

10-3-2003

## Counteracting Anti-United States Government Images in the Muslim World

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### Recommended Citation

Editor, IBPP (2003) "Counteracting Anti-United States Government Images in the Muslim World," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 15 : Iss. 6 , Article 3.  
Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol15/iss6/3>

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Title: Counteracting Anti-United States Government Images in the Muslim World

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Volume: 15

Issue: 6

Date: 2003-10-03

Keywords: Anti-American Image, Muslim World, Social Cognition

**Abstract:** The Muslim World is both a social construct and a phenomenological concept—without geographical boundaries. But United States Government (USG) efforts to counteract USG negative images perceived by denizens of the Muslim World seem to be addressing the space-time of geography but not the social and phenomenological elements from which these images spring.

The Muslim World is both a social construct and a phenomenological concept—without geographical boundaries. But United States Government (USG) efforts to counteract USG negative images perceived by denizens of the Muslim World seem to be addressing the space-time of geography but not the social and phenomenological elements from which these images spring.

Specifically, USG public diplomacy authorities seem to be choosing populations deemed Islamic and transmitting messages that—to the authorities—have pro-USG content through having pro-Islamic content. Yet the content may not be perceived as pro-USG, while and the content as pro-Islamic may be perceived but not believed by the Muslim World recipient.

The social cognition problem is that what truly fuels anti-USG images—e.g., deep discontent with USG policies towards the Palestinian National Authority and Israel, towards Iraq and Afghanistan, towards corrupt autocratic Mideast governments, towards the world as symbolic purveyor of ideological and cultural elements that concurrently attract and repel, taint and tantalize, facilitate and impede—are largely unaddressed. So is the concurrent and unconscious psychological dynamic of projection that continuously serves up the sole superpower as a target on which one can expel one's repellent features. And so is the concurrent idealization of the self as the antithesis of the evil other.

In fact, such USG policies and related projection and idealization may prevent the significant attenuation of anti-USG images even with the greatest of communications spins. It may turn out that living with current policies and images or not living with them are the only options. (See Beck, A. T. (2003). Prisoners of hate. *Behaviour Research & Therapy*, 40, 209-216; Castano, E., Sacchi, S., & Gries, P. H. (2003). The perception of the other in international relations: Evidence for the polarizing effect of entitativity. *Political Psychology*, 24, 449-468; Kaplowitz, N. (1990). National self-images, perception of enemies, and conflict strategies: Psychopolitical dimensions of international relations. *Political Psychology*, 11, 39-82; Silverstein, B., & Holt, R. R. (1989). Research on enemy images: Present status and future prospects. *Journal of Social Issues*, 45, 159-175.) (Keywords: Anti-American Image, Muslim World, Social Cognition.)