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Soft Power and Cultural Exchange: the Obama Administration and the Impact of U.S. Public Diplomacy on the Beliefs of Estonians

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SOFT POWER AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE: THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION AND
THE IMPACT OF U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ON THE BELIEFS OF ESTONIANS

By

Kadri Lutter

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of
Bucknell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors in Political Science
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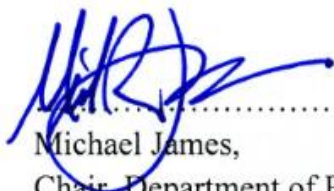
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Abstract

America's engagement with the world in the years following 9/11 is often criticized for being arrogant, conducted in a top-down fashion, and paying too little attention to listening and creating meaningful human interactions. Since 2009, President Obama has emphasized his belief in people-to-people contacts and soft power: the idea that a country can achieve what it wants in world politics by the power of attraction. Public diplomacy programs such as cultural and educational exchanges are believed to be valuable in creating lifelong friends for the United States, but there is little empirical evidence of their effectiveness as a foreign policy tool.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the impact of U.S. government-sponsored Fulbright Student and Fulbright Scholar exchange programs on Estonian participants' beliefs about the United States and its role in the world. The empirical part of the study was conducted through two comprehensive surveys: the first cross-examined 26 Estonians, who participated in the Fulbright program in 2009-2014, and the second consisted of a control group of 54 Estonians, who had not taken part in U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs.

The results of the Estonian case study provide some evidence for the effectiveness of the exchange programs, but suggest that the impact varies, and is strongly shaped by various historical, cultural, and political factors. The results confirm the notion of the difficulty of translating soft power into political power, and call for innovative solutions to make the exchange programs and U.S. public diplomacy more effective, but acknowledge the inherent value of exchanges in creating global networks and shaping today's world.

Introduction

“We have failed to listen and failed to persuade. We have not taken the time to understand our audience, and we have not bothered to help them understand us. We cannot afford such shortcomings.”

U.S. Department of State, 2003 Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy

Many argue that during the past decades, U.S. policy makers have not fully grasped the significance of international legitimacy and credibility, and utilized its soft power. President George W. Bush is often accused of paying almost no attention to international legitimacy and alienating America’s friends at a time when their support was much needed. There are several reasons to claim that his administration from the beginning relied too heavily on hard power and underestimated both the significance and the complexity of building a global alliance. John Ikenberry argues that America’s unilateral and disrespectful behavior created a world where “the U.S. unbound itself from its own postwar order and ruled the world by force and fear and searched out new enemies and threats” (2004, 84). Sharp rise of anti-American sentiment was apparent almost everywhere in the world, including among America’s closest friends and allies. Mead argues that “[m]any Europeans were painfully shocked, during the preparations for the American invasion to Iraq, to discover just how little the United States government at times can care about public opinion among people who do not vote in American elections,” leaving many people to believe that the upsurge of American power weakened global democracy (Mead 2005, 63).

Too often, the campaigns that were supposed to send messages of liberation and optimism ended up sending ones of invasion and defeat (Taverner 2010, 138), and U.S.’ credibility – the very essence of soft power – in the world was seriously undermined. The struggle against terrorism and post-9/11 wave of anti-Americanism made it clear that even a country like the United States could

not afford ignoring public opinion (Wyne 2009, 41; Nye 2011). On one hand, the problems increased the risk of conflict with America's greatest foes, and on the other, squandered influence and lost friends prohibited the U.S. from accomplishing its long-term aspirations. It became clear that military might was still a critical strategic resource, but the complex problems of the modern world could not be solved by brute force. The idea of soft power was brought to the forefront of American public debate. It was clear that it was not going to solve all the problems, but there was a great deal of what it could help achieve.

In 2009, President Barack Obama and his administration presented a completely different approach to advancing U.S. interests in the world. The National Security Strategy of 2010, the first Quadrennial Diplomacy & Development Review (2010) and other strategic documents outlined by the Obama administration reflect its attempt to redefine its mission and purpose in the world, as well as demonstrate his awareness of, and comfort with, the realities of the interconnected and culturally diverse world. The Obama administration has rightfully given diplomacy a much more significant role than before and rejuvenated U.S. public diplomacy. As Bruce Gregory notes, "Sustained 'engagement among peoples – not just governments' is a metanarrative for the Obama administration's foreign policy and central to its vision of diplomacy" (2011, 357). The Obama administration deserves credit for several new public diplomacy initiatives and for transforming the way the U.S. engages with the world. Nevertheless, across American society, and even across party lines, there seems to be an agreement on the need to further improve the effectiveness of U.S. public diplomacy (Lord 2008, 4). This is important particularly in the interconnected and culturally diverse world, where U.S.' ability to remain in a world leadership role depends heavily on its ability to influence foreign populations.

At the same time, in order to be effective, soft power needs to be supplemented by others forms of power; as the violent and disturbing events in the Middle East, Ukraine, and elsewhere in

the world once again suggest, U.S. military power remains crucial for global security. The role of force in world politics is not over, but the nature of power has changed. Nye (2004) argues that “[f]ifty years ago political struggles were about the ability to control and transmit scarce information. Today, political struggles are about the creation and destruction of credibility” (8). The term “soft power” was coined by Nye in the 1990s, and is defined as “an alternative to military power and economic power that would allow you an indirect way to get what you want” (Nye 1990). Soft power grows out of culture, out of a country’s domestic values and policies, and out of foreign policy (Nye 2011, 142).

As many other concepts in international relations, the term “soft power” is somewhat contested. Soft power contains assumptions about how influence works, and proposes that in one way or another, public opinion – both domestically and internationally – has an impact on a nation-state’s foreign policy objectives (Hayden 2012, 7). Interestingly, Nye argues that soft power is both an asset to cultivate as well as a tool to use, but maintains that public diplomacy is the main instrument of soft power (Hayden 2012, 3). Bruce Gregory describes public diplomacy as “an instrument used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relationships; and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values” (Gregory 2014, 7). At their core, both soft power and public diplomacy reflect the salience of communication in international relations, and this communication happens at several different levels. Nye argues that the three dimensions of public diplomacy are daily communication, strategic communication, and the development of long-lasting relationships through cultural and educational exchanges (2011, 108-110). Hayden employs a similar model, arguing that the two principal notions of communication in public diplomacy are information and relation-building frameworks (2012, 9).

In the modern world, both of these methods are important and reflect different levels of engagement. Daily communications is the most immediate dimension; it seeks to explain different domestic and foreign policy decisions and maintain the presence of U.S. perspectives in the news media sphere and the internet. Cultural and educational exchanges are much slower forms of engagement, but they are also deeper and considered to have the most powerful and long-lasting influences on people's attitudes (Nye 2011, 108). In one of his interviews, former Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here," (quoted in Nye 2004, 44), reinforcing Andrew Stewart's idea that "[n]o better press exists than a foreign leader explaining America's positive virtues" (2006, 15). At their best, public diplomacy programs such as cultural and educational exchanges can give future political and societal leaders a better idea of what the U.S. stands for and thereby create friends for the United States. However, this is far from being the only possible outcome of the exchange programs. For some exchangees, the first-hand experience of living in the United States may, for different reasons, be a negative one, and this must be taken into account while thinking about the political benefits from the programs.

Soft power is an indispensable supplement to hard power. Public diplomacy is an instrument that states use to engage with people and build relationships to advance a country's interests and values. Cultural and educational exchange programs remain a key component of public diplomacy even in the digital age and hold a promise of being agents for profound and long-lasting positive changes. Cultural relations can build trust between people and many scholars argue that it is increasingly apparent that cultural understanding is a precondition to solving pressing global problems, and that having a deep comprehension of America's own culture, as well as the cultures and values of others is vital to America's success in the diverse and interconnected world (Stewart 2006, v; Gregory 2011, 367).

In the wake of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, soft power and public diplomacy emerged as common subjects in academic and policy debates. The largely unrewarding experience of America's engagement in the Middle East and societies like Iraq and Afghanistan has brought public diplomacy back to the center of attention, but the importance of relations with allies, and the lessons that the U.S. can learn from its public diplomacy efforts with its friends, are often disregarded. In order to better understand the nature of soft power and evaluate its utility as a foreign policy tool for the United States, this research examines whether Estonians' exposure to Fulbright programs have changed their beliefs about the U.S. and its role in the world.

Estonia, a former Soviet Republic, but a present-day NATO ally that enjoys security guarantees from the United States is an interesting case to consider. Estonia and its Baltic neighbors Latvia and Lithuania have received considerable attention in the wake of the crisis in Ukraine, considering the geopolitical location in which the countries are located. During much of the Cold War, Estonia was a soft power battlefield: heavily influenced by the Soviet propaganda as well as channels like the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe from the West. Exploring the bilateral relationship between the United States and Estonia is all the more relevant in light of President Obama's speech in Tallinn in September 2014, by some observers labeled the most important security-related speech in the post-Cold War era.

This study uses a mixed methods approach: the first chapters draw on theoretical literature to explain the issues regarding soft power and public diplomacy, and the case study is constructed based on personal interviews, surveys, government documents, speeches, and other sources to explain U.S. public diplomacy in Estonia. Since the impact of soft power is difficult to measure and often not quantifiable or observable in the short term, the holistic single case-study format allows for richer discussion about the context of the bilateral relationship, and the cultural, historical and political factors that shape the relationship.

The Estonian case study benefits from theoretical literature and interviews with government officers from the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn and Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but at the center of this case study are the responses from 26 Estonian participants who took part of the Fulbright Student and Fulbright Scholar programs from 2009 to 2014. Additionally, as a control group, 54 Estonians with at least a Master's degree and outstanding academic achievements were surveyed. The similar, but not identical, online surveys included aspects of qualitative and quantitative research techniques, but focus is on qualitative data and responses that were given to open-ended questions about their perception of the United States, its role in the world, as well as about cultural and educational exchange as a public diplomacy instrument. The methods of the case study are fully discussed in chapter five.

It is important to note that this thesis explores the impact of U.S. public diplomacy on a very narrow segment of the Estonian society. The case study participant samples are not representative in any statistical sense, and therefore generalizations into the whole Estonian population are not viable. However, the 74.3 percent participation rate among the participants of the Fulbright Program and 54 authorized participants among non-Fulbrighters provide a solid basis for theoretical observations and allow making an overall judgment about to the impact of U.S. soft power on Estonia. While the focus of this research is narrow, the group of people that are addressed is not inconsequential, and the value of focusing on young, active, and educated people is their potential to become future societal and political leaders and have a broader influence in a society. In addition to that, while this thesis acknowledges the profound and conceivably growing importance of non-governmental organizations and actors with regard to American soft power and public diplomacy, its approach considers U.S. government as the central actor in this process. The main focus is on the instruments available for the U.S. government to promote its values and advance its interests in the world, and issues like popular culture and private media are not specifically addressed in this study.

Chapter 1: Soft Power and Its Context

The idea of soft power cannot be discussed without understanding the nature of power itself. Joseph Nye defines power simply as “the ability to get the outcomes you want” (2004, 1), however, in the international relations theory, the situation is much more problematic. Although almost all of the theories of international relations, in one way or another, recognize the importance of power, there is no conclusive answer to the question of what power is. Therefore, Kenneth Waltz’ almost thirty year old quote that defining the term *power* “remains a matter of controversy” holds true yet today, and there is no solution in sight (Waltz 1986, 333). However, three major schools have emerged that all have their distinct, if controversial, view of power: the first one sees power as resources, the second frames power in relational terms, while the third school defines power by its structural elements.

A conceptualization of power that focuses on the overall amount of capabilities of the state, mainly in the form of military and economic might, is widely adopted in realist and neorealist theories. The realist view is the first school of thought, articulated and argued by theorists like Kenneth Waltz and Hans Morgenthau, operates on the assumption that the quantity and quality of hard power resources is in direct correlation with a country’s position in the international structure. Waltz articulates the importance of capabilities like population size, territory, economy, military strength, as well as political stability and competence (1979, 131), while Morgenthau’s focus on resources as a power surfaces in his idea of the “elements of national power” (Morgenthau 1954, 25). The realist view is also reflected in the writings of Robert Gilpin who suggests that the sources of power are limited to military, economic and technological means (1981, 13). Hard power theorists assure that the national power, made up of certain material and immaterial resources, is all that a country needs to shape outcomes in international politics. The second school casts power as a

relational concept, and according to this view, the value of capabilities will always be determined by the relational context. Max Weber (1947) defines power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance”. The third school of scholars advocate for a theory that depicts power in structural terms. Susan Strange, one of the key scholars in this school, argues that power over structures is more important than power over resources, and suggests that there is no direct correlation between the existence of hard power resources and their value in terms of changing the outcomes. She suggests that power can shape and define the structures in which states operate and deal with each other and these structures become a resource of power when it comes to establishing the norms, or what Steven Krasner (1985) calls *meta-power*: the power “to change the rules of the game” (Pustovitovskij and Kremer 2012, 62). Strange defines structural power as the power “to decide how things shall be done, the power to shape frameworks within which states relate to each other, relate to people, or relate to corporate enterprises” (Strange 1988, 25). Essentially, the structuralists argue that the ability to establish the framework in which countries function and interact with each other is in itself a form of power.

With regard to the theoretical assumptions that the notion on which soft power operates, Nye seems to have built his concept on several interpretations of power. Nye acknowledges the practicality of the realist assumption of the centrality of the possession of resources, arguing that this “makes power appear more concrete, measurable, and predictable” (Nye 2004). However, this articulation does not fit into any of the preexisting theories. Nye argues that not all resources provide equally good bases for power behavior under all circumstances and in all environments and states that power is inherently relational (2011, 11). Despite the legitimate concerns that soft power is too broad of a term to be useful and readily applicable, part of Nye’s contribution to the field lies in making scholars and policy makers view and discuss power in broader terms and outside of any preexisting theoretical straightjackets. Nye makes a case that the power does not require tangibility

and argues that “It is wrong to think of power [...] as ‘power over’ rather than ‘power with’ others” (2010, 217-222).

The Definition and Features of Soft Power

In the 1990s, when Nye coined the term soft power, he argued that the capacity to have an impact on the choices and preferences of other countries is often associated with immaterial power resources like culture, ideology, and institutions (1990, 165–166). Nye continued to further develop the idea of soft power, and in 2004 he defines it as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment” (2004, x).

Nye makes the case that the soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources:

- its culture (in places where it is attractive to others),
- its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad),
- its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority (2004, 11)).

In an effort to respond to his critics, Nye explains that soft power is a country’s ability to entice and attract. Nye’s most recent definition of the term casts soft power as “the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes” (2011, 20-21). Here, Nye makes the distinction between three ways of affecting others: threats of coercion, inducements and payments, and attraction. The first two options can alternatively be seen as “sticks” and “carrots”, and the third category hinges on the sources of soft power. As Nye’s argument goes, the attraction that is created by the sources of soft power can help a country achieve its goals without having to resort to coercion or explicit inducements. Nye explains that the premise behind the powerfulness of attraction is that when a country has values and qualities that other countries admire and emulate, they are likely to

start acting in a way that is favorable to the country they admire (2008, 94-95). The problem, however, is that what is considered legitimate and right is by no means universal and depends heavily on the specific historical, cultural and social preconceptions of the interpreter. There is a universal understanding that all power depends on context, for context sets the parameters of any stabilities and imbalances. Put simply, the effectiveness of soft power resources depends as much on the partialities of the interpreters as it depends on the resources themselves. As Hayden put it, “Soft power is based upon a basic premise of what constitutes influence – yet this is by no means a universal formulation,” arguing that different countries and societies have very different interpretations of the idea and mechanisms of soft power (Hayden 2012, 11; Nye 2004b).

Nye’s conceptualization of soft power includes assumptions both about its sources and ways to generate it, as well as the potential value soft power can have in terms of bringing about desired policy change. Nye makes the case that soft power assets must be meritoriously leveraged, and translating soft power into political power presupposes well-designed strategy and its application. In terms of the definition, its dual nature is considered its key weakness. While it may be true that the field of International Relations is all but defined by unsettled and ambiguous concepts, the notion of soft power is even more complex – it resists generalization and thus makes a formation of a settled theory very difficult (Commuri 2012, 43). One of the main weaknesses of the term soft power is that it deals both with inputs and outputs of the process, as Hayden argues, it “functions at the same time as a measure of resources as well as a reflection of outcomes” (Hayden 2012, 5). Some scholars argue that while Nye’s concept of soft power is useful in policy debates, it is essentially unusable as an analytical tool, and that in order to make the term soft power more concise, the range of issues it deals with must be more manageable and the concept “disaggregated into separate ‘soft powers’” (Hall 2010, 191-193;). To put it simply, in order for the concept to acquire some analytical value, the

question of soft power resources should be separated from that of soft power outcomes. In Nye's view, attraction is the mechanism that analytically unites soft power resources.

Hall argues that the concept of attraction makes for an unwieldy theoretical tool because it is unclear what exactly produces attraction whether and how can attraction be translated into support (2010, 206-207). He is not challenging the substantive relevance of the term, but proposes three alternative categories of analysis, and distinguishes between institutional power, reputation power, and representational power (2010, 211), and that all describe different facets of power. Therefore, the debate over the definition is well on its way, and, as Hayden argues, even Nye's later and further refined definitions have not succeeded in framing the notion in a succinct way, and that there is still "considerable latitude in how the imperatives of soft power are interpreted and deployed" (2012, 5-7). Geraldo Zahran and Leonardo Ramos are also critical about the definitional features of soft power, and emphasize the concept's resemblance to Gramsci's concept of hegemony in which the dominant actor uses elements of consensus-building and coercion to maintain and advance its interests. Christopher Layne argues that Nye's work on power "blurs a complex relation between behaviors, resources, and strategy" and criticizes Nye for expanding the definition beyond attraction in its simplest form (2010, 55). Colin Gray, a prominent military and strategic thinker has been particularly critical, stating, "Soft power is a heroically imprecise concept, save only with respect to what it is not—hard power" (2011, 28). Nye maintains that soft power has an explicit value as a source of influence, but contends that while soft power is necessary in complementing military and economic power, it "cannot stand on its own as a strategic orientation" (Nye 2004, 129; Hayden 2012, 5). Nye acknowledges the complex relationship between hard and soft power, and agrees that, in many cases, the two are very difficult or even impossible to disentangle.

While there are legitimate concerns about the value of the term soft power as an analytical tool and the need to refine the concept, in general, scholars and policy professionals alike have come

to acknowledge the value of soft power, particularly in the context of the modern interconnected world. The transition from the bipolar world order that dominated during the Cold War to the one that is much more uncertain, complex, and characterized by the abundance of actors and interests, has changed the way global influence is seen and thought of. The advocates of soft power claim that not only have the publics a certain degree of influence over the foreign policy makers of their own country, but that international public opinion has considerable value (Hayden 2012, 7). Fareed Zakaria argues that generating international public support for country's view of the world is "a core element of power, not merely an exercise in public relations" (2011, 273-274). This notion is particularly appealing for the liberal camp in international relations, who believe that national characteristics of individual states and their publics play an important role in determining their position and goals in international affairs. Ali Wyne, who has extensively examined the role of world public opinion in allowing the United States to exercise influence abroad, argues that "While it would be foolish to base one's foreign policy entirely on the whims of world opinion, it would be equally, if not more, improvident to trivialize or ignore its impact" (Wyne 2009, 41). In this sense, effective use of soft power does not include all-or-nothing type of solutions or having to choose between soft and hard power. In the global era, any effective and durable solutions to the complex problems will presuppose using a variety of methods and striking the right balance between different forms of power.

Despite general consensus about the usefulness of the idea of soft power and its assumptions about the importance of credibility and legitimacy, there are scholars and policy professionals who question the overall value and utility of soft power even as a supplement to country's other power resources. Scholars like Kenneth Waltz, Joseph Joffe, Robert Kagan, Colin Gray, and Niall Ferguson, several of whom are associated with the realist school of international relations, argue that hard power is always at the core of soft power, and therefore the whole concept of soft power is

unpractical. As Ferguson put it, “the trouble with soft power is that it’s, well, soft” (2003). Realists reject the idea that public opinion in any way guides or impacts foreign policy, believing that popularity is ephemeral (Nye 2008, 128). This idea is reflected in senior statesman John J. McCloy’s idea who once told President John F. Kennedy “[w]orld opinion? I don’t believe in world opinion. The only thing that matters is power,” demonstrating his one-dimensional understanding of power (quoted in Nye 2008, 96). Along the same lines, Layne maintains that there is very little evidence that soft power has an impact on foreign policy. He argues that while ideas have the power to impact foreign policy, it usually happens at the level of policymaking elites and that a nation’s public opinion is not likely to have an impact on that state’s foreign policy (Layne 2010, 56). Layne argues that Bush administration’s invasion of Iraq and other actions in the wake of 9/11 are “a textbook example of how the state can use its power to shape public opinion and sell its preferred policies even to a skeptical public” (2010, 57). Another set of soft power’s critics point to soft power’s fluid and unpredictable nature and take Layne’s idea of how a state can use power to shape public opinion to the other extreme by arguing that “soft power is something that exists essentially outside of anyone’s reach” (Gray 2011, 30). Gray makes the argument that while the quantity and quality of the application of instruments like military force and economic sanctions or authorizations can be easily controlled “soft power does not lend itself to careful regulation, adjustment, and calibration” (2011, 30).

Nye’s response to the realist thinking has been swift; he sees soft power as an important reality and argues that the realists “succumb to the ‘concrete fallacy’ that espouses that something is not a power resource unless you can drop it on a city or on your foot” (2008, 96). However, much of the criticisms to the idea of soft power is legitimate, and Nye himself, in his 2010 article “Responding to my critics and concluding thoughts” has shown openness and desire for debate regarding soft power. In the article, Nye himself points out that although soft power is one of the

most important realities of the newly emerged global political landscape, and power really is becoming less tangible and less coercive among the advanced democracies, most of the world does not consist of advanced democracies and that “limits the transformation of power” (2004, 129).

In many ways, the complexity of the modern world reveals inadequacies of the realist thinking, and the inherent relativeness of soft power does not undermine its real life value. Critics are right to argue that unpredictability is inherent in the idea of soft power, and that there is always the danger that soft power can incite resentment and hostility instead of creating understanding and goodwill, but developing cultural expertise and becoming skillful in intercultural communication can go a long way in effectively controlling and using soft power. Nye’s conceptualization of soft power has a robust cultural component, and the role of culture in the soft power process is two-fold. To begin with, culture, in addition to political values and foreign policy, is one of the resources of soft power. Secondly, given that soft power rests on some shared values, culture of any target audience can be the single most important element that determines the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of any soft power proposition. In other words, culture places certain constraints on the idea of soft power, and different beliefs and sets of values are the reason why not everyone will be equally persuaded by any particular soft power endeavor.

In international relations and foreign policy, culture is a powerful but often neglected concept. Culture is the foundation for creating global dialogue and it provides the channels through which people understand each other. Valerie Hudson has contributed enormously to culture in foreign policy analysis, and she argues that foreign policy makers have to be sensitive to the environment of those whose behavior they try to explain. According to Hudson, cultural explanations are the most effective when “in the eyes of policymakers, times are turbulent and/or issues of legitimacy and identity loom large” (1997, 270). Even though the concept of culture enjoyed certain popularity in the 1960s and early 1970s and among the most enduring and profound sources of foreign policy,

cultural explanations have fallen into disfavor (Van Tassell 1997, 234). Vertzberger argues that much of this has to do with the fact that it is very difficult to prove the causal links between societal-cultural variables and foreign policy-related information processing., but argues that the difficulty of directly observing them does not mean that “the societal-cultural differences are minor or negligible” it is rather the opposite (1990, 261). Howard Wiarda in his *Culture and Foreign Policy: The Neglected Factor in International Relations* argues that “We are so sensitive about race and ethnicity that we would rather avoid political culture variables altogether rather than bringing them up in “polite company” (2013, 10). He proceeds, “That is a terrible mistake because it obliges us to ignore a key social science explanation” (2013, 11). This can be exceptionally unforgiving when it comes to designing foreign policy and communicating with people from other nations.

Culture is not singular or univocal, as Carey argues, “[i]t is, like nature itself, multiple, various, and varietal” (Carey 2009, 50). Culture as a concept is extremely difficult to define and difficult to deal with, largely because “problems of definition and measurement and cause-and-effect relationship between culture and other variables like policies, institutions, economic development run in both directions” (Harrison 2000, xxxii). It is clear that if culture includes everything, it explains nothing, and therefore different scholars have come up with a variety of definitions. For Harkovich, culture is the “human made part of the environment” (quoted in Hudson 1997, 2). Isard explains it as “the body of customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits constituting a distinct complex of tradition of a social group”, while van Tassell sees culture as comprising “a nation’s core interests, geography, perceptions/images, and historical experience” (1997, 234). The American anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) argue that culture consists of “patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values;

culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action." Geertz (1973) argues that "Culture is an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life" (quoted in Hudson 1997, 3). In Nye's conceptualization, culture is the "set of values and practices that create meaning for a society" (2004, 11).

There is no one right definition of culture, but its significance is particularly apparent in its ability to inform identities and reflect beliefs and values that are prevalent in any society. What is common to many of the different definitions of culture, is that the beliefs and values that are characteristic to a certain community often remain unconscious to those who hold them. Culture has a power to influence any cost-benefit analysis and is therefore of paramount importance in understanding international politics. For any soft power propositions, the fact that cultures vary and different cultural groups think, feel, and act differently dictates the necessity of having a deep understanding of the context and both countries involved.

If anything, the importance of culture has grown in the post-Cold War era. President George H. W. Bush's notion of the "New World Order" and Francis Fukuyama's ideas in his renowned book *The End of History* tricked some into believing that the downfall of communism ushered in an era that was to be described by global understanding, influx of international trade, and most importantly, the unwavering dominance of democracy. In fact, as Wiarda and Taylor argue, it was unrealistic to think that history, geography, resources, and culture no longer mattered, and what Fukuyama described as *the end of history*, was nothing more than "an end of ideology" (2009, 14; Wiarda 2013, 22). Thus, in some respects, the end of the Cold War brought a revival of interest in the concept of culture, for while the bipolar world order had undermined domestic idiosyncrasies of nations, the collapse of the Soviet system brought new ideas of nationalism and the formation of national identity

(Hudson 1997, 1). In the beginning of the 21st century, modernization theorists argued that the world was changing in ways that eroded traditional values, for economic development is often associated with the decline of religion and cultural differences (Inglehart 2000, 82). The weakness of the arguments made by the modernization theorists is demonstrated by Peter Berger, who maintains that there is not just one but “many globalizations.” The evidence for this argument stems from the diverse ways in which globalization has affected different countries and regions, thereby producing more, rather than less, diversity (Wiarda 2013, 7). Cultural differences are here to stay, and each culture defines its own goals and ethics, which should not be evaluated against the goals and ethic of another culture (Harrison 2000, xxvi). At the same time, dividing humanity into groups – based on similar values, institutions, and behavior patterns – is inevitable, and if done skillfully, can be helpful in navigating in an increasingly complex and dynamic world (Banerjee 1997, 31-33; Wiarda 2013, 135).

In conclusion, understanding culture and its role in soft power and international politics is of paramount importance for this research. Critics of the term soft power consider its inherent variability and heavy reliance on the context one of its key weaknesses, but they fail to acknowledge the potential of culture – a foundation of nation’s beliefs and values – in shaping soft power outcomes.

Chapter 2: Soft Power and Policy: The American Experience

Soft power and the American Experience

“American soft power is our Superman. It’s a blessing and a curse”

(Nancy Snow 2009, 3).

Not only is the United States the world’s only military superpower, but there is no other country in the world that could match the cultural reach of the United States. As Nye puts it, “Rome’s and Soviet Russia’s cultural sway stopped exactly at their military borders. America’s soft power, though, rules over an empire on which the sun never sets” (2004, 126). The U.S. with its cultural sway and economic resources possesses countless material and immaterial resources that have the potential to generate soft power (Nye 2008, 33). Despite its active engagement in peacekeeping and nation building missions around the world, it is likely that the most important way in which the U.S. has promoted democracy, has been to set an example that can inspire other nations. The U.S. government is built on principles and values that are appealing to many, and in her book *The Idea That Is America*, Anne-Marie Slaughter argues that it is precisely these American values that link the country to the world. She suggests “The belief that American values are universal values—that all men and women are created equal, that all are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, regardless of race, creed, or nationality – connects us to other nations” (2007, 7).

While there is plenty of evidence that American values are not universal in some absolute sense, U.S.’ democratic values are similar to those of many other nations, particularly in an information age in which people believe in freedom of expression and participation (Nye 2010, 217). This argument is strengthened by the idea that Western values are suggested by several clauses in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as Harrison argues, “the

idea that “[...] progress in the Western sense has become a virtually universal aspiration. The idea of progress – of a longer, healthier, less burdensome, more fulfilling life – is not confined to the West; it is also explicit in Confucianism and in the creeds of a number of non-Western, non-Confucian high-achieving minorities” (2000, xxvi).

In his reasoning, Nye displays skepticism for the label “West” and suggests that he does not see community forming, but contends that in many instances transatlantic differences are inflated and “Europe remains the part of the world closest to U.S. basic values” (2002, 33–35). While it is true that some basic Western values are more broadly shared than others, America’s cultural dominance in the world cuts both ways. Geiger is right to point out that “by directing our attention to American power, soft power reinforces the idea of American culture as universal,” leaving many Americans and non-Americans not only to disagree, but in some cases creating a great deal of resentment and active opposition (Geiger 2010, 101). With its cultural sway and power, the United States cannot and will never be universally loved, “and it would be a mistake to try” as Peterson et al. persuasively suggest (2003, 5). In some parts of the world, particularly those marked by high rates of poverty, inequality, and a sense of hopelessness among the people, the United States as the world leader has come to represent everything that has gone wrong, and their detestation of the U.S. is so entrenched and irrational that they cannot be convinced to change their opinions about the country. As Joseph Gordon put it,

“It is true that core al Qaeda members and other committed terrorists are unlikely to be mollified by a U.S. commitment to implement the Geneva Conventions, but it is also true that in a political war of ideas, millions of people around the world are judging US actions to determine whether they want to be on America’s side, fight against it, or sit on the fence (2007, 70).

In places like the Middle East, it is a fight for the middle ground and to explain to people with moderate views that even though the United States is strong and powerful, it is “not the enemy”

and it “represents a way of life marked by democracy, openness, and rule of law – and that this is a life worth aspiring to” (Peterson et al. 2003, 27). However, the problem in the years following the attacks of 9/11 and the U.S. invasion of Iraq was that not only America’s enemies, but its friends, open and democratic countries would “think we no longer listen or learn, but that we instead insist that the American way is the only way” (Slaughter 2007, 224-225). The Bush administration and its approach of “terrorizing the terrorist” left the world to see the U.S. as arrogant and self-absorbed, and produced for the country many more enemies than friends (Armstrong 2009, 65). The 2003 report of an independent task force sponsored by the Council of Foreign Relations (CFR) maintains that America’s “military victory in Iraq was impressive,” but poses the rhetorical question “[w]hat has the United States gained if it loses the good opinion of mankind?” (Peterson et al. 2003, v).

Especially during this period, despite being the home continent that coined the term soft power, the United States was criticized for its allegedly excessive attraction to hard power and military solutions. This divergence is especially stark in comparison to U.S. allies in Europe, who resort to force much more hesitantly. Neoconservative thinker Robert Kagan starts his article “Strength and Weakness” with an illustration that modern Europe is “entering a post-historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity, the realization of Kant’s ‘Perpetual Peace.’” Kagan argues that the U.S., meanwhile, “remains mired in history, exercising power in the anarchic Hobbesian world where international laws and rules are unreliable and where true security and the defense and promotion of a liberal order still depends on the possession and use of military might” (2004, 134). In fact, Kagan criticizes Europe’s excessive reliance on soft power tactics and defends America’s assertive request to seek finality in international affairs, but during the Bush era, the limits of America’s military power were on full display. While many

American allies in Europe and elsewhere – as some argue, often excessively – rely on U.S. security guarantees and benefit from its active role in the realm of global defense, they were alarmed by America’s actions and its conviction that it possessed a special right to exert its power in the world (Kriger 2010, 122). As President Bush declared the War on Terror, he made clear that he welcomed allies who wanted to join him, but also that he would not be prepared to compromise to win their support. “At some point we may be the only ones left,” he said in the fall of 2001, “That’s okay with me. We are America” (quoted in Gordon 2007, 30-31). The Bush administration’s willingness to act unilaterally and disregard rules and norms of the international community shocked Europeans and was something out of the ordinary in U.S. foreign policy. In Errol Morris’ documentary “The Fog of War” former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara set out lessons for U.S. foreign policy makers. In the lesson “Be prepared to reexamine your reasoning” McNamara argues,

What makes us omniscient? Have we a record of omniscience? We are the strongest nation in the world today. I do not believe that we should ever apply that economic, political, and military power unilaterally. If we had followed that rule in Vietnam, we wouldn't have been there. None of our allies supported us. Not Japan, not Germany, not Britain or France. If we can't persuade *nations with comparable values* of the merit of our cause, we'd better reexamine our reasoning.

(emphasis added, quoted in Errol Morris’ documentary “The Fog of War”)

The Bush administration failed not only to follow this policy advice and reconsider the way it used military force, but, as Zakaria argues, it “almost boasted its disdain for treaties, multilateral organizations, international public opinion, and everything that suggested a conciliatory approach to world politics” (2011, 246). In particular, the criticism had to do with the administration’s decision to reject the Kyoto climate change program and its refusal to support the creation of the International Criminal Court. As Peterson et al. argue, there must have been a

better way to articulate the specific concerns about the two projects instead of just leaving the negotiating table (2003, 3). The substance, but especially the style, of the foreign policy conducted by President Bush and his close advisors were all the more surprising given that American history shows the importance of trustworthiness and good relations with friends and allies. America's success in the Cold War was at least in part founded on the idea that while the Soviet Union was feared by its allies, "the U.S. was loved – or at least liked" (Zakaria 2011).

Faced with the "fundamental loss of goodwill and trust from publics around the world", reigniting America's credibility and striking the proper balance between the application of America's soft and hard power became a major topic following President Bush's first term in office (Peterson 2003, v). Remarkably, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen and former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates were among experts who advocated for "demilitarizing American foreign policy" and investing more in the tools of civilian engagements like diplomacy and development (Slaughter 2010). However, regaining the high moral ground was not going to be easy: as Gates agrees, "The solution is not to be found in some slick PR campaign or by trying to out-propagandize al-Qaeda, but rather through the steady accumulation of actions and results that build trust and credibility over time" (quoted in Lord 2008, 10). To win back the hearts and minds of America's friends and to create goodwill among U.S' foes, public diplomacy – the main instrument of American soft power – had to be brought back into the center of U.S. foreign policy making process. In fact, during the second term of the Bush presidency, the President and his administration became much more aware of the crucial role of public diplomacy in a world characterized by interconnectedness and abundance of actors. However, the fundamental shift towards public diplomacy as a core task of any diplomatic missions became when President Obama assumed office in 2009.

The Concept of Public Diplomacy

Before moving on to explain the historical role of public diplomacy in U.S. foreign policy and consider its resurgence under the Obama administration, it is important to understand the theoretical background of concept itself. Public diplomacy, similarly to its originator term *diplomacy*, acknowledges the power of negotiation and cooperation, and the limits to military might and brute force. Diplomacy means resolving international difficulties peacefully and through negotiations between accredited representatives of states (Melissen 2005). The basic difference between diplomacy and public diplomacy is that while the first is mainly concerned with intergovernmental relations, the latter attempts to engage directly with foreign publics. Somewhat paradoxically, the term *public diplomacy* was coined almost thirty years before the concept of soft power, which provides the basis for, and justifies investing in, public diplomacy, came to prominence. In the U.S., the idea of public diplomacy was first circulated already in the 1960s. Edmund Gullion, a retired foreign service officer and the dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, gave the first account of public diplomacy as follows:

Public diplomacy . . . deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications

(Gullion 1965, quoted in Cull 2009, 19).

The essence of public diplomacy, its recognition of the importance of public opinion and intercultural communication for foreign policy, has remained constant, but there are a variety of different ways that public diplomacy is defined. Nye sees public diplomacy as “an instrument

that governments use to mobilize [soft power] resources to communicate with and attract the publics of other countries” (Hayden 2012, 6). Another prominent definition comes from American political scientist Milton Cummings, who sees it as the “exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding” (2003, 1). In his definition, Hayden is more specific and casts public diplomacy as “an international actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public;” he considers that it is “not about changing the public unilaterally, but the proactive engagement of global audiences in support of a foreign policy that will stand alone and influence public opinion positively” (2012, 9). Gregory emphasizes the connection between public diplomacy and strategic communication and claims that public diplomacy is “an instrument used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relationships; and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values” (Gregory 2014, 7).

Public diplomacy is an increasingly popular research topic and scholars have distinguished three general categories of activity, according to Kelley:

- **Information:** information management and distribution with an emphasis on short-term events or crises;
- **Influence:** longer-term persuasion campaigns aiming to effect attitudinal change amongst a target population;
- **Engagement:** building relationships, also over the long term, to cultivate trust and mutual understanding between peoples (2009, 73).

Gregory’s account of the dimensions of public diplomacy is very similar. He makes the distinction between three time frames in public diplomacy communication: 24/7 news streams, medium range campaigns on high value policies, and long-term engagement (Hayden 2012, 3).

The most immediate form of public diplomacy is the one of daily communication, including the use of media, broadcasting, and increasingly the presence in different platforms of social media. Although the spread of the internet and popularity of social media has made it much easier for public diplomacy makers to reach out to new audiences and sustain a daily interaction, the broader context of abundance of information leave public diplomacy makers to compete for people's attention. The second category, sometimes cast as strategic communication, includes persuasion campaigns, one-way messages, presidential and other high-level speeches that are crafted for a specific audience and meant to advance the interests of the state in a way that would resonate with the foreign publics and their understanding of the world (Hayden 2012, 14). The third element in public diplomacy is about long-term engagement and designed to create genuine two-way dialogues and build personal contacts in a way that broadcasting or speeches never could (Lord 2008, 39). Although all three dimensions of public diplomacy are crucial and at their best enforce and improve each other, the long-term engagement is often considered to be the most profound of the three elements of public diplomacy and have the highest potential to cultivate trust and understanding (Kelley 2009).

Public diplomacy is a conflated term, and while there is general agreement among scholars that public diplomacy encompasses actions like strategic communication, cultural diplomacy, international broadcasting, exchange programs, publication of materials and even nation-branding, its connections with the term *propaganda* are different (Hayden 2012, 10). Gullion, who coined the term *public diplomacy* to describe the work done by United States Information Agency (USIA), in the late 1960s argued he “would have liked to call it ‘propaganda’” because “it seemed the nearest thing in the pure interpretation of the word to what we were doing” (quoted in Armstrong 2009, 65). Given the negative connotations of the term

propaganda, starting from the 1970s, the more benign term *public diplomacy* gained popularity. Nye, Snow, and John Brown argue that the two cannot be used interchangeably, though as Brown puts it, “the *intent* of the practitioners of public diplomacy and propaganda may be the same” since both have the potential to improve the credibility with specific audiences (2012, original emphasis). Brown distinguishes between the two by arguing that public diplomacy “at its best” presents a truthful image of nation’s foreign policy and way of life, encourages understanding and creates dialogue; propaganda “at its worst” misrepresents the facts, oversimplifies issues like history and foreign policy, forces its messages on an audience and demonizes elements of the outside world (Brown 2012). Affirming the difference between the two, Nye argues that “Public diplomacy that degenerates into propaganda not only fails to convince, but can undercut soft power” (2008, 108; Kelley 2009, 75).

Another important element in understanding the idea of public diplomacy is understanding its differences from what is widely known as cultural internationalism or cultural globalization. The two interrelated terms describe the new reality where the transformations in technology and communication, as well as increased travelling have produced a world in which much of its cultural content is readily available for people around the world. As Gregory argues, “It is public diplomacy when a student reads Mark Twain’s novel *Huckleberry Finn* in a US-funded Lincoln Center in Pakistan. When that student downloads *Huckleberry Finn* from Google Books, it can be thought of as cultural internationalism” (2011, 359). In other words, much of cross-cultural communication takes place outside of the realm of public diplomacy, and the term presupposes some kind of action or involvement – even in the form of financial sponsor – from a government.

The prospects of reaching a comprehensive and universally satisfactory definition for the dynamic and reactive phenomenon of public diplomacy are dim. In fact, the trend seems to be moving in a direction in which public diplomacy as a subcategory of diplomacy becomes essentially irrelevant. As Gregory argues, the term public diplomacy “[...] marginalizes diplomacy’s public dimension, which is now central in what all diplomatic actors think and do” (Gregory 2014, 3). Gregory does not foresee an abrupt end to the use of the term, but contends that as “a subset of diplomatic practice [public diplomacy] is no longer adequate for the mind shifts and holistic approaches required by more diplomats, more people, and more issues” (2014, 11). Gregory is not alone in arguing that public diplomacy is likely to define the future of diplomacy, the idea that the relevance of communicating to foreign publics “transcends method, time, and purpose” (Hayden 2012, 9; Melissen 2007; Graffy 2009; Riordan 2005).

Public Diplomacy and the American Experience

“For example, 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. It is just plain embarrassing that al-Qaeda is better at communicating its message on the internet than America. As one foreign diplomat asked a couple of years ago, “How has one man in a cave managed to out-communicate the world’s greatest communication society?” Speed, agility, and cultural relevance are not terms that come readily to mind when discussing U.S. strategic communications”

Robert Gates, Remarks at Kansas State University, 2007

Given that the United States with its cultural sway, broad diaspora, economic resources and technological advancement is probably to be better-equipped for effective public diplomacy than any other country in the world, Robert Gates’ grim account of the situation in the post-9/11 era is even more disturbing (Lord 2008, 4). America has had a long and generally successful historical experience with public diplomacy, though the specific tactics, initiatives, focus areas and resources have been subject to constant change (Lord 2008, 29).

During the Cold War era, as Henry Kissinger argues, the “predominant aspect of the new diplomacy is its psychological dimension,” both in terms of communication with the enemies and allies (quoted in Armstrong 2009, 65-66). With regard to enemies, Kissinger’s idea refers to the term psychological warfare, commonly defined as “use of propaganda against an enemy, supported by such military, economic, or political measures as may be required” (Encyclopedia Britannica). Perhaps even more important was America’s engagement with its friends and allies often done by the means of broadcasting, especially through radio. U.S. government-sponsored channels like Voice of America and Radio Free Europe were designed to present America’s views and values around the world, giving many an opportunity to have an alternative source of news to the dominant communist or Soviet state television and radio. When former U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz commented on America’s controversial decision to deploy NATO-sanctioned intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) in Western Europe in 1983, Shultz argued that America’s public diplomacy helped the U.S. make its case to deploy to its European Allies, “I don’t think we could have pulled it off if it hadn’t been for a very active program of public diplomacy. Because the Soviets were very active all through 1983 [...] with peace movements and all kinds of efforts to dissuade our friends in Europe from deploying” (quoted in Kelley 2009, 76-77).

Nye likewise believes that U.S. public diplomacy was a crucial factor in America’s victory in the Cold War. In particular, he emphasizes the role of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs that brought elements of Soviet elite to the United States to expose the exchangees with American values and provide an alternative vision to the communist reality. Various scholarship programs, seminars and conferences engaged more than 700,000 people over the postwar period, and included future world leaders like Helmut Schmidt, Anwar Sadat,

and Margaret Thatcher (Nye 2004, 109). Given the nature of the Cold War ideological battle, U.S.' hope was that the exchangees would return home and become advocates of liberal reforms, thereby helping the U.S. undermine Moscow's grip on the Warsaw Pact nations. Although it is difficult to demonstrate the specific causal significance of American soft power in bringing about the end of the Cold War, there is broad agreement that the constant presentation of Western values and living standards attracted people on the other side of the Iron Curtain and helped undermine the communist system. This is particularly true for Ronald Reagan and his administration, for the heavy emphasis on public diplomacy and his belief in the power of ideas is believed to have hastened the fall of the Soviet Union.

The end of the Cold War brought about significant changes in geopolitics and many of them carried over to the realm of U.S. public diplomacy. The funding for the broadcasting programs was cut back dramatically, U.S. cultural centers in many places of the world were closed, and the level of government-sponsored exchanges dropped. While the direct impact of these dynamics is difficult to assess, the shift of focus away from public diplomacy was harmful for U.S.' credibility in the world, and contributed to the misunderstandings between Americans and international populaces. Martha Bayles explains these dynamics by arguing, "America's victory over the once-mighty Soviet Union seemed to validate not only its economic system but also its political institutions and, indeed, its whole way of life" (2014, 5). While in principle, public diplomacy was supported by the George H. W. Bush administration, this support did not translate into real foreign policy making and United States Information Agency (USIA) – an institution that was charged with many of the public diplomacy tasks – was swiftly driven to the margins of the administration's foreign policy-making structure. A watershed moment for the U.S. government-sponsored Voice of America radio station came in 1989 when Beijing students

gathered in Tiananmen Square to demonstrate their support for liberal reforms. The correspondents of VOA's Beijing bureau were at the forefront of communicating the whole story to the world and provided a clear reminder of the relevance of VOA in the post-Cold War world. The problem, however, was that with its objective coverage of the situation, the Chinese government attacked VOA and caused the “toning down” of some aspects of the coverage, since the Bush administration was not willing to risk the long-term Sino-American relationship for the objective coverage of the Tiananmen crisis (Cull 2010). Unsurprisingly, such hypocrisy undermined U.S. credibility and legitimacy in the world, and many argue that the mishandling of public diplomacy continued during the Clinton administration. Most importantly, in 1999, the Clinton administration dissolved USIA, putting public diplomacy to the back burner, and, as Schneider puts it “effectively showcasing the attributes of a free society, cultural diplomacy had made itself obsolete, or so many thought” (2006, 193). While the funding of the public diplomacy programs had always been contentious, the Clinton administration and the ‘anti-arts’ sentiment in Congress further narrowed down many public diplomacy programs, believing that outreach to foreign publics was no longer important (Schneider 2006, 193; Fitzpatrick 2011, 5).

The skeptics of public diplomacy argue that since the end of the Cold War, spending money on broadcasting and international exchanges is a waste of resources: “Why pour money into VOA when CNN, MSNBC, or Fox can do the work for free?” (Nye 2008, 105). At the same time, those persistent in calling for U.S. government action in the cultural arena argue that private media and Hollywood production tends to represent the U.S. in an overly simplistic and one dimensional way and that there is misunderstandings about interpretations of freedom, democracy and the American persona (Bayles 2014, 3; Nye 2008, 105). Despite the efforts of numerous public diplomacy advocates to explain the importance of supplementing the images

promulgated by popular culture with a more accurate and nuanced vision of the U.S. and the American way of life, U.S. public diplomacy in the post-Cold war era was characterized by lack of interest and funding, and general underperformance.

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the idea of public diplomacy gained considerable attention. Particularly in the wake of the U.S.-led war in Iraq, world opinion of the United States and U.S. policy plummeted and produced widespread anger, fear, and mistrust. In October 2001, President George W. Bush said, “I’m amazed that there is such misunderstanding of what our country is about, that people would hate us. Like most Americans, I just can’t believe it. Because I know how good we are. We’ve got to do a better job of making our case” (quoted in Snow 2009, 7). While the idea of strengthening public communications and improving public diplomacy programs was widely seen as reasonable, the way in which these campaigns were carried out had significant weaknesses. Getting America’s message out – particularly in the Arab and Islamic world – became Washington’s primary goal (Zaharna 2009, 2). Some of the specific programs geared to these ends were the creation of a fact book *The Network of Terror* by the State Department, and the 2002 Shared Values campaign, that raised various ethical questions for looking like an international advertising campaign that attempted to “brand and even sell America to the Islamic world” (Zaharna 2009, 3). The shortcomings of extensive and forceful persuasive campaigns became apparent when the Bush administration was increasingly criticized for paying too little attention to listening and creating meaningful human interactions. The top-down fashion lecturing helped reinforce the image of Americans as arrogant and self-centered, and the Cold War-style defensive and vigorous persuasion campaign was not a match to the new and complex issues and problems.

Many scholars and professionals argued that increased messaging was not going to help the U.S. advance its interests, and that in order for the U.S. public diplomacy to be effective given the new circumstances, “old forms of diplomatic monologue” had to be replaced by – or at least supplemented with – “new forms of diplomatic dialogue and collaboration” (Fitzpartick 2011, 6; Krause and van Evera 2009). Increasingly, the Bush administration took note of the problems, and in 2005, changes were ahead when Karen Hughes, who had previously served as a communication advisor for the administration, was tasked with leading U.S. public diplomacy. Hughes understood the role of listening as a public diplomacy measure, but her “listening tour” to the Arab and Islamic world was still considered as a failure, when during the trip, “Hughes was described as painfully clueless” about the historical and cultural realities of the region, treating it as a broad and undefined monolithic mass (Zaharna 2009, 4). Despite this failure, the importance of listening and creating dialogue rather than fighting an information battle was a key lesson from the Bush administration, and revealed fundamental changes in the international context in which U.S. public diplomacy operates.

The roots of the communication and public diplomacy glitches of the Bush administration reach far beyond the beginning of the new century. The complexity and deep roots of the problems regarding the rise of extremism and international terrorism were sometimes associated with the mounting misunderstanding between the U.S. and parts of the world, and country’s lack of commitment to public diplomacy during the whole post-Cold War era. In addition to that, the conditions were fundamentally different from that of the Clinton administration, and Bush administration. Power diffusion, the abundance of actors and issues, unclear boundaries between foreign and domestic, innovative digital technologies and new media changed the calculus (Gregory 2014, 5). In other words, the forces of globalization and the advancements in

technology had eroded the traditional power hierarchies and created a situation where nation-states increasingly found themselves impacted by non-state actors, networks, and increasing people-to-people contact. For this reason, engaging with foreign publics presupposed a new approach, and many scholars agreed the institutions, methods and priorities of U.S. public diplomacy needed “transformation rather than adaptation” (Gregory 2011, 351; Gregory 2011a, 788; Lord 2008, 1; Fitzpatrick 2011, 8–13).

The Obama Effect

Although significant changes in the way U.S. public diplomacy was conducted took place during President Bush’s second term, the opportunity for a real change and fresh start came in 2009 when Barack Obama became the 44th President of the United States. Already in his inauguration speech, President Obama promised to reach out to people all over the world in a way that emphasized mutual respect and tolerance (The White House 2011, Gregory 2011a, 787; Fitzpatrick 2011, 7). In his inaugural address, president Obama said that under his administration the U.S. will not rely excessively on military power, but emphasize diplomacy and cooperation with allies: “Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with sturdy alliances and enduring convictions” (The White House 2009). In addition to improving relations with allies, President Obama’s particular commitment was to improving relations with the Muslim world, signified by his renowned speech at Cairo University in June 2009.

The speech that sought a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world covered a range of topics from violent extremism and the Israeli-Palestinian dispute to religious freedoms and the President’s plan to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay by early 2010. First and foremost, the speech received attention because it represented a completely different –

much more collaborative and humble – attitude and style of communication. For instance, President Obama argued that “[e]ach nation gives life to this principle in its own way, grounded in the traditions of its own people” and maintained “America does not presume to know what is best for everyone” but suggested the U.S. would stand by rule of law, freedom and justice, framing them as human rights (The White House 2009a; National Security Strategy 2010, 36). He made it clear that there were limits to what military power can achieve, arguing “[t]here must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground” (The White House 2009a).

The election of President Obama helped restore faith in American values in many parts of the world. Nye quotes a high-ranking British political leader, who in 2008 said, “[i]n one stroke, the election of Obama has changed the American image in the eyes of billions of people, showing the extraordinary capacity of the United States to renew itself”, creating an illusion that the support for the United States was almost universal (2010, 222). While the change in America’s moral position in the world was significant, as Table 1 shows, hoping that the differences would disappear was much too optimistic.

Table 1: Favorability of the United States in Selected Countries

	2008	2009	Net change
France	42	75	33
Germany	31	64	33
Mexico	47	69	22
UK	53	69	16
China	41	47	6
Egypt	22	27	5
Japan	50	59	5
Lebanon	51	55	4
Kenya	(87)	90	3
Turkey	12	14	2
Poland	68	67	-1
Russia	46	44	-2
Pakistan	19	16	-3

Source: Pew Research Center, Spring 2014 Global Attitudes Survey

The U.S. significantly improved its favorability among its allies in Europe and elsewhere, though this was not the case in all places around the world, demonstrating that the alleged “Obama effect” – the idea that his persona and theme of change could rejuvenate U.S.’ moral authority and legitimacy in the world – had its limits. While a portion of America’s enemies will never see the country in a positive light, the sustainability of the upswing in favorability was questionable even among U.S.’ friends and allies. President Obama proved his words during his first years in office when the strategic documents like the “National Security Strategy”, “Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review”, and “Strategic Framework for Public Diplomacy” outlined by the Obama administration reconfirmed the commitment to redefine the way the United States engaged with the world. President Obama and Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, presented public diplomacy as “a core diplomatic mission” and were committed to increasing people-to-people contacts and paying more attention to differences in cultures and values. The first “Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review” of 2010 emphasizes the potential of

civilian power, and calls for engaging with actors like NGOs, corporations, civil society groups in conducting public diplomacy (QDDR 2010, viii). As Gregory notes, in comparison with the earlier times, there was a lot of progress and the rhetoric suggested a real opportunity, but it was clear that the symbols had to be backed up by specific policy actions (2011, 351; Taylor 2010, 163). In fact, the inability of the administration to close the gap between its words and deeds became apparent early on. While President Obama's messages about closing the detention center at Guantanamo Bay and quickly winding up the war in Afghanistan had been powerful and widely appealing, the administration's apparent inability to take real action undermined its credibility.

In the realm of public diplomacy, a similar trend emerged. Fitzpatrick in her comprehensive 2011 report talks about the transition of U.S. public diplomacy "from messaging to mutuality," arguing that although many of the changes that have been taken place are the right ones, there are some inconsistencies between the official rhetoric and the way public diplomacy is actually practiced (2011, 33). Fitzpatrick claims that the progress towards more open and interactive engagement is obvious, and that the Obama administration's model of engagement is right to emphasize the use of dialogue, but that it "does not meet the requirements of *genuine* dialogue" which she considers one in which "both the nation and its foreign publics are subject to persuasion and dialogue is used to achieve mutual understanding and benefits" (2011, 8). Building on Dutta-Bergman's theory, Fitzpatrick compares dialogic public diplomacy to diplomacy in its traditional form, having an "objective of influencing the receiver countries without being open to persuasion" (Fitzpatrick 2011, 10). Scott-Smith has been similarly critical, arguing that although the U.S. public diplomacy outlook recognizes the changing global environment, it is marked by "a desire to do nothing but control it" (2010, 171). Whatever the reason, the foreign publics are also increasingly skeptical of President Obama's performance:

during his two terms, the approval ratings for President Obama have declined almost everywhere in the world. As Table 2 shows, the approval ratings are still considerably higher than those of President Bush in 2008, but the decline is indicative of hoping that public diplomacy was not necessary was much too optimistic.

Table 2: Approval Ratings of President Bush and President Obama in Selected Countries

	Bush 2008	Obama 2009	Obama 2012	Obama 2014
France	13	91	86	83
Germany	14	93	87	71
Mexico	16	55	42	40
UK	16	86	80	74
China	30	62	38	51
Egypt	11	42	29	19
Japan	25	85	74	60
Lebanon	33	46	39	35
Turkey	2	33	24	24
Poland	41	62	50	55
Russia	22	37	36	15
Pakistan	7	13	7	7

Sources: Pew Research Center, 2008 Global Attitudes Project;
Pew Research Center, Spring 2014 Global Attitudes Survey

Any approval ratings should not be, and are not, the driving force of U.S. foreign policy, and the American President, first and foremost serves the interests of the American people. However, as history shows, taking the interests of others into account and engaging with them in a meaningful way is crucial to the success of U.S. foreign policy. This is especially the case in this global era, when the security of the U.S. depends on its ability to cooperate with other nations. Legitimacy and mutual trust are the foundation of any collaboration, and public diplomacy, “if it is conducted thoughtfully and effectively, has the potential to build bridges and rebuild trust” (Taylor 2010, 163). To be sure, success in public diplomacy is always going to be

easier in some places than others – for the when the country and its foreign policies are fundamentally unpopular, no exchange program or form of engagement can offset this. As Marc Lynch argues, “some conflicts and hatreds are real and cannot be talked away, but others are not and dialogues may be helpful to determine which are which (quoted in Fitzpartick 2011, 39). Success in U.S. foreign policy presupposes in-depth understanding of the world, recognizing its cultural diversity, and engaging with people not only out of necessity, but as a part of standard operating procedure. As Edward Murrow, the legendary reporter and former director of the U.S. Information Agency who was tasked with communications after the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, put it, “[i]f they want me in on the crash landings, I better damn well be in on the take-offs” (quoted in Lord 2008, 33).

In conclusion, public diplomacy has been an important element of U.S. foreign policy in decades, and with the advent of the digital age, if anything, its importance has increased. Despite the consensus about its overall effectiveness, the levels of funding and commitment to public diplomacy – as well as its success in particular periods of time – have been subject to constant fluctuations. In order to advance U.S. interests in the global era, those charged with making U.S. public diplomacy need to demonstrate consistent commitment to listening and creating global dialogue, but also an ability to understand and adapt to changing conditions in which public diplomacy operates. Various questions about the effectiveness of U.S. public diplomacy in certain circumstances and with certain publics remain. In order to get a better understanding of the importance of the context, the next chapter is going to elaborate on the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Estonia, with a particular attention to the historical and cultural features in creating the Estonian identity and framing the nature of its interactions with the world.

Chapter 3: The Context for Soft Power: Estonia and the United States

For Estonia, once a member of not only the communist bloc, but the Soviet Union itself, public diplomacy – particularly less benign forms in which states attempt to leverage their influence – is nothing new. In the Cold War framework, Estonians were under heavy flow propaganda by the Soviet regime, but also targeted by U.S. and other Western countries for whom maintaining the ideas of freedom and democracy in everyday discourses of the Baltic States was of strategic importance. The impact of the information campaigns of the two Cold War superpowers on Estonians was markedly different. However, even with the demise of the bipolar world system, it is clear that the broader political context sets the tone – and quite directly – impacts any public diplomacy efforts. In order to get a better understanding of the context in which the modern-day U.S. public diplomacy in Estonia operates, this chapter outlines the key issues in the bilateral relationship between the United States and Estonia and makes broader comments about Estonia’s geopolitical location, history, culture, and their role in forming Estonians’ system of values and beliefs. Along Estonia’s way to integrating with the West, the United States had a profound political and cultural impact and many of these sentiments have carried over to the present day and to America’s engagement with its NATO ally during the Obama administration.

Estonia: History, Culture, and Identity

“The frontier of the Republic of Estonia is more or less the same as it was in the nineteenth century, the frontier between East and West”
(Jaan Kaplinski, quoted in Aalto 2013,15).

Estonia is bordered by Russia to the East, Latvia to the South, and Finland and Sweden across the Baltic Sea. By the virtue of its unique strategic location, the country with a present

population of about 1.3 million and an area slightly bigger than that of the state of Pennsylvania, has often been seen as denoting something bigger.

Figure 1: Political Map of Northeastern Europe



Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Estonia/@56.3810989,12.2321288,4z/data=!4m2!3m1!1s0x4692949c82a04bfd:0x40ea9fba4fb425c3>

During the course of history, the Estonians have survived occupations by Swedes, Danes, Germans, Russians, and the Soviet Union, and despite having been a NATO ally and a member of the European Union (EU) for more than a decade, the Estonian people still have a strong identification with their past. While most scholars maintain that Estonia has been an integral part of (Western) Europe’s economic, political, cultural life at least since the Middle Ages (Kuus 2002, 97), its proximity to, and relations with, Russia have often made the country seen a lying

on the separating line of what can broadly be described as Western and Orthodox culture. Although lumping the three Baltic States together is a common practice and understandable in terms of the geographical realities and Cold War dynamics – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were all Soviet Republics – a common Baltic identity was essentially created by the Soviet regime (CFR 1999). Estonia, the Northernmost of the Baltic countries, has always had strong Nordic influences, most visibly shaped by the fact that Estonian is a Finno-Ugric rather than Baltic language and much more similar to Finnish than Latvian and Lithuanian (Taagepera 2013, 93; Kirch and Kirch 2001, 130-133, Ilves 1999). The idea that Estonians are culturally close to northern Europeans and other Europeans who are fundamentally different from those in the East is an important factor in explaining Estonians’ sense of belonging even today. These sentiments are important; as Richard Mole put it, “no analysis of the history and politics of the Baltic States is possible without a sound understanding of the role and power of identity” (2012, 1).

Independent Estonia and the Soviet Occupation

Estonia, as many other European countries, emerged in the wake of World War I, when on February 24, 1918 Estonia declared independence. The U.S. recognized Estonia on July 28, 1922, and the first diplomatic mission opened in the same year. The period of independence was ephemeral, and the relatively peaceful period of independence came to an abrupt end when, according to Estonia, the U.S.’ and all other Western nations, Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 (Mole 2012, 46). This distinction is important because up to this day, Moscow asserts that there was nothing illegal about the actions of the USSR, and that Estonia was incorporated voluntarily since the Soviet-dominated national assembly voted to join the Soviet Union (Kramer 2002, 734; Bildt 1994). It was clear that Russia was not going to admit that the country had occupied Estonia: after all, as Mole stated, it “would have tarnished what is held up

as one of the greatest chapters in Soviet and Russian history” (2012, 122; Raun 2001, 250). The fact that the U.S. along with almost all other Western states did not recognize the *de facto* annexation of the Baltic States, is a key principle underlying the bilateral relationship (Mole 2012, 47). A fact sheet outlined by the U.S Department of State emphasizes this point, arguing, “[t]he United States never recognized the forcible incorporation of Estonia into the Soviet Union, and views the present Government of Estonia as the legal continuation of the interwar republic” (2014).

The economic, political, and moral toll that the 47-year period of Soviet occupation took on Estonia was considerable (Raun 2001, 166; Mole 2012, 47). During the occupation, Estonia was a separate Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) that had considerable control over its legislative and executive issues within its boundaries, and it was also assigned its own national symbols, like its own flag and national anthem. As Mole argues, this “myth of republican sovereignty” was designed to “convince the non-Russian nations with their own SSR that they had already attained the goal for which all national movements strive: a sovereign state” (2012, 54). In comparison to several other Soviet Socialist Republics, the Baltic States had more autonomy and this arrangement was helpful in retaining some of the Estonian-ness and Estonians’ sense of belonging, but a great majority of Estonians were profoundly discontented with these circumstances. In addition to their greater autonomy, the Baltic States were privileged in their connections with the outside world: while Lithuania had strong connections with Poland and the Catholic Church, Estonians had close links with Finns. In addition to Finnish visitors in Estonia, the northern part of the country could watch Finnish television, which, as Raun put it, “provided Estonians with a unique window on the West” (Mole 2012, 66; Raun 2001, 246). In many ways, the Estonian government and people actively sought out ways to be informed about and maintain

ties with the Western world. After all, the West provided not only a better alternative to the widely detested communist regime, but helped retain the hope of achieving, or at least aspiring to, a truly independent and democratic Estonia.

The decades under the Soviet regime varied in terms of the nature of the authoritarian rule by the Communist Party. In the 1940s, the regime strengthened its grip on the country and introduced campaigns of Sovietization and made Russian – a language completely unrelated to Estonian – dominant in almost all spheres of life. While some Estonians vehemently refused to learn or speak Russian, many eventually acquired the language, though in most cases, Estonian was always spoken at homes (Taagepera 2013, 19). The regime tried to instill its guiding principles in Estonians, but the rewriting of history and textbooks created even more resentment and a situation when many children “learned two histories, one at school and one at home” (cited in Mole 2012, 62; Conley and Gerber 2011, 15). Mass deportations in the 1940s created a general environment of threat and anxiety among Estonians, and during the one in 1949, more than twenty thousand people – about 3 percent of the Estonian population – were sent to concentration camps in Siberia. As gruesome as these events were, one of their side effects was that many Estonian elites who had not been exiled fled to the West, and instead of assimilating into the local cultures, often became outspoken opponents of the Soviet regime.

Considerable Estonian communities formed in Sweden and the United States, and they became crucial in maintaining Estonian culture and traditions by establishing Estonian societies and organization, lobbying in the local governments, sending Western information to Estonia, but perhaps most of all, keeping alive the dream of independent Estonia (Mole 2012, 5; Estonian Embassy in Washington 2015). These contacts are often emphasized on the highest political level, arguing that, “our warm relations are anchored by close interpersonal ties” (Joint

Statement 2013). Perhaps the most remarkable instance of this is Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who grew up in New Jersey in a family of Estonians émigrés and became a fervent opponent of the Soviet regimes when he worked for the radio stations Voice of America and Radio Free Europe. After Estonia regained its independence, he moved back to become Estonian foreign minister and later on, the president (CRS Report 2007). By virtue of the United States never recognizing the annexation, and their position remained that “the diplomatic relations continued uninterrupted”, Estonian representatives were allowed to stay in the U.S. with diplomatic status, which was of great significance during the occupation, as well as the re-independent Estonia (Aalto 2003; U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian).

These unique connections put Estonia in a better position than many other nations who were incorporated into the Soviet Union. The period of occupation consisted of both periods of more stringent and relaxed political climate, and although the idea of an independent Estonia was never forgotten, for many years, the prospects of its realization were dim. For Estonia and the entire Soviet system, a real change came in 1985 when Mikhail Gorbachev, a leader much different from his predecessors Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, was at the forefront of guiding the USSR. By that time, Soviet Union’s glory days as a world superpower had irreversibly ended, and Gorbachev’s initiatives such as *perestroika* and *glasnost* – aimed at modernizing the political and economic system and mobilizing society – only gave momentum to the developments that eventually led the communist system to collapse under its own weight (Mole 2012, 67). In Estonia and various other Soviet Republics, Gorbachev’s policy actions were crucial in generating “alternative visions of the future” and reconnecting with the West. The end of the 1980s ushered in an era of national re-awakening in Estonia, and the creation of popular movements produced a strong desire to withdraw from the union (Mole 2012, 67). Estonians’

increasing desire for independence – and even more importantly – the belief that this was attainable were combined by unforeseen weakness of the regime. Many believe it was Gorbachev’s personal aversion to the use of military force that contributed to the USSR’s somewhat unexpected strategy not to militarily crack down on nonviolent protestors in the Baltics.

Estonia Regains its Independence

Despite the general sense of gratefulness that Estonians felt towards the West for its help in both materially and morally supporting the forcefully occupied Baltic nations, there was something unique about Estonia in regaining of its independence. While the Western values of freedom, democracy, and rule of law were fundamentally important for Estonians, they always had some reservations about the general ideas with regard to what became known as Europeanization and standardization of Western popular culture. Pami Aalto argues that the independence movement in Estonia, often referred to as the Singing Revolution, “was ultimately about the survival of their language and culture, and thus, their identity” (2003, 118; Kirch and Kirch 2001, 131). Of course, it was also an attempt to regain freedom, civil rights, and do away with the Soviet economic mismanagement, but many Estonians saw that their identity was at stake (Raun 2001, 222; Aalto 2003; Mole 2012, 70).

The rapid developments in the sphere of geopolitics and the domestic struggle in Estonia culminated on August 20, 1991, when Estonia declared full independence. In early September of the same year, Estonia was recognized by the United States and admitted to the United Nations (Raun 2001, 224; Bildt 1994; Taagepera 2013, 97). Again, the Estonian government took the position that the Soviet occupation – as well as all the rules from it – were unlawful and insisted seeing Estonia as a restored rather than new state (Mole 2012, 88). The adherence to the

historical continuity discourse was an important factor in simplifying many of the reform efforts, but first and foremost, it was a moral argument that gave substance to the idea that in terms of its culture and value system, Estonia had always been part of the democratic world (Mole 2012, 81; Raun 2001, 246). This idea was reinforced when, for instance, the declaration with which the European Community recognized the independence of the Baltic States, stated: “the time had come for Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to occupy their rightful place among the peoples of Europe” (quoted in More 2012, 79). In August 1994, the last Russian troops left Estonia, and the Estonian President Lennart Meri announced that “the saddest chapter in Estonian history has come to an end” and “Estonia is *again* part of Europe and of the Western world” (emphasis added, quoted in Mole 2012, 128). Despite the daunting task of rebuilding the democratic institutions and constitutional structure, transitioning to a free-market system, and becoming a true liberal democracy, Estonians were optimistic and determined (Mole 2012, 104). Building on its close relations with its neighbors Finland and Sweden, as well as support from the United States, Estonia was at the forefront of the economic and political reform. Institutionally and societally, however, the direct impact of the U.S. on Estonia was smaller than that of Sweden and Finland (Kaljurand, personal communication).

Despite the tolerable, and at times even cooperative, relations with the newly emerged Russian Federation, the concern about Estonian security was always present. The indirect military pressure and attempts to protect its compatriots in Estonia created a great deal of unease (Kramer 2002, 734). The fact that Russia’s special rights in its “near abroad” became a central element of Moscow’s rhetoric throughout the 1990s reignited the fear that history could repeat itself (Kramer 2002, 735; Aalto 2003, 23). After all, there were more than twenty-five million Russians continuing to live outside of the borders of the Russian Federation. The changes in

Estonian ethnic breakdown had been remarkable: when in 1939, the share of Estonians in their home country was 92 percent; in 1989 this figure stood at 61.5 percent (Taagepera 2013, 97), representing the thousands of Russians who came to the Western and relatively more well-off part of the enormous union. For instance, while in the Estonian city of Narva, right by the Russian border in Eastern Estonia, Estonians had long stood at 95 percent of the population and the share of Russians was approximately five percent, by the late 1980s, these numbers reversed (Raun 2001, 205-206; Bildt 1994). Although in the referendum that took place in March 1991, the idea of an independent Estonia was supported even by many non-Estonians who lived in the country (Mole 2012, 76), the rhetoric “forced Estonians to perceive Russian speakers as a threat to independent Estonia” (Mole 2012, 83-84).

In these circumstances, the need for constructing a European identity – one that traced Estonians’ cultural and ethnic genesis and stood in stark opposition to the Russian other –only increased (Mole 2012, 144). Along the lines of Banerjee’s idea that “several elements of national identity are structured in oppositions”, distinguishing between the “Estonian ‘self’ and Russian ‘other’” became a central feature of the nation-building process in the early days of the independence (Aalto 2003, 30; Kuus 2002, 97; Kärner 2000). It was clear that Russia as a neighbor could not be wished away and that Moscow was not going to admit that the country had occupied Estonia, but Estonians were resilient in maintaining that Russia had not had any special rights in the Baltics (Raun 2001, 251; Mole 2012, 122). This struggle had profound ramifications beyond Estonia’s borders and, at times quite explicitly, became an issue for the United States.

The Post-Cold War Period: Estonia’s Engagement with the West

In many parts of the West, particularly in those where Estonian émigré communities had been influential, there was an understanding that even though the Baltic States are marginal in

size and population, they represent something much bigger in the post-Cold War world (Coffey 2013, 2). In 1994, then Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt argued in his *Foreign Affairs* article “The Baltic Litmus Test” that the security concerns of the Baltic states were to “test the readiness and ability of the United States to influence Russian policy and contribute to the new security order in Central and Eastern Europe” (1994). In light of the complications in Balkans, Bildt framed the case of the Baltics as an opportunity to prove the West’s credibility. A somewhat similar argument is made by Agnia Grigas, who considered the Baltic States as “primary indicator of whether or not Russia was willing to abandon its imperialist ambitions and cooperate in the New World Order and its system of norms and institutions” (2012, 22). For the government and people of Estonia and its Baltic neighbors, the accession to the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) quickly became a top national security and foreign policy objective. This goal was not to be achieved easily, but the stakes were extremely high; as Maria Mälksoo argues, “The quest of the Baltic States for membership in the EU and NATO has been politics of survival *par excellence*, aimed at securing Western security guarantees against historically aggressive and unstable neighboring Russia” (2006, 277).

Political engagement with the West

Estonians’ European identity and support for values like freedom and democracy was generally unquestioned by other Westerners even immediately after the country regained its independence in 1991. However, in most instances, the moral backing did not readily translate into political support, mostly due to the fear of aggravating the Russian bear. In the mid-1990s, Estonia’s closest supporters were the Scandinavian countries, particularly Sweden and Denmark, with the United States as an important NATO power following their lead (Library of Congress). Although Estonia became a participant in the NATO Partnership for Peace program in 1993, the

support for any propositions with regard to the accession to NATO had significant limits, most likely due to the fact that in the same year, Moscow made it clear that “the expansion of military alliances to Russian borders would be considered a threat to its national interests” (Mole 2012, 149). In 1997, when former Soviet Satellites Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were invited to join NATO, the Baltic States were left in the sidelines as they were not seen as an “area of vital strategic interest” (Asmus and Nurick 1996, Mole 2012, 149; Kramer 2002, 747). The idea of limiting the accession to these three countries was supported by President Clinton, who was among politicians who thought that since the Baltic States lagged behind in terms of military capabilities and indicators of societal development, they were simply not ready to join the security alliance (Kramer 2002, 737). Some argued that due to their geopolitical location, Baltic States were “militarily indefensible”, while their opponents insisted not defending the Baltic States was going to create instability in the region and create severe security concerns for Europe and the U.S. (Kramer 2002, 750). While the fear of aggravating Russia was understandable, there were those who argued that giving Russia “a de-facto veto over NATO membership” was fundamentally problematic and therefore accepting Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to the alliance was a strategic interest as well as a moral obligation for the Western powers (Kramer 2002, 747).

Outlined by the Clinton administration, the Baltic Action Plan of 1996 substantiated the cooperation between the United States and the Baltics. In 1997, the rhetorical support from the new U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright and her assurance that after the accession of Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic, NATO will expand again, was an important indication that the Baltics were moving in the right direction. In her speech in Lithuania, Secretary Albright further argued that America’s goal was to “create a new pattern of politics in Europe” and

maintained that “no European democracy will be excluded because of where it sits on the map” (Albright 1997), speaking directly to the fear that Russia’s proximity would strip the Baltics from the membership. The United States further consolidated its relations with the three Baltic States when the 1998 Baltic Charter of Partnership created a framework for multidimensional cooperation with the U.S. The document was not to be seen an unequivocal confirmation of the prospects of NATO membership, but sent a strong message about America’s support for the region (Talbot 1998; Kramer 2002, 741). Specifically, the first principle of the partnership, “[t]he United States of America has a real, profound, and enduring interest in the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania” (Charter 1998) is an indication of the Clinton administration’s desire to help the Baltic States to NATO. However, for many other players – including NATO senior officials in other NATO member states as well as in U.S. Congress – at that time, the costs of the Baltics’ membership outweighed the benefits (Council of Foreign Relations, 1999).

The relatively hesitant attitude from the Bush administration turned into a strong – and bipartisan – endorsement of the Baltic States’ aspirations, and the question became what was the specific timeline. In his speech in Warsaw in June 2001, President Bush made a strong argument in support for NATO expansion and argued that what George H. W. Bush had called a Europe “whole and free” was “no longer a dream, [...] but rising around us” (Bush 2001). Bush’s idea that all European democracies from the Baltic to the Black Sea had the same right for freedom, security and “the same chance to join the institutions of Europe as Europe’s old democracies” resonated in the Baltics (Bush 2001). A few months later, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 fundamentally transformed many preexisting conventions about U.S. national security and its relations with the world. Despite sharp differences with regard to the Bush administration’s

invasion of Iraq, as then Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, reminds in his book, the support for Baltics' aspirations was bipartisan and almost universal (Laanemae, personal communication). In addition to this, as Kramer argues, even though Russia was still against the accession of the Baltic States, in 2002 it became apparent that Moscow was "not willing to risk its relations with the West for it" (2002, 748). With a decisive role played by the United States, Estonia's – along with its Baltic members and four Central European countries – accession to NATO became a reality in 2004 (Aalto 2003, 49; Mole 2012, 163).

Cultural engagement with the West

In addition to promising to help Estonians work towards NATO, the United States persistently advocated for Estonia's deeper integration with Europe and eventually joining the EU. Multidimensional integration was one of the central features of the 1998 Baltic Charter, and in the words of Marina Kaljurand, former Estonian Ambassador to the U.S., "it was in Americans' interests to make sure Estonia was culturally engaging with the EU to make sure the country was not left alone even if the NATO bid was not to work out (Kaljurand, personal communication; Baltic Charter; CFR 1999). As it turned out, Estonia became a member of NATO a few weeks before it entered the European Union in spring 2004.

In many ways, Estonia's accession to the two crucially important organizations was very different. Estonians never doubted their European identity, the country applied for the EU in 1995 and became a candidate for the membership in 1997, but as opposed to the almost universal support for NATO among native Estonians, increasingly many had doubts about the sensibility of joining the union (Raun 2001, 259). Declining cultural independence, concern over the preservation of the Estonian language, and the understanding that the accession was not to come easily made many reconsider the sensibility of joining an increasingly unified union after having

fought to leave another (Kirch and Kirch 2001, 136; Aalto 2003, 66). Estonians were concerned about Western Europeans' perception of them as its "less civilized, more barbaric, other half" and fearful of being seen as a marginalized post-communist state in European periphery (Mole 2012, 154; Kirch and Kirch 2001, 135; Vetik 2003, nr 46). Estonian society as a whole was considerably more skeptical about the EU than the government and most of the elite. The governing elite rejected the idea that joining the European Union would result in the weakening in Estonian cultural identity and made a convincing case that it was fundamentally different from the one that the Soviets created and sustained (Mole 2012, 159). In the run-up for the 2003 referendum of joining the EU, the "yes" campaign managed to frame the debate as an "inevitable historical choice between West and East" (Mikkil and Pridham 2004, 737) and emphasized the prospect of peaceful coexistence of Estonian and European identity. The 66.8 percent support was not a particularly close call, but nevertheless the lowest among the ten countries – a tendency that can be explained by Estonians' particular concern over preserving their culture, language, and political independence (Mole 2012, 162).

Although there was some skepticism about U.S. actions in the years following 9/11, the Bush era in Estonian foreign policy was driven by sense of gratefulness for America's help with Estonia's pursuit of NATO and the EU, and a determination to give back to the alliance. Estonian troops fought in Afghanistan and Iraq and in the face of the growing tensions between the U.S. and its European allies, Estonian politicians were persistent in finding what bound rather than separated the two sides of the Atlantic (Marme 2004). As Sven Mikser put it, the notion of America's imperial overstretch did not go unnoticed, but for Estonia, bigger concern, to use Richard Haass' notion, was always "U.S.' imperial understretch" (2003). By and large, the Estonian public agreed with the rhetoric advanced by Estonian government and foreign policy

community. However, a certain level of discomfort with the potential impact of U.S.' cultural dominance on the Estonian identity had always been present, and during the Bush years it persisted, and perhaps even strengthened. While the opening of borders and increasing easiness of travelling were generally seen as positive developments, some were concerned about the survival of the Estonian language in a world where English was the *lingua franca*, and saw any signs of Europeanization, or even worse, Americanization, as negative.

Once again, the support for basic U.S. policies still remained relatively high. When President Bush visited Estonia in 2006 and praised the country for its successful economic and political transformation, but voiced some criticism about Estonia's unsuccessful integration policies, particularly in regard to poorly integrated Russians, more than ten percent of whom (130,000 people) at that time were stateless and able to receive Estonian citizenship only when they passed tests of Estonian language and history (Epstein 2004; Grigas 2012, 22). Over the past decade, the problem with Estonian residence of undetermined citizenship has decreased, but not disappeared. Despite otherwise relatively cooperative relations with Russia, in 2007 the bilateral relationship reached its low point with the controversy over moving the Bronze Soldier, a World War II-era statue that used to be in Tallinn's city center. The conflict initiated not only harsh verbal attacks from Moscow, but violent protests in Tallinn and Estonian Embassy in Moscow, as well as cyber-attacks on Estonian government servers.

The U.S.-Estonian Bilateral Relationship During the Obama Administration

Estonia has gained enormously from the post-Cold War security architecture and America's commitment to the region, and in 2009 President Obama was faced with a completely different Estonia than that greeted by George W. Bush eight years earlier. The U.S. has always

been one of the most vocal proponents of Estonia's success in democratic and economic transition (Ilves 2012). According to U.S. government accounts:

Since 1991, Estonia has undergone a tremendous transformation. Through hard work, innovation, and a pursuit of strong democratic ideals, enhanced security, and greater cooperation, Estonia has emerged as an example to the region and the world. The country's integration of technology into public and private partnerships demonstrates the endless possibilities that technology can have when harnessed to benefit societies. Estonia is an effective and reliable trans-Atlantic partner in advancing peace, stability, and democracy in Europe and beyond. Its cooperation with the region has made it an invaluable ally in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United States appreciates Estonia's commitment to the shared mission in Afghanistan.

(U.S. Department of State 2014).

Given its tough experiences with the Soviet occupation, Estonia has been praised for its liberal democracy, rule of law, relative economic prosperity, and technological innovations ranging from e-governance solutions to developing software for Skype (Coffey 2013, 22). At the same time, the country is far from having entirely offset the impact of half a century of repression and economic mismanagement, and catching up with its neighbors in Scandinavia in terms of human development, unemployment, poverty rates, GDP per capita, will take decades. Prominent Estonian social scientist Marju Lauristin talks about "social contradictions shadowing Estonia's success story" and makes a convincing case that even though Estonia's membership of NATO and the EU has increased its international position significantly, life in Estonia has not become significantly better for an ordinary citizen (2000, 614).

In addition to that, Estonia continues to receive international criticism for its poor success with integrating its Russian community, making up 24.8 percent of the population (Grigas 2012, 22). A 2011 report on Russian compatriot policy in Estonia by the Center for Strategic and

International Studies (CSIS) argues that poor integration is one of the main reasons why Russia “excels in its dissemination of soft propaganda” and is “successful in informing the views of compatriots on issues like history and politics” (Conley and Gerber 2011). To be sure, there is nothing wrong with countries using soft power and channels of public diplomacy. The problem in this case is that Russia’s manner of pursuing its interests in Estonia has strong elements of propaganda, and it impinges upon important areas of Estonian national sovereignty and undermines its core interests (Grigas 2012, 22). Nonetheless, many Estonians have become used to indirect pressure from Russia.

Driven by the idea of normalization in the Baltic region and President Obama’s relative disengagement with Europe, during his first term in office, President Obama, “much to the disappointment of Baltic officials”, did not host his Baltic counterparts at the White House (Coffey 2013, 3). The two countries still enjoyed excellent relations, and as Estonian government officials argue, from the Estonian standpoint, the political party of the U.S. President has never made much difference. In this sense, although the approval ratings of President Obama were considerably higher than that of George W. Bush towards the end his second term, the widely acclaimed “Obama effect” was of less importance than in Western Europe. During the first term of the Obama administration, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her commitment to the region dominated (Laanemäe, personal communication).

Few believed that the circumstances could change so profoundly and quickly, and that in September 2014, together with 150 American troops stationed in Estonia, President Obama would be in Tallinn to give what David Frum in *the Atlantic* labeled “the most important speech about European security of the post-Cold War era” (Frum 2014). For many, Russia’s aggression against Ukraine signified the end of the relatively peaceful time period, and just like in the 1990s,

many saw the Baltics as the test case for the U.S. administration. In Tallinn, 200 kilometers from the Russian border and 1000 from Moscow, as Mrs. Kaljurand, former Estonian Ambassador in the U.S., emphasized in personal communication, President Obama made it clear that “NATO Article 5 is crystal clear: an attack on one is an attack on all” and that although Estonia had lost its independence before, “With NATO, [Estonia] will never lose it again” (The White House 2014b). Mrs. Kaljurand, an Estonian ambassador in Washington, DC in 2011-2014 argued that she had been given these promises behind closed doors, but that seeing the President deliver this live to Estonian people was something out of the ordinary (Kaljurand, personal communication). In his speech, President Obama swiftly rejected any talk of spheres of influence, and claimed that the Baltics are not “post-Soviet territory” but independent nations (The White House 2014b).

What makes President Obama’s speech in Tallinn particularly relevant for this study, is the abundance of cultural and historical references in the speech and his ability to speak to the sensibilities of Estonians. The numerous references to Estonian culture and history included one about Estonian traditional and widely popular song festival, with President Obama stating, “My only regret is that I missed this summer’s Laulupidu. And I’ll try to come back next time and catch it,” (The White House 2014b). His mentioning of Estonian poetess Marie Under and Heinz Valk, a legendary Estonian politician from the 1990s, resonated with the Estonian public, and he was largely seen as genuine and humble. In particular, during a press conference with Estonian President Ilves, President Obama praised Estonia for its e-government solutions and claimed “I should have called the Estonians when we were setting up our health care website”, leaving an impression of a humble and relatable person with a good sense of humor (The White House 2014a).

President Obama's speech in Tallinn is not only a great way to understand the current frame of the U.S.-Estonian bilateral relationship, but it also sends broader messages about how acquiring in-depth country expertise and understanding the local context and way of life are crucial for effective public diplomacy. While it is difficult and time-consuming, the efforts pay off in a context of a relationship often marked by the word *excellent*.

In conclusion, U.S. public diplomacy in Estonia is heavily impacted by the nature of the bilateral relationship between the two countries. The relationship itself is built on shared values and people-to-people contacts as much as it is founded on coinciding geopolitical interests in the Baltic Sea region. Estonians are a nation whose beliefs and values are strongly shaped by its history and culture; and identity and security are closely linked. In conducting public diplomacy in Estonia, the nation's two goals of international integration, and at the same time the protection of its national identity from foreign influence, must be taken into account (Kuus 2002, 26; Aalto 2003, 121; Kärner 2000). In other words, the common quest for the protection of the Estonian language and culture may limit the ability of any actor to influence the deep-rooted belief system of Estonians.

Chapter 4: People-to-People Contact and U.S. government-sponsored Exchange Programs

The first chapters of this study have argued that the promise of soft power and public diplomacy cannot be understood without having a deep knowledge about the context in which public diplomacy – be it in the form of one-way messaging, high-level speeches, or exchange programs – takes place. The discussions about the nature of American public diplomacy and the nature of U.S.- Estonian relationship are important, but not sufficient for assessing the impact of the U.S. government-sponsored Fulbright program on the beliefs of Estonian participants. The final step before considering the original survey data is understanding the reasons for which genuine dialogue rather than one-way messaging is considered the most profound form of public diplomacy promise of exchange programs, but also the continuing debate over the effectiveness of the programs.

The Role of Cultural and Educational Exchange Programs in U.S. Public Diplomacy

In the history of U.S. foreign policy, various administrations' commitment to public diplomacy has fluctuated depending both on the international circumstances and domestic priorities. Exchange programs that are designed to create genuine dialogue and create mutual understanding have proved some of the more resilient elements of U.S. public diplomacy. After all, it was already forty years ago when a U.S. Congressional report, "The Future of U.S. Public Diplomacy" warned that: "More communication does not by itself guarantee better communication. In most instances, it merely multiplies the possibilities for misunderstandings and misinterpretation" (quoted in Snow 2009, 9). When it comes to acquiring in-depth knowledge and creating lasting relationships, cultural and education exchanges hold the most

promise for winning hearts and minds for the U.S. As Gregory argues, long-term engagement “places a premium on dialogue, reasoned argument, openness to the opinions of others, learning through questions, and not talking at cross purposes (2011, 357). At the same time, exchanges are the only type of public diplomacy initiatives that “directly involve the ‘human factor’” and directly deal with participants personalities and psychologies, which includes considerable risk (Scott-Smith 2009, 50). In addition to that, the nature of the exchange programs often makes them difficult to manage, and the direct benefits, if any, can be expected to emerge only over the long term.

The network of the official exchange programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of State is one of the most advanced and prestigious, and the State Department and its partner agencies have over the decades provided “considerable anecdotal evidence indicating the favorable outcomes that these activities have generated” (Scott-Smith 2008, 174; Mueller 2006, 63; Snow 2009, 5; Riordan 2005, 180). The basic justifications behind the practice of U.S. government-sponsored exchanges have remained the largely same since 1973 when the State Departments’ Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs outlined the basic goals for its exchange programs as follows:

- To favorably influence the environment within which US foreign policy is carried out;
- To enlarge the circle of those able to serve as influential interpreters between this and other nations;
- To help current and potential opinion leaders and decision makers to gain through first-hand experience more accurate perceptions and a deeper understanding of these realities in each others’ societies which ultimately tend to affect international relations.”

(Quoted in Mueller 1986, 4)

The idea that creating mutual understanding and greater appreciation for different points of view drive the exchange programs even today. Interpersonal communication is the most important opportunity to build trust, and understanding (Snow 2009, 5; Scott-Smith 2008, 176).

The Fulbright Program, one of the most prestigious among the exchange programs, was founded in 1946 and has had approximately 310,000 participants since that time. Senator William Fulbright was a dedicated educator and remained the face and unofficial spokesman for U.S. government-sponsored exchanges for almost fifty years prior to his death in 1995 (Snow 2008, 214). Senator Fulbright was committed to education and expanding mutual understanding, and believed that “in the long course of history, having people who understand your thought is much greater security than another submarine” (quoted in Cowan and Arsenault 2008, 19). During the Cold War, the Fulbright Program was seen as a Trojan horse that contributed to the eventual collapse of the communist system, and also gave Americans a better understanding of what life on the other side of the Iron Curtain was like (Nye 2004). Especially in its early days, a major benefit from the Fulbright Program was its promotion of American studies and their incorporation into the curricula of universities and schools outside of the U.S.. In the 1950s, Fulbright was also a part of the effort of establishing jointly run U.S-Spanish military air bases (Scott-Smith 2008, 181). While the focus of the Fulbright Program thereafter narrowed, its appeal did not, and the program gained popularity. Today, The Fulbright Program consists of the Fulbright Student, Fulbright Scholar, and various other subprograms that operate in more than 160 countries and attract thousands of American and non-U.S. students and academics to apply for the highly competitive program and spend a year or a semester abroad.

Gregory argues that much of the academic literature presents increasing number of exchanges as “a signature recommendation” for U.S. public diplomacy during the Obama

administration, and that “No foreign visit of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton takes place without at least one reference to the importance of expanding educational exchanges” (Gregory 2011, 357; Scott-Smith 2008, 176). The National Security Strategy of 2010 likewise emphasizes the importance of people-to-people contact: “Time and again, we have seen that the best ambassadors for American values and interests are the American people – our businesses, nongovernmental organizations, scientists, athletes, artists, military service members, students” (The White House 2010, 12). President Obama made a reference to his commitment of increasing exchanges in his renowned Cairo speech, making it even more personal by saying “we will expand exchange programs, and increase scholarships, like the one that brought my father to America” (The White House 2009a). A fact sheet outlined by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton explains that State Department’s goal is to help create an environment receptive to U.S. national interests, and argues that exchanges help advances U.S. national interests by fostering a sense of common interests and common values. For the State Department, offering visitors firsthand experiences to American society and culture are as important as the opportunity for Americans to learn about other countries and peoples (U.S. Department of State 2010).

The Debate about Exchanges

Although exchange programs have been a part of U.S. public diplomacy efforts for decades, there has been considerable debate about their real impact and usefulness. Several high-level foreign service officers like former Secretary of State, Colin Powell, have been steadfast believers in the exchanges, arguing, “I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here” (U.S. Department of State, 2001). At the same time, coalitions or individual members of Congress, particularly those most concerned with balancing the budget and appealing to their domestic constituencies, have not

shared this view. The basic political problem with exchanges is that it is really hard to measure their impact and observations taken within any one country during a specific time period are likely to be dependent on different factors specific to this country (Atkinson 2010, 8; Scott-Smith 2012). There is a host of variables involved, but several comparative studies, like the one Atkinson conducted from 1980-2006, concluded that U.S.-hosted educational exchange programs played an important role in supporting the development of liberal values and practices, particularly in authoritarian states (2010, 19).

By and large, the critics of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs are split into two groups. The first set of critics argue that spending precious resources on the programs is not reasonable. They point to the fact that the U.S. with its diverse and high-level higher education has attracted students from around the world for decades, as the number of international students studying in the U.S. has grown steadily since the 1970s. In 2013/14, the number of international students in the U.S. stood at 8.1 percent and meant a record high of 886,052 students; that is 4.2 percent of the total number of people enrolled in U.S. institutions of higher education (Open Doors Fast Facts 2014). The critics claim that international students, as opposed to the ones who are granted scholarships from the Department of State bring money to the U.S. and thereby help U.S. economy, rather than being an additional burden for the already troubled federal budget.

The second set of critics simply do not accept what they see as Senator Fulbright's idealistic idea that "exchange makes us better human beings" (Snow 2008, 214). Senator Fulbright stresses "the need for people to *understand*, though not necessarily *agree* with, a nation's position" and for its critics, this speaks to the weakness of the exchange programs (original emphasis, Cowan and Arsenault 2008, 19). It is true that the Cold War approach to exchanges was "not a one-sided altruistic mission" and most participants knew that the U.S.

government's commitment to exchange and international education was politically motivated, and all exchanges – even if presented as educational apolitical – operate within the broader political environment (Snow 2008, 215; Scott-Smith 2009, 50). Scott-Smith is right that “the potential political reward from creating a situation whereby individuals may reconsider their identity, and so their interests, is obvious”, but it is increasingly apparent that expecting the exchanges to produce tangible political benefit is impractical (2008, 184). In fact, great effort has been made over the years to maintain the Fulbright Program's distance from political objectives, since it is believed to undermine the authenticity of the exchange (Scott-Smith 2008, 180). Even during the Cold War, American Fulbrighters were “not expected to speak out in favor of U.S. foreign policy actions”, as this was believed to create more obstruction than attraction. Even during the Cold War, the exchanges were not seen as a retaliatory propositions, and throughout the Cold War, participants on U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs were “pleasantly surprised to find that there was no obligation to comply with U.S. interests in return” (Scott-Smith 2011, 9).

The idea that government's excessive activity in the field of cultural relations undermines the value and authenticity of these interactions is particularly true in the context of the global information age, where most democratic governments have realized that even an attempt to control the message and people-to-people interactions is be wrong, and that their task is to “encourage the free flow of discourse, public argument, and engagement across boundaries (Gregory 2011a, 797, Nye). For this reason, there has been an increasing attempt by the U.S. government to partner with independent actors like non-governmental organizations, businesses, and individuals, to initiate exchange programs, increase understanding which may lead to diffuse political effects (Rupp 1999). Senator Fulbright has claimed that instead of trying to improve the

image of the U.S. “the value of exchanges is in the opportunity for expansion of knowledge, wisdom, and empathy” (Snow 2008, 209). There is quite large body of work on the impact that direct experience of another culture can have on a participant’s belief system and psychological outlook (Scott-Smith 2009, 54). As Wiarda argues,

There is no substitute for being there, learning the language, soaking up the culture, living as the people do. Only then you start to understand what their perspectives and issues are. [...] You need to soak up the culture and the ambiance. You have got to see it first-hand. [...] You’ve got to speak the local language, do your own interviews in their language and not yours, understand the culture from your subjects’ point-of-view and not just through your own rose-colored glasses, which is our definition of ethnocentrism. I call this approach empathy – the ability to place yourself in the shoes of your subject (2013, 12-13).

Wiarda among others believes that living across cultures has the potential to change the way exchangees see not only their host country, but the world, their home country, and themselves, potentially becoming more open and challenging their preexisting assumptions (Geiger 2010, 98). As a corollary, the Fulbrighters, most of whom are active and influential in their local communities, are expected to share their experiences and broaden the understanding of people in their communities. Cowan and Arsenault argue that the exchanges should be seen as an opportunity to win an argument or change someone’s outlook. The authors praise exchanges for their potential to create “instances of collaboration” through projects, networks and partnerships, arguing “[n]othing helps build mutual understanding as well as a thoughtful dialogue. And nothing creates a sense of trust and mutual respect as fully as meaningful collaboration (2008, 27). The mutual understanding and sense of trust is often translated into long-lasting personal friendships that bind people together and create transnational networks that, many believe, have the most potential to challenge today’s complex problems (Scott-Smith 2010, 172; Slaughter 2010, Snow 2008). Nevertheless, the political debate over the funding on exchange programs is

ongoing; and although the amount of money channeled into exchange programs is marginal in comparison with America's defense expenses, the funding for programs is constantly at the risk of being cut.

People-to-People Contact between the U.S. and Estonia

The importance of people-to-people contacts in the bilateral relationship of the United States and Estonia dates back to Estonian émigrés who relocated to the U.S. during World War II and played a crucial role in Estonia regaining its independence. Later on, contacts have been built through travelling, business, different exchange programs, and students in U.S. universities. In 2013-2014, 212 Estonians studied full-time at U.S. universities, as a percentage of population higher than that of Germany, France, and the UK (Open Doors 2014). To provide information and assist international students who are interested in attending U.S. colleges and universities, the U.S. Department of State sponsors the network of Education USA offices: two of the total 400 of which are in Estonia. The office maintains presence in social media and sends newsletters about scholarship options. The office attracts considerable attention, though the high cost of U.S. college programs is a hurdle for many Estonians, especially given the many much less costly alternatives in Europe (Epp Kirss, pers. comm.).

Running the U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs is one of the most important ways in which the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn encourages people-to-people contact between Estonians and Americans. The Fulbright program, widely considered the most prestigious of the exchange programs, started in Estonia in 1991 and has an Estonian alumni network of nearly 100 people. Interest for the program has been significant and quite constant, and the Fulbright Student and Fulbright Scholar Programs continue to attract the best and the brightest from

Estonian universities (Hurst, pers. comm.). One of the program's most prominent Estonian alumni of the program is Marina Kaljurand, currently an Under Secretary for Political Affairs at the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Estonian ambassador to Russia from 2006-2008 and the United States from 2011 to 2014. Mrs. Kaljurand, who used the Fulbright grant to attend a Master's program in International Law and Diplomacy at the Fletcher School of Diplomacy at Tufts University, looks back to her exchange experience with great gratitude. Mrs. Kaljurand admits it was "an extraordinary experience" and suggested "a lot of schoolwork" was the first thing that came to her mind when she was asked to think back to her year in the U.S. In addition to that, she mentioned excellent networking opportunities and an expansion of her worldview, and claimed that she continues to benefit from her Fulbright experience even today (Kaljurand, personal communication).

To sum up the debate over the exchange programs and the enduring people-to-people contacts between the United States and Estonia, it is clear that creating genuine dialogue with people from other countries has the potential to produce mutual understanding and build trust. This is by no means the only possible outcome of different forms of intercultural communication as this may result in differences, but particularly in a context in which the two countries and cultures are similar, there are various opportunities for constructive collaboration and mutual self-enrichment.

Chapter 5: The Impact of the Fulbright Program on the Beliefs of Estonians

After in-depth exploration of soft power, public diplomacy and the context of U.S.-Estonian bilateral relationship, this study moves to consider the original survey data to assess the impact of U.S. government-sponsored Fulbright Student and Fulbright Scholar exchange programs on Estonian participants' beliefs about the United States and its role in the world. Designed as a holistic single-case study, it pays particular attention to the underlying historical, cultural, and political factor, and adds to the existing body of research done on the impact of public diplomacy programs. The case study relies on multiple sources of evidence: Comprehensive surveys and open-ended interviews were used in combination with documents, archival records, and direct observation. Besides its interesting history, culture, and continuing geopolitical relevance, the smallness of the country made it possible reach out to all of the 35 Estonians who participated in the Fulbright program since 2009.

From January 10 to March 11, 2015, two online surveys were conducted using Qualtrics software. The first questionnaire (Appendix 1: Online Survey for Fulbright Participants) was sent to all 35 Estonian participants of the Fulbright Student and Fulbright Scholar Programs from the years 2009-2014. All of the contact information was obtained from the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn. The second survey was similar, though not identical to the first one, and was sent to a group of Estonian students and scholars who had not taken part in any U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs. The control group was created to allow for the comparison of the responses of the Fulbright participants with Estonians who were of similar backgrounds, but who had not taken part of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs. In order to qualify for the control

group, a candidate needed to be at least in the process of obtaining a Master’s degree, though PhD holders were specifically targeted. Most of the contact information of the control group was gathered from the Estonian Research Portal (Eesti Teadusportaal, <https://www.etis.ee>), which lists Estonian scholars and academics.

Table 3: Survey Characteristics

	Total number of surveys sent out	Completed surveys	Rate of Response	Male	Female	Master’s Degrees	PhD
Fulbright Program Participants	35	26	74.3%	11	14	8	18
Control Group (non-Fulbrighters)	125	54	43%	25	29	31	23

More than 98 percent of the respondents of both groups identified themselves as Estonians, with one Fulbrighter and one member of the control group identifying themselves as Russian. The overwhelming majority of the people were either from Tartu or Tallinn or had studied in either of these Estonian cities. While the level of education of the people in the two groups was essentially equal, there was some variation in the age of the respondents. On average, Fulbright participants were slightly older than students and scholars from the control group, when 70 percent of the members of the control group and 58 percent of the Fulbrighters were twenty-three to thirty years old, 25 percent Fulbrighters more than 35, 12 among control group. A slight difference was also in the field of study of the two groups. While among Fulbrighters, law, economics, engineering, and computer science were the most frequent areas of study, in the control group, health, education, chemistry and geography dominated.

When it comes to the Estonian Fulbright participants, the 74.3 percent participation rate provides a solid basis for outlining tendencies about them as a group, and the slight differences in the backgrounds of members of the two groups do not prevent me from making comparisons and forming an overall judgment about the impact of U.S. public diplomacy in Estonia. However, it is important to note that the data from the surveys targets a very specific and narrow segment of the Estonian society and therefore making generalizations about the whole Estonian population based on the results of this study is not viable. At the same time, the segment of the society that the programs are targeting is far from inconsequential – as candidates for being the future political and societal leaders, Fulbrighters as highly educated and socially active young people are expected to have an influence that extends far beyond their persona and family.

The online survey sent to Estonian Fulbright participants and the control group consisted of three main topics: the first section dealt with their general beliefs and outlook of international relations, the second asked them to elaborate on the nature of the U.S.-Estonian bilateral relationship, and the third was designed to get a better understanding of their views towards exchange programs. The results of the research project were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods, and this next chapter presents the most relevant data in the form of graphs, tables, or direct quotations. In order to get an overview of the differences of the positions of the two groups, their responses to selected Likert-scale questions are presented in twofold tables. Any quotations that appear in the chapter are presented in their original form, including spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

General Beliefs

The first set of questions was aimed at getting a better understanding of the background of the respondents, their previous connections with the United States, and their general interest in international affairs.

Note: The table outlines the mean of their responses to the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Table 4: Responses Regarding General Beliefs

Rank	Fulbrighters	Mean	Rank	Control Group	Mean
1	I have extensive connections with the United States	3.62	1	I have extensive connections with the United States	2.39
2	I follow news about U.S. foreign policy on a regular basis	3.69	2	I follow news about U.S. foreign policy on a regular basis	3.02
3	I am socially active and hold several leadership positions	3.77	3	I am socially active and hold several leadership positions	3.50
4	I have always associated my long-term future with Estonia	3.88	6	I have always associated my long-term future with Estonia	4.15
5	International public opinion significantly shapes international affairs	3.92	5	International public opinion significantly shapes international affairs	3.93
6	Culture has an important role to play in foreign affairs	4.27	7	Culture has an important role to play in foreign affairs	4.30
7	I have always been interested in international affairs	4.27	4	I have always been interested in international affairs	3.80
8	Issues like democracy and personal freedoms are very important for me	4.50	8	Issues like democracy and personal freedoms are very important for me	4.46
9	I enjoy travelling and learning about other cultures	4.60	9	I enjoy travelling and learning about other cultures	4.56

As Table 4 shows, the statement that produced the greatest contrast was the one regarding extensive connections with the U.S. In comparison with the control group, Fulbrighters were less likely to consider their connections with the U.S. limited. Fulbrighters were more likely than

members of the control group to regularly follow news about U.S. foreign policy, be interested in international affairs, and consider themselves socially active. In connection with this, members of the control group were more likely than Fulbrighters to agree with the statement that they had always associated their long-term future with Estonia, perhaps revealing somewhat lower levels of global attitude. Interestingly, the control group was more likely than the Fulbrighters to consider the role of culture in international affairs important. Most of the Fulbrighters had had connections with the U.S. even aside from their Fulbright exchange, and their responses ranged from attending conferences and seminars, business and personal contacts from travelling. About half of the members of the control group had been to the U.S. as tourists; several people mentioned relatives and friends and American exchange students in Estonia whom they had met at their universities.

In conclusion on the section of general beliefs, it appears that in comparison with the control group, Fulbrighters demonstrated higher levels of interest in foreign affairs, higher levels of global-mindedness. The specific reasons for this are difficult to pinpoint, but these findings are in line with theoretical literature that associates experiences of living or studying abroad and being in a close contact with people of different nationalities with growing self-awareness and curiosity.

America's Role in the World and U.S.-Estonian Bilateral Relationship

The aim of the second set of questions was to identify the opinions of Fulbrighters and of the control group about the United States, its role in the world, and the nature of the relationship between the U.S. and Estonia, and the Estonian and American people.

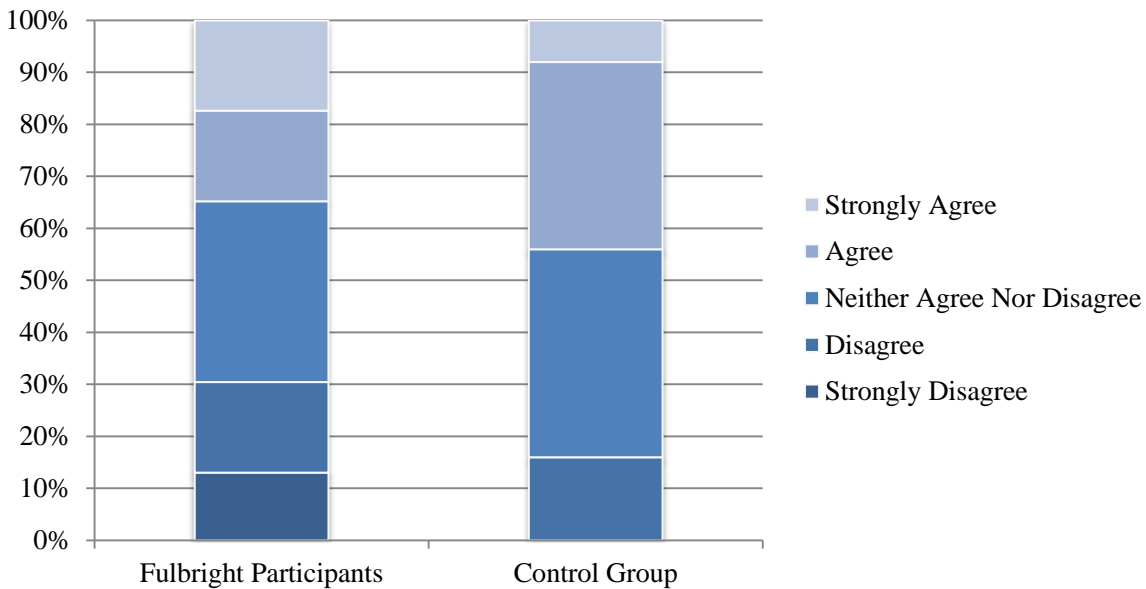
Table 5: Responses Regarding the U.S. and its Role in the World

Rank	Fulbrighters	Mean	Rank	Control Group	Mean
1	The U.S. provides an excellent example of democracy for the world	3.09	4	The U.S. provides an excellent example of democracy for the world	3.36
2	The U.S. has a great deal to gain from partnering with Estonia	3.32	3	The U.S. has a great deal to gain from partnering with Estonia	3.36
3	I personally know several Estonians who are highly skeptical of the United States and its role in the world	3.39	2	I personally know several Estonians who are highly skeptical of the United States and its role in the world	3.32
4	The U.S is culturally dominant in the world	3.43	6	The U.S. is culturally dominant in the world	3.64
5	The U.S. is successful in engaging with people from different countries and cultures	3.52	7	The U.S. is successful in engaging with people from different countries and cultures	3.70
6	The U.S. is overextending its military power in the world	3.65	1	The U.S. is overextending its military power in the world	3.24
7	NATO (and American) military power is central to global security	3.88	9	NATO (and American) military power is central to global security	3.94
8	U.S.-Estonian relationship is, first and foremost, founded on shared values	3.91	8	U.S.-Estonian relationship is, first and foremost, founded on shared values	3.90
9	In general, the Estonian people see Americans favorably	3.96	10	In general, the Estonian people see Americans favorably	3.98
10	Culturally, Estonia has always belonged to the West (Western Europe, the U.S.)	4.17	5	Culturally, Estonia has always belonged to the West (Western Europe, the U.S.)	3.56
11	Estonia has a great deal to gain from partnering with the U.S.	4.26	11	Estonia has a great deal to gain from partnering with the U.S.	4.22

As Table 5 suggests, regarding this set of questions, the differences between the two groups were more significant. Somewhat surprisingly, the biggest number of Fulbrighters disagreed with the statement that “The U.S. provides an excellent example of democracy to the world”. While the

average or mean percentage is helpful in understanding the general tendencies, this question is worth exploring more closely. Figure 2 shows the exact responses to the question and reveals that the answers of the both groups varied considerably.

Figure 2: "The U.S. provides an excellent example of a democracy to the world"



While a significant portion of responders was unsure about the statement in Figure 3, more than 30 percent of Fulbrighters disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. At the same time, more than 35 percent of Fulbrighters agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, demonstrating that it is very difficult to find any patterns in Fulbrighters' responses to this question.

When it came to questions about the United States, in many cases, the responses of Fulbrighters showed higher levels of skepticism than those of the control group. For instance, Fulbrighters were more likely to claim that the U.S. overextends its military power in the world, that they knew Estonians who were highly skeptical of the U.S., and that the U.S. is unsuccessful in engaging with people from different countries and cultures.

As Table 5 demonstrates, the overwhelming sentiment of Estonians towards the U.S. is positive, and this was confirmed in an open-ended question that asked the responders to name some of the basic values that they thought the U.S. stood for. The responses of the two groups were converted into word clouds where the frequency of the response is correlated with its size in the figure.

Figure 3: "In your mind, what are some of the basic values the United States stands for?" Most popular responses from Fulbright participants.



Figure 4 outlines the most frequent responses of the control group to allow for comparison between both groups. Because the overall volume of responses of the control group was greater, less frequent responses appear smaller.

Figure 4: "In your mind, what are some of the basic values that the United States stands for?" Most popular responses from the control group



Freedom and freedom of speech were the two terms most frequently used by both groups. However, it is interesting to see that *democracy*, overwhelmingly the most frequent response for the control group, was much less present in the responses of Fulbrighters. There reason for this could be explained by the high expectations that many Fulbrighters have for the U.S. prior to temporarily living in the country . As it appeared in the surveys, several people were negatively surprised to see that in some fields, the U.S. failed to live up to these expectations and its established values. While patriotism was often mentioned by Fulbrighters, none of the members of the control group considered this a basic value that the U.S. stood for.

Figures 4 and 5 are representative of the positive responses, but a few people in both groups expressed their opinion in a negative way. For instance, one of the Fulbrighters responded to the question about the values that the United States stands for by saying,

Used to be free speech and democracy

Another Fulbrighter suggested that there was a gap between articulated values on the public discourses and what his experience suggested. With regards to the control group, an interesting trend was emerged. While nearly everyone associated the U.S. with positive values like freedom and democracy, several people voiced their hesitance or outright skepticism regarding the ability of the U.S. to live up to these values. For instance,

The values of the US are hypocritical - it says it stands for freedom, but in reality the people have none - if someone says or does anything that another person does not like, they go to court. This is strictly limiting the freedom of speech.

Another member of the control group claimed,

[the U.S.] Wants to project itself as a defender of democracy and freedoms. However, it seems like it stands more for the business interests of big corporations.

A response indicative of general support, but a certain level of hesitancy that several other people showed, was,

I still hope they stand for freedom of speech and the right to privacy.

As mentioned earlier, Fulbrighters were considerably more likely to think that Estonia had always belonged to the West, though both of the groups tended to agree that the American and Estonian people shared the same values. When faced with a question about what some of the differences between the American and Estonian cultures are, a majority of the responders referred to the fact that Estonians tend to be more introverted and nature-oriented, while Americans are very social, have a more individualistic mindset, and are more motivated to work. The most typical responses among Fulbrighters was,

We do share the same values, but Americans are outspoken about them and say so. Estonians are more shy about showing how much these values mean to them and The core values have strong links, both nations value personal freedom and democracy, are

patriotic. Estonian society is currently less open to multiculturalism. I would also say that consumer practices differ due to economic opportunities, but this has made it possible for Estonians to be more sustainable in their consumer behaviour, more connected to nature and critical about the choices they make.

An outlier among the responses by the Fulbrighters was,

No, I don't think they share a lot of the same values. In the US is all about the career and money and not necessarily the quality of life (long vacations and such). On the other hand Estonians have a lot less motivation do work and excel at something. Also the US has very little regard to the environment and social liberties.

The members of the control group were more likely to make reference to the differences between the U.S. and Estonia regarding their posture and general role in the world. For instance, one member of the control group argued,

The biggest difference is the size and economical and sociological impact in the world. One can't really compare the incomparable.

There were also some references to the dominance of American popular culture and its influence on Estonians. One member of the control group claimed,

In my opinion Estonian and American people are pretty same, we share the same values and stand for the same values. Estonian teenager wannabe like a American teenager, listening American pop music and wear American fashion.

Given that President Obama's visit to Estonia in September 2014 got unprecedented media attention and added considerable symbolism to U.S.-Estonian bilateral relations, both groups were asked "What, if anything, comes to your mind when you think about President Obama's speech in Tallinn in September 2014?" The significance of the event is confirmed by the fact that only four people among 26 Fulbrighters and six among 54 members of the control group could not recall the speech. The overwhelming majority saw the speech in a very positive light, and

emphasized the significance of U.S. security guarantees for Estonia. Many mentioned NATO Article 5. One Fulbrighter wrote,

Like many Estonians, I was impressed by the strength and unambiguity of Obama's message, especially the part when the president said Estonia will not be left alone again.

Another category of responses emphasized the style and symbolism, rather than the substance of the speech. As a member of the control group argued,

Nice gesture to thank a small ally for (marginal) military support. Obama is a skilled orator and cited Marie Under.

And a Fulbrighter echoed these words by saying,

Carefully designed and excellently performed.

Some responses from the control group were more ambiguous, one Estonian saw this merely as Estonia's chance to "be famous for 15 minutes" and other claimed,

Very "big" words, whether they correspond to possible actions is yet to be seen. The speech was simply nice, American to me.

An example of a rather skeptical and perhaps overly political account of a Fulbrighter was,

A promise to protect Western values in Estonia and if needed, also by force. However, I do not know what was behind that promise. Maybe a promise by the President of Estonia that the controversial Law on Cohabitation, which most Estonians are opposed to, will be endorsed by the Estonian Parliament?

Despite some differences, there was a general understanding that Estonia had a great deal to gain from partnering with the U.S., as the majority of people either agreed or agreed strongly and a few remained neutral, though no one argued the opposite.

To summarize the responses in section on U.S.-Estonian bilateral relationship and U.S.' role in the world, Fulbrighters were more critical than members of the control group about

several features of the American society and particularly U.S. foreign policy undertakings. The overwhelming sentiment, however, was positive for members of both groups, and the negative comments seemed to have less to do with America's unattractiveness compared to other countries, for Estonians, than it was an indication of the high expectations that Estonians had for the U.S. At least in part, this could be explained by the Cold War experience during which Estonians looked up to the U.S. and other Western countries, and given the detestation for the communist regime, many idealized the life in the free and democratic countries.

Exchange Programs and Governments' Role in Cultural Relations

The difference between the questions that were asked from the two groups was the biggest in the third set of questions. While Fulbrighters were asked to elaborate on their specific experiences, the questions for the control group were more general and asked about their thoughts about U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs. As Table 6 shows, the third set of Likert-scale questions for Fulbrighters encouraged them to think back to their exchange experience and reflect on the impact the program had on them.

Note: The table outlines the mean of their responses to the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Table 6: Responses of Fulbrighters Regarding Exchange Programs

Rank		Mean
1	In general, I am likely to alter my beliefs and values	2.45
2	My assumptions about the U.S. and American people had been mostly wrong	2.59
3	It is likely that my opinion about the U.S. will change (again) at some point in the future	2.64
4	My exchange experience made me see the U.S. in a much more positive light	3.55
5	The U.S. government should do more to engage with people around the world	3.59
6	I personally want to do something to contribute to an even stronger U.S.-Estonian relationship	4.00
7	I am still in connection with several Americans I met through the Fulbright Program	4.55

While in the first two sets of questions Fulbrighters overwhelmingly agreed that they were eager to learn about other cultures and took interest in U.S. foreign policy, the third block of questions provided a solid affirmation that they did not consider themselves to be likely to alter their beliefs and values. Depending on the expected outcome of the exchange programs, this can be seen as an important indicator that makes it harder to expect tangible and quick benefits from the programs. When Fulbrighters were asked to elaborate on whether or not their exchange experience had an impact on their belief system, the responses differed markedly. One Fulbrighter argued,

No; but now I love and value US even more.

And another one made a similar argument, but for entirely different reasons,

I was exposed to the negative effects of all the values that USA is trying to implement at home and abroad. My basic values did not change too much, despite being abroad.

Another Fulbrighter claimed his experience made her think about her identity in a different way, arguing,

I became more sensitive towards social inequality and more aware of my duties as a citizen and The experience made me appreciate more my own roots and where I come from, it grew my sense of belonging. I discovered that many Americans have roots elsewhere than in America but they are detached from their original families and cultures and thus have lost part of their identity.

In the third section, the overwhelming sense of positivity about the U.S. was less noticeable than it was in the second set of questions that had more to do with the U.S.-Estonian bilateral relationship rather than the specific memories from the exchange experience. For instance, as Figure 5 shows, in an open-ended question about the most surprising aspects of American way of life, besides religiosity and openness, negative experiences with racial tensions and healthcare appeared most frequently.

Figure 5: "What were the most surprising aspects of the U.S. and the American way of life?"



In the last section of the survey, both Fulbrighters and the control group were asked about their opinions regarding the proper role of governments in cultural affairs. The responses from Fulbrighters and the control group mirrored each other, with both groups arguing for a minimal role of government in culture. As one Fulbrighter put it,

No, governments should stay out of shaping culture. The less the do the better.

Another Fulbrighter added to this,

No, they should not try to influence and shape other cultures, but they should instead honor differences. This is occasionally a problem with U.S. programs abroad that they seem to be enforcing U.S. culture and lifestyle rather than basic Western values.

Considering that the Fulbright Program itself is an indirect way in which governments have a role in cultural affairs, calls for a complete termination of governments' actions in the cultural

arena are somewhat tricky, and many responders saw this more broadly. In elaborating on governments' rights to be involved in cultural affairs and shape other cultures, one Fulbrighter argued,

I cannot imagine, how they cannot do this. Every contact with a different culture changes the other culture.

Most responders were more specific about what the role of a government in cultural relations ought to be. A member of the control group argued,

I think governments should support interaction between people so that they can learn about other cultures. They should attempt to initiate cultural exchange, because that can create a lot of growth in their own countries. They should attempt to influence and shape cultures as far as to promote safety and wellbeing (i.e. fund campaigns against domestic violence etc)

The questions in which Fulbrighters were the most uniform had to do with the contacts they made during their exchange and their motivation to be more active. All of them either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they are still in connection with several Americans they met through the exchange program. A great majority said the experience made them more active and they were happy to talk about their Fulbright experience. One Fulbrighter claimed,

Absolutely, I will try to share this experience with as many people as I can. A lot of my friends are following my blog that I am keeping here. Everybody is interested to hear how things are going here and I have always been relatively active :) However, I have become a part of the community of Fulbrighters, who annually meet at the Residence of the US

Ambassador to Estonia. Moreover, based on the acquaintances I have made when attending these events, I have been invited to some other important events [...]

In their closing statements, many indicated it changed their lives, and expressed gratitude towards the U.S. government for the experience and personally wanted to do something to give back and contribute to an ever stronger U.S.-Estonian relationship.

In conclusion of the findings from the original survey data, it appears that while participating in U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs considerably changed the way Estonian Fulbrighters saw the world and their role in being informed about international affairs, the experience did not translate into greater support of U.S. foreign policy undertakings. In fact, in many cases, the effect was the reverse, and Estonians who had not taken part in the exchange programs were more positive about the U.S. and the way it engages with the world. However, it is important to realize that the overwhelming sentiment expressed by Estonians from both groups was positive. To some extent, an explanation for this lies in the nature of the bilateral relationship and the importance of the U.S. in guaranteeing Estonia's security, and in places in world in which there are major differences with regard to foreign policy options in the region and glitches in the bilateral relationship, the responses of the individual exchangees can be expected to reflect somewhat different emotions.

Chapter 6: Analysis and Policy Relevance of the Estonian Case Study

The results of the Estonian case study reveal that in most cases, getting a direct political benefit from an exchange program is an unrealistic goal. While the results demonstrate that Fulbrighters are more likely to be active in their communities, enjoy travelling, and have more of a global outlook to the world, in several questions regarding the favorability of the United States and its role in the world, Fulbrighters were more skeptical than the members of the control group. Considerable criticism of the U.S. and its role in the world is all the more surprising given that the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Estonia is most often marked by the word “excellent”. Foreign policy goals of the governments of the U.S. and Estonia in the region where Estonia is located align perfectly, and are widely supported by the Estonian people. This raises several questions about U.S. public diplomacy efforts and realistic goals in regions where the policy preferences of the U.S. and the local population not only do not align, but are diametrically opposed.

Based on the Estonian study, four key lessons emerge:

- Cultural differences are pervasive and profound
- For the United States, getting its house in order is more important than ever
- The U.S. government has a crucial role as an initiator – as opposed to participant – in the exchanges
- The global networks initiated by exchange programs have value in and of themselves

Cultural differences are pervasive and profound

The results of the Estonian case study point to the fact that lumping the world together in regions – such as what has become to be known as the West – and expecting uniformity and monolithic audiences is unrealistic. Even in the context where policy preferences largely align and any two countries enjoy excellent relations, cultural and historical traditions make the task of public diplomacy difficult. The U.S. and Estonia share many of the same values, but instead of constantly claiming their universality, it is better to reiterate, based on U.S. National Security Strategy of 2010, that “different cultures and traditions give life to these values in distinct ways” (The White House 2010, 36). While the Estonian case study raises fundamental questions about the West and the homogeneity of its historical and cultural traditions, it also confirms that understanding different cultures can bind people together. A great example of this is President Obama’s carefully crafted speech in Tallinn, which reflected deep knowledge about Estonian history, culture, and way of life, and received overwhelmingly positive reception. To be sure, it is much easier for any U.S. President to win the hearts and minds of Estonians than it is to persuade audiences with widely divergent cultural backgrounds in places like Iraq or Pakistan. In these regions, opposition to the U.S. driven by substantial differences in specific policy questions as well as different cultural norms is often so ingrained and irrational that soft power is almost impossible to exercise. For this reason, understanding local culture and conditions is of paramount importance for U.S. public diplomacy, and there cannot be any illusions regarding these differences. Finally, as technology provides new outlets for U.S. public diplomacy and opportunities to engage with people around the world, it is important to understand that technology is thoroughly cultural, for any communication is linked to terms like sharing, association, and possession of common faith (Carey 2009, 15).

For the U.S., getting its house in order is more important than ever

Joseph Nye argues that while America benefits from being associated with values like freedom, democracy, and human rights, Americans may also find themselves constrained to live up to these values if the U.S. desires to remain attractive (2010, 217). President Obama's National Security Strategy emphasizes the importance of increasing America's credibility by "aligning our actions with our words" (The White House 2010), but this remains a major hurdle. Many people around the world admire American values and ideals, but as Slaughter puts it, "insist on measuring us by our performance" (2007, xvi). The Estonian case study gave evidence of the high expectations that people around the world have for the United States. Several of them were disillusioned by seeing first-hand that life in America – whether in terms of civil liberties or opportunity of equality – did not coincide with the imagination of the U.S. as a beacon of hope and freedom. Popular media often adds to the simplistic and idealized view of the U.S.

President Obama is right that America's "moral leadership is grounded principally on the power of our example" (The White House 2010) and when the U.S. is inviting foreign students to their country, they need to make sure not to produce negative images. Slaughter, Lord and others call for inward-looking, arguing that American citizens, as well as government should be willing to do more to "make democracy work" and to understand the world better (2007, 15; Lord 2008, 38). The importance of domestic citizens as strategic publics for U.S. public diplomacy is particularly apparent given that communication of parties tend to "mirror their perceptions of each other" and many argue that for this reason, the U.S. will have to listen as much as it talks to regain its moral balance (Zaharna 2010, 179; Fitzpatrick 2011, 39; Peterson et al. 2003, 10). Perfection is not a realistic standard to hold any individual or country up to, but the U.S. would benefit from inward-looking and frank discussion of its drawbacks to demonstrate its

humility and commitment to improve. A great example of this sense of humility and humor comes from September 2014 when President Obama was on his visit to Estonia, and made international headlines by praising the minuscule and internationally marginal Estonia for its e-government solutions and saying “I should have called the Estonians when we were setting up our healthcare website” (The White House 2014c).

The U.S. government has a crucial role as an initiator – as opposed to participant – in the exchanges

The results of the Estonian case study provide a strong basis to suggest that the role of the U.S. government in initiating these exchanges is crucial. Given the high cost of U.S. higher education, several Fulbrighters maintained that receiving the grant made the U.S. experience possible and that they will always be grateful for U.S. government’s investment in them. Besides creating opportunities for personal enrichment, by sponsoring exchange the U.S. government sends a broader message that it understands the value of exchange of ideas and resources and cares about what people around the world think about America.

At the same time, both Estonian Fulbrighters and non-Fulbrighters were overwhelmingly opposed the role of U.S. government in supervising and managing their exchanges and transnational people-to-people communications more broadly. Based on their accounts, the attempt of governments to intervene greatly undermines the authenticity and value of these communications. Any attempt to directly politicize the exchanges would defeat their purpose. The U.S. has nothing to win from inviting over oblivious people and indoctrinating them into believing a message set by the U.S. government. Its ability to create personal development and genuine dialogue and embody the belief in freedom of thought and freedom of speech is a key

strength of the Fulbright Program. Here, the Estonian case study can once again serve as a good example of how this cannot be taken for granted.

The expansion of global network is a value in itself

The Estonian case is a good example of the value and importance of people-to-people contacts, particularly with regard to how active Estonian expatriate communities and networks contributed to Estonia's regaining of independence in early 1990s. There is nothing fundamentally new about networks, but many argue that the intensity has grown, and that the international environment is defined by networks of interconnected communities and interests (Fitzpatrick 2011, 37). In analyzing the impact of exchange programs, Scott-Smith argues "Instead of asking what these results actually result in (in other words, as a form of measurable power), it is better to recognize [...] that the networks created are themselves a form of power" (2012, 23). The results of the Estonian case study back up this claim, with all 26 Fulbrighters either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement that they are still in connection with several Americans they met through the Fulbright Program.

The U.S. government has a direct stake in this – for in the modern world, "Groups and individuals have been empowered, and hierarchy, centralization, and control are being undermined. Power is shifting away from nation-states, up, down, and sideways" (Zakaria 2011, 5). Many argue that those with the capacity to build the most extensive and strongest communication networks will command power in the modern era (Lord 2008, 11). Zaharna suggests that America could gain the "cooperative advantage" in international affairs by better cultivating network communication and relational strategies; making it clear that building on the network the exchanges help to create must be a key priority for U.S. public diplomacy (Zaharna 2010, 173).

Policy Relevance and Using the Estonian Case Study as a Model

The significance of the results of the Estonian case study lies in its confirmation that cultural differences must be taken seriously and treating large geographical regions as a monolithic block is much too simplistic. These realities must be particularly seriously considered when U.S. public diplomacy sets itself to expand to new geographic regions and new audiences, often ones that are due to historical and cultural reasons are much more skeptical of the U.S. and its role in the world than countries anywhere in Europe. While using the results of the Estonian study as a template for America's engagement in Central and Eastern Europe is appealing, this thesis argues that it could be done in an instructive fashion, while taking into account the specific conditions and cultural and historical predilections of the target country.

The following policy suggestions are based on a combination of the theoretical literature and the part of original survey data in which the two groups of Estonians were asked to explain their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of U.S. public diplomacy. In terms of the organizational side of U.S. public diplomacy, the recommendations of this study are in line with several reports (Lord 2008; Peterson et al. 2003) that call for increasing partnerships between the Department of State and independent organizations and actors to ensure the authenticity and legitimacy of the exchanges and transnational communication is a situation where skepticism towards the role of U.S. government is significant.

Policy Suggestions: In its engagement with Estonia, the U.S. government ought to:

- **Increase the availability of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs**

If anything, the digital age has increased the need for exchange programs and long-term people-to-people contact. The availability of Fulbright grants in Estonia needs to increase, especially in

a context of proliferation of exchange programs funded by the European Union and other European countries. Despite the general appeal of U.S. higher education system, very high costs and overly complicated bureaucracy deny many Estonians from even considering applying to American institutions.

- **Use internet platforms as a an “exchange multiplier”**

U.S. public diplomacy makers should constantly adjust to new technology, as it has by moving from radio and satellite TV as the main channels of information to different internet platforms. Social media should be more habitually used to help participants of U.S. government-sponsored exchanges, but also other Estonians who have been to the U.S. to do business or study, to share their experience and thereby broaden the understanding of the United State in their home countries. Many Estonian Fulbrighters who participated in this study provided very long and thoughtful responses and would most likely be happy to see the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn contacting them for a short interview.

- **Provide more nuanced – rather than just more – information about the U.S.**

In any U.S. public diplomacy efforts, it is of paramount importance to ensure that chosen methods of engagement and communications reflect a nuanced understanding of the norms, ways of communication, and opinions of the host country. The idea of U.S. government-sponsored American Spaces and American Corners as places where people can find information about the U.S. and watch American movies is attractive, but fits much to a society where the knowledge about the U.S. and the availability of information – especially with regard to internet freedom – is limited. Almost any kind of online content is available for Estonians, and its history has made it almost inevitable for its people to have at least general knowledge about the world outside of Estonia’s borders. What Estonians are lacking is a more nuanced understanding of the U.S., the

American way of life, and U.S. foreign policy outside of their home region and U.S. relations with Russia.

- **Research the impact of U.S. public diplomacy programs in Estonia**

This thesis argues that the specific impact of U.S. public diplomacy initiatives, particularly exchanges, is very difficult to determine and should not be seen as a determinant whether or not investing in the programs is justified. However, it does call for greater efforts to reach out to Estonians through polling and other means to be able to understand their needs and opinions.

- **Better involve independent organizations and individuals in U.S. public diplomacy efforts**

Estonian Fulbright alumni are the best example of an underutilized human resource for U.S. public diplomacy efforts in the country. More than two thirds of the responders were very grateful for the experience and claimed they personally wanted to do something to contribute to an even stronger U.S.-Estonian relationship, and the Embassy must do a better job providing them with opportunities to do so.

- **Target non-STEM students for the Fulbright Program**

Although the scope of the Fulbright Program is broad and it accepts students and scholars from fields as different as physics and poetry, the lack of social scientists stood out among program's Estonian participants from 2009-2014. This tendency is apparent in many other competitive programs, where STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) students seem to be at a relative advantage for their work is often more readily measurable and transferable into tangible results. This does not undermine the value of liberal arts education, and while working for the government or becoming a foreign policy professional by no means presupposes a degree in

International Relations or Political Science, the Fulbright Program as the most prestigious of the U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs would benefit from attracting more social scientists and potential future political leaders.

Conclusion

The increasing value of soft power, the belief that a country can achieve what it wants in world politics by the power of attraction, is an indication of the transformation of traditional power structures and the new realities of the diverse and interconnected world. Public diplomacy in its various forms has the potential to build country's credibility and legitimacy, assets that are particularly important for the United States, a country that has an impressive set of foreign policy interests and obligations around the globe. The kind of foreign policy that best advances America's goals must take the legitimate concerns of others into account. Creating understanding and trust is crucial for foreign policy, as Peterson et al. argue: "Taking foreign opinion into account does not mean forsaking U.S. interests, let alone its values. But is it naïve not to realize that attitudes abroad can obstruct the success of U.S. foreign policies" (2003, 4).

In foreign policy, actions speak louder than words, but the style still matters, and context – the moment of time, the communicator, target audience, and the conditions of their interaction – are critical to public diplomacy (Cowan and Arsenault 2008, 12). The mistakes made during the Bush administration showed the costs of getting communication and public diplomacy wrong, but with its explicit attention to creating meaningful human interactions, the Obama administration has managed to offset some of these losses. At the same time, public diplomacy must be approached with a dose of sober realism: it is not a magic bullet and the United States, especially given its power and cultural influence, will never be universally loved. Given the realities of the complex and interconnected world, it is increasingly apparent that it would be a mistake to try.

The U.S. should make sure to show its willingness to engage even with those who feel outright hatred towards the country, but also commit itself to strengthening its ties with its

closest friends and allies by encouraging people-to-people contact and creating lifelong relationships. The exchange programs hold a lot of potential to benefit not only the participants, but generate ripple effects of mutual understanding. At the same time, the government's role in exchanges should be limited to initiation and support, and the interchanges, as Scott-Smith argues, "can only succeed if they are given the free space to function without any set agenda behind them" (2011, 9). People understand each other through culture, and culture is an essential way of creating dialogue. It is particularly important in the global communication era, for new technological solutions provide opportunities for understanding as well as misunderstanding. Increasingly, good listening is at least as important as persuasive talking, and this is the starting point of any effective public diplomacy.

In an information age, power has become less hierarchical and networks, organizations and individuals are increasingly influential in influencing nation-states. As Nye argues, today more than ever, the United States, with all its military might and economic prowess, needs the support of other countries and people around the world (2004; 2010). Many of the challenges to the U.S. and the world today are global, and as Slaughter argues, it is likely that the solutions will be, too (2010). The world, strongly impacted by terrorist networks, rise of violent extremism and xenophobia, needs people who accept the uniqueness of others, can work with people around the world, and are open to the possibility of change. Exchanges are not the magic answer to U.S. foreign policy or the world's problems, but they can, through their potential to create genuine dialogue, increase mutual understanding and create global networks, bring people closer to each other. For the United States, as Sun Tzu would suggest, this would bring more perfect battles – that is, those that do not have to be fought.

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Personal Interviews

Note: Even though much of the interview material does not directly appear in the thesis, it was very helpful in writing and understanding the background of the issues.

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Appendix 1: Online Survey for Estonian Fulbright Students and Scholars

Q1 Informed Consent Form: Bucknell University

Project Name: “Soft Power and Cultural Exchange: The Impact of U.S. Public Diplomacy on the Beliefs of Estonians”

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this research is to examine the role and nature of American soft power and study the impact of U.S. Public Diplomacy on the beliefs of Estonians. More specifically, the research seeks to assess the effectiveness of U.S. government-sponsored educational and cultural exchange programs and explain their value as foreign policy tools.

General plan of the research: I understand that I will be responding to a series questions about my perceptions of the United States, its role in the world, and its interactions with Estonia. I also understand that I will be asked to answer general questions regarding my demographic information such as gender and age. I understand that the language of the questionnaire is English, but I am allowed to give my responses either in English or in Estonian.

Estimated duration of the research: I understand that my participation in this study will take no more than 30 minutes.

Estimated total number of participants: I understand that the research wishes to include at least 30 students and scholars in this study.

Questions or concerns: I understand that if I have any questions or concerns related to this study, I may contact the Principal Investigator, Kadri Lutter, via email at kl032@bucknell.edu. I may also contact Professor David Mitchell, Chair, Department of International Relations at Bucknell University, via email at dmmitch@bucknell.edu. For general questions regarding human subject research or questions regarding ethical treatment and rights of human subjects, I may contact Matthew Slater, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at Bucknell University, at +1(570) 577-2767 or by email at mhs016@bucknell.edu.

Subject participation is voluntary: I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that if I agree to participate I may change my mind at any time.

No compensation: I understand that my contribution to the current research is voluntary and I will not be compensated for my participation.

Possible risks or discomforts: I understand that no risks or discomforts are anticipated from taking part in this study. I also understand that if I feel uncomfortable with a question, I can skip that question or withdraw from the study altogether. I also understand that information I disclose for the purposes of this study will be secured and kept confidential. Possible benefits: I understand that my participation in this study will contribute to the existing knowledge

concerning Estonians' perceptions of the United States and its role in the world, and the effectiveness of cultural and educational exchange programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. The study will also give valuable insight into how Estonians perceive the nature and role of soft power in the bilateral relationship between the United States and Estonia.

Confidentiality: I understand that data acquired through this study will be kept confidential. I also understand that all data collected will be secured and only made available to those persons conducting the study. I understand that no reference will be made in any works that could possibly link me to the study.

By clicking below, I affirm I have read the above description and I agree to participate in this research. (1)

Q2 Which gender do you identify with?

- Female (1)
- Male (2)
- Other (3)

Q3 Please identify your nationality

- Estonian (1)
- Russian (2)
- Other (3)

Q4 How old are you?

- 19-22 (1)
- 23-26 (2)
- 27-30 (3)
- 31-34 (4)
- 35+ (5)

Q5 What is your level of education?

- Bachelor's degree (1)
- Master's degree (or currently a candidate for Master's degree) (2)
- PhD (or currently a doctoral candidate) (3)

Q6 Where (in what part of Estonia) did you grow up, go to school and university?

Q7 What field are you studying or working in?

Q8 Aside from your Fulbright exchange experience, what have been your connections with the United States and the American people?

Q9 Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I have always been interested in international affairs (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have extensive connections with the United States (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I follow news about U.S. foreign policy on a regular basis (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Issues like democracy and personal freedoms are very important for me (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Culture has an important role to play in foreign affairs (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
International public opinion significantly shapes international affairs (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NATO (and American) military power is central to global security (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy travelling and learning about other cultures (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am socially active and hold several leadership positions (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have always associated my long-term future with Estonia (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q10 What is your general sense of the United States and its role in the world?

Q11 In your mind, what are some of the basic values that the United States stands for?

Q13 Do you think that the United States and Estonia, and the American and Estonian people, by and large, share the same values? What are some of the differences between the two cultures?

Q14 What, if anything, comes to your mind when you think about President Obama's speech in Tallinn in September 2014?

Q15 Please indicate your opinion about the following statements regarding the United States, Estonia, and the relationship between the two countries.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
In general, the Estonian people see Americans favorably (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The U.S. provides an excellent example of democracy for the world (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
U.S.-Estonian relationship is, first and foremost, founded on shared values (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Culturally, Estonia has always belonged to the West (Western Europe, the U.S.) (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The U.S is culturally dominant in the world (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Estonia has a great deal to gain from partnering with the U.S. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The U.S. has a great deal to gain from partnering with Estonia (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I personally know several Estonians who are highly skeptical of the United States and its role in the world (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The U.S. is successful in engaging with people from different countries and cultures (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have heard about EducationUSA offices, American Spaces, and American Corners in Estonia (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The U.S. is overextending its military power in the world (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Many of U.S. foreign policy actions serve merely their own national interest (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I welcome American troops in Estonia and support the efforts to integrate them in the society (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16 Have you come across any programs or initiatives (such as social media and other outreach campaigns) through which the United States tries to promote its values and ideals abroad? By your judgement, what has been the impact of this?

Q17 Why did you decide to apply for the U.S. government-sponsored Fulbright Program? What are the most important things you got out of the program?

Q18 What were the most surprising aspects of the U.S. and the American way of life?

Q19 Did your exchange experience make you reconsider some of your basic values? Did it make you alter your conception of democracy, freedom, and prosperity?

Q20 Did your exchange experience inspire you to become more socially (and politically) active? Do you enjoy talking about your U.S. experience and have your peers and colleagues been interested in hearing about it?

Q21 Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your exchange experience.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
My exchange experience made me see the U.S. in a much more positive light (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I personally want to do something to contribute to an even stronger U.S.-Estonian relationship (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am still in connection with several Americans I met through the Fulbright Program (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My assumptions about the U.S. and American people had been mostly wrong (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is likely that my opinion about the U.S. will change (again) at some point in the future (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, I am likely to alter my beliefs and values (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The U.S. government should do more to engage with people around the world (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I support the two-year home residency requirement after returning from Fulbright program (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q22 Former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell has said, "I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here." What are your reactions to this statement?

Q23 What is the proper role of governments in cultural affairs? Should they attempt to influence and shape other cultures?

Q24 Is there anything else that you would like to share about your exchange experience? Please feel free to provide any additional comments or questions.

Appendix 2: Online Survey for the Control Group

Up to Question 17, the surveys were almost identical.

Q17 Have you ever considered applying or applied for any U.S. government sponsored educational or cultural exchange programs (such as the Fulbright Student and Fulbright Scholar Programs)? Why or why not?

Q18 Have you talked to or heard about anyone who has taken part in U.S. government sponsored exchange programs? If yes, have the accounts of their experiences broadened or altered your understanding of America?

Q19 Have you had any study or work experiences abroad? Have they shaped your value system and perception of the host country? In what ways?

Q20 Former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell has said, "I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here." What are your reactions to this statement?

Q21 What is the proper role of governments in cultural affairs? Should they attempt to influence and shape other cultures?

Q22 Please feel free to provide any additional comments or questions regarding any of the covered topics.