Middle Power Pull:
Can Middle Powers use Public Diplomacy to Ameliorate the Image of the West?

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The international community is increasingly recognizing that instability is no longer constrained by geography. In the pursuit of domestic security, it is becoming common for states to be proactive in addressing social and cultural drivers of twenty-first century insecurity where they occur. One such driver lies in the deep resentment towards the West harboured by radicalised individuals in volatile regions of the world, regions that are struggling with economic disenfranchisement, social and cultural change, and corrupt and controlling governments. Much of this resentment is driven by inconsistent, unjust foreign policies of Western states. Much stems from misperceptions or prejudices. In both cases, the proliferation of travel, communications, and weapons technology means that simmering resentment can pose a serious threat to targeted states.[1]

While the United States (US), as the worlds' only superpower and self-styled global policeman, is the focal point for anti-Western sentiment, it is important to remember that just as threats posed by radicalised individuals are not state-based, neither are they aimed at a single state. The broader community of Western states is implicated. To date, attacks on Western targets by individuals with strong ties to volatile regions have been carried out in Australia (via Bali), the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom (UK), and the US. Other attempts have been thwarted by national security services. While many states are countering these threats by contributing resources to border security, intelligence-sharing, and counter-terrorism units, they have thus far paid comparatively little attention to creating favourable public opinion in areas of the world where adverse public opinion is a breeding ground for security threats.

This paper addresses whether or not Western middle power states are capable of making an effective, significant contribution to ameliorating the image of the West via public diplomacy. Public diplomacy, often incorrectly labelled as state-sponsored "spin," is a process of dialogue and relationship-building with application to foreign and security policy development. Relevant literature suggests that middle powers, which are typically understood to emphasize multilateralism in their foreign policy and who pursue "second and third agenda" items, are well positioned to engage in cooperative public diplomacy by virtue of their substantial soft power and established networks. This direction is tested through examination of two states considered to be middle powers: Canada and the Netherlands. Both states possess significant strengths that make them powerful allies in the court of public opinion: credibility and soft power, inclination to work with non-state actors on issues of global governance, and histories of innovation. Strengths are further reinforced when seen from the perspective of cooperative public diplomacy. Yet examination reveals this potential is going largely unrealized. The ability of middle power states to employ public diplomacy effectively is undermined by the lack of hard power resources – namely political will and economic support – dedicated to public diplomacy.

Middle Powers, Public Diplomacy, and the Network Paradigm of Persuasion

Writers, particularly in Canada and Australia, have been at variance over the characteristics of middle power states for half a century. Compelling arguments have been made that the term 'middle power' is imprecise, and perhaps even detrimental, in explaining the position of some states on the international stage. Critics contend the term is obsolete, lacks conceptual clarity, and is little more than a way for states to justify and extend their influence.[2] Indeed, most definitions are so vague as to possess little meaning. The Middle Powers Initiative, for example, describes middle powers as states that are "politically and economically significant."[3] The trouble with this definition is that determining what qualifies a state as "significant" is problematic.

While it may be difficult to define, the term's longevity and its common usage in diplomatic circles denote some underlying legitimacy. Namely, there are states that, although their resources are not comparable to the US, still wield considerable influence and authority that sets them apart from other, smaller powers. Countries such as Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, and Scandinavian states are often referred to as middle powers in a normative sense. In the past, identifying middle power states has been accomplished through establishing their position in the international hierarchy based on their resources. Holbraad rank-orders middle power states based on criteria such as gross national product and population.[4] "Any attempt to estimate the power of a nation," he writes, "starts with an effort to evaluate the force at its disposal."[5] Such a strategy is not without justification; the term itself implies a relational measure (i.e. occupying the middle place in a range). This tactic poses difficulties, however, as it is virtually impossible to objectively rank-order states. This is echoed by Welsh, who highlights that factors which have traditionally placed states in the "middle" of a power continuum – defence spending, for example – have become incongruent with the amount of influence those states can exert.[6]

In the absence of objective measurement criteria, agency comes into play. Middle power states have most recently been defined by their internationalism. States that exhibit certain foreign policy behaviour are considered middle powers. Qualifying behaviour might include good 'global citizenship,' niche diplomacy, and accepting roles as mediators, followers, or staunch multilateralists.[7] This common behaviour has formed the basis for grouping states as middle powers. Colijn notes that Canada, the Netherlands, Japan, and

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[2] Adam Chapnick, (2000). "The Canadian Middle Power Myth," *International Journal,* 55(2).

[3] Middle Powers Initiative, *Mission/Overview*, <http://www.gsinstitute.org/mpi/about.html> (7 June 2006).

[4] Carston Holbraad, *Middle Powers in International Politics* (London: MacMillan, 1984).

[5] Ibid., 77.

[6] J.M. Welsh, (2004). "Canada in the 21st Century: Beyond Domination and Middle Power. *The Round Table*, 93(376): 584.

[7] Richard A. Matthew, "Middle power and NGO partnerships: The Expansion of World Politics." Kenneth R. Rutherford, Stefan Brem, and Richard A. Matthew, *Reframing the Agenda: the Impact of NGO and Middle Power Cooperation in International Security Policy* (London: Praeger, 2003), 8-11.

Australia have played similar roles in the Ottawa Process to ban anti-personnel landmines, the comprehensive test ban regime, the chemical weapons convention, and the UN Conference on Disarmament.[8]

The most well received literature on the topic of middle power states is Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal's book *Relocating Middle Powers*, which subscribes to the latter method of classification. Rather than being based on traditional factors such as size, geographic location, or structural position in the international system, a state's classification as a middle power is rooted in its ability to provide "technical and entrepreneurial" leadership on the world stage on specific issues.[9] Their definition also rejects the idea of middle power as an all-encompassing role. It is more accurate to say that certain states can act as middle power states in certain circumstances and in certain subject areas. "To be included in the category of middle powers," they write, "countries have to act as middle powers."[10] Significantly, they also write that middle power states tend to be more passive on issues such as security.[11] Instead, they place emphasis on "second agenda" (i.e., economic issues) and "third agenda" items (i.e., the environment and human rights).[12]

There remain important censures on Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal's conceptualization of middle powers. One drawback is that it may open the door too wide. If a great power, or even a superpower, engages in entrepreneurial leadership tactics, does it qualify as a middle power? Denis Stairs extends this criticism by rejecting the idea that middle power states can be defined by any commonality in their foreign policy behaviour. "The reality," he writes, "is that middle power states behave in all sorts of different ways and the roles that have often been associated with them are in fact performed by all sorts of different countries."[13] In a similar vein, Welsh writes that the term 'middle power' is of little use in the 21st century. Middle power internationalism, she argues, is perceived to be about building consensus, managing, and mediating. But in the turbulence that has characterized international politics and global governance since 11 September 2001 and possibly since the end of the Cold War, states that have traditionally been considered middle powers need to seek new roles.[14]

While Welsh is correct in writing that the definition of middle power states as process-oriented falls short of outlining definitive parameters of who qualifies as a middle power, the characterization remains the most reliable and persistent for classifying middle powers. To reconcile Stairs' and Welsh's criticisms with the conceptualization of middle powers as actors with multilateral tendencies and heightened emphasis on second and third agenda items, it is useful to emphasize Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal's assertion that

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[8] Ko Colijn, (2004). "Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Medium Power Concern." *International Journal*, 59(2): 352.
[9] Andrew F. Cooper, Richard A. Higgott, and Kim R. Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 7.
[10] Ibid., 27.
[11] Ibid., 32.
[12] Ibid., 22.
[13] Stairs in Chapnick, 202.
[14] Welsh, 586.

'middlepowership' comprises only an aspect of a state's foreign policy conduct. A state is not restricted in its foreign policy by being classified as a middle power, but states included in this category are prone to certain behaviour arising from their status relative to other states. In summary, middle power states are conceived of as actors that are inferior to great powers in both realist and structural senses, but that emphasize multilateral solutions, that are capable of exerting leadership on the world stage, and that are particularly concerned with second and third agenda issues.

Public diplomacy has become increasingly prominent in recent years. The most dramatic catalyst was the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, which revealed the devastating effects that negative public opinion can wreak.[15] Other developments have converged to give public diplomacy heightened importance in foreign policy agendas. Melissen, for example, describes it as a broader trend in governance that he refers to as the 'societization' of diplomacy. The US is not the only state that has expanded its public diplomacy efforts. In 2002 and 2005, the UK commissioned the development of recommendations for its public diplomacy strategy. In 2005, Canada made public diplomacy part of its official foreign policy. The Netherlands is presently in the process of expanding and refining its public diplomacy capabilities. Reflecting a wider trend, in 2003 the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) transformed its Office of Information and Press into the Public Diplomacy Division, and the European Union (EU) has likewise begun to develop a public diplomacy strategy. Although public diplomacy has long existed, largely by other names, it seems evident that it is recently garnering a greater degree of attention.

The term continues to be understood in many different ways. It has frequently been derisively described as a synonym for propaganda.[16] It should be emphasized that *public diplomacy is not state-sponsored spin*. Public diplomacy is conventionally understood as the practice of cultivating favourable public opinion amongst foreign audiences with the objective of furthering a state's foreign policy objectives.[17] This definition provides a useful starting point, but fails to address the mutuality that is critical if public diplomacy is to become an effective tool for foreign and security policy. To come to a more nuanced understanding of public diplomacy it is helpful to consider traditional diplomacy. Traditional diplomacy refers to interaction

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[15] Mark Leonard, *Public Diplomacy* (London: Foreign Policy Centre: 2002), 1.

[16] Leonard, *Public Diplomacy*, 8; Mark Leonard and Andrew Small, *British Public Diplomacy in the 'Age of Schisms'* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2005): 6; Rhonda S. Zaharna, "From Propaganda to Public Diplomacy in the Information Age," Yahya R. Kamalipour and Nancy Snow, eds., *War, Media, and Propaganda* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 22.

[17] Evan H. Potter, (2002) *Canada and the New Public Diplomacy*. Clingendael Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, <http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2002/20020700_cli_paper_dip_issue81.pdf> (3 Aug 2006), 1; Jamie F. Metzl, "Network Diplomacy," (2001). *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 2(1); Mark Leonard and Vidhya Alakeson, *Going Public: Diplomacy for the Information Society* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2000), 59; Eytan Gilboa, (2001). "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 12(2): 4.

between government officials, typically conducted behind closed doors and over time.[18] If it is to be effective, diplomacy cannot be construed as one-way communication but must be built upon a positive relationship.

The major difference between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy lies in audiences. There are other qualifications - issues, techniques, and goals, to name a few - but these start and end with the audience. Rather than fellow diplomats, this kind of diplomacy is concerned with publics, whether the focus is confined to opinion-formers in target countries or extended to the woman or man on the street. As with diplomacy, the relationship remains of paramount importance. The importance of relationships in public diplomacy is supported by Leonard and Small, who write that public diplomacy is the ability to "understand, inform, influence and *build relationships* with foreign publics and civil society in order to create a positive environment for the fulfilment of [national] political and economic objectives." [italics added].[19] While the simplistic conceptualization of public diplomacy in the preceding paragraph acknowledges in an incidental way the importance of communication with foreign publics, it fails to recognize that establishing and maintaining mutually-beneficial relationships with foreign publics belongs at the centre of public diplomacy rather than on its periphery. Failing that, public diplomacy risks being labelled as a 'winning hearts and minds' psychological operations strategy.

An important aspect of public diplomacy is its relationship with domestic policy organs. For public diplomacy to be effective, it must be backstopped by the ability on the part of the practitioners to act as a genuine interface between foreign audiences and domestic policy organs. Otherwise, there is little incentive for foreign audiences to engage with public diplomacy practitioners. The content, objectives, and mechanisms of public diplomacy will change with individual programs. At its centre, however, sits dialogue and promotion of mutual understanding.

Engaging other actors and incorporating their concerns is imperative to building and maintaining *credibility*, a key ingredient of effective public diplomacy. Credibility loosely refers to the general willingness of a public to listen to and accept information, and is based on perceptions of the source as trustworthy and reliable. Neglecting to engage in dialogue with the developing world is a weakness of Western states. British public diplomacy expert Mark Leonard writes that the one-way flow of information from the West to other areas of the world is part of the reason for foreign publics' ambivalence about the West.[20] This has negative implications for a state's credibility. "Credibility," writes Zaharna, "is the most important asset that a nation seeks to attain and preserve."[21] Credibility is a precious asset that must be built over the long term through

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[18] Gilboa, 1.
[19] Leonard and Small, 16.
[20] Leonard, 48.
[21] Zaharna, 223.

relationships, and is something states possess to a greater degree than others. Once posessed, credibility is a significant advantage for the employment of effective public diplomacy.

Credibility is also a critical ingredient in soft power, a concept arising from Joseph S. Nye's and Robert Keohane's writings on complex interdependence. According to Nye, the traditional foundations of power in the international system are shifting. Coercive "hard power" assets (i.e., economic and military force) are gradually declining as a source of power, whereas economic, political, and social connections are increasing in importance. Nye terms this "soft power," or the ability to get others to share one's wants through attraction rather than coercion.[22] Soft power and public diplomacy are mutually-reinforcing: if soft power is significant, public diplomacy has a greater chance of being successful. Conversely, if public diplomacy is done well, it will improve the soft power position of the state conducting it. In the realm of international politics, soft power is contingent upon the attractiveness of one's cultural and political values *as well as* the policies that a state pursues.[23] In other words, simply having an attractive culture does not guarantee soft power. Likewise, public diplomacy cannot be effective if it relies on the promotion of culture alone. It must have a policy component. States can improve their soft power position if they pursue policies that are attractive to others. Norway, for example, enjoys higher levels of soft power in relation to peacemaking than its hard power resources might suggest, due to its past involvement in peace processes in the Middle East, Sri Lanka, and Columbia.[24] In the same way that such policies can upgrade a state's power position, policies that are seen as one-sided or self-serving can detract from it by negatively impacting on a state's credibility.

Credibility is soft power's 'centre of gravity,' or *the* critical ingredient without which it does not work. "Credibility," write Keohane and Nye, "is the crucial resource, and asymmetrical credibility is a key source of power."[25] Credibility does not arise solely from possession of hard power resources. Using international law selectively in the pursuit of state goals, or advocating policies or actions abroad that are ignored domestically, can detract from the credibility a state enjoys. Since soft power relies on credibility, it follows that actors that have significant credibility may be under-utilized in the context of public diplomacy.

How can states that possess reserves of soft power capitalize on this asset? Convincing arguments have been made in favour of the employment of networks – social, cultural, political, and economic connections within and between actors[26] – as a method of persuasion in public diplomacy. In light of advances in information and communication technology, actors that subscribe to 'network-centric' modes of operations are better suited than hierarchal organizations to operate in the new information environment. In his 2001 article

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[22] Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in International Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

[23] Ibid., 8.

[24] Ibid., 9-10.

[25] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, (1998). "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age," *Foreign Affair*s, 77(5): 7.

[26] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 4.

"Network Diplomacy," Jamie Metzl argues that diplomacy is well-suited to a networked model of operations.[27] Public diplomacy can be viewed in the same way. To date, public diplomacy efforts have largely mirrored the hierarchal philosophy and organization of foreign ministries. US public diplomacy tools in Iraq – Radio *Sawa*, *Al Hurrah* Television, and *Hi Magazine* – rely on "projection" rather than "partnership," a continuation of outdated, hierarchal Cold War techniques which are unsuited to the conduct of public diplomacy in the present day.[28] In the current information environment, information delivered *en masse* through sources that are easily discredited or dismissed (i.e., government sources) are not as effective as quality information disseminated via multiple, credible sources, what Zaharna refers to as the "network paradigm of persuasion."[29] Non-state actors, for example, can act as invaluable interlocutors between governments and foreign publics to disseminate information.

In recent years, non-state actors – particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – have become increasingly prominent on the international stage. This arises in part from advances in communications technology, which makes them more visible to publics and decision-makers, but also because of sheer volume. In 2002 there were over 20,000 transnational NGOs networks in place throughout the world, 90% of which came into being over the past 30 years.[30] Although these actors still do not have power in the structural or realist sense of the term, NGOs have become proficient at using their networks to cultivate their soft power.[31] This power has not gone unnoticed by governments, who are increasingly co-opting these actors into legislative and executive processes, giving rise to what has been termed "the new multilateralism."

It has been suggested that middle power states are ideally suited to partner with NGOs in the pursuit of selected issues on the international agenda. When Jody Williams accepted the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1997 for her role in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), she remarked that NGOs such as ICBL and middle power states are the new superpower[32]. In ideological terms, middle power states are well positioned to work with NGOs, particularly in the field of peace and security. Middle powers pursue foreign policies characterized by cooperation with other actors, and have been known to pursue second and third agenda issues. Moreover, middle powers' lack of resources make them receptive to working with others to achieve shared goals. Middle power states' resources, legitimacy, and authority in the international system, and NGOs' mobility and credibility, underlined by common points of ideological reference, are a powerful combination.

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[27] Metzl.

[28] Rhonda S. Zaharna, (2005). "The Network Paradigm of Strategic Public Diplomacy, *Foreign Policy in Focus,* 10(1): 1.

[29] Ibid., 2.

[30] Leonard, *Public Diplomacy*, 56.

[31] Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders* (London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 16.

[32] William R. Pace and Rik Panganiban, "The Power of Global Activist Networks: The Campaign for an International Criminal Court," Peter I. Hajnal, ed. *Civil Society in the Information Age* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 109.

Canada

Canada is the classic middle power.[33] Alongside Australia, its diplomats coined the phrase after World War II to describe Canada's role as a significant contributor not quite on par with the great powers of the UK and the US. Today, both the term and country have evolved, but Canada is still considered the archetypal middle power.[34] Canada has made multilateralism central to its foreign policy, depending heavily upon international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and NATO to provide the frameworks through which it engages with the world. Canada did not, for example, participate in the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, preferring instead to contribute to NATO's operations in Afghanistan. As further evidence of its 'middlepowership,' Canada has a history of providing leadership on second and third agenda issues. In the 1990s, for example, foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy devised Canada's 'Human Security Agenda,' a masterpiece of niche diplomacy that still informs many of Canada's current foreign policy initiatives.

Canada continues to enjoy a generally positive image and is highly liked around the world. Practitioners in Egypt, Jordan, and Libya consistently identified reputation as an advantage in the practice of public diplomacy. A 2006 Simon Anholt-GMI survey ranked Canada third, after the EU and the UK, as the most popular national brand.[35] Canada has strong advantages in the court of global public opinion. As a non-colonizing power, it does not carry the same baggage as France and the UK when operating abroad. In addition, its concern with territorial security has traditionally been low, so when it deploys hard power assets, it is generally for altruistic purposes. This history, supplemented by comparatively liberal immigration policies, a consistently high standard of living, and – not least – plenty of rhetoric by the Goernment of Canada, has given rise to the belief that Canada is a moral and unselfish power.

In recent years, the condition of defence in Canada has seen significant improvement, with foreign affairs lagging behind. As well as benefitting from new injections of funding, a long-anticipated review of Canada's foreign policy, the *International Policy Statement* (IPS), was released in 2005. With respect to public diplomacy, this document has important implications. As late as 2004, there was no government body tasked with central authority for Canadian public diplomacy. The IPS briefly recognizes public diplomacy as being important to the continuing vitality of Canada, leading to the creation of an entity in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) responsible for public diplomacy. While the IPS was largeley shelved after the 2006 election resulted in a change of government, the priorities put forth by the

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[33] For the definition of middle powers used here, see Andrew F. Cooper, Richard A. Higgott., and Kim R. Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993).
[34] Chapnick, 188-206.
[35] Scott Deveau, "Canada a great brand, but needs marketing," *Globe and Mail*, 14 August 2006. <www.theglobeandmail.com> (14 August 2006).

new Conservative government initially suggested a more central role for public diplomacy. In late 2006, "projecting Canada to the world" was listed as DFAIT's number one strategic objective.[36]

Canada's public diplomacy is overwhelmingly skewed in the direction of cultural and particularly economic interests. There is currently no publicly-available definition of public diplomacy DFAIT ascribes to. Judging by public diplomacy activities (typical activities include sponsorship of arts, organization of cultural events, embassy functions, and speaking events) it is fair to say that Canadian public diplomacy refers primarily to cultural diplomacy. In a 2003 nine-country study, Canada was found to spend $3.66 (US) per capita on promoting its culture overseas, second only to France. The bent toward cultural diplomacy is long-established. In 1995, the Government of Canada developed a "three pillar" approach to foreign policy, the three pillars being security, prosperity, and culture. Due to cutbacks, the culture pillar was consistently underfunded, and the International Cultural Relations Division at DFAIT came to be seen as peripheral to foreign and economic policy. As a result of the 2005 IPS, the International Cultural Relations Division was changed to the Public Diplomacy Bureau and a new section was added, Public Diplomacy Strategy and Services. But the restructuring was cosmetic; cultural diplomacy's structural legacy remains. In September 2006, sweeping cutbacks by the Conservative government cut almost $12 million (CAD) from the budget of the Public Diplomacy Bureau – a case of history repeating itelf.

In terms of geographic emphasis, Canada's public diplomacy program is heavily focussed on states of political and particularly economic significance: Western European states, BRIC[37] countries, and "pathfinder" nations such as South Africa and Indonesia. Regions such as the Middle East and North Africa are particularly low in the public diplomacy pecking order. Currently there is no Arabic-language webportal, as there is in Spanish and Mandarin, to help explain Canada to audiences in the Middle East and North Africa. Despite the linking of public diplomacy with the promotion of Canada's interests – and security being an overriding interest[38] – there is no concerted security dimension to Canada's public diplomacy program.

Interestingly, *dialogue* on foreign policy ranks high in the priorities specified by the current government, at number three overall.[39] Judging by solicitation techniques, this priority refers to domestic audiences. DFAIT has pioneered the development of "online policy discussions," in which members of the public can compose and post comments regarding Canadian foreign policy onto the DFAIT's website. These postings are later channelled into relevant policy organs. This mechanism, while innovative, is clearly aimed at domestic

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[36] Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Connecting Canada to the World*, 22 February 2006, < www.international.gc.ca/depart-ment/mandate/sppf-en.asp> (31 August 2006).

[37] Brazil, Russia, India, China.

[38] Canada's 2004 National Security Strategy – which formed the opening line of the Defence portion of the IPS – reads "There can be no greater role, no more important obligation for a government, than the protection and safety of its citizens."

[39] DFAIT, *Connecting Canada*.

audiences. When it comes to foreign audiences, public diplomacy activities continue to revolve around the third pillar of the defunct 1995 foreign policy document: "*projecting* Canadian values and culture" [italics added].[40]

Canada has long accepted the necessity of working with others to achieve its foreign policy objectives. While it has seen a number of important successes in its cooperation with NGOs, the fixed-term, project-based cooperation that has characterized previous relations has not translated into the construction of enduring networks at the level of embassies. The lack of "networks of influence" is a shortfall of Canadian public diplomacy. There are many issues that prevent such networks from being established. Primarily, it is a question of resources. Particularly in small embassies and consulates, there is a lack of dedicated personnel, time, and funds. The kind of relationship-building suggested by the network paradigm of persuasion requires Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) who are proactive at the grassroots level, engaging opinion formers and local media. Competing demands and lack of funds make this proposition very difficult.

The challenges that prevent embassies from building the networks envisaged are particularly acute in areas where public opinion is of greatest concern from a security perspective. The geographic emphasis on countries that are economically significant is disadvantageous for the security aspect of public diplomacy. States where adverse public opinion poses the largest security concern are often the most economically insignificant. Canada's trade with the entire region of the Middle East, for example, is comparable to its trade with South Korea: both account for just over 1% of Canada's bilateral trade.[41] Representation in the region corresponds to these low numbers. Due to the low priority these embassies are given, they are the most strapped for resources. The public diplomacy budget for Canada's embassy in Egypt, for example, stands at a mere five figures, despite being one of Canada's largest embassies in the region and located in Cairo, the city with the largest Arab-language daily newspaper in the world, *al Ahram*.

A means to extend networks – particularly in areas of the world that are economically disenfranchised – may be found in closer cooperation between DFAIT and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), which administers 80% of Canada's aid budget.[42] Disbursement of development monies is accomplished in large part through funding projects and programs that are implemented by third-party organizations. While CIDA does not have a mandate to conduct public diplomacy, their activities nonetheless serve Canada's public diplomacy interests. Project proposals, for example, must demonstrate complimentarity with Government of Canada priorities and include cross-cutting themes such as gender,

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[40] Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Canada in the World Canadian Foreign Policy Review*, 1995, <www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/foreign_policy/cnd-world> (13 August 2006).

[41] Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Canada's Merchandise Exports (Including re-exports)*, 30 May 2006 <www.international.gc.ca > (8 August 2006).

[42] Canadian International Development Agency, *FAQ*, 2006, < www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/faq-e> (30 August 2006).

children, and the environment. These features of CIDA's aid distribution (unintentionally) ensure that selected projects help to build Canada's soft power and credibility.

Even within CIDA's existing networks, building development networks in areas such as the Middle East still poses challenges. Of Canada's nine identified strategic partner-development countries – countries which form the focus of CIDA's development assistance efforts – none are in the Middle East or Central Asia.[43] Nevertheless, potential still exists. An excellent example of the public diplomacy potential of CIDA can be seen in *ad hoc* projects such as the Middle East Good Governance Fund (MEGGF). This project, which is 85% funded by CIDA, is administered by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). IDRC works with partners in the Middle East and North Africa to build knowledge about governance and Islam. It then tries to demystify those issues for policymakers both locally and in Canada. As such, it is used as a conduit for actors from participating countries to reach Canadian policy makers and vice-versa. In addition to acting as a means of communication between local publics and Canadian policy-makers, the IDRC has extensive networks at its disposal. Over the first two years of the project's existence, organizers have engaged over a hundred organizations in the Middle East and North Africa. Its status as an autonomous organization enables it to engage with a wide variety of actors, and to explore issues that may be too sensitive for governments to address directly.[44] The MEGGF project embodies the policy and dialogue aspects of public diplomacy that are missing from DFAIT's present public diplomacy practices.

To take advantage of the work being done by organizations such as the IDRC, cross-government coordination – what the US has termed "strategic communication" – must be improved. In terms of public diplomacy, there is presently no national-level coordination mechanism through which CIDA and DFAIT (and other departments such as the Department of National Defence and Industry Canada) could coordinate their public diplomacy activities.[45] Within embassies, personnel from the two departments work alongside each other. However, lack of communication and cooperation between personnel from the two departments, who are accountable to Ottawa through two separate chains of command, result in many missed public diplomacy opportunities.

The Netherlands
A colonial superpower from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, the Netherlands has since come to fill a very different role in the international system. In terms of international clout, it does not rank in the same category of its immediate neighbours: France, Germany, and the UK. Nevertheless, it has managed to retain considerable influence in the international arena. Dutch foreign policy is backstopped by a deep commitment

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[43] Canadian International Development Agency, *Canadian International Development Agency Estimates, 2005-2006: Part III: Report on Plans and Priorities*, March 2005, <www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/acdicida.nsf/En/JUD-12214466-DGG> (13 August 2006), 29.

[44] Charaf Ahmimed, personal communication, 2 August 06.

[45] A national-level coordination forum for public diplomacy is in the process of being proposed to Cabinet.

to multilateralism. The Netherlands is an original member of the UN, NATO, and the EU. Its 2006 Foreign Policy Agenda emphasizes the pursuit of national policy objectives with partners and within international frameworks.[46] Further solidifying its status as a middle power, the Netherlands has traditionally been active on second and third agenda items. Aside from terrorism, all of the Netherlands' current foreign policy priorities fall into these categories: pollution, climate change, infectious diseases, and human trafficking.[47]

Over the years, the Netherlands has sustained significant blows to its image. The so-called 'moral issues' of the '80s and '90s - drugs, prostitution, abortion, and euthanasia – are blamed for changing the reputation of the Netherlands from a country of friendly, cheese-eating, clog-wearing inhabitants to one characterized by deviance and criminality. Recent years have seen their own challenges. These include issues such as 'immigration and integration,' the assassination of Pim Fortuyn in 2001, the 2004 murder of Theo Van Gogh, the recent controversy surrounding former Dutch Member of Parliament, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and the 2005 "no" vote on the European Constitution. Political support for the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, soon followed by military support, also tested the resiliency of the Netherlands' reputation abroad.

Despite these trials, the Netherlands has managed to maintain a strong international reputation and significant soft power. The Dutch commitment to overseas development, which is fixed at 0.8% of its gross national income, is one of the most generous in the world.[48] The Centre for Global Development recently ranked the Netherlands first in its 2006 Commitment to Development Index.[49] In addition, The Hague is often considered the international legal capital of the world, hosting six major international judicial entities, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and the pending trial of Liberia's Charles Taylor.[50]

The Government of the Netherlands is aware that the reputation of the Netherlands as an open, tolerant, and prosperous country will take on amplified importance as the structural power of the Netherlands is increasingly curtailed. The 2004 expansions of NATO and the EU to 26 and 25 member countries respectively, have meant that the Netherlands now possesses a smaller proportion of decision-making power in these international fora. In the context of the EU, this situation will be exacerbated as a result of plans for

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[46] MFA, *Policy Agenda*, 2006 < www.minbuza.nl> (13 August 2006).

[47] Ibid.

[48] World Bank, The, *Netherlands: Country Profile,* 2006, <www.worldbank.org> (8 August 2006).

[49] The US, by contrast, was last in terms of development assistance relative to the size of its economy. In British Broadcasting Corporation, *Netherlands 'does most for poor,'* 13 August 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4785813.stm> (13 August 2006).

[50] The International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Permanent Court of Arbitration, The Hague Conference for Private International Law, and Europol.

further expansion (Bulgaria, Romania, and possibly Turkey) and as Qualified Majority Voting[51] becomes more common. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)-driven public diplomacy is receiving increased emphasis. In 2003, a centralized body was created within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate public diplomacy activities. In 2004, Dutch embassies were provided with public diplomacy monies for the first time. The Dutch foreign policy statement for 2006 explicitly recognizes the importance of public diplomacy to the Netherlands.[52] The MFA is currently undergoing a two-year restructuring and modernization of its public diplomacy, scheduled to be complete in 2007.

Within the existing public diplomacy strategy, greatest emphasis is placed on trade partners. Two-thirds of the Netherlands' exports go to five countries, which include its most immediate neighbours of Belgium, France, Germany, and the UK.[53] In light of Dutch trade practices, it is perhaps not surprising that seven of the MFA's nine public diplomacy target countries are located within the boundaries of Europe.[54] Within these countries, the issues addressed are typically related to Dutch policies in areas such as prostitution, drugs, and euthanasia.

In theory, the Netherlands' public diplomacy strategy is focused on building relationships with non-state actors. According to a public diplomacy manual provided to FSOs, Dutch public diplomacy adheres to the basic model of creating a public opinion that is favourable to the Netherlands. Public diplomacy is defined as "generating support for the aims of Dutch policy and fostering understanding for Dutch perspectives and standpoints among *unofficial target groups* in foreign countries" [italics added].[55] Significantly, it adds that this should be done through building relationships with "unofficial" audiences, or groups *outside* of national governments.

In practice, the construction of networks among non-state actors is proving problematic. While the MFA recognizes the necessity of having networks in place to deal with public diplomacy situations as they occur, there remain serious impediments to its ability to be present at every table where its concerns are being addressed. These difficulties primarily stem from a lack of resources. Personnel at the Royal Netherlands embassies in Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Algeria went so far as to say that they have neither the time, personnel, nor funds to practice public diplomacy to a meaningful extent.

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[51] Qualified Majority Voting is a decision-making procedure of the EU whereby decisions are made on the basis of majority vote rather than by consensus. In light of the 2004 expansion it is thought that this procedure will become more common.

[52] MFA, *Policy Agenda*.

[53] MFA, *Focus on the Netherlands* (The Hague: International Information and Communication Division, 2004), 35.

[54] Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, Turkey, the UK, and the US.

[55] MFA, *Public Diplomacy in Practice* (The Hague: MFA, 2005), 4-5.

Extending networks through development avenues is more problematic in the case of the Netherlands than in Canada. Dutch development euros suffer from an acute lack of visibility. The reason for this is twofold. The relationships represented by the MFA's new SALIN (Strategic Alliances with International Non-governmental Organizations) program is symptomatic of a wider trend from project-based funding to program-based funding.[56] While this trend will lead to greater effectiveness from the perspective of long-term development, providing long-term funding to organizations in conjunction with other donors will result in less visibility. Although the work of international NGOs who receive such funding may promote values supported by the Netherlands, they do not represent their activities as being made possible by the Netherlands. The second reason for the lack of visibility of Dutch development euros is a manifest lack of concern with cultivating understanding of the Netherlands by FSOs engaged in development assistance in developing countries. This stance, described by one practitioner as "principled," is endemic throughout Dutch representation in the Middle East and North Africa. "We are more concerned," said another practitioner, "with ensuring our euros are spent well."

The Netherlands has work ahead of it when it comes to establishing and maintaining networks in regions of the world with overriding security importance to the West. Only four of the Netherlands's thirty-six partner countries are located in Central Asia or the Middle East, as opposed to sixteen in Africa.[57] In the Middle East, the Netherlands' only development partner is Yemen. Diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and Yemen were established in 1978 as a result of the Yom Kippur War, when an oil embargo on the Netherlands prompted the realization in The Hague that it needed increased representation in the region. Today, the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Yemen has a budget of €22 million, primarily for development assistance.[58] The Embassy, with 16 expatriates and 17 locally-engaged staff, is by far the largest in the region. Even then, there is little to speak of in terms of public diplomacy activities, despite the original intent of Dutch representation in the country.

Weighing the Balance

Of the two countries profiled, Canada in particular has been active in projecting its culture and values. Its 1995 foreign policy document, *Canada in the World*, identified culture as one of the three pillars of its foreign policy. While cultural diplomacy never took on the importance of the other two pillars (security and trade), this pillar continues to inform Canada's approach to public diplomacy. The Netherlands spends less on cultural diplomacy than countries such as France and Canada but has maintained its credibility in other ways, most notably through its development assistance and a solid commitment to multilateralism. The "no"

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[56] The SALIN program is designed in part to increase the Government of the Netherlands' engagement with international non-governmenal organizations. In brief, it proposes to establish a policy forum which organizations that receive development funding would be obliged to participate in.

[57] MFA, *Development Cooperation*, 2005, < www.minbuza.nl > (10 November 2005).

[58] This figure does not represent the totality of the Netherlands's development assistance in Yemen, as monies may also be provided from purses in The Hague directly to implementing organizations.

vote to the EU constitution and support of the 2003 invasion of Iraq notwithstanding, the Netherlands has generally been strongly supportive of multilateral institutions. In addition, the Netherlands has fought determinedly to cultivate understanding of the 'moral issues' abroad, ensuring that Dutch embassies abroad have ample information to explain policies and rebut misinformation on these issues.

When seen through the lens of cooperative public diplomacy, the different competencies of Canada and the Netherlands within the practice of public diplomacy can be used to further reinforce each other's image. Canada's traditional bent towards cultural diplomacy has given it substantial expertise in that area, while the Netherlands' struggle with the 'moral issues' has resulted in proficiency at explaining policies. Seen in isolation, these leanings can be seen as a failure to adapt to contemporary realities. However, they also mean that states possess different areas of expertise. Cooperative public diplomacy efforts can provide a venue for each country to pool and showcase and use its strengths. Alternatively, Canada and the Netherlands are well-positioned to run different but complimentary public diplomacy campaigns.

While there are many instances of success arising from cooperation between Canada and the Netherlands and non-state actors, it should be remembered that these instances of success occur at the political-strategic level. Cooperation with non-state actors such as NGOs at the level of embassies – particularly in areas such as the Middle East and North Africa – is not comparable. In general, embassies do not have personnel, time, or funds to engage in a sufficient level of network-building, particularly in areas of the world where negative public opinion constitutes a security concern. People from developing countries are more likely to come into contact with Canada and the Netherlands via their development assistance programs. Although these programs are not characterized as public diplomacy (nor should they be), they serve the interests of public diplomacy by building networks, promoting a positive image of the country, and cultivating a positive public opinion climate. Through their development assistance programs, Canada and the Netherlands have a strong association with non-state actors.

Even where development assistance networks are extensive, there are still challenges. The commitment to multilateralism that characterizes middle power states has led Canada and the Netherlands to avidly build networks in Africa in pursuit of the UN's Millennium Development Goals. This has put them at a disadvantage in the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa, where their networks have not received the same emphasis. Current development assistance spending by the governments of Canada and the Netherlands signify that they are not engaged in these regions to nearly the same extent to which they are present in areas such as Sub-Saharan Africa.

The lack of networks in regions such as the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa is a liability for Canada and the Netherlands in the short-term conduct of public diplomacy. Seen in another light, the absence of strong political or economic interest in these regions can also be a significant advantage. Because middle

power states such as Canada and the Netherlands have low levels of involvement, the lack of competing foreign policy or trade interests make them excellent candidates for cooperative public diplomacy. Networks of influence constructed on a cooperative basis would be useful in the long-term conduct of public diplomacy.

While Canada and the Netherlands have indicated in their foreign policy statements that they are highly supportive of public diplomacy, their actions indicate that insufficient will exists to make public diplomacy central to the way that foreign ministries and embassies function. The lack of resources and coordination at the national level, reinforced by the number of practitioners unable or unwilling to speak on the topic, point to a lack of political, institutional, and ultimately public will to practice public diplomacy in a truly effective manner. In both countries, public diplomacy is seen as peripheral to the business of foreign ministries, while ministries of defence have no involvement in public diplomacy at all. In Canada, the legacy of the underfunded International Cultural Relations Division has meant that the new Public Diplomacy Bureau is still seen as secondary to foreign and economic policy. In the Harper government's sweeping cuts of September 2006, the Bureau suffered a $12 million (CAD) gouge – representing almost one fifth of their budget – despite internal calls for an increase in public diplomacy funding.[59] In the Netherlands, public diplomacy is rarely practiced at the level of embassies, particularly in regions such as the Middle East and North Africa. The integration of both foreign policy and development assistance in the MFA means that embassies which are development-oriented largely disregard public diplomacy, which falls under political affairs.

To the extent that public diplomacy is taken seriously, regions such as the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa still fare poorly. Unlike France, the UK, and the US – countries with overriding political or historical interests in these regions – Canadian and Dutch public diplomacy in these regions is not strongly supported at the political and institutional levels. While these countries have cultural centres in the Middle East, for Canada to locate a cultural centre there, one practitioner revealed, would require a potentially contentious political decision. Despite the benefits that could be reaped by such a move, neither political nor institutional will exists to fight the requisite internal battles for such an initiative.

Lack of capacity to conduct public diplomacy is a hybrid weakness, arising partly from the resource limitations of smaller states, and partly from spending priorities of governments. A lower level of resources is a characteristic of middle power states. While this challenge was not discussed in relevant literature, the lack of capacity – people, funds and time – was repeatedly cited by practitioners as a major impediment to conducting public diplomacy at the level of embassies.

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[59] Treasury Board of Canada, *Backgrounder, Effecive Spending*, 25 September 2006 <*http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/media/nr-cp/2006/0925_e.asp*> (23 January 2007).

On the balance, effective public diplomacy is contingent on relationships (i.e., engagement, dialogue, mutuality) and credibility. Canada and the Netherlands have seen success in these areas. These successes indicate that both countries possess significant potential to employ public diplomacy in ameliorating the image of the West. The nature of their weaknesses, though, is such that they override these advantages. Keohane and Nye's theory of complex interdependence described above argues that cultural, economic, and social connections – what Nye later termed soft power – is gradually increasing as a source of power. In describing the rise of soft power Nye stipulates that soft power and hard power are complimentary. Soft power can be effective only if reinforced by appropriate hard power assets. In other words, despite all the advantages that middle powers possess, soft power cannot proliferate in the absence of economic support. For this reason, the lack of will, and particularly the lack of dedicated resources in middle power states, are serious limitations to effective employment of public diplomacy. Without appropriate economic support, middle power states cannot employ their strengths effectively.

Lack of capacity alone is not a fatal flaw. The will to conduct public diplomacy – if it existed – could override this deficiency by driving change and increasing capacity. Will is the prime driver of resource allocation and strategy development. Without political, institutional, or public will, public diplomacy will not be expanded into a truly useful foreign policy tool. Unfortunately, the lack of will seems unlikely to improve. Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal point out that middle power states tend to focus on second and third agenda items in their foreign policy, in order to avoid challenging the dominance of the hegemon on issues where it is not "willing to be reigned in."[60] Security, presumably a first agenda item, forms a chief concern of the US and, as per Cooper, Higgot, and Nossal's characterization of middle power states, is not an area where states such as Canada and the Netherlands take leadership roles. The preponderance of the US in this area is evidenced by its defence spending, which in 2002 was more than the next eighteen biggest spenders combined.[61] As discussed above, public diplomacy has an increasingly strong relationship with security. Without the support of the hegmon, the security aspect of middle power public diplomacy will not reach its potential. But with the support of the hegemon, the effectiveness of middle power public diplomacy would be compromised due to association with the US, which lacks credibility. This 'catch 22' means that even if the US did endorse an expanded role for middle power states in the security aspect of public diplomacy, effectiveness would be far from certain. While middle power states possess the capabilities to employ effective public diplomacy, the above paradox means that their success in a public diplomacy campaigning endorsed or led by the US is up for question.

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[60] Cooper, Higgot, and Nossal, *Relocating,* 21.
[61] Timothy Garton Ash, *Free World*: *Why a Crisis of the West Reveals the Opportunity of Our Time* (London: Penguin, 2004), 255.

"Public Diplomacy," said Daryl Copeland, "has the promise of being able to address the drivers of insecurity in the 21ˢᵗ century."[62] This paper asks if middle power states could be effective in ameliorating the image of the West. The simple answer is 'yes'; potential certainly exists. Canada and the Netherlands, as examples of middle power states, possess significant strengths that make them powerful allies in the court of public opinion: credibility and soft power, inclination to work with non-state actors on issues of global governance, and histories of innovation. Strengths are further reinforced when seen from the perspective of cooperative public diplomacy. Despite this potential, the likeliness that middle power states will be able to employ their strengths is low unless the weaknesses of will and resources are first addressed. For the most part, these challenges are not inherent to middle power states, but are situational. They arise from the current political and security context. However, it is important to remember that public diplomacy activities typically become more important during times of crisis. As such, it is not outside the realm of possibility that decision-makers will become serious about employing public diplomacy, and will resolve the issues outlined.

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[62] Personal communication, 7 June 06.

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