, are driven by the pressure from the U.S. Congress to show huge audience figures on par with how commercial TV channels measure their success.

8-2 Performativity: Identification of Target Audiences and Identifying with Them

One of the objectives of asking Alhurra Arab communicators who their audiences are is to examine to what extent their perceptions vis-à-vis what is stated in BBG and Alhurra literature match what is stated by Alhurra's top American management. A previous chapter analyzed the target audiences of Alhurra, persistently stated in very broad and fluid terms as 'Arabic speaking' publics. Occasionally equally fluid terms are used, such as the voiceless Arabs who, when defined more concretely, can be women, religious or ethnic minorities, and others. Uncertainty about who Alhurra target audiences are, was very evident in the 2010 report on BBG performance presented to the Committee on Foreign Relations One Hundred Eleventh Congress titled *U.S. International Broadcasting: Is Anybody Listening?—Keeping the U.S. Connected* (2010) the issue of who the target audiences of the U.S. international broadcasting remained unresolved. The primary targets are those with favorable leanings towards the U.S., which amounts to preaching to the choir, who are in turn expected ultimately to influence those with an unfavorable perspective towards the U.S.

> "American Public Diplomacy has always addressed two audiences. One audience views the United States positively, as a democracy based on the free flow of information, the freedom of expression, civic discourse and active citizen participation in government. This group will more often than not be supportive of U.S. actions and initiatives, or at least give us the benefit of the doubt. Members of the second group believe that these strengths are, instead, weaknesses and are predisposed to assume the worst about America; they reject-- or worse, attack—us as a result. Successful Public Diplomacy (PD) keeps the first group engaged and increases its numbers while reducing the size and impact of the second. Impacting both groups are not only the actions, images and words of our own Nation, but

fierce competition from other nations whose own interests may or may not agree with our own. One of our major tools for connecting with these audiences is through people-to-people exchanges; another is international broadcasting" (p. 5).

But what remains unresolved is the size of this choir. In the C-SPAN interview referred to above, former Alhurra president, Brian Conniff, estimated Alhurra's audiences to be 26 million. However, concerns about Alhurra's audience size and its impact had persisted ever since Alhurra was launched in 2004. These concerns are reflected in the report *Is Anybody Listening?*

"Alhurra--the U.S. 24-hour Arabic television news channel--is expensive, and with the exception of Iraq, little watched elsewhere in this vital region. Alhurra's budget of some $90 million surpasses the combined budgets of Radio Free Asia ($37 million), Radio/TV Marti ($30 million) and VOA's Persian News Network Television ($17 million). Given the crowded media environment of the Middle East, either greater resources must be devoted to marketing and promotion or additional programming changes must be enacted in pursuit of increasing the channel's market share. Should these efforts fail to improve the overall viewership levels, policy makers will have to decide if continuing Alhurra's operations is worth the costs" (p. 7).

Controversy over Alhurra's audience size aside, it is evident that the incoherence within BBG and Alhurra official literature about the uncertainty of Alhurra's audiences is perfectly matched by a comparable incoherence within its Arab communicators' perception of the audiences they think they target. Indeed, the perception among one segment of Alhurra journalists that they target none could be striking; but the report *Is Anybody Listening?* does not rule out this possibility. But does coherence matter with respect to who the target audience is among a TV channel's news anchors, reporters, talk show hosts, and producers? Informed by Reece Peck in his book *Fox Populism: Branding Conservatism as Working Class* (2019), the answer to this critical question is a definitive *yes*. Peck presents Fox News as an outstanding illustration of the clarity and consistency with which the channel's frontline communicators identify their audiences. They frequently use several terms interchangeably, which Peck argues are all infused within the populist political theory. Peck cites many authors who have noted the terms used. "Fox … as the network for the unrepresented, for the outsiders" (pp. 85-86); Bill O'Reilly referring to his mission as "looking out for the folks"

(p. 86); Fox being the voice of the "… underrepresented group of citizens that has been ignored by the "establishment media"" (p. 87); or "I'm the Blue-Collar Guy" (p. 121), but to mention a few. What is more critical for Peck is that other than the apparent well-defined identification of the Fox audiences -- using terms the audiences they themselves associate themselves with, it is the extent to which the communicators identify themselves with their audiences. For Peck, this in turn presents Fox as yet another outstanding illustration for a unique case for a media channel in terms of both *performativity* and *performance* where the channel's performativity, overall and at the individual level of its frontline communicators, is ascertained by the performance of both the editorial policy of the channel and its frontline communicators.

The correspondence between Fox performativity and performance is a seen as a reflection of the congruence between identification of real, concrete audiences who are out there and the identification with them, which means that Fox does in effect perform the role of the spokesperson for its audiences. Jeffry P. Jones (2012) notes that this correspondence is the key for Fox performativity which has, in turn, brought about a fundamental change in "… the ways in which representation within the news genre has changed—from the journalistic representation of events to the political representation of audiences" (p. 179). Jones contends that Fox News has done away with the notion that TV channels construct their audiences through a consumer-based programming revolving around specific content. In other words, it is no longer the proposition where a program content is expected to draw audiences because "… of the inherent value, quality or attractiveness of the programming" (Jones 2012, p. 180). Fox News is believed to have introduced what Jones refers to as the "… intentional formation of "community." Whereas for talk shows those connections can occur through consumer behaviors and commodity interests, for Fox News the connections occur largely through ideology" (Jones 2012, 180).

Evoking Fox may seem to be an example taken out of context, but its relevance to the analyses of how Alhurra American management and its Arab communicators perceive their audiences is of particular significance. In the context of Bourdieu's (2005) theorization of the journalistic field, where the 1980s journalism was witnessing a very visible struggle between pure journalism and commercial powers that had started to have a growing impact on the field, the performance of Fox, however, has subjected TV journalism in America to a comparable struggle with different axes. In

the case of Fox News, the struggle is between 'pure' journalism, to use Bourdieu's term, and the political ideological representation of the channel's audiences. There is no doubt that in this struggle, the performativity of Fox News is squarely due to its performance in representing the interests of its audiences. But while the Fox News phenomena is presented as a unique case in American journalism, we can similarly project the same journalistic struggle scenario on the U.S. Cold War communication where the surrogate media does by its nature entail over-riding the representation of the audiences' interests over the journalistic representation of events; or to give the U.S. Cold War communication the benefit of doubt, it managed to strike a balance between the two.

Now in the context of Alhurra's perceived audiences, who in the mind of its Arab communicators may span from no one to everyone, is there at all a space for the ideological representation of Alhurra's audiences? This question is relevant as there is BBG literature claiming that Alhurra is the voice of the voiceless Arabs. If the American blue-collar workers were voiceless before Fox and it provided them a representation refuge, how could Alhurra provide the voiceless Arabs a representational refuge if its Arab frontline communicators do not see themselves as their spokespersons? By comparison, there is a strong case to suggest that the performativity of the Russian and East European émigrés who performed the role frontline communicators in the Cold War was so because of a combination of both objective representation of events as well as the ideological representation of their audiences, who themselves were once part of them; talking on their behalf in the name of democratic and liberal ideals against one common ideological enemy, communism.

Before concluding this section, it is worth noting that should be the field of mainstream media experience a struggle between journalistic representation of events and the ideological representation of audiences, in the field of mediated public diplomacy there is also a third axis, which is totally ignored, and that is the representation of the message of the sender or the sponsor, which, in our case, is the United States. Frontline communicators must be in perpetual struggle between these three axes. Perhaps the most interesting case in the context of the U.S-Arab mediated public diplomacy is that although the American management saw Alhurra as the voice of the voiceless Arabs, it is an established fact that the primary reason for launching Alhurra post

9/11 was because America had perceived itself utterly *voiceless* in reaching them. Alhurra was meant to convey the voice of America, the *country on the hill*, which it believed had escaped average Arabs. As such, theoretically, Alhurra Arab frontline communicators must be expected to perform their mediation taking three axes into consideration: perform objective journalism, provide a voice for voiceless Arabs, and a voice for voiceless America.

8-3 Implications of the Absence of Collective Meaning of Mediation

The abductive approach to social research presupposes surprises in the due course of the research. The extent to which the empirical findings presented above in relation to the incoherence in the identification of Alhurra audiences by its Arab communicators, matched with a comparable incoherence in how they articulate their perceptions of their work at Alhurra, is a manifestation of this abductive expectation. This prompts asking whether this *double* incoherence is a mere anomaly or something more characteristic of the structural settings within which Alhurra Arab communicators operate, thereby driving such a discord in meaning and orientation. A related looming question would be: Given the *intentionality* of the mediation as explicitly expressed by BBG in terms of impacting Arab audiences, do these findings allow us to determine the extent to which these actions can be characterized as *social action*, and if yes, what type of typical social action could it characterized as proposed by Weber: value rational or instrumental rational? The relevance of fitting this mediation action within the social action characterization assumes that a social action is always purposive—irrespective of whether it is motivated by *ideals* or by *material interests*; it is a means of achieving an end by taking into consideration the possible behavior of others towards whom the action is directed. Posing these questions does not necessarily mean an endorsement of the notion that coherence in both the meaning journalists in a media organization give to their actions and their perception of their audiences, are on their own, a necessary and sufficient conditions for a performative performance of Alhurra. For Cagle (2016), it is natural that actors in a given field give different meanings to the same action since such variations are innate to field maintenance and development. "Fields are not static entities. Not every agent in the field shares the same attitudes and values, and even the most stable fields change over time. A social field model therefore examines internal field dynamics in addition to the relationship between fields; each can change a field's nature and disposition. … newly emerging or dissolving fields are

especially susceptible to external shock, whereas established or stable fields are inclined towards incremental, internal change" (Cagle 2018, p. 41).

We can infer from Cagle's argument that variations in how Alhurra Arab journalists interpret their work is only expected. It is worth noting, however, that there is a caveat to how far a contestation over the meaning can go. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, in his analyses of the intellectual field, Ringer (1997) notes that no matter how a field may be experiencing instability or contestation, "… all participants in an intellectual field should be expected to share at least some of the implicit assumptions upon which it rests, or some element of the pretheoretical 'habitus' it tends to perpetuate. Yet especially during periods of instability in the intellectual field or in the wider culture, mute doxa may be partly replaced by explicit contests between orthodox and heterodox positions" (p. 5). However, in the field of U.S.-Arab public diplomacy, it is not the issue of whether its doxa is on mute, it is whether there is doxa specific to it at all. Hence, should such variations in meanings attached to an action be considered part and parcel of maintenance of the life cycle of a well-established field, it is less likely that the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, which is in its early inception, can afford such near to total incoherence in aspects that are critical to its performativity. In this subsection I will attempt to situate the nature of the action performed by Alhurra Arab communicators within Weber's two social action types: value rational and instrumental rational, to be followed by a causal explanation of what could be a possible cause for not resembling one type of social action or the other. In the due course of the analysis, I have always found it useful to compare with the U.S.-Cold War communication given its proximity to the ideal type mediated public diplomacy as established in a previous chapter.

One main consequence of the double incoherence in how Alhurra Arab journalist understand their work and their perceived audiences is that it makes very difficult to fit their action within one of Weber's ideal type social action or another. At the level of meaning, we have reported a spectrum of meanings with two extremes. At one extreme we have an action that is devoid of meaning, one with no particular purpose of the communication uttered; this is doubled with the absence of any perceived audiences. On the other extreme of the spectrum, we have the exceedingly complex meaning, one that not only dissects the perceived objectives into great details, but one that showed strong convictions in the intentions of Alhurra. Here we have a perspective that sees its mission

primarily as a journalistic one, with an ideal type to compare oneself, which is the American journalism type, believed to espouse objectivity and independence. The complexity in this meaning stems from the perception that while it sees itself as in a continuous struggle for preserving the journalistic independence of Alhurra from the intrusion from the U.S. Congress or the U.S. government, it is aware very aware of overt objective of the station is to be a showcase for America's democratic experience. Then in between these two extremes is a range of other meanings, such as the one that wanted to take on the authoritarian regimes head-on but found itself a lone, frustrated voice. Or the one that wanted to change the Arab world culturally and intellectually by engaging in critical thinking. Or the one that had personal growth as the ulterior motive, and should the world benefit from it in due course, then it would be an unintended bonus but welcome nevertheless.

In conceptualizing the nature of Alhurra Arab journalistic work in Weber's social action ideal types, the discord in meaning makes it very difficult to fit it into one average social action type or another, especially the two most probable candidates, be they the *value rational* or the *value instrumental* type.[14] In the no-meaning zone of the meanings spectrum, we see an Alhurra Arab journalist as disengaged, with no self-pride, no self-fulfillment, and with no hope that things may change. In Weber's theorization, actions do not always have to hold meaning at the time, but some actions will nevertheless. "In all the sciences of human action, account must be taken of processes and phenomena which are devoid of subjective meaning, in the role of stimuli, results, favoring or hindering circumstances" (Weber 1964, p. 93). But at the same time Weber cautions that "To be devoid of meaning is not identical with being lifeless or non-human; every artifact, such as for example a machine, can be understood only in terms of the meaning which its production and use have had or were intended to have; a meaning which may derive from a relation to exceedingly various purposes. Without reference to this meaning such an object remains wholly unintelligible" (p. 93). In the context of providing news, the AI anchor developed for the Chinese state news agency, Xinhua, could be a case in point where the intended purpose was to "work tirelessly to keep you informed as texts will be typed into my system uninterrupted"[15]. But for this segment of

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[14] I am excluding the other two types, the *traditional* and *effectual* (or emotional) from the comparison mainly because of lack of intentionality in engaging in any of these two types.

[15] https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-46136504

Alhurra Arab journalists, there is no explicit intelligible or understandable intended purpose for their actions. Adding to their frustration, such a type of Alhurra Arab journalist may tend to compare himself/herself with his/her counterparts in the profession at Aljazeera or Al ███████ who are seen as the ideal type of mission-oriented and highly engaged with their audiences and who work for TV stations that have explicitly stated missions.

By contrast, and as we have seen in the previous chapter, the *value rational* social action type seems to fit perfectly into how Russian and East European émigrés may have interpreted their work at VOA and Radio Free Europe or Radio Liberty during the Cold War. However, their motives may not fit all of the assumptions Weber builds into the characteristics that constitute value rational action. To start with, "[t]his is a type of action in which the ultimate values act as a guide for action" (Morrison 2006, p. 359). Their communication action may have epitomized the ultimate ideological struggle these actors could have engaged in against communism and Soviet state. Nevertheless, Weber has projected on value rational action several possible motives, not all of which may apply to the Russian and East European émigré communicators. For instance, for Weber such actors may have wanted to "… put into practice their convictions of what seemed to them to be required either as a duty, honor, the pursuit of beauty, a religious call or the importance of some cause no matter inn what it consists, regardless of possible cost them themselves" (Morrison 2007, p. 359). Actors engage in such action for the intrinsic values the actions possess and their engagement "does not lie in the achievement of a result ulterior to it, but rather lies in carrying out the realization of the specific value considerations for its own sake" (Weber 1964, p. 116) As such we may know with a high degree of certainty how incomparable the motives that drove the action of Russian and East European émigrés communicators are vis-à-vis their Alhurra Arab counterparts.

The closest we may come to the characterization of the Alhurra Arab communicators is *value instrumental* type. According to Weber, actors of this type do shrewdly calculate all components of their actions, from start to end, be it in terms of aims, strategies, or means to achieve those aims and towards whom the action is oriented. "Action is rationally oriented to a system of discrete individual ends … when the end, mean, and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed" (Weber 1964, p. 117). But here again even actors under study who may fit

within this characterization are not uniform in their motives or in towards whom the action is oriented or at least for one segment not included. The first type of value instrumental can be observed in the motives that are individual-centric, with personal cost-benefit evaluation systemically taken into consideration. It is a social action scenario where the drive for maximizing the personal benefits is continually propelling the motivation to work. However, and as we have seen, the moment this personal marginal utility working at Alhurra starts to decline, it is the moment one starts considering leaving the organization. One key aspect in this type of action is the possible absence of any specific audiences.

The second type of value instrumental that emerges for the findings is that one that has clear understanding of the goals for Alhurra. This is depicted in the notion of the open American political kitchen to which the communicator would want Arabs to be exposed for the purpose of appreciating what the political process in America is all about. In theory, this perspective is oriented towards the mass of the young Arabs. But even in such a typical action type of clear objectives, there is potentially one vital component missing for it fit into social action characterization. According to Morrison (2008, p. 431) this component is an act is social "… only after having 'understood' the actions and the act of others." It is more likely that in perspective, the Alhurra actor is demonstrating more understanding to the intentions of the sender of the message, which is in this case the U.S. government, rather than demonstrating an understanding of the Arab audiences' needs and expectations from exposure to Alhurra or its perceived ulterior objective behind the open kitchen concept.

8-4 Possible Explanations for the Absence of a Collective Meaning

For although I had labeled the variations in the meanings Alhurra Arab journalists assign to work as either incoherent, in disarray or discordant, all of which may have negative implications on the journalistic action of the station, one critical positive element seems lost in this clutter of meanings, which is the adherence to journalistic independence and objectivity. This commonly held perception may have been overshadowed by the reported overall failed performance of the channel. Referring to Ringer's (1997) statement, this journalistic value should act at least as 'the implicit assumption' upon which their work rests, but because of the failed performance of

Alhurra, this important journalistic value is lost in action to the extent that on its own it has neither proven to be a necessary nor sufficient condition for overcoming the shortfalls of the station. Also referring to Cagle (2018) and Ringer (1997) contentions, fields go through periods of 'struggle' for their identities.

While Ringer refers to 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' positions within a field, Cagle is concerned with 'external shocks' that make 'emerging fields' vulnerable. For Alfredo Fernandez, Alhurra's vulnerability was largely self-inflicted and not due to factors external to the organization itself. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, for him Alhurra's American management lacked imagination; it was not familiar with the Arab culture; it also lacked aggressiveness; and it was not American enough. In short, Alhurra has not been ideological enough. The empirical research findings outlined thus far in this chapter may corroborate the notion that the reasons for Alhurra's failed performativity are indeed *internal*. Should Fernandez have singled out the top American management as the culprit in this failed mediation, the research findings would have implied that the channel's Arab frontline communicators are to be equally blamed. In effect, the wholesale firing and hiring of dozens of Arab staff since Fernandez took over as the president illustrates the notion that he saw them as a part of an *internal* problem, and their replacement with new ideological blood would be a panacea for a successful relaunching of Alhurra. This, in turn, may confirm one potentially straightforward take-out of the research finding, which is that the hiring of more ideologically oriented Arab journalists who can rally around the presumed stated objectives of Alhurra would provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for putting Alhurra on the revamped launch pad for delivering a performative performance.

Just as we may want to give such a prescription for the benefit of the doubt, there is an equally strong case for the need to be more cautious about its feasibility, especially when the subjective meaning Alhurra Arab journalists give to their work is studied as a factor on its own with no explicit interrelationship with other *external* factors that could jointly affect the performance of Alhurra. The potential shortfall in this course of action is the underlying assumption that there is no correlation between Arab journalists' actions and the macro structural factors within which their attitudes are shaped. However, while a purely inductive approach may indicate that the implications of the research findings attained thus far may have reached their optimum

possibilities, an abductive approach may allow us to harness more possibilities. This is possible since built-into the abductive approach is what Peirce defines as '"process of forming an explanatory hypothesis'" (quoted by Tavory & Timmerman 2014, p. 36). Tavory and Timmerman note that the main advantage of abductive research is that it allows interpretative researchers to use existing relevant theorizations for a more robust understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Combined with how active the sociological imagination of the researcher is, the abductive approach allows for reaching out for support from theories that were not considered as potentially contributing much to the understanding of social phenomena under study, while reassessing the relevance of ones that their contribution to the empirical analyses may have turned out to be limited.

In abductive research, the macro factors within which the actors perform their work are not just the *context* or *background* within which these attitudes ought to be studied, they are an integral component of the action itself (Tavory & Timmeran 2014). In the rest of this section on the implication of the findings, I will bring into the analyses the interrelationship between the macro structural factors and the micro factors that potentially shape the attitudes of Alhurra Arab journalists. Again, and in the spirit of the abductive research, surprises in abductive research findings may require a researcher to reach out to untapped research tools to release the full potential of research findings that have seemingly reached their finishing line in terms of their implications.

> "We can make this causal exploration only *after* we have ascertained the most compelling explanation with an examination of variations. The test of historical deepening or causality remains whether or not these causal explanations are situated within chains of meaning in action we have found in initial observations. The link between the condition the researcher want to deepen and the historical context they mobilize should be conceived as a part of the research – not as its context or background. Expanding the scope of an explanatory theory may thus require pushing beginnings back in time or extending the causal field to conditions currently invisible to the researcher. In turn, we may need to revise our theoretical abductions because new-data-theory misfits have emerged" (Tavory & Timmerman 2014, p. 99; emphasis by authors).

In the previous chapter in comparing the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy with the ideal type, I outlined a selection of external macro factors that undermine its performativity. But now that the empirical findings have established an incoherence in how Alhurra Arab journalists perceive their work, I would want to explore whether these seemingly internal factors operate in isolation from external factors that might drive the motivations of these journalists. In line with Weber's interpretive research approach I have adopted thus far, I will situate the micro-macro (or internal-external) analyses in the theoretical frame of reference Weber uses to define sociology as a whole, and which not only considers the interpretative understanding of social action to be at the heart of sociology, but also the understanding of the causality and the consequences of these actions. For Weber sociology becomes "… a science concerning itself with interpretative understanding of social action and thereby with the causal explanation of its course and effects" (Weber 1978, p. 88). Hence, I want to explore possible causes for the discord in how Alhurra Arab journalists see their work, the consequences of which, at least in part, may have contributed to the failure of the communication. My intention is to understand the dynamics of this mediation within the broader macro context as well as relation to the claimed objectives of Alhuura American management as already cited in an earlier section. The main factor I intend to focus on is the ideological one; its meaning will become more evident shortly.

Earlier, we witnessed former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton blaming America's failure in countering the 'jihadists' narrative' on America's 'abdication of the ideological struggle' (Weed 2013), which for her was the main ideological weapon that annihilated communism. The descriptive term 'abdication' is critical here for it connotes an *intentional* act of relinquishing the responsibility of the struggle for the liberal-democratic ideology, which as implied by Clinton, continues to endure as it was during the Cold War but was not been tapped into in the ideological war against jihadists. In the remaining part of this section, I will argue that should a surplus of ideology have been the trigger for action during the Cold War, there has been a critical shortage of it in the 'ideological war' against radical Islamism.

In the context of Weber's social action theorization, just as an action may be manifested by performing an action, it may alternatively take the form of intentionally *refraining* from performing it. In his definition of social action, Weber notes that an action "… may be either overt

or purely inward or subjective; it may consist of positive intervention in a situation, or of deliberately refraining from such intervention or passively acquiescing in the situation" (Weber 1964, p. 88). In another more concise definition, he notes that "failure to act" (p. 112) is yet another possible action. Hence, was America's *abdication* from engaging in the ideological struggle a *deliberate* act or was it a *failure* to act in Weber's terms? Or was it because America had already run out of its ideological stock it once marshaled during the Cold War by the time the more consequential head-on confrontation with radical Islamism began on 9/11? Or were the ideological consequences of the struggle against the jihadists comparatively minor in which case they could not pose an existential threat to America; hence was there no need for America to mobilize its full ideological arsenal?

It can be inferred from Clinton's lamentation that America had purposefully refrained from engaging in the struggle while it was presumably sitting on the same ideological stock it had accumulated during the Cold War. I must note here that, as aware as I am that I ought to refrain from posing more questions in this late chapter, I believe that they are valid, especially when searching for clues as to why the America and its Russian and East European émigrés, who shouldered the frontline communication, possessed ideological fire power in their struggle against communism, whereas America and its Alhurra Arab journalists possess none?

In the previous chapter on comparing the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy with that of the Cold War, I noted that differences in the ideological conditions for each had significant contribution to the under-performativity of the former and the performativity of the latter. Interviews with Alhurra Arab communicators had consistently shown that the notion of being motivated by an ideological trigger had barely surfaced at the spontaneous level. Even when asked whether they see their role at Alhurra as part of an ideological struggle of some sort, their responses were a definite no. For the very few who had initially thought that Alhurra was in part meant to shake the foundations of authoritarian Arab regimes, to their disappointment, they soon realized that was not on the channel's official agenda, nor did they perceive their colleagues as endowed with the ideological stock for a confrontation with whoever the antagonist may have been. Nor do they see their colleagues possessing the fuel to promote democratic ideals through Alhurra programming. This will be discussed in the subsequent section.

By contrast, the Cold War communication project itself was in its entirety ideological: it was a struggle between two ideals as much as it was between nations that were struggling to assert their respective worldviews. As America and the West scored an equivocal win with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which signaled the *end of history*, the alternative notion *the clash of civilizations* hardly survived its conceptual phase irrespective of the symbolic scale represented by the 9/11 attacks, which for a moment in history felt that these attacks were the evidence Huntington's thesis needed to prove its viability. Zbigniew Brzezinski, a national security advisor to former U.S. president Jimmy Carter, was more realistic in placing the clash with radical Islamists in its proper context. In an interview with the French newspaper *Le Figaro* (1989), he asked: what was more important, the death of communism or the anger of some disgruntled Muslims? It is also worth noting the fact that the neo-conservatives, who had secured a strong ideological foothold in George W. Bush administration at the time Alhurra was launched in 2004, had proven that their ideological rise was transient as it faded with Barack Obama's ascension to the presidency in 2008. By the time Hillary Clinton, as a Secretary of State (2009-2013) was hoping to rally Washington for an ideological struggle against radical Islamism, she must have quickly realized that the ideological hatchet America used against communism had already been buried two decades earlier.

In his book *Remembering 9/11: Terror, Trauma and Social Theory* (2013), Victor Seidler contrasted the state of mind America was in during the Cold War with the eve of 9/11. Seidler cites historian Studs Terkel, who described America at the time of 9/11 as suffering from "'a national Alzheimer's disease. We have no memory of yesterday'" (p.104). To illustrate how well-defined the enemy was during the Cold War, Seidler notes, "Terkel knew that in the Cold War, communism was the enemy against which the USA learnt to define itself. It was against the Soviet Union that the USA could present itself as the country of freedom, rights and democracy. But, as Terkel put it: "The Evil Empire is no more, so now it's terrorism. Now we come to the question: what is terrorism?" (p.105). In contrast to the Cold War mindset, Seidler cites excerpts of a *The Guardian* OpEd written by historian Simon Schama on September 20, 2001, which illustrates the state of perceptual disarray about who the enemy was at that time of the 9/11 attacks.

> "But this time the go-and-get-em American responses are scrambled by the terrifying diffuseness of the threat and the inconvenience of the enemy not being any sort of

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discernable nation state. "Should the president and congress make a formal declaration of war?" asked one CNN correspondent last night to another. "Against whom, exactly?" he reasonably replied. She wasn't listening. "But shouldn't we declare war?" she repeated, pointlessly. "How about carpet bombing everything between Jordan and Nepal?" one of my downtown friends who had seen the towers collapse in front of his eyes sardonically asked a belligerent comrade-in-suffering. "Well yes, that might take care of it," was his reply".[16]

We can infer from Terkel's and Schama's reflections that two factors were intertwined in the Cold War: the ideology and the target of that ideology. For Schama the confusion about against whom the ideological war was oriented is attributed to "America, as Alexis de Tocqueville noticed in the mid-19th century, was founded, and runs, on impatience." But the ideological struggle against communism was a long and enduring one, it required patience, and it was a struggle it jointly fought with the flood of Russian and East European émigrés who were willing to take on the frontline communication fight. On 9/11 America may have been too self-satisfied with its Cold War ideological legacy. The common perception was that the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks 'hate us because of our democracy or because they do not know us.' In scrambling to fight radical Islamism, this ideological legacy had already run out of ideological fuel. In contrast to their Russian and East European émigrés counterparts who fought on the frontlines of the media war, Arab journalists whom Alhurra hired in the hope of representing America's ideology were not ideologically motivated in any measure, nor was it at any time indicated to them that this was expected of them. If Russian and East European émigrés U.S.-Cold War journalists had an immediate stake in fighting communism because they were its victims, Alhurra Arab journalists were not the victims of radical Islamism. If at all, they were the victims the authoritarian Arab states system which America perpetually supports.

In short, just as America was ideologically muted in comparison to its ideological surplus during the Cold War, so was Brian Conniff, Alhurra's president for thirteen years, who persistently saw his job as a journalistic mission despite sporadic cries in the U.S. Congress and at BBG that Alhurra

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[16] Republished in *the Guardian Weekly* 100th anniversary edition, 5 July 2019, p. 21.

had political mission. In such an ideological organizational environment that was typically represented by Conniff, Arab Alhurra Arab staff were not ideologically any different. Their ulterior motive was to provide objective journalism, a trait they believed in prior to joining Alhurra, and it is only fortuitous that Alhurra shares the same value. In addition, those who joined Alhurra to change the Arab regimes realized very soon that their ambitions were not high on Alhurra's agenda.

<p style="text-align:center">*******</p>

Chapter Nine

Alhurra's Stated Mission of Representing America: "Who Said that?!"

It is always important for state funded media organizations to set high expectations for their mediated public diplomacy. BBG and its Alhurra branch are no exception. But what seems to be an exception is that an observer may not be able to keep up with how high the ceiling of expectations continues to rise, especially with respect to Alhurra's aim for representing America, in the reconstruction of its social reality according its own image, as well as speaking on its behalf to Arab audiences. This chapter reports and analyses crucial findings related to how Alhurra Arab communicators perceive their role in the representation of America or in the notion of spreading democratic and liberal ideals; America contends it has a surplus of them while Arabs live in societies that have a severe democratic draught. What is equally critical in the findings is how those interviewed perceived their colleagues at Alhurra regarding the representation of America and promoting its ideals. In the course of this chapter, I analyze the findings related to the extent to which Alhurra Arab communicators are aware of the details of the different tasks they are hired to perform. The chapter reintroduces certain aspects of Bourdieu's field theory to demonstrate Alhurra Arab journalists' strong tendency to perform their journalistic independence vis-à-vis the other objectives of mediated public diplomacy that are not purely journalistic. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the viability of theorizing the U.S.-Arab mediate public diplomacy in the light of Alhurra Arab journalists seeing their work as journalists from a purely journalistic perspective rather than attaching to it any other representational meaning, be that of America itself or their audiences.

9-1 "I am Not *National Geographic*"

Against the backdrop of America's perceived exceptional soft power David Ensor (2015), former director of Voice of America, suggests in a discussion paper, "Exporting the First Amendment: Strengthening U.S. Soft Power through Journalism," that "Greater effort should be made to find affiliates: stations willing to have American Arabic-speaking reporters and segments appear on their shows, with news about U.S. policy toward the region and life in America" (p. 23). Ensor is seemingly oblivious to the fact that Alhurra hardly ever had any Arabic-speaking American

frontline journalist or talk show host. According to a former Alhurra American-Arab top executive, journalists of such caliber are rare, incidentally contrasting with the abundance of American-Russians who joined ranks in VOA during the Cold War. As noted in an earlier chapter, part of the blame of the failure of Alhurra is that it relied on 'imported Arabs' who barely knew America. If this thesis *Can Arabs Represent America?* is to be given an alternative title, it could appropriately be *Can Imported Arabs Export the First Amendment?* A corresponding thought may be evoked as to why Russian and East European émigrés succeeded in exporting the First Amendment (answered in Chapter 7) while Alhurra Arab journalists failed.

A core part of this thesis is provoked by the notion that since America cannot represent itself to apprehensive Arab audiences; it must rely on the Arabs it hires to represent it. Consequently, the need arose to delve into the different theorizations on the possibility of the representation of the *other* especially when the represented and the presenter or the representor comes from a totally different, if not seemingly unequal, ontologies. The assumption here is based on the notion that for one to represent the *other*, one first needs to generate knowledge about that *other*. In other words, one must decode that knowledge, and then in order to represent it to others it must be encoded in a message, but the agents being from different social realities entails that they revert by default to their own epistemological frames of reference for interpreting and generating knowledge about the *other* that is to be represented. The question becomes: What guarantees the adequacy and the accuracy of such representation? Put differently, what guarantees the legitimacy of this representation? Although Robert Grafstein (1984) discusses Weber's conceptualization of interpretation of the *other* in a different context, he does nevertheless capture the likely epistemological imperative an interpreter cannot escape, which is seeing the other through one's own cultural prism.

> "To the extent that Weber accepts the historicist view of social reality, he also inherits the notorious problems of Verstehen. In particular, Verstehen involves the problem of obtaining valid interpretations of meaningful reality, since there is a tendency to interpret other distinct cultures through the categories of one's own. In so far as meanings become objects of inquiry, the observer is caught in the so-called hermeneutic circle. The framework of interpretation within which he or she attempts to assess the accuracy of the imputed meanings may also be the framework within which those meanings are first

constituted. The interpreter struggles to break the bounds of his or her own culture" (Grafstein 1981, p. 459).

Assuming the American-Arabs, or *exported* Arabs, that Ensor has in mind share the same interpretational cultural prism as their fellow 'pure' Americans, it is not certain how quickly those Arab journalists, no matter how much socialization they may undergo about America within Alhurra or about its ultimate objectives, can replace American ones. Revisiting a host of literature on the sociology of the generation of knowledge about the *other*, and the possibility of representing that *other,* make borrowing certain aspects of Stuart Hall's Decoding/Encoding Model seem feasible. While Hall's model dealt with audiences' negotiation of meaning of the message encoded by the sender, in the case of mediated public diplomacy, there is compelling reason to believe that this negotiation must be happening right at the production stage. This high likelihood of negotiation is precisely because Arab communicators are presumably hired by Alhurra to 'export' the First Amendment without Alhurra's management knowing how willing they are to be the messengers of America's worldview, let alone their belief in it, or whether there is an actual explicit or explicit agreement between them and the management that this is what is expected of them.

In pre-empting the possibility of encountering a 'negotiation' scenario as a prelude to the expected representation, learning from comparable experiences was assumed to facilitate a better understanding of what could emerge from the findings. Finding comparable experiences had not proven to be an easy task. However, the closest might be what Wes Sharrock (1974) did in analyzing the behavior of party members in two types of political parties. He calls one of them 'pluralistic parties,' whose members are drawn from different socio-economic classes, but their ideologies transcend classes, that is to say, the dominant worldview is not 'owned' by one particular collectivity. The second type comprises those centered on one dominant class but still attract members from other classes. However, the latter type includes "… those who are of lower social status can now be seen as taking their ideas from those of higher status, identifying with them and expressing their views." Without assigning ownership of a corpus to one or another collectivity, we could then be unable to talk of people 'identifying' with collectivities to which they do not belong, and we would also be unable to populate the social structure with such social types as 'stooges,' 'mouthpieces,' and 'tools of the oligarchy' in the ways that we presently do"

(Sharrock 1974, pp. 50-51). What could be of interest is that those in the lower status may not be able to escape expressing the worldview of those who are socio-economically superior to them. The sort of identity crisis a member of the former class may find oneself in is whether their behavior genuinely represents a true conviction or resembles " … imitations, impersonations, representations and the like, that he is not acting in his own behalf but trying to appear like others or to express their ideas and interests" (Sharrock 1974, p. 51).

As revealing as Sharrock's reported findings are, as much as they could have guided the expected empirical findings with respect to the extent of Alhurra Arab communicators' willingness or intentionality of representing America, the surprise came from Alhurra's most senior former executive who co-launched the channel. When I asked him how he reacted to one of BBG's main objectives, which is exposing Arabs to America's civilization, history, and culture to Arabs, his immediate, short, and direct answer was, "I am not *National Geographic,*" adding, "Who's saying these things!?" A comparable reaction about the representation of America to Arabs was echoed by other participants in the research. When I asked a talk show host about this objective, his answer was, "There was a documentary that was done some time ago … and there was a program on technology in America, about describing America, the American politics and the American culture; I don't know how well-produced it was." Another respondent noted that this is barely the objective of Alhurra, not to mention that any realization of this objective was not evident in Alhurra programming. For him, by contrast, RT [Russia Today] goes out of its way in showing the civilization and the culture of Russia. "Look, for instance at RT, technical-wise it is by far more superior to Alhurra, its tempo is fast, and the Russian perspective is extremely visible. Therefore, the news or the RT programs want to tell you about Russia is a matter that is a done deal; it is clear. At Alhurra they do not know if it wants to talk about the Arab world or about America or about both." Wanting to find out if he was at all aware that the representation of the America's civilization was also part of Alhurra's mediation mandate, a follow up question was, "Have you read any material about the publicly stated objectives of Alhurra?" The response was, "I remember that I did read, but I no longer recall what I read initially." This is a response from an Alhurra Arab staff who coordinated news gathering for Alhurra in an Arab country for over a decade.

Contrary to the meaning found in 'exporting the First Amendment,' the statement "I am not *National Geographic*" encapsulates the meaning of what the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy

is not from the perspective Alhurra Arab frontline communicators. The nature of abductive research is, in addition to relying on the meaning actors give to their actions, to prepare researchers to be adaptive in the theoretical frames of reference they adopt or have to disregard mid-research stream. I thought that shifting the use of Hall's Decoding/Encoding negotiations process from the *consumption* phase to the *production* phase would advance the use of Hall's model. However, knowing now that such negotiation barely takes place within Alhurra Arab frontline communicator's mindset, in the context of exporting the First Amendment, had literally made the potential of such an intellectual exercise redundant. Still in the context of Weber's social action theory, this negotiation remains a social action, in the sense that these communicators intentionally refrain from engaging in performing such an action or rather do not see it as a task they are expected to perform. That aside, such an assignment was never discussed with them as a part of their job description at the recruitment stage. Still, not even the person who did most of the initial recruitment of Alhurra communicators interviewed for this research believed it was a job assignment for them either.

9-2 Revisiting Alhurra Arab Communicator's Performativity

Other than the conscious abstention from the representation of America's ideals on the part of Alhurra Arab communicator, there are at least three factors that may hamper performing the representation of America performatively—even if that were a possibility. The first factor is intrinsic to the perceived nature of America as an *exceptional* country that defies representation by *others*. It is impossible to represent America by presumably inferior Arabs. Alberto Fernandez poignantly claimed in 2018 that it would have been impossible for anyone in the Arab world to even dream of a country that was as free, dynamic and diverse as America. Against this seeming impossibility of representation of American by Arabs, Fernandez set a goal for himself and the Arabs working for the Alhurra "*to provide a voice for Arab audiences that is distinctively American, enlightened, brave and reform-minded*" (Fernandez 2018). The challenge is then how to synchronize between a goal and a pre-requisite for achieving it, which is having Alhurra Arab journalists access the exceptional America that is inaccessible to them for the purpose of reproducing a 'voice' that is 'distinctively American,' that is also 'enlightened, brave and reform-minded,' all to be found in one communicator, who at the same time must provide a voice for the 'voiceless Arabs.' The second factor is that despite the expectations of representing America that

are written all over the wall, Alhurra Arab journalists themselves are not aware of, nor were they told about that assignment explicitly by Alhurra management. In other words, it is the perceived lack of representational characteristics of those tasked with the representation itself which places performing this task in the realm of impossibility.

Thirdly, and perhaps this is most crucial factor, most research participants have voiced critical reservations about the ability of *other* Arabs at Alhurra to represent America, even less to promote its democratic and liberal thinking in the Arab world. The prevailing perception is that their fellow journalists lack the legitimacy for performing such actions even if they wanted to. This is because they see their colleagues as a microcosm of their Arab societies with their own perceived social and cultural ills. Hence, they are seen as a representation of their own societies, rather than a group of liberal Arabs ready to use Alhurra as a platform to engage in an ideological struggle that is a reproduction of the Cold War experience where one ideology was in genuine struggle against another.

> "They [Alhurra] were always taking young people who were eager but their political leanings were not always pro-American policies … they had nationalistic leanings which did not make them defenders of the American values or policies. … And there are people within Alhurra we know them they are against America and are with fundamentalists here in the Arab world that are inside Alhurra –I was told so, I went there for a month and I used to drop by … they told me about the Iraqi-Shiite axis, … the ▮▮▮▮Sunni axis, also the Christian Lebanese and the right wing Lebanese and the Lebanese Shiites who support Hezbollah. There are blocks who insert and sneak in [in the programs] whatever they want."

What appears evident was that relocating a group of Arab journalists from one geographical location to another and putting them in an organization in America does not mean that the organization could become fully oriented with an American perspective or with a liberal orientation but remains typically Arab with all the perceived negative cultural baggage the Arab world could produce. According to one TV show host, the traditional social practices were not only evident in the how they work at Alhurra but equally evident in their social practices outside the channel.

"Muwafaq [Harb][17] lives there [America] and worked there before but all the rest do not know America. They were brought from Al Ashrafia [a district in the Christian sector of Beirut], … The head of the Iraq section at Alhurra and this is [name withheld] is an example, he used to keep his wife in the van in the heat of 40 degrees and goes up to visit you and does not bring her up to your house. … This one, will he talk about America? Oh Americans, just answer this question of mine? Are these going to change the Iraqi society, change Iraq? … They brought in people … to change the Arab world and for the promotion of the American values independent of the policies; they brought in those people to change by the mere fact that they are against Saddam to narrate the American principles! I did not understand!"

A similar perception of fellow Alhurra Arab staff was captured by a producer for Alhurra who had a fundamental identity issue, if not an identity crisis. This is reflected in both the mentality of the people who work within it, capped with perceived absence of its overall mission in terms of whom it wants to target and what perspective it wants to present.

"The issue is not whether it is located in America, in Qatar, or in Dubai. The problem is with the people who are working in the media, are they themselves free from inside or not? They are not free from inside and therefore the principle is fundamentally wrong."

Excerpts from the interview with a producer:

"All of us there didn't know America … we had to learn once we were there … Not all of us were in the same educational and scientific levels … I was going there with knowledge about the American system but there were many people who were with us who had no idea and notion of what is the American system."

So where would reporters incorporate the four American pillars in their presentation of the news, I asked?

"There is nothing called American foreign policy or the American perspective for us. We were not affiliated with any American administration. They did not interfere; there is a firewall between us and the American institutions. In the final outcome, this is America.

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[17] Muwafaq Harb was the first news director who was instrumental in initial launch of Alhurra in 2004.

And during my eight years of work in America I worked on the coverage of wars and worked on programs … and these eight years at no time had anyone come and told me you can do this, or you cannot do this. The margin of freedom in which I worked with was very, very huge …."

The findings show that there is a visible sensitivity towards terms like worldview, a viewpoint, an outlook, or a perspective. For the research participants, the moment any such terms are evoked, a specific political stance is triggered in their minds, which they say all goes against objective journalism. One participant notes that as a matter of principle, Alhurra news reports are not expected to be reported with a perspective, nor is that possible. A perspective can only be presented in talk shows or other political programs, and still not by the talk-show hosts themselves but by the participants in the talk shows. For that participant, Aljazeera and Al █████ journalists present what Alhurra stands against, but they present the desired type. Their apparent worldview is something that goes against the basic journalistic values of Alhurra, yet journalistic engagement evident in their performance is seen as exemplary. The second news director at Alhurra for eleven years notes that lack of resources had meant that the channel had to rely heavily on news wire reports to the extent that the channel could barely infuse its own editorial perspective in its news content. The other lamentation was that Alhurra hardly had the required financial resources to accompany the president on high profile foreign trips on par with news channels such as CNN.

"Worldview means that you are giving an opinion on all of the events that are happening. It [Alhurra] was not designed to present opinions about events; what happens is that it reports events that take place with transparency; its job is to shed light in its programs on fundamental issues that are [part] of its mission. But it is not its job to state an opinion, for example at the time of Abu Ghraib scandal prison scandal [in Iraq in 2005] we were the first American station to report it as scandal; people [at Alhurra] were working as much as they could and know; and no one stopped them; and they were working with transparency. Now if there were some people who liked to be more royal than the king and be more American than the Americans, then this is their problem."

It can be inferred from the findings, however, that the indisposition to imbue a point of view in Alhurra journalism was not just because it is reportedly a journalistic practice that undermines their performativity as frontline communicators. In other words, should Alhurra's mission be to

expose the Arabs to America's democratic kitchen or promote democratic ideals, it is believed that for them to be able to do so, they must at least have shed values that go against thier high ideals. Alhurra's first news director voiced concern over the difficulties the editorial management would have in assimilating newcomers who join Alhurra with all the journalistic practices they bring along from the other Arab media worked for, which do not blend with Alhurra's. On the other hand, some other research participants note that lack of performativity goes well beyond the mere journalistic practices which the Alhurra management often re-oriented through training courses given by American professors in journalism. What is more fundamental is their core values that undermine what liberal, modern thinking espouses, which accordingly, ought to have been reflected in Alhurra but could not. I am aware that some research teachers warn against allowing the interviewees in the research to become themselves the analysts. The length of the selected quotes below may confirm those fears, but they remain revealing when coming from a producer who spent a good eleven years at Alhurra.

> **"T**here are two main problems with Alhurra channel. The first one is the Arab journalists who most of them were brought up in [cultural] environments that were not democratic and had schizophrenia in their personality who think that being subservient is the yardstick for this type of work and most of them do not have a disposition towards freedom and were not brought up with a disposition towards freedom …

> "They [management] used to stating that they wanted the Arab world to know America. They failed because neither the people they employed were able to perform this mission nor did they work in the context of this mission.

> "Freedom and democracy is a right for each person but this right does not come through a pill that you swallow and that's it: you have it [freedom]. This is a practice over years and this experience that those who have not experienced it how do you expect him to talk about it, and how is he going experience it, and how is he going to convey it? Oh, my brother, it is like you want to talk to someone about wine; and if you do not drink wine and had never drank wine, how would you make others appreciate it?"

A pertinent Arabic proverb states that you cannot give away something that you don't have. In the case of Alhurra frontline communicators, the prevailing perception within fellow colleagues that they lack the required characteristics for representing America or their own audiences

presumed to seek political change, is seen to be detrimental to both their performance and performativity. In his book *Fox Populism* (2019), Peck notes that performance and performativity are intertwined in the reconstruction of reality that needs to be based on a clear ideological narrative. By contrast, being overly zealous about the notion of objective journalism, as is the case with Alhurra journalists, may amount to performing their journalism as being a true mirror of reality rather than a reconstruction of social reality that must usually be framed by one ideological leaning or another. In the case of Alhurra Arab journalists, there are two realities they need to cover. One is the social reality of America, and the other is the social reality of the Arab world from which they come.

Theoretically speaking, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, the positivist perspective BBG journalism seems to hold about being a true reflection of reality must have primarily meant to be applied in reporting about America to Arabs since BBG believes that Arab media distorts the social reality of America. But what remains a critical question is whether the same journalistic value of objectivity should apply to covering the Arab world, knowing that it is anti-American because it holds political values that America would want to be changed and to be more aligned with those it espouses. With this objective in mind, what would be more effective: a media that mirrors Arab reality for its own sake, or a media that reconstructs social reality according to an ideological template that seeks salvaging the Arab world from its political, social, cultural and economic ills? For a media that must deal with two social realities that are totally unrelated, if not antagonistic, is something that is utterly overlooked in the research in mediated public diplomacy.

Existing mainstream theorization about media is set largely set within the realm of one social reality. The extent to which current theorizations in international media can provide a helping hand is something that had not explored in this thesis. Such an epistemological question may have been needed in the context of the U.S. Cold War communication. The construction of the ideal type mediated diplomacy and comparing it with the U.S. Cold War experience was meant to shed light on both the performance and the performativity of the media overall and more specifically that of the Russian and East European émigrés as the front-line communicators. In the case of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, should there be any reconstructions of social realities, it is not clear which they are, their lack of purpose for this action, or whether the actors themselves are legitimate performers.

9-3 Performing a Journalistic Job that Cannot be Conceptualized

The U.S.-Cold War communication which spanned nearly half a century had not been thought of as a *field* of its own. For although it fell initially mostly under propaganda, the crafting of the term public diplomacy in the late 1960s was a life-saving term that allowed for its rebranding. The crafting of the term *soft power* by Joseph Nye in the early1990s was another equally powerful life-saving term that gave it yet a further boost. Those boosts, however, could not successfully carry it off when it targeted the Arab world. Nearly two decades after former president George W. Bush's outcry 'why do they hate us?' there is yet no final answer, nor is there a way to stop the tide of this presumed 'hate.' Under the assumption that 'they hate us because they do not know us,' Alhurra was launched in 2004 with the intention of exposing Arabs to America's self-acclaimed soft power in the hope that once Arabs get to know America, the country on the hill, the more likely they would appreciate it, or at least the hate beast would be tamed.

It did not take too long to prove that the Alhurra project could not reach its objectives, but that did not mean that the expectations from it stopped piling up ever more. It was perhaps Brian Conniff, the only senior American in the organization, who kept the objectives within the reasonable bounds of objective journalism. Labeling him by his predecessor as lacking imagination, not aggressive, and lacking knowledge of the Arab cultures, Alhurra's current president (since 2018), pushed Alhurra's objectives even further. *"The goal is to provide a voice for Arab audiences that is distinctively American, enlightened, brave, and reform-minded"* (Fernandez 2018a).

Concurrently, there is no shortage of proposed reasons for Alhurra's failure. One of the more vociferous critics had been the McCormick Institute report (2007) which contends that Alhurra and even other BBG broadcast entities have failed because they did not adopt the Cold War broadcast recipe, which was based on adopting two separate broadcasts instead of one. One was about 'us' which showcased America and its worldview and its soft power. The second was a surrogate media that was exclusively about 'them'—the targeted countries, broadcasting about national issues their national government would suppress. The contention is that for although during the Cold War the two missions overlapped at times, they remained differentiated to some extent. By contrast, Alhurra's failure is not only because the two visions crisscrossed aimlessly, but also because for the following reason:

"USIB's[18] mission is further clouded by what increasingly appears to be a confusion of purpose. … unable to bridge the divide between two visions of how America connects to the world through its broadcasting. The first vision is that we broadcast as a normative activity, for example to showcase ourselves, increase our credibility and support the free flow of information. The second vision is that we are enlisting our persuasive arts, talents and powers in the cause of a great struggle, which is not normative but is full of passion and emotion. During the Cold War, these two visions largely converged; everyone connected to USIB understood that America broadcasted for a purpose, that while our broadcasts were balanced and met high standards of journalism *they were never neutral*" (McCormick Institute 2007, p. 9; emphasis added).

Inadvertently, while the McCormick Institute called for the separation of both types of broadcasts, it maintained that although journalistic objectivity remains the highest virtue, it is never possible to remain neutral in an ideological war. Ensor (2015) cautions that the lobby for mixing the two broadcasts, 'us' and 'them', was gaining foothold in Washington, where there is a call for calling spade a spade and to stop shying away from stating the ultimate political goals of the U.S. public diplomacy.

> "James Glassman, a former undersecretary of state and former chairman of the … (BBG) … believes that the BBG has two incompatible goals. "Its mission is contradictory and confused. The law asks it to be both, a tool of U.S. foreign policy and an independent, unbiased journalistic organization, protected from government interference." Instead, Glassman argued, the "mission should be the same as that of the State Department itself: to achieve the specific goals of U.S. national security and foreign policy"" (p. 4).

It is evident that the replacement of former Alhurra president Brian Conniff, who believed in the journalistic mission of Alhurra over its ideological mission, with Alberto Fernandez who came straight from the State Department and who wanted to make Alhurra 'more American' was seen as a manifestation of giving priority to the ideological goals of Alhurra according to

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[18] USIB stands for United States International Broadcasting.

its former first news director interviewed for this research. It is not the intention here to predict how Alhurra will perform under the new management, which assumed responsibility in Summer 2017, just over two years into my work on my thesis. My intention has been all along that it is impractical to make decisions about the objectives of Alhurra without a more in-depth knowledge about the meaning Arab journalists at Alhurra give to their mediation. BBG has been conducting extensive surveys about Alhurra's audience size and how audiences perceive Alhurra, but on the production side, there has been an utter absence of systematic research on those who produce and deliver the communication. The bare minimum Alhurra management must do is to find out the extent of coherence between its stated objectives and the objectives of those it hires to perform the frontline communication on its behalf.

One of the most critical findings emerging from this research is the extent of the discord between publicly stated objectives for Alhurra and the objectives of its Arab communicators; nonetheless, this finding requires qualification. The discord is very evident when compared with the vast literature that is published by BBG, U.S. officials, mediated public diplomacy professionals, and academics. But practically speaking, it may appear that there is barely any discord between their interpretation of their work and that stated publicly by Alhurra Brian Conniff. Both stress the over-riding values of journalistic representation over ideological representation. Similarly, while Conniff had barely made an explicit reference to the ideological component of the mediation, for Alhurra Arab journalists it is a dimension from which they are totally detached. But this convergence in shared meaning stops at the moment the notion of 'explaining America' in this mediation is flouted by Conniff. We had seen earlier that this was a point of divergence between him and his Arab staff. They do not explain America. Conniff's timid public statements may prompt us to reflect on whether he had, in effect, led an organization that truly lived up to the mandate he was assigned to perform: independent, objective journalism, but it has proven not be a sufficient requirement for its success, or perhaps, not a believable one as far as the publics are concerned.

This reported journalistic value is believed to have operated as a 'firewall' between the journalistic representation, which the research participants believed in on the one hand, and the ideological representation on the other, irrespective of whether the latter was oriented towards audiences or towards the broadcaster. A few participants cited the Alhurra Code book[19] for its strict adherence to independent and objective journalism. It is equally apparent that the moment the term 'worldview' is mentioned in any of the interviews, it instantly triggered the notion of ideological media, which research participants spontaneously resisted. In Bourdieu's terms, the research participants' objective journalism, where the different sides of a story are presented and verified, constitutes their journalistic capital, which for them manifests their performativity.

Similarly, provoking Bourdieu's field theory, they perceive their performativity through the autonomy Alhurra's work code is reported to have granted them. At no time do any of the participants hint that they orient their reporting or analyses of news to their audiences or to the U.S. government. Bourdieu notes that the less autonomous a field becomes, the less pure it becomes. He gives the French television in the 1980s as an illustration where 'pure journalism' was forced to yield to the commercial interests of the advertisers (Bourdieu 2005). The research findings show that one of the apprehensions Alhurra Arab staff had at the recruitment stage was how independent they would be knowing that for them Alhurra is a state-owned media. They were assured that one of Alhurra's core values is independent journalism detached from any ideological leanings.

However, other than the agreement on doing representational journalism for the sake of objective journalism, there is barely anything else Alhurra Arab communicators agree upon with respect to the meaning they give to their work, or whom they perceive their audiences to be. There are arguments which note that contestation over a meaning of a field is the nature of things. But I questioned whether the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy can indeed afford contestation over its meaning by every stake holder who has a vested interest in this mediation. In the preceding analyses of findings, I sought to illustrate that this

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[19] Alhurra Code book is not made public, but it is said to resemble that of VOA Style Book.

incoherence may, in effect, be the result of a broader structural ideological vacuum within which all, the U.S., Alhurra and its Arab journalists, operate. However, before I conclude this chapter, I want to bring to the foreground other potentially potent reasons that may further explain the contestation in the meaning that they give to their work.

9-4 Crossing Journalistic Red Lines at One's Own Risk

Should the claim by the McCormick Institute (2008) that the success of the U.S. Cold War communication be attributed to having two separate broadcasts working largely independently of each other, one is 'surrogate' (about them), being about the target countries, and the other being purely about the U.S. 'public diplomacy' (about us), neither concept was on the mind of Alhurra Arab communicators when they joined Alhurra. Alhurra's news director and vice president, whose last day at Alhurra was the day Alberto Fernandez assumed his role as its president, articulated both concepts as follows. There were too many limits on how bold an Arab journalist could be in reporting about an Arab country from within that country. At the time of my interview with him, the blood of ██████ ████████ had not yet dried, or rather it could not be traced in the sewers of Istanbul. He used two rhyming Arabic terms to describe the imminent risks to Arab journalists crossing red-lines: *shwar* and *intihar,* or the cliff and suicide.

The implication is that no one is willing to come close to the cliff and become a martyr for no good cause, as surrogate broadcasting may suggest would be the case should one report from the within an Arab country. In effect, the assassination of ████████ demonstrated that no Arab surrogate journalist can be safe even if he or she operates from another country. Similarly, for this research participant, presenting America to Arabs was no more than the by-product of Alhurra being based in Washington, which makes presenting the political scene in Washington to Arabs an expectation because of its geographic location rather than its core objective. Correspondingly, according to Alhurra's first news director, as discussed earlier, Alhurra is seen as no more than a facilitator in bringing in different perspectives in Washington to present their respective perspectives prevailing in Washington's political scene.

This is at the more practical side of the terms *surrogate* and *public diplomacy*. At the conceptual level, neither term has had a commonly used equivalent in Arabic. As such, neither of these two communication concepts can be internalized by an Arab mind, simply because there are no commonly used Arabic terms for either of them in the context of media. Nor are these two internalized in practice as part of Alhurra's journalistic mission by the Alhurra Arab journalists I interviewed. For public diplomacy in specific, which is essentially a contested concept in the English language, it has yet to find for itself an equivalent Arabic term. Some of those who are aware of the English term translate it as popular (*shabiya*) diplomacy, others translate it as general (*aam'mah*) diplomacy. Hence, the mismatch between how Alhurra Arab journalists internalize their work and how it is desired or perceived by many in the U.S. is partly due to lack of common knowledge of concepts— surrogate media and public diplomacy—by the two cultures. One culture has elaborate meaning and media regarding them; the other cannot even conceptualize either concept, let alone articulate either in words that have common meaning.

Similarly, at the conceptual level, as we have seen in an earlier chapter that 'representation' is yet another concept Arabs cannot fathom. There is nothing comparable to this term in Arabic; certainly nothing even comes close to what Stuart Hall (1997) meant in his edited book on *Representation,* where for him media is all about representations. If an Arab author ever ventures into using the Arabic translation *tamtheel* for representation, it is more likely that the English text will appear next to it for the sake of securing a minimal understanding of it in the hope that the reader knows it in English. Similarly, the term 'representations' and the Arabic for it, '*tamtheelat'* sounds enormously odd and is rarely used, if at all.

This, however, need not mean that Alhurra Arab journalists cannot represent America because they cannot internalize the term representation. Nor are they unable to represent America because they cannot imagine what America is in the first place, according Alberto Fernandez. Nor is it because they come from a different ontology, which for the purpose of knowing or decoding America, they will invariably require using a different epistemological lens, and hence a distortion may likely occur when encoding what America is in their

mediated messages. Nor is it because it is next to impossible for a people from a presumed superior ontology to be represented by people from a presumably inferior one. Nor is it because journalists who come from authoritarian systems cannot represent the presumably ideal type democratic society in the world. All of these were assumptions that I could not escape making throughout my research journey in this thesis on the possible hindrances for representing America by Arabs. They either are explicitly or implicated stated as such. The answer for why Alhurra Arab journalists cannot represent America is not because of one or a combination of the just mentioned assumptions. It is more be because they neither see themselves as hired by Alhurra to represent America, not is it to spread its ideals so that Arabs who are presumed to be desperately seeking emulate it are eager to know about America. Instead, they see their primary work no more than presenting news and information objectively, be it any news or news about America.

Reference to presenting objective news about America appears as an anomaly rather than as a main objective of Alhurra communicators. Still, rather than seen as being objective for its own sake, they are seen as making sure that the perspectives of both, the Democrats and the Republicans, are present in Alhurra coverage, where the Congress is continuously holding Alhurra management accountable for fulfilling this role. The assumption here is that because the U.S. political process is so 'fascinating' according to Alhurra former president, Brian Conniff, this fascination should, according to its first news director, allow Alhurra to act as a buffer zone to calm down hot Arab tempers. Conceptually the buffer zone is hoped to permeate a sense of *respect* for Alhurra as an objective American media that talks to Arabs in their own language. Built-into this assumption is yet another one whereby it is hoped that Arab viewers are more likely to be interested in the democratic process of arriving at policies in the U.S. than with the final policy product itself. This is unlike policies in the Arab world that are cooked in political kitchens that are off-limits to the public.

Against this assumption, however, the findings show that Alhurra Arab journalists are ideologically indifferent to the actual American political process itself. Indeed, here one might want to question the extent to which journalism in its quest to become 'pure' ends up becoming an emotionally detached act, rather than some sort of representation of reality

with a degree of intentionality that is expected by viewers in a highly politicized pan-Arab media. That is, becoming an Artificial Intelligence anchor-type journalism where not only the professional identity of journalists gets diluted, but this identity erosion is projected on Alhurra as a whole as hinted by one respondent. This is seen happening to Alhurra in stark contrast to Aljazeera and Al ▇▇▇▇ they are often cited as the media with clearly identifiable identities, a characteristic that gets projected on their respective journalists however excessive their ideological identity may be perceived by participants to the research. But organizational identities remain vital from the perspective of the public. A talk show host articulates the differences by saying:

> "… I believe the objectivity of Alhurra and the absence of political fanaticism … of course it would have been idiotic had it been a propaganda for the war in Iraq or to the stances of President Bush; the Arabs are attracted to emotional impulses and attracted to grand issues. Alhurra could not have been like Al ▇▇▇▇ in how it tightens Arabs' [nationalistic] nerves against the Persians, nor could it be like Aljazeera [that promotes] Islam and Bin Laden."

9-5 The Reluctant Sender and Messengers

It needs to be noted that the absence of a common journalistic identity within Alhurra's Arab journalists itself ought not to be taken as the primary cause for its failure. Doing so would imply attributing its failure merely to internal causes. It is imperative that the findings of this empirical chapter take into account the macro factors that Alhurra is expected to perform its mediation role holding them as constant, knowing that they undermine its ability to perform its desired role effectively. Alhurra's Arab journalists' resistance to structural factors is evident when analyzed in the context of Bourdieu's field theory. Although this meaning is not explicitly studied in the context of America's foreign policy in the Middle East, it can be inferred from the reactions of Alhurra's first news director interviewed for this thesis that these journalists are not oblivious to the impact of these policies on Arab's reactions to the channel. It can also be inferred that the more extreme these policies are, the more likely it is that these journalists will want to preserve their journalistic independence. This was possibly happening under the leadership of Brian Conniff,

when during his later years of presidency it was not that clear who America's antagonists were in the region. We know that in the initial years of Alhurra, Islamic fundamentalism spearheaded by Al Qaeda was the 'they' in 'why do they hate us?'

Under the presidency of Alberto Fernandez, however, the antagonists are far clearer: they are Iran, Hezbollah, the Syrian regime, and the Muslim Brotherhood. This may explain why many of the new faces on Alhurra' screen are graduates of Arab Gulf-owned TV channels known for their antagonism towards Iran. Developments at Alhurra were taking place as I worked on my last chapters, which provided me with immediate input for my work; there was a limit to how much I could pose, absorb, integrate, and analyze. Indeed, the meanings the new Arab journalists and anchors at Alhurra give to their new work warrant studying—given that there is a totally new orientation in the channel's editorial policy, at least at the publicly stated level. Fernandez, coming from the State Department, has meant—to at least one of the research participants—that the firewall Alhurra Arab journalists firmly stood behind to protect their journalistic independence against political ideologies has been loosened. But does that mean that new Arab staff can represent America better than the dozens of their fired colleagues? The findings of this thesis could give some clues to answering this question, more so as to whether Alhurra can provide a more unique *American perspective* on reporting events to Arab audiences, as desired by Fernandez.

One of the main motives for engaging in this PhD thesis was trying to resolve the riddle of the contestations over the meaning of the U.S.-Arab public diplomacy. It was assumed that a more unified meaning may be found amongst those who are actually the frontline communicators. Exploring whether the representation of American was ever on their minds became relevant because just as they expected to be the presumed voice of voiceless Arabs, hungry for democracy, they could perform at the same time the voice of a voiceless America that has a surplus of democracy. The research findings suggest a clear indication that the representation of America is not on the mind of Alhurra Arab journalists, but not necessarily because they cannot represent it but because they are not asked to do so. It is only an expectation that BBG must have missed bringing to the attention of the people it hires to represent America to Arabs.

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Chapter Ten
Conclusion

The 9/11 attacks in 2001 were a rude awakening to the U.S. government: there was an Arab public opinion that was apprehensive towards the United States. Knowledge about the reasons for this apprehension was and still is guess-work: 'Do they hate us because they do not know us, or because they know us and hate who we are?' America, presumably the best communicator the world had ever seen, suddenly realized that it was voiceless when it needed to talk to Arabs. Most intriguing to the U.S. government was how any people could hate America, the *exceptional* country that it is. Not considering it anything other than a 'miscommunication' or a 'misunderstanding' issue causing this apprehension, the George W. Bush administration decided to go on a communication offensive to change Arab attitudes towards the United States. This option became more urgent, especially after its invasion of Iraq in spring 2003, when the Bush administration needed an Arabic voice of its own to 'explain' its polices to Arabs, exposing them the democratic process that produces these policies, as well as promoting democracy in the region. Put in the words of former president George W. Bush, "*We have to do a better job of telling our story*."

Preoccupation with the communication option had its roots in the critical role communication played in the Cold War in which the Russian and East European communist regimes invested heavily in blocking the transmission of Western short-wave radio signals from reaching their people. U.S. Congressmen and many others in the U.S. were of the opinion that same successful scenario could be replicated in targeting the Arab world. For them, Arab regimes were either blocking or distorting the true image of America in their national media. Hence, there was the need to reach Arabs directly with America's own Arabic media. Belief in the centrality of the communication for changing Arabs' attitudes towards the U.S. was also strikingly evident in the sudden mushrooming of the academic, professional, and think tank publications on mediated public diplomacy— a surge that went on unabated for well over a decade post the 9/11 attacks.

The launch of Alhurra TV channel in spring 2004 was hoped to be the panacea for establishing access to direct communication with Arabs where Alhurra was tasked with the representation of America to apprehensive Arab audiences. In the absence of Arab-Americans who could mediate

between America and the Arabs, Alhurra had, and still has, to rely almost exclusively on Arab journalists hired from across the Arab world either to relocate to America or remain stationed in their home countries, to do the representation of America, a country they have no first-hand experience with. However, for about a decade and a half since its existence, Alhurra has barely received any praise for delivering what it promised or was expected of it. In the words of former Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, Richard Stengel, "*We're not the best messenger for our message.*" Stengel does not qualify who he meant by 'we.' However, in this thesis the messenger is considered to be the frontline communicator, and in the case of Alhurra the messengers are Alhurra Arab journalists. Alhurra's failure is what prompted the work on this thesis captured in both the main research question as well as the title of the thesis: *Can Arabs Represent America*?

The issue with respect to the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy is that in addition to the comparative incongruence over its meaning attributed to the concept as per the published literature, we know nothing about the meaning Alhurra Arab journalists attribute to their mediation. The knowledge gap applies equally to the extent of congruence in the meaning Alhurra Arab journalists attribute to their work, on the one hand, and Alhurra's publicly stated objectives, on the other.

My original aim in this thesis was to attempt a preliminary venture into theorizing the U.S. mediated public diplomacy from the perspective of the Alhurra Arab frontline communicators themselves, or, more specifically, how they perceive their role in communicating on behalf of America, a country with which they themselves have no first-hand experience. Yet they are expected to represent and impress apprehensive Arabs with its worldview, explain its policies to them, and at the same time promote democratic ideals. Whereas America has a surplus of democratic ideals, the Arab world hungers for them. These objectives are expected to be achieved through objective journalism, which the Arab media is believed to lack; alternatively, Alhurra will provide unbiased reporting about America, the Arab region, and the world. It is expected that through objective reporting of news and on information about America, Arabs will start appreciating America, its exceptionalism, and its foreign policies since Arabs will receive this news and information, raw, unfiltered, and reflecting reality as it is.

Understanding how the Arab journalists interpret their work is in part prompted by the contestation over the role and purpose of the U.S.-Arab public diplomacy mediation. However, because of the centrality of their expected role in the representation of America to their own Arab people, an in-depth understanding of their intentions and motivations and the meaning they give to their work at Alhurra becomes imperative. Porta and Keating (2008) remind us that knowing "why people do as they do" (p. 3) has motivated social research in the recent years for learning more about "… the role of ideas as opposed to interests in social and political life; and in the way that perceptions of interests are conditioned by ideas" (p. 4).

In this thesis I justified why the *social action* theoretical framework can be appropriately adopted for understanding the meaning these journalists give to their work as they negotiate their mediation between the American and the Arab social collectivities. Because of the *intentionality* of the mediation, at least from the perspective of the sender, i.e. the U.S. government, the adoption of the social action theorization assumes that the act of decoding and encoding what America wants to communicate to Arabs about itself could be theoretically classified as a social action. This approach has provided insights into identifying and understanding the gaps between what Alhurra believes to be the desired U.S.-Arab public diplomacy mediation which is based on Alhurra's (or BBG's) intentions and desires, as compared with what can be regarded as the *practical type* of mediation, as experienced and practiced by the Alhurra Arab journalists themselves.

For Weber, for an action to fully qualify as social, it must meet two criteria: the actors must assign a subjective meaning for their action, and the second is that the action itself must take into consideration how those towards whom the action is directed interpret it. The third component built into the interaction of the two components is the possibility of explaining the causality of the action itself and its consequences. Existing literature on the meanings which actors assign to the same action presume that incoherence in meaning does not necessarily lead to a failure in producing a meaningful action. As such, the incoherence in the meaning Alhurra Arab journalists attribute to their work need not explain or contribute much to explaining why Alhurra failed. But when combined with the findings related to the corresponding disharmony in whom they perceive as their audiences, we have more credence to infer that the incoherence in both components is not a mere coincidence and has potentially serious consequences on the mediation itself.

But by superimposing this incoherence at the actors' (messengers') level on the same corresponding incoherence at Alhurra's top American management (senders') level, the closing of the circle explaining possible reasons for Alhurra's failure becomes more evident. The explanation comes full cycle when realizing the complete absence of a well-defined and agreed upon ideological drive that propels the communication mission to its desired final destination. We have seen that on more than one occasion. In her capacity as Secretary of State in the Obama administration, Hillary Clinton lamented at the 'abdication' from the ideological struggle that for her, was the main propeller in winning the Cold War. During the Cold War, however, no one had to call for turning on the ideological engine. It was on full capacity on its own, for it was part and parcel of every aspect of the American life, all under the banner of democratic ideals, and all against a known ideological antagonist: communism.

In the context of Weber's social action theorization combined with the performativity component of the ideal type action, the issue is not just the interpretation of a journalist's own actions as communicators and who the audiences are; it is also the issue of identifying with the audiences. A more contemporary manifestation presented in this thesis is the proper identification of audiences with Fox News as its leading news anchors. In the case of Russian and European émigrés at VOA and Radio Free Europe, their audiences were 'our' people. By contrast, in the case of BBG and top American management of Alhurra, the audiences are 'Arabic speaking' in the Middle East, but for Arabs, there are no 'Arabic speaking' in the Middle East, there are Arabs who speak Arabic. Arabic speaking may apply to descendants from the Arab world who live in other parts of the world. Such a term may not only be meaningless to an Arab; it could be considered insulting.

The research findings show that, on the Alhurra Arab communicator's side, the perceived audiences could range from no one, either because they think Alhurra has no audiences or because they genuinely do not relate to any audiences, to the other extreme of targeting everyone. In summary, just as targeting no one may amount to talking to oneself, targeting everyone may amount to a total dilution of the message contents where no one gets offended by covering the least controversial topics, which is exactly what Alhurra should not be doing—assuming that the intentionality of the message dictates that the messages have meaningful intentions aiming at impacting audiences.

At the start of my work on my thesis, and in the absence of any theorization about the mediated public diplomacy in general, coupled with contestation over its meaning, I had ambitiously thought that the adoption of an abductive research approach would allow me to construct a theory based on the perspectives of those who practice the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy as producers and frontline communicators. I had hoped that all the relevant theoretical frames of reference I utilized would guide me to the right path allowing me to theorize this un-theorized social phenomenon in the hope that it provide deeper understandings of its dynamics. Much of the media and the sociological theoretical work I contemplated in Chapter Two would be relevant to the social production of media and generation of knowledge about the other and was meant to act as an intellectual landing ground for more findings. This effort was in reaction to all the grand expectations form the U.S.-mediated public diplomacy; expectations that only grow larger.

After over four years of research work, I realized, however, that my goal could not be achieved in full simply because none of the participants in the research, except for one, perceive what they practice as mediated public diplomacy. This is in terms of representing the exceptionalism of America, or practicing the more aggressive surrogate-type of journalism that exposes the inside of the Arab world to Arabs – supposedly hungry for political change for the sake of putting the Arab world on the path of democracy. It can be inferred that, all without exception, when put between the struggle for journalistic representation of events and its ideological representation, Alhurra Arab journalists interviewed for this thesis do not blink in choosing the former. For them, objective journalism is what secures their performativity as journalists; more so, it is what they are hired for, and what for them constitutes the core values of Alhurra. In short, they practice journalism according the Alhurra chart of independent and objective journalism. This is a matter of principle for them.

However, while my attempt at theorizing the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy from the perspective of its Arab frontline communicators may have proven fruitless, since they do not see themselves doing mediated public diplomacy, the potential for theorizing the mediated public diplomacy *ideal type* is more promising. In that theorization attempt, I combined the social action theorization with the performativity theorization adopted from Austin and Bourdieu and identified the key conditions that must be secured for an ideal type public diplomacy mediation to succeed.

One condition must be coherence in the meaning attributed to communication objective and target audiences, between the frontline communicators themselves, and with the sender. The second condition is the performativity of communicators themselves in the eyes of their target audiences, where the audiences are properly identified, the communicators identity with them and with their cause as well. The third condition is the cohesiveness in the performativity of the sender, more specifically, the claims as well as the actions or policies made by the sender, which at no time should undermine the performativity of the frontline communicator. In short, the possibility of theorization in this case is not just based on a conceptual ideal type model but on empirical evidence inferred from the existing experiences of frontline communication actors who struggled to bring down the Iran Curtain.

The U.S.-Cold War communication had perfectly met every criterion or characteristic of the ideal type. By contrast, the U.S-Arab mediated public failed to meet any of the criteria constructed for the ideal type. For not only there is incoherence in the meaning Alhurra Arab journalists give to their work at Alhurra, there is utter disharmony in who the audiences they are supposed to target. Similarly, there is comparable incoherence in both aspects as interpreted at the successive top American management of Alhurra.

As demonstrated in comparison with the ideal type conditions for performative mediated public diplomacy, taking the U.S.-Cold War communication as a case in point, in addition to the fact that the sender and the messenger shared the same ideological drive, the sender was not engaged in any activity that undermines the performativity of the messenger. In other words, both the sender and the messenger were in the eyes of receivers behind the Iron Curtain equally performative and legitimate representors of the democratic ideology that both claimed to have espoused. Furthermore, we can argue that in the U.S.-Cold War experience there was barely any visible differentiation between the messenger and the sender. The fact was that America, as the sender, had to rely on Russian and East European émigrés to produce and communicate the messages supplemented by a continuous flow of dissident ready to jump on the communication wagon with the minimum pay.

As I argued in the empirical analysis of the ideal type, there is a strong case for suggesting that the frontline Russian and East European émigrés were not necessarily representing America as much

as they were representing the people to whom they were communicating; they were mediating on their behalf across the Iron Curtain. This representation scenario is thus dual. While they were, more or less, representing America's ideals, they were also representing the aspirations of those they were reaching out to on the other side of the Curtain.

However, in the case of the U.S.-Arab mediated public diplomacy, the factor that undermines the performativity of the communication is the performativity of the U.S. itself. For other than the fact that the U.S. is going through an ontological transformation itself, its policies in the Arab world, in which it blatantly supports authoritarian regimes, undermine its claims for promoting democratic ideals. Similarly, its claims for fighting Islamic extremism are placed against the backdrop that America had sponsored groups that espoused these tendencies in its fight against communism in Afghanistan during the Russian occupation during the 1980s.

Inadvertently, it may have been a mere coincidence that ███ Khashoggi's last Washington Post OpEd piece, October 17, 2018, published two weeks after his slaughter in Istanbul, ends with a call for America to provide Arab dissidents a media platform for reforming the Arab states, along the same lines America provided Russian East European dissidents during the Cold War. Inadvertently, Khashoggi's call amounts to a testimony, from presumably the ultimate Arab dissident, that Alhurra does not resemble anything close to the Cold War U.S.-sponsored surrogate broadcast.

Similarly, the U.S. government's reactions to Khashoggis' murder is yet another testimony that its sponsorship of surrogate broadcasting to the Arab world is no more than mere lip-service, for it failed to condemn the ███ monarchy in its alleged involvement in the murder. Again, Alberto Fernandez's rush to post a *like* to a text posted by one of Alhurra's columnists on her Facebook page claiming that ████ was no more than a 'charlatan,' is a testimony that if Arab journalists contemplate crossing red lines, they do so at their own risk, with not even a symbolic endorsement from the U.S. government or Alhurra.

Much of the work on this PhD happened during a transitional period of the America's soft power; from its last peak under Barack Obama to the start of decline under Donald Trump. Similarly, changes within the leadership of Alhurra, coupled with the ontological changes happening within

America itself, as I wrote each paragraph and each chapter amounted to somewhat of an emotional and intellectual roller-coaster. I had to stop somewhere while America itself continued to sort out its new national identity issues, if not an all-out identity crisis. This may even provide respite for those who are asked to represent America till it sorts out what it wants to be and communicate about itself. As such, the issue is not whether Arabs can represent America, but equally so, if America itself is representable at this stage of its history, a history very different from the Cold War era, where America's soft power or exceptionalism was more a more credible proposition to others than it is now under the Trump administration.

Other than pointing to a clear answer to the main research question as to whether Arabs can represent America, contestation over the meaning Alhurra Arab journalists give to their work may have also given an answer to whether in practice there is a U.S-Arab *mediated public diplomacy* as a *field* of *its own* at all. The answer here is yet another *no* since Alhurra Arab journalist perceive their work to be an extension of their journalistic profession where a change in media owner—Arab or American—does not mean a change in the meaning they give to their work.

Perhaps more importantly, despite the deluge of literature about the publicly stated objectives of Alhurra being the beacon for representing America with its democratic liberal ideals and worldview and the explanation of its foreign policies, Alhurra Arab journalists are never told that these are expectations of them by the management. While in some job announcements at Alhurra mention that its work is part of the U.S. public diplomacy, this term is never elaborated. The focus is job requirements and specifications. As such, the representation of America is an assumed expectation and since it is as such, Alhurra Arab journalists ought not to be held responsible for the failure for impressing Arabs with what America represents from its perspective.

A core component of this thesis is related to the possibility of a group of journalists from one culture representing another social collectivity that is different from theirs, if not unequal. In a speech at the Westminster Institute in DC, June 2018, the new president of Alhurra, Alberto Fernandez, goes as far as telling his audiences that America is not only different or unequal vis-à-vis the social reality Alhurra Arab journalists come from, America is simply beyond their

imagination for it is 'diverse and dynamic and open and freer than anything that anyone in the Arab world could dream of.'

I worked on this topic during a transitional period in the international image of America. Paradoxically, it may represent the final burst in the rise of America's soft power under Barack Obama and its fall under Donald Trump. With evident populist tendencies in how Trump rules and the sudden rush for publishing books on the threat of the rise of tyranny in the democratic West, there are certain manifestations that Arabs may be able to imagine America. This is not because they are becoming more democratic, but perhaps because certain aspects of political America may have resemblances of the political systems with which they are familiar.

Hence, the dilemma Alhurra Arab journalists find themselves in is that while America is beyond representation by them because they are Arabs who cannot dream what America is, the Alhurra president believes that for Alhurra to succeed it must become 'more American.' His desperation in seeking to infuse *Americanness* in Alhurra's voice is echoed in a MEMRI OpEd where he wrote, "The challenge of U.S.-funded broadcast media is, in my opinion, not that it is American but that it is not American enough" (Fernandez 2017). How he qualifies the meaning of being more American may be found in both the title of the OpEd itself '*More Than Half The Battle: On Broadcasting And Ideology,"* as well as in the visual of a handheld camera built-into it a magazine of submachine bullets.

As I conclude this thesis, I admit that at times I may have sounded as if I have treated the qualitative findings with a high degree of certainty with respect to their potential implications. Qualitative research is meant to allow researchers to reach hypotheses to be tested quantitatively. Luckily for me, abductive research allows a high degree of relaxation of such strict limitations. I am fully aware that I approached this study with a baggage full of assumptions and hypotheses, some of which I arrived at in the due course of my previous writings on the subject and knowledge of people who worked or still work at Alhurra, but most importantly are the ever-growing expectations from what Alhurra ought to deliver. Equally critical in formulating these assumptions and hypotheses have been the different theoretical frames of reference I adopted, which naturally provoked their creation.

Part of Alhurra's logo is an image of what resembles a pigeon. However, in the mind of Alhurra's new president, the image seems to be a handheld camera built-into a submachine gun. The research findings indicate with certainty that Alhurra's former communicators would be very disturbed by such an image. Again, and in contrast to the Cold War communication, it was America's soft power, or more specifically its popular culture, that pierced the Iron Curtain, not the bullets. This was the original belief of Norman Pattis, who spearheaded the launch of Radio Sawa (a sister of Alhurra TV) back in 2001. It is popular culture versus camera and bullets. Bullets kill whereas words may or may not convince. But when a bullet is attached to a message, the communication may become what Janice Bialy Mattern (2005) terms a *representation force* that is loaded with verbal threats that aims at threatening the ontological security of the target audiences. Representational force is used when soft power fails.

It is commonly stated that there is a tendency for researchers to state the shortcomings of their research and suggestions for future research out of mere expectation that they ought to be doing so. I like to think of myself as having a genuine purpose for the additional research I am proposing. In order to lead an organization, its leaders must know what is on the minds and in the hearts of its staff. Many important goals have been set for Alhurra since its inception in 2004. The fact that it is seen to have failed in delivering these expectations, and the fact that under its new leadership of Alberto Fernandez, dozens—if not over one-half of the 800-strong—staff were replaced with new blood, the findings of this research could form the basis for further research. It would investigate the extent of Alhurra Arab journalist's engagement in their work at Alhurra, awareness of its objectives, sources of knowledge and commitment to its objectives, the challenges, possibilities and hindrances of realizing the set objectives, especially the new image Alhurra's new president has for the station.

As I conclude this last chapter it is evident that the expectations from Alhurra Arab journalists are largely assumptions on the part of Alhurra and BBG. In the complete absence of theorization about U.S. public diplomacy, it had the option of going straight to Grounded Theory and perhaps would have avoided the interrogation of many social media and social theories. However, just as I am interested in the outcome of this research, I was equally interested in the research process itself.

Had I gone straight into Grounded Theory and then went back to some of these social theories, I would have missed the intellectual joy of this intellectual exploration. The borrowing of the many social theories I consulted was meant to serve as launching pad for analyzing the empirical findings which many Alhurra Arab journalists had on their minds. Perhaps, for Alhurra, the main lesson is that just as the organization must have expectations, it is not enough to have them published in different English language literature of which its frontline communicators are not aware, never discussed with them, let alone that they do not believe them or think they are part of their mission, especially when it comes to the ideological representational aspect of the mediation.

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