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Netherlands Institute of International Relations

American Diaspora Diplomacy

U.S. Foreign Policy and Lebanese Americans

Deborah Lee Trent

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Discussion Paper in Diplomacy





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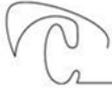
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Abstract¹

This paper investigates U.S. government diaspora diplomacy with Lebanese Americans and how it is associated with the credibility of U.S. policy toward Lebanon. These transnational relations include public diplomacy, international development, military, and other cross-national programs. The analysis suggests the following two primary policy challenges to U.S. credibility among Lebanese and the American diaspora of Lebanese descent: 1) lack of Arab-Israeli peace; and 2) lack of inclusive engagement with all of Lebanese society. The study finds potential for mutually engaging, collaborative diaspora diplomacy to strengthen the credibility of U.S. policy toward Lebanon. Collaborative diaspora diplomacy would involve trans-sectarian outreach across the diverse religious communities of Lebanese Americans and their cultural, political, and professional organizations. The paper also contributes insights into engagement with other diasporas in the U.S. and other governments' relations with the diasporas they send and receive.

¹ The author gratefully acknowledges suggestions from editors Ellen Huijgh and Ingrid d'Hooghe and doctoral dissertation reviewers David Bernstein, Lori Brainard, Bruce Gregory, Michael Harmon, Kathryn Newcomer, and Rhonda Zaharna.



About the author

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Americans, like all of you, have such an opportunity to talk with, to support these kinds of changes in minds and hearts. Because democracy is not just an election; democracy is changing the way people relate to one another, work with one another, listen to one another. And there's no place that has more experience, since we are now the longest-lasting democracy, than we do. And there are no people with more credibility than all of you.

– U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, 25 July 2012, Washington, D.C.,

*Second Annual Global Diaspora Forum.*²

Introduction

In the globalized knowledge economy, people have increasingly easy access to constant, seemingly infinite news and information sources. The 24/7 news cycle poses governments around the world with a huge challenge: maintaining credibility at home and abroad. Ethnic diasporas, common to many countries, are among the publics at home. Diplomatic engagement with diasporas is a transnational dimension of 'public diplomacy at home'³ and a type of outreach to domestic publics.⁴

In the epigraph above, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is addressing hundreds of diasporans online and in person. As immigrants or U.S.-born diasporans, they enact their transnational civic identities through volunteer efforts and advocacy, out of concern about

2 See online at <http://diasporaalliance.org/hillary-clintons-remarks-at-the-second-annual-global-diaspora-forum/>, accessed 20 September 2012.

3 Philip Fiske de Gouveia, 'The Future of Public Diplomacy', paper presented at The 2006 Madrid Conference on Public Diplomacy: *The Present and Future of Public Diplomacy: A European Perspective*, accessed online at <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documentos/276.asp>, 28 November 2008.

4 Ellen Huijgh, 'Changing Tunes for Public Diplomacy: Exploring the Domestic Dimension', *Exchange: the Journal of Public Diplomacy*, vol. 2, no.1, 2011, pp. 62-74; accessed online at http://ftp.clingendael.nl/publications/2011/20111100_huijgh_exchange.pdf, 4 November 2011; Jan Melissen, 'Beyond the New Public Diplomacy,' *Discussion Papers in Diplomacy*, No. 3 (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2011), accessed online at http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2011/20111014_cdsp_paper_jmelissen.pdf, 25 January 2012.



conditions in their countries of origin and U.S. policies associated with them. Clinton recognizes that by not working to listen to, understand, and anticipate diasporas' responses to policies affecting them and their countries of origin, government loses a channel for engagement and source of credibility. The Global Diaspora Forum (GDF) and its companion public-private partnership, the International diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdeA)⁵ are two prominent U.S. Department of State (DOS) efforts to network and engage with organized diasporas. They reflect recognition of the valuable context diaspora engagement offers for making and implementing policy. How collaborative this cross-sector engagement is can determine the benefits to international diplomacy overall.

Diaspora diplomacy is conducted throughout DOS – from the Office of the Secretary to bureaus of regional affairs, national security, democracy, public affairs, and public diplomacy. Explaining U.S. policy to diaspora civil society members and private sector leaders, listening to their perspectives on political and economic issues in their countries of heritage, and including them in policy deliberation and information, exchange, training, and professional, counterterrorism, and other programs is part of the DOS mission. U.S. broadcasting, administered by the Broadcasting Board of Governors, is also an important policy and program site for diaspora engagement. Although engagement with diasporas has long been a dimension of U.S. foreign policy and domestic politics, DOS has only in the last decade begun specific programs to engage with diaspora-based organizations for their experience and insight into shared needs of countries of origin. IdeA and the GDF are two current examples at DOS. Earlier examples of U.S. diplomacy with diasporas are located in U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs, e.g., Trade Enhancement for the Services Sector.⁶ As Secretary Clinton also noted at the 2012 GDF, collaborative engagement with diasporas can promote economic growth in the U.S. as it fosters post-conflict reconstruction overseas and supports constructive diplomatic relations abroad.⁷

U.S. diaspora diplomacy is becoming more integrated into public diplomacy, international security, and international development at home and abroad. Engagement with diasporas is mentioned in the *National Security Strategy*.⁸ Several critical factors of this track of international diplomacy merit closer examination. They are (1) the scope of policy and program issues addressed by government officials and diasporans; (2) the degree of inclusiveness of the diverse diasporan sub-national groups in these interactions; and, (3) the quality of the relationships among diplomats, other government officials, and the diverse

5 See online at <http://diasporaalliance.org/>, accessed 11 September 2012.

6 Brett Johnson and Santiago Sedaca, 'Diasporas, Émigrés and Development: Economic Linkages and Programmatic Responses. A Special Study of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Trade Enhancement for the Services Sector (TESS) Project' (CARANA Corporation, March 2004).

7 'Remarks at the Second Annual Global Diaspora Forum,' July 25, 2012, see online at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/07/195479.htm>, accessed 11 September 2012.

8 See online at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf, accessed 20 September 2012, p. 12.



diasporan sub-groups. These organizational dimensions are central to effective, collaborative U.S. government engagement with diasporas.

This paper focuses mainly on diaspora relations conducted by DOS and USAID. Beyond the scope of this analysis is the engagement conducted directly by the Executive Office of the President (i.e., the White House and National Security Council) and other federal agencies. The other branch of government with a stake in DOS/USAID relations with diasporas is Congress. The paper addresses a specific case – U.S. diplomatic relations with the Lebanese American diaspora. Lebanon, a key U.S. ally with a large, longstanding diaspora in the U.S., is a democratic, multi-sectarian nation whose constitution guarantees governmental representation for the country's 18 Muslim and Christian sects (also known as confessions). The sectarian-based government, with ties to the Syrian and Iranian governments that conflict with U.S. interests, poses many challenges to U.S. policy. The central question of this paper is: What are the major policy and program themes, and qualities of DOS/USAID-Lebanese American-Congressional relations, and what do they imply about the credibility of present and future U.S. relations with Lebanon?

These issues are addressed in the following sequence. First is a sketch of a conceptual framework for collaborative, networked, government-diaspora engagement as a part of U.S. diplomacy and development. Second is a description of the current relations between Lebanon and the U.S. Third is an explanation of the qualitative methodology used to generate and analyze the data for this study. The fourth section presents the findings and analysis, ranging thematically from broader Middle East policy issues to current and potential qualities of government-diaspora relations and associated bilateral program issues. Included are five recommendations for improving U.S. relations with Lebanon. In conclusion, the paper recaps the conditions, limitations, and possibilities of diaspora diplomacy in U.S.-Lebanon relations, also stating why the findings are relevant to engagement with other diasporas in the U.S. and to other governments with diasporas.

Framing Government-Diaspora Collaboration

Why Engage with Diasporas?

Several core organizational concepts and processes frame this study. The first is that diasporic publics, with life experience involving more than one nation, have unique perspectives on policy of the home country and country of origin. Modern diasporas are self-identifying members of 'ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin—their homelands.'⁹ A diaspora is a people tracing their ethnic heritage and sense of

9 Gabriel Sheffer, 'A New Field of Study: Modern Diasporas in International Politics', in Gabriel Sheffer (ed.), *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 3.



belonging to one nation, after dispersing, often traumatically, to two or more other nations.¹⁰ An ethnic diaspora bonds to both the original and more recent home countries. Identifying with a diaspora is a social process that is transnational and intercultural, ever-changing with one's personal development and social connections, as well as with transnational socioeconomic and political changes.

Politically active diasporas can be engaged to counter 'marginalization of immigrant, minority, and ethnic communities, in terms of both societal inclusion and inclusion in the foreign policy process.'¹¹ Political experiences and perspectives among diasporas inform government efforts to interpret domestic and foreign policy in ways that resonate favorably at home and abroad. The past decade has witnessed increasing attention to the practice and study of diaspora diplomacy¹² and diaspora involvement in development.¹³ These follow from the practice of development diplomacy.¹⁴ Development diplomacy is the process by which development managers in the host country negotiate for the completion of projects amid competing interests of donor organizations and host country laws and administrative procedures.¹⁵

Diaspora diplomacy is a useful process in international relations because diasporas' political perspectives provide context for shaping policy at home and negotiating it abroad. Diasporas are 'constituted by a compelling sense of moral co-responsibility embodied in material performance which is extended through and across space.'¹⁶ A moral sense of transnational responsibility is a unique quality in the political identity of members of diaspora organizations. Moral co-responsibility makes them agents of change and important stakeholders in domestic and international relations of governments. Diasporas have commitment both to their adopted, or host, countries and to their countries of origin. Host

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- 10 Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press Limited, 1997).
 - 11 Rima Berns-McGowan, 'Redefining "Diaspora": The Challenge of Connection and Inclusion', *International Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (2007-2008, Winter), p. 3.
 - 12 E.g., Mark Leonard, Andrew Small, and Martin Rose, 'British Public Diplomacy in the Age of Schisms' (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2005, February), see online at <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/407.pdf>, accessed 25 January 2012; Philip Fiske de Gouveia, and Hester Plumridge, 'European Infopolitik: Developing EU Public Diplomacy Strategy' (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2005), see online at <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/657.pdf>, accessed 25 January 2012; de Gouveia (2006); Eytan Gilboa, 'Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616, No. 1 (2008), pp. 55-77.
 - 13 E.g., Jennifer Marie Brinkerhoff, (ed.), *Diasporas and Development: Exploring the Potential* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008); Nadejda Marinova, 'Transnational Homeland Development of the U.S.-Based Lebanese Diaspora' (The Center for Global Studies, George Mason University, Global Migration and Transnational Politics, 2010), Working paper No. 15, see online at http://gmtg.gmu.edu/publications/gmtgwp/gmtg_wp_15.pdf, accessed 5 November 2010.
 - 14 Milton J. Esman, *Management Dimensions of Development: Perspectives and Strategies* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1991).
 - 15 Esman (1991), p. 84
 - 16 Pnina Werbner, 'The Place Which is Diaspora: Citizenship, Religion, and Gender in the Making of Chaordic Transnationalism', in Andre Levy and Alex Weingold (eds.), *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Place*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 42.



government engagement with diasporas in the politics and programs of domestic and foreign policy can be beneficial to democratic pluralism and reduction of ethnic tension at home¹⁷ as well as to overall socioeconomic progress in countries of origin.¹⁸

From Rhetoric to Credibility

Governments are challenged to understand the historical context in which foreign policy takes place, reflect that context in ongoing policy and programs, and strengthen their relationships with diaspora organizations. The second piece of the conceptual framework is the challenge of governmental credibility. Implicit in the challenge to maintain credibility is the need to identify and sensitively address the conflicting interests between nations. A government's credibility rests on the believability and legitimacy of policy rhetoric and actions.¹⁹ Credibility is a 'perceptual phenomenon...[that is] "receiver-based...[and] bestowed on a source by an audience."²⁰ As a category of 'nonstate actors,' diaspora-based civil society and private sector organizations are both a test and source of credibility to help inform diplomats about how to strengthen the U.S. image abroad and increase cross-national understanding.²¹

A report for the U.S. Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World calls for 'intelligent listening' to the nuances of Arab public opinion.²² The report argues that Arab public opinion indicates an appreciation for U.S. 'values' but dissatisfaction with U.S. policy and action in the Middle East. Establishing credibility with Arab publics is not simply a public relations process; it requires U.S. diplomats to empathize with Arabs for their

17 Yossi Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad: Diasporas in the U.S. and Their Homeland*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

18 E.g., Shain, (1999); Hein de Haas, 'Engaging Diasporas: How Governments and Development Agencies Can Support Diaspora Involvement in the Development of Origin Countries' (University of Oxford: International Migration Institute, James Martin 21st Century School, 2006, June), see online at <http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/engaging-diasporas-hein-de-haas.pdf/view?searchterm=de%20haas>, accessed 19 September 2012; Brinkerhoff (2008).

19 Deborah Lee Trent, *Transnational, Trans-Sectarian Engagement: A Revised Approach to U.S. Public Diplomacy toward Lebanon*, Ph.D. thesis (The George Washington University, 2012), chapter 1.

20 Robert H. Gass and John S. Seiter, 'Credibility and Public Diplomacy'. in Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 155-156.

21 Bruce Gregory, 'Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616, No. 1 (2008), pp. 274-290.; Trent, (2012), chapters 1-2.

22 Edward Djerijian, *Changing Minds Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab & Muslim world*, Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World. Submitted to the Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, October 1, 2003, see online at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/24882.pdf>, accessed 25 January 2012.



experience living with the causes and effects of U.S. foreign policy and action.²³ Members of diaspora organizations have empathy, skills, and experience to inform government efforts to listen intelligently and encourage dialogue and collaboration between their homelands and adopted countries.

Democracy by Example: Collaborative Citizen Engagement

The third conceptual frame is that democratic governance involves inclusive engagement and collaboration with civil society and the private sector.²⁴ International diplomacy includes engagement of these sectors. It is on a broad scale in the open, unclassified diplomacy fostering citizen-to-citizen engagement and on a small scale in the closed, secret diplomacy between governments acting on global security intelligence data. The cross-sector engagement and collaboration dimension in diaspora diplomacy is also increasingly networked, reflecting the globalized, digitized knowledge economy. Diaspora diplomacy is an example of government-citizen relations, i.e., citizen engagement. Citizen engagement is a general phrase for cross-sector contact or interaction, defined broadly as 'any activity, individual or collective, devoted to influencing the collective life of the polity.'²⁵

Collaboration, literally the act of working together, has deeper roots and purpose than citizen engagement. Collaboration refers either to intra-governmental co-laboring or to cross-sector citizen engagement with distinctive qualities of interaction. Several key qualities distinguish collaboration from the related concepts of coordination, consultation, and cooperation. Collaboration transforms conflict into new, shared understanding of problems involving multiple parties.²⁶ Collaboration is mutually engaging,²⁷ citizen-centered,²⁸ and trust-building.²⁹ Specific to diplomatic interaction, collaboration:

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- 23 Shibley Telhami, 'Reaching the Public in the Middle East', in William Rugh (ed.), *Engaging the Arab & Islamic Worlds Through Public Diplomacy* (Washington, D.C.: Public Diplomacy Council, School of Media and Public Affairs, The George Washington University, 2004), pp. 4-10; Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, 'U.S. Public Diplomacy in a Post-9/11 World: From Messaging to Mutuality', *CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy*, Paper 6, (2011).
 - 24 Cheryl Simrell King and Camilla Stivers, *Government Is Us: Public Administration in an Anti-Government Era* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998); Terry L. Cooper, Thomas A. Bryer, and Jack W. Meek, 'Citizen-Centered Collaborative Public Management', *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 66(s1) (2006), pp. 76-88; Janet V. Denhardt and Robert B. Denhardt, *The New Public Service: Serving, Not Steering (expanded ed.)* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007); Terry L. Cooper, 'Collaborative Public Governance: Implications for Civic Engagement' (SSRN eLibrary, 2008), see online at <http://ssrn.com/paper=1516844>, accessed 19 September 2012.
 - 25 Stephen Macedo, Yvette Alex-Assensoh, Jeffrey M. Berry, Michael Brintnall, David E. Campbell, Luis Ricardo Fraga, et al., *Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation and What We Can Do About It* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2005), p. 6, qtd. in Cooper et al. (2006), p. 76.
 - 26 Barbara Gray, *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989).



*requires sincere engagement between parties in which the relationship is not viewed in terms of winning or losing or as an attempt to defeat the other's ideas. Collaboration recognizes that nations/international actors and foreign publics, respectively, will advocate on behalf of their own views and interests, but that each party also sincerely cares about the welfare and future of the other. Collaboration presumes a shared interest in a joint creation rather than a predetermined outcome.*³⁰

The most collaborative citizen engagement processes foster community between civil society and government and are consensus-oriented and deliberative.³¹ Deliberative citizen engagement is an approach for identifying shared and divergent interests and exploring their context in a framework of common purpose. In democratic governance, deliberation is:

*distinguished from other kinds of communication in that deliberators are amenable to changing their judgements, preferences, and views during the course of their interactions, which involve persuasion rather than coercion, manipulation, or deception. This 'tolerant' framing of 'authentic deliberation'... would allow argument, rhetoric, humour, emotion, testimony or storytelling, and gossip.*³²

Deliberating public problems emphasizes inclusiveness, collaboration, common purpose, and conflict mediation.³³ By integrating multiple stakeholder perspectives through collaborative processes,

what emerges is different from any of the original ideas and better than what would, or could, have emerged in a compromise situation. This is what we call

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- 27 Michael Harmon, *Public Administration's Final Exam: A Pragmatist Restructuring of the Profession and the Discipline* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2006).
- 28 Cooper et al. (2006); Margaret Stout, 'Symposium Introduction: Deliberative Democracy and Participatory Practice', *Public Administration and Management*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2010), pp. 1-8.
- 29 E.g., King & Stivers, (1998); Robert B. Denhardt and Janet V. Denhardt, 'The New Public Service: Serving Rather Than Steering'. *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 60, No. 6 (2000, November/December), pp. 549-559; Denhardt and Denhardt, (2007).
- 30 Fitzpatrick (2011), pp. 20-21.
- 31 Cooper et al. (2006).
- 32 John S. Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 1.
- 33 Cheryl Simrell King and Camilla Stivers, 'Introduction: Strategies for Collaboration', in Cheryl Simrell King and Camilla Stivers (eds.), *Government Is Us: Public Administration in an Anti-Government Era* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998).



collaboration. [It is a political space where] ... no point of view is privileged over the others. All come to the table as equals, working together...³⁴

The concepts of collaboration and deliberation between governments and the diasporas they receive and host are challenging in practice, particularly in the highly networked organizations of international diplomacy. There is also debate about their merits. How is it possible to collaborate when no shared interests are apparent and government needs to act quickly, while representing all citizens' interests?³⁵ How is government-diasporan deliberation possible in cases where transnational activists and other organizations want no part of engagement with governmental actors?³⁶ The increasingly inter-disciplinary nature of diplomatic theory and practice continues to yield approaches that recognize these challenges.

Processes, Tools, and Networks

A relational framework for public diplomacy is one approach to the challenges presented to practicing collaborative, networked, deliberative, citizen engagement.³⁷ The relational framework features cultural communication tools and processes that foster empathy through trust- and relationship-building initiatives and encourage highly contextualized dialogue and cross-sector collaboration.³⁸ When policy officials and public diplomatists dialogue in the U.S. with diasporas about how foreign policy and programs are received in the country of origin, the U.S. officials gain understanding that informs their explanations to audiences in the 'high-context' culture of origin. Arab countries, including Lebanon, are high-context cultures, where people interpret messages more through the policy actions of the messenger and through historical context, than by the explicit message that is sent.³⁹ Complementing the relational framework is the information framework, which calls for crafting more effective public diplomacy information programs featuring short, monologic, messages transmitted by 'low-context' cultures, e.g., the U.S.⁴⁰ Policy and program dialogue between practitioners and diasporas also supports the information framework. U.S. diplomacy and policy change

34 King and Stivers, (1998a), p. 83, citing Mary Parker Follett, *Creative Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1924).

35 Bruce Gregory raises this debate in 'Public Diplomacy and Governance: Challenges for Scholars and Practitioners', in Andrew F. Cooper, Brian Hocking, and William Maley, (eds.), *Global Governance and Diplomacy: Worlds Apart?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 437-438.

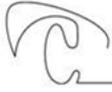
36 For example, see Clifford Bob, *The Global Right Wing and the Clash of World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

37 Rhonda S. Zaharna, 'Mapping Out a Spectrum of Public Diplomacy Initiatives: Information and Relational Communication Frameworks', in Snow and Taylor, (2009), pp. 86-100.

38 Zaharna (2009).

39 Rhonda S. Zaharna, 'Understanding Cultural Preferences of Arab Communication Patterns', *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1995), pp. 241-255; Zaharna (2009), p. 87.

40 Zaharna (2009).



informed or actively supported by engagement with diasporans is suggested by the literature on low- and middle-income countries on many continents.⁴¹

Intelligent, empathic listening across sectors using a relational approach is challenging on its own. However, a government's diplomacy is situated in an increasingly complicated, large, and networked social space. Diplomatic networks are constituted of people and their organizations and information systems. Diasporas, particularly recent immigrants closely tied to with their countries of origin, are active in voluntary, business, and political networks. Their networks overlap with diplomatic networks. Diplomatic networks interface with diaspora networks through personal face-to-face, traditional broadcasting, and more recent digital social media. Public diplomacy and international development program implementation networks overlap with foreign policy networks. They are not as hierarchical as traditional bureaucracies, although vertical networks abound. Networks are formal or informal, interdependent structures connecting individuals or organizations sharing interest(s) and beliefs or professional norms.⁴² They are often framed as 'multi-organizational arrangements for solving problems that cannot be achieved, or achieved easily, by single organizations.'⁴³ Widening access to global information and social media technology renders diplomatic engagement increasingly networked.⁴⁴ Diplomatic networks

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- 41 E.g., Mark Leonard, 'Diplomacy by Other Means', *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 132 (2002, September-October), pp. 48-56.; Jason Parker, "Capital of the Caribbean": The African American-West Indian "Harlem Nexus" and the Transnational Drive for Black Freedom, 1940-1948', *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 89, No. 2 (2004), pp. 98-117; Aaron H. Sherinian, 'Marketing Assistance Programs to the Diaspora: The U.S. Embassy, Yerevan Experience', Third International AIPRG Conference on Armenia, 15-16 January 2005, Washington, D.C., see online at <http://aiprg.net/UserFiles/File/jan-2005/aaronsherinian.pdf>, accessed 25 January 2012; Brinkerhoff, (2008); Maria Eugenia Cruset, 'Irish Diplomacy in Argentina', *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2009), pp. 45-49; Kishan S. Rana, 'India's Diaspora Diplomacy', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (2009), pp. 361-372.
- 42 H. George Frederickson, 'The John Gaus Lecture: The Repositioning of American Public Administration', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (1999), pp. 701-711; Emily Perkin and Julius Court, 'Networks and Policy Processes in International Development: A Literature Review', Overseas Development Institute, Working paper 252 (2005, August), see online at <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/138.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2012; John M. Bryson, Barbara C. Crosby, and Melissa Middleton Stone, 'The Design and Implementation of Cross-Sector Collaborations: Propositions from the Literature', *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 66(s1) (2006), pp. 44-55.
- 43 Robert Agranoff and Michael McGuire, 'Big Questions in Public Network Management Research', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2001), p. 296.
- 44 E.g., Manuel Castells, 'The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, and Global Governance', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616, No. 1 (2008), pp. 78-93; Ali Fisher, 'An Introduction to Using Network Maps in Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication', (2009, October), <http://mountainrunner.us/2009/10/networkmapping.html>, accessed 25 January 2012; Philip Seib, 'Connecting Public Diplomacy and Policy', *Perspectives*, Vol. II, No. 3 (2010, March), see online at <http://www.layalina.tv/Publications/Perspectives/PhilipSeibMarch10.html>, accessed 19 September 2012.



that are both policy- and program-oriented are multiplying rapidly; diplomats must manage them collaboratively.⁴⁵

Networks can promote inclusiveness and effectiveness in policy shaping and program implementation, but they are also difficult to control, adding to the challenge of managing diaspora relations and a credible image abroad. Cross-sector, transnational collaboration is gaining recognition as a process or tool to increase trust across diplomatic networks and credibility of U.S. diplomacy among Arab and Muslim publics.⁴⁶ Integrating the study and practice of diplomacy, international development, and diaspora relations sheds light on the challenge to increase citizen trust and governmental credibility.

Diaspora diplomacy is part of the normal course of DOS and USAID policy and program networking from regional and program bureaus, across other agencies, and civil society organizations, and private firms. Two key DOS organizations concerned with diaspora engagement are the Office of Public Liaison and Media Initiatives⁴⁷ and the Global Partnership Initiative (GPI).⁴⁸ The GPI's Global Partnership Center has recognized Lebanon as one of ten countries with a strong record of and additional potential for cross-sector partnership with diaspora communities.⁴⁹ The GPI is the home office of the GDF within the Office of Secretary Clinton. The report on the 2012 GDF indicates seven key themes suggesting collaborative and deliberative engagement with U.S.-based diaspora organizations.⁵⁰ The report states that diaspora engagement is 'critical to effective foreign policy,' promotes sustainable socioeconomic development beyond the short-term effects of remittances, and facilitates emerging markets for trade between the U.S. and the countries of heritage. The collaborative management tools of networking – especially through social media – and public-private partnership are emphasized in the report.

DOS and USAID contracted with the private, non-profit Migration Policy Institute to implement the 2011 and 2012 GDFs. They have also published research and policy

45 Brian Hocking, 'Reconfiguring Public Diplomacy: From Competition to Collaboration', in Jolyon Welsh and Daniel Fearn (eds.), *Engagement: Public Diplomacy in a Globalised World* (London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2008), pp. 62-75, see online at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/pd-engagement-jul-08>, accessed 19 September 2012.

46 E.g., Geoffrey Cowan and Amelia Arsenault, 'Moving from Monologue to Dialogue to Collaboration: The Three Layers of Public Diplomacy', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616, No. 1 (2008), pp. 10-30; Welsh and Fearn, (2008); Rhonda S. Zaharna, *Battles to Bridges: U.S. Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy after 9/11* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

47 See <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/pl/about/>, accessed 9 September 2012.

48 See <http://www.state.gov/s/partnerships/>, accessed 9 September 2012.

49 Personal communication with a member of the Global Partnership Center Staff, 16 June 2009.

50 The Secretary's Global Diaspora Forum - Moving Forward By Giving Back - Event Report, Washington, D.C., July 25-26, see online at <http://diasporaalliance.org/featured/global-diaspora-forum/#report>, accessed 12 September 2012.



recommendations regarding diaspora engagement in global development projects⁵¹ and advocacy on policy toward the homeland.⁵² USAID has also established the Diaspora Network Alliance (DNA) within the Office of Innovation and Development Alliances. DNA was established to engage the interest and experience of diaspora individuals and organizations. DNA engagement is pursued in six areas: philanthropy; a volunteer corps; direct investment; capital markets (e.g., diaspora bonds); tourism and nostalgic trade; and advocacy and diplomacy.⁵³ Through these networked relationships, DOS and USAID personnel are expanding engagement with diaspora organizations that share an interest in the development and stability in their home and host countries and with private firms seeking new business at home and abroad.

Conceptual Framework

The foregoing survey of research and practice suggests that diaspora diplomacy has increased recently. Conceptually, government engagement with diasporas is associated with strengthening credibility of foreign and domestic policies when these citizens are engaged collaboratively. Collaborative, deliberative engagement with diasporan publics promotes informed policy and deeper ties with governments and publics abroad. These qualities of engagement are reinforced by efforts to include the range of citizens identifying with a particular diaspora, particularly those with different political or religious affiliations. Collaborative, deliberative, and inclusive engagement with diasporas is especially relevant as governmental diplomatic actors grapple with increasingly diffuse, decentralized networks across government and the non-governmental and for-profit sectors.

In the case of the U.S. government, the Executive Office of the President oversees diaspora diplomacy, with much of the intergovernmental coordinating conducted by DOS. DOS works closely with USAID, across their many offices and bureaus, to manage their engagement with diaspora organizations and monitor that of other federal agencies. To reach across the networks of international diplomacy and diaspora organizations, these agencies use global communication and analytical tools, as well as the cross-cultural communication processes developed through multi-disciplinary research.

This collaborative engagement framework suggests that diplomacy practitioners have greater capacity to network transnationally with diasporan citizens and shape policies and programs that are perceived as legitimate, credible, and constructive for the home and host countries. Communication, information, and analytical tools are combined with cross-cultural and social-relational processes to establish mutual trust and interests between government and

51 E.g., <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/diasporas-volunteers.pdf>, accessed 9 September 2012.

52 See <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/diasporas-advocacy.pdf>, accessed 9 September 2012.

53 See <http://idea.usaid.gov/gp/diaspora/diaspora-network-alliance-dna>, accessed 9 September 2012.



diasporan actors. Shared interests in the political, economic, security, and cultural relations between the home and host countries are the primary sites for collaborative, deliberative engagement between these actors. These interests are linked to others, from immigration to health and the environment, culture, transportation, and beyond. In the mutual trust-building experiences of collaborative engagement with diverse groups of diasporan citizens, conflict over interests that are not shared can also be mediated by not unilaterally imposing outcomes in advance. This is a sketch of concepts, social processes, and tools as they can be applied in the highly networked milieu of diaspora diplomacy. The context for collaborative engagement with the diverse communities of Lebanese Americans is discussed next.



The Case Study

Context: U.S.-Lebanon Relations and the Role of Lebanese Americans

Lebanon's diverse domestic and diaspora populations exemplify the potential for and challenges to credible U.S. diplomacy. The U.S. and Lebanese governments share an interest in the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Lebanon, each nation's security, cultural and commercial ties, and peace in Lebanon and the broader Middle East.⁵⁴ However, Lebanon has national and regional interests that diverge from those of the U.S. – especially regarding Israel, Syria, and Iran. The complicated domestic politics of both countries include but are not limited to the uniquely close relationship between the U.S. and Israel and Lebanon's history as a battleground for both civil and regional sectarian conflict. U.S. diplomacy with Lebanon is complex and ambiguous, drawing constant scrutiny of the U.S. Congress and a variety of interest groups and research organizations.

Lebanon's population approximates four million and is ethnically diverse and politically fragmented. The government is based on a fragile power-sharing arrangement – consociationalism – among its 18 legally recognized religious confessions.⁵⁵ The most populous are the Shi'i Muslims, Maronite and Orthodox Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Druze (a sect of Shi'i origin). Lebanon is also deeply involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Lebanon is a member of the Arab League and remains in an official state of war with Israel. Lebanon is host to some 465,000 registered Palestinian refugees inside and outside 12 United Nations refugee camps.⁵⁶ The mostly Sunni Palestinian refugees are marginalized in Lebanese society, adding to the sectarian-based political conflict in Lebanon. There was a brief civil war in 1958. The main civil war started in 1975, ending between 1989 and 1991. Since then, political conflict, at times violent, has continued over Lebanese national identity and unity. The Israeli Defense forces occupied parts of the country until 2000. Sectarian conflict and the Palestinian crisis are exacerbated by some Lebanese political parties'

54 See 'U.S. Department of State Fact Sheet on U.S. Relations with Lebanon', online at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35833.htm>, accessed 13 September 2012.

55 Khaldoun AbouAssi, 'An Assessment of Lebanese Civil Society: A Long History of Achievements Facing Decisive Challenges Ahead of an Uncertain Future', *Civicus Civil Society Index Report for the Republic of Lebanon*, (Beirut: International Management and Training Institute, 2006), see online at http://www.civicus.org/new/media/CSI_Lebanon_Country_Report.pdf, accessed 19 September 2012; Arend Lijphart, *Thinking about Democracy: Power Sharing and Majority Rule in Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

56 See <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=253>, accessed 13 September 2012.



continuing alliances with the Syrian government, which, until 2005, maintained armed forces inside Lebanon. Enforcement of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 resulted in expulsion of Syrian government troops from Lebanon. The Syrian government has continued to strongly influence politics and policy there. Since the beginning of the current civil war in Syria, fighting between government forces and rebel groups has driven at least 48,000 Syrians refugees into Lebanon.⁵⁷

One of the key sources of conflict in and about Lebanon is the Syrian- and Iran-backed Shi'i resistance party and militia, Hizbullah.⁵⁸ In the mid-late 1990s, the U.S. government designated Hizbullah as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) due to the militia's involvement in the deaths of U.S. military personnel and civilians between 1983 and 1996, alleged drug-smuggling and money-laundering, calls for the destruction of the Israeli state, and weaponry exceeding the strength of the Lebanese Armed Forces (the national army).⁵⁹ As a legal political party in Lebanon, Hizbullah constitutes a large portion of one of the two main Lebanese political coalitions ('March 8th'). The other main coalition ('March 14th') consists primarily of Sunni Muslims and Maronite Catholics. Druze and some Maronites, many in the Antiochian Orthodox, Armenian Christians and other churches as well as secular movements, align with one or the other coalition, or take an independent stance. The FTO regulations prohibit U.S. government personnel or funds from materially supporting Hizbullah-run organizations or party members. Since approximately one third of the Lebanese population is Shi'i (the largest religious sect in the country) and many are members of Hizbullah, U.S. diplomatic engagement in Lebanon is not permitted with many in the Shi'i community. Hizbullah and the Israel Defense Forces are in constant tension, which in summer, 2006, resulted in war in Lebanon.

The Lebanese Armed Forces has for over two decades been supported by U.S. government training and supplies for the troops. Still, the army struggles to defend the borders with Syria and Israel and the sectarian-based Lebanese government remains fragile, with difficulty enforcing the law. Delivery of public services is inadequate and subject to confession-based patronage. In addition, the controversy over the funding of and indictments by the United Nations Special Tribunal for Lebanon, that has been investigating the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, led to the January 12, 2011, collapse of the coalition government and takeover by the March 8th coalition. Hizbullah retains strong support of a large minority of the population because of its broad, effective social services, although recently the support has vacillated. Many factors have lately caused Lebanese public opinion about the policies of the Iranian and Syrian governments to be in flux. Few want to see

57 See <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, accessed 13 September 2012.

58 The spelling of 'Hizbullah' varies. The present spelling is a transliteration from Arabic used by the party itself (see <http://www.english.moqawama.org/>, accessed 11 July 2012). This spelling is not often seen in the mass media, where 'Hezbollah' is more common. No direct quotation using the 'Hezbollah' spelling has been altered.

59 See, e.g., <http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/hizballah.html>), accessed 5 July 2012; Rotella, 2011; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No6/465/03/PDF/No646503.pdf?OpenElement>



Lebanon succumb to another civil war. The Lebanese general election is coming up in mid-2013, and Hizbullah wants to remain dominant. The British government is calling for the European Union to join with the U.S. in further sanctioning Hizbullah's financial and military ties to the Syrian government. The Lebanese American diaspora communities understand these factors through direct experience, monitoring and in many cases seeking to influence them.

U.S. diplomacy and development in Lebanon are complicated by all these factors. In addition, the lack of a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict fuels the credibility of Hizbullah as the official party of resistance to Israel. In support of Lebanon's independence, sovereignty, and socioeconomic prosperity, U.S. diplomacy works to: reach as many of the diverse Lebanese political groups as possible; facilitate the strengthening of civil society and governmental institutions associated with national unity; and foster interests that are shared among the Lebanese and American people and governments. In support of these goals, DOS, USAID, and the U.S. embassy in Beirut at times engage the Lebanese American diaspora. Many in this diaspora work or volunteer in civil society organizations encompassing various interests, e.g., international relations, education, community health, culture, regional peace, post-war reconstruction, human rights, trade, and economic development. Lebanese Americans possess cultural and professional skills that inform U.S. broadcasting, cultural and educational exchange, civil society institution building, development, and other programs in Lebanon. Lebanese Americans also reflect the religious diversity and political fragmentation of Lebanese politics and public opinion. After more than 100 years of Lebanese emigration, there are at least 485,000 self-identifying Lebanese Americans, constituting a substantial and well-established civil society stakeholder group.⁶⁰

Because the Lebanese diaspora reflects the fragmentation of Lebanese society, engaging with diaspora organizations is a sensitive matter. Some organizations share U.S. government interests; others have different agendas and may or may not wish to be engaged.⁶¹ DOS personnel navigate around organizations with interests that diverge from those of the government, while accounting for their right and capacity to pursue their own agendas. A study of Lebanese American activism among three organizations in the Christian Maronite community finds that 'transnational Lebanese-American political participation is along sectarian lines, while economic initiatives have a broader appeal and are multi-sectarian by nature.'⁶² Prominent multi-sectarian organizations are: the American Task Force for Lebanon, the American Lebanese Chamber of Commerce, and the Lebanese American

60 U.S. Census Bureau, *2006-2010 American Community Survey*, see online at <http://factfinder2.census.gov>, accessed 13 September 2012.

61 Michael Humphrey, 'Lebanese Identities: Between Cities, Nations and Trans-Nations', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2004), pp. 31-50; Laurie A. Brand, 'Lebanon and Its Expatriates: A Bird with Two Wings', in Laurie A. Brand, *Citizens Abroad: Emigration and the State in the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 133-175.

62 Marinova, (2010), p. 2.



Renaissance Partnership.⁶³ The Arab American Institute is also a civil society stakeholder organization actively engaged on Lebanon issues. Many of the institute's members are of Lebanese descent; some are also involved in Lebanese American organizations.

Given the sectarian nature of Lebanese and Lebanese American society, the present study includes Lebanese American organizations across the Lebanese and Lebanese American confessional and political spectrums. The sectarian politics makes deliberative, inclusive, and conflict mediation-oriented qualities of collaboration all the more important to develop for civil – rather than combative – collaboration. Cross-sector collaboration opens up space to build trust and deliberate mutual, overlapping, and disputed transnational interests.⁶⁴ Including Lebanese Americans with diverse perspectives about politics at home and abroad and using collaborative processes provides important context for shaping credible, effective U.S. bilateral policy and programs.

A recent incident illustrates how collaborative engagement with the diaspora can prevent ill-advised turns in policy and programs. On August 2, 2010, U.S. Representative Howard Berman, who then chaired the House Foreign Affairs Committee, placed a hold on a \$100M security assistance package already appropriated for the Lebanese Armed Forces. The hold, supported by other members of Congress, telegraphed strong concern to the White House about alleged influence of Hizbullah within the Lebanese Armed Forces. Hizbullah's militia is larger and better armed than the national army. Hizbullah also runs a wide network of social service agencies. The Lebanese Armed Forces is to many Lebanese and Americans the most important non-sectarian national institution in Lebanon. U.S. support to the national army is a cornerstone of official U.S.-Lebanon relations. Coincidentally, the day after the August 2nd hold was placed, the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces clashed on the southern Lebanese border, leaving one Israeli and three Lebanese dead. Congressman Berman issued a press release on August 9th, stating that the border clash 'reinforces the critical need for the United States to conduct an in-depth policy review of its relationship with the Lebanese military'.⁶⁵

As this incident unfolded, the Obama administration and U.S. Embassy Beirut continued to state confidence in the Lebanese Armed Forces, asserting that the national government, and not Hizbullah, controls it.⁶⁶ Congressman Berman lifted the hold on funding of the Lebanese Armed Forces on 12 November 2010, after being briefed 'in a classified setting' by the Obama administration on the results of 'a thorough, inter-agency review of its military assistance

63 Marinova, (2010); Deborah Lee Trent, 'Collaborative Governance of U.S. Public Diplomacy toward Lebanon: Reconceptualizing Government-Diasporan Civil Society Engagement?' (Omaha, Nebraska: Public Administration Theory Network Conference, 2010, May).

64 Cowan and Arsenault (2008); Zaharna (2009).

65 http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/press_display.asp?id=751, accessed 12 November 2010.

66 See, e.g., a 10 November 2010 statement of support by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during an interview, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/11/150842.htm>, accessed 13 September 2012.



program for Lebanon.⁶⁷ Perhaps DOS and then Chairman Berman sought input from a diverse religious and political sampling in the Lebanese American community. Doing so would provide an important source of context about what was happening along the border of Israel and Lebanon, and deeper within Lebanon. Lebanese Americans are on the phone and Internet daily with friends, family, and business associates in Lebanon. They share an interest with the U.S. government in keeping the peace and maintaining a strong national army.

Ongoing relationships between the U.S. government and two diaspora institutions in Lebanon are prime examples of collaborative networking that build U.S. credibility in Lebanon. The American University of Beirut and the Lebanese American University have over the past ten years received over \$19 million to support student scholarships and other programs.⁶⁸ There are at least two reasons for this high level of funding. First, the American University of Beirut, established in 1866, is the oldest binational civil society institution in Lebanon, and can be considered one of the foremost and oldest 'practitioners' of U.S. people-to-people diplomacy in Lebanon.⁶⁹ Second, faculty, students, and alumni of both universities reciprocate the support by actively engaging with DOS, USAID, and the U.S. embassy in Beirut. They reciprocate through networking efforts among a large number of bilingual Lebanese and Lebanese American graduates and other supporters.⁷⁰

Another DOS effort that exemplifies collaborative engagement is a partnership with the American Task Force for Lebanon. DOS has been providing matching funds to the task force for the deactivation of cluster bombs in southern Lebanon since the 2006 summer war between Hizbullah and Israel.⁷¹ The task force is a highly respected organization in Lebanon and in most Lebanese American communities. DOS' association with this non-sectarian organization strengthens the U.S. government's credibility and increases the potential to leverage additional funds for humanitarian projects through the task force's network. Having presented both the conceptual framework for collaborative engagement with diasporas and background about recent U.S.-Lebanese relations involving the diaspora, the paper now turns to the interview and meeting data.

Methodological Approach

The data generated for this study consist of responses to a semi-structured questionnaire guiding 77 interviews, along with observations of 27 public meetings. Categories of interviewees include: current and former U.S. Foreign Service and civil service employees of

67 http://hirc.house.gov/press_display.asp?id=765, accessed 22 November 22, 2010.

68 http://lebanon.usembassy.gov/latest_embassy_news/press-releases2/pr062910.html, accessed 11 November 2010.

69 Interview with a former U.S. diplomat, 3 and 11 February 2011.

70 Personal communication with a U.S. diplomat, 7 October 2010.

71 See online at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/10/149861.htm>, accessed 13 September 2012.



DOS, the National Security Council, and Department of Defense; professional committee staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee; U.S. civil society leaders of Lebanese and broader Middle Eastern descent; U.S. and Lebanese participants in and alumni of public diplomacy programs; current and former Lebanese staff of the U.S. embassy in Beirut; Lebanese diplomats; U.S. and Lebanese foreign policy analysts; Lebanese and U.S. non-governmental contract staff implementing DOS and USAID programs; and several other U.S. and Lebanese stakeholders. A purposive sampling strategy was used to recruit interviewees of diverse educational, political, religious, and professional backgrounds. The public meetings in the sample ranged by topic from Lebanese politics and society, to U.S. policy, public diplomacy, and development toward the broader Middle East, to U.S. immigration, counterterrorism, and homeland security policy. The meetings involved Lebanese and American participants, including: government officials; leaders of diaspora and other civil society organizations and businesses, journalists, political and media analysts; and activists in political parties as well as human rights, culture, and education. The interviews and meetings took place in Lebanon and the U.S. in 2010 and 2011.

Analysis of interviewees' and meeting participants' discourse was conducted using methods of narrative inquiry and organizational sensemaking.⁷² Narrative inquiry is a research orientation privileging individuals' perspectives about and insights into social and organizational experiences. Organizational sensemaking, simply stated, addresses the question: 'how can I know what I think until I see what I say?'⁷³ Confusing, unpredictable, ambiguous situations prompt this question; in organizations, the sensemaking task is how people who are working together to address a problem act on what they collectively agree on. Organizational sensemaking involves: identity-making; retrospection; enactment of objects or actions to be noticed and inspected; ongoing social influences and changes; cues extracted from context and personal experience; and agreeing on plausible, though not necessarily fully accurate, explanations.⁷⁴ Examples of two actions from the data are: 1) President Barack Obama's 2009 Speech at the American University of Cairo; and 2) an interfaith breakfast arranged by DOS and hosted by a mosque in the U.S. for Arab and Israeli military officers on a U.S. military-sponsored training program. Organizational sensemaking is complemented by narrative inquiry because it privileges individual and organizational identity-making in the process of constructing social realities.

72 Weick (1995); (2001); Sonia M. Ospina, and Jennifer Dodge, 'It's about Time: Catching Method Up to Meaning—The Usefulness of Narrative Inquiry in Public Administration Research', *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (2005), pp. 143-157; Jennifer Dodge, Sonia M. Ospina, and Erica Gabrielle Foldy, 'Integrating Rigor and Relevance in Public Administration Scholarship: The Contribution of Narrative Inquiry', *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (2005), pp. 286-300; Sonia M. Ospina and Jennifer Dodge, 'Narrative Inquiry and the Search for Connectedness: Practitioners and Academics Developing Public Administration Scholarship', *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (2005a), pp. 409-423.

73 Weick (1995), p. 61.

74 Weick (1995), pp. 61-62.



The interview questions probed for reflections and stories about direct experience being a diplomat, member of a diaspora organization, Congressional committee staff member, program implementing staff on contract to DOS, or participant in a U.S.-sponsored program. Public meetings were opportunities to witness networked communication involving stakeholders of many types of organizations. Sensemaking data were generated by these diverse stakeholders about the political and social environments in which U.S. diplomacy with the Lebanese American diaspora occurs. In both the individual interviews and the meetings, different, competing realities and perspectives were plainly evident, yielding rich context about the challenges of U.S. diplomacy toward Lebanon. Patterns and themes in interviewees' and meeting participants' sensemaking emerged from the analytical process of reading and interpreting their narratives through the conceptual framework of collaborative engagement with diasporas. The themes are the subject of the next section.

Findings and Analysis

Organization and Protocol for Diaspora Diplomacy

Much of the diaspora diplomacy among Lebanese Americans at DOS is administered through Public Affairs and Outreach Coordination in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Office of Press and Public Diplomacy (NEA/PPD).⁷⁵ In the last 15 years or more, the number of requests for DOS speakers from the Arab American communities has grown, and with it an interest in NEA/PPD to talk about and explain policies. The domestic side has received more attention since the turn of this century, especially since the tragedies of 11 September 2001. Associating the rise in domestic outreach with 9/11 is, in organizational sensemaking, acting retrospectively. Diaspora groups are a 'natural constituency' who desire input into policy just as other civil society organizations that follow foreign policy have input into policies, or through Congress, the Department of Justice, Homeland Security, or the White House. Interviewee sensemaking about the social, ongoing nature of engagement with diasporas also reflected that because these groups have become more active and vocal in airing their views, it is incumbent upon NEA/PPD to engage them and have dialogue with them. Policy and program 'ideas can come from anywhere,' e.g., business partnerships, exchange programs. This statement is a sensemaking cue and is a key insight about the potential benefits of diaspora engagement.

Protocols are followed in any kind of diplomacy. In the U.S. government, diplomatic protocol most commonly refers to facilitating foreign missions and visiting dignitaries, ensuring they have constructive experiences in the U.S., and following reciprocal guidelines when they

75 Most of the information about NEA/PPD engagement with Lebanese and Arab Americans was provided during an interview with an NEA Public Affairs Specialist, including all quotations, unless otherwise indicated.



travel abroad.⁷⁶ Selwa Roosevelt, the DOS Chief of Protocol during the Reagan administration, is a Lebanese American of Druze descent. She emphasized in her memoir that protocol and public diplomacy, done with intercultural sensitivity, foster human connections.⁷⁷ Mrs. Roosevelt notes that opportunities for dialogue between the most senior officials are particularly important.

Protocols for diaspora diplomacy may not be codified anywhere, but they have the same facilitative function and require intercultural sensitivity. When speaking about the reasons for and frequency of formal U.S.-Lebanese American relations, a retired Foreign Service Officer commented that diplomats do not have the 'right' to cooperate or collaborate with diaspora organizations on their projects and should not expect their cooperation on U.S. government-initiated projects, either. Noting the protocols for relations with all contacts – foreign, domestic, and diaspora – this interviewee said that diplomats must be respectful in conducting their relationships. In consonance with protocol and to be effective in their relationships, diplomats must first establish trust, by not intervening in diasporas' private endeavors in an unwelcomed way. Opportunities for diplomats to engage with diasporas depend on how busy they are as well as their program knowledge and contacts in the networks of diaspora civil society and program implementers. Some diplomats have unusually deep experience. For example, some have served extensively in the broader Middle East and as program managers in both the DOS and the former U.S. Information Agency, which was the lead agency for public diplomacy until its consolidation into DOS in 1999. Other diplomats have benefited from particularly seasoned and reliable local staff that have contact with diasporas.

Themes

The table below displays the findings of the study according to three categories of themes that emerged from interviews and meeting observations. The first column of the table lists the themes. They center on diaspora civil society stakeholders and U.S. officials engaging (or trying to) with each other on policy and program issues. The second-fourth columns indicate with check marks the category or categories to which each theme corresponds. The first category, in the second column, includes the policy themes of engagement with the Lebanese American diaspora. The second category, in the third column, includes the qualitative themes of the cross-sector relations of diaspora diplomacy. The third category, in the fourth and last column, includes the program issues that emerged from diasporans' participation in, or other direct knowledge about, U.S. public diplomacy and development programs. For example, in the third row, the theme 'mutual and divergent interests' is a policy issue and a diaspora-government relationship quality. The themes are discussed below in the order of the table, starting with lack of Arab-Israeli peace, and ending with program evaluation.

76 See online at <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/>, accessed 14 September 2012.

77 Selwa Roosevelt, *Keeper of the Gate* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990).

*Policy Issues**Lacking Arab-Israeli Peace and Inclusive Engagement with all Lebanese*

The first and second rows of the table display the two principal foreign policy issues related to U.S.-Lebanon relations. These two – the Arab-Israeli conflict and lack of inclusive, open engagement with all of Lebanese society, including Hizbullah – are the issues that surfaced most frequently across interviews and meeting observations. Most Lebanese American interviewees viewed DOS and Congressional committee staff engagement with them as 'zero-sum politics,' reflecting that they are not usually included in policy-level meetings about the conflict because advocating for a Palestinian state threatens Israel's security. One civil society leader of Lebanese descent who self-identifies as Arab American called this 'a politics of exclusion' that 'State understands the need to change.'

U.S. Government – Lebanese American Engagement			
Theme	Thematic Categories		
	Policy Issues	Diaspora-Government Relationship Qualities	Program Issues
Lack of Arab-Israeli peace	✓		
Lack of inclusive engagement with all Lebanese publics	✓		✓
Mutual and divergent interests	✓	✓	
Power relations between government and diaspora organizations		✓	
Diaspora access to policy makers	✓	✓	
Diaspora-oriented perspective on policy-making in the broader Middle East	✓	✓	
Lack of respect for Lebanese, Arab, and Muslim Americans		✓	✓
Formal interaction between government and diaspora organizations		✓	
Cross-sector collaboration through shared commitment to mutual interests and projects		✓	
Mutual trust developed through successful cross-sector collaboration		✓	
Deliberative cross-sector engagement	✓	✓	



High-context interaction between government and Lebanese Americans		✓	
Light touch of governing in diaspora interactions		✓	✓
Digital social networking and other new media			✓
Broadcasting and Internet news platforms			✓
Cultural diplomacy			✓
Trans-sectarianism	✓		✓
Program evaluation			✓

Regarding inclusive, open engagement between the U.S. government and all of Lebanese society, most interviewees across stakeholder categories see a need to relate to the Lebanese public as a diverse whole rather than sect-by-sect or through a 'non-sectarian' approach. Many diasporan interviewees recommended against programs or other support for one or another sectarian group because that would neglect the diversity of Lebanese society and the demand, especially among Lebanese youth, for national unity-oriented discourse and action. Diasporan interviewees called for more hiring of Lebanese Americans by the U.S. government. Several said that more qualified Lebanese Americans should be hired for two reasons. One is that because their Arabic language and cross-cultural skills would benefit program administration, indicated by the second check mark in the second row, in the column for program issues. The other reason is that their direct and indirect experience with past U.S. policy in the broader Middle East would sharpen future calculations on policy.

The next four policy issues are: mutual and divergent interests between diasporan citizens and the U.S. government; diaspora access to policy makers; diaspora-oriented perspective on policy-making in the broader Middle East; and deliberative cross-sector engagement. As the table indicates, these four policy issues also correspond to the category of qualities of diaspora-government relations. The last policy issue is trans-sectarianism, also categorized as a program issue. These five policy issues are explained in the context of the second and third categories of themes, below.

Diaspora-Government Relationship Qualities

Mutual and Divergent Interests

The second category of themes, quality of government-diaspora relations, begins with national government interests that either coincide with or differ from diasporan citizen



interests. Government engagement with Lebanese Americans requires sensitivity to the Palestinian and Lebanese issues as well as to the interests and backgrounds of Lebanese Americans. U.S. diplomats and civil servants spoke of reasons to cooperate. They also spoke of the goal of U.S. policy to represent all of America and of the need to be cautious about timing. For example, some diaspora organizations distance themselves from embassy officials during periods of particularly controversial U.S. policy positions and actions, e.g., the invasion of Iraq in 2003. When there does seem to be mutual interest, diplomats are watchful, because situations change quickly. As the months passed after the March, 2005 Lebanese civil society uprising in response to the assassination of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri, some diaspora organizations shifted from a communal, national stance to more particularistic, self-interested agendas. Diplomats and civil servants ask themselves, how up-to-date is the diaspora leader's experience in the country of origin? One diplomat summarized that 'the "hyphenated" American coming back to the country of his or her origin or possibly birth can be the most wonderful bridge or the most obnoxious wall or barrier. ... to a larger public diplomacy goal or effort.' The officer should determine whether U.S. government cooperation could be seen as 'promoting a political agenda that is divisive within Lebanon or harmful to U.S. governmental or public interests.'

From the interviews with civil society-based Lebanese American leaders it became clear that U.S. government interests often diverge from those of their organizations although most pointed out that their organizational identity is couched in U.S. interests. For example, the mission of the diaspora organization of two interviewees is to prepare and disseminate accurate research on Lebanon and also to advocate for a free, independent, and sovereign Lebanon. One of the two interviewees has over the years had a cooperative relationship with DOS policy and program officers. At times, advice has been sought from the interviewee by DOS based on mutually held perspectives, e.g., removal of foreign troops from Lebanon. At other times, the organization pitched a point of view diverging from U.S. policy. Several Lebanese American civil society leaders seemed to accept that there are limits to the potential for shared views.

Power Relations between Government and Diaspora Organizations

Intertwined with the interests-based engagement quality of diaspora diplomacy is power. Professional staff of Congressional committees whose portfolios include Lebanon and/or public diplomacy and development issues constitute the smallest of the stakeholder groups. There, power is the most highly concentrated and focused on electoral politics. Reflecting discussion with all four professional staff of Congressional committees interviewed, one staff member commented that it is in the U.S. interest for them to be attentive to how the Lebanese would respond to U.S. foreign policy there. This staff person interacts with March 14th party members and lobbyists. The staff person meets with several other Lebanese American diaspora organizations on policy issues. The exception is when committee input is sought from them, or the organizations request to meet, about press releases regarding Congressional action on Lebanon, such as the legislative hold of 2010. The staff person also



visits Lebanon at least once a year. Another Congressional staff member, who has had no experience with the Lebanese American community, commented that relative to other ethnic communities in the U.S., it is very small. Still, this staff member said, diasporas are important constituents, particularly for direct investment opportunities. Sometimes administrations are not so interested because of the differing agendas between the U.S. government and the various diaspora groups. In lean budgetary times, the interviewee reflected, diasporas are an untapped resource that administrations are just starting to understand.

In another small, powerful stakeholder category, three diplomats in the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants were interviewed for their insight about Lebanese government and national and regional interests as related to the diaspora in the U.S.⁷⁸ One related that Lebanese citizens still have only minimal trust that the state will protect them, because of the legacy of colonial occupation and civil war. Lack of trust in the Lebanese government is why the non-state militias in Lebanon persist and have so many supporters, e.g., Hizbullah. The 'government has sought to find a solution to all arms not under its control' because these resources should be transferred to the state, and the newly unarmed parties and the government should work together. The first step is to unify the arms under the government, something the government has been unable to do, yet. The Lebanese government would prefer that diaspora organizations in the U.S. 'stay out of government-to-government politics because they are the 'highway' issues and instead focus on the 'small streets' issues.'

As for seemingly 'small streets' issues, interviews with Lebanese diplomats also revealed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants promotes relations with Lebanese American organizations that are not politically partisan. The American Task Force for Lebanon and the Lebanese International Business Council were cited as examples. The former was cited because of its humanitarian assistance to Lebanon; the latter, for promoting international trade. The Ministry works with Lebanese citizens abroad on the civil side of consular matters and on the social side of maintaining their identity by encouraging them to build Arabic language schools abroad, send their children to the Ministry-sponsored summer camp, and contribute as citizens in their countries of residence to environmental, educational, and health initiatives. These interviewees mentioned that the only problem that Americans of Lebanese descent have raised with the Lebanese embassy has been the increased profiling of Arabs since the Al-Qaeda plane bombings of 9/11. It seems that for both the Lebanese and U.S. governments, the power struggle with Lebanese Americans over the enforcement of counterterrorism policy connects the major highways and small streets of U.S.-Lebanon relations. Members of Congress and their staffs who represent the interests of Lebanese Americans are also stakeholders in these power relations.

The perspectives from the Lebanese and U.S. government stakeholders reveal myriad domestic and bilateral interests to balance in administering relations with the U.S. diaspora.

78 The perspectives on diaspora diplomacy from the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants were related by one or more of the three Lebanese diplomats I interviewed.



Globalization, private-sector international trade, and civil society cooperation in the areas of human rights, anti-corruption, environmental conservation, and other issues, help foster some shared interests. Yet, Lebanon is a lower, middle-income country with an exceptionally high national debt and strong ties with several regional powers whose interests conflict with U.S. policy. Lebanese banks with global investors finance much of the national debt. These investors include U.S. entities, among them Lebanese Americans. The U.S. continues gathering evidence, making arrests in connection with Hizbullah involvement in money laundering and drug smuggling, aiming to persuade the European Union to join in designating the Hizbullah network as an FTO and sanctioning it for supporting Syrian army training and weaponry via Iran.⁷⁹ All in all, the Lebanese government faces great challenges in cooperating with other states and international authorities while managing the political and sectarian conflict and around the country and while encouraging the diaspora to participate in politically and environmentally sustainable development of Lebanon.

The U.S. government advocates the transfer of weapons from party-based militias to the Lebanese government because it would strengthen the state and the Lebanese Armed Forces while diminishing Hizbullah's standing. Negotiating disarmament of non-state militias is principally a task for closed, government-to-government diplomacy, but an arms transfer is more likely to be maintained if the public demands it. U.S. engagement with Lebanese American organizations embracing the major issue of arms transfer, other U.S. national interests, as well as the somewhat less politically fraught issues around Lebanese socioeconomic development, provides feasible open pathways for deliberation among the Lebanese political class about power shifts and a unified government in Lebanon. For example, Lebanese Americans could argue from personal experience with occupation and war that transferring weapons from Hizbullah and other militias would have to be couched in cooperation from the governments of the U.S., Israel, Syria, and Iran, in addition to the Arab League, Turkey, and the United Nations Security Council. The Lebanese diaspora would need assurance that there would no longer be a need for an official resistance party and militia in Lebanon. Collaborative engagement with Lebanese Americans would provide U.S. diplomats and members of Congress and their staff with local context and the diasporans with an opportunity to share their experiences. Recognizing diasporans' views on the shaping and

79 See online, e.g.: 'Daily Open Source Infrastructure Report, August 22, 2012', http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/DHS_Daily_Report_2012-08-22.pdf, p. 5; 'On-The-Record Briefing Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen And Coordinator for Counterterrorism Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, On the Designation of Hezbollah for Supporting the Syrian Regime - August 10, 2012 Via Teleconference', <http://translations.state.gov/st/english/texttrans/2012/08/20120810134572.html#axzz26dPB9unw>; 'Indictment Charges 4 with Conspiracy to Support Hezbollah, 6 Others Charged with Related Crimes', <http://www.ice.gov/news/releases/0911/091124philadelphia.htm>; http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444017504577645101530804904.html?mod=googlenews_wsj; <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/western-powers-mull-new-round-of-sanctions-on-iran-1.463574>; 'News Release, January 27, 2011, 'Mohamad Youssef Hammoud Sentenced to 30 Years in Terrorism Financing Case', <http://www.ice.gov/news/releases/1101/110127charlotte.htm>.



enforcement of policy would be a step toward more credible policy and balanced relations between government and diasporan citizens.

Diaspora Access to Policy Makers

A theme that was almost as strong in the sensemaking narratives of Lebanese American interviewees as interest-based engagement and cross-sector power relations was gaining and maintaining access to policy makers.⁸⁰ Access is a function of power. Having the ear of a DOS official or Congressional committee staff member is an opportunity for the Lebanese American civil society leader to convey organizational interests in a policy issue for Lebanon or the broader Middle East. Across political parties, U.S. legislators engaged on Lebanon issues can be categorized in one of three ways: those with Arab American and Muslim communities in their districts; those with other groups of constituents concerned with policy in the broader Middle East, e.g., Jewish Americans; and those with experience, affinity, or committee responsibility related to foreign policy.

The interviewee mentioned that it is 'unbelievable' that one House leader on foreign affairs is known not to meet with, or permit staff to meet with, Arab Americans or American Muslims, despite representing constituents of these ethnic and religious groups. At the same time, this interviewee has had access to that House leader's staff and this lack of access is not common to all House foreign affairs leaders and staffs. Another House leader on foreign affairs, along with staff, do meet with the Arab American and Muslim American communities.

The grievance from Lebanese Americans about the difficulty of gaining access to power to convey their perspectives on policy issues was acknowledged by Congressional committee staff to a limited extent. A staff member was asked about ever meeting with any Lebanese Americans of Shi'i descent, e.g., from the Detroit area of Michigan, with the highest concentration of Lebanese in the U.S. The interviewee had not had such an occasion, although it is a practice to meet with all kinds of people, both as a check for understanding the issues and out of intellectual curiosity about the diverse context of the relevant issues. In general, U.S. citizen lobbyists and activists seek out Congressional staff, not vice-versa, and no Lebanese Americans of known Shi'i descent had approached the staff member. However, this staff member has considerable contact with Lebanese nationals who are Shi'i. These narratives suggest a need, and official political space, for greater access among Lebanese Americans to federal government officials. There is a substantial number in the communities interested in sharing their perspectives with decision makers and an interest among some in Congress to listen and consider their views.

80 These findings are based on interviews with several diasporans with extensive experience on Capitol Hill and in Lebanese and/or Arab American civil society organizations.



Diaspora-oriented Perspective on Policy Making in the Broader Middle East

This theme regards a diaspora-oriented perspective on policy-making that considers the rights and welfare of people in all countries of the broader Middle East – irrespective of religion or socioeconomic status. This theme emerged from the sensemaking of Lebanese Americans during interviews as well as cross-sector meetings including members of their communities. These study participants spoke of an imbalanced perspective in policy-making in both the legislative and executive branches. This sentiment converges with their sense of a lack of access to policy makers minority into a major undercurrent in the study's findings.

Diasporan interviewees who have experience working with Congressional offices feel, as one put it, a 'hunger for a different perspective among Hill staff members. A lot of staff are craving a different narrative [for a broader Middle East policy] and they want political space to do something different.' Perspective is limited in part because there are relatively few Lebanese and Arab Americans among Capitol Hill staff, executive branch appointees, and career civil servants with broader Middle East policy and program portfolios. Again, diasporan interviewees noted that there are Hill staff and members of Congress with broader perspectives, especially, but not always, in districts with high numbers of Lebanese/Arab Americans. Shaping policy and programs on broader, more diverse perspectives could add credibility to the U.S. image in Lebanon and elsewhere across the globe. The recommendations presented toward the end of the paper are intended as a springboard of ideas for diversifying policy through a diasporan lens.

Lack of Respect for Lebanese, Arab, and Muslim Americans

Many Lebanese Americans interviewees expressed a feeling of being excluded from participation in foreign and domestic policy making, also noticing narrow perspectives among policy makers. An interviewee who identifies as a Lebanese and Arab American of Sunni and Shi'i descent and has diverse leadership experience in civil society-government-private sector cooperation, voiced this feeling of exclusion as a lack of respect in government for the high level of education achieved by Lebanese Americans. When asked a question from the interview protocol about the meaning of public diplomacy, this Lebanese Muslim interviewee responded that:

Public diplomacy is the opportunity to have effective means of communication with other governments and people in a diplomatic situation, although it ends up that there is no conversation, just commands. There are so many issues across the board to address, especially Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, that border Israel.

The part of the passage above about being 'commanded' instead of engaged with connotes a lack of mutually respectful dialogue about the full range of context and controversial issues faced by the communities of Lebanese Americans. A sense of a lack of power and access is also apparent here, likely due to challenges in exercising their rights and responsibilities as U.S. citizens.



Similarly, a perception of lack of respect was mentioned in regard to administering programs with Lebanese and other Arabs. Recalling a two-year USAID project for an Egyptian parliamentary delegation that engaged with members of the U.S. Congress, a diasporan interviewee stressed that programs involving political elites should be framed respectfully and appropriately as colleague-to-colleague programs rather than as 'training programs.'

Formal Interaction between Government and Diaspora Organizations

Interviewees and meeting informants talked about interaction between government and diasporas in formal meeting situations and networks. Formal interaction is that which occurs in pre-arranged meetings, as opposed to unplanned and informal meetings that are not part of the public record. According to the DOS Public Affairs Specialist, NEA/PPD outreach to Lebanese and Arab Americans occurs largely through meetings. Seven to fourteen meetings, about 20% of the annual total, are initiated by NEA/PPD and officers travel to them. The rest are by request from diaspora civil society organizations. Many engagements take place in Washington, D.C., because of all the diplomatic activity and tourism in the capital. The agenda is usually talking points, followed by questions and answers. The questions and answers are 'the best opportunities for connecting.' Audiences can be very well informed, or not. They range from students on class trips, to immigration activists, to people with business ties to the region. Smaller meetings with just one or two diaspora organizations are not opportunities for networking or mobilizing on an issue or program. When NEA/PPD convenes multiple organizations, there is much greater potential for networking to promote their interests and influence each other.

Sites for formal interaction with diasporas on foreign policy, public diplomacy, and international development are limited in the Congress. Generally, the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee are set up by region, not program. For example, in recent years, the House committee only had a staff member with a specific public diplomacy portfolio for a few months, whereas the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has had one for many years. The geographic and programmatic organizational lanes of the House and Senate are not very conducive to the networked, transnational nature of diaspora diplomacy. Also limiting formal engagement with diasporas are the sheer number of individual constituents and groups to whom Congress is accountable and elected officials demanding campaign schedules. Members and professional staffs' schedules are at least as constrained as those of most diplomats. The legislative branch is responsible for more policy and programmatic territory than are diplomats, and foreign policy implementation is more the purview of the White House Office of Public Engagement than the Congress.

Trust and Collaboration through Shared Commitment

Some DOS and USAID engagement is based on longer-term trust building and collaboration realized through ongoing, shared commitment to mutual interests and project results.



Reliable partnership and capacity to resolve inter-organizational conflict are hallmarks of government-diaspora engagement grounded in trust and collaboration. For example, the leader of a Lebanese American organization noted many requests, over time, by DOS to plan, cost-share, and conduct projects relating to humanitarian assistance, post-war reconstruction, development, and public diplomacy in Lebanon. These requests have been made during many years of steady, formal, quiet dialogue, based on mutual interest in Lebanon's security and socioeconomic stability. The relationship enjoyed between this Lebanese American organization and DOS is based on mutual trust developed through successful collaboration. It is truly collaborative because the partners have a deep enough commitment to shared interests to navigate conflicts over divergent interests. Additionally, at the time of the interviews in this diaspora organization, the success of collaborating with DOS was leading to engagement with USAID about a new partnership.

Deliberative, Cross-sector Engagement

A mixed picture of deliberative, cross-sector engagement was observed on the policy making level at a variety of meetings where members or staff of Congress were featured speakers. Legislators and their professional staff were observed to debate with other panelists, moderators, and audiences including Lebanese Americans, about national security and U.S.-Lebanon relations, but their exchanges were short and lacking detail. Like the sensemaking of the government personnel who were observed in these meetings, sensemaking of Congressional staff interviewed included theoretically grounded phrases, e.g., deliberate, for describing the quality of interaction with diasporans. These interviewees spoke of initiating discussions with Lebanese American civil society organization leaders about upcoming ambassadorial nominations, planning for member delegations to Lebanon, and programs. In contrast, many diasporan interviewees expressed a need for sustained, deliberative engagement with Congressional and executive branch staff. For example, while generally enjoying access to DOS officials and Congressional committee staff, the leader of the Lebanon research and advocacy organization said:

If you ask me how many times there has been a formal, organized, structured meeting of Lebanese Americans to discuss a certain policy that the U.S. would like to advocate [or] promote with the Lebanese people, I would say very few.

Overall, sentiment among diasporans is that few opportunities seem to exist for deep, ongoing, sharing of perspectives, while Congressional staff sensed that the quality of engagement is constructive and its frequency sufficient. Several diasporan interviewees did note that the House Democracy Partnership as an exemplary exchange program at the cross-national, policy-making level.⁸¹ However, none cited a domestic program or process for

81 See online at <http://hdac.house.gov/>, accessed 17 September 2012.



diasporan civil society leaders to deliberate with policy makers. This gap underscores the value of long-term relational, high-context diplomacy, to create cross-sector mutuality and foster an interest in deliberation.

High-context Interaction between Government and Lebanese Americans

In government-diaspora engagement, high-context interaction refers to diasporans' personal experience with cause and effect of policy and knowledge of pertinent history and culture, along with government's interest in the context to strengthen policy and programs. High-context dialogue is based on far more than results of Lebanese and Arab public opinion polling about U.S. government policy and programs and other second-hand sources of information. This relationship quality was reflected most often in meetings and interviews touching on international trade policy and programs. Several Lebanese American interviewees who are international business leaders said that their interaction with federal agencies was significant in meeting U.S. goals in international trade. An interviewee involved with the American Arab Chamber of Commerce spoke about decades of relations with federal and international agencies and state and local government. The Chamber promotes products made in the U.S. to Lebanon and Qatar through trade seminars there and in Detroit. The White House called the interviewee to join a U.S.-Middle East trade promotion effort in Washington in May, 2011. The effort was part of a partnership with USAID to double exports to the region; the U.S. government sought to engage Arab American organizations. The Chamber responded with a delegation of 25 business leaders from the Detroit area and the Washington, D.C., area. Seven U.S. agencies, the Export Import Bank, and other organizations were then to consider what kinds of projects to undertake and whom in the Arab American community to encourage to bid on projects in the Middle East. Rather than rely on market survey results and in-house sources of information, government trade officials sought firsthand knowledge from diasporan Chamber members. The diasporans understand the local context of international trade in the Middle East and were interested in serving the mutual interest of expanding it.

Deliberative, Cross-sector, High-context Engagement

Three of the 27 meetings observed in 2010 and 2011 for this study were sponsored by members of Congress. A fourth featured panelists who are senior professional staff of members of Congress. All four were open to the public and were sponsored by civil society organizations affiliated with Lebanese, Arab, and Muslim American communities. They are examples of formal, networked, high-context engagement between government personnel and civil society organizations. However, as in the mixed picture on deliberation discussed above, the following discussion of two of the meetings suggests minimal deliberative engagement. Government-diaspora interaction lacking face-to-face policy deliberation does not bode well for increasing U.S. credibility among Lebanese Americans or Lebanese nationals.



The first public meeting observation was in early 2010. It was led by an Arab American organization and convened in a U.S. House of Representatives office building, courtesy of a House member. The meeting topic was racial profiling of travelers from fourteen countries, precipitated by the failed attempt on Christmas Day, 2009, of Nigerian national Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (the 'underwear bomber') to blow up a Northwest Airlines jet close to a scheduled landing in Detroit, Michigan. The meeting panel consisted of Arab American and Muslim American civil rights activists. The panelists, part of a national, multi-ethnic coalition, stressed that citizens and others with relevant experience and interest should press their elected representatives to condemn the discrimination against the traveling publics of the fourteen countries. They stressed evidence that situational behavior profiling and confirmed intelligence data, rather than racial profiling, improve homeland security. From the sensemaking of each panelist, it emerged that behavior profiling is not objectionable to publics abroad or dual nationals, because they value safe travel as much as Americans.

It was unclear whether the activists or any of the other attendees had tried to meet with U.S. homeland security officials or members of Congress, or if anyone in government had sought to consult them, about this issue. The panelists demonstrated their capacity to critique policies using salient evidence and highly contextualized explanations. No one in the audience at the briefing self-identified as a member of Congress or committee staff person. Although the office of a member of Congress sponsored the meeting in a House office building, this was not a collaborative, deliberative cross-sector engagement during which government officials and diaspora organization members could have learned from one another and possibly reached a shared understanding about policy. For government officials, it would have been a unique opportunity to network and share information with citizen-experts. In all, the briefing was a key opportunity for the diaspora organizations to share information and expand their networks, but officials could have deliberated with the panelists and attendees about ways to develop airport screening procedures that protect passenger security while avoiding racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination. This kind of U.S.-diaspora engagement could have also informed officials how to craft more culturally sensitive diplomatic messages and domestic public service announcements about the security procedures. As the information framework posits, a formal cross-sector process for crafting policy and public diplomacy messages for high-context cultures could help avoid blunt messages that trigger negative reactions among Muslim and Arab publics.⁸²

The second observed meeting evinced some, limited face-to-face diasporan-government deliberation. The meeting was also conducted by an Arab American organization in a House member-sponsored venue on Capitol Hill. The audience was comprised of Hill staff members, civil society organization staff, and media personnel. The presiding Arab American civil society leader, of Lebanese descent, reported results from a spring, 2011 poll of citizens in six Arab countries, including Lebanon. The poll showed declining Arab public opinion about the last two years of U.S. foreign policy in the broader Middle East, between 2009 and 2011. Ratings were poor because: Guantanamo had not been closed, as promised; the U.S.

82 Zaharna (2009).



military had not yet left Iraq; and there was still no Palestinian state. The poll results indicated that the U.S. government is seen neither as having a balanced policy toward Israel and the Palestinians nor as a trustworthy partner. Increased racial profiling of Muslim airline passengers after the attempted bombing outside Detroit contributed to negative opinion of the U.S. among Arabs, creating much more alienation across the region. The confrontation between President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in May, 2011, also took a toll on U.S. credibility. Arabs, the meeting leader said, seemed to see no difference between what Obama asserted to Netanyahu about the 1967 Israeli-Palestine borders than what former President George W. Bush had promised.

Reflecting the desire among some Congressional staff for more inclusive dialogue and policy options for the broader Middle East, one Hill staff member asked the diaspora leader what the less influential members of Congress could do? The leader responded that domestic public opinion also shows that even Americans who strongly support Israel want the U.S. to have a balanced Middle East policy. In organizational sensemaking analysis, this exchange is a 'triple interact' between two people in two organizations. The first exchange is the diasporan leader making a presentation. The second is the Congressional staff member responding with a question, and the third is the leader's reply. If the reply was plausible to the staff member, s/he may have gone on to enact it. They may have had additional conversation after the briefing, continuing into quadruple interacts and beyond. The sensemakers develop cues from the context and experience discussed in these interacts. Over time, the interacts may result in cross-sector, organizational learning or other policy or program change.

The civil society leader's response also reflects the desire for access and perspective voiced by many Lebanese American interviewees as well as the reality that there is a variety of opinions in the Congress regarding Middle East policy. This leader is asked to testify periodically before Congressional committees in addition to writing and speaking widely about Arab and Arab American perspectives. These presentations always include a call for more engagement and consideration of ethnic communities in policy deliberations, as opposed to being subjected to a politics of exclusion. With formal, public engagement among government officials and diaspora civil society leaders, diverse perspectives can be aired, raising the potential for high-context policy networking and collaborative cross-sector partnership.

Light Touch of Governing in Diaspora Interactions

Another collaborative relationship quality in diaspora diplomacy by which DOS and USAID can advance national economic and security interests in the U.S. and Lebanon is a light touch of governing. In public diplomacy and international development the light touch is a process where third-party implementing organizations or mediators engage with publics on behalf of



government.⁸³ IDEA, DNA, and the GDFs of 2011 and 2012 are all examples of a light touch by DOS and USAID to facilitate networking and partnerships among diaspora organizations and government. Scores of civil society organizations and private firms have been involved. Lebanese/Arab American participation in the GDF resulted from cross-sector networking in public meetings and briefings.⁸⁴ The GDF is a venue for discussing effective diaspora-led cooperation across commercial and civil society sectors that might be used in the future in partnerships among additional countries, international firms, and civil society organizations. Its functions to:

explain better and engage more, about what we do and why we do it, and to gain a better understanding of the concerns of ordinary American citizens who have deep ties to their countries of origin. The forum reflects the realization that government can't do it all. [The GDF in 2011] was a first attempt for State to be facilitator with the diaspora, to be partners.⁸⁵

This explanation of the GDF yields several insights. It reflects government's limited capacity to fulfill the demand for international partnerships and investment in developing countries. It emphasizes the need to support each other's interests out of mutual interest, respect, and commitment, i.e., collaboratively. 'Without getting in the way' of the diaspora organizations, the GDF is an example of the facilitative, brokering role of government.⁸⁶

Program Issues

1. Digital Social Networking and New Media

The last five rows of the table comprise the majority of the themes in the program issues category. Along with the three other program issue themes discussed above, these last five reflect interviewees' and meeting participants' perspectives on public diplomacy and development programs for Lebanon based on direct participation in or other working

83 See, e.g., Joseph R. Duffey, 'Town Hall Meeting - Definitions of "Public Diplomacy," Foreign Affairs Agencies Reorganization, (U.S. Information Agency, U. S. Department of State, 1997, April 29), at <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/usiahome/USIA-S~1/PUBLIC.HTM>, accessed 13 July 2012; 'The Future of Public Diplomacy is Still Uncertain', *The Layalina Review*, Vol. V, No. 2 (2009, January 2-15), at http://www.layalina.tv/Publications/Review/PR_V.2/article1.html, citing Adam Kuchner, 'How to Sell America', *The Daily Beast*, Newsweek, (2009, January 2), at <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2009/01/03/how-to-sell-america.html>, accessed 19 September 2012.

84 The background on the GDF in this section is drawn from an interview with an NEA/PPD Public Affairs Specialist.

85 Quotation from an interview with an NEA/PPD Public Affairs Specialist.

86 E.g., King and Stivers (1998); Denhardt and Denhardt (2007).



knowledge about them. DOS and USAID welcome participation of eligible Lebanese Americans, Arab Americans, and other ethnically diverse Americans. They can be hosted in Lebanon or be hosts to Lebanese participants in the U.S.

The interview questions touching on the role of digital and social networking tools in cross-national public diplomacy and international development programming drew frequent, consistent responses across categories and age groups, including the diaspora interviewees. Interviewees were aware that social networking tools are integrated into public diplomacy and development programs and their administration. Some interviewees were cautionary about how much the U.S. government should rely on new media to conduct programs. One diaspora leader acknowledged the facilitative role of social media in the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere, saying that they are 'hopeful' and 'a rejection of fatalism that's very different than what the region is used to.' However, the 'ability [of diplomats] to translate the virtual organizing, and make it real, takes direct engagement.'

The use of social media in public diplomacy and development programs is alluring because it is relatively inexpensive for the U.S. government and implementing organizations. U.S. practitioners interviewed and observed in meetings readily acknowledged that social media are an inadequate substitute for longer-term, face-to-face engagement generally. Social media may increase numbers of audience contacts in Lebanon and the U.S., but other policy messages, program topics, and presence of collaborative engagement underpinning the use of new media tools are critical for strengthening credibility. Moreover, in Lebanon and other developing countries, access to the Internet is neither reliable nor inexpensive.

2. Broadcasting and Internet News Platforms

U.S. government broadcasting, including companion websites, was another U.S. media product that drew a strong response from American interviewees of Middle Eastern descent. U.S.-funded Alhurra television network and Radio Sawa serve the broader Middle East. The clear consensus is that they are a waste of resources.⁸⁷ Diasporan interviewees cited two primary reasons: lack of credibility of the U.S. (or any government) as a news source; and, lack of purpose in a media-rich country like Lebanon. As one interviewee put it, 'I have never communicated with anyone who has watched or listened, and I haven't, either.' Alternatively, suggested two different interviewees, DOS could 'spend more time and funds on providing guest speakers to Al Arabiya and other media outlets,' and 'bring American networks or

87 In the current debate over updating the Smith-Mundt Act (the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948), the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors, as well as non-profit and private sector broadcasters, are indicating more interest in targeting diaspora communities. Americans of Lebanese and other heritage might become interested if they perceive that they are being instrumentalized as targets of propaganda. See Trent (2012), pp. 243-244.



American businesses in partnership with outlets in the region to help improve program quality, standards, and opportunities for excellence.⁸⁸

American business acumen and direct investment by U.S. corporations are of great relevance and interest to the Lebanese, as their country has a dynamic business sector that needs foreign direct investment. Prior research and the present study substantiate the effectiveness of pairing the Lebanese diaspora with Lebanese to improve international ties through joint business ventures.⁸⁹ Programming by DOS, USAID, and other federal agencies increasingly pursues those themes in Lebanon among as much of the public who can be reached within the constraints of U.S. counterterrorism regulations. Diasporans are engaged by DOS to participate in these programs and overall the interviewees praised them. At the same time, as one retired U.S. diplomat noted in an interview, programs should reflect the diversity of U.S. society.

Alongside the emphasis on business-related programs, Embassy Beirut maintains a large public diplomacy section that houses: support to the press and media; resources on U.S. society, history, education, and culture; and educational and cultural exchange programs.⁹⁰ The educational exchange programs range in focus from English language study and teacher training, civic education, conflict mitigation, leadership, democratic-institution building, to information technology and journalism. The Middle East Partnership Initiative is a regional DOS program housed within NEA. In less than a decade, the program has sponsored over 300 Lebanese from the spheres of civil society, education, and government. Its mission is to increase empowerment of citizens throughout the broader Middle East (except Iran) through assistance to local civil society organizations.⁹¹ This regional program and the Lebanon-specific programs include support for women to develop small businesses and participate in local government, also dovetailing with building civil society and business leadership in the country.

3. Cultural Diplomacy

Overall, the aforementioned activities foster intercultural understanding and 'soft' skill building, although they are not primarily focused on cultural diplomacy. While U.S. public diplomacy's focus on business, the media, youth, women, English language, government and civil society, and information technology has intensified, cultural programming has been reshaped. As Lebanese civil society has developed, so too have privately-funded cultural initiatives. A variety of programs offered to Lebanese in the performing and material arts and culture respond to these changing needs.⁹² The programs still seek to explain American

88 Trent (2012), p. 232.

89 E.g., Marinova (2010); Trent (2010); Trent (2012).

90 See online at <http://lebanon.usembassy.gov/publicdiplomacy.html>, accessed 17 September 2012.

91 See online at <http://mepi.state.gov/about-faq.html#a3>, accessed 17 September 2012.

92 See online at <http://lebanon.usembassy.gov/cultural-programs.html>, accessed 17 September 2012.



culture through short-term exchanges of Lebanese and American experts in filmmaking, dance, music, language, arts, and arts management. However, the travel and training opportunities focus on young adult Lebanese, similar to other public diplomacy opportunities. The U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, a competitive direct grant program that began in 2000, is also very popular in Lebanon.⁹³ In promoting Lebanese cultural heritage, the fund seeks cost-sharing of projects involving civil society institutions.

Among the Lebanese American and other Arab American interviewees who specialize in Middle Eastern and Arab American arts and culture, two main perspectives emerged on U.S. exchanges in culture.⁹⁴ One view was that strengthening U.S. credibility and increasing relationships between the U.S. and Lebanon fits well with cultural exchanges because 'all people love art and culture, they are unthreatening, and people can enjoy each other and break a lot of barriers.' The other perspective is that governments should not be funding Lebanese arts and culture. The Lebanese should support the arts more in their country. This second perspective takes into account the more inclusive cultural diplomacy outreach in Lebanon of many European and Asian embassies that do not restrict engagement with Hizbullah-affiliated Lebanese. The sense of the diasporan interviewees is that the breadth and depth of cultural diplomacy in Lebanon could be enhanced by more inclusive engagement with the diverse communities in Lebanon and the diaspora across political and sectarian divides.

4. Trans-sectarianism

Calls for programming and policy that is transnational as well as trans- or cross-sectarian were heard in the discourse of interviewees and meeting participants, regardless of their religious, political, organizational, or national identity. These narratives converged into the theme of a trans-sectarian approach to domestic outreach and public diplomacy/development programs.⁹⁵ U.S. policy and programs encourage dialogue and collaboration across sect and political party, yet the FTO designation of Hizbullah excludes much of the Shi'i sect and their largest party. Discussion of sectarian political interests is de-emphasized in the name of national unity, yet, practically, perceived inequities across the sectarian-based parties are the essence of Lebanon's discord.

Interviews with many diasporans in the U.S. and Lebanese in Beirut delved into the tension between U.S. support of religious diversity, Lebanese national unity, and the Hizbullah FTO designation. During an interview, a Lebanese American Fulbright⁹⁶ lecturer discussed the experience of functioning on Lebanese college campuses and in larger Lebanese society, where political dialogue of a sectarian nature is circumscribed, and admiring U.S. programs

93 See online at http://exchanges.state.gov/media/office-of-policy-and-evaluation/chc/pdfs/afcp2008annual_report_final.pdf, accessed 17 September 2012.

94 Trent (2012), pp. 228-229.

95 Trent (2012).

96 The Fulbright senior scholar and student fellowships are the flagship DOS academic exchange programs.



that support various institutions there. However, the lecturer expressed concern about the emphasis of the programs, along with local campus regulations and other laws, to 'de-politicize' self-expression:

The question for me: is there a political basis for sectarian interests? Now, the sectarian system is a total nightmare. It's dysfunctional and everything. And many of the groups that I've spoken to for my own research have been interested in creating common ground, and finding issues that don't have a sectarian nature to them, that are easy to bridge, like in the environment, and health, and education. They try and create these issues, and the U.S. seems very keen on funding these groups, building up civil society that is non-sectarian, and de-confessionalized. They talk about their efforts as being de-politicized; we want to de-politicize. Keep the politics out, keep the sectarianism out. But there is a politics to the non-political.

Perhaps the approach of de-confessionalizing and de-politicizing public speech makes sense in a country that has remained steeped in sectarian conflict ever since the end of the civil war. What this interviewee, and the discourse of others, suggests, though, is that any approach for encouraging national unity should account for all the Lebanese sects. The U.S. government's relations with Lebanon overall are not de-politicized or non-sectarian, nor could they be, because of the legitimacy of all 18 religious confessions and their protection by the constitution. However, a trans-sectarian approach to U.S. engagement would emphasize the need to move to a new way of more open and expansive engaging with all the sects across civil society.⁹⁷ It would create space in the U.S. policy and program networks for all sectarian organizations, both to air their grievances and promote platforms for addressing them.

A first step in a trans-sectarian diplomatic approach would be to engage with the diasporan leaders who understand the context in which Hizbullah has risen to power and are in contact with Lebanese nationals living in Lebanon and sympathizing with Hizbullah. These diasporan leaders would need assurance from DOS that this kind of engagement would not place them in jeopardy vis a vis U.S. counterterrorism regulations. Along with engaging them, DOS would engage diasporan leaders who do not necessarily favor engagement with Hizbullah and are in contact with like-minded Lebanese nationals in Lebanon. A second step would be to work with diaspora interlocutors and allied governments to open dialogue with Hizbullah members of parliament through these intermediaries.⁹⁸ A third step would be to coordinate across U.S. government agencies in the homeland security area to consider permitting limited, gradual engagement and material support to Lebanese civil society organizations, e.g., schools and hospitals, that are affiliated with Hizbullah.

97 Trent (2012).

98 Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson, 'The Hezbollah Problem', *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, Summer, No. 17 (2010), at <http://www.democracyjournal.org/17/6752.php?page=all>, accessed 19 September 2012.



An additional reason to consider a trans-sectarian approach for engaging with the Lebanese American diaspora and with Lebanese nationals is the current civil war in Syria. The sectarian strife there has spilled into Lebanon because of longstanding ties among Hizbullah, Syria, and Iran. Some Arab governments around the region are supporting rebel Syrian forces; these and non-state, external support to the rebel fighters are inciting isolated but concerning incidents of unrest in Lebanon. These incidents reflect Sunni-Shi'i-Christian divides as well as conflict over pan-Arab nationalism. A more inclusive U.S. approach to engagement with the Lebanese and the diaspora could provide venues to draw the policy and program networks of diplomacy toward Lebanon and Syria together. Trans-sectarian engagement is more adaptable to the porous, vulnerable borders of Lebanon and Syria, e.g., negotiating with stakeholders, providing refugees humanitarian assistance, protecting Lebanese civilians in northern Lebanon, communicating accurate and updated information to citizens, keeping Syrian troops within their borders. By drawing more key stakeholders together, the U.S., European, and Arab governments might have more leverage in negotiating an end to the Syrian war.⁹⁹

5. Program Evaluation

The last of the themes in the table is program evaluation. DOS employs internal and external program evaluation methods and also conducts public opinion surveys to monitor the U.S. image abroad and reaction to U.S. foreign policy. Measurement and evaluation of short- and long-term U.S. public diplomacy program results were challenges for the U.S. Information Agency that continue in information, educational, and cultural programming at DOS. The Congress and DOS want results of U.S. taxpayer expenditures to be quantified, and credibility and mutual understanding are difficult to measure statistically. For example, while public opinion polling methods in the broader Middle East have improved, they are inadequate for measuring the 'soft' cultural and relational dimensions of the diverse menu of public diplomacy and related programs. These include: online social networking and message-oriented information programs; grade school to post-graduate educational programs; cultural programs, professional exchanges, sports diplomacy, and broadcasting; democratic institution-building; military training; and development assistance. In addition, dozens of other federal agencies sponsor Lebanese components of regional and global international visitor and training programs evaluated outside of DOS. Finally, the U.S. government contributes funds for Lebanese participation, or support to Lebanon, through the United Nations and a variety of other international organizations.

Five Lebanese American interviewees with direct program experience hosting and speaking before Lebanese participants in public diplomacy and related programs shared their perspectives on evaluation. The one who had volunteered the most time to study policy and programs and lobby DOS and Congress expressed a general concern about DOS-wide

⁹⁹ A special envoy could be established to explore a trans-sectarian approach (see recommendation 2 on pp. 46).



evaluation. Despite detailed knowledge about public diplomacy, USAID, broadcasting, defense, and commercial programs for Lebanon, this interviewee had not been able to learn much about how they are evaluated. The interviewee also wanted to know how Lebanese view the programs, further stating 'I would like to see Lebanese Americans directly advising, informing, and promoting, as well as evaluating, policy and programs. I am not sure about the accuracy of polls that are conducted.' The interviewee acknowledged that 'two goals of U.S. public diplomacy in Lebanon are to involve Lebanese Americans more and to evaluate the programs in more ways than just polling Lebanese.'

Another of the five Lebanese American interviewees, whose career has included civil society organizing for U.S. relations in the Middle East, focused on the Middle East Partnership Initiative. This diaspora civil society leader honed in on this initiative because it has had a high profile during the post-9/11 'global war on terror.' This interviewee called for an independent citizens review board to evaluate the program, because its fast start-up, separate administrative structure, large annual budgets, and appearance of imposing U.S.-style democracy in the region have generated controversy. Among the program dimensions to evaluate are how the scores of program alumni are parlaying their program experiences into their own and their organizations' capacities, and whether they have had an impact on freedom and democracy in Lebanon.¹⁰⁰

Between 2005 and 2007, another of this group of interviewees participated in DOS-organized Internet chats on Muslim integration into American life for European audiences. This interviewee had also been sent to Kuwait and Qatar to speak about Arab American political participation. An attorney and political scientist, the interviewee related that DOS program staff encouraged the interviewee to speak freely during those programs. The interviewee continued that Kuwaiti and Qatari interlocutors liked how the program went. As for interaction with DOS, the quality of communication with program staff was much better than with U.S. law enforcement agencies, and it was an excellent experience working with them. However, the interviewee related, DOS staff should not 'vet people using Google [the Internet search browser].' Finding 'one negative thing on me by a right-wing lawyer, political activist, and blogger, State backed down and didn't call on me again.'¹⁰¹

The interviewee was asked, as a U.S. taxpayer, if these are worthwhile programs. The reply:

I am a U.S. citizen. I think these are cheap, good programs. It would be good if more people on Capitol Hill understood the importance of these programs. But these programs won't be credible among Lebanese and Arab Americans or Arabs abroad if an extreme blogger is driving their decisions.¹⁰²

100 E.g., see online, <http://mepi.state.gov/mh511c.html>, accessed 17 September 2012.

101 Trent (2012), p. 216.

102 Trent (2012), p. 216.



The foregoing analysis shows how experienced, informed Lebanese American and Arab American stakeholders without governmental decision making power make sense of a variety of direct experiences and governmental challenges in U.S. diplomacy toward Lebanon. Some warn against favoring social networking tools over personal, direct engagement processes. Others are concerned about de-emphasizing cultural diplomacy. Discouraging political debate about non-sectarianism in programmatic themes and participation is another concern. Counterterrorism regulations seem to constrain U.S. outreach in Lebanon. Implementing them unintentionally excludes groups who could benefit from the opportunities. The sense of this group of interviewees is that trade, education, civil society, and other initiatives need to engage all of Lebanon and the diaspora in the full cycle of policies and the programs that support them.



Recommendations for Practice and Policy

The organization, protocol, policy issues, relationship qualities, and program issues of the U.S. government's engagement with Americans of Lebanese descent provide several insights for practicing diplomacy and making policy. Foremost, the issues of a lack of Arab-Israeli peace and a lack of inclusive engagement with all Lebanese publics limit collaborative engagement among DOS, USAID, and Americans of Lebanese descent. The ongoing conflict over Palestinian statehood is intertwined with Lebanon's sectarian conflict, Sunni-Shi'i-Christian conflict across the broader Middle East, the nature and strength of Hizbullah, and U.S. domestic political intransigence over collective security for the U.S., Israel, Lebanon, and the region. These policy issues, the qualities of diaspora-government relations, and program administration all interact. Diaspora diplomacy is based on mutual and divergent interests and perceived by diasporan interviewees as limited by their lack of access to policy makers. More access, through increased government engagement, would foster diaspora-oriented perspective on policy-making toward Lebanon and the region and domestically, particularly if the engagement were deliberative and inclusive of all the sects, i.e., trans-sectarian. Additionally, U.S. diplomacy with the Lebanese American diaspora would benefit from increasing the citizen engagement qualities of mutual respect, formal cross-sector networking, and collaboration on mutually agreeable policies and programs to build trust necessary for deliberating divergent interests. More high-context interaction by executive officials and Congressional committee staff with Lebanese Americans, as there has been on international trade and development, would be beneficial.

The light touch of governing through third-party implementing organizations, effective in public diplomacy and development (e.g., the IdEA, DNA, and GDF initiatives of DOS and USAID) could be extended more widely to Lebanese and Arab American organizations. Credibility in diplomacy comes from delivering on rhetorical promises. The evidence of this study suggests that Lebanese American diasporan experience engaging in public diplomacy and development programs to benefit Lebanon can be expanded. Their insights, combined with the experience of governmental and non-governmental implementers, can improve the use of digital social networking and other new media, extend the outreach efforts of broadcasting and cultural diplomacy, and sharpen program evaluation methods and results. Coupling deliberative government-diasporan engagement on policy with collaborative engagement in administering public diplomacy and development programs increases the possibility of strengthening the credibility of U.S. diplomacy toward Lebanon.

Following are specific recommendations for improving U.S.-Lebanon relations. All but the last one originate with Lebanese American interviewees. Practitioners engaging with diasporas of other countries, however, may also find some dimensions of the recommendations to be informative. The value of the recommendations depends on at least three factors: 1) the sociopolitical characteristics of the diaspora in question; 2) the nature of



bilateral relations between the relevant sending and receiving countries; and 3) and the types of programs currently being implemented or considered.

1. Avoid sectarian frames for information and exchange programs. They neglect the diversity of Lebanese society and the demand, especially among Lebanese youth, for national unity-oriented discourse and action.
2. Recruit a diplomatic envoy for Lebanon and the broader Middle East who has regional experience, credibility, and trans-sectarian appeal across the sects in the region and the U.S. Such an envoy 'would have a better chance of explaining U.S. policies to Lebanese publics.' The envoy's success would be enhanced if granted flexibility to organize dialogues including all political parties of Lebanon and diaspora civil society leaders of Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian, pan-Arab, and Israeli descent. (See footnote 99.)
3. Expand programming to strengthen relationships between Lebanese and Americans at the policy-making level. The House Democracy Partnership (see footnote 81) conducts peer-to-peer exchanges between the U.S. House of Representatives and fifteen other countries' legislatures, including Lebanon's National Assembly.
4. Encourage enterprise funds for Lebanon. Enterprise funds promote loans to local private sector firms, where capital for start-up businesses is scarce but business culture and acumen are strong. The problem that enterprise funds would avoid is USAID contracts conditioned on a high percentage of business going to U.S.-based firms and non-profits. To provide more benefit to Lebanon, stakeholders should study how to make enterprise funds work and indirectly support democracy-building in the process.
5. Increase efforts to cultivate cross-sector collaborative engagement through DOS' IdEA and USAID's DNA (see footnotes 8 and 56, respectively). Few Lebanese American civil society leaders interviewed in 2011 had heard of these initiatives, including those who engage regularly with officials from those agencies. Several were interested in learning more about the potential to create alliances, public-private sector partnerships, and advocate for policy change.



Conclusion

The organizational sensemaking data of this study suggest that engagement with a diaspora has advantages to government at times of mutual interest and conflict. In the case of U.S. diplomatic relations with Lebanon, increased collaboration with Lebanese Americans could provide salient context for making and implementing credible policy on controversial topics. The brittle sectarian politics of Lebanon, the U.S.-Lebanon relationship, the lack of Arab-Israeli peace, and broader regional politics are part of the Lebanese American experience. Governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in policy and program networks recognize the experience and skills of this diaspora. DOS and USAID have recently stepped-up engagement efforts with Lebanese Americans, but engaging through more social-relational approaches would foster collaboration.

The mutual and divergent interests of U.S.-Lebanon relations are unique, but this case has implications for U.S. relations among other countries, whether or not they harbor U.S.-designated FTOs with non-state militias. Forty million people, either foreign-born or naturalized U.S. citizens, were living in the U.S. in 2010.¹⁰³ They are from over 130 countries.¹⁰⁴ These immigrants are directly implicated in U.S. diaspora diplomacy because of ties to their countries of origin and interest in U.S. policy abroad. The present study also has implications for governments of other diaspora 'destination' countries where policies and cross-national public diplomacy and development programs are disputed. Engagement with diasporas in their destination countries, and in programs for their countries of origin, offers human resources worthy of destination governments' consideration.

Among the basic conditions for conducting collaborative diaspora diplomacy is that policy makers and diplomats, plus program implementers on contract with government, listen and understand how national interests diverge and converge with interests of diaspora organizations across their diverse communities. In the present case, historical mistrust and rivalry between the fragmented diaspora organizations and other interest groups result in inter-organizational conflict around the issues of: funding the Lebanese Armed Forces and Special Tribunal for Lebanon, the status of Hizbullah; the Arab-Israeli conflict; and the

103 Nathan P. Walters and Edward N. Trevelyan, 'The Newly Arrived Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 2010', *American Community Survey Briefs* (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011, November), at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acsbr10-16.pdf>, 19 September 2012, p. 1, cited in Trent (2012), p. 309.

104 U.S. Census Bureau, *2006-2010 American Community Survey One-Year Estimates, Detailed Tables*, see online at <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>, accessed 22 January 2012.



impact of Syria's civil war on Lebanon. Mutual interests, access to government officials, and broadly shared perspective are necessary but not sufficient conditions for collaborative government-diaspora engagement. Diplomats also need to follow protocol and have sufficient time in their schedules for engaging with private citizens and organizations. They and their knowledgeable local staff must carefully vet diaspora sources of project proposals and policy critiques. This vetting process should involve their colleagues throughout sections of embassies and ministries, for coordination of open and closed diplomacy. Collaborative statecraft with diasporas is further enhanced when diplomats and their staffs are seasoned enough to, as one diplomat put it, be their 'own networkers' and 'drum up business' for connections between Americans and Lebanese.

Under these conditions, engaging with diaspora networks can increase information-sharing, contextualize policy making, and inform diplomatic messaging and interactive programming. The national security implications of Palestine and Hizbullah limit what open diplomatic engagement can accomplish to strengthen bilateral and people-to-people relationships between the U.S. and Lebanon. However, sensemaking by key stakeholders suggests that policy and programs can be innovated deliberately and inclusively to strengthen shared interests and build trust for confronting divergent interests. From policy deliberation to the cross-national exchanges of the Middle East Partnership Initiative, to public briefings including the ones on racial profiling and Arab public opinion analyzed above, there are compelling reasons for collaborative engagement between governments and their diaspora communities. Scholars can collaborate more with diplomatic practitioners, too, by further exploring how to apply the information, relational, and other collaborative approaches to diaspora diplomacy.

Collaborative diaspora diplomacy is a way to increase mutual respect, commitment, and trust across government, civil society, and the private sector. Secretary Clinton enacted this relational process at the 2012 GDF with the sentiment, 'democracy is changing the way people relate to one another, work with one another, listen to one another.'¹⁰⁵ Relating in this constructive way to the growing number of diaspora organizations seeking change strengthens the credibility of policies and public diplomacy and development programs toward their countries of origin as much as it strengthens democratic governance at home.

105 See footnote 2.



American Diaspora Diplomacy

U.S. Foreign Policy and Lebanese Americans

Governments increasingly acknowledge that engagement with diaspora communities in their destination countries, and in programs for their countries of origin, is an important diplomatic tool. It is a way to increase mutual respect, commitment, and trust across government, civil society, and the private sector. Engaging with diaspora networks can increase information-sharing, contextualize policy making, and inform diplomatic messaging and interactive programming. This case study of U.S. government diaspora diplomacy with Lebanese Americans shows the challenges of actively engaging a diaspora community. It finds that a basic condition for conducting collaborative diaspora diplomacy is that policy makers, diplomats, and program implementers, listen and understand how national interests diverge and converge with interests of diaspora organizations. When implemented well, diaspora diplomacy strengthens the credibility of policies and public diplomacy and development programs toward diasporas' countries of origin as much as it strengthens democratic governance at home.

About the author

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Colophon

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