Digital Diplomacy & Social Capital:

Analysing Relational Components of Trust in US & Israeli Online Social Networks

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Abstract

For diplomatic relations, the ability to influence through attraction, or soft power, rather than hard power is preferable in the interconnected 21st century global society. Although debate remains regarding the objectives of public diplomacy, the relational approach offers opportunities for reaching the goal of mutual understanding. The emergence of new public diplomacy and the relational approach coincided with extensive innovation in communication technologies. The digital arena became a possible place for outreach, interaction, and the generation of social capital. These limited studies into digital diplomacy initiatives have focused on quantitative measures and structural aspects. However, the mechanisms that provide for social capital development still require investigation. Therefore, questions remain about whether social capital is being generated through digital diplomacy, and if so, how? This research offers a framework for evaluating the development of trust and reciprocity, presumed prerequisites for social capital generation, through four components of relational interaction: access, openness, credibility, and commitment. This framework is then used to investigate the digital diplomacy initiatives of two specific cases—the US and Israel. Results suggest that digital diplomacy can generate social capital via a relational approach using communicative action. However, social capital is contextual and has both positive and negative implications for diplomatic relations.

Keywords: social media, social capital, digital diplomacy, networks, relational public diplomacy
Für Klaus Hagemann, MdB

Klaus ist ein wahrer Freund und Vorbild. Ein Mann von dem wir alle lernen können. Er hat immer ein offenes Ohr und setzt sich immer für jeden einzelnen Menschen ein. Einzigartig in Maß und Mut!
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Interestingly, my journey to complete this dissertation resembles the concepts discussed within, including the power of relationships, the intricacies of networks, and the delicacy of bonds. The experience has been truly rewarding with the resulting value greater than the sum of its parts. These pages of text are the physical, tangible products of the process. However, they hold hidden within them the intangible components of these efforts as well.

US Supreme Court Justice, Sandra Day O’Connor is credited with having said, “we don’t accomplish anything in this world alone ... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one’s life and all the weavings of individual threads form one to another that creates something.” I have always thought this to be true and, at least in completing this dissertation, I have found it undeniable. While I put great personal effort into this academic endeavour, I could never have been successful without all the people, opportunities, mistakes, and experiences along the way.

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In the end, I have gained not just a great deal of knowledge about the presented research topic and academic process generally, but most significantly about myself. I assume that this is the goal of the process and for this opportunity I am thankful.
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACPD</td>
<td>Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANT</td>
<td>Actor-Network Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFR</td>
<td>Council on Foreign Relations (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMC</td>
<td>Computer Mediated Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>Committee on Public Information (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDS</td>
<td>Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign (Palestinian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOT</td>
<td>Digital Outreach Team (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>Executive Order (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EOP</td>
<td>Executive Office of the President (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2G</td>
<td>Government-to-Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2P</td>
<td>Government-to-Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAO</td>
<td>Government Accountability Office (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPO</td>
<td>Government Press Office (Israel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWOT</td>
<td>Global War on Terror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIG</td>
<td>Office of Inspector General (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communications Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDF</td>
<td>Israel Defense Forces (Israel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIP</td>
<td>Bureau of International Information Programs (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JA</td>
<td>Jewish Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Israel)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPDDA</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs (Israel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defense (Israel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEA</td>
<td>Bureau of Near East Affairs (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NID</td>
<td>National Information Directorate (Israel)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSA</td>
<td>National Security Advisor (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSA/CSS</td>
<td>National Security Agency / Central Security Services (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Security Council (Israel)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Security Council (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODE</td>
<td>Office of Digital Engagement (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>P2P</td>
<td>Public-to-Public / Person-to-Person</td>
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<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Public Diplomacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>PD 2.0</td>
<td>Public Diplomacy 2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDD</td>
<td>Presidential Directive Document (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PMO</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office (Israel)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>QDDR</td>
<td>Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Report (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SM</td>
<td>Social Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMNZ</td>
<td>Social Media New Zealand (NZ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Short Message Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOT</td>
<td>Social Construction of Technology</td>
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<td>SST</td>
<td>Social Shaping of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>UGC</td>
<td>User Generated Content</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>USIA</td>
<td>United States Information Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOA</td>
<td>Voice of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>WWW</td>
<td>World Wide Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WZO</td>
<td>World Zionist Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALI</td>
<td>Young African Leaders Initiative (USA)</td>
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Part 1: Theoretical Foundation & Research Methodology

Innovations in information communication technology (ICT), most particularly the widespread use of the Internet across the globe, have tremendously influenced global society. Since the late 20th century, diplomatic scholars have been interested in the Internet due to the global mass communications the Internet facilitates. This mass communication created a “fundamental challenge to the traditional conduct of international relations” (Potter, 2002d, p. 3). However, the Internet is an aggregate of different components and mechanisms (Farrell, 2012, p. 36). This dissertation ‘unbundles’ the Internet to observe one particular subset—social media—and analyse the mechanisms that affect diplomatic practice. Many states now embrace social media as a way to engage with digital social networks. A greater understanding of the process, as well as an investigation into the assumptions of the benefits of social media interaction, is necessary for both the study and practice of diplomacy.

Social capital is defined in this research using descriptions from previous research on the topic, most predominantly Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) socially constructed perspective. However, the following research is not as pessimistic as Bourdieu regarding the use of social capital as an oppressive mechanism used by powerful to maintain position (Gauntlett, 2011; Jenkins, 2007). Thus, the definition used in this research describes social capital as a resource represented by the sum of reciprocity, trust, and information potential available through participation in social networks, which holds value in a specific contextual setting. In public diplomacy research, social capital, often regarded as a
benefit resulting from relationship building and collaboration, has become the focus of a great deal of research and many digital diplomacy initiatives. However, there are still relatively few case studies regarding digital diplomacy. The research that does exist is generally quantitative and structurally focused, leaving questions about qualitative issues of social capital and the mechanisms necessary for its generation. This dissertation aims to address the question of whether social capital is being generated through social media in digital diplomacy, and if so, then how?

The ‘broadening and deepening’ of the International Relations (IR) discipline in the three decades since the ‘cultural turn’ (Geertz, 1973; Jackson, 2008) began has had interesting ramifications for research and knowledge in the social sciences. As a mutation of the ‘linguistic turn’ precipitated by such scholars as Althusser, Derrida, and Lacan (Armstrong, 2001), the cultural turn has had consequences for diplomatic studies as well. This is connected to the “perceived elitism and ‘assumption of unchanging rationality’ at the heart of ‘traditional’ political and diplomatic history” (Burke, 2008; Jackson, 2008, p. 157). Still, the cultural turn was slow to influence diplomacy because diplomacy was regarded as a practice rather than a field of study.

The drive to develop a theory of diplomacy and public diplomacy has brought with it facets of the broader cultural turn in IR. The ‘relational turn’ (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Snow, 2008; Yun, 2012; Zaharna, 2010; Zaharna, Arsenault, & Fisher, 2013b) is a result of the movement towards developing a theory through the investigation, examination, and theorizing of diplomacy in the 21st century global society. This dissertation explores the relational aspects of public diplomacy in a digital context
and investigates if and how intersubjective constructions of social capital are possible and observable through digital diplomacy.

Public diplomacy is an exercise of power through a process of both generation and expenditure of different types of capital. Over time, the practice has evolved from a focus on hard power to one that has become more associated with public opinion, relationships, and the exercise of ‘soft power’. Diplomatic soft power has gained preference as the first, if not the preferred, avenue for mitigating conflicts and facilitating cooperation among states since the end of World War II. Although numerous armed conflicts erupted in the mid-20th Century, generally soft power diplomacy is exhausted before the implementation of hard power options. Public diplomacy’s reliance on opinion shaping, information dissemination, and communication with foreign publics exemplified the power that perception and opinion could have in reaching foreign policy goals.

As Nye (2004) stated, power is “the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants” (p. 2). Soft power is the “ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments” (p. x), which can be more or less effective depending on the social capital resources available to the actor. As stated, power is an inherent concern for public diplomacy, but power is a social construction that is contingent on socially constituted facets of international relations. Given the relevance of soft power and the influence of ideas, norms, and values in public diplomacy, this study highlights the importance of one type of capital—social capital.
Moreover, this trend in diplomatic studies began with consideration that culture, including ideas, norms and values, could serve “as a tool of state policy in the ideological battle for ‘hearts and minds’” (Jackson, 2008, p. 155). The attention to and maintenance of public diplomacy operations has always come in spurts, with the newest resurgence occurring since 9/11. However, the inability of public diplomacy to eliminate the possibility of such a brutal attack brought forth questions of approach. In the previous decade, globalization and interdependence created increased preference for diplomatic solutions to military action (Gomichon, 2013; Keohane & Nye, 1998). In addition, the emergence of ICTs offered new avenues for outreach, information dissemination and dialogue.

Social media, for example, have challenged traditional constructions of social interaction, network organization, politics and international relations including diplomacy (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002, p. 9). The practice of diplomacy has become ever more public as democracy has spread, and publics have demanded transparency and involvement in domestic and foreign affairs of the state. Bollier (2003) noted the changing diplomatic environment remarking:

There is a sense that the old rules do not apply anymore. This is a period of blurring borders, flattening hierarchies, and heightened ambiguity... Something is different: the emergence, significance and importance of the network structure within a world of complexity. The ‘life form’ and organizational structure that is most in evidence in this new world of ideas and media is the network—social networks, electronic networks, media networks, to name a few (p. vi).

In such an environment, the state is no longer ‘master at the gate,’ and social capital resources are both required and utilized in greater quantity. State actors need to be part of the discussion and build trust not just with foreign officials but
also with foreign citizens in order to acquire social capital resources. The ability of
the state to generate social capital relies on its capacity to engage networks and
build relationships, as social capital is not a tangible product, but the result of a
process. This dissertation, proposes the process of developing trust and reciprocity
in digital diplomacy, which this thesis claims is a prerequisite for social capital
generation, involves fulfilling four components of relational interaction: access,
openness, commitment, and credibility.

Since the end of the Cold War the conditions for generating social capital and
therefore for projecting soft power have been transformed (Nye, 2004, p. 105). In
the 21st Century, international relations are a contest about meaning, without
which power is potentially insignificant (Szondi, 2008, p. 8). Therefore, efforts
directed towards shaping meaning, discourse, and public opinion have a high
priority. Previously, mass media played a crucial role in framing foreign policy
public opinion. Political leaders, publics (both foreign and domestic), and media
worked in an interdependent manner creating a dominant frame that influenced
imagery and discourse, thus it can be said that media influenced the relationship
between public opinion and foreign policy deeply (Baum & Potter, 2008, p. 40). In
this model, the public was a consumer of information.

The new digital and networked "global communications era" (Zaharna, 2007, p.
216) has altered this relationship. Now publics are both consumers and producers
influenced by and influencing public opinion, demanding a voice in policy, and
creating new distinctions in the traditional producer-consumer dichotomies
(Hershkovitz, 2012, p. 513; Ritzer, Dean, & Jurgenson, 2012; Ritzer & Jurgenson,
The new situation created by greater public demand, influence, and inclusion has moved public diplomacy to the new public diplomacy (Zaharna, 2010, p. 88) that requires reflection on the part of the state regarding how to maintain relevance and influence.

Previously public diplomacy used a linear and asymmetrical broadcast communication—a push model. However, the ‘information revolution’ and emerging global ‘noosphere’ increasingly demonstrated a move towards ‘noopolitik’ in which knowledge is power (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 1999). Arquilla and Ronfeldt (1999) defined noopolitik as “an approach to statecraft, to be undertaken as much by non-state as by state actors, that emphasizes the role of soft power in expressing ideas, values, norms, and ethics through all manner of media” (p. 29). This model highlights the primacy of networks and, as van Dijk (2006) noted, the ability of networks to flatten hierarchies and initiate cooperation and collaboration (pp. 95–96). Public diplomacy responded to the development of ‘network society’ and the use of social media through the evolution of various approaches. These approaches fostered dialogue and symmetry to build mutually beneficial relationships, such as the relational model (Zaharna, 2007). Moreover, the focus on networks brought attention to the processes that were now conceivable in the new global communications era.

Affecting public opinion to sway social norms are paramount concerns for the state (Szondi, 2008). Social media, although not a replacement for traditional media, has advantages within and across societies demanding greater transparency and inclusion. These benefits are social media’s unique characteristics that allow for
convergence of communication mediums, direct reach to publics, and ability to facilitate engagement across diverse networks in time and space. As such, social media are becoming an important factor in diplomatic practice. Indeed, as Seib (2010) stated, “digital media constitute some of the most important tools of modern diplomacy and also themselves become, collectively, a diplomatic issue” (p. 3). It then follows that social media and digital social networks would become a topic of interest in diplomatic studies.

Earlier studies regarding the social consequences of ICTs have considered issues surrounding speed and forms of interaction, reach of information dissemination, and the effects on the formation and adaptation of norms and identities, but many blind spots remained (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002, p. 5). Since then research about the effects of Internet technologies on politics and international relations, such as website discussions boards, blogs, and mobile short message service (SMS) have focused on use in domestic uprisings and implementation by NGOs during international political action such as ‘cyber-protests’ or ‘smart-mobs’ (Rheingold, 2003) phenomena.

The earliest, successful example of the use of ICTs in a diplomatic manner was that of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)1 (Bollier, 2003, p. v). Non-state actors and activists have integrated social media into their organizing

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1 The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) proposed a multilateral treaty to ban the use of landmines. A grassroots campaign, the ICBL used online technologies to coordinate multiple international organizations into an effective network. The efforts led to more than 140 countries signing the Mine Ban Treaty.
strategies changing transnational activism in many ways (Tilly, 2005, pp. 156–157). In the past decade there are a number of cited examples and one of the first to organize using network structure use technology was the Zapatista ‘netwar’ in Mexico (Ronfeldt, Arquilla, Fuller, & Fuller, 1998). Other often cited examples include the Orange revolution in the Ukraine (Goldstein, 2007; Karatnycky, 2005; Seib, 2012, p. 145), the 2008 Obama campaign (D. Carr, 2008; Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; Harfoush, 2009; Lutz, 2009) and the Iranian ‘Twitter revolution’ in 2009 (Burns & Eltham, Ben, 2009; Mueller & van Huellen, 2012; Schleifer, 2009). These examples showed mixed results, but success depends on context of the specific public sphere in each country including “the position of the opposition, its impact on public discourse, and the presence of oppositional scenarios for the development of society” (Ociepka, 2012, p. 25). Nonetheless, the instances offered the state examples of how of digital social network engagement can influence public opinion and action, organization and relationship building.

Shaping meaning, agenda setting, and influencing public opinion was important in the past, but global societal changes and innovation in ICT has altered the dynamics of the communication landscape. Claims that technology will allow for the development of a global society are anything but new. Since the Industrial revolution, technology has brought about extreme and dramatic social and political change and optimists have extolled such consequences as the end of war and the creation of a ‘global village’ many times (Keohane & Nye, 1998). Likewise, the information revolution was heralded as a unique change bringing forth a network society (Castells, 1996). Almost as though it was a new society, detached from previous historical events the network society was celebrated for the potential
opportunities it offered for mutual exchange, understanding and sustainable peace (Shirky, 2011). It is fair to state that, in a broad manner, social media have played a part in altering the media landscape and the exchange of information globally. However, questions remain about the accuracy of these revolutionary claims, especially in diplomatic practice.

For public diplomacy, these innovations and the resulting social repercussions underpinned assumptions that social media could assist in generating social capital through digital diplomacy or Public Diplomacy 2.0 (PD 2.0). The assumptions include notions that (a) technology facilitates the formation of relationships around social networks and online communities; (b) diplomacy becomes dependent on UGC; and (c) information has a horizontal structure (Bastianello, 2014). Research has linked social media and social capital presenting possibilities for community development and trust building (Hampton & Wellman, 2003; Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2007; Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009), which have fuelled cyber-optimist claims about the democratizing and relationship building effects as well as the potential of social media for public diplomacy.

Generally, it is assumed that social capital is a positive for society by assisting with costs and providing efficiency in such areas as health and healthcare services, crime reduction, and economic productivity (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 1998). However, social capital can also produce negative effects, including exclusion, restrictions on individual freedoms, and downward levelling norms (Portes, 1998). The exploration of the link between social media and social capital in the context of public diplomacy is still at early stages. Until recently there
has been little empirical work completed on this subject for two reasons: the newness of the technology and rarity of relevant examples (Shirky, 2011). Therefore, a research on digital diplomacy and social capital offers numerous areas for investigation.

The lack of qualitative case studies examining the influence of digital diplomacy from a relational approach leaves a number of questions unanswered. Research that does exist has set a solid foundation for such inquiries, as these studies were exploratory in regards to social media capabilities of states, discussed audience and network structure. Furthermore, the studies that exist on digital diplomacy are largely quantitative (i.e., counting posts, friends, tweets, shares, etc.) and thus, a gap exists for qualitative assessments regarding the impact and benefits of digital diplomacy. These aforementioned studies have been important and relevant in offering insight about the structural aspects of social digital networks. These inquiries have established new questions about relational aspects of digital diplomacy engagement, such as social capital generation and the mechanisms involved in the process.

As states found themselves as one actor amongst many and realized they no longer were the gatekeepers, they needed to reaffirm legitimacy and credibility—they needed to become boundary spanners (Hocking, 2002). Across the globe, the civic and non-state use of social media and the power of digital social networks are ever more noticeable. As a matter of history, it is clear that officials accepted assumptions regarding social media's ability to assist in the generation of social capital through relationship building, trust and reciprocity, perceived as a positive
for diplomatic relations. This influenced decisions to engage in digital social networks via digital diplomacy. Still, our understanding of the effects of state engagement in digital social networks through social media is inadequate. This research aims to move beyond strict theoretical research and quantitative analysis to help address this gap.

Through a constructivist perspective and using a qualitative methodology, this dissertation aims to expand the understanding about social capital generation in the context of digital diplomacy. This explosion of interest and energy brings to the forefront questions about how social media and social network engagement affects the state’s capability to manage relationships and develop trust and obligations of reciprocity. Therefore, focusing on digital diplomacy I ask, is social capital being generated through social media in digital public diplomacy, and if so, then how?

**Outlining Key Assumptions & Objectives**

In an endeavour to contribute to diplomatic studies, this research addresses three specific gaps in the literature noted by academics in the field. These include empirical case studies that produce and integrate knowledge for future research (Brown, 2011b); further investigation into the use and effects of social media (B. Harris, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Ociepka, 2012); and the examination of new approaches (Gilboa, 2008; Hocking, 2005; Snow, 2008) including, for example, critical (Comor & Bean, 2012) and relational (Yun, 2012; Zaharna et al., 2013b) approaches. This research aims to offer some new insight across each of these areas.
Along with the aim of offering research that can help fill these gaps in diplomatic studies, I aim to offer insights for practitioners addressing if/how states can generate social capital through digital diplomacy. The research question carries with it a number of sub-questions: Can social media interaction generate social capital generally; is social media a power equalizer or at least power neutral? Moreover, is the goal of public or digital diplomacy to reach mutual understanding? Finally, do states wish to generate social capital; and is social capital universally positive for all involved actors, as often assumed?

I assume, given previous research addressed in the next chapter, that it is possible to generate social capital in digital social networks via social media interaction. In regards to diplomacy, the research recognizes that there is still a tension regarding the goals of public diplomacy. The debate, as identified by Mor (2014), is between public diplomacy as a means to reach mutual understanding (Tuch, 1990) or as a means of promoting national interests (Manheim, 1994) (p. 254). This research assumes that public diplomacy is a means of promoting national interests, by way of reaching mutual understanding.

In addition, societal changes have precipitated an evolution to a ‘public’ diplomacy in which public opinion is of great concern to states, especially democratic states. In the process, information dissemination, knowledge exchange, bi-directional discourse, and relationship building have become essential components. Thus, given these societal changes in which influence and ‘winning hearts and minds’ is an important component of state foreign policy I assume that states do indeed wish to generate social capital for and through diplomatic practice.
Finally, I recognize that generally the state has assumed that the generation of social capital is a positive and beneficial resource. In public diplomacy, social capital is a resource that is itself both an end goal and a resource that offers positive outcomes. However, this research assumes no predisposed positive or negative outcome. Instead, the research question assesses the possibility of social capital generation and assumes that the context of the relationship(s) and the way in which social capital is spent creates the outcome. Therefore, this research, does not assume that social capital is a universally positive concept—a suggestion that may spark future normative research in regards to diplomatic practice and social capital.

The background chapters on public diplomacy and social capital examine these terms and the aspects, processes and relations that together give each their meaning. On the issue of definitions, both public diplomacy and social capital have myriad different definitions and conceptualizations within and beyond their respective fields. While this dissertation does not aspire to investigate, construct or present a universal definition, I offer definitions to create an understanding regarding the meaning of these terms, as used throughout the research. These definitions, compiled from the public diplomacy and social capital literature, highlighted in the next chapter, are broad, but adequately precise to guide this research. Again, the objective of this research is to investigate assumptions regarding the use of social media in public diplomacy with a relational approach perspective. The aim is to critically examine if social media has led to the generation of social capital as is the assumption of cyber-optimists and the state generally and if so, how.
Thesis Outline

I divide the research into two parts: In the first part, Chapter 1 synthesizes the theoretical literature drawn from the multiple fields of study. This lays the foundation for the case studies by discussing the research regarding the relational approach in the context of digital diplomacy as well as theories of social capital and the influence of technological innovation. Likewise, I explore theories associated with social media and the cyber-optimist/cyber-pessimist debate. Chapter 2 offers a framework that outlines the theoretical components of trust and reciprocity that lead to social capital generation through relational public diplomacy approach. Finally, Chapter 3 describes the methodology and the methods used to collect and analyse information and outlines how I operationalise social capital to assess the material collected in the case studies. The second part of the thesis examines the two case studies: the US and Israel. Each of these case study chapters analyses public/digital diplomacy operations in the respective states. The concluding chapter, Chapter 6, summarizes the entire dissertation, re-capping results and discussing possible future research.
Chapter 1: Generating Social Capital via Relational Digital Diplomacy

This chapter reviews the literature regarding public diplomacy, social media, and social capital. The scope of this study is not to investigate if, why or how diplomatic practice in general has changed, but whether and how the incorporation of social media in public diplomacy has facilitated the production of social capital. As will be illustrated, public diplomacy has changed and states have found it necessary to adapt to the changing communications environment. More than ever public opinion is a key factor in formulating policy and forming diplomatic relationships and building trust. Increasingly, states have worked to innovate and update their public diplomacy operations. Interest in communication and engagement online has soared, but the question now is whether digital diplomacy engagement through social media in digital social networks generates social capital?

Communication aimed at foreign publics has been an essential government activity from the classical era, through to the Cold War, and into the 21st century. In the post-9/11 period, states have reaffirmed the place of government-to-people (G2P) or public diplomacy (as it is now known), as an integral part of international relations and security operations. The events of 9/11 launched a new chapter in the history of public diplomacy, beginning in the United States and spreading globally (Arsenault, 2013). This ‘new public diplomacy’ concentrated on influencing public opinion, transmitting information, and establishing relationships to engender trust through two-way dialogue and engagement (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Melissen, 2005b; Nye, 2010a; Pamment, 2013). Still, even in the initial post-9/11 environment, as in the past, governments used public diplomacy as a tool for combat.
With new actors relevant in diplomatic relations, trust was and is increasingly critical in projecting the norms, values, and ideas of the state. To develop trust the state looked for new approaches. Unlike previous perspectives, the relational approach, which evolved within this ‘new public diplomacy’ paradigm, is not a tool for combat to win the ‘hearts and minds’ in the usual sense. Instead, it places the worth of public diplomacy in the intersubjective process of building relationships, trust, and obligations of reciprocity, which can offer the state access to social capital resources (Arsenault, 2013; Zaharna, 2010; Zaharna et al., 2013b). This process is predicated on building trust through credibility, access, and transparency (or openness), as well as commitment through consistency, (Finel & Lord, 2000; Hocking, 2005, p. 39; Melissen, 2005a, p. 7; Mor, 2012, p. 394). Where public diplomacy creates such qualities within a relationship, it offers actors, including states, a potential cache of social capital that assists in reaching foreign policy goals through soft power.

In order to gain attention and trust, hold it, and then ultimately persuade others, one needs a reputation for providing trustworthy, accurate information (Mor, 2012, p. 393). To do this the state found optimism in a new approach, but the relational approach required new methods of operation. ICT innovation occurred in tandem with changes in the global political environment and public diplomacy. The ubiquitous advance and integration of social media consequently affected public diplomacy practices. Social media and the relational approach are seen as a way to reach new audiences and interact with greater public networks and influence public opinion in an on-going manner (Chavez & Hoewe, 2010; B. Harris, 2012; Hayden, 2012a; Ociepka, 2012, p. 26). Furthermore, the integration of social
media in context of the relational approach to public diplomacy is associated with access to the relationally embedded benefits of social capital.

The discussion in this chapter will focus on the theoretical underpinning of digital diplomacy and social media and its association with the generation of social capital. In addition, this chapter addresses the distinctions between technologically determinist approaches represented by the cyber-optimist/pessimist debate and Actor-Network Theory (ANT). This provides clarity on the perspective taken in this research concerning interactions of both human and non-human elements and the recursive nature of technology and society.

To examine the connections between social media and socially embedded resources available through network interaction and information or knowledge exchange I first offer background research. The following section briefly outlines the evolution of diplomatic practice from traditional diplomacy to new public diplomacy and the characteristics that differentiate the ‘new’ public diplomacy from previous variations. Research regarding societal changes in diplomacy as it has evolved towards a more public-focused, digital, and relational practice is presented. Second, I introduce research regarding the characteristics of social media and its ability to facilitate community, relationships, and network associations. This research illustrates the process of mutual reconstruction that has occurred between societal changes, public opinion, public diplomacy and technology.
1.1: The new public diplomacy and nuanced approaches

New public diplomacy, which includes ‘digital diplomacy’, is not a spontaneous formation, but reflects the changing norms of society in an evolutionary cycle. The continuous construction and reconstruction that occurs through the interaction of actants—human and non-human modifiers of actors through action—in society has made public diplomacy a crucial component of the diplomatic practice. Moreover, the following sections discuss the relational approach; demonstrate its appropriateness in digital diplomacy; and highlight the elevated position of ICTs, especially social media, and networks in the relational approach.

Developing methods to engage public opinion and build relationships through public diplomacy are important considerations for the state. Since the adoption of the Westphalian nation-state system, states have often relied on a diplomacy of hard power. This model is exemplified by employing coercion and the threat of military action. In contrast to secretive alliances and closed-door negotiations, a new appreciation for multilateral diplomacy and public diplomacy surfaced after World War I and II. “Power over opinion” (Carr, 1964) is as old as the practice of diplomacy and the state itself (Melissen, 2005a, pp. 3–4), but a new fascination with public diplomacy, information, and communication took hold after World War I. As global society changed due to the growth in number of democratic states, forces of globalization, and interdependence, public diplomacy gained prominence as an effective model for diplomatic practice.

While the term may be new, the goals and processes of public diplomacy are anything but original. As a practice in which information is used to influence
foreign publics for political benefit it is traceable to a period well before the creation of the Westphalian state system in 1648 (Cohen, 1999; Melissen, 2005b, p. 3). Within the Westphalian nation-state system, diplomatic practices began to formalize through the establishment of stable, sovereign states with an agreed national identity (Riordan, 2003, p. 1). The traditional diplomats’ fundamental role in state affairs was to serve as the single vehicle of communication between governments, encouraging the creation of a hermetically sealed world leaving foreign policy to the professionals (i.e. them) (Riordan, 2003, p. 1). This model of diplomacy and the diplomat’s role was relatively unchanged until the beginning of the 20th century as forces of globalization, innovation, and interdependence advanced.

The next sections reflect on the progression of diplomatic practice from the traditional model towards a more public focus. Next, the research moves to discuss the relational approach, a product of the turn to a more public diplomacy, which emphasises public opinion. Predicated not on influence through control, but on communication, relationship building, and cooperation, discussion progresses to the means by which this relational approach is operationalized. In a global interconnected world, ICTs and networks are these avenues.

1.1.1: Towards a ‘Public’ Diplomacy: The Impact of Public Opinion

The spread of democracy and globalization’s effects of increased interdependence, technological innovation, and the quantity of information available aided the emergent emphasis on public opinion and thus reconstructed the typography of diplomatic practice in the public. Public diplomacy is about influencing public
opinion, and influencing actions and behaviour of people and institutions (Fisher, 2010, p. 271). Done either through influencing outcomes or through influencing the construction of relationships, trust, and facilitating collective action, this is a division Fisher (2010) calls a key tension in public diplomacy research (p. 217). How public diplomacy is conducted matters, since it reflects and reconstructs the type and style of society within which we operate.

In public diplomacy, communication and interaction drives a continuous process of exchange, construction and reconstruction. Hocking (1999) identified that diplomacy goes through an evolutionary process and transcends the traditional dichotomies of the state-centric world (p. 21). This evolution has occurred continuously and diplomacy remains important to the global system, but includes new participants and is operational in new modes and approaches. In this complex situation (Hocking, 1996, p. 51) communication is both fundamental and vital to social cohesion and diplomacy—public diplomacy in particular (Archetti, 2010, p. 2; Deibert, 1998, p. 1). Therefore, factors affecting communication have an effect on diplomacy including how and why we communicate.

Public diplomacy, as evident in its name, focuses on the public. Influencing public opinion has been an important political goal even before the Westphalian nation-state system. One of the most effective public opinion influencing organizations is the Catholic Church. It was the Church that, in 1622, established perhaps the first public diplomacy organization—the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, or ‘Congregation (Office) for the Propaganda of Faith’—to blend the teaching of the Church and consolidate power (Black, 2001, pp. 121–2). Power and control would
remain the primary factor for diplomatic practice and the management of public opinion would be key.

World War I offered the first large-scale opportunity for state-based professional image campaign directed at mass foreign audiences and new technology such as the radio had a monumental impact both on military operations and influencing public opinion (Bernays, 2005; Melissen, 2005b, p. 4). However, at this time the word used to describe information operations and the management of public opinion was propaganda and it was the first time that mass media combined to facilitate large-scale propaganda (Bernays, 2005; Ellul, 1973, p. 232). The management of public opinion or “the manufacture of consent” (Lippmann, 1922, p. Chapter XV, Section 4) after WWI became highly intertwined with government actions and foreign policy. The term propaganda became an increasingly negative term associated with telling people what to think, close-mindedness, and processes focused on action and quick results that lend themselves to control and censorship (Martin, 1929, p. 145). This perception made propaganda undesirable given its unethical undertones and a new term with more principled goals would need to emerge to gain positive public support.

By the mid-1950’s, with the Cold War well underway, public opinion and diplomatic outreach to foreign publics was a core focus for the state—most prominently the US and USSR. At the core was the realization that mass media can contribute to the influence of public opinion and therefore the formulation and presentation of foreign policy (Rawnsley, 1999, pp. 147–8). Numerous researchers outlined the difference between unethical or immoral propaganda and general
relationship building and knowledge sharing as the difference between control of message and the supplanting of truth and the search for truth that occurs through interpersonal intersubjective communication (Black, 2001, p. 126). This would shape the movement from propaganda towards public diplomacy and the successive changes in public diplomacy practice ever since.

As time progressed, publics began demanding engagement and dialogue (Snow, 2008, p. 8) and wanted to be involved instead of simply being audiences that received messages. New diplomacy recognized the growing importance of people-to-people (P2P) dialogues in comparison to G2G dialogues (Lee, 1968). Still, states held tightly to time-honoured roles. The rise in influence of both non-state actors and public opinion continued and along with new technologies, meant that existing diplomatic institutions had to choose to reform and innovate or face irrelevance (Murray, 2012, p. 580). Since the end of the Cold War, the public opinion of both foreign and domestic publics has continued to grow increasingly important. This only reinforced that public diplomacy is no longer at the periphery of diplomatic work (Melissen, 2005b, pp. xix–xx). States slowly and somewhat reluctantly began to acknowledge that change would be required in order to maintain relevance and deliver on the goals and aims of foreign policy objectives.

Public opinion was not only still relevant it was the paramount concern. The issue was one of how to influence—control the message or move towards mutual dialogue and intersubjective, interpersonal communication and relationship building. Technology and diplomatic practice adapted along with society, constructing and reconstructing upon one another in a cyclical manner new
practices both enabling and constraining the actions of the other (Fisher, 2013, p. 209). Throughout history various innovations in technology have influenced changes in the scale, presence, and importance of official communication between governments and publics (Melissen, 2005b, p. 3). Like the printing press, telegraph, radio, and television, the Internet is a transformative force within society.

Each of these innovations has expanded the reach of information and the dissemination of ideas—and in so doing created new openings for debate, discussion, and societal change (Bijker & Law, 1992; Chadwick & Howard, 2010; Neuman, 2010a, 2010b; Winston, 1998). Changes in society have inspired public participation in foreign affairs, which has also resulted in the prominence and involvement of public opinion in foreign policy development (Snow, 2008, p. 6). As technology and society continued to evolve, a new public diplomacy emerged.

The new public diplomacy is an outgrowth of modern public diplomacy, which, as stated, is itself a relatively young practice. However, with each innovation, new innovations emerged faster and faster. As societal changes continued, a point was met at which they undermined many of the assumptions on which traditional diplomacy was grounded (Riordan, 2003, p. 3; van Ham, 2001, p. 4). Although there are many societal differences today in comparison to historical periods, there are also similarities. Furthermore, while globalization may produce a new contextual environment to which diplomacy must adapt, “diplomatic relations are not made redundant by globalization; they are a condition of it” (Cohen, 1999, pp. 14–16). Essentially, diplomacy is “neither about maintaining the status quo nor the
management of order as an end in itself”, but it is “the management of change, and
the maintenance by continual persuasion of order in the midst of change”
(Melissen, 1999, p. xix). Therefore, states needed to adapt in the 20th century by
being flexible in how they interact, engage, and cooperate with civil society.

Diplomacy works on the “boundary between cultures as an interpretive and
conjunctive mechanism” (Cohen, 1999, p. 18). Power is still a concern and the
dynamics of power are socially embedded, meaning that “social power derives
from the understanding that power is fluid and non-linear and that it moves
through relationships and communication” (van Ham, 2013, p. 18). This
conceptualization, as opposed to a realist model, recognizes that power is always
exercised in a “specific social situation” and is “inherently contextual” (van Ham,
2013, p. 18). Simply, the power of diplomacy rests in the context of the relations
between actors and the capital resources these relationships make available.

Innovation in technology, globalization, and interdependence in the international
system have impacted the conduct of international relations and the evolution of
diplomatic practice as diplomatic representation has reached a “new stage”
(Melissen, 2005b, p. xix). This new stage brought forth nuanced approaches. Still,
one of the on-going debates in public diplomacy scholarship and a reason for some
ambiguity regarding theoretical and practical issues is the fact that multiple
definitions exist.

Defining modern public diplomacy has been a difficult task given its evolutionary
nature and various conceptualizations. Edmund Gullion coined the term for
modern usage in 1965. An early brochure from the founding of the Edward R. Murrow Center, defined public diplomacy as a practice regarding influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policy, public diplomacy:

encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications (Cull, 2006).

Later, Tuch (1990) defined public diplomacy as the government’s “process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies” (p. 3). The definition used in this research is a composition of definitions offered in the new public diplomacy literature.

Beginning with Sharp's (2005) definition, public diplomacy is “the process by which direct relations are pursued with a country’s people to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented” (p. 106). Gregory’s (2008) definition expands the processes expressed by Sharp, stating that public diplomacy is “to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relationships; and influence opinions and actions to advance interests and values” (p. 276). Furthermore, Brown (2011) places public diplomacy as an “umbrella for a range of external influence activities that have different intellectual and institutional histories (for instance cultural relations, nation branding, international broadcasting) but which share intellectual and practical concerns” (p. 3). The conceptualizations imply relationships with civil society, the inclusion of norms and most importantly that public diplomacy relies on the “practical benefits
of truth and credibility,” which “separate it from covert instruments and deception techniques” (Gregory, 2008, p. 276). The resulting broad definition used for the purposes of this research is as follows:

Public diplomacy is a set of communication and interactive activities intended to influence external politics and perceptions, ideas, values, and attitudes of the audience.

The new public diplomacy moved away from “peddling information to foreigners” towards “engaging with foreign audiences” (Melissen, 2005a, p. 13). Moreover, this new variant recognized more fully the importance of networks and in so doing established a more broad-reaching collaborative model. This model incorporates non-state actors that pursue the “three essential aspects of diplomacy: representation, communication, and the reproduction of international society” (Jönsson & Hall, 2002). In addition, it has “a distinct identity; a capacity to mobilize persons and their resources for political purposes” (Ferguson & Mansbach, 1996). Thus, the new public diplomacy addressed issues surrounding the changing nature of public diplomacy.²

The ideal operationalization of new public diplomacy is “building relationships with civil society actors” as well as “facilitating networks between non-governmental parties at home and abroad” (Melissen, 2005a, p. 22). The importance of relationships and networks was set against traditional models of information disseminations and hierarchical structures that functioned on

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² The ideas intrinsic to the new public diplomacy reaches back to a 2002 report released by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) after the 9/11 attacks that assessed the state of US public diplomacy. The report stated that the US needed to take a revolutionary approach (Pamment, 2013, p. 8; Peterson et al., 2003).
centralized control. In the post 9/11 period, the benefits of learning, sharing, and building relationships across networks, the inclusion of non-state actors, and the effects of technological innovation lead to calls for a new public diplomacy, as Fitzpatrick (2011) explained:

Recognizing transformational changes in global society, public diplomacy scholars and practitioners and other informed observers have called for a new public diplomacy to meet the demands of a new time. As a result, nations must ‘engage with’ rather than ‘communicate to’ foreign publics in the pursuit of more collaborative relations (pp. 8–9).

These factors perpetuated the emergence of a new public diplomacy that could manage the changing position of the state in the international setting and facilitate the exchange of information and public demand for interaction. Moreover, new public diplomacy is operative in “complex policy networks” in which “image creation and management is a key resource” (Hocking, 2005, p. 41). Some within society regarded this change as contingent on the revolutionary capabilities of the Internet. Nonetheless, new public diplomacy brought new actors and actants—networks, technologies and approaches—into the diplomatic process.

The relational turn in public diplomacy is one such example of flexibility and adaptability in conceiving public diplomacy. The relational approach in public diplomacy is a return to earlier focuses in diplomatic relations with an emphasis on reciprocity, mutuality, and negotiation (Sharp, 2009; Zaharna, Arsenault, & Fisher, 2013a, pp. 2–3). The US adversarial model heavily influenced public diplomacy in the 20th century, with a cycle of initiating public diplomacy activities at the start of a conflict or war and ending as the conflict subsided (Brown, n.d.; Zaharna et al.,
2013a, p. 3). However, this model progressively lost effectiveness as a long-term strategy for diplomatic relations, especially after the 9/11 attacks in the US.

The relational approach pulls together aspects of different areas of research and synthesizes a nuanced approach to public diplomacy relations. The resulting approach offers a model for public diplomacy that emphasises the benefits of relational embedded social resources that are available through engaging in networks, exchanging information, participating in dialogue, facilitating collaboration, and building relationships. This model aims to establish relations of trust and obligations of reciprocity that generate social capital for the state. Public opinion is the overriding concentration, but not through exerting influence and control. Instead, the emphasis is on mutual exchange and co-creation of shared meanings and experiences to reach mutually beneficial goals. This section described development of new public diplomacy and laid the groundwork for examining the relational approach in public diplomacy. Next, this text outlines this approach and examines how it fulfils contemporary goals and objectives—by generating social capital needed to exercise soft power.

1.1.2: A digital relational approach

As societal changes altered both the actors in the diplomatic process as well as the role of the state in public diplomacy, academics have discussed nuanced approaches and methods in an effort to further theoretical development in the field. The previous sections presented an overview of this evolution towards a relational approach and made clear the link between networks, ICT innovation and the process of collaboration, which come together in the relational approach. This
section stresses the theoretical connections from other fields and practices in regards to the evolution of the relational approach in new public diplomacy. In addition, this section demonstrates the suitability of using the relational approach to assess digital diplomacy initiatives, such as the case studies provided in the second part of this dissertation.

President Wilson’s Committee on Public Information (CPI), known as the Creel Committee, during World War I included Bernays, Lippman, and Creel. They recognized that “with the printing press and the newspaper, the railroad, the telephone, telegraph, radio, and airplanes, ideas can be spread rapidly and even instantaneously” (Bernays, 2005, pp. 39–40). Bernays (2005) continued:

modern means of communication—the power afforded by print, telephone, wireless and so forth, of rapidly putting through directive strategic or technical conceptions to a great number of cooperating centers, of getting quick replies and effective discussion—have opened up a new world of political processes. Ideas and phrases can now be given an effectiveness greater than the effectiveness of any personality and stronger than any sectional interest (p. 40).

These innovations and the abilities they offered to actors, most specifically the state, and the norms that formed around them continued to bring new changes to society and diplomatic practice. In the interwar period, as well as during and immediately after World War II, further perfections to radio transmission and telephony occurred along with the introduction of television. Public information campaigns, coinciding with easier and cheaper reach and access to remote locations, became more powerful and practical.
The evolution of public diplomacy during almost four decades of Cold War began from ambitions to counter the perceived threats of communism. The information offensive played out as a struggle for the minds of friends, foes and neutrals alike and later, as fear about the perceived enemy threat dwindled public diplomacy transformed to “winning hearts and minds” (Armstrong, 2005, p. 64). The refocus on public diplomacy after the 9/11 attacks marked a new phase in public diplomacy met with challenges stemming from innovative technological communication systems and international relations (Gilboa, 2008, p. 56; Lord, 2005, p. 2). The 21st Century society demands a new way of thinking about how relations, goals, and interests are constructed and achieved. Digital diplomacy emerged out of a recursive process in which new actors, networks, and processes were established through alterations in the global communications structure.

Massive increases in available information and substantially lowered interaction costs heightened the interaction between individuals and networks in distant locations, and new actors entered the diplomatic sphere. As La Porte (2012) explained, “the globalization and evolution towards democracy of international society has brought about the advent of other actors” (p. 2). These actors organized themselves across borders, and they exchanged knowledge and shared ideas about the “development of new strategies for communication and influence, engagement techniques, and the creation of opportunities for dialogue” (La Porte, 2012, p. 2). Networks, as noted earlier, have become more important than ever before due to vast amounts of information being shared across greater distances.
This new public diplomacy is characterized as engagement with the general public where multiple actors including governmental and non-governmental institutions collaborate and listen, interact in dialogue, and work to develop long-term relationships (Melissen, 2011, pp. 2–11). As innovation occurred alongside social changes, diplomatic practice accommodated and adopted new technologies and adapted processes. The new public diplomacy included an exploration of approaches that attempted to adjust to the information society or network society.

In this new setting “knowledge, more than ever before, is power” (Nye & Owens, 1996). This shift, which began in diplomatic practice from the 1990s onward, included several factors. Kelley (2010) noted these factors, writing:

> The expanding perceptions of international agency to include firms, non-governmental organisations [NGOs] and other actors, the widespread adoption of information communication technologies such as the Internet—each served to reinforce claims of the looming disintegration of diplomacy as the world had known it, and much epistemological soul-searching ensued (p. 287).

The interpretation that diplomacy was in decline proved only a period of adjustment. Albeit the adjustment meant a move from “the age of diplomacy as an institution...to an age of diplomacy as a behavior” (Kelley, 2010, p. 288). The evolution of the revolution in diplomacy, as Kelley (2010) stated, is dependent on the state’s innovative collaboration with other networks and actors. This change preordained the erosion of power asymmetries between state and non-state actors.

Integrating knowledge and expertise from other fields was a focus of new public
diplomacy approaches, leading to the incorporation of research and theories from other disciplines as well as learning from external actors. As Pigman and Deos (2008) stated, learning from and/or working with external professionals could be beneficial “as the global media environment becomes more competitive and global publics gain greater access to streams of information, it is becoming progressively more difficult to undertake public diplomacy successfully on their own” (p. 87). Part of building relationships and networks means listening to and collaborating with a diverse collection of actors and networks. Furthermore, successful engagement requires dialogue and that dialogue must include both mutual “credibility and access” (Riordan, 2005, p. 182). The relational turn in public diplomacy is an effort to consider the multi-faceted political, cultural, and social aspects of states and publics to develop effective relationships in the diplomatic process.

These processes are conducted through communication actions based on cooperation and collaboration among interconnected networks (Zaharna et al., 2013b, p. 1). Thus, the relational approach is a unique approach incorporating lessons from nation-branding exercises, public relations campaigns, and social networking. Emerging efforts exemplified a new approach given the growth of interdependence and the importance of economics, innovation in ICTs, and the inclusion of non-state actors.

For example, the Business for Diplomatic Action (BDA) in the US reflected that it was time to “relaunch the brand” (Olins, 2005, p. 169). Such nation branding was essentially a public diplomacy approach that is a coordinated strategy including
“brand export, foreign direct investment and tourism, backed by a cultural, sporting and commercial programme and all associated with political influence—public diplomacy in fact” (Olins, 2005, p. 175). Public diplomacy and nation branding are often associated closely with one another and frequently have similar goals, but the approach, tactics, and tools often differ (Szondi, 2008, p. 1). Nonetheless, nation branding can prove to be a poor approach because it is highly questionable whether a national brand can be constructed anew without creating issues of credibility, and even if possible, a national brand is all encompassing, creating the question of who manages the process and towards what goal (Olins, 2005, p. 178; Riordan, 2005, p. 188). The process of ‘selling’ a nation is not an end in itself.

Brand and image dynamics are often one-way, but the achievement of public diplomacy goals in regards to new public diplomacy depends much more heavily on a two-way dynamic. Including an emphasis on the context of relationships with the international community (Zaharna, 2010) and a state’s ability to “maintain alliances and create networks will be an important dimension of its hard and soft power” (Nye, 2010). Therefore, a relational approach in contrast to a branding approach appears more conducive to achieving public diplomacy goals in the current global environment.

Success means targeting proper audience segments, understanding the goals, and using the proper tools, tactics, and strategies for each audience—and ultimately establishing strong relationships (van Ham, 2010, p. 15). The inclusion of new actors and increased globalization strengthened the influence of image and
perception intensifying the move away from hard power to soft power. Public diplomacy needed to develop a broader understanding of itself away from simple image creation and “the bias towards communication research” towards an approach that incorporates concepts from IR like bargaining and negotiation (Brown, 2011). This can create a more accurate picture of the situation and offer nuanced tactics and strategies better equipped for the dynamics of the situation (Brown, 2011). One early adaptation is the dialogue-based public diplomacy approach that Riordan (2005) discussed.

Key aspects of this dialogue-based approach included learning from the private sector and listening to other interlocutors with a long-term focus on objectives and allowing an open decision-making process (Riordan, 2005, p. 192). Although dialogue is a fundamental component in new public diplomacy, a dialogue-based approach may miss some of the important distinctions and benefits of other communication styles such as monologue and collaboration. Public diplomacy encompassing all possible layers of communication can lead to the creation of trust and an obligation of reciprocity (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008). Pulling from both Riordan and Cowan & Arsenault, a communicative-based approach that includes dialogue, monologue and collaboration becomes a powerful model. In this model, the cornerstone of relations is communicative action in the appropriate communication style with the goal being to reach mutual understanding.

This would fall in contrast to information dissemination or rhetorical action. These styles aim towards different ends, guided by an instrumental rationality. As Mor (2014) noted, diplomatic discourse has become “doing” in international politics (p.
However, where the doing is rhetorical debate instead of communicative action the setting moves from one of understanding, cooperation or bargaining towards one of competing narratives of instrumental purpose. Moreover, the focus moves from relationship building between the actors or within the networks towards persuasion directed at a third party (Mor, 2014, p. 251). In such a setting, it is reasonable to assume that relationships are a low priority and therefore any trust or obligations of reciprocity between the actors are lost.

New public diplomacy and the relational approach specifically gained a great deal from communication studies and public relations. The new public diplomacy was not only about messaging or promotion campaigns, but about “building relationships with civil society actors in other countries and about facilitating networks between non-governmental parties at home and abroad” (Melissen, 2005a, p. 22). As Melissen (2005a) asserted in the new environment of “transnational networks” trust-building and the facilitation of integration cross-border is part of the “core business” of public diplomacy and diplomats (p. 23). Public relations (PR) theory expounded the idea that communication and credibility as well as relationship building established trust and has been influential in formulating the relational approach to new public diplomacy.

This new public diplomacy is based on ‘true dialogue’ (Fitzpatrick, 2011). This perspective emphasized similarities to public relations research regarding dialogic communication and the building of collaborative relationships (Kent & Taylor, 2002, pp. 21–22). As early as 1992, a convergence was noticed between public relations and public diplomacy, which was designated international public
relations (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). The convergence brought forth and underscored once again that the objective of public diplomacy was to influence public opinion (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992, p. 139). Most significantly, communication and relationships were acknowledged as the key factors in reaching desired goals within networks of publics (Kent & Taylor, 2002; L’Etang & Pieczka, 1996; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). As Fitzpatrick, Fullerton, and Kendrick (2013) summarized, public relations research helped set the stage for a progression towards a relational approach in public diplomacy.

This relational approach aimed to provide both a “defining worldview characterized by symmetry and mutuality and a unifying, holistic framework to support the strategic dimensions of public diplomacy” (p. 3). This set forth expectations that public diplomacy includes a commitment to mutuality, symmetry, and dialogue—the development of trust (Brown, 2013, p. 44) as opposed to propaganda. This entrenched within the relational approach are aspects of Habermas’s (1984) theory of communicative action that he placed in contrast to instrumental or strategic action.

According to Habermas (1989), instrumental or strategic action promotes manipulation and distorts or transforms the public sphere—and hence the move

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4 Communicative acts or communicative action, as developed by Habermas (1984), refers to cooperative action based on a rationality that is inherent in language—mutual deliberation and argumentation. “We use the term argumentation for that type of speech in which participants thematize contested validity claims and attempt to vindicate or criticize them through argumentation” (Habermas, 1984, p. 18). Communicative action is action based upon argumentative speech absent of coercive force, including a mutual search for understanding, and compelled by the power of the better argument. The social implications of the theory of communicative action include greater democratization and the reduction to barriers to participation in public discourse or public sphere that could lead to a more open form of social action (Habermas, 1984, 1989).
towards a relational approach, centred on relationships and true dialogue. However, Habermas’s theoretical base rests upon a notion of equal and level power structures, assuming a communication environment devoid of power dynamics (McNeely, 2003). Public diplomacy research and practice has historically tried to downplay political features of diplomatic relations.

Previous considerations overlooked the power component of relationships and generalized the context of each relationship, but there is a “politics of public diplomacy” and this must be reflected when examining public diplomacy as a process of relations and exchanges (Brown, 2013, p. 44). Often networks relationships involved in coalition-building, cooperation, and negotiation include aspects of power (Brown, 2011, p. 3). Furthermore, there is no guarantee of equality among participants and so such actions may not result “in anything more than an expression of the status quo” (Miller, 1987, p. 90). Therefore, the relational, networked, and collaborative public diplomacy theories and approaches must take into consideration the context of each relationship and balancing closure and brokerage in social networks must be a priority (Brown, 2013; Burt, 2005).

The balancing of new information and actors into a network relationship along with the development and maintenance of trust is integral to the generation of social capital for the state.

The growing attention to the relational approach in new public diplomacy coincided with the growth of networks and social media, thus the arrival of digital diplomacy. Richter (2012) claimed that the social web seems to fit the stipulations of new public diplomacy well because it fosters interaction, encourages dialogue,
viral and moves away from the one-to-many model towards a many-to-many model (p. 109). These observations are accurate and helped uncover new research questions including whether and how state-based digital diplomacy harnesses these characteristics to generate social capital. Generally, public diplomacy or its digital variant tends to justify actions based on an instrumental rationality and therefore the use of social media is still less about genuine relationships and more about reaching goals. This instrumental rationality creates issues for long-term considerations and undermines trust and reciprocity, a topic revisited again later in this chapter.

Even so, as this new digital sub-form of public diplomacy began to arise early efforts focused on outlining and understanding the growing influence of public diplomacy and new challenges and issues that came with adapting to the new technology (Dizard, 2001; Potter, 2002b). Furthermore, as Archetti (2012) noted, the US was the main focus of digital diplomacy research given the large number of American scholars looking to understand the “gulf of misunderstanding’ that appears to fuel extremism against the West” (p. 187). This research addressed the historical evolution of US digital diplomacy (Cull, 2013; Hanson, 2012c); described the organization and implementation of new social media technologies at the State Department known as 21st century statecraft or eDiplomacy (Esser, 2012; Hanson, 2012a, 2012b). It also evaluated the conceptual adaptations and limitations (Hallams, 2010; Hayden, 2012a) and investigated specific technologies used in US digital diplomacy (Zhong & Lu, 2013), as well as particular US digital diplomacy initiatives (Khatib, Dutton, & Thelwall, 2012; Milam & Avery, 2012). It is fair to say the US dominated digital diplomacy research at the beginning of the 21st century.
The dominance of the US also has some grounding in the fact the State Department created the first entity specializing in digital diplomacy; the 2002 Taskforce on eDiplomacy became the Office of eDiplomacy in 2003 under Colin Powell’s tenure as Secretary of State (“eDiplomacy Ushers In a New Culture of Collaboration at State,” 2010). The US still commands a great deal of focus, but research about digital diplomacy has moved beyond exploratory studies to incorporate a variety of topics and states. New research includes probes into non-state actors and their use of social media to influence both states and publics (Stoltzfus, 2008). Additionally, case studies on the digital diplomacy efforts include studies from Norway (Bátora & Neumann, 2002), Finland (Nurmi, 2012), Kenya (Ipu, 2013), the Netherlands (van Noort, 2011), Canada (Copeland, 2009; Potter, 2002c), and even comparative studies (Hayden, 2013; Park & Lim, 2014). Likewise, research of specific social media has produced research and statistics on the most influential, engaging, or connected political leaders and diplomats. Twitter use, for example, has resulted in the coining of the term ‘Twiplomacy’ along with the release of statistical, informational, and anecdotal reports for diplomats, diplomatic actors, and state ministries, departments (Bastianello, 2014; Lüfkens, 2014; Sandre, 2013). These studies have created interest in digital diplomacy and helped move the discussion from descriptive and exploratory research towards more empirical and theoretical evaluation of digital diplomacy processes and effects.

Digital diplomacy has had various names such as PD 2.0, eDiplomacy, 21st century statecraft, and Open Policy. Generally, the definition has included a reference to the use of the Internet and new ICTs to help achieve diplomatic objectives by diplomatic actors (Dizard, 2001; Esser, 2012; Hallams, 2010). These actors
included the state and non-state actors (Cox, 2006; Stoltzfus, 2008), and was characterized by a move from one-way to two-way engagement or from G2G or G2P towards a dialogic loop of two-way or multiple-way interaction (Sifry & Rasiej, 2009). This research defines digital diplomacy as the use of the Internet and ICTs to further to influence perceptions, ideas, values, and attitudes through communication and interaction activities intended to improve mutual understanding.

Digital diplomacy offered a new avenue for interaction, but now states are incorporating social media into their diplomatic operations. What are the effects? Does it matter? Social media has altered the media landscape, but while it has advantages for the “dissemination of information and dialogue and its structural and strategic implications ... does it have the power to change minds, net of other factors” (Richter, 2012, p. 110)? This contemplative and critical sentiment is indicative of the next level of research that is building on previous evaluations of integration, implementation and exploratory studies.

For example, investigations on the global implications of the Internet, cyberspace, and social media reveal insights for understanding the impact of digital diplomacy and outline questions that are essential to consider including power, neutrality, censorship, security, surveillance, and privacy (Costigan & Perry, 2012; Seib, 2012). A relational approach can offer digital diplomacy an effective model given that shared trust and reciprocity within a social network and among actors can mitigate a number of issues such as power asymmetries, privacy, and security (Dhami, Agarwal, Chakraborty, Singh, & Minj, 2013). Still, there are many
considerations in regards to state-based digital diplomacy specifically issues regarding the inherent biases of technology and a need to contextualize engagement.

Furthermore, as new public diplomacy intensified the focus of states on ‘engagement,’ questions arose around the merits of such claims. Comor and Bean (2012) looked deeper into engagement as a goal of state-based public diplomacy and found that engagement often meant leveraging social media in an instrumental way. Operating under an instrumental rationality based in strategic action, instead of what Risse (2000) calls an argumentative rationality based in communicative action, creates issues for building mutual respect and mutual interest. The goal is not mutual understanding but the advancement or maximization of one’s own interests (p. 3). In such an instance, the commitment to the relationship is no longer legitimate.

Communicative action, as described by Habermas (1984), uses speech acts of argumentation in contrast to rhetorical action or strategic action, which uses speech acts of debate and/or bargaining. This represents the logic and rationale split between rational theory and constructivism. Shimmelfennig (Schimmelfennig, 1995, 1997) tried to incorporate ‘arguing’ into rationalism, but did so by defining argumentative speech acts as acts used to pursue individual preferences in a strategic manner (Müller, 2004, p. 404). Thus, an actor uses arguments to persuade opponents to change positions without being open to changing oneself.

The unwillingness to change one’s own position removes the bi-directional
features that differentiate argumentative rationality from instrumental rationality, strategic or rhetorical action from communicative action, and the logic of appropriateness from the logic of consequences. The use of argumentative speech acts in strategic or rhetorical action can create “scepticism, resentment and eventually, loss of reputation” (Müller, 2004, p. 404). In digital diplomacy, a state’s use of engagement in an instrumental manner, when communicative action is expected, can undermine the exchange and relationship.

1.1.3: Networks, ICTs, & diplomatic benefit

Clearly, technological innovation is only one of many changes that have affected diplomacy, but it is arguably one of the most profound given its impact on communication (Constantinou, 1996; Jönsson & Hall, 2002; Nicolson, 1963; Tran, 1987). The prospect of communicating more effectively, not only with foreign governments and officials, but also with foreign publics, expanded the allure of ICTs for state diplomatic institutions. However, the task of instrumentalizing these changes was a challenge for the state’s public diplomacy organizations and required more collaborative diplomatic relations (Melissen, 2005a, p. 5). This new variation was not focused on the traditional pushing of messages but rather on the capability to establish relations of trust in order to gain access to embedded social resources—social capital.

The evolution of diplomacy within the context of ICT innovation, specifically the emergence of social media, further elevated the focus on networks and relationships. The 9/11 attacks highlighted the need of states to adapt properly to the changing world. Across the globe states observed non-state actors, including
terror groups had an ability to successfully use the new technologies and social networks for political communication and organization (Cox, 2006; La Porte, 2012). The inability of states to alter traditional processes, practice, and structure or to find the resources needed to incorporate such activities properly for the benefit of public diplomacy was problematic (La Porte, 2012; Melissen, Riordan, Sharp, & Hocking, 2012). Direct public interaction and the incorporation of non-state actors all pushed states to embrace social media and digital diplomacy as a way to maintain legitimacy and develop or strengthen relationships in a changing world.

The evolution of new public diplomacy pushed network structure, ICT innovation and the processes of collaboration to the forefront of diplomatic studies. This section explores the diplomatic connection and benefit of these three factors. The way in which individuals weigh the value of knowledge and information is by verification with their social network (Wellman, 1999). The movement towards a network society means that “broad engagement between societies is more important now than ever before” (Metzl, 2001, p. 85) and this interaction is recursive as the broad engagement is both a prerequisite, component, and result of networks.

Broad engagement builds relationships and cross-cultural understanding, the vital component of networks (Metzl, 2001, p. 85). Moreover, the technological advances of ICTs has grown the capacity of online or digital networks making them suitable modes of social organization (Flew, 2008, p. 31). Presumably, the networked society makes interaction online more participatory and thus the online is an
extension of the offline, rather than a separate realm, and each influences, transforms, and supplements the other (Bakardjieva, 2005; Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002). Thus, the intertwining of networks and social media offer diplomatic benefit in the processes of relationship building and collaboration.

In the past, formal G2G relationships were required to establish and maintain the official relationships between governments, but recently attention has focused on G2P and P2P level engagement. Networks have relevance, but it is more than being connected. The adage “it’s not what you know, but who you know,” is more accurately both who and what you know and whether or not you and your connections reciprocate actions and share trust (Field, 2003, p. 11).

Communication that occurs in a network and the interaction between agency and structure are fundamental aspects of the process. Relationships and communication still comprise the basis of the diplomatic practice. In both practice and theory academics and practitioners alike acknowledged the development of the information age, in which power politics is more about whose story wins rather than whose military or economy wins (Nye 2008, 2010a). In an “‘infosphere’ of ubiquitous communication...the diplomatic advantage goes to countries that are able to present distinct voices or ‘information edges’, attract support, project identifiable three-dimensional national images, and that can provide credible, timely information” (Potter, 2002a, p. 7). However, an overabundance of information, this ‘paradox of plenitude’ that Nye refers to and others reference (Nye, 2004; Nye, 2002; Zaharna, 2005), has made invaluable the interactions, relationships, and networks that can properly filter and decipher information.
Networks are a core element of the new public diplomacy, reflecting the broad and emerging global call for mutual interaction, cooperation, and collaboration (Fisher & Lucas, 2011). However, the differentiation between collaborative relations as processes and networks as structures is important (Zaharna, 2013, p. 173). Networks—meaning connections and webs of exchange can be integral in facilitating collaboration. Clearly, networks and relationships are important elements for consideration. In the relational approach, efficiency comes from ‘empowering and engaging’ with networks in an appropriate manner given the goals and context of the relationship. The processes of integration, interdependence, and globalization has shifted the debate from the national to the global, thus promoting the emergence of a global civil society (Castells, 2008, p. 78) and the formation of a public sphere around global communications networks.

Information in today’s global society is important, but it is no longer just about information. With the growth of the Internet and the ubiquity of information on demand, the idea of an ‘information society’ has developed further and given way to the network society. Globalization is not a new phenomenon, but ICTs have allowed for the acceleration of its processes. These changes have allowed for networks to become the “key feature of social morphology” (Castells, 2000, p. 5).

These new networks and communication channels are:

- increasingly speaking a universal, digital language, is both integrating globally the production and distribution of words, sounds and images of our culture, and customizing them to the tastes of the identities and moods of individuals...creating new forms and channels of communication, shaping life and being shaped by life at the same time (p. 3).

Then again, networks are not a new phenomenon. In the early period of the Cold War, the US developed one of the most extensive networks of educational and
professional exchange, and radio and television broadcast public diplomacy programs for the purposes of reaching foreign publics. However, technological innovation and growth of international networks has fuelled new organization of the socio-technical environment.

Advanced communication technology has changed the very nature of information. ‘Network diplomacy’ in this new global communication era is a model of influence through relationships within social networks both digital and in-person (Metzl, 2001; Zaharna, 2005). The basis of the relational approach to public diplomacy is relationships of trust that, in turn, establish obligations of reciprocity by the actors. Changes in the global community have constructed an environment in which public opinion sways the pendulum of power based on the social capital a state can command from its relationships based on shared ideas, values, and goals. ICT innovation in the period from the end of World War II until the present has had profound implication, since improved communication across distance from the radio and broadcast telephony to the Internet “increased the significance of public opinion in the conduct of foreign policy” (Cull, 2013, p. 124). On-going experimentation resulted in improved broadcast quality, but also inventions such as the transistor in 1947 and the integrated circuit in 1959, which would eventually lead to developments in wireless communication (Ling, 2010, p. 48). Between the 1920’s and 1970’s, radio and telephony became commonplace with the standardization of wired interpersonal communication and wireless broadcasting.
From these advances, the idea of the 'Negroponte switch'\(^5\) emerged and further innovation later gave birth to contemporary slogans of information revolution, digital age, and information age. It was in this vastly and quickly changing global environment that the concept of a new public diplomacy was born (Cull 2013, 124). The Internet and the digital social networks that it facilitates, is not technically determined, but rather the result of the interaction of the technical, political and social constructs within society. The Internet fundamentally changed communication and information, which are considered main pillars of diplomacy (Kurbalija, 1999, p. 171). By introducing new structural organizations, creating changes in the stratification of social and political relations, and flattening the communication infrastructure the standard process transformed (Kurbalija, 1999). These changes implied a shift in political paradigms, moving from a world of geopolitics and power to a world of images and influence (van Ham 2001, p. 6). User-friendly communication technologies such as social media fuelled optimistic outlooks.

These innovations were effective mechanisms for building shared norms, disseminating information, and constructing images and perceptions in the targeted regions, and many of these programs continue in some form today. This ‘network perspective’ refers to the ability to bridge different groups within the network and this process connects actors not already connected (Saffer, Taylor, & Yang, 2013, p. 6). Moreover, Saffer et al. (2013) noted, these connections alter information flows that allow ‘bridges’ to gain influence (p. 6). Moreover, social

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\(^5\) The ‘Negroponte Switch’ was a dictum proclaimed in 1989 by George Gilder, due to his interaction with Nicholas Negroponte. The “switch” meant that “[w]hat goes over the air (broadcast TV and radio) will go via wire and what goes via wire (telephony) will go over the air” (Ling, 2010, p. 50).
media have the potential to bridge both individuals and organizations (Saffer et al., 2013, p. 6). To bridge, engagement is required between the actors in a network. Social media networks both require and necessitate a two-way or multidirectional communication model. Thus, the ‘logic’ of the network trumps the powers of the network (Castells, 1996, p. 193). As such ICTs have allowed for the development of a new environment, which empowers networking (Webster, 2002b, p. 104). States have turned to social media as a way to engage publics, establish relationships, and realize the benefits of networks.

The benefits of bridging are associated with weak-ties or connections established outside of traditional tight networks of close friends and family. Granovetter (1983), asserted that “our acquaintances (weak ties) are less likely to be socially involved with one another than are our close friends (strong ties)” (p. 201). As such, the designation of strong ties and weak ties, the bridges between networks not previously connected, emerged. Moreover, weak-ties or new acquaintances, are valuable because they offer a crucial bridge between different and previously unconnected close networks. Granovetter (1983) continued:

Individuals with few weak ties will be deprived of information from distant parts of the social system and will be confined to the provincial news and views of their close friends. This deprivation will not only insulate them from the latest ideas and fashions but may put them in a disadvantaged position (p. 202).

Those actors (individuals, groups, corporations, states) that can serve as a bridge between diverse networks would be in an elevated position both in regards to information access and knowledge. Social media is generally perceived as a space that can facilitate a great deal of important crossover between groups. Since Granovetter (1973) studied of the value of weak and strong ties, there have been numerous studies investigating his claims regarding the strength of ties, whether
weak or strong and the associated benefits. Although his initial study dealt with job searches and the importance of weak-ties in the work force, the result emphasized relationships and networks.

The benefits of weak-tie or bridging tie networks is embedded in the offer of new information (Granovetter, 1983). In this case the actor that can create this weak-tie or bridge gains a considerable amount of influence. This is the premise behind what Burt (1992) designated the theory of structural holes, which assumes “the payoffs an individual entity gets in a network will clearly depend on his relative importance in bridging gaps in the network between others” (Goyal & Vegaredondo, 2007, p. 461). Such bridging is believed to “instil tolerance and acceptance of otherness, one of the foundations of civic virtues” (Stolle & Hooghe, 2003, p. 28). This is not to insist that only bridging ties have benefits. The alternative type, bonding, offers benefits as well.

The benefit of strong-tie or bonding tie networks is the ability of such networks to develop localized trust. Furthermore, as Gould (1991) illustrated, bonding capital is associated to group solidarity and, as per Stefanone, Kwon, and Lackaff (2012), connected mutual social support (p. 454). Such ties are also effective in increasing credibility and amassing consensus and support (Williams, 2006, p. 597). Bonding capital also proves more valuable where action or mobilization of support is required in contrast to discussion, exchange, or exposure to ideas and knowledge. However, there are leaders, organizers, and facilitators of social media networks that represent strong-ties and then there are those that join efforts, conversations, or networks that initially represent weak-ties (Kanter & Fine, 2010). Therefore, it
seems possible that social media can facilitate both weak and strong ties.

The social media of today, is not a spontaneous outgrowth of any particular event, but, in essence, is part of an evolutionary process. Networks form the fundamental unit of interaction between actors. These networks offer insight into how information and knowledge flows and thus if and/or how social capital is generated. The influence of ICTs, such as social media, have altered the practice of public diplomacy in regards to the way networks of actors exchange information and establish ties. These changes have made a relational digital public diplomacy approach possible.

Social media has offered public diplomacy a new arena in which to interact. Digital diplomacy offers states the possibility of facilitating exchange across diverse networks and the building of relationships with new audiences. As ICT innovation continued and global societal norms evolved, expectations regarding social media's ability to democratize societies, flatten hierarchies, and drive mutual understanding expounded. For public diplomacy, the possibilities offered through engagement with digital social networks were associated with the generation of social capital and the positive effects of network and relationship development, trust and knowledge sharing, and exchange. The following sections explore these assumptions and the characteristics of social media. They also examine the cyber-optimist and cyber-pessimist debates. Underlying these debates are larger theoretical discussions around rationality and normative and instrumental actions. The aim of the next section is to engage with this theoretical literature regarding technology and society and specifically to investigate social media and its influence
on the global communications landscape in the context of public diplomacy.

1.2: The social media revolution in public diplomacy

This second portion of this chapter investigates the characteristics of social media and the interplay between the process of diplomatic practice and innovation of ICTs. The Internet is an outcome of the politics and dynamics of global societal events prior to and during its development, most specifically the dichotomous society of the ‘closed’ Cold War/‘open’ counter-culture and anti-war society of the late 1950s–1960s that shaped the period of the Internet’s emergence (Rosenzweig, 1998, p. 1531). The connection of the Internet and associated ICTs, like social media, with social movements has historical connotations (Rosenzweig, 1998; Triga, 2011). Both social media and public diplomacy as social institutions are historical and reflexive (Feenberg, 1996) and have been influenced by and influence social reality. While the Internet and social media are the newest technological innovations to create what appear to be massive societal changes, the critique of technology and types of rationality that guide action and create debates about normative, operational, and instrumental issues is timeworn.

Public diplomacy interaction in the digital era requires an understanding of the changes to global society and a new thinking about what it means to be part of a public and in particular the global public (Snow, 2009, p. 8). The new socially constructed environment combines historical consideration and context with new possibilities. New technological innovation allows for the “flow of information across national borders” and this can have “a profound impact on the way that societies construct an identity of themselves, and of each other” (Rawnsley, 1999,
p. 135). The dual origins of the Internet and divergent mindsets in society regarding its effects have offered differing perceptions of the effects of the Internet and ICTs and this, in turn, has had repercussions for international relations, especially diplomatic relations.

In the post-World War II period, radio represented a new, quick medium for transmission of information much like the Internet in the late 1990’s and early years of the 21st century. Broadcast radio such as the Voice of America (VOA) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) became invaluable assets for public diplomacy efforts, especially in the US (Ungar, 2005). For radio, the late 1950s–early 1960s offered a period of expansion. The 1980s–1990s were periods of extreme change globally, both geopolitically and technologically first with television and then with ‘satellite diplomacy’. The first example of satellite diplomacy occurred in 1997 when President Clinton held a “hemispheric town hall meeting” with an audience in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Los Angeles, and Miami using satellite technology (Peterson & Rotella, 1997). More than a simple message broadcast, the event was interactive.

It was in this period that a new atmosphere was forming from the integration and interaction of these new technologies and public diplomacy. WORLDNET, the Gopher Protocol and finally the World Wide Web (WWW) were all adaptations of new ICT innovations and the constant interaction of social and technological offered fresh approaches to diplomatic operations. First, WORLDNET launched in November 1983 and then just over 10 years later the Gopher protocol online text service commenced operations in January 1994 (Cull, 2013, p. 127). Following the
success of the Gopher protocol the agency expanded its online content a year later when it began offering resources on the World Wide Web (WWW) (McGregor, 1995, p. 3). Soon, many regarded the Internet as a revolutionary force. The arguments about the Internet’s social impacts have been situated within a technologically determinist paradigm, which assumes technology has a given outcome, either positive or negative depending on perspective, no matter the events or context of human interaction.

The personal computer, the Internet, and social media have been regarded as a force for economic, political, and social transformation—a force for democratization (Hauben & Hauben, 1997); but also a danger to the open public sphere, shaped by and a shaper of the Cold War and its centralized, war focused control mentality (Edwards, 1997). Likewise, the social consequences have been seen both as a cause of the decline in civic involvement and deterioration of community while simultaneously as avenues for freedom and democratic and collective action (Papacharissi, 2009). In mainstream society and global politics generally, the Internet has been accepted as an altruistic project of determined scientists; a technology resulting in exponential economic and social growth unprecedented in human history and world-transforming (Edwards, 2010, p. 142). Global political leaders proclaimed the revolutionary effect of the Internet and ICTs as early as the late 1980’s. President Reagan pronounced “technology will make it increasingly harder for the state to be able to control the information that its people receive...the Goliath of totalitarianism will be overthrown by the David of the microchip” (Torres-Soriano, 2013, p. 334). Much of these types of discussions around technology and society are absent of contextualization.
Consequently, in context the 21st century social media are anything but groundbreaking (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60). The progression of social digital media has its roots in such projects as the Abelson’s Open Diary project and Truscott and Ellis’s Usenet program.⁶ As the Internet protruded further into daily life, its use and popularity spurred new online community, networking, and sharing platforms and services. Following the popularity of blogs, a new format appeared in 2003 with MySpace, then came Facebook in 2004 and Twitter in 2006. Instagram launched in late 2010 and Facebook purchased it in 2012.

Social media differentiate themselves from previous technologies and periods in the evolution of Internet technologies: Web 1.0⁷ vs. Web 2.0.⁸ Social media was built upon these previous technological innovations, most importantly the idea of user generated content (UGC) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). The principle and distinguishing feature of social media appears to be the combination of computing and information technology (IT), communications networks, and digitized media and information content (Flew, 2008, p. 4; van Dijk, 2006, p. 7)—a process known as convergence. Convergence is one of the three structural characteristics of social media, the other two being interactivity and digitalization.

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⁶ Truscott and Ellis from Duke University created Usenet in 1979. It was a worldwide discussion system that allowed Internet users to post public messages (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60; Lueg & Fisher, 2003). In 1998, The Abelson’s founded Open Diary, which was an early social networking site for online diary writers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60; Seminerio, 1998).

⁷ Web 1.0 included applications such as personal web pages and the idea of content publishing.

⁸ Web 2.0 is a term that came about in 2004 to describe the new way actors were utilizing the World Wide Web; content and applications continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Examples include blogs, wikis, and collaborative projects. Web 2.0 diverges from Web 1.0 in the inclusion of user content and possibility of interaction, which includes the “growth of social networks, bi–directional communication, and a significant diversity in content types” (Cormode & Krishnamurthy, 2008).
In general terms then, social media can be described as “media which are both integrated (using data, text, sound, and images) and interactive” (van Dijk, 2006, pp. 6–9). In comparison to previous ICTs, social media can more easily extend across national borders, allow users to be both consumers and producers, can shrink time and space between actors, and integrates auditory, visual and written messages. All of these characteristics play a part in designating social media as different from its ICT predecessors. Social media are electronic communication networks, within which actors exchange and generate content. Social media take a number of different forms, but as noted, most combine text, sounds, and image—unlike previous ICTs.

The new aspect of social media has primarily to do with the social contexts of use rather than the technologies themselves. Moreover, others have noted that the technology that underpins Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 are essentially the same, the difference is in the way the technology allows users to change or update existing content as well as generate and share new content. From a web of cognition to a web of communication and collaboration, the Web 2.0 is not about the technology, but about the interactive and communicative process (Aghaei, Nematbakhsh, & Farsani, 2012). Hence, this research aims to investigate the relational aspects in regards to the generation of social capital through social media in digital diplomacy. Thus, the main consideration is what is new for society (Livingstone, 1999, p. 62). Continuing along the theoretical lines that I have established this research understands social media to be a composite of both the technical “information and communication technologies and their associated social
contexts” (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002, p. 7), incorporating these factors as per Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002):

- the artefacts or devices that enable and extend our abilities to communicate;
- the communication activities or practices we engage in to develop and use these devices;
- the social arrangements or organizations that form around the devices and practices (p. 7).

While, this research questions the deterministic claims of either cyber-optimists or cyber-pessimists it is, nonetheless clear, as Auer (2011) wrote, that social media are indeed shaping values and opinions because “digital posts spawn commentary, sway views, and spur action” (Auer, 2011, p. 711). For example, in 2008 around 20 percent of Internet users posted thoughts and/or comments regarding the US Presidential election on a social media or digital medium (Auer, 2011, p. 711; A. Smith, 2009). Historically speaking, each new innovative technology from the establishment of the written word to the printing press and television was significant, but claims of their revolutionary properties predisposes an assumption of pre-determined outcomes that each were destined to thrust on to society.

Similarly, the Internet and social media have produced advocates and detractors proclaiming similar assertions—both positive (cyber-optimistic) and negative (cyber-pessimistic) as well as those that see both positive and negatives (cyber-realist). Surely, the Internet and social media have unique properties and influence society, but it is equally as true that society influences the development of technology. This move towards digital and social media is less a revolution and
instead an evolution representing a cyclical pattern of how society, values, and innovative processes interact. Social media are a result of recursive evolutionary processes.

Social networking technology, commonly described as Web 2.0, is structurally organized to successfully create a large user base because it has been “embedded with features that are seen as central to the Web as a communications infrastructure, including scope for participation, interactivity and collaborative learning and social networking” (Flew, 2008, p. 17). In many ways it is described as a contemporary form of the agora that has “shifted from a physical space to a communication network; from local deliberation to global conversation” (Nisbet, 2011). This transition from information push to participation mirrors the adaptations of public diplomacy as practice and research transitioned from a concentration on informing foreign publics to engaging foreign publics. Heralded as unprecedented, proponents see social media as offering opportunities for unprecedented leaps in the transition to a democratic society and thus gains in legitimacy, trust, and reciprocity in the eyes of the public.

Social media research is difficult to categorize into one field or focus due to its broad reach into all aspects of society resulting from the fact that “different fields and specialties have entered the scene at different times in different places” (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002, p. 2). Scholars in media and communications across diverse fields seek to understand whether and how such ICTs can act as “factors in wider social change, yet at the same time be already embedded in a
social context” (Flew, 2008, p. 2). Various scholars have addressed issues surrounding innovation in ICTs, providing insight for contemporary research on new social media technologies including the research presented in this dissertation (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002, p. 2). Previous research on the social and political effects of technology and innovation are particularly interesting in the context of this research and lay a foundation for this investigation.

Work focused on the cyclical, evolutionary process of technological innovation and diffusion in society and the mutual construction between agency and structure in that process is most intriguing. This cycle of diffusion and co-determination between technology and public diplomacy began with the telegraph and occurred again with the introduction of radio and television. In the last decade, research into social media has offered interesting results linking expectations of social capital generation to interaction and engagement in digital social networks.

As late as 2013, the use of social media has come to represent “a vibrant and transparent communications strategy”, which has a particular “utility” to governments in regards to legitimacy and credibility (Graham & Avery, 2013, p. 1).

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9 For example Schumpeter, Bell, Giddens, and De Sola Pool are of importance. Schumpeter was an economist that addressed the diffusion of technology and social evolution. He claimed that technological change and organizational innovation where the result of mutual reinforcement that including human entrepreneurial behavior. This process was described as ‘creative destruction’ and occurred in ‘clusters’ in the economic system (Hospers, 2005). Bell was an American sociologist best known for his work on the ‘post-industrial society’, which was his classification of modern society. He found modern society to be “an uneasy amalgam of three distinct realms: (1) the social structure (principally the techno-economic order), (2) the polity or political system, and (3) the culture.” The three realms are ruled by contrary principles: efficiency, equality, and self-gratification” (Cornish, 2011). Giddens ‘Theory of Structuration’ focused on the co-determination of social structure and agency. Structuration allows for the constant reproduction of the social world by the social structures and agency due to interaction of people and information resources. (J. G. Webster, 2011). De Sola Pool was a political scientist that researched the social and political effects of communications technologies. Likewise, he began research on trying to define the global information society (Etheredge, 1997).
As a function, social media can allow for new or expanded engagement between a government and citizens, both domestic and foreign (Bertot, Jaeger, Munson, & Glaisyer, 2010). Additionally, evidence suggests that interaction of digital social networks creates community (Lampe et al., 2007). Even technologically mediated communities enable the creation of “a common experience that supports a shared commitment and common identity, which are reasonable characteristics of community” (Komito, 2011, p. 1083). These results have drawn attention from academics and practitioners in the diplomatic field at the same time soft power began to overtake hard power in diplomatic practice.

As ICT innovation has continued through the 21st century and Web 2.0 social media technologies have become more prolific, diplomatic actors began to feel the effects. Although the concept of a new public diplomacy was still fairly new, an even newer variant, PD 2.0, was already on the scene by 2008 (Cull 2013, 125). General features distinguished this 2.0 model of public diplomacy from previous styles of diplomatic practice. Most prominent was its reliance on and use of ICT developments such as social media to “facilitate the creation of relationships around social networks and online communities” and the utilization of user-generated content\textsuperscript{10} (Cull 2013, 125). Glassman’s introduction of the concept of a PD 2.0 signalled an alignment of public diplomacy goals with the value embedded in networks, which is social capital (Edwards & Weiss, 2011, pp. 206–207). In addition to networks, the introduction of social media is one of the

\textsuperscript{10}UGC is a term that achieved broad popularity in 2005, describing the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users. UGC can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people make use of Social Media. The OECD defines UGC as: a) content which is made publicly available, through internet, b) boasting a certain level of creativity and maybe the most important point c) contents created outside of professional practices (Balasubramaniam, 2009, p. 28).
transformations that have resulted from broader global societal changes such as the growing influence of public opinion, and greater civilian involvement in foreign policy (Huijgh, 2011; Snow, 2008). With the explosion of social media, assumptions that social media “increases shared awareness by propagating messages through social networks” and can “remove traditional barriers for greater public integration” (Shirky, 2011) have flourished.

However, social media does not fundamentally change the goals of public diplomacy. The goals still centre on gaining and maintaining influence by establishing shared understanding and support through engagement and information sharing (Ciolek, 2010, p. 2). Potter (2002) addressed the emergence of digital diplomacy stating, states needed to adapt to the new digital environment and “global information order” to successfully exchange, seek, and target information (Potter, 2002d, p. 7). His research on Canada specifically noted the detriments of ignoring the new global interconnected setting (Potter, 2002b). States need not only be present, they need to engage and build relationships.

In social media a qualitative assessment is important because Facebook ‘likes’ and Twitter ‘followers’ or ‘retweets’ do not always signal either agreement or understanding, much less do they represent to a positive or strong connection with an audience (Wallin, 2013, p. 3). Recent scholarly investigations of digital diplomacy considered evidence of engagement as signalling effective initiatives that strengthened potential for future interaction. Although more heavily focused on quantitative measures, researchers such as Ciolek (2010) acknowledged the
importance of qualitative assessment (pp. 15–17). Qualitative and critical analysis of digital diplomacy has offered new insight, but still more research is needed.

Digital diplomacy has implications for the cultural and psychological aspects of interaction. Sharing of cultural norms offers opportunities for understanding, but there is also the possibility that power asymmetries can allow certain cultural norms to dominate over others. This can be a point of dispute. As Grincheva (2013) explained, “cultural diplomacy capitalizes on this power of culture and cultural objects by using the art of diplomacy to promote culture, resulting in greater awareness of different populations cultural backgrounds” (p.14). However, in the digital realm diplomacy can also serve as a tool of cultural propaganda and manipulation (p. 14). Such effects of digital diplomacy, whether deliberate or not, create ethical questions and can have an effect on credibility.

These themes draw on earlier public diplomacy research discussing the emergence of a network society and the influence of soft power. Likewise, it draws on the idea of the noosphere, in which digital diplomacy can manipulate the information environments of foreign nations through soft power (Grincheva, 2013; Potter, 2002b; D. Ronfeldt & Arquilla, 2009). This is possible given that the Internet and ICTs allow for the unlimited flow information directly across the globe. In this environment, information and exchange become key, but the outcome is dependent on context both in regards to the development and implementation of new social media and ICTs.
As Grincheva (2013) noted in her critical examination of digital diplomacy through the lens of Stiegler’s philosophical concept of techno-culture, issues of control and implementation as well as the social, political, and cultural settings will influence the outcome (p. 27). This perspective lays further doubts that the Internet and social media are either neutral or offer pre-determined positive or negative outcomes. In regards to social capital generation, digital diplomacy needs to be culturally sensitive and context focused, yet globally interconnected and formed of democratic communities.

Critical theorists assume that new technologies reinforce existing power structures. Furthermore, critical theory suggests social media cannot ‘flatten’ these pre-existing hierarchies, but instead the conceived ‘information revolution’ is a way to exert uneven access to and control over information resources (Robins & Webster, 1999). Of course, social media and other ICTs are products of a specific cultural, political, and social environment—predominantly these technologies arose in the US—in which particular actors control the means of production. As noted, power continues to play out across a number of different strata in society. However, in line with Kellner’s (1999) critical theory of technology, this research aims to moves beyond utopian or dystopian claims and technologically deterministic analysis (pp. 239–240). Instead, as is discussed in the next sections in more depth, the interplay between power, relationships, technology, and social norms results in unique outcomes that are constantly shaped and reshaped.

Each technology, seen as revolutionary in its time, appears in hindsight no more revolutionary than the last. According to Winston (1998) claims of hyperbole are
more evolutionary (p. 1), as the “regularities in the pattern of invention and diffusion” of technologies demonstrate (p. 2). Society appropriates new technologies and they then diffuse into the regular routine of society. All major technological changes had been accompanied by pre-existing social formations (Winston, 1998, p. 2). Even so, social media has produced a great deal of excitement and debate to the point that once again there is discussion about revolutionary changes brought to society through technological innovation. These assertions are often deterministic and do not take into account the context in which technology is developed nor the effects of interaction between society, humans, and technology.

The model of innovation and diffusion appears to be a regular cycle. However, various perspectives regarding the normative value of technology influence the implementation and the effects of the social media in social settings. The next section examines these perspectives and various theoretical debates regarding the Internet and social media in the context of international relations and public diplomacy.

1.2.1: Avoiding biases & technological determinism in digital diplomacy

The following section examines various viewpoints in social media research to understand the perspectives from which digital diplomacy is observed and critiqued. These divergent perspectives are technological determinism,¹¹ which relates to the idea that technology develops a separate logical path uninfluenced by

¹¹ Technological determinism consists of two main claims including that technology “proceeds in an autonomous manner independent of social influence; and technological change determines social change in a prescribed manner” (Kline, 2001, p. 15495).
social aspects, either positive or negative, and social construction (shaping) of technology,\textsuperscript{12} which sees technology and society as influencing the development of each other (Bijker, 2001, pp. 15522–7; Kline, 2001, pp. 15495 – 8). The research presented in this dissertation situates itself closer to the latter approach—specifically from the ANT perspective—and is consequently less concerned with such things as classification of tools, ownership structure or technological features and more interested in inherent biases, the amalgamated social effects on norms and values, and their influence on further innovation.

Critical theorists have offered interesting assessments of technology and their social consequences. These theoretical arguments are the foundations of the ongoing debates surrounding such topics as the integration of social media and public diplomacy. Critical discussions, arguments, and theories regarding technology’s place in society, inherent social biases, and social effects have been an interesting topic of discussion throughout the contemporary-modern period. Although communication is as old as human society, the modern global communications environment is a result of technological innovation and social interaction since the World Wars.

The changes have continued to accelerate since the end of the Cold War, bringing economic, political, and social ramifications (Madikiza & Bornman, 2007).

\textsuperscript{12} Social Construction (Shaping) of Technology (SCOT) regards technological development and design as a result of “negotiations between several social groups,” as opposed to an internal, autonomous technical logic put forth by technological determinism (Kline, 2001, p. 15497). SCOT regards that an understanding of our current society is not complete without recognizing “technology is socially (and politically) constructed; society (including politics) is technically built, and technological culture consists of sociotechnical ensembles” (Bijker, 2001, p. 15526).
Habermas and Marcuse examined the interplay of technology and society and while both are critical of technology in different ways, they recognize that technology can be both positive and negative. The cyber-pessimist and cyber-optimist debates that surround social media in the 21st century link back to Habermas and Marcuse’s arguments.

Furthermore, although both Habermas and Marcuse were referring to the domestic sphere the principles they describe, criticize, and theorize about are not exclusive to one location or population. The interconnected global community has developed a public sphere that transcends the fabricated boundaries of the nation-state. Linklater (1990) denotes that Habermas’s theory is integral in the global context and highlights the need to remove “all systematic forms of exclusion and the pre-eminence of the obligation to develop global arrangements that can secure nothing less than the consent of each and every member of the human race” (p. 142). Thus, the goal in international relations and foreign policy, especially diplomacy is a higher one of universal inclusion in a process similar to that of Habermas’s communicative action.

Habermas and Marcuse offer differing critical views on the connection of technology, communication, and the social construction of reality that have had repercussions for public diplomacy research. Specifically, Habermas’s (1984) theory of communicative action has found footing in public diplomacy, as has his focus on the public sphere: a network for communicating information and points of view (Castells, 2008, p. 78). The theory of communicative action argues that actors work towards common understanding and coordinated action by reasoned
argument, consensus, and cooperation rather than strategic action strictly in pursuit of their own goals (Habermas, 1984, p. 86). The idea of the public sphere has proven useful in pulling together the concepts of communicative action, the information and network society and public opinion in the context of public diplomacy. His theories fit well into public diplomacy research because the perspective advocated “public participation, sharing of information with the public, reaching consensus through public dialogue rather than exercise of power, avoiding privileging of experts and bureaucrats, and replacing the model of the technical expert with one of the reflective planner” (Bolton, 2005, p. 2). Ironically, Habermas was critical of the manipulation of the public sphere through mass media technology by actors such as the state (Madikiza & Bornman, 2007, p. 33), which one could assume meant he was critical of public diplomacy generally.

In regards to technology’s relation to the world, Habermas’s ideas assumed a “nonsocial, neutral rationality,” which, while perhaps possible in the abstract, is not possible in context (Feenberg, 1996, p. 65) since each technological innovation occurs within a particular societal situation. Habermas also regarded technology as focusing on success and control, but Marcuse, in contrast, did not assume that technology’s relation to society was a neutral one (Feenberg, 1996, p. 49). Instead, the dominance of an instrumental rationality imbued technology with oppressive tendencies and therefore, as designed, does not offer the ability to reconfigure social structures as assumed in the abstract and, as such, a revolutionary change in the relation of man, system, and nature was required to alter the supremacy of instrumental rationality (Piran, 1977). Still, unlike Adorno and Horkheimer (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947), Marcuse (Marcuse, 1941, 1964) does leave room
for the possibility of change in regards to the design of technology, meaning social influence can change the effects and structure, creating a new type of instrumental action.

Both Habermas and Marcuse were critical of the manipulation possible through mass media technology and saw the free flow of information as a positive for individual freedom. Feenberg (1996) argued for a middle ground comparing and contrasting Marcuse and Habermas’s approaches. A middle ground is based on a context specific rationality that falls between positivist claims about technological innovation and progress and the critical Frankfurt School theorists such as Habermas and Marcuse, their colleagues Adorno and Horkheimer, as well as other more technophobic theorists such as Heidegger and Ellul (Feenberg, 1996, pp. 45–46). Feenberg (1996) introduces the concept of “implementation bias,” which he noted evokes what Latour (1992) describes as ‘delegation,’ referring to the norms delegated to technology through design, structure or system (Feenberg, 1996, p. 63). This concept allows for understanding the social implications that are shaped by and that shape technology, while also recognizing Habermas’s reference to the colonization of the ‘lifeworld’ by ‘system’ through technological rationality.

This offers, perhaps, a way to deal with Hayden’s (2009) consideration about whether it is possible to have an ethical and instrumental public diplomacy or in the case of this research, digital diplomacy. An ethical and instrumental public diplomacy may well be possible, although it would still be contextual in regards to the relationship. In a relational digital diplomacy based on communicative action, it would recognize the inherent biases of technology and require efforts to mitigate
asymmetries. With the introduction of social media and other ICTs into the political and diplomatic sphere, such concerns have spurred debates around the benefits or detriments of the Internet with roots in research of the ‘critique of technology’.

The so-called information revolution began, most notably, with the ARPANET project. Western nations and leading political leaders during the mid-to-late 20th century and early 21st century adopted cyber-optimist arguments similar to those of the community-building camp that Bimber (1998) described. These debates reflect and repeat those that arose about television, radio, the telegraph, and even the printing press. The debate is less about the particular technologies and more about the social consequences or the social activities that they limit or constrain. The contrasting camps established themselves as early as the late 1990’s.

Politically, the concerns concentrated around the transformation of the public sphere, political participation and democratic change, and issues around social cohesion. The populist camp claimed “the Internet would erode the influence of organized groups and political elites,” and the community-building camp claimed “the Internet would cause a restructuring of the nature of community and the foundations of social order” (Bimber, 1998). The optimists or community-building camp included scholars such as Dahl (1989), Etzioni (1993), and Grossman (1995) who believed the Internet would prove to be a democratizing force—the “third

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13 ARPANET, shorthand for The Advanced Research Projects Agency Network, is recognized as the core network of what became the Internet. The network was funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) of the United States Department of Defense (DOD) and was based on designs by Lawrence Roberts of the Lincoln Laboratory.
great epoch of democracy” (Bimber, 1998, p. 134). Most notable were claims that the nation-state would cease to exist or “evaporate” given the growth of such new technologies (Bimber, 1998, p. 134; Negroponte, 1995, p. 165). Conversely, considerations about the effects of the Internet on social cohesion lead to hypotheses about political polarization and extremism (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001; Farrell, 2012). However, both sides tended to be extreme in their claims and neither presented substantial theoretical support.

As discussed previously, assumptions that social media offer a revolutionary opportunity to create the necessary conditions for states to generate social capital through digital diplomacy never before possible may be overstated. Similar to critiques offered by Frankfurt School theorists, this debate deals with normative value of such social media technologies. There are currently three points of view regarding the influence of social media and its effects on social capital in society. These include the technologically deterministic variations of cyber-optimism and cyber-pessimism and a more contextually and socially contingent variation represented by social shaping of technology (SST) / social construction of technology (SCOT) literature.

Social media have often been designated as a unique innovation by optimists, sometimes in an ahistorical way possibly due to its ability to allow convergence. As such, social media technologies renew an old debate. Cyber-optimists and cyber-pessimists believe the use of social media pre-determines outcomes of positive or negative results, respectively. While many have offered comment and research, three specific commentators have been the most notable in the debate as of late.
These commentators are the ‘cyber-optimist’ Clay Shirky, ‘cyber-realist’ Evgeny Morozov, and ‘cyber-pessimist’ Malcolm Gladwell.

Cyber-optimists regard social media as being a force for positive change in political systems and international relations. In some cases social media and the Internet are seen as a “panacea” (Morozov, 2011, pp. 19–20), allowing for mutual interaction and discussion and hence possibility for the construction of shared experience and meaning. Many cyber-optimists accept and assume that the communications landscape “gets denser, more complex, and more participatory” as it grows and therefore the networked population gain “greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech, and an enhanced ability to undertake collective action” (Shirky, 2011, p. 29). For the most part this optimism assumes a move towards democratization, the removal of authoritarian regimes, and the empowerment of individuals through the spread of these technologies and the social interaction they allow.

Early optimist, John Perry Barlow, famously distributed a Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace in 1996 (Barlow, 1996). Other cyber-optimists, such as Lévy (2000) and Morris & Delafon (2002), also believe that ICTs have the ability to level the field and bring forth an egalitarian or cyber-democratic society that is free of state power and emancipated from market forces and manipulation (Breindl, 2010, p. 43). The overarching theme is the presumption that cyber-space, the Internet and associated ICTs empower individuals and shifts power from the state or governments to the individual. The flattening of power hierarchies and the removal of traditional power constraints is seen as a positive effect of ICTs that
offer new opportunities and possibilities.

In opposition, cyber-pessimists dismiss the idea that social media or the effects of ICTs and internet access lead to what Kvasny and Keil (2006) regard as “digital opportunities” (p. 27). Instead, the Internet and such social technologies represent an avenue for further exploitation and control. In many ways, there exists a ‘paradox’ of the idea of the Internet given that these ICTs have succumbed to the capitalist commodification process, which has damaged its democratic potential as an “increasingly open public sphere” and transformed it “into a private sphere of increasingly closed, proprietary, even monopolistic markets” (Foster & McChesney, 2011, p. 97). In the cyber-pessimist view, the Internet is not emancipatory, but reinforces dominant power structures.

Outside the determinist setting of the cyber-optimist/pessimist dichotomy, cyber-realists, the group in which Morozov includes himself, believe that social media “is simply one in a long series of communication technologies which operate in a subservient role to larger political forces” (Swenson, 2011, p. 104). Although, sometimes referred to as a pessimist as well, Morozov’s viewpoint represents a more moderate approach in line with the perspective of this research. This group recognizes that “while the Internet has the potential to both oppress and liberate, which side dominates depends on the social and political context in which it is used rather than on some internal ‘logic’ that derives from its architecture or culture” (“Economist Debates,” 2011). This more balanced view sees both “beneficial and detrimental, intended and unintended consequences” that are swayed by “power relations, knowledge, policies, technical skills and resources”
(Kvasny & Keil, 2006, p. 27). Thus, they are cautious to agree with notions that the Internet can remove deep-seated hatred or re-shape relationships through a like on Facebook.

Some cyber-realists have critically commented, as Morozov has, that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, Instagram, and other social media networks have developed in an effort to avoid the influence of controlled messages by such government entities as the State Department. However, this takes as a given that such public diplomacy agencies are unwilling or incapable of adjusting to the new environment and only interested in exerting control. Perhaps that is the case, but they may well be able to negotiate a place within these networks and generate social capital for the state. Still, whether the state hope to exert control or adapt the important point to carry forward is that there is no predetermined outcome.

Thus, taking into consideration the arguments of cyber-optimist, pessimist, and realist viewpoints and moving beyond the determinist perspective, this research recognizes that claims we are experiencing an information revolution or embarking on an Information Age are hyperbolized (Winston, 1998, p. 1). Instead, innovation in the technological field is more evolutionary. Looking at technological innovations throughout history, it is clear that the developments are more “bizarre happenstance” rather than the result of deliberate planning (Neuman, 2010b, p. 2) since one cannot plan the effect of social influences. Neuman (2010b) further expounded that “what we know as newspapers, radio and television were socially constructed, not technologically determined,” a core theorem of SST/SCOT models (p. 2). SCOT is a theoretical perspective that explores the interaction of cultural
beliefs and the constraints exerted by embedded interests and the political economy of technical change. This research takes a SST/SCOT approach in assessing the deterministic assumptions that have been much more popular in mainstream circles and have therefore tended to underlay the introduction and establishment of state’s digital diplomacy outreach.

This theoretical viewpoint does not favour a positive or negative outcome nor guarantee the generation of social capital in any context. Rather the outcome is dependent on the way in which actors and networks engage, how the resulting capital is spent, and how actors influence one another. Societal interaction influences the results, which can include both hard and soft power elements. In regards to the relational approach, it would comprise such activities as bi-directional dialogue, relationship building, and knowledge sharing across diverse networks of strong and weak ties. The interest in this research is to step back from assumptions of pre-determined outcomes, assess the situation and determine if and how the state is generating social capital through social media digital diplomacy.

While this research questions the technological determinist character of both the cyber-optimists and cyber-pessimists, the cyber-optimist’s assumptions regarding the revolutionary nature of social media are the main concern. These arguments are of interest because they have found mainstream acceptance and because it has been the source behind many state’s digital diplomacy strategies. As Odugbemi (2009) remarked, the conversation regarding social media often proclaims that new social media tools will “destroy all others, life will change beyond recognition.”
and that “mass media is ‘legacy media’” (Odugbemi, 2009). Moreover, Odugbemi cites Newton’s summary of questionable assumptions of the social media community, including:

- Everyone has access to new media.
- Everyone has goodwill and will not harm others.
- Everyone can correct each other.
- Everything is transparent.

Most, if not all, of these assumptions are inaccurate, but many states have embraced social media and the allure of digital diplomacy with expectations of optimistic outcomes. This research questions the assumptions that interaction within digital social networks automatically results in the establishment of relationships that bridge across diverse networks to facilitate knowledge sharing and exchange, thus creating mutual understanding and mediating estrangement.

Assuming that social media offers avenues for forming new relationships based on information dissemination as well as knowledge exchange in a bi-directional fashion, then social media digital diplomacy is an important venture for the state from a diplomatic perspective. This is especially true in a global environment in which soft power approaches, such as the relational approach to diplomacy, have become the predominant method of state interaction. As described, critical theorists of the Frankfurt School offered new public diplomacy scholars interesting considerations regarding discourse, public interaction, and issues of power asymmetries and biases inherent in technology that influenced the development of digital diplomacy. The assumption that social media and other ICT innovations constructed McLuhan’s ‘global village’ or that the digital medium alone could help eliminate alienation and estrangement between actors, is, as Comor (2013) noted,
“dubious” (pp. 1, 7, 9). Moreover, the basic arguments of these theorists have continued in the 21st century and surround the Internet and social media as described by the cyber-pessimist, optimist, and realist debate.

This debate has been integral for the inclusion of social media into diplomatic practice. Digital diplomacy initiatives regard interaction within digital networks as potential opportunities for dialogue, debate, and collaboration as well as spaces for establishing an alternative narrative that may not have been available before (Hallams, 2010, p. 571). As noted, both sides see the appeal of this potential, but differ in outlooks towards results, which depend on how states incorporate and adapt social media. Whether or not to engage in social networks is now an irrelevant question, as the global society appears to demand it and states are already trying to interact within and across these networks. Does that mean that digital diplomacy through social media generates social capital and if so how?

1.2.2: A note on actor network theory

The medium we use to transmit our ideas, knowledge, and messages is certainly important, and although McLuhan (1964) asserted the ‘medium is the message,’ technological innovation is “more than a technological arm of efficacy; it is simultaneously a message by itself, and both a potential and actual shaper of content carried upon it” (Chong, 2007, p. 14; McLuhan, 2001). The medium is not the whole message and “there is simply no overwhelming reason to believe that a new medium will necessarily enhance the political quality of communicative content” (Bimber, 1998, p. 136). Moreover, research that only categorizes
technologies by their functions “fails to ask broader questions about the contexts of their use and their broader social and cultural impacts” (Flew, 2008, p. 2). The communication activities that we engage in and the social arrangements that form around these technological innovations and human practices create an ensemble that is “characterized by dynamic links and interdependencies among artefacts, practices and social arrangements” (Flew, 2008, pp. 3–4; Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002, pp. 1–14). The social world is not assumed to be something to discover, but is instead constructed by the continuous making and remaking of associations and groups.

This perspective is reflected in the ANT approach that emerged from science and technology studies (STS) in the early 1980’s and is attributed to Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law (Latour, 2005). The social shaping of technology (SST) and social construction of technology (SCOT) models in science and technology studies that produced ANT are, as noted, the counterpoint for technological determinist positions. The original starting point for SCOT is one that recognizes the problem that researchers had not accepted “science and technology are themselves socially produced in a variety of social circumstances” (Pinch & Bijker, 1984, p. 403). Maintaining a siloed outlook results in a linear model of innovation, which is unrepresentative of the process of mutual reconstruction that occurs.

The original movement towards SCOT suggested that technology innovation is an open process with the result ensuing from intergroup negotiations, and that the actions of relevant social groups manifested the meanings to artefacts (Klein & Kleinman, 2002, p. 29). As such, this line of study has produced a great deal of
research, but has remained primarily agency-centred. Therefore, minimal research investigating the influence of social structures of technological innovation and vice versa (Klein & Kleinman, 2002). Missing in the original conceptualization of SCOT is the consideration of socio-cultural and socio-political factors. This has led to numerous criticisms, especially the disregard of concerns regarding structure in favour of emphasizing agency (Klein & Kleinman, 2002). The development of ANT aimed to move beyond this dichotomy as well as to leave behind an adherence to a linear model of scientific, technological, and social development and focus on effects (Cressman, 2009). Given the topic of this research, the inclusion of human and non-human elements, and the perspective adopted ANT is an appropriate choice.

ANT aims to explain how material-semiotic networks come together to act as a whole, whereby, the network is constituted of technical and social elements—actants—that are continuously shaped and re-shaped by the heterogeneous forces within those networks (Stanforth, 2007, p. 38). This approach to investigating networks, their interactive processes, and results allows for a more holistic approach taking into consideration all actants that influence the process.

To understand ANT it is necessary to draw attention to the definitions of actor, actant, and network within the specific context of the theory. The terms are defined as follows: an actor is an association of heterogeneous elements that constitutes a network and a network is a “group of unspecified relationships among entities of which the nature itself is undetermined” (Callon, 1993, p. 263). More plainly, an actor in ANT is explained as “combinations of symbolically
invested ‘things,’ ‘identities,’ relations, and inscriptions, networks capable of
nesting within other diverse networks” (Ritzer, 2005, p. 1). While actant is defined
by Latour (2004) as anything that modifies other actors through a series of actions
(p. 75). More precisely an actant is understood as “any agent, collective or
individual, that can associate or disassociate with other agents, deriving their
nature from the networks with which they associate (Ritzer, 2005, p. 1). Finally,
actants can develop into networks as well.

Following from the fact that actants themselves organize networks, Latour notes
“social aggregates are not the object of an *ostensive* definition ... but only of a
*performative* definition” (Latour, 2005, p. 34). The interaction of networks is a
focus of this research that recognizes power “as a consequence and not as a cause
of collective action” (Stanforth, 2007, p. 39). Furthermore, ANT understands the
process of building and changing networks as political in nature. In essence this is
unavoidable from an ANT perspective since “actors put forward favoured solutions
and contest these and by enrolling allies, they are able to mobilize the resources to
sustain commitment for the new network” (Stanforth, 2007, p. 39). The use of ANT
offers more comprehensive method of tracing and understanding a ‘socio-technical
network’ characteristic of the Information Age (Flew, 2008, p. 31). It sets forth an
approach that focuses on the processes of social changes in society through the
introduction and quick growth of social media in which, the building of networks
and relationships is an on-going political process. In such an environment ideas,
norms, and values play a role in the social phenomena of relationship building,
thus the importance of a relational approach to digital diplomacy.
However, the network society puts the state in a precarious situation, caught between the global network and its domestic constituents, between maximizing relationships and reinforcing state identities. Given this dilemma, governments must change the way they do business to make their best voices heard in a networked world (Metzl, 2001). If governments fail to internalize globalization’s lessons, their ability to promote broad-based values and engage in this dialogue will diminish relative to others (Metzl, 2001). The growing influence of non-state actors has been a recurring theme in public diplomacy discussions. An “enhanced transnational civil society and issue networks...can serve as invaluable tools for sharing information, developing mutual understanding, and solving problems” (Metzl, 2001, p. 85). In the absence of this communication link to the global network, the state risks losing the trust of the public, especially in dealing with issues of global concern such as the environment, poverty, terrorism, and other trans-national issues.

Publics, non-state actors, and other trans-national organizations constitute a global public civil society in the international arena, which functions in a global public sphere. This global public sphere is beyond the influence of any single sovereign power and the disappearance of the barriers of time and space in the network society facilitate greater information flow across state borders. Hence, this global civil society exists independently from political institutions and from the mass media, striving for global governance without a global government (Nisbet, 2011). The influence of this global public sphere is dependent on the global/local communication through new ICTs such as YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook (Nisbet, 2011). This dependence is associated with the connections or ties made
within and between social media networks and the actants that comprise these networks. Previous research has observed and traced network ties in a quantitative fashion advancing our understanding of how social media can generate network relationships.

Networks as organizational structures have always existed. The more accurate and pressing question is what type of network? Structure, for the purposes of this research, is interesting insofar as it affects process. This is where social media becomes a critical variable. Some theories or assumptions presume that social media has moved the network structure from vertical or hierarchical to horizontal. Horizontal networks facilitate the need to move to a more collaborative process. Essentially, the social capital that develops from different ties is dependent on the network’s structure and different structures offers different benefits. Therefore, as per Burt (2005), the process of balancing brokerage and closure in the network structure is an especially important aspect. This brings me to the exploration of the debate regarding the effects of ICTs on the diplomatic practice of states specifically and the ability of the state to generate social capital by engaging with networks.

This chapter has traced the evolution of public diplomacy and outlined new public diplomacy and the relational approach that has become a focus in diplomatic studies. As illustrated, new public diplomacy allows for the inclusion of multiple actors other than the state, the blurring of domestic and foreign boundaries, and the focus on interaction with and inclusion of methods, approaches and tactics from other fields of study and practice, and most significantly for this research the implementation of new, innovative ICTs such as social media. Nonetheless, new
public diplomacy, as an advanced version of public diplomacy iterations before it, maintains a focus on communication. As a variant, digital diplomacy is predisposed to engagement and dialogue within digital social networks where the focus, given a public diplomacy aimed at mutual understanding, is communicative action. Social media appears to help facilitate such dialogue and exchange.

The background presented in this chapter sets the basis for the evaluation of social capital in Chapter 2, which delineates the appropriateness of the relational approach in digital diplomacy in context of generating social capital. In addition, Chapter 2 outlines the framework, which sets forth the relational components of trust and reciprocity (access, openness, commitment and credibility) associated with social capital and public diplomacy. This framework is used to critically analyse the case studies in the second part of the research dissertation to determine if and how the US and Israel generate social capital via digital public diplomacy.
Chapter 2: Relational Social Capital through Digital Diplomacy

This chapter connects the concepts of social capital, social media, and public diplomacy. The purpose of this section is to reinforce the interplay between the theoretical research regarding social media and networks on one side with new public diplomacy, specifically the mode of digital engagement and the relational approach, on the other and then highlight the linkages of the resulting relational digital diplomacy with social capital. The previous chapter reviewed the evolution of new public diplomacy and the relational approach to examine the influence and importance of networks, technology and relationships. This laid the foundation for the introduction of digital diplomacy, a sub-form of new public diplomacy. Next, in the context of a relational digital diplomacy, the influence of new ICTs, specifically social media, on diplomatic practice was explored. The discussion continued by focusing on research that has offered evidence that social media has the ability to build relationships and facilitate cooperation and collaboration in digital social networks. Now, the link between digital diplomacy and relational social capital is investigated.

This research assumes the goal of public diplomacy is to reach mutual understanding, which in turn influences perceptions, ideas, values and attitudes to foster cooperation and collaboration. This exercise of soft power requires capital and one form of capital required is social capital. The generation of social capital is the focus in this chapter. Therefore, a theoretical overview of social capital research, its relational dimensions, and connections to digital diplomacy will be useful. Finally, this section sketches the framework used to assess social capital generation in the case studies. So, what is social capital?
Social capital, although not a new idea itself with research on the concept reaching back as far as the 1960’s, has enjoyed renewed vigour. Increased attention came with Putman’s *Bowling Alone* (2000), which discussed the collapse of American community connected to factors such as trust, norms, and networks. A second work, Fukuyama’s *Trust* (Fukuyama, 1995), aligned the ability of a state to be competitive with its level of trust or cooperative behaviour based upon shared norms. The interesting point here is that both authors arrived at the same conclusion: “successful cooperation for long-term mutual benefit depends on the cultivation of social capital” (Bridger & Luloff, 2001, p. 464). Social capital has the potential to improve the efficiency of society and coordinate action (Field, 2008, p. 4). As Fine (2001) stated, and as has been alluded to in this dissertation, social capital “can be used in a number of different ways that are not pre-determined” (p. 103) and therefore questions began to emerge about how social capital is generated, how it can be spent and what its effect is on situations.

Much research in the past two decades has used social capital in numerous different contextual settings, and across different issues, topics, and fields. Given the amount of research on the topic there is apparent utility in the concept (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Steinfield, Ellison, Lampe, & Vitak, 2013) and this holds true for public diplomacy as well. The concept has been regarded as an element of influence in economic prosperity (Fukuyama, 1995), regional development (Grootaert & Van Bastelaer, 2002), collective action (Burt, 1992), democratic governance (Putnam, 2000; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993), industrial development (Knorringa & van Staveren, 2006), public policy (Lang & Hornburg, 1998), and economic development (Woolcock, 1998; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000),
as well as in many other settings. Social capital, like public diplomacy, is highly contextual and the definition of what social capital is cannot be explained separate from its use, given that social capital is context dependent (Fine, 2001, p. 103), thus generalization often proves invalid (p. 97). Nonetheless, an understanding of the concept, even if broadly defined, is helpful in moving this exploration forward. Therefore, this section begins by exploring the definitions offered by scholars seen as foundational in social capital research.

Although, all having somewhat different definitions, the definitions of social capital offered by the three main early scholars, including Coleman, Putnam, and Bourdieu, do allow for this generalization: social capital facilitates action. Connecting this to new public diplomacy the action facilitated is the exercise of either hard or soft power. As has been expounded upon in previous sections the contemporary global environment is one in which soft power action is preferred to hard power conflict. However, there are different dimensions of social capital: structural and relational. The structural dimension or “structural embeddedness” has been the most analysed in social capital research (Moran, 2005). However, the relational dimension aligns more appropriately with public diplomacy as conceptualized in this research. In social capital research, the structural aligns with Coleman’s work and the relational with Bourdieu.

Coleman (1994) defined social capital by its function and classified it as “a variety of different entities, having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure” (p. 302). Putnam (1993) referred to social capital as
“connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” creating a network of reciprocal social relations (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). About a decade earlier Bourdieu (1986) discussed social capital as the “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (pp. 248–49). Bourdieu’s definition describes social capital as the embedded resources that result through the social interaction within and between the networks.

There are differences but also points of overlap in the social capital scholar’s conceptualizations and one of particular note for this research is that relationships are key in generating social capital. One of the major debates in the research is regarding whether social capital is a community or individual level resource (Lin, 2001b). As per Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992):

> The sum of measures, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (p. 119).

One side, represented by Bourdieu (1986, 2001), argues that individuals possess the ability to exercise the resource, but that the resource is only available through interaction and engagement in a collective or network. On the other hand, social capital is a community resource alone; Putnam (2000) represents this line of thinking.

If social capital is an individual resource accessed through engagement in a collective or network, then it follows that different individuals would find they had access to different amounts. In further research this point was asserted by Lin
(2001) who understood social capital as a resource that was a result of individual "investment in social relations" and that these actors take part in "interactions and networking in order to produce profits" (Lin, 2001a, p. 6; Steinfield et al., 2013). Bourdieu’s conceptualization and Lin’s assertion fall in line with a reality of the social world with which public diplomacy practice must contend. Symmetry is not a normal situation in the social world. Since asymmetric power exists—social or otherwise, it follows that those actors with an elevated status influence the interaction, even in a digital social network. Theoretically, social media offers the possibility to flatten hierarchies and therefore flatten asymmetries as well. Therefore, digital diplomacy, may offer a way to mitigate power asymmetries.

Nonetheless, this aspect highlights another point of disagreement in social capital research. Bourdieu and Coleman diverge, arguing different perspectives on whether social capital is an instrument used by higher classes to reinforce and maintain social structures for their benefit. Bourdieu believed social capital to be an asset of the privileged alone that held no possible value for less privileged individuals and Coleman saw that social ties and the capital that could be attained through these connections offer potential value to all communities, groups and individuals (Field, 2003, pp. 29–38). Coleman’s assertion that social capital was not only available to individuals, but that communities and groups could harness it as well, provided for claims of social capital’s potential for collective action. Of course, both claims are potentially possible and contingent on the context and constraints of the social system.
Furthermore, most conceptualizations designate social capital as a resource. Although more functional in nature, Coleman’s (1988) research offers that social capital “inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among them” and that it comes about in the “changes in the relations among persons that facilitate action” (Coleman, 2000, p. 22). Coleman’s attention to relations of actors within and between networks is further underscored by the understanding of social capital as a “particular kind of resource” that is available to the individual or the collective through the actor’s interactions in the social networks or relationships (Coleman, 2000, p. 20; Field, 2003, p. 33). However, his research is narrow and concentrated on ‘bonding’ social capital specifically.

The emphasis on closed networks and shared norms as the foundations for generating social capital (Coleman, 2000) create issues when transferring the concept to public diplomacy. Lin’s (2001) research and social capital definition reinforce many of Coleman’s points. Lin (2001) explains social capital as capital that “is captured in social relations,” but Lin’s statement that “examining the mechanisms and processes by which embedded resources in social networks are captured” is essential in appreciating social capital (p. 3). This point is central in the presented research, as the aim is to examine if and how the state generates such resources (social capital) through mechanisms (components of trust and reciprocity: access, openness, commitment, credibility) and processes (interaction, collaboration, exchange) in digital diplomacy.

In this research, social capital is as an outcome of the interaction and participation in networks. The process is one in which actors come together and build valuable
relationships across interest and topics, which contribute to the growth of social capital through exchange of new information, reciprocal obligations and expectations, and shared norms, thus building trust. While aspects of Coleman and Lin's research are important to incorporate, Bourdieu's perspective offers a great deal given his view that world politics are socially constructed (Adler-Nissen, 2013, p. 4; Guzzini, 2000; Jackson, 2008; Pouliot, 2007). Combining aspects offered by previous research, this research relies mainly on Bourdieu's conceptualization using the following definition of social capital: social capital is a resource represented by the sum of reciprocity, trust, and information potential available through participation in social networks, holding value within the specific contextual settings. Therefore, the next section focuses specifically on connecting social capital and public diplomacy to outline the contextual setting in which the case studies are assessed.

2.1: Connecting social capital and public diplomacy

Aspects of social capital have been present in political science and especially in the area of diplomatic studies for some time. For public diplomacy, the embedded positive and negative social capital resources of relationships, trust, and knowledge sharing are a powerful and important factor to consider, but the usage of the term social capital is relatively new. At approximately the same time that social capital research gained renewed consideration, Nye (1998) was building the concept of soft power. There is an overlap between the terms soft power and social capital, which can be a problematic convolution. The vital distinction between the concepts is that social capital is required to exercise soft power. They are not one in the same and distinguishing between social capital and soft power can be
confusing. Yet, given the concept of soft power has come to mean almost everything it means almost nothing (Hoagland, 2004; Ying Fan, 2008), as has the concept of social capital. Therefore, it is important to reposition the terms and clarify the connection between social capital and public diplomacy.

Nye’s (2004, 2008, 2010a, 2011) concept of soft power rests on three resources of an actor including culture, political values, and foreign policies, all intrinsically connected to one another (Nye, 2011, p. 84) and is defined as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment” (Nye, 2004, p. x). The definition was later refined by Nye (2011) as “the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes” (pp. 20–21). Soft power is concerned with the behaviour outcome, but not the generation or maintenance of the resources needed to exercise soft power.

However, exercising soft power is contingent on social capital. Social capital in turn relies on the ability to develop understanding, dialogue, and relationships as a means to develop collective action (Fischer, 2010, p. 271). The evolution of diplomatic practice showed that previous models of diplomacy (i.e., traditional G2G approaches) were less possible today due to the breakdown of the linear, controlled, one-way message information arrangement. Thus, the efficacy of soft power resides in relationships and memberships within networks. Networks can influence access to other actors and these network ties or connections are fundamental to the generation of social capital (Hazleton & Kennan, 2000). As Williams (2006) explained, “establishing the presence of
networks is important because it is the causal mechanism in the formation of social capital” (p. 598). In regards to international relations and diplomacy, these networks are perhaps better understood as “webs of significance”, to use Geertz’s (1973) term—meaning culture that man “himself has spun”, whereby the analysis is “an interpretative one in search of meaning” (p. 5). In this sense Geertz’s idea of culture means the total way of life including the ways of thinking, acting, feeling, and believing, essentially the socially constructed world.

Often research focused on ideas, beliefs, norms, work to eliminate ‘politics’ or ignore the “role of structural elements in shaping the political imagination” (Jackson, 2008, p. 161). This resembles Brown’s (2013) critique of approaches of the new public diplomacy focused exclusively on the communicative act (p. 45). An almost exclusive focus on “language, and in particular on the way discursive formations create political reality, too often comes at the expense of all other elements shaping policy choices” (Jackson, 2008, p. 161). Moving beyond this singular focus sets a holistic foundation for assessing the network's ability to generate social capital.

However, previous research on social capital has focused on the structural aspects, thereby sidelining the relational aspects. These main forms carry with them certain dimensions (Bartkus & Davis, 2010; Kramer, 2010; Lin, 2001a, 2001b; Nahapiet, 2010). Much of the previous social capital research especially the literature that combines public diplomacy and social capital has concentrated on structural social capital. This includes investigation of tie strength (Granovetter, 1973, 1983), the examination of network centrality (Freeman, 1979), and
structural holes (Burt, 1992, 2000, 2005, 2010). To offer a different perspective and to align appropriately with the relational approach to public diplomacy this research will be concerned specifically with relational social capital.

Giddens’s (1984) structuration theory offers clarification on the interaction of agents and structures, focusing on the interaction of ideas, beliefs and identities, as well as the structural environment in which action takes place (Giddens, 1984; Jackson, 2008; Sewell, Jr., 1999). This is represented by Bourdieu’s argument that the movements of social actors are a result of the interaction of an actor’s ‘habitus’ and the structures of a particular contextual ‘field’. Bourdieu’s (1986) work regards social capital as resources residing in relationships and that relationships are created through exchange. In contrast to Coleman’s rational-choice theory based approach to social capital, Bourdieu takes a relational approach (Häuberer, 2011).

Bourdieu's concept is similar to Jacobs's (1961) notion that social capital develops from “strong, cross-cutting personal relationships that develop over time” and that create “a basis for trust, cooperation and collective action” (Jacobs, 1961; Ostrom, 2010, p. 18). Social capital requires organizational trust that creates the environment needed for members to “engage in activities together,” which depends on strength, breadth, and depth of networks and shared norms and this in turn creates trust (Davis & Bartkus, 2010, p. 319). This exemplifies the recursive and contextual nature of agency and structure in building social capital, as social capital is composed of and reinforces “features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks, that...[facilitate] coordinated actions” (Field, 2003, p. 41;
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Putnam et al., 1993, p. 167). An institution, like the state, or a structured space like the digital space, can offer this organizational trust. Either way, the building of relationships and the classification of social capital as a resource are aspects of Bourdieu and Jacobs's research central to the relational approach to public diplomacy and the exercise of soft power.

Connecting the evolution of the relational approach in public diplomacy and social media with the concept of social capital it is clear that the relational approach is indeed focused on both maintaining and generating the resource of social capital. Thus, we return to the research question of whether social capital is being generated through social media in digital public diplomacy and, if so, then how? This, as noted, depends on whether the states are developing relationships that engender trust and reciprocity across and between networks in which they are active. However, this research has been heavily quantitative, so this research takes a qualitative approach by directing attention towards the relational dimensions of social capital.

2.2: Social capital & social media: the components of trust & reciprocity

The best way to gain a clear understanding of social capital is to consider its individual components (Bridger & Luloff, 2001, p. 465). The theoretical and practical research on relational approach, social capital, and relational social capital assume similar features. The most important features for the generation of social capital in regards to the aspects afforded primacy in the relational approach including relationship building and collaboration prove to be trust and reciprocity. These features are operationalized through access, openness (sometimes referred
to as transparency), commitment, and credibility. Previous discussion about social media and networks recognized that “members of networks engage in a constant building and rebuilding” (Haythornthwaite, 2002, p. 394). This is possible only through commitment and open exchange of information given that relationships are the basis of network ties, whether weak or strong.

ICTs have become an important factor since social media have the ability to facilitate such relationships on a broader, larger scale—thus; states assume engagement in digital social networks offers access to greater social capital resources. Scholarship regarding social capital generation through social media or social networking platforms such as Facebook generally agree that these platforms have a positive effect on community and trust building generally (Kavanaugh, Carroll, Rosson, Zin, & Reese, 2005; Lampe et al., 2007; Phulari et al., 2010; Valenzuela et al., 2009). The concept of ‘network capital,’ essentially social capital in the digital realm, is the capacity to engender and sustain social relations with individuals who are not necessarily proximate, thus generating emotional, financial, and practical benefit (Komito, 2011, p. 1076). Network capital is social capital resulting from shared experiences that construct new shared and collective norms and communities through interaction in digital social networks.

Like other networks, digital social networks can be composed of either strong or weak ties with the balancing of these connections a key issue in maintaining participation in the network (Herreros, 2004). Thus, it is possible that engagement through a relational approach in digital social networks by the state—digital diplomacy—will generate social capital. New technologies have become a focus for
social research because they offer cheaper, easier, and more efficient means and techniques for “networking and building relationships” (Olins, 2005, p. 183). In fact, face-to-face contacts do not lead to more generalized trust than passive participation, which is associated with digital social networks.

Passive participation is just as effective in generating social capital, whereas association in multiple networks is a much more important indication of an actor’s ability to generate social capital (Wollebaek & Selle, 2002). In regards to the influence of social media in developing social capital, the result that passive participation is also effective in generating social capital is an important point, specifically because it contradicts Putnam’s claims that face-to-face interactions are the basis of social capital generation. Moreover, the Internet and specifically social media offer opportunities for promoting cross-national collaborative engagement as well as dialogic and monologic communication (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008, p. 26). Since social media allows for all three different types of communication and for balancing the brokerage and closure of networks across time and space, it would be reasonable to expect the generation of social capital online.

Public diplomacy, especially new public diplomacy, is “an open process” (Tuch, 1990, p. 4). By engaging in digital diplomacy, the state enters a social network and through this open process develops both strong and weak ties in an effort to generate social capital. If membership of social networks determine the “potential stock of social capital” (Herreros, 2004, p. 7), then the state, as an actant within a network, has the potential to acquire social capital. Therefore, the state can play an
important role in generating social capital within and between networks (Herreros, 2004). A tie, whether potential (latent), weak or strong does not necessarily remain perpetually latent, weak or strong, but can evolve over time and as Haythornthwaite (2002) concluded, “communication is a key way in which ties are maintained,” and presumably evolve and “media enable such connection” (p. 387). Social media, therefore, are assumed to be “as real in terms of their impact on the tie as are offline exchanges” and online and offline interactions and exchanges can become extensions of each other (Haythornthwaite, 2002, p. 388).

Trust, which develops over time by consistent interaction and stability of reputation allows, in combination with obligations of reciprocity, for the generation of social capital. Social capital consists of certain resources gained through participation in social networks; these resources include relations of trust and obligations of reciprocity. While participation is a potential source of social capital, it does not insinuate an instantaneous creation of social capital (Herreros, 2004, p. 7). Trust is not itself social capital (Herreros, 2004, p. 7) nor is trust guaranteed in any interaction because “trust is an expectation not a decision” (p. 9) and “expectations of trust are not always rational” (p. 3) as they are social constructs. Both Putnam’s (1993, 2000) and Levi’s (Levi, 1997) research focus on reciprocity and trust in connection with collaboration and commitment (Tilly, 2005, pp. 132–133). Moreover, in regards to political interaction, Tilly (2005) outlined an understanding of trust that develops from relationships in networks needing to be connected to policy to generate social capital (pp. 134–135). In term of public diplomacy, the policy goal theoretically is to reach mutual understanding.
Social media does not change this, but trust networks are simply reorganizing and adapting, given that "life is 'glocalized': combining long-distance ties with continuing involvements in households, neighborhoods, and worksites" (Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002, p. 32). In this research, I delineate trust and reciprocity as being comprised of four components: access, openness, commitment, and credibility. These four components offer actors the ability to acquire new knowledge, understand reputation, and develop shared values and norms. The balance between brokerage and closure in this process helps derive the maximum benefit from the relations, but misguided or unchecked relations can also lead to a loss of social capital or negative and unforeseen consequences.

Further to the point of commitment, Seo's (2013) research in “The 'Virtual Last Three Feet” again discusses the importance of this component as observed in the study. Seo (2013) concludes that public diplomacy initiatives online should “include strategies designed to build relationships with global publics, rather than simply delivering information to them” (p. 166). Here again, Seo (2013) reinforces the four components of access, openness, commitment, and credibility, specifically stating that they have “important implications for relationship-based public diplomacy” (p. 160). Finally, as an example used to help structure this research, Seo notes that in the relational approach, along with relationships:

commitment and mutual trust are important aspects of the relational framework that aim to 'find commonalities and mutual interests between publics and then ways to link those publics via some form of direct interpersonal communication.' New digital technologies may facilitate that shift from the informational to the relational framework (p. 158).

Observing and assessing the communication dynamics of the case studies using the broader, holistic ANT approach recognizes that networks are structures, but public
diplomacy is a process that includes monologue, dialogue, and collaboration (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008; Zaharna, 2013, p. 174). This perspective removes assumptions of a specific pre-determined outcome and allows for a critical assessment of the state’s ability to generate social capital.

This dissertation operationalizes social capital by examining the presence of the component elements of trust and reciprocity—access, openness, commitment, and credibility. The balance between strong and weak ties within and across networks known as brokerage and closure helps derive the maximum benefit from the relations. As such, I incorporate Zaharna’s (2013) discussion of “network synergy,” which is designated as the relational dynamics in a network and includes commitment to the relationship, balancing the closure and brokerage to allow openness and access to diverse information and knowledge as well as new actants/actors (Zaharna, 2013, pp. 182–184). Of course, the information shared and the networks engaged and connected must be credible.

Earlier I defined public diplomacy as a set of communication and interactive activities carried out by governmental or quasi-governmental organizations intended to influence external politics and international relations. In this setting, the generation of social capital is a high priority. Furthermore, I define social capital as follows:

Social capital is the sum of obligations of reciprocity and that derive from relations of trust and the information potential offered by participation in social networks.

Therefore, the generation of social capital through public diplomacy is contingent on the actor’s (in this case the state) ability to conduct communication and
interactive activities that develop relations of trust and obligations of reciprocity. While social capital may not have been the term used it is not a radical idea or new strategic aim for public diplomacy. However, exemplified by the push towards more networked, collaborative, or relational approaches since 9/11, public diplomacy has a renewed focus on social capital generation, both in theory and practice.

2.3: Social capital and digital diplomacy

A fundamental necessity for the generation of social capital is creating an environment in which new ideas and information flow freely and trust and reciprocity develops. Balancing the processes of brokerage and closure in a network is a significant aspect in building an environment suitable for maintaining social capital. Still, one may question if social capital is an important element in reaching public diplomacy goals. Moreover, if it is, can social media sufficiently facilitate an environment conducive to its generation?

Guided by Portes’s (1998) proposition that social capital research should differentiate between the mechanisms allowing for the generation of social capital and its consequences, I reiterate this research is concentrated on understanding the mechanisms (Portes, 1998). However, this research recognizes, given the recursive nature inherent in any process, that mechanisms allowing for the generation of social capital create consequences for the state’s ability to maintain the generation of social capital in an ongoing manner.

This study explores different mechanisms or sources of social capital through the
review of research on such structural elements as tie strength. However, the context is one of the relational element of balancing brokerage and closure not the structural tie itself. Both bridging and bonding capital are necessary, but there must be the right mix, as Knorringa and van Staveren (2006) confirmed in a UNIDO report, which, although focused on social capital in industrial development, offers insight on the operationalization of social capital generally.

Giddens’s structuration theory, which addresses the relationships between structure and agency in terms of the influence social practices have on structures and how they are influenced by structures at the same time reveals a similarity with ANT that “human social activities... are recursive” (Giddens, 1984, p. 2). Furthermore, this “is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time” (Cattell, 2004, p. 947) and there is evidence that this recursive process needs both strong and weak ties. It appears the tension between the different types of ties, as evidenced Cattell (2004) shows that there are both a:

- need for stability of the social structure for the social integration of individuals, and the fluidity concomitant with neighbourhood integration. The point underlines a problem for policy in balancing interventions which foster maintenance of strong ties, with those which facilitate weaker, looser ties (p. 957).

As such, Giddens, Cattell, and Knorringa & van Staveren formulate an argument that both types of ties are integral for a state exercising social media digital diplomacy.

According to Knorringa and van Staveren (2006), policy and action need to balance the transfer between the two types of ties to generate social capital. This depends
on “reducing the role of a common identity and increasing the role of common
goals and shared social values” (Knorringa & van Staveren, 2006, p. 24). Managing
the benefits of each will strengthen stability, social interaction and integration.
Network connections have been a major focus in social capital research, but the
concern in this research is not the strength of ties in social relationships. Rather,
the need to mitigate downsides of the extreme on either side of the argument is an
imperative. This reflects the research about balancing between strong and weak
ties or between brokerage and closure within networks (Burt, 2005). Loose, more
flexible and mobile connections are important for providing brokerage across
networks. However, as the networks interact, they share experiences and establish
norms - an important element in building trust and reciprocity. The development
of shared norms, collective identities and collective action occurs as closure in a
social network develops (Kramer, 2010). Of course, not all connections created are
inherently beneficial and there is usefulness in both strong and weak ties.

As I have noted the literature has led to an understanding that both weak and
strong or bonding and bridging capital are integral in a network, but must be
balanced to mitigate the negative side effects of extensive brokerage and/or
closure. Granovetter’s work on tie strength and his assertion that weak ties can
facilitate greater information exchange, align with Jacob’s early work on bridging
networks and her argument that networks, or neighbourhoods with higher levels
of social capital were those that included interaction between and among a range
of dissimilar people (Jacobs, 1961). However, this is not to say that strong-ties, or
bonding ties, do not also bestow benefits on the networks. The potential gains from
bonding and bridging different networks and/or different portions of networks are
dependent on a host of factors. As Woolcock and Narayan (2000) have argued, “different combinations of bonding and bridging” that offer the wished for, effective or optimal outcome of social capital change over time (p. 227). Both weak and strong ties or bonding and bridging capital offer benefits.

Additionally, balancing closure requires a reflection not just on the strength of ties but in the number and composition of ties within and across the network as well. There are more options on offer and a greater abundance of information, but actors, both human and non-human, are limited in ability to manage, sort and address information and relationships. Further previous research, as Yuan and Gay (2006) detailed, has addressed associated issues of homophily in network ties. They summarize research by Monge and Contractor (2003) that included Byrne’s (1971) similarity-attraction hypothesis and Turner’s (1987) theory of self-categorization. The empirical data offers strong reinforcement that “people who are homogeneous…are much more likely to interact with each other than with people who are heterogeneous” (Yuan & Gay, 2006, p. 1064). Therefore, balancing between brokerage and closure is an important aspect of effectively navigating network relationships in regards to public diplomacy outreach online—or digital diplomacy.

Both bonding and bridging capital develops through social media interaction, which in turn increases apparent social capital (Lampe et al., 2007; Steinfield et al.,

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14 The similarity-attraction hypothesis predicts that people are more likely to interact with those with whom they share similar traits. The theory of self-categorization proposes that people tend to self-categorize themselves and others in terms of race, gender, age, education, etc., and that they use these categories to further differentiate between similar and dissimilar others (Yuan & Gay, 2006, p. 1064).
This increase in ‘perceived social capital’ may “contribute to instrumental action on- and offline” (Stefanone et al., 2012, p. 455). The role of the state, then in a relational public diplomacy approach is to foster an environment that creates such collaborative interaction. Each new network potentially moves towards closure as the relationship between actors develops, but to avoid complete closure a network must carefully balance this with brokerage across diverse networks. Cyber-optimists assumptions herald social media as a way to facilitate engagement across diverse networks to develop new relationships, trust and generate social capital beneficial to the state in the diplomatic arena.

As has been noted, the three academics who have heavily influenced the thinking on social capital are Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam. This research references the work of all three by integrating different aspects in a more nuanced model of social capital. The presented framework is more appropriate for the analysis of the presented case studies and the emphasis on public diplomacy and social media. As a basis, this research agrees that social capital inheres in the relations facilitated through communication between and among actors.

This central idea is not exclusive to any one perspective, but as Lin (2001) notes is a shared notion and “consistent with various renditions” of social capital offered by “all scholars that have contributed to the discussion” of social capital (p. 19). Equally as important, this research reaffirms that communication—dialogue, the sharing of ideas and the co-production of knowledge—and exchange serves as the medium through which these changes are accomplished (Hazleton & Kennan, 2000, p. 81). Thus, this foundation offers a logical link between the concept of
social capital and the goals of the relational approach to public diplomacy described as the development of relationships, shared experiences and mutual trust and respect through bi-directional discourse and knowledge exchange in an effort to mitigate estrangement, alienation and thus conflict.

Social capital is a resource that can be converted to power to influence an actor or network and offers the potential to shape an outcome (Hazleton & Kennan, 2000, p. 82). However, simply being able to generate or possess social capital does not mean that it guarantees any particular outcome, either positive or negative. It is not a given that when accessed it will deliver desired results. As relational aspects of the new public diplomacy continued to gain attention, further research was required to understand the mechanisms that facilitate the generation of social capital. Therefore, in this research it is not a question of whether, in a normative sense, the state is exploiting the social capital generated successfully (since success is a relative term depending on perspective), but rather whether there exist aspects appropriate for the generation of social capital (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2009, p. 3) and how the state is facilitating this generation.

To this point, this chapter has sketched the evolution of diplomacy in tandem with the evolution of global society and technological innovation demonstrating the influence of one on the other and as such has explored the elevated significance of public opinion, relationships, and networks along with the technologies that facilitate expanded reach, flow of information and exchange. This has offered a foundation from which to evaluate the case studies presented in regards to social capital generation. The scope of this research is not to investigate why diplomatic
practice has changed, but how, given these changes, the state can generate social capital through social media. This chapter has reviewed previous research, outlined the concepts and tied together digital diplomacy and the concept of social capital. In this context, I examine the case studies through the framework presented. This established framework delineated that the generation of social capital is reliant on relationships based on trust and reciprocity and the fulfilment of the components of access, openness, credibility and commitment.

The next chapter will describe the methodology and methods used to assess the cases in the second part of this dissertation. The background presented in chapters 1 and 2 outlined the connection between the practice and processes of public and digital diplomacy and the concept of social capital. Chapter 3 describes the methods and methodology used to explore this connection in the diplomatic setting of the state to explore the research question—is social capital being generated through social media in digital public diplomacy, and if so, then how?
Chapter 3: Research Methodology & Methods Overview

The aim of this research is to address how social capital is generated via social media in public diplomacy, not by a measure of quantity, but alternatively in regards to the nature of the process (Berg, 1998, p. 3; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 8). This is done by deferring to the interpretation of the meanings, concepts, definitions, descriptions, and characteristics of obligation, trust, norms, reciprocity, etc. before, during, and after certain actions by and between the state and other actors via social media. As Finnemore and Sinkink (2001) wrote, there is no single model or research design for constructivist research (pp. 395–6). Constructivist empirical research uses many of the same tools, methods, and criteria as other researchers.

This research will offer observations from a new approach, hoping to counter potential pitfalls of quantitative research such as the reporting of statistically or mathematically precise conclusions that do not fit reality (Berg, 1998, p. 8). The methods of data collection used were semi-structured interviews, archival and governmental document research, cyber-ethnography and broad media discourse analysis, as explained below. Through these methods the investigation sought to observe if and how new ways of engagement (social media) influence interaction among actors and whether it constructed intersubjective meaning and shared experiences generating social capital.

Qualitative inquiry regards the researcher as an observer in a specific world or case (Berg, 1998). Such research uses varying methods to interpret and uncover practices through "sustained interaction with the people being studied in their
own language, and on their own turf” (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 12). The researcher aspires to “make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). A qualitative methodology is congruent with the chosen research philosophy and question.

I adopted both methodology and methods that allowed for methodological congruence with the constructivist paradigm or ‘style of reasoning’ (Hacking, 2004, pp. 159–177; Pouliot, 2007). Constructivism is based on three tenets: (a) knowledge is socially constructed (an epistemological claim); (b) social reality is constructed (an ontological claim); and (c), knowledge and reality are mutually constitutive (a reflexive claim) (Guzzini, 2000; Pouliot, 2007, p. 361). As with any style of reasoning, constructivism has repercussions for methodological approach in research. The main implications for methodology given a constructivist or postfoundationalist constructivist (Pouliot, 2007, p. 363) approach are: induction as main approach to knowing; interpretation as the primary task, since it is first and foremost a “search of meaning” (Geertz, 1973, p. 5); and finally, inherently historical (Pouliot, 2007, p. 364). In constructivism, the world is a process.

3.1: Research design: case studies

It was possible to use any number of research designs to gain knowledge regarding how the state is generating social capital via social media public diplomacy. Case studies stress the importance of “the social construction of meaning in situ” and first seek to “identify and describe before trying to analyse and theorize” (Stark & Torrance, 2005, p. 33). After careful consideration of different case study models, I decided individual in-depth cases that allow for the investigation of “contemporary
phenomenon within its real-life context” was most appropriate for this research without limiting variables in the process (Stake, 1994, p. 236; Yin, 2003, pp. 12–13). This was in contrast to experiments or strictly quantitative survey case studies. Although I did include some data collection methods typically associated with quantitative methodology, such as questionnaires, these methods were practical for gathering further information on ideas for interpretation. The information allowed greater understanding of the meaning of the interaction in the online spaces and was more a digital interview than a quantitative collection of data. Therefore, they served to expand the qualitative research.

The case study design used here is a parallel or collective case study design. Given the relatively recent emergence of social media and the even more recent inclusion of social media in state-based public diplomacy, as well as time constraints for the research project, a longitudinal study was not a practical option. Likewise, a comparative qualitative case study would have been limited given there are not yet large quantities of prior research available on which to base comparisons. In addition, this research is not comparative due to constraints; the research is both temporal and contextual. Moreover, practical constraints were also limiting; in interviews, officials expressed concerns about participating if the research critically compared states. To secure interviews and offer information for assessment the research was limited to multiple non-comparative cases.

Case studies gain insight of the “complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118) by allowing the researcher to “engage with and report the complexity of social activity in order to represent the
meanings that individual social actors bring to those settings” (Stark & Torrance, 2005, p. 33). Since meaning is constructed from “events and phenomena through prolonged, complex processes of social interaction involving history, language, and action” (Schwandt, 1994, pp. 118–119) this design was a suitable choice given the research question. There are requirements case studies need to meet to overcome the difficulties associated with a case study research design. These include clearly identifying the class or subclass of event of which the cases are instances, as previously discussed, and to provide a well-defined research objective and strategy that also guides the choice of cases to be included (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 69). In the following section, I identify the reasons for the selection of the specific case studies and their significance.

3.1.1: The United States & Israel: why these cases?

Identifying the appropriate cases also demanded a great deal of background research and this section provides an overview of that process. In qualitative research, as noted above, one desires to present cases that will represent unique and profound environments, provide valuable insights that help explain particularities, and offer knowledge for a greater understanding of the specific cases. Finally, I considered practical restrictions (budget, visa permission, travel) as well. The first step was to eliminate cases where the use of social media was too narrow or the period of use too short, and/or where no public audience interaction is ‘observable’.

Initially, I identified possible cases where the use of social media / digital diplomacy was part of government policy either practically exercised or
theoretically in discussion or in planning. A number of potentially relevant and interesting case study options from around the world were possibilities, but ultimately, I chose the US and Israel. Within the research methodology and methods outlined above, the two factors of utmost importance were a government ministry or department policy clearly advocating and institutionalizing the use of social media public diplomacy and access to individuals that both had experience and official approval to discuss the states operations regarding social media public diplomacy.

The US and Israel were among the first states to introduce social media digital diplomacy programs. Likewise, both are Western advanced democracies. However, they are different in many ways including population, territory size, and social and religious history. Peaceful allies border the US, while hostile neighbours surround Israel. The extensive and high profile use of social media in the US and Israel led to the decision to use these cases to generalize against the chosen theories. In addition, the various examples selected represent a variety of different models and styles of interaction.

The US continues to organize numerous social media projects and is one of the state that engaged in the greatest number of digital diplomacy initiatives globally. In addition, given its position within the international community, the US has complex relationships to manage. Meaning, if the US can manage such an environment and generate social capital through digital diplomacy, it should be possible for other state as well. Therefore, the US is one of the research case studies.
The US initiatives included ExchangesConnect, an in-person/online, crossover initiatives meant to maintain interaction after exchanges abroad and the Democracy Video Challenge, a user-created content competition. The case study also included the CO.NX social media hub; US Embassy New Zealand integrated social media network strategy; and USAdarFarsi, the US virtual Embassy in Tehran, Iran allowing exchange where no exchange between the general public or official political or diplomatic relations exist otherwise.

Israel grapples with a unique geo-political, cultural and historical situation including continuous hostilities with neighbouring states. The choice of Israel as a second case presented a number of benefits to further both an understanding of the particular case and the use of social media digital diplomacy where hostile relations are consistent and founded on long-held social constructions both domestically and abroad. Moreover, having been, arguably, the first state to allow a foreign post (Israeli New York Consulate) to venture into the ‘Twitterverse’ for public diplomatic purposes (Cohen, 2009), Israel offered an interesting case. Plus, Israel was the first state to engage in a social media war (with Hamas in Palestine) in 2012 (Peled, 2012). Including cases that occupied different social environments offers a benefit for analysing the results of the research more broadly.

For the Israeli case, the different initiatives examined included the YouTube initiative created during the Mavi Marmara incident to explain the Israeli approach, the Masbirim Israel campaign of the Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs, created to combat misinformation about Israel, build good will towards the state of Israel, and focus on issues other than the Israeli-Palestinian
conflict. Similarly, the case study included three additional initiatives, President Peres’s social media network and strategy, the Arabic and Persian language community networks established by the MFA for outreach between these communities, which are otherwise fairly isolated from Israeli contact, and finally the @IsraelintheGCC virtual twitter embassy for the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Having choosing the US and Israel as the best case studies to help address the research question of whether and how social media digital diplomacy generates social capital, the next step was to determine the methods best suited to gather the required information. The subsequent section provides a summary of the methods used in this research to draw data from the cases and the various initiatives.

3.1.2: Ensuring rigor in the research design

The goal was to create a richer more complete picture from which to analyse the collected data. Each of the methods used offers a “different line of sight” and including several methods offers a richer, more complete reality (Berg, 1998, p. 5). The use of multiple lines of sight is triangulation. This research utilized multiple types of triangulation and data-collection techniques. The different methods for data collection and the verification of information from involved parties have helped to ensure the accuracy of data, events and decisions.

Triangulation searches for confirmation, which can deliver greater confidence in the validity and reliability of the data collected (Stake, 2010, pp. 123–4). The quantitative concepts of validity and reliability are interpreted here as
trustworthiness, rigor and quality, which was achieved by using triangulation “where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 604). I used the three different methods: archival and government document research, interviews, and cyber-ethnography.

Furthermore, I follow Guba and Lincoln’s (1985) structure for qualitative research rigor, which comprises the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In regards to credibility, an in-depth focus of a particular situation means that only the participants have the ability to lend the research and resulting outcomes legitimacy—whether or not the material reflects the interaction accurately. The interviewees were in agreement with conclusions taken from the meetings and I maintained contact to confirm notes.

Dependability in such research requires properly understanding and outlining the effects of the changing environment and its effect of the possibility of producing the same results in the future. The approach taken in this research makes clear the need to assess each case in situ, instead of in isolation since the environment is constantly changing in a cyclical or recursive manner. Moreover, given the constructivist perspective of this research, each meaning is intersubjective in the context and highly contingent on the interpretations of the researcher. Therefore, it is unlikely that the exact same outcomes, inferences, or assumed conclusions would result if the same review occurred in the future or in a different environment.

In regards to transferability, the research presented is specific to the two cases
studied, although it would be possible to transfer the research question, methods and general assumptions into another case; it is the job of the individual researchers to transfer the model appropriately. Still, the nature of public diplomacy research makes it difficult to generalize results from a specific context, place and time to another place, time or context.

Finally, confirmability refers to the ability of the research to mark possible biases and evaluate material used and outcomes presented. This was managed by investigating details, and comparing and contrasting this information with other sources. This dissertation undertook a reflective focus on the specific issue of bias both in this chapter by formally noting the limitations of this research and in the conclusion where I outline future research that might further probe this issue.

While this research is mainly a qualitative study, triangulation was extended to include multiple methodologies. Two traditionally quantitative methods of data collection—surveys and questionnaires—helped collect data to assess the ideas, thoughts, and opinions of social network participants involved with or engaged in state public diplomacy initiatives. These two methods are explained further later in this chapter, however, they represent another style of triangulation important used to establish legitimacy and accuracy in this research.

3.1.3: The research timeline

Clear planning and a well-managed timeline referenced and updated as necessary guided the successful completion of this research. The research extended over a period of three years starting in June 2010. The pre-planning period ran from June
2010–June 2011 and fieldwork continued for the following two years. The research scope was defined by a five-year period from 2008–2013.

The reasons for choosing this period were two fold. First, in 2001 a re-focus on public diplomacy occurred after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon, laying the foundation for the new innovative approaches to public diplomacy, which started as early as late 2007. Second, it allows for comprehensive observance of both the evolution of social media and the introduction of ICTs into public diplomacy strategy over a period of time, which gives historical context for the case studies and a more comprehensive picture of the environment in which this research was situated.

The initial interviews in Washington, D.C. occurred in April 2011 with secondary meetings in June/July 2012. The initial interviews in Jerusalem occurred in June 2012, with secondary interviews occurring via Skype in late 2012–2013. I welcomed and solicited comments from interviewees including questions, concerns, updates or corrections to statements throughout the process. In 2013, the analysis process began. The next section presents this information and begins the discussion on outcomes of the investigation described.

3.2: Methods: collecting data & analysing the process

The primary methods used in this research to collect information include archival and government document research, semi-structured interviews, cyber-ethnography and broad media discourse analysis. I used the information gathered to identify the social media programs, events and projects considered effective or
successful in helping to reach foreign policy goals and that presumably generate[d] social capital for public diplomacy in each case. In this section, I outline the process of data collection from initial planning to the final summary.

3.2.1: Archives, government documents, & media reports

My first step after identifying the cases was to contact interviewees and develop appropriate questions based on background research. I conducted this background research via archival and governmental document research. Both the US and Israel have active public diplomacy apparatuses and their operations are open to internal government approval and oversight as well as to critique or praise by journalists, academics and subject matter experts. It is here that I started my research journey to acquire background information and establish appropriate contacts for interviews.

In the US, the United States Department of State (State Department) maintains an Internet web presence (www.state.gov) that holds a great deal of information and archived documentation. Furthermore, all unclassified documents are available for public research. Likewise, a good deal of time was spent at the United States Library of Congress, where government documents and both internal and external research reports and publications are available.

Israeli government documents were much more difficult to attain if they were available at all. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) documents remain in the Israeli State Archives for an extended period. However, I was able to obtain research reports completed in cooperation with the MFA and subsequently used as
foundations for reforms. Moreover, the State Comptroller produced a number of reports on Israeli variant of public diplomacy called hasbara (meaning to explain), which are also available.

The information collected was useful as a first reference as background on programs and the historical evolution of social media / digital diplomacy innovation in each state. This research offered contact information for individuals with whom I began my correspondence for interviews. Noting the dangers in relying exclusively on archival research, such as the possibility of reaching false conclusions that could be drawn from missing data (Berg, 1998, p. 286), secondary sources (i.e., academic research and media reports) were collected and used for discourse analysis. I continued to execute this broad-based media analysis throughout the project. Certainly, the influence of media as a constructing force within society is pivotal and therefore, this method was used to help verify points extracted from archival and document research as well as from interview discussions.

### 3.2.2: Semi-structured interviews in Washington, D.C., Tel Aviv, & Jerusalem

For both cases, I spent a month on-site in the capital cities: Washington, D.C. and Jerusalem. Here officials and subject-matter experts were, more or less, highly concentrated and more available for in-person interviews. The interview pool was a targeted sample, which then grew as new information and contacts were available. Before arriving, and through the above mentioned archival and government document research, I created potential contacts for interviews. From these initial contacts, my network continued to grow and new contacts emerged
for consideration throughout the research period. The interviews used for this research included 30 formal interviews and numerous informal discussions regarding the topic, cases and social media / digital diplomacy projects.

3.2.2.1: The interviewee pool

Certain criteria limited the interview pool. Primary participants were from official state bodies tasked with diplomatic relations including: The State Department (and affiliated divisions and organizations), DOD (US), MFA (Israel), Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs (MPDDA), Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). Specifically, those individuals and/or teams responsible for the implementation of new technologies and digital diplomacy initiatives were the focus. The individuals interviewed included project managers, subject matter experts, social media managers, public affairs officers, public diplomacy officers and special consultants. I was able to interview high-level officials including a Military Spokesperson, a Ministry Deputy Director, two Department Managers as well as an Ambassador.

In addition, I invited non-government representatives, such as consultants, academics, diplomatic experts and analysts with knowledge and critical insight regarding the use social media in diplomatic operations, to participate. The interviewee numbers were greater in the case of the US, as the State Department is a larger organization with a comparably larger budget. Another interesting point is that the military component in Israel had a higher profile domestically and internationally in this specific operational area than the United States Department of Defense (DOD).
The methodology used does not require vast numbers of interview sessions, but rather in-depth discussions; a limited number of in-depth discussions did not create an issue in regards to gathering data. The goal was to have a collection of interviews from both central state diplomatic institution and foreign posts for each case study. I contacted participants and informed them of the purpose of the research along with requests for interviews with appropriate advance notice prior to the field research phase of the project. Finally, I sent additional material including general themes for the interview and the required ethical research and participation acknowledgement forms to each individual participant just prior to the scheduled interview along with a confirmation note.

3.2.3: Cyber-ethnographic observation as a network member

To gather information accurately in the new environment that is represented by the “merging together of the physical and virtual realms” creating “a space that is neither wholly physical or virtual” requires the use of cyber-ethnography (Ward, 1999, p. 95). Cyber-ethnography, although similar to traditional ethnographic studies, is different in a very important way. Instead of assuming the group being studied is a community, cyber-ethnography “allows the participants to take the lead role in establishing the reality, status and principles of their group” and the researcher observes the interaction on a website, or social media network to understand more fully the constructed culture (Rybas & Gajjala, 2007; Ward, 1999, pp. 96–100). In response to the objectives of this research in reviewing and understanding the interaction on social media, I found it necessary to establish an “interactive methodology based on epistemologies of doing” (Rybas & Gajjala,
2007). To facilitate this I became a member of all relevant social media groups and networks on Facebook and Twitter as well as any available proprietary interactive or network websites connected to social media diplomacy operations of the US and Israel.

Cyber-ethnography aligns itself well with the overall methodology of this research and makes it possible to establish further credibility and dependability of the results. Qualitative ethnography research on Internet and computer mediated communication (CMC) is limited. As CMC is incorporated in more and more aspects of life the division between on and off-line is less relevant in research (Garcia, Standlee, Bechkoff, & Cui, 2009, pp. 52–53). Moreover, cyber-ethnography underscores the agency inherent in social media and associated ICTs themselves. As Sunden (2003) argued:

This distance is on one level introduced in text-based online worlds through the act of typing, and further reinforced by the mediating computer technology itself. By actively having to type oneself into being, a certain gap in this construction is at the same time created (p. 4).

Moreover, the construction of identity and behaviour, as well as norms occurs through the interaction between researcher and network and from the “cultural and social conditions/contexts in which this artifact has been created and used” (Rybas & Gajjala, 2007). The production, consumption and observation builds a “technospatial environment” that highlight expectations about technological and human qualities (Rybas & Gajjala, 2007). In this environment, different forms of text and symbols are used in CMC to convey feeling, construct identity and develop relationships (Campbell, 2006; Garcia et al., 2009). Cyber-ethnographic study is a useful method for recognizing,
observing, documenting, and understanding these interactions.

By including cyber-ethnography as a method in my observation and data collection, I became a part of the setting that provided the experiences I was studying; I became a “participant-expericer” (Walstrom, 2004). This required me to create and grow my own associations, connections and networks, which allowed me both greater insight into the technospatial environment I was studying as well as greater legitimacy in my discussions with others. However, I followed the example of Shoham (2004) by first ‘lurking’ to observe and understand the norms of the setting and then engaged. The objective was to observe the constructed social norms and culture of the networks and groups, but also to interact and engage with the group.

Importantly, this research views the online and offline settings of life in a holistic manner, meaning that the online networks in which an actor/actant interacts is not regarded as separate from the offline (Teli, Pisanu, & Hakken, 2007). Digital social networks are influenced and influence offline interactions and vice versa. With the introduction of new online and digital or virtual communities, (Rheingold, 1993) ethnographic methods have grown in importance. The need to move beyond seeing the Internet as a space for experiment and recognizing it as a cultural setting has created new research both to reconfigure and to use ethnography for these purposes.

As Hine (2000) explained, although using the term virtual-ethnography, “cyberspace is not to be thought of as a space detached from any connections to
'real life' and face-to-face interaction. It has rich and complex connections with the contexts in which it is used” (p. 64). Moreover, it is important to investigate the online in the social and cultural context to gain a better understanding of the culture and its affects (Hine, 2005). I incorporate cyber-ethnography to assist in doing just that in regards to the practice of public and/or digital diplomacy and the broader global society. Furthermore, in my interaction as part of the networks I collected additional information through individual, personalized questionnaires as well as a survey open to all participants within these social networks. As described previously this method allowed me to collect feedback to gauge the generation of social capital.

The personalized questionnaires were sent to 250 online social media network participants selected at random, sent from a personal account I established for this research that offered me the ability to conduct cyber-ethnographic observations. The online blind survey was administered through the free online survey service SurveyMonkey. The criteria for selection were simply having been active on one of the social media sites facilitated or managed by a state institution of one of the two case study states (US or Israel). These questionnaires and the survey asked questions aimed at extracting information regarding feelings, assumptions and perceptions of access and credibility of information, openness and transparency of the state and actor/actant (trust), the states and actor/actants commitment (reciprocity) to the network through response and useful exchanges.

Below is an example of the questions sent in the personalized questionnaires:

1. How often do you comment on XXXX Facebook page?
2. Do you use XXXX Facebook page to gather information, discuss issues? What type?
3. Do/how often do you receive responses from XXXX?
4. Do you find XXXX is open, honest and balanced in interaction on this Facebook page?
5. Do you feel the information shared on XXXX Facebook page is credible?
6. Is there consistent interaction by XXXX to questions or comments made by others?
7. What kind of regular interaction occurs on the XXXX Facebook page?
8. Has your trust of XXXX improved via interaction on XXXX Facebook? Why or why not?
9. Do you find XXXX promotes discussion and the expression of diverse opinions?
10. Has the XXXX Facebook page helped change your perceptions of XXXX?

The response rate was approximately 11% as represented in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Social Network</th>
<th>Sent</th>
<th>Returned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Israel MFA / @IsraelintheGCC</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IsraelArabic</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IsraelPersian</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shimon Peres</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IDF Spokesperson/IDF</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Democracy Challenge</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USadarFarsi</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US Department of State/Digital Outreach/IIP</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US Embassy NZ</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AtAmerica/CO.NX/ExchangesConnect</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>250</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1:* Questionnaire responses according to case study & social network.

These questionnaires, as will be demonstrated in the following case study chapters, proved a valuable mechanism for gauging the generation of social capital within different networks. This helped with the analysis of the case studies conducted in Chapters 4 and 5.
3.2.4: Operationalizing social capital & retracing data to theory test

Once I collected all my data, I needed to conduct my analysis. Process tracing is the method used to analyse the data collected and compare it against the assumptions of the theories identified regarding the generation of social capital. Process tracing seeks to highlight the causal mechanism or chain between variables and is recognized as a useful method for both theory testing and development (George & Bennett, 2005, pp. 206–208). I used process tracing to help identify causal mechanisms and test theory as this method was the most suitable methodological foundation. The use of process tracing also lends itself to helping explain how social phenomena including values, ideas, expectations, information as well as social processes such as small group and bureaucratic decision-making, coalition dynamics, strategic interaction, and so on can identify causal mechanisms (Bennett & George, 1997). I completed process tracing in the case studies by compiling the data collected to identify variables that appear to have exerted influence on decisions, actions and interactions in the social media networks and whether the expected process in generation of social capital appears to have occurred.

In addition, the interview notes, survey and questionnaire responses were reviewed multiple times to pinpoint themes regarding interactive processes, topics, and feedback methods. The cyber-ethnographic observations included not just text, but also reflection on photos, video and avatar choice. From this, I identified how the on-going gap between the public expectations or perceptions and state assumptions and limitations perpetuated itself throughout the network. Namely, the lack of a final loop-back process on behalf of the state, which is an indication of active listening—action taken in recognition of messages received—
was noticeable. The use of process tracing alone does not provide absolute answers, but can offer insight on whether the theories tested offer potentially accurate explanations or whether research should venture down another path for answers to the how questions. In tandem with tracing the processes of interaction in each network, I needed to operationalize the concept of social capital.

The conceptual basis, as I illustrated in the previous chapters, is one whereby social capital is an outcome of trust created via reciprocal relationships of mutual collaboration characterized by access, openness, commitment and credibility – the development of relations of trust and obligations of mutual reciprocity. Therefore, these elements of digital diplomacy, described below, established elements of the framework that were to be evaluated in the social media initiatives introduced in the case studies:

- **ACCESS:** Alter processes and/or norms to remove barriers to information.
- **OPENNESS:** Partner to share concerns, goals and issues instead of maintaining control.
- **COMMITMENT:** Engage and collaborate, offer mutual reciprocity and actively listen.
- **CREDIBILITY:** Offer useful information and cultivate diverse, adaptable relationships.

The final step in creating this framework was to operationalize the methods of evaluating these elements in the framework. In other words how would I recognize when these elements were present. To fulfil this task I needed to reflect on social media literature and theoretical understandings of the process of generating social capital. Therefore, I referred to foundational social capital research by Coleman,
Putnam, Bourdieu and Lin among others and then examined research surrounding the assessment, recognition and operationalization of social capital. Then I needed to engage within the social sphere to observe interaction and discuss these elements in an effort to discern the presence within the networks being investigated.

The scope of this research was limited to the analysis to relational social capital. However, that is not to diminish the value of both quantitatively and qualitatively measuring ties (*friends, likes, followers,* etc.). As noted, it is both important to connect with enough actors/actants to be relevant. In observing these networks through cyber-ethnography and the personalized questionnaires and surveys, I operationalized elements in the social media network environment as follows:

**ACCESS:** Does the state offer statements regarding values and goals for intake and discussion?
Is there dialogue on issues and processes in which ideas for change are offered and/or accepted as possibilities?

**OPENNESS:** Does the state allow comments both on its main page and in response to posts?
Are responses, posts and questions accepted and responded too candidly?

**CREDIBILITY:** Are varied opinions presented? Including divergent POV’s from the state?
Are diverse sources and opinions allowed or reflected in the information shared within the network?

**COMMITMENT:** Is information shared in different networks specific to the audiences and issues?
Do other actors/actants post, respond and interact with the state’s posts?
3.3: Limitations

In all research, there are limitations and potential criticisms that limit the scope, methodological choice or methods. All possible measures were taken to collect accurate information for analysis. Nonetheless, every research design has inherent limitations. As is the character of qualitative research the study is subjective, but within a social world there is subjectivity and so this can be seen as a limitation or as an essential element in understanding human activity (Stake, 2010, p. 29). Furthermore, the research presented offers more new questions than it does answers and the information, although useful, is not enough on which to base absolute certainties. The results create a new layer for further development of practice and theory and a valuable perspective of the particular cases.

Focused on digital social networks and the generation of social capital, this dissertation has three main limitations. First, in qualitative research generally, researcher bias is in-built and unavoidable. However, in an effort to minimize such influences triangulation of multiple methods was used to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The surveys and questionnaires were sent without prior interaction and incorporated to mitigate one-sidedness. Likewise, research studies, reports, and commentary representing both benefits and detriments of social media use in politics and diplomacy were sought and included to outline both perspectives of the debate.

In addition, qualitative research is reliant on social perception and context at a particular time and place. Therefore, it is unlikely that another researcher at a later date will be able to observe or obtain the exact same results. In regards to this
limitation, the research design was clearly outlined to allow for analysis and critique as well as for possible future comparative studies conducted using the same methods. Moreover, I maintained on-going observations for the three-year period, in an effort to notice changes in the networks.

Finally, cyber-ethnographic research can involve interacting with unknown individuals. In such a situation, the ability to confirm identity or verify authenticity, with absolute certainty, is limited if non-existent. Given that all interaction was voluntary, the research assumed answers from interviewees and feedback from surveys and questionnaire were truthful and honest, in so much as it was the true beliefs held regarding the topic by the respondents, but it is recognized that there are potential false statements included. In addition, my identity as a researcher may have affected data collection.

During my research period, multiple revelations of state-sponsored online spying had been revealed. My online profile noted that I was a PhD candidate at the University of Otago. Nevertheless, when I officially presented myself as a researcher in personal messages, for example, when requesting feedback via the questionnaires, some individuals accused me of spying and refused to participate. Following examples offered by Taylor (1999) and Cherny (1999) and in an effort to reassure potential participants, I offered URL links to my research profile at the University and copies of my research ethics approval. While this did not always abate concerns, in some cases individuals did decide to partake.

Though the results are particular to the cases, they are important for
understanding the specific context and reason for actions. This research can serve as one piece of an amalgamated collection of cases, which could then present opportunities for comparative analysis. Finally, social media diplomacy research is new and this is a limitation in regards to available data, but the immense growth of social media networks offered a large reservoir of untapped data—this research represents just one attempt to understand its value and effects.
Part 2: The Case Studies

The second part of this thesis focuses on the two case studies—the US and Israel. As discussed, continuous interplay between changing social norms, ICT innovation and numerous other factors has led to new technologies that expand possibilities for the inclusion of greater numbers of actors and networks and fresher methods for interaction and cooperation. As states began moving into the digital realm, their goals were to reap the benefits, specifically social capital, of being part of and interacting with digital social networks. The rhetoric espoused grand gestures of renewed engagement with the public and people-to-people diplomacy that connected communities to the foreign policy apparatus of the state and then further to other publics abroad. Interaction, building relationships, and developing trust were assumed to be the results of being active online—efforts to generate or maintain social capital for the benefit of reaching foreign policy goals. Interacting in the new digitally mediated environment of the global communications era with a generally cyber-optimist outlook, both the US and Israel in the early years of the 21st century turned to social media digital diplomacy as a forum abound with new opportunities to mediate differences and offer solutions to conflicts and issues.

In regards to public diplomacy research specifically, the global changes compelled research and theory to examine the new public diplomacy and various approaches that could lead to the most ideal and efficient strategies. The relational approach is based upon building relationships, bi-directional discourse, facilitating collaboration, and bridging networks. This approach aligns well with the goals of state’s digital diplomacy initiatives. This research is neither a debate on the pros and cons of social media digital diplomacy nor an assessment of its effectiveness.
Instead, I examine if social capital is being generated through social media in
digital public diplomacy and, if so, then how?

In this part, I review and trace the development and execution of social media
digital diplomacy projects facilitated or operated by the US State Department
(and/or associated public diplomacy institutions) and the Israeli MFA (and/or
associated public diplomacy institutions). I assess both case studies that follow
using the framework outlined in the methodology and methods chapter. The
framework’s conceptual basis is one whereby social capital is an outcome of trust
and obligations of reciprocity created via relationships of mutual collaboration
characterized by access, openness, commitment and credibility. I will consider how
each project or initiative either did or did not display or foster these elements,
therefore allowing me to evaluate whether or not it was possible for the state to
generate social capital.

This section includes two chapters: Chapters 4 and Chapter 5 outline the cases of
the US and Israel respectively. Both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 follow the same
outline. In both I first review the evolution of diplomacy from the traditional
variant through to public diplomacy and then denote the turning point in regards
to digital diplomacy. Next, I outline the movement of each state into digital social
network engagement and examine early examples. This inclusion of historical
aspects is not merely to use history as a “descriptive method”, but rather “as part
of the contexts that make possible social” (Adler, 2002, p. 102). The inclusion of the
historical path allows for a greater interpretive understanding of the process and
the possible implications and results of state interaction in digital social networks.
Finally, I look at recent examples to investigate whether and how the state works to develop trust through access, openness, credibility and commitment. In the US case I explore (a) CO.NX networks, (b) US Embassy Wellington social media community, and (c) USAdarFarsi social networks; and in the Israeli case, I explore (a) President Peres’s ‘Peres 360’ social media outreach, and (b) Israeli MFA Arabic & Persian Facebook networks, and (c) The Israeli virtual Twitter Embassy @IsraelintheGCC. In Chapter 6, I present the conclusion of the thesis and its findings as well as possible future research topics.
Chapter 4: Case Study 1—The United States of America

This chapter looks at the case of the US specifically in context of the research question: *is social capital being generated through social media in digital public diplomacy, and if so, then how?* The exploration of the evolution of diplomatic practice in the US takes into account the historical context, global societal changes and technological innovation. Next, digital diplomacy examples are introduced and assessed according to the theoretical framework outlined in part one of this dissertation. The assessment investigates if and how the initiatives develop trust and reciprocity by fulfilling the component requirements of access, openness, commitment and credibility.

US diplomatic history is an evolution affected by events, both global and domestic, and factors from ideology and religion to technology and economics. Even before the World Wars, the US was grappling with how to manage its new role as an emerging global power. The foreign policy of the US, as in every state, is the sum of domestic political and ideological struggles, cultural norms and values, and constructs of national identity. The period in which the US ascended to its role as a global superpower was one of immense technological change that both precipitated economic and political change and in a cyclical manner fostered further technological innovation. The interplay of change in society and processes of governance created adaptations to foreign policy and the diplomatic practice used to reach those goals.

The Industrial Revolution and through the Progressive era, a cacophony of events created a schism in US foreign policy and therefore its diplomatic history. The
'watershed’ moment of US diplomacy, or at least one of the most important, was the Spanish-American War of 1898. As US diplomatic historian Bemis (1950) and others have remarked, the Populist and Progressive movements created an internal debate and crisis that moved the US toward both expansionism and imperialism. This period marked the end of the isolationist foreign policy the US had maintained, although small periods would reappear between World War I and World War II. As the World Wars raged the “proliferation of mass communications” and a “heightened mobility of individuals and ideas” made public opinion and the citizenry generally a “component of a broadened conception of what constituted foreign policy” (Hart, 2013, p. 10). This was a global dialogue to be sure and as Archibald MacLeish pronounced in the 1940's “electronic communications has made foreign relations domestic affairs” (Hart, 2013, p. 10). Thus, one of the most important debates in US diplomatic history began.

Constant re-assessments and reconfigurations of both foreign policy and diplomatic institutions were motivated by tensions fuelled by a constant domestic power struggle (Cull, 2009, p. 23; Ninkovich, 1995, pp. 176–180). The struggle played out on both political and ideological lines, between those advocating for a US information strategy predicated on psychological operations and propaganda, and those that advocated for transparency, mutual information exchange, and relationship building or “strategies of truth” (Hart, 2013, pp. 71–106). Although domestic struggles affected US government organization and the relative power of different departments in formulating policy and practice, it was the global interdependence, the changed international system, and the “changing character of thought and action everywhere” that fuelled these domestic actors to joust for
control (Hart, 2013, p. 108). The interplay of domestic and international pressures, public opinion and the importance of image, perception, and relationships began in the post-World War II era and has grown in importance since.

Changes in the structure of US diplomatic institutions 1945–2000 created the United States Information Agency (USIA) and then similarly disregarded it, again due to domestic ideological conflict and perceptions regarding changes in global society. Social media digital diplomacy emerged in the early 21st century just after the USIA was absorbed into the State Department in 1999. US Digital diplomacy is an outgrowth of global societal changes and previous innovations in ICTs used by the State Department since the Cold War such as VOA and WORLDNET. Before the dissolution of the USIA, government officials foreshadowed the emergence of an interconnected world via technologically mediated networks that would bring the importance of relationships, knowledge creation, and collaboration to the forefront of international politics and diplomacy (Cull, 2013; Hansen, 1984; Hayden, 2012). Sadly, as Cull (2013) noted, when the State Department became the agency responsible for public diplomacy operations after absorbing the USIA there was “little interest in digital innovation” (p. 129). Renewed motivation to concentrate attention on public diplomacy in the US came with the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 9/11. ICTs and their potential would take a central position in US public diplomacy efforts from then forward.

As noted in the previous section, assumptions around the revolutionary characteristics of ICTs, especially social media, have placed these technologies at the centre of US diplomatic outreach worldwide. Castells (2009) offered that social
media “transform the context for international politics, transnational social organization, and intercultural relations,” (as cited in Hayden, 2012, p. 1), which, as Hayden (2012) added, meant that a new public diplomacy required “conceptual rethinking” (p. 1). In 2008, Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Glassman (2008) proclaimed US public diplomacy was moving into a new era: An era of PD 2.0 also known as digital diplomacy. By this Glassman meant a new ‘holistic’ approach incorporated technology and social networks not as tools, although “technology is absolutely necessary to its success” (Glassman, 2008), but as core actors. Thus, US public diplomacy would be less “a means of projecting perceptions of the U.S” and more a “platform for cooperation, mediation, and reception—a mode of being informed as well as informing” (Glassman, 2008). It was more than the simply integration of a new technology or the passage of messages via a new medium. Instead, it was asserting the necessity of a relational approach.

In public diplomacy research, the US has been the predominant case of reference. As Osgood and Etheridge (2010) indicate this has a great deal to do with public diplomacy historiography drawing its origins from US public diplomacy history (p. 7). In comparison, there is a wealth of information regarding the history of US public diplomacy. Using the US as one case offers a great deal of material. However, US public diplomacy is the result of a process that comprises numerous different actants that have interacted to produce a unique US diplomatic context. This includes social constructs of ideology and national identity, which underscore the point that certain outcomes resulting from US digital diplomacy may not produce similar outcomes in other contexts (states). The following chapter assesses US
digital diplomacy initiatives specifically and whether they are generating social capital through social media engagement and, if so, how this is accomplished.

To reach this objective I begin this chapter by giving a background of US public diplomacy focusing on the evolution of the practice. Of particular interest has been research regarding the USIA and the Cold War period. I do not intend to undertake an extensive review of US public diplomacy history. Instead, I present a brief synopsis to highlight points that offer a better understanding of the process leading to the current setting to illuminate if and how the US is generating social capital via digital diplomacy. The second and most substantial segment of this chapter is devoted to exploring examples of US social media digital diplomacy and evaluating the potential for generating social capital. I first review two older examples that have been regarded successes: (a) ExchangesConnect and (b) the Democracy Video Challenge as well as these newer examples: (a) CO.NX networks, (b) the US Embassy Wellington social media community, and (c) USAdarFarsi social networks.

4.1: Out of isolation: US diplomacy from the progressive era to post-9/11

Diplomacy, as a technique of European statecraft, was a practice the US was hesitant to adopt. The causes for US emergence from a more isolationist foreign policy position were myriad, but of specific interest in this research was the influence of technological innovation, as Fain (2005) wrote.

Economic imperatives, political requirements and commercial ambitions all came together to shape the course of American expansion after 1898. In key respects, the roots of American expansion were located in the Industrial Revolution and its resulting crisis of overproduction by American manufacturers. American industry in the late nineteenth century was driven by technological advances in electricity and communications (Fain, 2005).
This move towards outward expansion beyond the coastal boundaries of the continental US, was a major shift.

Throughout early US history, the favoured diplomatic practice was one of isolationism and neutrality generally. This foreign policy path followed from Washington’s warning during his Farewell Address to avoid ‘entangling alliances,’ which became an oft-cited mantra of US officials keen to return to more isolationist policies. Ironically, even though there has been great resistance to government involvement in public diplomacy, the US has used various types of information, outreach or public diplomacy strategies to making its case to foreign governments and publics since the Revolutionary War (Cull, 2008, pp. 1–3). As America’s first diplomat Benjamin Franklin led the “international campaign” to rally support for American independence and in so doing he “paid close attention to image and worked to correct misunderstandings about America and its Revolution” (Cull, 2008, p. 2). Like Franklin, Thomas Jefferson was a brilliant diplomat serving in both London and Paris.

Historically, however, US public diplomacy has been principally an ad hoc exercise. Most often used during wartime as an instrument of American foreign policy to meet demands of the situation (Wang, 2007, p. 28). Public diplomacy grew out of traditional G2G diplomacy and, whereas European countries and Russia (and later the USSR) were engaged in such activities for quite some time, the US was apprehensive regarding government involvement in such ‘propaganda’ operations. The resultant isolationist preferences (Ninkovich, 1996, p. 5) set in place a “par-
ideological umbrella”\(^{15}\) of ‘American exceptionalism’ that has influenced much of US foreign policy and thus also its diplomatic practice (McEvoy-Levy, 2001; Ninkovich, 1996; Walt, 2011)\(^{16}\). Thus, the US often rejected practices of European nations as matter of principle, including diplomacy.

The diplomatic expansion that did occur in the 1800s focused on Asia and Latin America. Diplomats such as Anson Burlingame,\(^{17}\) William Woodville Rockhill, and Edmund Q. Roberts\(^{18}\) recognized the importance of relationships, trust and reciprocity in their dealings with the peoples of the Asian and Pacific regions. US cultural international education exchange projects were important in China in late 1800’s–early 1900’s (Cull, 2008, p. 5). These notable exceptions of US diplomatic practice in the period, show the impact of US relations in Asia and the Pacific, specifically in Siam (now Thailand, China and Japan), based on a relational approach.

\(^{15}\) McEvoy-Levy uses the term “para-ideological umbrella” to describe an overarching connection between “concepts and phrases as “manifest destiny”, “city on a hill”, “American dream”, and “new world order”” (McNevin, 2006, p. 8).

\(^{16}\) Exceptionalism refers to the notion that the US is special and protected from the historical tribulations that afflicted Europe (Ninkovich, 1996, p. 5). As per Holsti (2010) exceptionalism is a specific type of foreign policy that is exemplified by, but not exclusive to, the US (p. 382). The state sees itself as exempt from rules of international relations; on a messianic mission to ‘liberate’ others; operating in a hostile world, where even minor threats are inflated to project the state as the noble, moral, innocent victim (Holsti, 2010, p. 385).

\(^{17}\) Burlingame’s expertise and efforts led to the Burlingame Treaty of 1868, laying out the basic points of China’s sovereignty using the US as a model. Anson Burlingame, a US diplomat, was even named Ambassador of China to the capitals of all Western nations (Schrecker, 2010).

\(^{18}\) The first US diplomatic relationship in regards to a formal treaty was with the Siamese (Now Thailand). This relationship was formalized through the Treat of Amity and Commerce between Siam and the United States, or Roberts Treaty of 1833. It was negotiated by Edmund Roberts in his capacity as Minister of the United States on behalf of President Andrew Jackson with Chau Phaya-Phraklang in his capacity as Minister of State on behalf of His Majesty the Sovereign and Magnificent King in the City of Sia-Yut’thia (later known as Rama III). The treaty, in Thai and English, was concluded on March 20, 1833.
According to Bridoux (2013), American foreign policy and diplomacy “has been and is still shaped by identity as much as by power ... built on three elements, namely, democracy, liberal rights and capitalism” (p. 235). The US operationalized these three elements in an exceptionalist style foreign policy that has produced a diplomacy distinctive to and reflective of its national identity. In the early 1800’s the Monroe Doctrine set forth a change in US foreign policy while maintaining and reinforcing the principles of neutrality (Schulzinger, 2008, p. 10; Wiseman, 2011, p. 239). Until 1823 and the Monroe doctrine, diplomacy was a secondary concern and the foreign service was “small and weak” (Wiseman, 2011, p. 240). As expansionist feeling and ideas of Manifest Destiny soared in the mid-late 1800’s the US found itself involved in a number of territorial wars. If the Monroe Doctrine had not been a clear turning point, the Spanish-American War of 1898 certainly was and it pushed the US into a new era.

The Treaty of Paris of 1898 resulted in Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines coming under US control. For the first time the US was an imperialist state. In 1899, American diplomat William Woodville Rockhill authored the Open Door

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19 The Monroe Doctrine is a US foreign policy doctrine issued in 1823 by President Monroe during his State of the Union address regarding Latin American countries in the early 19th century. The policy stated that efforts by European nations to colonize land or interfere with states in North or South America would be viewed as acts of aggression, requiring U.S. intervention. At the same time, the doctrine noted that the US would neither interfere with existing European colonies nor meddle in the internal concerns of European countries. The Doctrine set out rules for European engagement, not with the US, but within the Western Hemisphere, which the US considered its sphere of influence.

20 Manifest Destiny refers to the term coined by John L. O’Sullivan coined in 1845, that was used to describe the 19th-Century American belief that it was their God-given mission to expand westward, occupy a continental nation, and extend U.S. constitutional government to unenlightened peoples (“1830–1860: Diplomacy and Westward Expansion - 1830–1860 - Milestones - Office of the Historian,” n.d.). The term re-emerged in different form during the conflict with Spain that led to the Spanish-American War. It was a form more akin to imperialism and expansionism (Merk, 1995). Today, the term applies to tendencies of U.S. foreign policy to focus on democratic nation building around the globe and as practiced heavily by President Wilson.
notes in consultation with British China expert Alfred E. Hippisley for Secretary of State Hay (Kim, 1966, p. 41). Although the Open Door policy was not new, it was an effort to build relationships broadly with the powers of the day (Russian, Germany, Britain and France) with the best outcome for the interests of the US. The isolationist foreign policy of the US was essentially at an end and its diplomacy evolved from Roosevelt’s realist ‘big stick’ diplomacy to more relational styles such as Taft’s ‘dollar’ diplomacy, Wilson’s ‘wilsonian internationalism’ and Hoover’s ‘good neighbor’ approach.

Still, diplomatically, not much changed. It was the ‘Progressive Era,’21 that proved a transformative period in US diplomacy and the US approach to involvement in global events (Schulzinger, 2008, p. 10). Progressives transformed this perceived uniqueness into an obligation or duty to help others. Since the turn of the 20th century, US global power has grown and the US has become more integrated in global affairs and international relations—especially in regards to diplomacy. The US influence corresponded both with the progressive era and the industrial revolution that helped create both interest in global events and public demand for transparent diplomacy (Ninkovich, 1999; Wiseman, 2011, p. 244). Beginning with World War I the US began to take what it believed to be its place on the global stage emboldening ideas of American exceptionalism—the belief that the US was a

21 The Progressive Era is a period in US political history that spanned from the late 1890s to the entry of the United States into World War I and is the period in which “modern American diplomacy emerged” — a diplomacy “based on a liberal, democratic, free-enterprise world order designed to promote global cooperation” (Prisco, 2007, p. 547). This period included the Presidencies of McKinley, Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson. During this period the US adopted the belief that “a liberal, democratic, free-enterprise political and economic system would advance human progress on every continent, and that global free trade would remove many causes of war and conflict” (Prisco, 2007).
remarkable nation above the problems experienced by the powers of Europe in previous periods.

As with any state, the influences of norms, values, ideas, and identity have created an American diplomacy with distinctive characteristics. The growing power of the US globally coincided with a worldwide progressive transformation. This period also saw innovation in technology that greatly affected communication, trade, and diplomacy. This more open public diplomacy is perhaps a result of the recursive nature of US leadership, its unique national culture and style, and global innovation in the period since the beginning of the 20th century. US diplomacy has had many configurations and the reform, reorganization and restructuring of US diplomacy, including the emergence of a more public variant that included information and broadcast operations, has had much to do with US national culture, values, and ideology.

Wiseman (2011) outlined seven distinctive characteristics of American diplomacy of which two are of particular importance to this research (p. 238). The two distinctive characteristics to which I refer are the “high degree of domestic

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22 It was not until the Cold War, where the battlefield was refocused to an ideological one that the use of technology and technical knowledge truly became a form of cultural and public diplomacy in the US. After World War II and the growth of communism in Eastern Europe the US began to understand both that technology could facilitate public diplomacy initiatives with greater speed and reach, but also that technology itself was a way to showcase American ingenuity and support allies (Cull, 2013, p. 126; Cull, 2008). The telegraph was the first major innovation in communications that changed processes, as it allowed communication to disassociate with transportation, but the US was slow in adopting it into its diplomatic processes and adapting to the technology (Dizard, 2001, p. 5). Innovation led from radio to television and ultimately to the Internet. To paraphrase, Gore said in 1994 that the developing global information infrastructure was seen as a metaphor for democracy because both required and promoted citizen participation. ICT innovation would continue to be introduced for US public diplomacy initiatives when and where appropriate by the USIA until it ceased to exist in 1999. Radio broadcasts throughout post-World War II Europe weren’t America’s first trial with technology in public diplomacy, but it represents an important milestone and starting point.
influence over foreign policy and diplomacy” and the “privilege of hard power over soft power” in US strategy historically (Wiseman, 2011, p. 238). Certain elements including listening, advocacy, culture, individual exchange and international broadcasting, have long been part of the work of public diplomacy globally, but in the US the advocacy function has dictated policy at the detriment of other functions, specifically listening (Cull, 2009; 2010; 2013). Advocacy, meaning to disseminate messages and information to sway others, was the focus when the government established the first formal agency to manage and facilitate information operations.

The World War I conflict gave the needed impetus for the creation of the Committee on Public Information (CPI) in April 1917.\textsuperscript{23} The CPI, more commonly known as the ‘Creel Committee,’ was short-lived. Following the end of conflict President Wilson abolished the agency in mid-to-late 1919. Although, public diplomacy remained a component of diplomatic practice, attention came in spurts and it was not until after World War II and the onset of the Cold War, when fear of losing the “war of ideas” began to manifest itself, that US public diplomacy emerged as a fairly consistent component of US foreign policy (Ninkovich, 1996, p. 17). The character of this public diplomacy was not relational; instead, it was about advocacy for the US ideals and information dissemination.

\textsuperscript{23} The Committee on Public Information (CPI) was established on April 13, 1917 by President Woodrow Wilson as an independent information agency tasked with rallying support for the war effort domestically and improving America’s image and promoting American-style democracy abroad. The ‘Creel Committee’ as it was also known existed only 18 months until August 21, 1919 (Nicholas John Cull, 2008, pp. 6–9; Wang, 2007, p. 23). [NOTE: The CPI work was cut after July 1, 1918, domestic activities stopped after the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, but foreign operations ended later in June 30, 1919. President Woodrow Wilson abolished the CPI by executive order 3154 on August 21, 1919.]
During World War II a myriad of agencies within the US government were responsible for public information and public diplomacy programs. The work of these institutions had been the “promotion of American values of democracy and freedom” (Wang, 2007, p. 28). Broadcast became the most important component of US public diplomacy efforts during World War II. VOA aired its first radio broadcast in Europe on February 24, 1942 (Voice of America (VOA), 2007). By the end of armed conflict on the European continent, the US had established a powerful information network. The inclusion of this technology was an important step forward for public diplomacy, but the model was still one-way at its core. However, like after World War I, the future of the Office of War Information (OWI) in the post-war period was anything but certain.

Ultimately, the creation of the Office of International Information and Cultural Relations (later known as the International Information Administration (IIA))

24 The organizations included the United States Information Service (USIS), Office of Government Reports (OGR), Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) later changed to the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA), Foreign Information Service (FIS), Division of Information, Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) and Office of War Information (OWI) among others (The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.). In 1934 the USIS was created mainly for domestic information programs but was then included under the OGR in 1939. On July 27, 1938 the Secretary and Undersecretary of State created the Division of Cultural Relations to further bolster cultural diplomacy education and exchange programs. The establishment of the CIAA and FIS followed in 1940 and 1941 respectively, addressing the need to inform foreign publics about US policy and finally, on June 13, 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt consolidated the functions of various agencies (USIS, OGR, CIAA, and FIS) into a new Office of War Information (OWI) with Executive Order (EO) 9182 (Nicholas John Cull, 2008, pp. 11–15; Wang, 2007, p. 24). The OWI was comprised of a foreign arm, previously the FIS, which continued and managed the Voice of America (VOA) and USIS operations as well as a domestic arm. The new organization was authorized to “use the press, radio and motion pictures for information programs designed to form an intelligent public understanding of the war and of government programs” and “to coordinate Federal activities to assure an accurate and consistent flow of war information to the United States and the world” (Wang, 2007, p. 24).

25 The Office of International Information and Cultural Relations would have a number of restructures before being dissolved in 1953 with the establishment of the USIA. These included: the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs (1945-1948), which were then separated by the US Information and Educational Exchange Act 1948 into the Office of International Information (1948-1950) and Office of Educational Exchange, Information and Cultural Exchange Programs, Office of the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs (1950-1952) and finally the International Information Administration
was the first official peacetime information agency of the US government. It set the stage for the emergence of a more advanced and permanent US public diplomacy establishment (Dizard, 2001, pp. 24–5). With responsibility transferred to the State Department by December 31, 1945, the evolution of US public diplomacy had already begun and the refinement of operations continued as the Cold War began.26 The result was an announcement by the White House on 1 June 1953 of a new agency to manage US overseas information operations, the USIA, which began work that August.

Until 1999 the USIA, a separate, semi-independent government institution was responsible for US public diplomacy. The work of the USIA initially included the

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26 The Smith-Mundt Act had two broad objectives for US international information programs: (a) “promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries”, and (b) “increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries” (United States Information and Education Exchange Act of 1948, 1948).

The U.S. Advisory Commission on Information and U.S. Advisory Commission on Educational Exchanges were created under Section 601 of the Smith-Mundt Act. These separate commissions merged in 1977 to form the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD) (The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 2011). The ACPD was given responsibility to “appraise US Government public diplomacy activities intended to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics and to increase the understanding of and support for these same activities” (The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 2011).

The Hoover Commission, officially known as the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government, was created by an act of Congress in 1947. The Commission produced numerous reports outlining recommendations for the organization of the Executive Branch and submitted its final report in May 1949. The various reports were produced via work compiled by “task forces” with Foreign Affairs being a topic of one such task force. In its final report the Commission compiled its recommendation including the creation of a new separate organization responsible for the execution and facilitation of public diplomacy programs (Heady, 1949; Hoover with United States. Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government (1947-1949), 1949, pp. 135–82).
information operations of the State Department’s International Information Administration (IIA), which it replaced, and later exchange and educational programs as well as the operation of US broadcast channels, most prominently VOA (Dizard, 2001; Schulzinger, 2008). The US became the leading global communications power and remained on the technological cutting edge in developing advanced information communication technologies (Dizard, 2001, p. 26). However, as hostilities eased with the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the break-up of the Soviet Union, attention to and support for public diplomacy waned.

The term ‘public diplomacy’ itself is an outcome of this US distrust and distaste for the propaganda of Europe and a want to lead a new way forward (N. Cull, 2006). Edmund Gullion, Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, first used the term when he established the Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy in 1965 (Cull, 2008, pp. 259–60; Osgood & Etheridge, 2010, p. 12). According to Gullion’s remarks, public diplomacy was a practice in which “governments, private groups and individuals influence the attitudes and opinions of other peoples and governments in such a way as to exercise influence on their foreign policy decisions” (Gullion, 1966, cited by Fletcher School, Tufts University). From then forward US information and propaganda initiatives have operated under this label—one more respected and accepted by the US domestic public befitting of the national identity that had formed within society.

The events of 9/11 simultaneously fuelled criticism of US public diplomacy and reinvigorated assumptions that public diplomacy could combat misinformation
about the US, re-establish positive opinions and consequently rebuild a sense of security for the national citizenry, as it helped to do during the Cold War. These events resulted in increased funding for public diplomacy and potential to establish broad trust and relationships globally as public sympathy poured in from around the world (Amin, 2009, pp. 111–4). The events created greater domestic awareness of perceptions of the US abroad (Amin, 2009, pp. 111–4). Numerous academics and think tank analysts as well as government agencies conducted hearings and published reports concerning US public diplomacy efforts. The efforts concentrated on questions of how such events occurred and why the US was so disliked or, better said, why US public diplomacy was “ineffective” (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 5). The 9/11 attacks were a turning point for US public diplomacy.

As the US led Global War on Terror (GWOT) continued, the decline in U.S. favourability ratings restricted and limited America’s foreign policy options (Zaharna, 2010, p. 19). Al Qaeda created what Nye and others have termed an “imagined community” that was impenetrable with missiles and bombs (Hallams, 2010, p. 545). Given the difficulties in fighting an adversary managed via non-hierarchical, dispersed and disaggregated networks, many in the US realized the need for a new plan. A new plan meant moving away from the traditional realist approach that had dominated foreign policy since the end of World War II.

Although, leadership in this regard would prove to be less than impressive (Cull, 2009, pp. 42–3), slowly, the realization that global societal change, particularly regarding ICT innovation, offered new opportunities. The question then was whether the US would adapt to changes in the global society, specifically the new
global communications environment. The possibility of engaging directly with actors and networks became the crux of reforming US public diplomacy – a move from traditional public diplomacy towards a new public diplomacy.

4.2: New PD in the US: social capital, relationships, & digital diplomacy

As Nye (2004) and Dizard (2001) claimed, the US was a “relative latecomer” to recognize the benefits of information and culture in diplomacy (p. 101; Dizard, 2001). In 1993, 1995 and 1996, the ACPD had already discussed an emerging new public diplomacy adapted to the ‘changed world,’ the information age and the 21st century. The reports recognized that “diplomacy in the information age is public diplomacy. With instant global communication, what people see and hear affects immediately how governments act” (U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 1993). The reports worked to affirm the need for public diplomacy, flexibility in programs and inclusion of expertise from other institutions and non-state actors (U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 1995), while also addressing the appropriateness and for investment in USIA. Most notably, the 1996 report asserted that the growing power of foreign publics together with the globalization and the expanding reach of NGOs require a ‘new diplomacy’ (U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 1996). In spite of efforts, US public diplomacy maintained an information dissemination strategy, except for educational and professional exchange programs and then partly in an effort to remake US public diplomacy and partly as a political deal on budget issues, the Clinton administration merged USIA into the State Department in 1999.
Between 1998–9, Jamie Metzl, who served as a White House Fellow and Senior Coordinator for Public Information, led the establishment of the International Public Information Core Group (IPI). The IPI, which President Clinton officially approved by issuing of Presidential Decision Directive (PDD)-68 in April 1999, was housed within the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) and reporting to the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Metzl, recognizing the need for a “more deliberate and well-developed international public information strategy,” believed the IPI could deliver “rejuvenation” and “coordination” of US information operations (Cull, 2009, pp. 38–9) and it represented a “cohesive approach” to US information and public diplomacy operations that had been missing since the 1950’s (Cull, 2009, pp. 40–2). Mostly, the IPI remained focused on information dissemination.

For example, according to declassified documents available in the Clinton Library, the project objectives for the public diplomacy strategy regarding Kosovo in 1998 included speeches, reports, media press conferences, Presidential Appearances, and Ambassadorial diplomatic dispatches to:

- Raise public awareness of the crisis;
- Define U.S. interests and policy objectives in Kosovo;
- Demonstrate our preference for a political solution;
- Secure international support;
- And, project a credible threat of force and clarify the aims of military intervention ("Kosovo Communications Strategy," 1998).

The State Department and USIA labelled the public diplomacy effort in Kosovo, which began in 1998, an example of a proactive public diplomacy initiative for the information age ("History of the Department of State During the Clinton..."

For example, outreach to and relationship building with diaspora communities and P2P interaction through a public-private partnership working with NGOs and private corporations to arrange computer access (“Kosovo Communications Strategy,” 1998). Refugees in camps could communicate by e-mail to locate lost family members and communicate globally, later the computer centres were later moved inside Kosovo and free Internet access was provided to local community leaders, journalists, doctors, and entrepreneurs in an effort to reconstruct an operating civil society (“History of the Department of State During the Clinton Presidency (1993-2001),” n.d.). The P2P initiative and the use of technology to supplement the project demonstrated the value of digital diplomacy (Cull, 2013).

However, a change in administration would halt initial changes to process until 9/11 reinvigorated the need to renew US public diplomacy.

The main question in government and civil society circles was “why do they hate us” (Beehner, 2005)? The neglect of public diplomacy after the end of the Cold War was noted as a reason for the prolific negative perceptions of the US worldwide (Nakamura & Weed, 2009, p. 1). The first ACPD report after 9/11, issued in 2002, offered recommendations for rebuilding and reforming US diplomatic operations, specifically those associated with public diplomacy (The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 2002). Moreover, this report stated, “strengthening America’s long-term public diplomacy means greater investment in cross cultural initiatives. It also means listening more…” (The U.S. Advisory Commission on
Public Diplomacy, 2002, p. 3). While the report again endorsed the inclusion of non-state actors and made mention of the growing importance of ICT in public diplomacy, its recommendations were mostly structural changes to government offices, reporting structure, and resource allocation.

In the following year the ACPD released another report titled “The New Diplomacy: Utilizing Innovative Communication Concepts that Recognize Resource Constraints” that investigated three concepts that would utilize new media while recognizing resource constraints on the behest of the Office of eDiplomacy including American Presence Posts, American Corners, and Virtual Consulates.\(^{27}\) (The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 2003). This report went to the heart of relational aspects by discussing local integration and interaction, access to information and exchange of knowledge about the US and global topics, as well as third party resources including access to the internet, which could offer legitimacy and credibility in the information exchanged. These two reports acknowledged and reinforced the changes occurring in diplomacy due in part to globalization and the emergence and use of new ICTs. Furthermore, the combination of both the structural and relational aspects offered a blueprint for adapting processes.

\(^{27}\)American Presence Posts are single officer posts, essentially mobile posts in specific regions where there are important commercial and public diplomacy goals; American Corners are spaces that provide information, library facilities and discussion forums, etc. and do not require State Department personnel to staff the facility; and finally, Virtual Consulates can be maintained via the Internet and social media to interact with digital social networks of the local community and connect US and local networks (The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 2003).
However, more than a decade after the 9/11 attacks a lack of consensus endures (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 5). Two broad camps emerged from the numerous assessments, which included those that recommended (a) focusing on improvement of information dissemination and messaging techniques, thus following the model employed during the Cold War; and in contrast, those that advocated (b) concentrating on strategies based on building trust and developing long-term relationships. The difference was presented as an option to either continue “telling America’s story” to the world or begin deeply “engaging with the world” (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 6). The latter is associated with new public diplomacy and more specifically with a particular approach—the relational approach. As referenced previously, the relational approach embraces principles of two-way dialogue, mutuality, and an emphasis on active listening with goals of improving trust, building relationships, and increasing understanding within and between networks.

Evelyn Lieberman served as the first Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs28 from late 1999 until early 2001. Her focus was on setting-up a “workable administrative procedures” (Cull, 2009, p. 37) a task that overshadowed reviewing current processes and structuring a future public diplomacy. The position remained vacant until after the 9/11 attacks when on October 1, 2001

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28 The new position was to represent public diplomacy operations, which would include involvement on the Strategic Communication Policy Coordination Committee that National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice established to help reach the goals of the Office of Global Communications (OGC). The Office of Global Communications (OGC), was created on 30 July 2002 by President Bush via Executive Order to coordinate the administration’s response to anti-American public opinion globally. The Office’s mission is to facilitate strategic communications overseas and better coordination of international communications about the US “with greater clarity and through dialogue with emerging voices around the globe” (“The Office of Global Communications (OGC),” n.d.).
Charlotte Beers began her term as the second Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Her goals for U.S. public diplomacy were “to inform the international world swiftly and accurately about the policies of the U.S. government,” and then to “re-present the values and beliefs of the people of America, which inform our policies and practices” (Beers, 2002). Only two months after the attacks, the Bush administration produced the book *The Network of Terror*. The book was aggressive and it exemplified the “battle mindset” (Zaharna, 2009). In regards to public diplomacy, it was not an effective tool for collaboration, trust or relationship building. Nonetheless, it outlined the focus of US efforts.

This laid the basis for the ‘Shared Values’ campaign. The mindset that this campaign portrayed was clear: the focus of US public diplomacy remained information dissemination. As in the past speaking to and disseminating to foreign audiences was the focus instead of engagement and listening. As an integrated PR campaign, Shared Values directed its message at Muslims worldwide. The design goal was to depict Muslim life in America for consumption and acceptance. However, as Plaisance (2005) stated the program was ill suited to accomplish these goals:

> The campaign’s utilization of truth, its treatment of Muslim audiences as means to serve broader policy objectives rather than as a population to be engaged on its own terms, and its use of palaver all suggest the ‘Shared Values’ videos, as an example of mass communication, had serious ethical shortcomings (p. 250).

Not only were there ethical shortcomings, but the focus to disseminate messages instead of listening created issues for the initiative from the beginning. Essentially, the US worked to find the perfect message, but did not work to engage the
audience. The State Department needed to “learn how people are connected in order to develop new links” (Zaharna, 2005, p. 3). Nonetheless, the Shared Values campaign proved to be a failure abroad and an example used to show how the government wastes resources on diplomacy at home. In fact, it appeared to create “scepticism [sic] and mistrust” (Simonin, 2008, p. 33), the exact opposite of its goals.

Even after the failure of the Shared Values campaign, US officials continued to perceive the problem as one of misunderstanding. The solution was the emulation of Cold War efforts of sharing information and informing and influencing foreign publics assuming this would lead to mutual appreciation for shared values (Zaharna, 2010, p. 29). However, the failure of the Bush Doctrine and the National Security Strategy of 2002 to deliver desired outcomes pushed officials to accept the strategy had inflamed anti-American sentiment instead of quelling it. As Hallams (2010) writes:

> Along with the invasion of Iraq, events at Bagram Air Base, Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, Haditha and elsewhere inflamed Arab and Muslim opinion and helped fuel a growing backlash against the United States and its allies. Far from being seen as a benevolent hegemon, America was seen by many as a rogue state, a Pax Americana seeking to reorder the world in its own image (p. 555).

Therefore, towards the end of Bush’s final term in late 2005, when Karen Hughes took over as Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs a new approach was formulated.

It was during her tenure that the US would first employ a PD 2.0 initiative. Hughes goal was to listen and learn on the September 2005 ‘Listening Tour,’ but often criticism, scepticism, and even hostility won out (Weisman, 2005). The tour faced
numerous problems including that the timing coincided with the ongoing aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the perception domestically and abroad that Muslims had no influence in the government or on foreign policy (Slavin, 2005). The Network of Terror, Shared Values campaign, and finally Hughes’ listening tour proved to be the trifecta of disaster for US public diplomacy during the Bush administration. Additional efforts included the establishment of the Al Hurra television network and the Radio Sawa station. Unfortunately, US public diplomacy of this period was out of touch with the reality of changes that affected the global society and they “appeared to generate more distrust and further eroded America’s credibility” (Zaharna, 2010, p. 29). In the post-9/11 period, US public diplomacy was heavily criticized as being ineffective.

Inevitably US public diplomacy was characterized as “broken” and in deeper “crisis” (Kelley, 2007, pp. 53–54). This scrutiny was followed by calls for innovation and delivered what have become, more or less, the accepted reasons why US public diplomacy was so seemingly unsuccessful—the marginalizing and underfunding of public diplomacy in the US generally, but even more so after the Cold War (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 5). The reasons were accepted and were certainly part of the problem, but they represented only the structural issues. There were also relational issues with the model of US public diplomacy. At that time it was unclear how the US could or whether it would be able to adapt to overcome the shortcomings of its public diplomacy endeavours.

The widely circulated 2003 Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World report was mandated to steer clear of local reactions to US foreign
policies limiting the commission’s attention to organizational restructuring and new modes for disseminating messages (Kelley, 2007, p. 55). In interviews with officials at the State Department it was communicated that, for both practical and not-so practical reasons, “there seemed to always have been an entrenched fear of change, which included the introduction of new technology, at the State Department” (K. Schalow & D. Paradiso, personal communication, April 16, 2011). Understandably, the State Department had worries about information security. The recent WikiLeaks scandal and distribution of US diplomatic cables that began in late 2010 and the 2013 Edward Snowden affair underscore these fears. Yet, in the late 1990’s–early 2000’s, although the use of the Internet, social networking sites, and social media in general were creating new virtual or digital communities, the US was not yet engaging with these networks.

In an era categorized by global interconnection via the Internet, two-way exchange and interaction via social media was becoming the norm. Publics wanted greater interaction and transparency. Individuals were increasingly moving towards innovative ICTs and Internet outlets for information. US government agencies were still operating in print with press releases and off-the-record roundtables (Graffy, 2009). Following these reports by the APDC and the election of the Obama administration in 2008 the State Department under Secretary Hillary Clinton put into place a review process similar to that of the DOD and Homeland Security ("Town Hall on the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review at the Department of State,” 2009). The first Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), released in December 2010, was a framework for the State Department for the next four years.
The State Department still had not successfully integrated institutional knowledge from the USIA and along with an entrenched hierarchical structure, did not offer much latitude to trying new things especially in regards to technology. One specific, if small, portion of the QDDR took up issues regarding relational aspects of the new public diplomacy and included clear assertions about integrating and adapting to ICT innovations and social media. The QDDR stated, that such changes would “connect the private and civic sectors with our foreign policy work” and allow interactions and engagement with digital social networks “expanding, facilitating, and streamlining” the public-private partnership process in the State Department (*The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR)*, 2010, p. viii). This would, as per the State Department “ensure that we can participate in public debates anywhere and anytime; pioneering community diplomacy to build networks that share our interests; and expanding people-to-people relationships” (*The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR)*, 2010, p. viii). The QDDR made a clear push towards engagement via digital diplomacy.

The previous two sections of this chapter made clear that US public diplomacy has been an evolutionary process, with public diplomacy a cyclical focus during conflict until the mid-20th century. Since then the Cold War offered opportunities for learning and advancement that fuelled further changes in US public diplomacy. However, at the end of the Cold War US public diplomacy again lost the attention of officials. Since the end of the Cold War, many political leaders, academics and informed individuals were critical of the failings of US public diplomacy and its inability to quell growing foreign hatred and misunderstanding of the nation and
its people (Beehner, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 2008, 2011). The need to reassess US public
diplomacy and recalibrate appropriately for the Information Age was a theme as
far back as the mid-1990s.29

By the beginning of the 21st century, and after consistent reduction in funding for
US public diplomacy, continued efforts to consolidate international affairs agencies
followed with the folding of USIA into the State Department (Fitzpatrick, 2008, p.
4).30 Academics, non-governmental bodies as well as government agencies
produced reports and held meetings to discuss how US diplomatic institutions and
public diplomacy could be reinvented or reinvigorated31 (Epstein, 2006;
Fitzpatrick, 2011). However, the focus was addressed mostly towards structural
problems within the bureaucracy (e.g. lack of funding and absence of diplomats in
policy formation) ignoring, for the most part, approach (i.e. how to build
relationships, listen to public opinion, and bridge networks).

29 A report titled “A New Diplomacy for the Information Age” released by the ACPD in 1996 had
as its main statement that: “the information revolution and the growing power of foreign publics are the
30 In 1999, the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 made a number of changes
to existing US public diplomacy and international affairs institutions and structures. Most notably the
USIA was absorbed into the State Department and the position of Undersecretary of State for Public
Diplomacy and Public Affairs was created to lead the public diplomacy programs that would continue
within the Department (Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998, 1998). This Act also
altered the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), established by the International Broadcasting Act of
1994, to manage all US international broadcasting channels and effectively brought Radio Free Europe
and Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) under its supervision (Broadcasting Board of Governors, n.d.).
31 For examples of such reports and assessments on U.S. public diplomacy see: The Report of
the Defense Science Board Task Force on Managed Information Dissemination (2001), by the Office of
the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisitions, Technology and Logistics; Building America’s Public
Diplomacy Through a Reformed Structure and Additional Resources (2002), a report of the U.S. Advisory
Commission on Public Diplomacy; Finding America’s Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public
Diplomacy (2003), an independent report sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations; U.S. Public
Diplomacy (2003), by the U.S. General Accounting Office; Strengthening U.S.-Muslim Communications
(2003), from the Center for the Study of the Presidency; How to Reinvigorate U.S. Public Diplomacy
(Johnson & Dale, 2003), published by the Heritage foundation; and Changing Minds and Winning Peace:
A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World (2003), a report of
the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World.
Even after 9/11 and years of research and deliberation the information dissemination approach continued to influence public diplomacy work at the State Department with the production of information products (videos, brochures, magazines), radio, television and also online media, for foreign publics (Beehner, 2005). There was little change in process regarding policy formation, or approach as exemplified by the Shared Values campaign. Recently, however, attention on approach has arisen along with research surrounding social media, social capital, networks, and relationships. The question is whether new ICT innovation, growing influence of digital social networks, and new digital diplomacy initiatives would finally alter approaches. I review some of the early State Department digital diplomacy efforts fuelled by the strategy of 21st Century Statecraft in the next section.

4.3: Re-engaging the world with social media digital diplomacy

Between 2006 and the beginning of 2011 the US Government and State Department moved disjointedly into the new digital environment. In the first few years of the 21st century the US was essentially absent, leaving a void or hole and “of course, somebody will fill the void—not always an ally” (D. Krape, personal communication, April 12, 2011). The use of social media began at field posts and Ambassadors led their posts with a certain degree of autonomy. Initially, integration of new technologies was sporadic and there was little guidance or support in terms of budget or human resources. The following paragraphs outline the State Department’s movements into digital diplomacy and the subsequent sections consider the first efforts of the State Department to adapt and incorporate social media.
During an interview in April 2011 an official at the State Department affirmed there was a recognition that to align efforts with this evolution in public diplomacy the US needed “to go where the people were, and the people were engaged in social networks and using social media prolifically” (D. Krape, personal communication, April 12, 2011). Since 2010, the State Department has made social media itself a prime emphasis. Questions remain regarding whether these efforts have led to wished results; engagement with social digital networks, build relationships to connect the public with the foreign policy work of the State Department, and create a pioneering community diplomacy to build networks—essentially to generate social capital.

In 2006, Lev Grossman wrote in *Time* magazine about the new emerging ‘Web 2.0’ phenomenon (Grossman, 2006). Grossman believed that it was “an opportunity to build a new kind of international understanding, not politician to politician, great man to great man, but citizen to citizen, person to person” (Grossman, 2006). Citing this statement, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Colleen Graffy affirmed that the new Internet phenomenon allowed for PD 2.0, however she was also clear to note that this would require a new approach by the State Department and a new type of Foreign Service Officer.

Furthermore, Graffy claimed that with the end of the Cold War challenge “a new challenge arose” (Graffy, 2009). This new challenge was that “no longer was the task getting information into a closed system, but rather effectively competing in an open one...where the changing shape of media required more engagement, not less” (Graffy, 2009). Social media are a gateway to a variety of different actors and
networks. They magnify the outreach capabilities of public diplomacy organizations such as the State Department. A virtual relationship may not replace face-to-face connections, but being present is always better than being absent.

As technology and society continued to change and recreate one another, PD 2.0, which resulted from the changes brought forth by societies’ use, integration, and moulding of Web 2.0 technologies, eventually morphed into 21st Century Statecraft. This 21st Century Statecraft became the framework of the State Department’s grand strategy and as such, affected public diplomacy. The core of this strategy, as per the State Department, is Internet freedom. Internet freedom in this sense included attention to issues of governance, cyber-security, and goals to “establish greater transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in government around the world” (“21st Century Statecraft: The ‘Internet Moment’ in foreign policy,” n.d.). A paramount issue arising from 21st Century Statecraft was the need to reconsider how diplomats interact and respond on behalf of the government.

The U.S. stated that its reaction in regards to diplomacy was to “align policies and actions with greater openness” by making changes to the methods of diplomacy (“21st Century Statecraft: The ‘Internet Moment’ in foreign policy,” n.d.). As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter the State Department released the QDDR in December 2010 laying out its process to execute this strategy. This document labelled social media and digital social networks as the networks and platforms for “the communications, collaboration, and commerce of the 21st century” that are “connecting people to people, to knowledge, and to global networks” (The First
Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), 2010, p. 22). Most important in 21st Century Statecraft for diplomacy was to interact and engage with publics globally and locally to learn, discuss and ultimately become better listeners.

The use of ICT in international relations has grown exponentially along with mobile technology. Africa, for example, has been a main benefactor of this growth in mobile technology and in the period 2003–2008 had the fastest growing mobile phone market in the world, which had much to do with the affordability of such devices in comparison to other types of personal technology (Smith, 2009). Since 2010, the State Department has been a partner in developing, conducting and funding the Apps4Africa competition. The competition was developed to tackle issues existing on the African continent by using social media and mobile technology to create discussion and collaboration. The aim is to find innovative ways to resolve the issues of the region by engaging the African population in the issue identification and solution process. The first Apps4Africa competition was described as:

highlight[ing] the needs of local stakeholders in four East African countries and brought together the private sector, students, universities, the NGO community, the private sector, and local Governments for a discussion about civil society problems and potential solutions. These constituents then worked together with local application developers to devise technology solutions to these societal problems (“About Apps4Africa,” 2012).

The program engaged the local African population in discussion about current problems. In 2010, the focus was on civil society problems. In 2011, the competition had to do with climate change; and in 2012, youth across Africa. The
Apps4Africa program and its partners including the State Department served as facilitators connecting civil society members and technology experts. As a ‘boundary spanner’ across a structural hole between two previously un-connected networks the US, via the State Department and USAID, worked to create social capital by building relationships and trust in the African community.

Founded by Appfrica International, the State Department and USAID supported and took lead roles in facilitating the programs. In 2010, Secretary Hillary Clinton was clear that the Apps4Africa program was an example of the type of ‘21st Century Statecraft’ that the US would pursue. This particular program was described as a ‘Civil Society 2.0 initiative’ (“Secretary Clinton Congratulates Winners of First Apps4Africa Competition,” 2010). The initiative combined State Department aims of fostering entrepreneurship, youth engagement and innovation on the African continent (Gosier, 2012). The competitions received a great deal of support in the African communities and the discussions and cross-network collaborations have continued. This program played on the learnings that had come before, but with an effort to develop partnerships and integrate a larger long-term theme.

Still, maintaining a connection and building long-term relationships with the networks after the competition via social media appears to have been less effective. Like the Democracy Video Challenge, the model generated positive effects and support for US initiatives. It displayed the US positively and the model fell well in line with underlying US identity constructions of guiding others in need and putting the power of liberal institutions on display. However, the event itself was
short-term and as such would have little potential for generating social capital on a long-term basis. The competition would run its course and the networks created during the short-term would dissolve unless a more encompassing long-term plan for ongoing engagement accompanied the initiative. Even the managing organization, Appfrica International, was a US based organization, so the goal needed to connect with a theme and integrate digital or mobile technology with in-person interaction in an effort to build a ‘glocal’ network.

The State Department, as per my interview with Kate Dowd, Innovation Advisor, State Department, in July 2012, was interested in the competition as part of a larger integrated program. The larger focus was on innovation, entrepreneurship and development in Africa and the social networks that the State Department were then able to infiltrate allowed for on-going contact both through ICT (mobile and Internet based) and to a larger extent in-person. One such example of a follow-on effect is an event on the use of social media for business growth that was organized by the US Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria in March 2013 (“Entrepreneurs Learn How to Grow Business Using Social Media,” 2013). The event featured a past participant in the Apps4Africa competition and leveraged networks and connections made to create a successful event.

An additional digital diplomacy initiative in the region that incorporates these themes and use social media to engage digital social networks is the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) which President Obama launched in 2010 (“Young African Leaders Initiative,” n.d.). Dowd noted that the goal for integrating social media and engaging with digital social networks was to find solutions and she
reaffirmed that the method is engagement, relationship building and trust—social capital as I have outlined in this research. The question asked by the State Department is how do we interact and use the social capital generated to “solve issues” (K. Dowd, personal communication, July 12, 2012)? Furthermore, Dowd noted, “as technology has changed, so have the goals”. We have taken on the role of a facilitator and we aim to be “catalysing relationships” and “learning and creating relationships” (K. Dowd, personal communication, July 12, 2012). Simply, Dowd stated, “social media has changed the world” and the State Department needed to continue to change with it. The following section further investigates some of the ways that the State Department has integrated social media in its efforts to engage digital social networks. I review these to establish how well they represent the framework for developing trust and thus generating social capital.

4.3.1: The State department’s first forays in the digital realm

The State Department social media digital diplomacy includes efforts by IIP, the Office of eDiplomacy, the Digital Outreach Team (DOT), the Office of Digital Engagement (ODE) and the Education and Cultural Affairs Bureau (ECA). These groups established State Department based blogs, for example, DipNote in 2007, and other websites in foreign languages, thus actively entering into digital diplomacy. Following from these early platforms the State Department began interacting on more and more platforms and now interacts in numerous social media networks including Flickr, Pinterest, Timblr, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, and Instagram.

Although the US made great strides in this arena in 2007–8, the Bush
administration had little patience for public diplomacy and soft power in the initial years of the administration. Former Ambassador Holbrook observed that US public diplomacy was “mired in a Cold War paradigm,” but in the final years new initiatives were quickly being developed inside the State Department (Hallams, 2010, pp. 552–553). New initiatives launched during the last years of the Bush administration under Secretary Rice showed promise and these, along with a myriad of new programs and projects, continued when Obama’s administration assumed power in January 2009.

As Hayden (2011) noted, prior to the Bush administration much of the technology behind US public diplomacy was used in a “mostly mass-communication-oriented” manner, but newer services have “emerged to capitalize on the affordances of networked, relation-oriented communication” (p. 237). I give further details of two of these early programs, the Democracy Video Challenge and ExchangesConnect below. In both, the underlying focus is on values consistent with American national identity and use culture as a mode of interaction with the main medium being social media.

The programs set specific audiences, delineated finite operational periods, and constructed environments where the state was a partner with consent to set the rules for engagement, so as not to create a hierarchy, but also to clearly define roles. Each example made the state a partner in the management of the project, but not a controller of messages and a facilitator of network development. These examples operationalize each of the four components of trust as outlined in the framework created in the previous section and endorse its findings. Moreover,
these projects are noted as effective models by government and non-government actors and represent the core focus of the relational approach—relationships. I explore these points below as guidance for comparison with the more recent examples I will investigate next.

4.3.1.1: ExchangesConnect: Promoting mutual understanding

Established in October 2008, as a Ning site (see Figure 1), ExchangesConnect was the first social network established by the State Department and US government (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, n.d.). The goal of the online social network at the time was to “encourage international exchanges and to help enhance the U.S.’s image abroad, especially with younger generations” (Oppenheimer, 2008). From that early model, the ExchangesConnect program has continued to evolve.

The ECA’s ‘social hub’ maintains a main web presence (see Figure 2) for its exchange programs as well as webpages and blogs for numerous associated programs, topics and audiences (prospective participants, participants, alumni, families, etc.). By 2013, the ECA was also interacting on a number of different social media networks including Facebook (www.facebook.com/ExchangeProgramsAtState), Twitter (@ECAatState), YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/exchangesvideo), Flickr (www.flickr.com/people/exchangesphotos/), and others depending on regional reference.
Figure 1: ECA ExchangesConnect Ning platform interface. (Oppenheimer, 2008)

Figure 2: ExchangesConnect ECA ‘Social Hub’ website homepage.
The current ECA traces its origins to the *Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (The Fulbright-Hayes Act)*, and its work is “to build friendly, peaceful relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, and professional exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships” (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, n.d.). To develop these relationships and build connections across a broad array of networks the ECA has established an approach with a concentration on the human aspect of interaction.

The overall approach of the ECA exchange programs network, of which ExchangesConnect is a part, offers a complete ‘community’ for the audience. This audience is, as stated open, but specialized for individuals, networks, and networks of networks interested, involved in, or affected by international exchanges. In 2010, the ECA established an outgrowth program from ExchangesConnect photo contest called “Postcards from Home” (see Figure 3). As per the State Department press release in November 2010, the contest was a worldwide photo contest that challenged entrants to share personal perspectives on their own homes and cultures through a photograph. The contest, open to both non-US citizens and US citizens, ran November 9–December 17, 2010.

The photo contest, which integrated digital interaction that supplemented offline activity, was not the first such project of the ECA’s ExchangesConnect program. A video contest titled “Share Your Story: My Culture + Your Culture = ?” launched at the same time as the original Ning platform went live in December 2008 and ran through until January 2009. This contest attracted over 8,400 participants from
180 countries and resulted in 360 submissions. The ECA then decided to run a second video contest titled “Change Your Climate, Change Our World” along with the photo contest to attract additional members to the ExchangesConnect social networks. The video and photo contest used social media to develop interest, share content and build its network. The aim was to facilitate information and knowledge sharing between different areas in the world in the hopes of creating both shared experience and better cross-cultural/cross-network understanding.

Figure 3: Flyer for ExchangesConnect Photo Contest “Postcards from Home”.

The ExchangesConnect ‘social hub’ as stated earlier now offers numerous platforms for interaction and integrates both virtual and in-person events for
prospective, current, and alumni members of exchange programs.
ExchangesConnect grew rapidly and in the first week it had over 1400 members and by February 2009, only three months after launching, ExchangesConnect had more than 7600 members and over 60 active groups (SocialFeds, 2009). By April 2009, the site had slightly more than 9,000 members with about half the members living outside the US (Herbert, 2009). However, as Jeremy Curtin, former coordinator of IIP stated, "using the technology in and of itself is not the goal" (Herbert, 2009), but neither is building a large audience, since large member numbers are not always vital for social media to work and such spaces for interaction can attract influential users.

The contests were an interesting way to expand the membership and knowledge about the existence of the new digital social network. The State Department employed a similar model for the second Democracy Video Challenge, which I further examine in the next section. However, this model is not without its critics. Some equated the contests with pure propaganda and although they acknowledge online engagement there was a clear aversion to replacing journalism with advertising (Free Media Online, 2009). However, this critique misses the fact that the online engagement in the contests is not mandatory and the actors that join and interact in the networks in part construct the content.

Moreover, the focus is less on the contest and more on developing ongoing experiences and information sharing. This helps to construct new relationships and develop new knowledge about the individual actors and the world. In addition, the ECA is clear in its communication guidance documentation that all social media
outreach is to acknowledge that the sender is the ECA and the US government. Propaganda is a one-way sell, but ExchangesConnect is nothing more than a public space, although geared towards specific topics and a particular audience.

In a May 2011 report from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Himelfarb and Idriss stated that digital social network engagement was a way to address many challenges and leverage many opportunities and spark “meaningful dialogue with young people around the globe” (p. 3). Likewise, they continued, such programs as ExchangesConnect “complement, and even strengthen, the benefits derived from in-person” and two studies, one conducted by East Carolina University (Chia, Poe, & Wuensch, 2009) and another by iEarn found digital engagement increases the likelihood of participation in physical exchanges and interest in cross-cultural interaction (Himelfarb & Idriss, 2011, p. 3). Such digital social networks offer social capital to the network members.

The ExchangesConnect digital social network community exemplifies network of mutual trust and reciprocity. This is exemplified through access to information on a number of different physical exchange programs such as The Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) and the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) programs; openness about the mission of educational, professional, cultural knowledge sharing; and commitment to the network from prospective participant through to alumni. As such, the network offers the actors social capital resources in the form of knowledge and new relationships.

From the US State Department perspective, the digital social network offers access to social capital in the form of positive experiences both through the connections
of foreigner’s experiences with the US, its people, culture, and values, but also through the connections American citizens make abroad. Moreover, the interaction across multiple networks across time and space offers great reach and long-term interaction acts as a multiplier effect. Acknowledging that not all experiences will be positive, the network may all also serve as a resource in these cases to mitigate or solve issues.

A review of the messages and exchange on Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook offer further evidence to reinforce a mutual respect and trust in the network. The Facebook page and YouTube pages allow for comments from individuals and is not merely a broadcasting centre. For example, below are some of the posts to the ExchangesConnect Facebook page from individuals including well wishes, thanks, and questions. The network is an active space and NGOs from the US and across the globe share information through this network as well.

From Australia (September 15, 2014):
“The Exchange programmes offered by the US department of State are brilliant. One way of connecting the world through passions, friendships and visions.”

From Bangladesh (July 20, 2014):
“Congratulation Muhammad Ferdaus & Abdullah Al Noman Bro for your Exchange Programs - U.S. Department of State's #Community College Initiative program (CCI) in the United States!!! ‘Have a safe journey’ ......”

From Brazil (July 2, 2014):
“How can I take part of it? I’m really excited with all the information I’ve just read...it’s awesome!”
Of course, there are some spam messages, but mostly the interaction is on topic. While the networks seems active, it was noticeable that the representatives for the ExchangesConnect Facebook page did not take every opportunity to respond to specific questions and often no reply was made (at least not publically viewable). Although, there are regular postings and exchange of information, this lapse in direct response to individuals could have repercussions in regards to commitment, therefore creating legitimacy and trust issues. However, as noted earlier the wide use by individuals globally as well as educational, civil society and NGO organizations offers credibility to the networks.

The Twitter feed (@ECAatState) is full of video, blog, news and photo links. Much of the content includes material from in-person live events sponsored or organized by the ECA. As per the structure of Twitter, Interaction consists of retweets and favourites of the content. In addition, Twitter’s search function allows for keyword searches. In searching for @ECAatState the returned examples included messages mostly from US State Department officials or US government organizations. There were few messages from individuals that referenced or included a mention of @ECAatState. This is not necessarily surprising given the social norms and culture of the ‘twittersphere,’ as unless there was a direct question for that actor the ‘@’ name would not likely have been included. More telling are the search results for ExchangesConnect. These results included numerous references from international organizations and NGO’s about programs of the ECA or specific projects conducted by fellows (for example, see Figure 4).
In all, the ECA hub has a clear message regarding the topics and issues discussed and its purpose. The various social media networks are open and offer access to information regarding the specified topics. Interaction occurs on a regular basis and is consistent, although the ECA team does not seize all opportunities to interact, which in conversations with officials, is more an issue of resource constraint in relation to the amount of messages and posts (Dilber, 2012). Likewise, individuals have access to ask questions, post comments, engage with both officials and other members if they so desire. Moreover, the inclusion of multiple sources, offers credibility. Although, there is an abundance of material and content from US government sources, the material is a result of in-person events conducted to facilitate networking and interaction of relevant topics. In this way, the digital social networks serve as supplementary spaces and are not replacements.

As depicted in Table 2 below, all four of the elements of trust were present in the ExchangesConnect example.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>MODERATE; topic specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; Group membership preference, not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>STRONG; on-going interaction, supplements events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>STRONG; multiple sources &amp; participant material</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: ExchangesConnect: element/presence degree scale.

The regular interaction by representatives of the ECA, specifically on Twitter with their own personal/official account is also an important factor to note. The use of personal photos as avatars, instead of official logos creates a more personal connection and lends both a recognition of commitment and credibility. The mutual recognition and general fulfilment of the components of trust and reciprocity make the ECA social hub and digital social networks an example in which social capital resources are available to the participating actors.

4.3.1.2: Democracy Video Challenge

In 2008, the US also unveiled, arguably, one of their most successful social media project to date. The goal of the Democracy Video Challenge was to generate discussion around democracy with a worldwide audience. Former Undersecretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, James Glassman, stated that “the point of the Democracy Video Challenge is to generate a global discussion” and that if they could engage the youth community to discuss democracy “on the medium of choice” it would be considered a successful endeavour (“Democracy Video Challenge Launches Global Contest: Enter Now!,” 2008). This “best example of State’s use of social media” went beyond reactionary information operations to explain US policy (Mascott, 2009, p. 22). Instead, the model proactively asked for
feedback and engaged others to deliver content. Of course, the aim was to reinforce and promote core American democratic ideals, which aligns with US public diplomacy objectives. However, the structure of the initiative allowed for the inclusion of different partner groups creating greater legitimacy and bridging across various cultural, political and industrial networks.

George Clack, a former employee and current consultant for the State Department, discussed the Democracy Video Challenge during an interview and noted that it became a model for digital social network engagement (G. Clack, personal communication, April 28, 2011). The contest launched on September 15, 2008, the design of the Democracy Video Challenge as part of US social media digital diplomacy meant it was both a public and cultural diplomacy event, inviting citizens worldwide to submit videos that completed the phrase “Democracy is...”

The Democracy Challenge Facebook (www.Facebook.com/democracychallenge) was still active in 2013 and had over 2.6 million likes. The page is described as a “global conversation that encourages people to share, consider, debate and learn from diverse perspectives on democracy” (“Democracy Challenge,” n.d.). As a project developed within the paradigm of new public diplomacy, it included partnerships with multiple governmental and non-governmental organizations, including private business entities. The partner organizations included YouTube, which provided the video platform, allowing for extended reach, and engagement and relationship development. The State Department was transparent in regards to both its involvement and the goals of the event and served as the lead partner organization, which lent it greater credibility.
As a public diplomacy initiative in a new global communications environment, the format appropriately integrated new technologies to allow for the broadest possible participation. In addition, the YouTube platform was easily used and well known globally and therefore it did not require sophisticated technical expertise. This is reinforced by over 900 entrants from 95 countries (Mascott, 2009; State Department, 2009). These technologies expanded the reach of not only the initiative, but also the ability to share the submissions of entrants with the global community. The result was an open discussion about the submissions and the creation of new networks amongst and between the participants themselves as well as the partner organizations and the participants. Analysis of the project by others offered that the project “exemplifies a number of core American values. Its open-ended nature is the embodiment of freedom of speech” (Mascott, 2009, p. 22). Secondly, the structure of the competition exemplified core American values, but without explicitly discussing freedom of speech, the process of voting or transparency. In effect, the initiative did not even discuss democracy, as the participants did this themselves.

The Democracy Video Challenge continued in 2009/10 and 2010/11 and added a “Democracy is...” Twitter competition and “Democracy is...” photo competition (“Launch of Inaugural Democracy Photo Challenge,” 2010). The conversations sparked by the video, photo or Twitter initiatives all leverage new technologies and social networks to engage people to and allow them to “share, consider, debate, and learn from diverse perspectives on democracy, ultimately reflecting the voices of all of the world’s citizens” (“Launch of Inaugural Democracy Photo
Challenge,” 2010, State Department, 2009). On December 4, 2008, a newly created Facebook page allowed for ongoing discussion. As of the writing of this research the Facebook page was still regularly updated and had over 2.6 million likes with the most popular and active group being teens and young adults (“Democracy Challenge,” n.d.). The continued interaction on the different platforms originally established for the “Democracy is...” project is an important legacy of the campaign. This continued interaction is evident most prominently through the regular postings, likes and interaction on the Facebook page.

The Facebook analytics that were available to me during my research allowed me to note that between 2010 and 2013 the most active week of interaction was the week of September 18-24, 2011. During this week there were two new posts made by the page owners, although certainly activity on other previous posts also continued. The two posts gained a large number of likes, comments and shares. There were two posts on September 24, 2011 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Democracy Challenge Facebook post September 24, 2011.
The first was a question that asked, “today’s young people are more influential [sic] than early generations. Why?” to which 158 people commented, over 1,100 read and acknowledged a positive affirmation with the theme of the question by liking the post, and 54 people shared the question onward to other networks. The second was a post that included a video message from Ronan Farrow, Special Advisor on Global Youth Issues inviting interested youth to an event called “Youth Driving Change,” scheduled for September 24, 2011, which was also then live-streamed for online viewing (see Figure 6). The post received 1,078 likes, others shared it 75 times, and the post received 73 comments, which is a relatively large amount of activity for a post.

Figure 6: September 24, 2011 digital invite to “Youth Driving Change” event.

The State Department’s IIP team manages the page and although the page received a large number of comments, the team did not make additional comments or replied to any comments or questions posted. However, since the site allowed comments this does not seem to have affected the growth of the network, which means information sharing and access to diverse information can occur, maintaining credibility.
In addition to the Facebook page, Democracy Challenge also engaged on YouTube, posting numerous videos about democracy and related topics. The YouTube channel, established on August 8, 2008, includes 25 videos: there have been over 328,000 views of the various videos, and 2,490 people have subscribed to the channel to receive updates and notices about new videos and comments. The video viewed most was the “Democracy is...” finalist video. This video dated June 16, 2009 received over 140,000 views. The video (see Figure 7) included snippets of submissions and the link to view all 18 videos, chosen from against 900 submissions across 95 different countries.

*Figure 7: YouTube video re: Democracy Challenge finalists on June 16, 2009.*

Both the Facebook profile and YouTube channel allow others to comment on the material shared. New videos are posted occasionally on the YouTube channel, but the number of views has declined per post. In contrast, the amount of interaction
on the Democracy Challenge Facebook page has increased. Most of the YouTube channel videos appeared as links on the Facebook page; therefore, interaction about the videos appears to have transferred to the Facebook page.

For example, on May 15, 2013, a YouTube video soliciting questions for Ben Herman, co-founder of Storify, instructed individuals to post a comment including their questions on Facebook. The video was part of a new segment of the Democracy Video Challenge called “Democracy Voice”, which was meant to build an interactive network from the audience originally established through the Democracy Video Challenge competition. Network facilitators urged members to “ask him about citizen journalism, freedom of expression, press freedom, anything!” and Ben would reply the next week (“Democracy Challenge,” n.d.). In the end, the number of questions asked were few, but others within the network shared both the original video and the answers with others in yet further networks.

Furthermore, given technical changes at Facebook, direct replies were possible as of late March 2013. The stated goal of this improvement was to facilitate improved conversations (Lavrusik, 2013). The Democracy Challenge team, essentially the IIP at the State Department, have been more interactive in regards to replying. For example by December 2013, on a December 21 post asking “Who was your ‘democracy hero’ in 2013? Why?,” 15 of the 83 posts were replies by the Democracy Challenge team (“Democracy Challenge,” n.d.). Compared to a year earlier when there were no additional replies by the Democracy Challenge team on initial posts it portrays an improvement in commitment to a relationship and
partnership, given the time and attention taken to engage in discussion with the actors in the network.

The technical change driven by a need for better interaction offered opportunity to engage in a deeper way. The improved ability to engage in dialogue between the actors offered better discussion and exposure to ideas. Engagement was central and access to information was free and transparent, as represented by a lack of censorship and the variety of posts (i.e. questions, reports, invitations, etc.). The credibility of information was clear given the citation of sources or the firsthand presentation by sources, and commitment, exemplified by on-going network interaction and maintenance, improved with increased personal replies.

Furthermore, as noted in part one, consistency reinforces the creation of trust in continuity with broad theme, maintenance of the relationship and adherence to a dialogic, relational approach.

As depicted in Table 3 below, all four of the elements of trust were present in the Democracy Video Challenge example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>MODERATE; topic specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; no limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>STRONG; ongoing interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>STRONG; multiple sources, participant &amp; third-party material</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Democracy Video Challenge: element/presence degree scale.*
Networks that bridged multiple other networks, provided information of interest and allowed openness in regards to information exchange. The State Department was consistent in providing credible information, allowing dialogue, and focusing on interactions. These first examples, seen as initial successes set the stage for US online and digital engagement. Newer examples, examined below, aimed to move US digital diplomacy even further from one-way dissemination towards interactivity as a general strategy.

4.3.2: Digital partnerships & relationships through IIP & CO.NX

CO.NX is described by the State Department as the core for “Digital Diplomacy of the U.S. Department of State” (“About CO.NX | IIP CO.NX,” 2012). The Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) established the suite of platforms, which include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, iTunes Audio and Video archives of events. It also includes a weekly newsletter among other communication vehicles to allow for information distribution, and interactive discussion. The CO.NX portal describes its operations as diplomacy that “transcends global geographic and cultural boundaries through over 1,000 live, interactive online programs a year featuring subject experts, opinion-makers, community leaders, and U.S. officials” (“About CO.NX | IIP CO.NX,” 2012). Furthermore, there are online programs in multiple languages and the digital space provides a forum for open discussion and mutual understanding.

In regards to important topics “CO.NX facilitates conversations that might never take place otherwise” (“About CO.NX | IIP CO.NX,” 2012). The events organized and then archived by CO.NX are not exclusively political messages from the US
government; instead, the issues discussed are diverse including religion, education, democracy, regional politics, economics and more. Thus, CO.NX has become the hub of the IIP comparable to ExchangesConnect as the social hub for the ECA. While ExchangesConnect serves networks of young individuals centred on opportunities for foreign exchange and discussing topics of a diverse nature, the CO.NX platform offers engagement across various networks. The CO.NX networks engage different topics and programs from across different bureaus and offices of the State Department, NGOs and civil society.

According to the CO.NX main webpage, which links to myriad different digital social networks, the main goal of the CO.NX hub is to facilitate dialogue. CO.NX both provides content in multiple languages, empowering individuals to create, share, and engage in discussions and by provides funding for local posts to produce context specific to the local audience’s tastes and technological landscape (“About CO.NX | IIP CO.NX,” 2012). CO.NX offers a Facebook app that allows interested parties to view content and live stream events.

The CO.NX YouTube and Twitter accounts offer access to all information produced and archived across multiple platforms and by local posts. As of the time of this research the Twitter account showed that 6,169 were following the @CO.NX feed and that the @CO.NX team were following 1,354 others. Even so, the Twitter feed of @CO.NX does not resemble any form of conversation or interaction. The list resembles an event schedule or agenda and offers little follow-up discussion. As a hub, CO.NX (see Figure 8) serves as a repository of information about US culture, politics, history, and much more open to all. The IIP team manages this site, which
includes an IIP YouTube channel, but also serves as a host, hub or management centre for other project-based YouTube channels. The viewership is minimal and comments are rare, however, most of the videos appear are shared within the Facebook networks, which is likely where most of the interaction, engagement and discussion occurs.

Figure 8: CO.NX hub main webpage.

In addition, a Google+ page is active, although since February 2014; there have been no new posts and no observable interaction prior to that. The associated Facebook page, which garners the greatest attention—2 million likes—is now titled “Innovation Generation”. The page does not allow for posts to the main timeline, but allows comments on posts made by the owners/managers. However,
this does not seem to limit the discussion either with State Department representatives of other actors in the network.

Likewise, CO.NX maintains two twitter accounts. The (@CONX) account is the IIP account defined as a space for “connecting & exchanging ideas with the world through live interactive virtual engagement & #digitaldiplomacy at the U.S. @StateDept” (“Interactive (@CONX) | Twitter,” n.d.). The (@Innovgen) account defines itself as the space for “discussing innovation, advice for startups and new businesses, and providing entrepreneurship content from the US State Dept.” (“InnovationGeneration (@innovgen) | Twitter,” n.d.). At the time of research, although the @Innovgen account has over 20,000 followers, the account only follows about 750. The picture is similar on the @CONX account, which has approximately 7,000 followers and is following only about 1,500. However, as stated in previous sections, numbers are not necessarily important for a functioning network. The point here is more on the disproportionate number of followers compared to follows. As such, each account appears to be more a broadcast stream, rather than a place for interaction and discussion. Moreover, much of the interaction on both is limited to officials within the US government in Washington or foreign posts, or retweets by other US government institution accounts.

As late as 2013 the OIG noted that IIP continued to focus on counting “raw numbers” and that “digital outreach should focus more on PD goals rather than raw numbers of social media fans,” (Geisel, 2013, p. 1). As depicted in Table 4 below, although the elements of trust were present. As a hub for multiple networks
the level of social capital possible is limited, but as a bridge CO.NX facilitates the
generation of social capital. However, the controlled environment and lack of
consistent interaction in the CO.NX example does make on-going long-term social
capital generation difficult.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>MODERATE; scheduled and controlled periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>MODERATE; limited access and feedback allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>MODERATE; interaction occurs on connected networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>MODERATE; some third-party content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4: CO.NX: element/presence degree scale.*

Additionally, while trying to create audience specific realms the IIP team at the
State Department has created overlap and this contributes to both confusion and
in some cases conflicting messages. Some of this comes from the continued
creation and management of central social media outreach in tandem with
localized material created at foreign posts. This issue arises from what has been
considered a positive development in regards to outreach. In comparison to
previous moves to centralize content management and message formulation there
have been recent movements towards de-centralization in the State Department.

**4.3.3: US embassy, New Zealand: revitalizing relationships**

Created on May 27, 2008, the State Department’s Facebook page did not have its
first post until almost 10 months later on March 15, 2009. Even today five years
later, the Facebook page does not allow posts by others, but it does allow
comments on posts the State Department makes. This offers the State Department
a way to limit negative posts, but damages openness and transparency, which in turn also creates issues for credibility. While, the page does offer a great deal of information, critique is plentiful since the limitations, tantamount to passive censorship, hinder the digital social network’s expectations of access and openness.

In regards to social media, there is an expectation of opportunity to react and/or respond, which is lost here. Moreover, this is especially frustrating when considering the US government rhetoric about free expression, democracy, and its own efforts to garner acceptance among digital social networks. Its Twitter account, established in late 2007, had its first tweet on October 23 and like the Facebook page, this account seems to emulate the same broadcast technique amounting to little more than bulletin boards. Even today, although the State Department created the first ever, official Twitter account for a government institution, there seems to be very little social interaction as noted by the zero replies (see Figure 9).

![Tweet analytics as of 1 July 2013](image)

*Figure 9: State Department Twitter analytics July 2013 (Burson-Marsteller, n.d.)*
These general accounts are broadly focused networks that encompass a whole range of issues and topics. Due to the dearth of information that is available disseminated about operations, policies, and events, there is limited space, time or resources remaining for true engagement. As Hayden (2012) and others have noted, the most impactful efforts are likely “those that leverage the relation-building capacity at the local level” (p. 11). Here the problem is a mismatch between goal, resources, medium and function.

A traditional website suffices when the goal is simply to post information, as that medium allows further sharing and dissemination of information. Additionally, this does not create expectations that interaction and active listening are occurring or even a possibility. To be active in the Facebook network brings with it expectations and when these expectations are not met they result in distrust as the commitment to the relationship is not reciprocal, and credibility is lost as openness is undermined.

According to the State Department they now operate “more than 2.6 million followers on 301 official Twitter feeds communicating in 11 languages” and over “15.5 million fans, friends, and followers on 408 Facebook accounts department wide” thus communicating with “about 20 million individuals across the globe” (“21st Century Statecraft: The 'Internet Moment' in foreign policy,” n.d.; White, 2013). Initially, the State Department worked to centralize content and control the message, but this quickly changed as the State Department recognized that each post served a unique population and that topics of interest varied, as did communication norms, across the different audiences.
De-centralization was a topic of discussion during my interview with the Acting Director of the State Department’s IIP, Office of Innovative Engagement. As noted, after the USIA was absorbed into the State Department there was a focus on creating a central location from which to push content and control message (D. Krape, personal communication, April 12, 2011). According to Krape, as the State Department manoeuvred the norms of the social media sphere each foreign post—Embassy or Consulate—was given more liberty to communicate with the local networks according to appropriate cultural norms, on the popular social media outlets of the region. Moreover, they were given approval to create content that would be of interest to the audiences they served. This decentralization has continued. A prime example is the US Embassy in Wellington, New Zealand, which represents a foreign post that the State Department considered to have used social media to enhance communication, engagement, and interaction with the local publics.

In December 2009, David Huebner arrived in Wellington, New Zealand as the newly appointed Ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa. While the US and New Zealand maintained a friendly relationship, tension had existed since the mid-1980s. The history of this diplomatic relationship is long for New Zealand in comparison to others because in 1838 the US was the first nation to establish a consulate in New Zealand. This brought a collection of cultural visits by US entertainers and artists. Then the World Wars further reinforced the US-NZ relationship and led to the ANZUS treaty and alliance in 1951, which also included Australia. The tensions arose in 1985 when the New Zealand government refused a visit of the US nuclear powered USS Buchanan into New Zealand ports. This
resulted in the US suspending its obligations under the ANZUS treaty (“U.S. Relations With New Zealand,” 2014). Although diplomatic relations broke down, cultural and trade relations continued, nonetheless, the general opinion of the US in New Zealand had suffered and continued to stagnate well into the 2000’s.

A 2004 Pew Research poll showed that, like elsewhere in the world, New Zealanders did not have highly favourable perceptions of the US. The poll reported that the percentage of New Zealanders holding positive opinions of the US were only 29 percent and the negativity was apparently not just focused on political policy, but also more broadly on American culture as well as its citizens (Cohen, 2006). In 2010, the signing of the Wellington Declaration foreshadowed a move beyond an almost 30 year tenuous relationship. A study released in February 2011 by the New Zealand Institute for International affairs (NZIIA) in conjunction with the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) reviewed the bilateral link between the US and New Zealand and made further recommendations for taking the relationship to new levels (Bower & Lynch, 2011). In the following year, the Washington Declaration was signed and, as a New Zealand media commentator remarked, there appeared to be a “new normal” emerging between the US and New Zealand (Watkins, 2013). The re-kindling of the relationship and the resulting successes were seen to have been substantially supported and due in part to the efforts of Ambassador Huebner and the New Zealand Embassy staff.

The Ambassador and staff were highly successful in re-orientating the Embassy in Wellington towards a new approach to diplomacy, a relational approach. Politicians had negotiated a new normal, but what was the consensus of the public
in New Zealand and how would the US best approach engagement? These questions were to be debated and answered by the Ambassador and his team. The New Zealand media, bloggers and many organizations touted the Embassy's work. From my broad analysis of traditional, blog and social media the general feeling in New Zealand was that the Ambassador was “an excellent public face for the United States in New Zealand, and also a prolific social media aficionado” (Farrar, 2013) and his approach and the Embassy staff were held in high regard, which reflected well on the US.

Likewise, the State Department recognized these efforts as having improved New Zealand and US relations to the highest point in decades (“U.S. Relations With New Zealand,” 2014). The Embassy team under the direction of Ambassador Huebner created an extensive social media presence and became an influential actor within social media networks in New Zealand and the region and the Embassy fully adopted “social media as a form of diplomatic outreach” (Huebner, 2012). Further to this end, Ambassador Huebner worked to create a new operational culture at the Embassy in which interaction and engagement with the public was a focus, not a second thought.

On October 2, 2012, the US Embassy in Wellington expanded its social media outreach from the Twitter account it had already been maintaining since April 2009 by establishing a Facebook page. At the time of this research, the @USEmbassyNZ Twitter account had 7,907 followers and was following 2,267 others and the US Embassy New Zealand Facebook page (see Figure 10) had 4,434 likes or friends. Its Twitter feed is often full of retweets of information relevant to
the New Zealand community and specialized digital social networks within New Zealand, but also in the US and globally. Likewise, @USEmbassyNZ replies to questions and comments as did the Ambassador himself via his personal Twitter account, @DavidHuebner.

The Embassy rounded out its digital diplomacy outreach with YouTube (131 subscribers, 181,400 views), Instagram (156 followers, 41 following), Google+ (715 followers, 37 following, 66,029 views), Pinterest (208 followers, 179 following) and Flickr (12, 646 photos shared) accounts. In most cases the videos, documents, photos shared on these platforms were also shared jointly on the Embassy Facebook page. Moreover, Ambassador Huebner was one of the first Ambassadors to establish a blog (www.davidhuebner.com) (see Figure 11) and he compiled an impressive number of entries—over 500 during his tenure, an average of 10 entries a month.

**Figure 10:** US Embassy New Zealand Facebook page.

**Figure 11:** US Embassy New Zealand: Ambassador Huebner’s blog.
In the broader East Asia and Pacific region, the State Department and civil society organizations recognized the Ambassador and Embassy team for innovation and excellence in social media innovation and interaction. In 2012, the communications industry professional association Public Affairs Asia awarded the Ambassador and Embassy staff the Gold Standard Award for Social Media Communications for 2011 (“PublicAffairsAsia: Gold Standard Awards,” n.d.). The award applauded their social media work naming the Embassy “the ultimate winners based on an in-depth, comprehensive review of all four nominees’ social media activities and outcomes” (Huebner, 2012). In reviewing the social media of the US Embassy in Wellington, I found that the social media fulfilled all the components of trust outlined in this research.

The information provided was relevant and credible to the audience and including a broad spectrum of topics from sport and tourism to education, science, business and general discussion about the US, New Zealand and the US-New Zealand relationship. The Embassy demonstrated openness by often expressing interest in receiving feedback, by engaging in discussions and attending in-person meetings or events from which interaction continued into the digital networks. Moreover, the Embassy was sure to integrate the social interaction with digital social networks with in-person events.

Two specific and on-going focuses of the Embassy were sports diplomacy, youth education, and leadership development. Considering previous discussions here, I note that Ambassador Huebner was not a net-optimist or net-pessimist, but held a relatively moderate position. During my interview with Ambassador Huebner in
July 2011, he was adamant that communication technology could be a positive, but that it was about how individuals and organizations adapted, adopted and in turn re-moulded such technology to our goals and needs.

According to Ambassador Huebner, social media should not be seen as a “novelty, a stand-alone function, or a nice accessory on display,” since approaching social media in this way shows that there is a misunderstanding of the “power, opportunity, and great risk posed by global cyber interconnectivity” (Huebner, 2012). The Ambassador himself, and his social media team, led by Michael Cousins, have incorporated social media engagement into the work of public affairs, political, economic, public diplomacy, youth, agricultural, commercial, and focused staff.

Moreover, the Ambassador and his team engaged multiple audiences within New Zealand and created specialized accounts in order to engage with these networks, yet they are not isolated and interact with each other across network divides—sharing ideas and topics. For example, these included a focus on sports-diplomacy in the lead up to the Rugby World Cup 2011. Overall, the Embassy recognized the importance of interactivity and was clear to focus on the point that “diplomacy should be about conversations” (Huebner, 2012). To that end, the Embassy staff and ambassador are often creating opportunities for engagement, including Twitter Q&A’s, but also integrating virtual and in-person events.

In this regard, the Embassy is a model for establishing local/global programs and projects for engagement on various topics the ‘glocal’ focus allowed the Embassy
to establish itself as a hub and facilitator of connections, but also as a participant in the digital social network. Furthermore, the digital diplomacy continued and emphasized in-person events. By collaborating with local organizations like Social Media New Zealand (SMNZ) on national conferences, specifically “The Project” and organizing local student networks for information and feedback sessions with the youth of New Zealand, the Embassy further developed credibility. In addition, the team showed commitment to building relationships and demonstrated that it was listening, although that did not always mean agreement or change in policy, but often did include discussion.

As depicted in Table 5 below, all elements of trust were present in the US Embassy, New Zealand example, which made social capital generation possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>STRONG; across all topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; no limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>STRONG; continuous interaction – online &amp; in-person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>STRONG; multiple sources: local, global, and participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: US Embassy, New Zealand: element/presence degree scale.

New Zealand was both a practical and interesting example. I was able to monitor the interaction of the digital social networks through cyber-ethnography. New Zealand is a Western and liberal democracy, so there was potential that this example could be too easily considered a success. I contend, however, that even given the similar societal norms New Zealand has a unique culture and strong national identity that creates its own challenges especially when considering the
US-New Zealand relationship. Nonetheless, to offer an example in contrast I now turn my attention to the Virtual US Embassy in Tehran, Iran.

4.3.4: USAdarFarsi: Virtual US embassy, Tehran

وزارت امورخارجه آمریکا به زبان فارسی

The State Department manages a number of Persian language and Iran focused social media. In working to engage Persian speakers, mainly Iranian citizens and the associated Iranian networks, the US established the USAdarFarsi Facebook page (www.Facebook.com/USAdarFarsi) in April 2011. Since then, the State Department established corresponding Twitter (@USAdarFarsi), YouTube (https://www.YouTube.com/user/USAdarFarsi) and Google+ (https://plus.google.com/+USAdarFarsi) accounts. In addition, in December 2011, the State Department launched a Virtual Embassy in Tehran, Iran (http://iran.usembassy.gov) in both English and Persian. Furthermore, the IIP established and maintains an additional Facebook and Twitter account to engage with the Iranian people and other Persian language speakers—Vision of America: www.Facebook.com/Visionofamerica. The audience specific Facebook pages offer an opportunity to interact with the networks in their mother tongue, which is a benefit when building trust.

However, as a report by the OIG in May 2013 states “it is not efficient for the Department to have competing Persian-language Facebook and Twitter sites” (Geisel, 2013, pp. 23–24). The potential is that multiple channels competing for the same audience divided into different sections of the State Department and secluded, operating separately from one another simultaneously offers an echo chamber and portrays a disjointed or schizophrenic personality of the US. Today
both Facebook pages continue to operate. I will focus my attention on the
USAdarFarsi networks directly connected to the Virtual Embassy, and established
and managed by the same Bureau within the State Department, the Bureau of Near
East Affairs (NEA).

At the time of this research, the various social media accounts and profiles boasted
the following number of members, likes, friends, followers, etc.: Facebook:
211,924, Twitter: 46,200, YouTube: 3,026 subscribers & 1,530,669 video views
and Google+: 28,457. The Twitter account and YouTube channel offered little
information for analysis due to its relative small interaction history. Although the
Twitter account boasts a large following, the State Department only follows 199
others. The @USAdarFarsi account also does not resemble an account in which
there is viewing reading or interaction within the Twitter network. This is
noticeable by the @USAdarFarsi Twitter stream (see Figure 12). It is an endless
and uninterrupted list of the accounts’ own tweets with no re-tweets from others
or tweets reminiscent of conversations with others.

In a 30 day period only four tweets in the @USAdarFarsi Twitter stream were from
others: @StateDept (the State Department’s general official Twitter account),
@JohnKerry (Secretary of State, John Kerry), @stengel (Undersecretary for Public
Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Rick Stengel), and @vj44 (Senior Advisor to the
President and Assistant to the President for Public Liaison and Intergovernmental
Affairs, Valerie Jarrett). The lack of interaction leaves others active within the
Twitter network the perception that there is no genuine commitment to
relationship building and true engagement.
Essentially, it appears that the @USAdarFarsi Twitter account is little more than a message dissemination and broadcast tool similar to radio. Therefore, while access to information is possible and potentially regarded as credible, it is unlikely this will lead to the development of social capital that could be beneficial to the State Department. A similar situation exists on the YouTube channel. Much of this may be due to the use of the Facebook page as a central ‘hub’.

Figure 12: Clip of @USAdarFarsi Twitter account stream.

The USAdarFarsi Facebook page, as with most other audience specific social media maintained by the State Department, appears to be the where links, videos and posts are aggregated including YouTube and Twitter content. Although, each of
these networks also maintains engagement within its own specific network, material from all networks meshes here. It would then follow that I would find a greater amount of engagement between the State Department and the targeted publics. The State Department does allow for comments on its posts and unlike other pages managed by the State Department also allows others to make direct posts on the Facebook page as well. The topics range from political messages regarding US policy broadly and, of course, Iran specifically, but also deal with sport, culture, art and religion. According to analytics offered by Facebook the city with the most active members on the Facebook page is Tehran, Iran with the age demographic of 25-34 year old individuals being the most active.

The ‘friends’ of the page generally find the content shared credible and this is evident in the interaction that occurs between the various individuals that comment on posts made by the State Department. Although, agreement with the information shared is not always the case, the dialogue infers an understanding that this information comes from the US and reflects a specific perspective, not that it is false. Although the State Department shares information allowing access to information on a consistent basis and the information is generally seen as credible there is limited, if any, real engagement visible between the State Department and the networks interacting on the USAdarFarsi Facebook page.

I actively tracked and viewed a sample of all posts made by others on the USAdarFarsi Facebook page during a six-month period (September 2013–March 2014). During this period, there were approximately 830 posts made by others yet the State Department did not comment or engage any of the individuals. The posts
did include some spam and propagandistic posts for which there is no response. However, there were numerous posts requesting additional information or resources for studying in the US. Likewise, on posts made by the State Department there is also rarely any additional comments or engagement with those that add comments or questions. The commitment to engagement and developing relationships would appear questionable. As such, openness also suffers because there is limited interaction with the various networks and actors to communicate ideas, thoughts, concerns, etc. The largest number of posts by others in that six-month period occurred in March, the month of the Persian New Year—Nowruz. The State Department also made its own Nowruz post and it is one of the most shared, liked and commented on posts on the USAdarFarsi Facebook page (see Figure 13).

*Figure 13: Pres. Obama in USAdarFarsi Facebook Nowruz post March 21, 2014.*
Since 2011, President Obama has posted a message for Nowruz – the Persian New Year. This is a very important event in Persian culture, especially in Iran and the messages are widely viewed and shared. The 2014 message received over 1,000 messages and many of those messages received replies. In addition, the post was shared over 2,200 times and was liked by over 12,000 individual Facebook members as shown in the clip below. The reach was large, but interaction was minimal. The State Department team managing the USAdarFarsi Facebook page did not comment further on the post or comments and/or questions posted. The responses to President Obama’s message likewise spanned from grateful as depicted in Figure 14 to statements of dislike and distrust as shown in Figure 15. Overall, the responses were well wishes and thanks along with messages of hope for better relations in the future. However, in the mix were a number of messages recounting US hypocrisy in regards to past Middle East foreign policy actions and questions of credibility.

*Figure 14: Positive comments on USAdarFarsi Facebook post March 21, 2014.*
A specific benefit of the USAdarFarsi Facebook page for both the State Department and the networks and actors active on the page appears to be the mixing of different digital social networks on the US managed Facebook page. This includes Iranians that defy blocks placed on Facebook inside the country, the diaspora Iranian population and broader Persian populations in the Middle East. Serving a bridge or what Hocking (Hocking, 2008; Hocking & Spence, 2002) call a ‘boundary-spanner’ for these groups and allowing for discussion across and between different digital social networks the State Department, arguably, gains some social capital. However, I presume that this would be minimal and passing in comparison to social capital generated via personal interaction.

The 1979 Iranian Hostage Crisis and the resulting end of diplomatic ties has been a hindrance on US diplomatic efforts and has created a wall limiting interaction between US and Iranian citizens. The social media efforts of the State Department including the Virtual Embassy and the USAdarFarsi social media networks have
DIGITAL DIPLOMACY & SOCIAL CAPITAL

offered a new avenue for discussion and interaction that has been missing for almost 35 years. The goal of these efforts has been to support pro-democratic changes in Iran and influence youth (Fialho & Wallin, 2013, p. 2). Fialho and Wallin (2013) wrote in their report that “if the U.S. wishes to exert strategic influence in Iran, it should cultivate relationships with citizens and battle misperceptions through exchange and dialogue” a sentiment I echo (p. 2). With over 50% of the population online and one of the fastest growth rates, the opportunities are vast for connecting with Iranian digital social networks.

Moreover, recent announcements that Internet restrictions may be loosened in Iran offer even more opportunities (Rezaian, 2014). Opportunities demonstrated in this above review of the USAdarFarsi Facebook page, represent the possibility of social media digital diplomacy, but certain difficulties will persist without a physical presence. For example, without the ability to interact directly in-person with Iranian citizens US representatives lack ability to elevate action or a “solid understanding of the audience and its perceptions,” which makes it difficult to “produce results or serve as a bridge” (Fialho & Wallin, 2013, p. 4). This makes it more critical to ardently and fervently engage as much as possible and as often as possible via these digital venues. How does the State understand the audience, offer access to credible information and resources that can show an openness to communicate and a commitment to building relationships? The answer is to listen.

The idea, echoing Secretary Clinton, is that social media “in the absence of direct contact ... can work as a bridge between the American and Iranian people” (Coleman, 2011). Iranians and the Iranian diaspora as well as Persians globally are
speaking, but the State Department does not appear to be listening. By engaging, the State Department could both ask for and share information and demonstrate that it is listening, but the current “perceived lack of listening can also correlate to lower levels of trust from the very target audiences the U.S. is attempting to reach” (Fialho & Wallin, 2013, p. 5). The investigation presented in this dissertation ran over a period that also incorporated the research period in which Fialho and Wallin conducted their research, thus the congruence of our findings adds reliability to the results presented here.

As depicted in Table 6 below, although the elements of trust were present in the USAdarFarsi example, social capital generation remains moderate given limitations of in-person contact and the general historical context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>STRONG; across all topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; no limitations (US limits on FB interaction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>MODERATE; continuous interaction (online only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>MODERATE; participant content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: USAdarFarsi: element/presence degree scale.

Nonetheless, this example, and the others presented both earlier and current projects, which represent the now ubiquitous use of social media digital diplomacy, shows such attempts can generate social capital. Still, State Department Facebook pages or Twitter accounts do not generate social capital simply by existing, instead it is if and how if they actively engage that makes the difference. I conclude this chapter by reviewing the information presented and discussing the
themes that emerged in the US case study including social media integration, message control, ‘network arrogance’ and consistent strategy-practice disarrangement.

4.4: Conclusion: Future.gov

This chapter evaluated US digital diplomacy to analyse current assumptions and theories about whether social media digital diplomacy generates social capital and, if so, then how. In the introduction, I outlined the underlying national identity constructs that have influenced US foreign policy and diplomacy. I then continued by introducing the major periods of influence that affected the process and evolution of US diplomatic practice, specifically the emergence of public diplomacy and the growth of its importance continuing to present day. Finally, with a focus on ICT, I sketched the process by which current US social media digital diplomacy activities arose. Finally, I focused my review on early digital diplomacy projects and noted how they then led to general employment of social media across the State Department. In this concluding section, I revisit the results and themes that became apparent from my investigation.

By tracing the process on US digital diplomacy from early examples to more recent projects, I was able to bring together issues and factors missing from previous research. Many other scholars have more completely investigated issues of identity and history in regards to public diplomacy. These are not the core focus of this dissertation but including these factors in the tracing and analysis of US digital diplomacy might offer insight to the observed research outcomes. For example, a persistent focus on ‘saving’ or ‘helping’ the world that comes through not just in US
rhetoric but also in particular digital diplomacy engagement. This might leave digital social networks with perception of arrogance of behalf of the US and feelings of disparagement for themselves. The US conversely sees this as part of its responsibility to improve the world, albeit through the spread US centric ideas and liberal democratic institutions.

Ironically, as negative perceptions such as this began to grow in the aftermath of 9/11 the State Department, in an effort to change such perceptions, turned to social media and engagement with digital social networks. The logic here, as clarified through discussions in this chapter that refer to the theoretical discussions in part one, is grounded in theories of the democratizing effects of social media. Meaning, the ability of social media to reach across diverse networks, reinforce bonds in existing relationships, and assemble bridges to new relationships, thus generating social capital.

This chapter established US attempts to revitalize public diplomacy in the late Bush years were viewed unfavourably. Ellen Hallams wrote “when it comes to the Internet and new media technologies, US policymakers have failed, thus far, to harness their power and potential in the service of US public diplomacy and soft power” (Hallams, 2010, p. 550). As noted in Chapter 1, public diplomacy institutions must decide whether public diplomacy is purely a tool to extend power or a means to engage and participate in establishing a shared future and relationship (Fisher, 2010, p. 295). In turning to social media various individuals including Morozov and Graffy were sceptical and stated that social media is not a panacea, but can hurt relationships and even destroy social capital. Graffy (2009)
noted “‘Public Diplomacy 2.0’ must also include a new attitude toward who engages in it” and it “should mark the end of the separation of policy and public diplomacy”. In contrast, social media can also offer new opportunities for connecting, building relationships and mitigating estrangement, if a new attitude were adopted.

Today it appears an important question still remains, which is not whether “public diplomacy officers are contributing to policy, but whether policymakers are contributing to public diplomacy” (Graffy, 2009). In a world that has “gone past the tipping point of global connectedness,” it is not whether, but how the US embraces these new connections that will be key (Hallams, 2010, p. 563). While, there is observable movement to understand social media and digital social networks it is not surprising that the greatest impediments remain the inability to release control and engage in true dialogue resulting in reflection and potential policy changes.

In addition, from my interviews at the State Department it is clear that the energy and will is present to engage actively and appropriately, but budgetary limits, human resource shortfalls, and a lack of a broad or overarching strategic plan and training about social media tools, etiquette and norms remain issues. Not to mention the inflexibility of the State Department to re-structure the model of the bureaucracy. As noted by government analysis itself and as demonstrated by the examples, overlap due to siloed and separated bureaus vying for resources and protective of operations are impediments to the overall public diplomacy mission at hand. It is clear that 21st Century Statecraft as outlined by the State Department
in the QDDR aligns well with the how public diplomacy research currently describes the relational approach. Meaning that access to information and resources through bi-directional discourse, openness to exchange, credibility, and commitment through consistent interaction is the path to reaching diplomatic and foreign policy goals in the interconnected global society of the 21st century.

Rhetorically the State Department recognizes the global social changes and their influence. To this end and in an effort to adapt, the State Department has established social media digital diplomacy efforts, but an institutional belief that these endeavours are secondary and in some cases, a waste of resources appears to persist. This is apparent by the limited resources offered both at the State Department in Washington and at posts, where according to my interviews in 2011/2012, additional resources specifically for social media outreach and digital diplomacy initiatives are not available.

This examination of US social media digital diplomacy made it clear that social media and digital social networks are still considered ‘tools’ instead of seen as actors in a social setting by the State Department generally. Upon reflection of the theoretic literature noted and through observation, this subjugates others underneath the US and the State Department when discussing diplomacy. Seeing social media as technology and tools instead of a unique social entity with its own norms and values means that the State Department is not likely to be able to interact appropriately and may potentially ostracize itself from the very networks it wishes to be part of, create, or bridge. A recent incident in which it was discovered that the US government created a Twitter-like service for Cubans in
order to manipulate public sentiment is one such example. The ZunZuneo service grew fast, but was short-lived after funding ended (Butler, Gillum, & Arce, 2014; Olson, 2014). The revelations of the fake service and its intended goal will have ramifications for US credibility in other networks. Such operations in today’s global and increasingly transparent society are difficult to maintain and often very harmful to credibility often without obtaining intended goals.

Digital diplomacy and interaction in digital social networks can offer opportunities for generating social capital as demonstrated by some of the US examples investigated. The early programs of the State Department introduced in this chapter showed immense promise. The Democracy Video Challenge, the Apps4Africa initiative, and ExchangesConnect all created new digital networks and served as bridges for other networks and actors to interact. Long-term nurturing of these relationships is important. Especially in the example of the Democracy Video Challenge (Democracy Challenge Facebook page), it appears to have continued well since 2009. Yet, the State Department’s main Facebook page exhibits an opposite picture with minimal interaction. The apparent assumption that maintaining a Facebook page, Twitter account or YouTube channel without consistent contact is enough to preserve ties and produce positive social capital generation is a potential danger. Ignoring these existing networks could become a detriment to efforts, as this creates a disconnect between rhetoric and action.

Table 7 below gives an overview of all the examples discussed in this chapter. As evidenced by this visual table, when these four elements are present social media digital diplomacy initiatives can offer chances to develop social capital.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EX</th>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
<th>SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ExchangesConnect</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>MODERATE; topic specific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; Group membership preference, not required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>STRONG; on-going interaction, supplements events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>STRONG; multiple sources &amp; participant material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy Video Challenge</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>MODERATE; topic specific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; no limitations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>STRONG; ongoing interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>STRONG; multiple sources: participant &amp; third-party</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO.NX</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>MODERATE; scheduled and controlled periods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>MODERATE; limited access and feedback allowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>MODERATE; interaction occurs on connected networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>MODERATE; some third-party content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Embassy, New Zealand</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>STRONG; across all topics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; no limitations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>STRONG; continuous interaction - online &amp; in-person</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>STRONG; multiple sources: local, global, and participant</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAfardFarsi</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>STRONG; across all topics</td>
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<td>STRONG; no limitations (US limit on FB interaction)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>MODERATE; participant content</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7: Entire US case element/presence degree scale (EX=example/SC=social capital).*
However, it is clear that it is not the use of social media, but the process—technology does not determine an outcome. Moreover, there is no guarantee the social capital created will be positive or affirmative instead of negative or adverse. In each initiative, the potential exists for the state to us the networks in an exclusionary manner to create division. That this does not occur is not a result of the technology, but of the mutual consensus and intersubjective agreement of the network to be inclusionary, open, and committed. Contrary to critical theory, the state does not hold the power. If the state wished to transform the network to create division, the members could reject the change and ultimately remove themselves rendering the network useless. A fair criticism is that the networks themselves do not occur in a vacuum, a good initiative that is not part of a large relational public diplomacy structure may not maintain social capital long-term.

Finally, from tracing the evolution of US social media digital diplomacy this research shows the State Department has made great strides. Still, plenty is left to do and what remains may be some of the most difficult and fundamental changes. The model of the US Embassy in New Zealand stands out as a unique example of how to build trust and qualitatively substantial relationships to generate social capital. All four components of trust are satisfied in this example, but maintaining the hard-earned respect of the social networks both digital and physical will require ongoing effort and long-term strategy focused on relational elements. Moreover, the level of engagement on the USAdarFarsi Facebook page including the tone and content of the discourse all point to very positive possibilities in regards to engaging the digital social network and generating social capital. This
would require a greater investment in resources, as consistency will be key where the State Department does not maintain a physical presence.
Chapter 5: Case Study 2—Israel

There have been attempts by different Israeli governments and multiple government institutions and ministries to deal with image and public diplomacy issues. While there has been discussion regarding the needs to re-organize and unify the Israeli public diplomacy apparatus, little substantive change had occurred in the 20 years prior to 2010 (Medzini, 2012, p. 7). Academics and officials recognizing the need for improved Israeli public diplomacy claimed that it was the missing piece in Israeli foreign policy (Gilboa, 2006). This growing need for review and continuous global societal changes created impetus for change.

The Israeli public diplomacy narrative was incoherent (Gabay, Sheafer, & Shenhav, 2010) and missing a grand strategy (Mor, 2006). Previous research on Israel’s public diplomacy efforts assessed it as a “battle” or “contest” with detractors, most notably the Palestinians, to win global public opinion (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009). Similarly, Israel’s public diplomacy focused on what Mor (2014) describes as rhetorical action in contrast to a relational approach of communicative action. Israeli officials turned to digital diplomacy to improve Israel’s image with foreign publics through engagement and the development of broad reaching digital social networks.

The 2006 Lebanon War, a military failure, spurred the creation of the National Information Directorate (NID) in the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). However, it was in 2009 and 2010 that Israeli public diplomacy saw the greatest changes, coinciding with major innovations in ICTs. In 2009, the first signs that attention was shifting towards public diplomacy came with the creation of a
Ministry of Public Diplomacy, which integrated into the existing Ministry of Diaspora Affairs to establish the new Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs. Likewise, the first use of social media in Israeli foreign missions took place in 2009 in New York and Los Angeles consulate offices.

The Israeli Consulate in New York executed the first government conference using social media that invited interaction from the general public (Cohen, 2009) and the LA Consulate followed in the fall with live-streamed events in English and Spanish. The Internet and New Media department in the PMO was created in 2010, responsible for “co-ordinating internet work across government branches and ministries with the aim of improving ‘public relations advocacy’” (Stein, 2011). Influenced by the American version of PD 2.0 as practiced in the Washington, D.C. (Stein, 2011), Israel created a unique model divided amongst multiple offices, ministries, and government bodies.

The IDF and MFA both trace their social media outreach and digital diplomacy efforts to around 2009 during the conflict in Gaza, referred to as the Gaza War or Operation Cast Lead (Dunayevsky, personal communication, August 2, 2012; Leibovich, personal communication, June 13, 2012; Morad, personal communication, August 2, 2012; Rudich, personal communication, August 2, 2012; Stein, 2011). The objective of introducing social media into public diplomacy for the MFA was to improve the image or brand of Israel, to explain policy, answer questions, and to allow for dialogue (Dunayevsky, personal communication, August 2, 2012; Morad, personal communication, August 2, 2012; Rudich, personal communication, August 2, 2012). On another front, the IDF’s use of social
media, initiated by a YouTube venture by young soldiers in the early days of Operation Cast Lead (Stein, 2011), was an avenue to bypass traditional media, which had, in Israel’s eyes become critical of its handling of adverse situations (Leibovich, personal communication, June 13, 2012). Early on, the IDF was the most active government body to use social media to communicate information, gain sympathy and support, influence global public opinion, and communicate about the continuous existential security threat Israel believed itself to be facing.

It is not surprising that the on-going conflict garners much of the media attention. By branching out into digital social networks, the IDF aspired and became the first point of contact for foreign media when conflicts erupted. As Shih (2012) explained, the IDF has “established a presence on nearly every platform available” and posts infographics and updates in several languages. These first steps in Israeli digital diplomacy sparked new discussion and evaluation in Israel. The learning curve has been steep and uneven, as senior officials admit. However, the MFA remains hopeful that the use of social media might offer opportunities to reach social networks previously inaccessible as well as reinforce support from allies and diaspora Jewish populations (Dunayevsky, personal communication, August 2, 2012; Morad, personal communication, August 2, 2012; Rudich, personal communication, August 2, 2012). Public diplomacy continued to lack internal governmental support and the IDF and PMO continued to sideline both the MPDDA and MFA.

Assessments by the Comptroller since 2006 have acknowledged these on-going issues and lack of coordination (Greenfield, 2012). Thus, after the Lebanon War in
2006 public diplomacy gained renewed attention and as a result by 2009/2010 Israel embraced digital diplomacy. Given the context of the Israeli situation, the domestic political rifts, and its unique public diplomacy known as hasbara (meaning to explain), Israeli public diplomacy has found difficulty in managing relationships with foreign publics and improving Israel’s international image. Generally, Israeli public diplomacy has strived to control the narrative and “decrease the willingness of audiences to consider information linked to politically unacceptable viewpoints, individuals, and groups and to inhibit the circulation of adverse information in social networks” (Freeman Jr., 2012). Thus, Israeli efforts exemplify a public diplomacy of rhetorical action as described by Mor (2014) in order to control the narrative element of rhetoric and define the context. Given the “us versus them” narrative that Israel’s public diplomacy continuously reconstructs and which sets a “baselines for conformity and hence for ostracism” (Freeman Jr., 2012) can Israel generate social capital via digital diplomacy and if yes, then how?

As will be evident, Israeli digital diplomacy initially focused greater attention on groups already supportive of Israel, including allied foreign publics and diaspora communities. Using digital diplomacy, Israel worked to generate bonding social capital as a way to further entrench preconceived notions of division between Israelis and ‘others’ (i.e. Arabs, Palestinians, etc.) and engender greater support for its policies and actions. Furthermore, the state’s actions and statements often conflicted due to miscommunication, uncoordinated strategy, and domestic political strife. Moreover, the IDF used digital diplomacy as a method of information dissemination, message control and warfare. These actions damaged
Israel's ability to improve its image and generate social capital useful to the state in diplomatic relations based on the goal of reaching mutual understanding, since the components of trust and reciprocity, identified as mechanisms for social generation were not fulfilled. However, new digital diplomacy initiatives show promise, if Israel can align goals across government moving from rhetorical action towards relational digital diplomacy based on communicative action.

Literature examining Israeli public diplomacy explicitly includes a relatively small corps of scholars. Including Israel in this research adds to the limited number of case studies on digital diplomacy as well as to literature on Israeli diplomacy. This chapter presents an overview of Israel's use of ICT in its diplomatic efforts and the circumstances that led to the emergence of social media to manage diaspora engagement and public diplomacy operations. The final portion of this chapter surveys examples of Israeli digital diplomacy by first revisiting two of Israel’s early social media digital diplomacy attempts: the use of YouTube during the Gaza flotilla incident and the ‘Masbirim Israel’ (Explain Israel) campaign and associated efforts of the now defunct public diplomacy arm of the Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs MPDDA. Finally, I examine more recent Israeli digital diplomacy programs, including Shimon Peres’s ‘Peres 360’ initiative, the MFA’s Arabic and Persian Facebook outreach, and the creation of a virtual Twitter Embassy in the Gulf States called @IsraelintheGCC.

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32 There has been a large amount of research produced on aspects of Israeli culture, society and politics. Much of the literature focusing on political topics is associated with security and military aspects of the state policies. These are certainly important issues for investigating foreign policy, as they form part of the grander strategy, but comparatively, diplomacy has not been a research focus. Research on peace processes, security issues, middle east relations and even literature regarding the public diplomacy efforts of other states in this region, particularly the US, offer insight into Israeli public diplomacy.
This case uses the framework established in the first part of the dissertation to assess whether such initiatives fulfil the components of trust and reciprocity identified as mechanisms for the generation of social capital including access, openness, commitment, and credibility. Again, the brief historical overview presented in the next section is not a full and complete historical account, but serves to set the contextual stage for the reader regarding the atmosphere in which Israel formulates and communicates its foreign policy, and thus how public diplomacy evolved.

5.1: Israel’s public diplomacy & social capital problem

Israeli public diplomacy intertwines with the broader Israeli-Arab conflict and this issue generally dominates discussions of Israeli foreign policy. However, as Maoz (2006) illustrated, it is curious that Israeli public diplomacy has been fairly ineffective since “the Arabs have been far more incompetent, short-sighted, and malicious than have been the Israelis” (p. 33). Thus, Israel’s poor public diplomacy and inability to generate social capital broadly deserves further investigation because the Palestinians inability to be effective generally (until the beginning of this research in mid-2010) “does not diminish the responsibility of Israel for its own policies. On the contrary, it makes Israel’s mistakes more pronounced” (p.33) and its limited ability to generate social capital—mainly concentrated within religious and diaspora communities and those nations already strongly allied namely the US—a curious reality.
The roots of Israeli public diplomacy are of course Zionist diplomatic efforts exercised across the globe before Israeli statehood in May 1948, which were heavily influenced by the Labour movement (Sofer, 2004, p. 1). The period of 1947–48 provides insight about the Zionist’s diplomatic wherewithal that would see a final, successful bid for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine and that would continue to guide public diplomacy strategy after the creation of Israel. The following brief overview sketches the development of the Israeli public diplomacy apparatus and practice. The aim here is to offer context that assists in understanding the results of the research presented later in this chapter.

Many factors converged to create a situation favourable for the establishment of the State of Israel between late 1947 and May 14, 1948. A great deal of these factors and therefore the creation of Israel itself, owes a debt to the effective diplomacy employed by leaders of the Zionist movement. From the outside, with a minority ten-percent ownership of land and representing only a minority, about one-third, of the population of the British Mandate for Palestine in 1947, one would have assumed a UN vote supporting the partition of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish state unlikely (Jensehaugen, Heian-Engdal, & Waage, 2012). However, strategic, networked diplomatic efforts coordinated from both London via the Zionist Organization and Jerusalem via the Jewish Agency was essential. The public diplomacy executed by the organization as a non-state actor including outreach by Jewish NGOs worldwide and well planned, country specific public diplomacy proved critical. Zionist leaders, Theodore Herzl in particular, from the
First Zionist Congress\textsuperscript{33} in 1897 forward, executed a long-term extensive campaign with the goal of establishing a Jewish homeland. From the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the Zionists exemplified a ‘public’ diplomacy well before it became common practice.

The Zionists, specifically the Zionist Organization (now known as the World Zionist Organization (WZO)) and the Jewish Agency were innovative in their approach. As non-state actors, these organizations engaged both government officials, the public and diaspora communities, in a dialogue surrounding the merits of their cause. The diplomatic wherewithal of a select few Zionist leaders were fundamental in formulating the political and social ideology that would guide Israeli foreign policy and diplomacy for approximately 20 years until the Six Day War in 1967 (Shindler, 2008, p. 123). These individuals include Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Sharett (born Shertok) and Dr. Walter Eytan. Certainly, Theodor Herzl, the “father of modern political Zionism” - the “Khozeh HaMedinah” or “Visionary of the State”—is an important figure as well.

Herzl did not have the backing of a state power, an army, or any of the official tools of statecraft, nonetheless Herzl succeeded in meeting with the Ottoman Sultan, the Pope, numerous Heads of State, ministers, government leaders and members of royal families (Yegar, 2010, pp. 1–2). He established a ‘new Jewish diplomacy’—a diplomatic presence in international diplomacy for the Zionist movement long before the creation of the State of Israel. Chaim Weizmann was a prominent figure

\textsuperscript{33} The First Zionist Congress was a symbolic parliament of a small minority of world Jewry in agreement with Zionist goals. The Congress was held in Basel (Basle), Switzerland from August 29-31, 1897. The First Congress adopted the Basle program and founded the Zionist Organization (Goldmann, 1978).
within British Zionist circles in the early 1900’s. Weizmann’s influence led to his being elected the President of the British Zionist Federation in 1917 (Weizmann, 1983, p. 144). Having established connections to British political elite prior to and during World War I as a scientist for the government, Weizmann, along with Lord Rothschild, influenced and advised then Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour on the issuing of the Balfour Declaration (Weizmann, 1983). Weizmann’s work, resembling network or relational approach diplomacy, generated a great deal of social capital.

Still, there was often debate amongst the Zionist factions and this discord deepened “the rift between Right and Left,” for diplomacy the lesson was clear “henceforth, the successes of Israeli diplomacy were presented as faits accomplis” (Sofer, 1998, p. 32). Ten years later, on November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181—the UN Partition Plan, acknowledging, legitimizing and essentially initiating the plans for partition presented in the Peel Commission report (Eytan, 1958, p. 4). UN Resolution 181 was soon to be followed by the creation and recognition of the state of Israel (Jensehaugen et al., 2012). Approximately 50 years prior, Herzl had established the vision and set the course with exceptional diplomatic success. An approach heavily based on relationship building and networking, establishing trust, and finally securing commitment helped secure the creation of the State of Israel.

In its early years the State of Israel enjoyed remarkable diplomatic achievements

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34 The Balfour declaration acknowledged, for the first time, support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
in large part due to the efforts of Moshe Sharett, who would later serve as Israel’s second Prime Minister, and Dr. Walter Eytan, the “Father of Israeli Diplomacy” (Zvielle, 2001), whom together are credited with developing the Israeli MFA. Sharett became the first Minister of Foreign Affairs and Eytan became the first Director-General of the MFA. Both Sharett and Eytan were instrumental in establishing Israel’s diplomacy operations, much of which was ad hoc and in a continuous mode of adjustment—equally due to diverse domestic friction and international security pressures. Two uniquely Israeli factors appear to influence how Israel regards and approaches public diplomacy. These two factors are Israel’s domestic political discord between factions and its unique take on public diplomacy—hasbara.

In Palestine, before the creation of Israel, the Yishuv’s ability to operate politically and socially was constrained by the many ideological and cultural differences within these Jewish communities. Zionist leaders constructed tight intra-group connections and a unique identity that helped generate strong-ties. These bonds proved effective, especially in foreign policy and diplomacy. However, post-independence these bonds weakened and “crisis was not long in coming” (Sofer, 1998, p. 13). The diplomatic culture cultivated was “cautious, pragmatic and fairly conservative”, usually secondary to security concerns, and absent from policy-making decisions (Gabay et al., 2010, p. 145; Sofer, 2004, p. 1). Furthermore, the Israeli government and the Israeli public gained a general adversity to diplomacy, regarded as a weak tactic in statecraft.

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35 The Yishuv is the name of the community of Jewish residents in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel.
The difficulty of attaining agreement between the Israeli political factions has meant Israel has been unable to adapt its foreign policy to the new international environment and technological innovations (Sofer, 2004). The discord has led to a situation where each group creates a strongly bonded network and “Israeli statesmen tend to almost ignore the public,” which has consequences for the success of any initiative in today's global environment where information, transparency and public opinion are fundamentally necessary (Sofer, 2004, p. 3). National security is the paramount concern for practical, ideological, and identity construction reasons, while international legitimacy is secondary, throwing Israeli diplomacy off balance (Sofer, 2004, pp. 4–5). This, along with the assumption that by explaining their logic they would be both understood and accepted, has created issues for developing trust. Explaining is at the centre of Hasbara, Israel’s culturally entrenched public diplomacy equivalent. As a cultural artefact the ability to alter its processes are difficult and poses problems in a changing global environment.

Hasbara, Israel's unique version of public diplomacy, concentrates on reactive explanation rather than proactive engagement, dialogue, and cooperation (Gabay et al., 2010, p. 144). Generally speaking, from the first hasbara efforts of Josephus Flavius in ancient times hasbara has been defensive in nature (Schleifer, 2003, p. 126). Given the historical journey of the Jewish community, a great deal of distrust developed regarding the ‘other’, essentially anyone not of the Jewish faith. This distrust eventually became a type of contempt involving assumptions that others were not worthy of real discussion (Schleifer, 2003, pp. 126–128). Zionist and later Israeli diplomacy had hasbara as the cultural predecessor and it was based to large
extent on emotion, the belief of ill-will from outsiders, focused on reaction and had a tendency to react with anger rather than discussion, compromise and relationship-building (Sofer, 1998, pp. 384–386). The first twenty years of Israel’s diplomacy focused on balancing these issues and building an international presence and diplomatic organization.

In the period between late 1970’s–mid 1990’s, which included the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, the Oslo accords, and restraint during the Iraq War, Israel was able to maintain a fairly positive international reputation (Gilboa, 2006, p. 715). However, the Six Day War in 1967, considered a military victory, was not such a triumph in regards to long-term diplomacy. The Six Day War resulted in the capturing of the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights, the old city of Jerusalem, and other important religious cities (Maoz, 2006, p. 82; Shindler, 2008, p. 125). Sadly, the rhetoric of an impending existential threat and the unchecked influence of the IDF sidelined diplomacy (Maoz, 2006, p. 86). Thus, the repercussions of the events have had continuing effects on the Arab-Israeli conflict since. Moreover, it set the stage for the emergence and exceptional growth of the right-wing of Israeli politics further impeding the development of Israeli diplomacy.

A Likud victory in 1977 resulted in Menachem Begin becoming Prime Minister. His foreign policy was ideologically charged and he reinforced a realist approach, something he called “military Zionism”, thus almost completely dismissing diplomacy as a useful tool of statecraft for Israel (Shindler, 2008, pp. 130–134). Ironically, the international events that defined his government were the Camp
David Framework Agreements in September 1978 and the first Lebanon War in 1982. Although the Camp David Framework Agreements resulted in the first peace treaty in Israel’s history, the first Lebanon War erupted shortly after in June of 1982. The on-going conflict changed from an Israeli-Arab conflict to one better defined as Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the re-awakening of Palestinian nationalism surrounding the Six Day War (Rekhess, 2007; Shindler, 2008, pp. 150–156). As would be expected, the growth of Palestinian nationalism reinforced images of the existential threat used since independence to generate an Israeli national identity. Once again, on the premise of national security, militarism became the default position, essentially abandoning diplomacy as a primary concern altogether.

Since the late 1970’s, Israel has encountered an increasing number of challenges testing its readiness and strength, both militarily and diplomatically. These events have demonstrated Israeli reliance on militarism, but have also exposed the weakness of its diplomacy, specifically its public diplomacy (Gilboa & Shai, 2011, p. 35). Exemplified by the increasing public attention in Israel to its declining reputation and consistent association with war, a drive to reform its public diplomacy has grown in importance since the Oslo process. In late 2003, when progress in the Middle-East peace process seemed to have stalled, the Geneva Accord\(^3\) presented a way forward.

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\(^3\) The Geneva Accord, also known as the Draft Permanent Status Agreement and officially launched in December 2003 was a non-official initiative between prominent Israeli and Palestinian individuals established with the support of the Swiss government. Its goal was to re-start the stalled Middle East peace process by negotiating a comprehensive agreement resolving the most divisive issues of the conflict including: the status of Jerusalem, the Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, and status of the Palestinian refugees ("Geneva Initiative," n.d., "The Geneva Accord," 2003).
While unofficial it appeared to push Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to initiate a process for withdrawal of Israeli settlers and forces from Gaza (Fraser, 2008, p. 182). For the first time, in 2003, Israel removed forces and citizens from land and returned it to the Palestinians (Fraser, 2008, p. 186) through the unilateral disengagement plan announced in 2003 and fully implemented in 2005. The effort was to improve Israel's global image and generate good will or social capital for the state.

While, the plan did garner domestic support in Israel and could have had huge potential, the plan as executed was incomplete, as it lacked follow-up measures to ensure security in Israel, stability both politically and economically in Gaza, and most importantly was void of any diplomatic strategy (Peters, 2010, p. 43). Unfortunately, the impact of the plan was limited and many insist that it was a failure (Peters, 2010). Not only was there a lack of dialogue and interaction regarding the plan either domestically, with the Palestinians, or with international partners but research also reports that the public diplomacy messages disseminated for foreign audiences were incomplete and included gaps in logic between the problem, the responsible party, and the solution (Gabay et al., 2010; Peters, 2010). Israel's public diplomacy surrounding the disengagement from Gaza appeared incoherent to foreign audiences and many statements appeared to be responses out of anger (Gabay et al., 2010, pp. 155–7). Furthermore, there was no mechanism for dialogue or relationship building.
In 2005, Gilboa (2006) wrote about Israel’s falling reputation and associated it to a lack of public diplomacy, which he referred to as the ‘missing component’ in Israel’s foreign policy. Continuing, he noted, “in the information age, national reputation has become a critical asset and ‘soft power’ has developed into a major instrument of foreign policy” further reinforcing that it was clear that “communication, education and persuasion are the principal techniques of foreign relations, not military force” (p. 716). Gabay et al. (2010) explained Israel was not communicating well, finding it difficult to both articulate coherent messages for domestic and international audiences and frame the discourse.

Incoherent, contradictory, and incomplete messages and a public diplomacy operation void of interaction and relationship building before, during, and after the disengagement appear to have had a negative effect (Gabay et al., 2010; Eytan Gilboa, 2006; Peters, 2010). Public diplomacy efforts failed to reconcile the “ambiguity of goals and their incoherence with some of the military initiatives” (Mor, 2006, p. 169). The Second Intifada37 or Al-Aksa Intifada made clear that in the 21st century wars would be fought “in the field and in the media” and this was reinforced and further refined in 2002 by replacing “the media” with the “virtual world” (Hassman, 2008, p. 8). During the Second Intifada Palestinians, pro-Palestinian, and Palestinian diaspora groups developed the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.38

37 The second Palestinian Intifada is the name given the extended period of conflict between Israel and the Palestinians between late September 2000 and early February 2005.
38 The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement originated in 2005 and has been coordinated by the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) since 2007. The campaign calls for the use of boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel until it “complies with international law and Palestinian rights” (“The BDS Movement,” n.d.).
branding offensive only added to the urgency for Israel to improve its public diplomacy capability, as military action was increasingly ineffective in regards to perception and global image.

Its failure and the beginning of the Second Lebanon War in mid-2006 created further issues for Israeli public diplomacy. The global reaction to Israel in regards to the Second Lebanon War confounded government and public. This fostered interest to identify why and how Israel was once again ‘misunderstood’. Since 2005, Israel has elevated the importance of public diplomacy in comparison to the past and much of the focus has been on understanding the new global society and the new technologies.

Generally, Israeli public diplomacy strategy since the late 1990’s was seen as having a “lack of foresight and long-range planning, a susceptibility to impulse and crisis exigencies, and a paucity of originality and inventiveness” (Sofer, 2004, p. 1). In the late 20th and early 21st century Israel’s image and reputation globally has been characterized as “dramatically deteriorated” (Gilboa, 2006, p. 715). According to Gilboa (2006) and Gilboa & Shai’s (2011) previous scholarly assessments by the early 21st century the sidelined public diplomacy operations of Israel were in need of major changes. Israel’s ineffective public diplomacy was costing the state political, social, and diplomatic capital (Gilboa & Shai, 2011, p. 35). This was not a new revelation.

Israel has been aware, but ignored, the need to address its diplomatic shortcomings (Gilboa & Shai, 2011, pp. 45–48). In fact, since the late 1990’s, the media,
Israeli public and many government bodies such as the State Comptroller, Knesset Committee on Defense and Foreign Affairs and the MFA itself had commissioned research and investigative reports that called for improvements and modifications (Druckman, 2012; Gabay, Sheafer, & Shenhav, 2010; Gilboa, 2006; Gilboa & Shai, 2011, p. 35; Ronen, 2012). In 2001 and 2002 the State Comptroller released a report very critical of the state’s public diplomacy efforts and included recommendations for improvement; still the government did very little (Gilboa, 2006, p. 737). This report was released a year into the second Intifada.

The existing public diplomacy apparatus had been fragmented, a result of domestic political conflict, clashing ideologies, and mismanagement (Gilboa & Shai, 2011, p. 36). Moreover, where public diplomacy did have a role to play, Israeli Hasbara with a predisposition to explain rather than engage was detrimental. The new global communications era values the exact opposite - engagement above explanation. Only in the last 10 years has the MFA moved slowly from using the term hasbara (Gilboa, 2006, p. 735). The next section examines the evolution of Israeli’s diplomatic history and shows how past approaches to public diplomacy have continued into contemporary social media digital diplomacy initiatives.

5.2: Emergence of Israel's new public diplomacy

Israel’s public diplomacy had suffered from negligence becoming inadequate at best and at worst a cause, itself, of the increasing degradation of Israel’s reputation and overall national brand (Cook, 2010; Gilboa & Shai, 2011, p. 48). However, in recent years Israel has revitalized its public diplomacy through the greater use of technology, chiefly social media. The promise of technology and diplomacy is
perhaps a flashback to the first months of the State of Israel, when technology and diplomacy were vital to strengthening and sustaining its existence on the international stage.\footnote{With only two staff and working while war raged around him in Israel and greater Palestine, Sharett worked non-stop to compile telegraphs for transmission to the world’s capitals (Rafael, 1998). The telegraph was indispensable to Israel’s early efforts for recognition.}

Recognizing the need to reform was an imperative first step and the limited reforms provided some level of success such as elevating the importance of public diplomacy. Early on, the IDF and MFA recognized the need for improvements and that it required an adjustment to the “existing administrative structures” (Gilboa & Shai, 2011, pp. 47–48). To that end, the MFA created a special unit for Arab media and the IDF created an Arab media desk in 2004, yet this alone would not be enough. These changes assumed the problem was not enough information and it neither addressed the need to adapt structure nor acknowledged that societal changes called for more engagement and interaction. However, the movement to interact with Arab media was critical since for most of Israel’s existence, the Israeli public have not been able to interact in any ordinary, typical way and Israeli public diplomacy didn’t pay much attention to the community either, leaving it open to influences of radical and anti-Israel organizations (Gilboa, 2006; Greenfield, 2012).

Portraying the similarities between Israel, Israelis, and other nations and peoples is imperative for it establishes a shared reality and this often results from creating a tie or relationship.

At the same time in Israel and in diaspora and pro-Israel groups, there was growing consensus that ignoring the on-going conflicts with the Palestinians and
broader Arab communities should be the Israeli public diplomacy and nation branding strategy (Tobin, 2009). This would appear to make little sense given the overwhelming impact of this conflict on Israel generally and its international relationships specifically. Nonetheless, in October 2005 the MFA adopted a plan in cooperation with the PMO and the Finance Ministry to re-brand Israel by making it “relevant and modern rather than only as a place of fighting and religion” (Popper, 2005). This plan was presented by the Brand Israel Group (BIG), a committee of seven marketing and communications executives, who based their recommendations on research done by BIG and other firms in the advertising, marketing and communications industry (Gilboa & Shai, 2011, p. 48; Popper, 2005). The goal of the plan was to change the image of Israel, focusing on aspects of normal life of citizens.

Of course, the conflicts with the Palestinians and the Arab community do have a hand in shaping Israeli national identity fundamentally and thus will affect its image, brand and diplomacy. The Brand Israel idea began in Israel’s New York Consulate following the September 11 attacks and finally launched in 2008 after a number of pilot projects (Pfeffer, 2008; Tobin, 2009). This branding initiative with MFA backing is an example of public diplomacy as nation branding. The campaign was to be an integrated campaign, meaning that the approach would use new networking technologies for broader reach, organizing functions so the MFA and partners could host events highlighting Israeli innovation, art and culture as well as incorporating traditional media relations (Greenfield, 2012). While it was to include more than just a one-way marketing and communications strategies
focused on traditional media and broadcast models, the MFA and associated offices and Ministries still focused on message dissemination and message control.

Moreover, the Brand Israel campaign was going to try and ignore the conflict in an effort to reach broad improvement of Israel’s brand (Pfeffer, 2008). The campaign did create discussion about Israel and in some cases helped re-invigorate pro-Israel supporters, but it also created concern even in the Jewish diaspora community that the campaign was avoiding the substance of current issues facing Israel (P. Harris, 2012; Nussbaum, 2009; C. Smith, 2009; Tobin, 2009). Relatively small in reach and with limited resources, the initiative continued, but with mixed reviews. The campaign continued to evolve and integrate itself throughout the operations of Israel’s public diplomacy or hasbara apparatus and even received a large budgetary increase in 2010 (Greenfield, 2012, p. 32). Still, the campaign did not alleviate the problems of Israeli public diplomacy. The major problem was ignoring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which resulted in misalignment of rhetoric and action and an approach to social networking and social media that perceived the networks as tools rather than partners in relationships.

The introduction of social media into the IDF’s public diplomacy started with videos posted by IDF soldiers on YouTube during Operation Cast Lead. Operation Cast Lead or the Gaza War in Israel and as the Gaza Massacre or Al-Furqan Battle in Palestine was a three-week conflict bridging late 2008 and early 2009, starting on December 27, 2008. The videos, which were not part of an official government strategy when initially posted, garnered immense attention and were a go-to source (Ser, 2009). A potential reason for their high-viewership is during
Operation Cast Lead Israel did not allow journalists into Gaza, a policy that has since been relaxed due in part to social media.

Aliza Landes and Lee Hiromoto, IDF soldiers at the time, used YouTube to transfer video to foreign journalists reliant on IDF footage (Hoffman, 2012). The initial videos were of two varieties either made with small handheld devices on the ground or using IDF military surveillance footage. For example, the first video posted used crude Israeli Air Force (IAF) footage taken during air raids and recognisance edited with text to give updates on the operation (https://youtu.be/XAokqVFMvWU) and the second video uploaded showed Israeli aid being sent to Gaza (https://youtu.be/Pof1y7tlCIM) (Israel Sends Humanitarian Aid to Gaza, 2008). Videos that followed were similar and grew in popularity.

Only two days after the first video was posted, the IDF YouTube channel had an additional 16 videos with over 5,600 subscribers (Simone, 2008). The project grew with a blog for data and statistics to a specialized unit for video production (Hoffman, 2012). By early January 2009 there were 8,544 subscribers and 563,019 views across the videos (Heussner, 2009). The attention the videos received helped build the case for further investment of resources in the IDF Spokesperson's office. In fact, as early as January 3, 2009, then Major Avital Leibovich, the head of the International Press Branch in the IDF Spokesperson’s Unit, made her first video blog (Leibovich, 2009).

The IDF Spokesperson's office was tasked with developing greater outreach via social media networks. Not long after the posting of the IDF videos, and with
negative global opinion growing against Israel’s actions, the Consulate General of Israel in New York reached for social media as well. Using the micro-blogging platform of Twitter, they scheduled a Twitter conference for the afternoon of Tuesday, December 30 (“Citizens’ ‘Press’ Conference on Twitter,” 2008; Simone, 2008). This was a bold move and a new forum for government communication.

David Saranga, head of media relations for the Israeli Consulate in New York acknowledged that the “definition of war has changed, the definition of public diplomacy has to change as well,” when speaking about the impetus for the organization of the first ever governmental press conference via Twitter (Cohen, 2009). In response to a critical tweet the Consulate General of Israel answered, tweeting via the Consulates handle (@Israelconsulate), that “the point of this was to hear what ppl say and to share our POV with fellow Twitters,” in essence saying they wanted to have a dialogue and to engage the general public (Cohen, 2009). Given the state of affairs in Israel, there was not much to lose.

The reputation of the country was in a worrying state. In recognition of this, the Consulate in New York made efforts to reach out for dialogue. The medium was different, but the approach remained the same. Israel’s public diplomacy did not seem to understand the changed environment and officials, albeit using social media, still worked to explain actions taken, instead of discussing, or more importantly listening. The strategy changed to include social media, but the general approach to interaction did not. At this point with Israel suffering from a very poor international reputation despite new initiatives and concerted, although limited, branding and outreach efforts—a new plan was needed.
5.3: Reaching out: Israeli social media digital diplomacy efforts

The previous sections of this chapter have outlined the foundations of Israel's unique public diplomacy style known as hasbara. This cultural style, along with the realist, militaristic foreign policy and fragmented domestic politics constrain Israeli public diplomacy. As outgrowths of Israel's on-going national identity crisis, geo-political situation and cultural history, Israel's desire and ability to develop a coordinated public diplomacy apparatus and strong position in the government has been limited. The need for reforms in public diplomacy emerged from increasingly critical international images of Israel. Social media and social networks offered a new opportunity for direct interaction with foreign publics.

Social media and social networks, although not the sole component of Israeli public diplomacy reforms, are the focus of this research. From previous research, I assume that social media can facilitate opportunities for interaction with previously unfriendly, unknown or otherwise isolated groups to help build relationships. This does not guarantee social capital is intrinsically positive. Of course, other issues such as coordination, proper funding and the inclusion of public diplomacy concerns during policy formation are all necessary elements of success as shown in public diplomacy research. The examples below move beyond previous research to look at the implementation of social media and assess Israel's efforts to utilize social networks and social media to generate social capital. The assumptions, as stated, were that by engaging in digital social networks the MFA could neutralize the spreading of what the state considered inaccurate information and help improve Israel's brand or image internationally.
At times Israel uses ICTs and digital diplomacy to reinforce existing narratives and power structures, resembling claims made by Bourdieu and Marcuse. This is in contrast to the relational approach predicated on communicative action. For example, in 2011 Israeli Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs Minister, Yuli Edelstein, asked Facebook to remove a page with over 230,000 friends because it called for a third Intifada and the liberation of Palestine through violence (Odenheimer, 2011). Eventually, after public pressure, Facebook removed the page, although it claimed the removal was due to calls for violence. However, in July 2014 an Israeli managed Facebook page established after the abduction of three Israeli soldiers calling for retaliation and “vengeance” did not result in requests from the government for its removal (“Facebook campaign calls for ‘vengeance’ against Arabs,” 2014). This Facebook page remains active, since “Israel is awash in demands for vengeance by senior politicians and media pundits” (Schechter, 2014). In this way, Israeli officials used Facebook to influence, control, and disseminate information to construct and reinforce dominate narratives favourable to the Israeli cause in contrast to reaching mutual understanding.

The results from the examples below offer a mixed picture. To be concise, Israel's domestic divisions and uncoordinated public diplomacy are still an issue for generating social capital. Israel’s ability to generate bridging ties is impeded by contradictory messages between the various public diplomacy agencies, specifically the antagonistic posts and comments by the MPDDA before it was dissolved in mid-2013, as well as by the continued effort of the government, specifically the PMO, to control dialogue and relationships on its terms. Nonetheless, the MFA has cultivated social networks for interaction with the
Persian and Arabic communities, which, relatively speaking, show a fair amount of interaction for government sponsored social media accounts. Reinforcing bonds with already friendly pro-Israel groups and diaspora communities appears to be where Israel has been most successful in generating a type of social capital—via bonding or strong-ties.

**5.3.1: Israel’s plan to frame, engage & unite**

During Operation Cast Lead, the Samuel Neaman Institute, Technion Israel Institute of Technology and the MFA worked together on producing a study of Israeli public diplomacy with the aim of creating a public diplomacy strategy. As noted, even Israeli officials acknowledged that Israel needed a fundamental shift in regards to public diplomacy. That public diplomacy be a “part and parcel of Israel’s foreign policy, and a true concern for the Israeli presence in the international arena” was fundamental for Israel’s future public diplomacy (Gabay et al., 2010, p. 159). The Neaman research report made special note that the “changes in environments, circumstances, perceptions, methods and technologies in the world and in Israel, demand to continuously update PD policies” (Shinar, 2009, p. 11). The report set forth a number of themes or essential characteristics for effective public diplomacy in general.

Rhetorically, at least, these themes became guides for Israeli digital diplomacy (Izikovich & Pfeffer, 2009). These characteristics, which mirror many statements made in previous portions of this research include:

- Public diplomacy begins with listening.
- Public diplomacy is a two-way dialogic process. Engage and be engaged.
• Public diplomacy must be connected to policy. Words equal actions.
• Public diplomacy requires building relationships and maintaining networks.
• Public diplomacy is not the exclusive domain of the state.
• Understanding the audience is vital. There is no ‘One size fits all’ approach.

The recognition that this new global information environment represents a move from a “modern world of geopolitics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence” was an important step in working towards a new public diplomacy (van Ham, 2002, p. 252). Israel’s image is one dominated by hard power features that need to be dulled or “better balanced” with soft power to generate social capital (Shinar, 2009, pp. 151–2). Social media was turned to as a possible avenue for ‘moving the needle’ in regards to global perception about Israel.

Currently, the core public diplomacy institutions in Israel include the PMO (PM Spokesperson, GPO, and the NID), the MFA and the IDF (specifically the IDF Spokespersons). However, the structure and composition of the public diplomacy apparatus and the roles of each actor and agency is in constant flux. Created in 2007-8, the NID within the PMO was “to serve as the supreme professional authority for coordinating and directing Israel’s official hasbara bodies” (Ronen, 2012). Even though many other organizations, such as the Israeli National Security Council (NSC) and Ministry of Defense (MOD) and even Mossad collaborate and play a significant role in Israeli public diplomacy, these institutions represent the hubs for both domestic and international public diplomacy functions in Israel.
Like the NID, the Israeli government established another new public diplomacy Ministry in 2009, the MPDDA. The Ministry, according to Deputy Director General Daniel Seaman, was charged to “portray normal life in Israel” (Seaman, personal communication, June 14, 2012). The Ministry’s purview includes the Israeli domestic audience and Diaspora communities. The Ministry tries “to connect people to people, using culture to put Israel in a broader context outside of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” (Seaman, personal communication, June 14, 2012). According to officials in the MPDDA in 2012, there was no overarching strategic plan and operations are project based. However, the ministry aimed to focus on public engagement, exchange opportunities and the younger generations.

At the MFA, a 2008 work plan noted that Israel should focus on increasing the use of new media, while also continuing the use of traditional media. An emphasis was placed on both information dissemination and encouraging interpersonal communication with the general public and key persons and organizations (Shinar, 2009, pp. 133–4). In addition, there was multiple mention of establishing a practice of on-going review of progress to adjust goals appropriately and as necessary. Much debate, discussion and research, resulted in the setting of three main guiding points for digital diplomacy at the MFA (Morad, personal communication, August 2, 2012). These three main guiding points are:

- Concentrate on soft power → Real life of the ‘Israeli experience’.
- Concentrate on expertise → Hi-tech innovation, science, etc.
- Advocate for Israel and Israeli Policies (both foreign and domestic policies).
The MFA has established Twitter, YouTube and Facebook accounts for all posts worldwide. Operationally, there is coordination from Jerusalem, but posts have a great deal of independence and autonomy. The MFA tries to supply “all the tools necessary and some guidance, but then empower the missions to tailor material and topics appropriate for their audience” (Morad, personal communication, August 2, 2012). Across the board, Facebook is the focus for the MFA in regards to social media. Websites are still important for operations, but serve more as a business card with static information. Still, according to Yoram Morad, who leads the Digital Diplomacy Department at the MFA, “daily updates and active discussion now occurs on our social media networks” (Morad, personal communication, August 2, 2012). Here it is important to note that traditional diplomacy is still the centre of operations at the MFA.

At the IDF, there has been consistent and relatively fast growth of the IDF Spokesperson’s office and the social media desk under its direction. The Spokesperson’s office operates through “target audiences” with the main goal being to “influence conversations and shape dialogue on the Internet” (Leibovich, personal communication, June 13, 2012). A secondary, but equally important goal is to get out in front of the traditional media (Izikovich & Pfeffer, 2009). At the IDF there are limitations to what is being done due to it being a military organization, but there is now an expectation that operations are continuously reviewed as it is perhaps the most prominent government institution on social media.

Israel exploited social networks and social media early in comparison to other states globally. In fact, “clumsily or not, no state has mobilized more quickly in its
efforts to assimilate this media environment” (Allan & Brown, 2010, p. 66). Israel’s efforts, at least initially, to adjust to a new communications dynamic and engaging with social media and social networks looked more like efforts to co-opt social media as a tool and for Israeli state propaganda instead of a forum for mutual interaction and the development of relationships. This likely stems from Israel’s apparent trials to operate within this new, different and “intrinsically grassroots, improvisatory, bottom-up medium” as it had with previous mediums that were more centralized, one-way and top-down (Allan & Brown, 2010, p. 67). Given such criticisms I question, whether Israel has been able to generate social capital via social media public diplomacy, and if so, how?

The following section will review examples, including the Mavi Marmara incident, The MPDDA’s Masbirim Israel campaign, Shimon Peres’s social media outreach and the MFA’s Arabic Facebook project, to establish where and how Israel has generated social capital via social media public diplomacy. These examples will be examined in context of the framework established to assess the generation of social capital as a product of establishing trust via reciprocal relationships of mutual collaboration characterised by access, openness, commitment, and credibility. This insight will further our understanding of the use of social media and the relational approach to public diplomacy while also illuminating needed future research.

5.3.1.1: YouTube & the boarding of the Mavi Marmara

Israel’s need for a new plan to combat a declining global image began just after 2010, as has been noted. Operation Cast Lead and the Israeli New York Consulate
began the movement into social media and pushed Israel’s public diplomacy apparatus into the new communications environment. That journey, as both the MFA and IDF acknowledged in my interviews, was fraught with trials and errors.

The Mavi Marmara incident was one such trial—condemned internationally and criticized as poorly executed. Of course, this was not because of the use of social media. However, the way in which Israel employed social media portrayed an air of arrogance as well as awkwardness that eroded credibility and questioned the access, openness and commitment of Israel to its relationships with various networks. These networks included human rights, journalist and NGO networks and even some diaspora and domestic, Israeli-minority networks – already strained by the on-going Gaza blockade and continued development of settlements.

The pro-Palestinian Free Gaza Movement and the pro-Hamas Turkish Humanitarian Relief Fund organized a six-ship flotilla called the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in mid-2010. Reports estimate about 700 activists from 38 countries participated in the expedition (Migdalovitz, 2010, p. 2). The stated aim was to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza and break Israel’s blockade of the territory. On May 30, the ships refused Israel’s offer to unload at the port of Ashdod to inspect their cargos before delivery. The next day Israeli naval Special Forces took control of five of the ships while still in international waters (Friedman, 2010; Migdalovitz, 2010). Passengers on the sixth ship, the MV Mavi Marmara challenged the Israeli forces resulting in the death of eight Turks and a Turkish-American, more than 20 injured passengers, and 10 injured IDF commandos.
Israel controlled the information landscape regarding the incident, as Israeli forces held the flotilla participants incommunicado. However, the IDF used confiscated video to pull together a social media campaign via YouTube. The first information communicated by Israel was done through social media, which makes this event very suitable for analysis in the context of this research. Following the incident Israel managed a controlled release of information and initially refused calls for an international “prompt, impartial, credible and transparent” inquiry (Barbara & Palmer, 2010; “Q&A,” 2013). Following the event and initial rejection by Israel for a formal independent investigation, the UN Human Rights Council commissioned a report and found Israel broke international law during the raid and that the force used was “disproportionate” to the threat (“Israel Rejects Findings Of UN Rights Probe Of Gaza Flotilla Raid,” 2010). Israel refuted the report’s findings calling them “biased, politicized and extremist” and that it was both conducting its own investigation and cooperating with Turkish authorities and the UN panel of inquiry on the incident.

The UN Panel of Inquiry investigating the incident delivered its report in September 2011. This panel was mostly critical of Israel, stating that Israel’s use of force was “excessive and unreasonable,” criticizing the boarding of the vessels while still so far from the blockade zone and citing “significant mistreatment” of the flotilla participants by Israeli authorities after being taken into custody (Derfner, 2012; “Q&A,” 2013; United Nations Inquiry Panel, 2011). However, the panel did state that Israel was justified in establishing the Gaza blockade to stop the passage of weapons and that the flotilla acted “recklessly” (Derfner, 2012;
“Q&A,” 2013; United Nations Inquiry Panel, 2011). The information reviewed included statements of participants and the video material shared on social media.

In May 2010, both the MFA and IDF had active social media accounts, yet the MFA did not post anything until August 2010, even though prior to the incident on May 24, 2010 a message recorded by MFA Spokesperson Yigal Palmor was posted on YouTube. The video stated that Israel would facilitate the delivery of aid via the land crossings, but “ships pushing their way, violently into Gaza will do nothing to aid the people living there” (MFA Spokesman on Gaza Flotilla - 24 May 2010, 2010). Palmor continued, describing how Israel has helped deliver aid to Gaza via the land crossings; insisting that flotilla organizers were more interested in a “political propaganda” and “engaging in publicity stunts” rather than providing aid (MFA Spokesman on Gaza Flotilla - 24 May 2010, 2010). Only days later, as the flotilla arrived, communication about policy was absent and the IDF became the lead agency.

The MFA and the central public diplomacy body in the PMO lacked the proficiency and ability to communicate anything immediately following the incident (Druckman, 2012). Generally, the video of the MFA was a television broadcast posted on YouTube, with little further interaction regarding the event. Moreover, statements that the flotilla sought publicity and was interested in political propaganda would have provoked rather than mollified the participants. Meanwhile, the IDF posted edited video clips of the incident for international viewing immediately following the incident, but other than the video images, Israel was slow to divulge additional information about the confrontation.
The general lack of official dialogue immediately following the operation including, Israel’s media blackout and barring the flotilla participants from communicating until deported, left many questions unanswered. Without dialogue and open communication, the Israeli government left a gap for others to fill. An issue Simon Plosker (2012) reflected on when stating:

As Europeans awoke to the flotilla as the top story on their breakfast news; Israeli reaction was notable in its absence. Instead, the vacuum was filled with breathless commentary from anti-Israel activists aboard the flotilla, backed up by fuzzy images from video feeds on the boats (Plosker, 2012).

While, the IDF Spokesman’s Unit is supposed to “serve the military alone, its size, resources and the military and diplomatic information it is privy to make it Israel’s central hasbara body, almost by default” (Ronen, 2012). In an attempt to frame the narrative, the IDF posted edited video footage from various sources on its YouTube account. These videos, still available on the IDF YouTube account today, number approximately 20 (www.youtube.com/user/idfnadesk). They include five that are Israeli created re-enactment videos now used for IDF training and a number of edited videos overlayed with descriptions and text to direct attention and guide perception. Most videos also have comments deactivated removing YouTube viewers from commenting or interacting with the IDF. This affects the ability of viewers to ask questions, clarify concerns or confusions and reinforces a focus on message dissemination and a disinterest in dialogue. Using social media in this way eliminates the possibility of discourse and terminates assumptions of commitment.

Nonetheless, the social network on YouTube and the reference of the videos became the focal point of debate. As Allan and Brown (2010) comment, viral video
has become to Israeli-Palestinian conflict what the Olympics were for the US and USSR during the Cold War: “site of proxy conflict, where style and bravado are all” (p. 64). As in the example of the Cold War, public diplomacy is a major factor in this incident, as it plays a key part in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, in this instance Israel is not seeking to use outreach and engagement on digital social networks as a way to further understanding, but as a way to debate the legitimacy of their claims. Israel bypassed a chance at dialogue, collaboration, and relationship building with the Flotilla participants, their sympathizers, and the Palestinians to express the rationale and validity of Israeli concerns.

The videos appear to show flotilla participants attacking Israeli forces armed with what were reportedly iron rods, knives, broken glass bottles, and sling-shots, and equipped with gas masks, night vision goggles, and life vests (Migdalovitz, 2010, p. 2; Plosker, 2012). Unfortunately, as mentioned, the quality of the videos are generally poor and without much clarity or sound. In addition the videos are edited without reference to time stamps, which makes tracing the sequence of events difficult (Allan & Brown, 2010, p. 63). Israeli rhetoric offers the ‘weapons’ found on-board as evidence that the flotilla participants were prepared for a confrontation with the IDF and that they had organized a premeditated attack.

The interpretation offered by the IDF and Israeli government ignores two important facts. First, in planning this operation the two goals for the flotilla participants were to deliver aid to Gaza and break the blockade. They knew an attempt to dock in Gaza would mean almost certain interaction with the IDF. Therefore, a possession of weapons could easily have been perceived as necessary
for self-defence, which is the same reason Israel cited for needing to stop and board the ship and arrest the flotilla participants. Second, if the flotilla participants had organized a pre-meditated attack and stockpiled weapons for a confrontation its seems illogical that they would have secured such ‘weapons’ as broomsticks, kitchen knives, deck chairs and glass bottles as depicted in the YouTube videos. Instead, these items appear to be makeshift weapons out of necessity and convenience, causing further issue concerning the credibility for Israel’s version of the events.

The Initial IDF posted YouTube videos (see Figure 16) created a flurry of responses. A search on YouTube for ‘Gaza Flotilla’ conducted during the period of this research returned over 60,000 results. The first official Israeli government video to appear is the MFA Spokespersons video noted above. Israeli forces worked to maintain control over the narrative while the flotilla participants, held in confinement, awaited deportation.

*Figure 16: IDF YouTube video: Gaza Flotilla raid posted May 31, 2010.*
As the single source of information, it was easy for the IDF and the Israeli government to frame the incident without having to deal with contrary statements. However, material from one source—in this case the IDF itself—creates questions. As soon as flotilla participants were free and able to discuss the events of that night publically the information damaged Israeli credibility. Credibility, openness and access are three of the four core components identified by the framework in this research for assessing trust, which generates social capital for deployment during such incidents. However, Israel’s actions violated all of these through a media blackout.

Access and openness ended along with the stopping of the flow of information. Furthermore, the posting and dissemination of edited video footage brings into question the credibility of the information and message. In addition, controlling the agenda, frame and discourse through coercion, ignoring calls for cooperation, and manipulating information further damaged credibility, but also any sense of commitment to a relationship. Israel employed the media tactic of framing to influence perceptions of the incident in its favour by offering ‘evidence’ via social media. Through rhetoric debate, as outlined by Mor (2014), Israel offered excuses, justifications and blame imposition. Thus, Israel intended to frame the conflict as one in which Israel was defending its citizens against flotilla participants that were ‘terrorists’ with connections to terrorist organizations. The aim was to justify actions to a third party—the global public—instead of engaging with the flotilla participants or the Palestinians. In this situation, generating social capital, mediating estrangement or building relationships was apparently neither a goal
nor a possibility. As is shown in later examples, this model of rhetoric debate would become Israel’s general approach in digital diplomacy.

Israel guided all the ships to Ashdod, here Israel detained the passengers and unloaded and inspected the cargo. On June 15, the U.N. announced it would deliver and distribute the aid in Gaza. Since the incident there has been “near-universal condemnation of Israel’s actions” (Migdalovitz, 2010, p. 6). Certainly the cargo could have been delivered with the assistance of the Israel, but “the mission was designed to demonstrate that the Israelis were unreasonable and brutal” (Friedman, 2010). The flotilla participants intended to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza, likely knowing they would not be able to do so, the flotilla participants were betting on outrage from the international community.

A blockade of aid ships would help fuel growing negative feelings regarding Israeli operations in the Palestinian territories. As Friedman writes: “A logical Israeli response would have been avoiding falling into the provocation trap and suffering the political repercussions ... Instead, the Israelis decided to make a show of force” (Friedman, 2010). There were a number of repercussions including many countries recalling ambassadors, demands for an immediate opening of Gaza’s border crossings and an end to the blockade (Migdalovitz, 2010, pp. 6–7). Initially Israel refused to cooperate with international partners establishing its own internal investigation. This created additional international friction, but even Israel’s internal investigation resulted in criticism of the Israeli response and public diplomacy efforts.
The Israeli “external military probe” and “independent public probe” both had very limited scopes and each resulted in supportive outcomes for Israeli actions. This further eroded the credibility of Israel’s statements. For example, Maj. Gen. Giora Eiland (Ret.) who led the external military probe to explore the appropriateness of the military decision (i.e. intelligence and military procedural accuracy, etc.) already defended the actions in an interview on June 9, 2010. This interview occurred only two days after his appointment to lead the probe. In the interview he stated that the only mistake made by the soldiers was “underestimating who the Turkish ship’s passengers were” (Migdalovitz, 2010, p. 7). The event and subsequent debates on social media played a large role in communicating the events across time and space. Israel’s preoccupation with controlling and framing the message and limiting information and interaction brought about trust issues in the social networks that spread online and offline.

As depicted in Table 8 below, the four elements of trust were limited or not present in the Mavi Marmama example. While the strategy generated bonding social capital amongst already tight-knit members of pro-Israel groups it did not generate broader bridging social capital. In regards to public diplomacy, this event created negative social capital through developing greater mistrust of Israeli messages, actions, and further eroded the possibility of social cohesion between diverse groups engaged in the Israeli-Palestinian crisis via exclusion. While, the Israeli government perceived the mission as a success in the short-term, the long-term diplomatic effect has been damaging for social capital generation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>WEAK; topic specific, one perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>WEAK; broadcast only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>WEAK; reactive explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>WEAK; single source, no or limited critique/discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 8: Mavi Marmara: element/presence degree scale.

The MFA allowed the IDF to lead the social media outreach. Being a military organization there is limited room to navigate in regards to discussion about operations. In addition, social networks are not likely to see the IDF, which carried out the operation, as a balanced partner for unbiased information. Limited access and openness, and questionable credibility led to perceptions that Israel was not committed or open to partnership or building relationships and in the end all four components of trust were either limited or inhibited. Israel’s use of rhetoric action instead of communicative action makes this evident.

Moreover, although Israel turned to social media to help spread information, the disinterest in engaging with the digital social network, which included influencers of global public opinion, had a multiplying effect on the disconnect between Israel and the wider global public regarding the validity claims made by Israel. In fact, although Israel tried to use a media blackout and frame the narrative early on, the Internet served as an international public sphere in which information was shared first-hand, offering a more credible account (de Muth, 2010, p. 21). Social media is one actor among many, but generating social capital in this global communications era requires access, openness, commitment, and credibility. This example offered
none of these, and was a public diplomacy failure for Israel, which has finally moved towards rapprochement in 2014 through an Israeli apology to Turkey. This example reaffirms that public diplomacy today depends much more on dialogue, relationship building, and trust to generate social capital for the state’s benefit, than control, framing and hard power.

5.3.1.2: Masbirim Israel

Transition from the controlled environment has been a difficult transformation for many states; this example from Israel offers a glimpse at a unique endeavour in the progression from full message control towards partnership. The Israeli MPDDA tried to incorporate domestic and foreign publics, integrate mass or traditional and social media in a single campaign and attempted to serve as a bridge between various networks by establishing a venue to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas. The approach of the broad Masbirim Israel campaign and the various projects that were components of it including “Presenting Israel 2010” and “Faces of Israel 2011” resembled public diplomacy with a relational approach and the inclusion of digital diplomacy. A closer look uncovers that the ‘engagement’ appeared to be mostly information dissemination and message control through a new medium rather than dialogue and idea exchange.

Masbirim Israel, a program initiated by the MPDDA in 2010, had the tagline:

“נמאס לכם לראות איך מציגים אותנו בעולם? החלו לשנות את התמונה”

Roughly translated into English it states “Tired of seeing how the world shows us? Begin to change the picture” summing up the goal of the program accurately and succinctly. Organized as an integrated campaign designed to train Israeli citizens
on how to engage with foreigners about perceived misconceptions of Israeli police and culture while traveling, the program was reliant on social media as a medium to connect to broader networks, but it used printed materials and TV commercials as well. It was the first time a campaign in Israel was organized by a government ministry, “employing new-media tools and calling on Israeli citizens to independently take part in improving their country’s international image” (Hershkovitz, 2012, p. 511). Given the inclusion of the domestic audience and the production of materials in Hebrew, the campaign started strong establishing a website (www.masbirim.gov.il), Facebook (www.Facebook.com/masbirim.Israel), Twitter profile (@masbirim), and YouTube (www.YouTube.com/user/Masbirim) presence.

The Masbirim Israel project was unique. In line with new public diplomacy research, the design included both domestic and foreign audiences and the diaspora Jewish communities. Essentially, the project recruited domestic publics and diaspora communities, not foreign nationals. However, foreign publics were, through engagement, the intended audience of interest. The goal was to create citizen diplomats. Masbirim Israel and its component parts were labelled by Attias (2012) as Israel’s new innovative “peer-to-peer” (P2P) approach to diplomacy (pp. 473–476). The goal of the program was to encourage interaction between foreign nationals and Israeli citizen’s during overseas travels. Israel had planned to cultivate social capital by harnessing “the communication potential of their citizens to conduct effective public diplomacy offensives” (Attias, 2012, p. 474). The inclusion of the domestic public was not to receive feedback and gain insight, but was to manufacture credibility.
In my interview with the former Deputy Director General Daniel Seaman, I was shown the various materials created including training programmes, information booklets and a website for additional information and reference (Seaman, personal communication, June 14, 2012). Likewise, Masbirim Israel, as an integrated campaign, utilized social media “to interact with participants from the events and to act as a hub for participants to exchange ideas, opinion and information” (Attias, 2012, p. 481). The principle of engaging the domestic public and building broad networks for the exchange of information and ideas aligns with new and emerging ideas about the changed landscape of public diplomacy. The effort to harness citizen’s communication potential through message training and scripts co-opted both the citizen and the dialogue to the service of the ministry, which distorts the relational approach. In this case, incorporating Israeli citizens undermines credibility because citizens are not engaging in true dialogue, but instead trained by the Ministry on official messages and guided towards topics.

The program included some training for Israelis, but the main spaces for exchange and interaction of information were the website, which, according to Deputy Director Seaman, was an resource for Israelis to use and share for accurate information about Israel, show “real life” and plant seeds (Seaman, personal communication, June 14, 2012). Likewise, he said that Masbirim Israel was set up to create dialogue. However, the shared material is satirical and paints pictures of foreign audiences as gullible and ignorant (“Israeli government videos portray Europeans as gullible,” 2010). Such a portrayal would presumably make dialogue and relationship building more difficult rather than more probable. Moreover, even though the incorporation of social media through Facebook, Twitter, and
YouTube provides interaction with Israelis and foreigners (Seaman, personal communication, June 14, 2012), the use of social media in this example reflect Marcuse and Bourdieu’s theoretical views that the technology is reinforcing the dominant power structures of the Israel government.

This ‘dialogue’ is not ‘true dialogue’ as discussed in Part 1 of this dissertation, since the facts are predetermined and the agenda pre-set. The program goal is to reframe the Israeli image away from the continuous Arab-Israeli conflict and pictures of war. The generation of bridging social capital is doubtful where communicative action and mutual understanding is not an objective. However, bonding social capital through strengthening national identity may be more likely.

Once MPDDA translated the content into English for wider distribution, commentators derided it as menial and served a fodder for sarcastic and humorous quips. For example, as Ahren noted, “Jonathan Gabay, a leading London-based marketing and branding professional, maintains the campaign is counterproductive. ‘People are laughing at you,’” (Ahren, 2010a, 2010b). Access to information, people, and networks was an encouraging aspect, but by trying to manage and control the message the possibility of generating lasting and beneficial partnerships or relationships with foreign publics was limited, thus constraining openness and commitment. While it is impossible to measure accurately and completely the number, tone, and impact of the interactions that occurred as a result of Masbirim Israel, there is some research that suggests the benefits for social capital, if there were any were domestic—bonding capital. This offers two points: first, the project generated social capital and second, the relationships and
partnerships between the Israeli government, Israeli citizens and Jewish diaspora communities generated social capital.

Hershkovitz (2012) discussed the designation of Masbirim Israel as an example of prosumption, a process of product (or public good) production and consumption by the inclusion of citizens in fulfilling a role that was traditionally that of the state, in this case public diplomacy (p. 511). However, in prosumption there is a relinquishing of control and an incorporation of ideas and feedback from the consumer in the production phase. In essence the strategy appeared much less “positive” in essence a form of “exploitation through much more sophisticated means” (Hershkovitz, 2012, p. 514). The ministry may have aimed at inclusion and prosumption, but in producing materials and strategy for the Masbirim Israel campaign the ministry did not include feedback in the production of a good and it continued to control its consumption and further diffusion.

The campaign poorly executed the inclusion of foreign publics as a central element of the social network. The deficiencies in the execution of the initiative exemplified the heavily political nature of the MPDDA leadership, which pervaded the social networks. The campaign created a website, but this was in Hebrew only and set-up as an asset for the Israeli citizen and Jewish diaspora volunteers. Foreign publics were be directed to the MPPDA Facebook, YouTube and Twitter accounts to interact. The campaign information along with posts offered trivial facts about Israel and quickly slipped into right-wing political rhetoric such as “there has never been a state called Palestine” (Reider, 2010). The use of antagonistic and arrogant posts including incendiary comments, videos and political cartoons not
only created issues of commitment and credibility for this campaign, but for the ministry in general.

For example, one of the more frequently discussed posts by the ministry is a link to the YouTube video “Free Gaza from Hamas, not from Blockade” that depicted a distraught women who is meant to represent Israel recounting events of the Gaza flotilla incident in May 2010 to a psychologist as though it were a rape. At the end of the video the women yells at the psychologist “this flotilla is a provocation against the state of Israel” and a message flashes on the screen stating “Stop the provocation against Israel” (Free Gaza from Hamas, not from the Blockade, 2011). In addition, Deputy Director Seaman, who was charged with overseeing these public diplomacy initiatives, has made a number of remarks that have slighted foreign publics in particular the Japanese (see Figure 17):

> I am sick of the Japanese, “Human Rights” and “Peace” groups the world over holding their annual self-righteous commemorations for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims. [The bombings of] Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the consequence of Japanese aggression. You reap what you sow…Instead, they should be commemorating the estimated 50 million Chinese, Korean…and other victims of Japanese imperial aggression and genocide (cited in Aquino, 2013).

![Figure 17: Daniel Seaman Facebook post August 8, 2013.](image)

Although these comments were made on his personal Facebook, he is an official within the Israeli government responsible for public diplomacy. These types of
actions ultimately led to Deputy Director Seaman being reprimanded (Ahren, 2013b). Moreover, such actions further degraded trust by damaging credibility of the ministry, its messages, and programs it developed and undermined confidence of others about the commitment of the Israeli government, the ministry, and those involved in its outreach in building true relationships across diverse networks. For example, even Israeli media were critical of Seaman and asking “Is an abusive racist the best Israeli PR can produce” (Ravid, 2013)? Furthermore, as Figure 18 illustrates, reactions to the news about Daniel Seaman’s statements offer insight regarding the state of credibility within the digital social networks in which Seaman and his Ministry meant to engage.

Figure 18: Twitter reactions to Daniel Seaman statements in August 2013.
Aspects of the Masbirim Israel campaign represent a relational approach to public diplomacy. However, the execution process appears to have undermined the ability of the campaign to build social capital with foreign publics in efforts to reach the goal of altering the image of Israel abroad. Trust would be difficult to secure when information contains conflicting messages or when the strategy for execution is information dissemination or proselytizing. Certainly, aggressive, antagonistic, and in some cases material akin to pure propaganda, does not often lead to sympathy with one’s cause. The audience of most importance to the MPDDA was the domestic and diaspora Jewish communities.

Favourability for the programs and messages of the Masbirim Israel campaign were presumably higher amongst domestic and diaspora audience comparatively. Therefore, maintaining the social capital generated in these groups potentially outweighed interest in negotiating understanding with other audiences. Criticisms of the campaign and its messages by foreign publics and the potential for deeper rifts with already estranged groups and networks became a concern (Ahren, 2010a; Reider, 2010). Finally, the contradiction of the MPPDA attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while the MFA was simultaneous working to discuss Israeli life apart from the conflict did not likely help the Brand Israel campaign in reaching success either.

As depicted in Table 9 below, the four elements of trust were limited or not present in the Masbirim Israel example. This made it difficult for this program to generate bridging capital, although, in diaspora and domestic audiences it had the
potential to create bonding capital. The negative aspects of this program meant divisions were exacerbated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>WEAK; specific topics addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>WEAK; limited inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>MODERATE; on-going, but specific &amp; limited frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>WEAK; controlled sources: opposing ideas ridiculed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 9: Masbirim Israel: element/presence degree scale.*

Finally, given that the elimination of MPDDA in mid-2013 passed without much notice further highlights the limited impact the ministry and its programs had on developing sustainable and engaged networks. From a social media standpoint, the government deleted all material from the website and Facebook pages. In addition, the government removed discussions and material used in MPDDA programs, thus eliminating any further review, discussion or use of the content. In fact, a search in late 2013 offers only minimal results of images or content, except for those used in further media articles and posts regarding controversial incidents, such as Deputy Director Seaman’s outbursts or the video clips of TV commercials then distributed on YouTube.

Results of cyber-ethnographic observations of the Facebook and Twitter networks offer notes on the material posted. Many times the statements and images posted were not meant for relationship building, but for further entrenchment of a particular narrative regarding Israel’s right to defend itself and its legitimacy in actions. While, the posts are no longer available, examples of some of the material
posted from third parties is, for example, the use by MPPDA of *Dry Bones* (http://www.drybonesblog.blogspot.com) comics from the political cartoonist Yaakov Kirschen. Today his cartons are considered somewhat right wing, and potentially offensive to other foreign audiences including Palestinians, Americans, and Europeans. While, political cartoons offer a voice to diverse viewpoints the reposting or retweeting of independently made material infers alignment with the message or viewpoint. From a relational public diplomacy perspective, this can create issues for discourse and sincere openness.

Both the Flotilla incident and the Masbirim Israel campaign are occasions that allow for analysis using the framework set forth in this research. Both have social media as a core component that is vital to their communication and outreach efforts. However, in neither cases are social networks partners or actors themselves, but tools for message management and information dissemination. As noted in Part 1 of this research social networks are not tools, but actors themselves comprised of numerous other actors. Manipulating, or endeavouring to manipulate, networks via information dissemination and message framing, ignores the reality of the new communications environment, where actors can source their own information for confirmation. Moreover, partnership, access to information and dialogue offer more credibility and confer greater feelings of commitment than do efforts to control the agenda of exchange and discourse and frame perceptions.

The review of these two examples indicates that they did not allow for the trust and reciprocity to develop because access to information was managed, openness in discussion, topic, and issue was controlled, credibility was hampered by minimal
sources while other statements portrayed as ‘fact’ were disputed, and finally, commitment to the networks or relationships established was relatively non-existent. The digital diplomacy as represented in these examples was of instrumental, rhetorical action not communicative action and social media was a tool used to strengthen existing state narratives and power constructions.

The limited ability to generate social capital and thus affect foreign public perceptions of Israel is notable in the results of both instances: Israel has since apologized for its handling of the flotilla and the MPDDA dismantled. Instead, it is fair to say that the results of both examples required the expenditure of social capital in the hopes of mitigating a further growth of unsympathetic feelings; supported by consensus not just of domestic and foreign publics, as per various media reports, but also by government investigative and accountability agencies.

As noted, global societal changes require a rethink about public diplomacy in regards to collaboration and cooperation. Controlling access to information to frame events favourably or inhibiting openness and exchange of concerns and goals isolates actors more than it favours them. Israel’s historical public diplomacy style, which focuses on explaining, equates to rhetorical action. Rhetorical action negates any possibility of relationship building, as it is adversarial instead of relational. These examples exemplify the detriment of such actions in an interconnected global setting and make clear that a relational approach in digital diplomacy is more appropriate. Given, as noted in earlier chapters, that soft power is the preferred method of influence, the generation and/or maintenance of social capital is an important aim.
Digital diplomacy offers the possibility of greater reach across more and diverse networks, thus implying new and additional opportunities for generating social capital. However, this requires participation in communicative action, while also making efforts to balance the inherent power asymmetries and biases in technology. In this way, it is possible, although not guaranteed, that through the development of trust and reciprocity, social capital useful to the state in establishing sustainable relationships and networks and for mitigating further conflict, can be generated via digital diplomacy. Israeli officials made efforts to harness this potential through digital diplomacy, but as these examples show, they did not fulfil the requirements of access, openness, commitment and credibility needed.

Since the debacle of the Mavi Marmara, the Israeli government has developed new initiatives with the goal of engaging previously isolated antagonistic audiences. The following sections direct attention to analysing these projects in an effort to assess if and how social capital has been generated.

5.3.2: Peres 360: be my friend for peace

Current Israeli President, Shimon Peres, has had a long political career that has spanned the entire history of Israeli politics thus far including both diplomatic and military positions. After the 1948 War of Independence at the age of 24, he became the head of the Israeli Navy. Currently the President of Israel since 2007, Peres has held nearly every major position in the Israeli government. This includes Prime Minister twice (1984-86, 1995-96), as well as interim Price Minister twice (1977 and 1995), a member of 12 cabinets in various positions including Minister of
Defense (1974-77, 1995-96), Minister of Finance (1988-90) and Minister of Foreign Affairs thrice (1986-88, 1992-95, 2001-2) ("Shimon Peres | President of the State of Israel," n.d.). Peres has recently taken his efforts to social media as a forum he says helps create a direct link and an opportunity to “engage with people in meaningful discussion” (Algemeiner Staff, 2013). Shimon himself declares an adherence to many of the principles that have been addresses in this research, such as clear communication and access to information, the absence of “double talk” or contradictions in statement and action, lead do not rule or in other words listen and guide, but do not control (Kirkland, 2012). This represents each of the four components of access, openness, credibility, and commitment required for social capital generation. In this section, I analyse if Peres’s social media have been able to exemplify them.

On March 6, 2012 President Peres officially launched his social media outreach initiative—Peres 360. His focus has been broad with topics that range from technology and science to education, current affairs and international issues. However, the overarching theme, peace, is not hard to recognize. Under the title, “Be My Friend for Peace” Peres created a YouTube video that quickly went viral.40 In this re-mixed, dub-step style music video that has now been viewed almost 400,000 times and shared globally, the then 88-year-old Peres addressed listeners saying, "be my friend for peace. I want to hear your voice. Be my friend, share peace. Speak up and change the world" (President Shimon Peres - Be My Friend For Peace (Noy Alooshe Remix Video), 2012). His venture into social media includes the

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40 The term ‘gone viral’ in regards to social media refers to extreme popularity of images, videos, or other sharable content. However, there is no set definition or measure denoting that something has gone viral.
above mentioned YouTube channel ([www.YouTube.com/user/Peres](http://www.YouTube.com/user/Peres)) established seven years earlier but inactive until December 2009 when Peres posted a video from June 2008 of a meeting between himself and then Sen. Obama, a Facebook profile ([www.Facebook.com/ShimonPeresInt](http://www.Facebook.com/ShimonPeresInt)), a Twitter account (@PresidentPeres) and an Instagram profile ([www.instagram.com/shimonperes](http://www.instagram.com/shimonperes)).

Peres is no stranger to adjusting to technology, especially in regards to the practicalities of its integration in politics and has had a strong history of innovating along with technology. He created the first website for an Israeli Prime Minister while serving as Prime Minister after Yitzak Rabin’s assassination. With approximately 230,000 likes in late 2013, Peres’s Facebook had a greater number of friends than the MFA, which at the same point in time had only approximately 145,500 likes. Peres also allows others to post statements directly on his Facebook wall and allows comments on any posts he makes. Likewise, Facebook analytics\(^\text{41}\) show that in recent months tens of thousands of people are viewing, posting, liking, commenting or sharing information from Peres’s Facebook wall at any given time.

On YouTube Peres has created and shared over 200 videos making his average about four videos a month. In addition, like his Facebook, his YouTube account allows comments and discussion, although Peres himself has not added extra commentary to the video posts or responded to any messages. Peres’s Twitter

\(^{41}\) Facebook offers analytics known as ‘Facebook Insights’. This information allows a user to keep track of information such as page views, unique views, fan statistics, wall posts, video and audio plays, and photo views. Certain information on public pages is available to all viewers such as page likes, most active/popular demographic and city for a given period.
account and Instagram profiles show similar patterns in regards to sharing information and creating dialogue. Although his Twitter account and Instagram profiles have approximately 35,000 and 19,200 followers respectively, Peres himself is not following anyone. Both are intended to be social network platforms with the dual functions of sharing information and facilitating discussion, Peres appears to be using the social network less as a place to facilitate dialogue and discussion between himself and others and more as modern style newspaper or radio broadcast.

President Peres’s apparent one-sided use of YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram does not appear to create issues for trust nor the generation of social capital, although it may limit it. According to a few survey respondents, this integrated approach offers Peres a level of social capital from a broad spectrum of individuals. Within the Arab Palestinian community, the Israeli population, and globally Peres enjoys a level of trust and willingness to interact and cooperate that other Israeli officials do not. Although Peres does enjoy a favourable reputation generally, his previous actions mean the much of the Arab world still considers Peres a war criminal for actions he undertook before his ‘hawk-to-dove’ transformation (“Moroccan activists call for Shimon Peres’ arrest,” 2015). His silence on such controversial issues means his social media strategy is limited and not likely to quell such concerns in audiences of older generations and hard-liners.

However, 90% of social media networks are composed of members from younger generations (Pew Research Center, 2014) and therefore it has offered Peres a new platform to re-brand. Peres’s new brand means “people love him” (Avnery, 2011)
allowing him to generate social capital in these networks. Maintaining and sharing within these social networks and not limiting or censoring comments still offers the benefits of being part of the network. Others follow Peres, interact with each other, and pull information as they like. Peres's personal inaction does not limit the bridging power of his social media networks. Moreover, he gains from this openness and from providing access to knowledge and information. Peres's presence in these social media networks and his willingness to create large-scale interactive events as well as in-person engagements supplements his social media networks. He may not be personally liking or commenting on other's pictures, but knowing the platform, being present, and posting his own photos on Instagram has offered insight into the network.

For example, in September 2012 Peres met with 10 Instagram photographers from the US and Europe.

Figure 19: "Once in a Lifetime HD" Instagram campaign.
They were part of the Instagram project “Once in a Lifetime HD” (www.onceinalifetime.org.il) (see Figure 19), a private initiative created by StandWithUs, proclaiming that “photography is not just art, it’s also education” (Kairys, 2012) and a way to portray Israel and influence others the image of the country. Although not a state initiative, Peres’s interest and involvement lent additional credibility to the project and offered an opportunity for Peres to address foreign publics by proxy.

Peres’s interaction in the Instagram social network event simultaneously affected the content by influencing the interaction amongst the participants and the Instagram network itself given the content shared. The photos shared by others might not directly affect his personal social capital, but in terms of public diplomacy his responsibility and goal, as President of Israel, is to help maintain or generate social capital for the state through building relationships, trust and reciprocity. Uniquely, Peres has created two possible paths to do this—via his own personal charisma and by facilitating actions of others through the office of the President on behalf of Israel. The Instagram network is not politically centred or Israeli-focused, but photography-based. However, understanding the network Peres was able to portray Israel in a positive light with the potential of creating discussion, debate or simply enlightening others with new knowledge.

Similar to participation in other cultural events, such as sporting, exchange, or art events, the Instagram event can offer similar benefits. Research shows that such cultural interaction foster understanding and generate goodwill and positive public diplomacy results (Finn, 2003; Kennedy, 2003; McDonald, 2012; Ninkovich,
The Instagram event is significant, especially since online content is accessible indefinitely and social networks act as multipliers and magnifiers. Moreover, reflecting on research by Wellman et al. (2001) regarding the Internet and social capital this event demonstrates both online and offline engagement. This is a middle ground between cyber-optimist (utopians) and cyber-pessimist (distopians) described in Part One of this dissertation (Wellman, Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001, p. 450). Thus, the event supplements social capital generation, which will build on the chain effect of interaction between individuals involved and their digital social networks. Much of Peres’s digital diplomacy is of a similar style: a supplement to in-person events or a continuation of discussions.

Peres, once seen as a hawk, is currently regarded as rather dovish particularly in comparison to the current Likud right-wing government (Sternhell, 1998). His term as President of Israel juxtaposed against Netanyahu as Prime Minister is a rather ironic depiction of the on-going domestic Israeli national identity crisis. Compared to the strict realist perspective of Netanyahu, Peres has become a fervent social media user and is a believer that opportunities to engage with social networks across diverse populations, domestic and international, can bring about change because “ideas are now more important than materials” (Kirkland, 2012). Through the social media digital diplomacy initiative he has launched he has been able to provide access to information and promotes dialogue.

Although he does not always engage heavily, his commitment to mutually beneficial relationships is exemplified by his full schedule across diverse networks both domestically and internationally and he insistence on engagement,
communicative action and a relational approach. For example, in July 2014 Peres conducted a Live Chat on Panet.co.il, a popular site for the Arabic community in Israel, answering questions and engaging with individuals from Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt (Doherty, 2014). All of this further bolsters his credibility with those with whom he interacts and builds broad trust across various networks generating a caché of social capital available to him on behalf of Israel.

Peres’s does add posts regularly and allows others to comment and to carry-on discussions, which make him and his Facebook page a facilitator in the building of new and diverse networks. For the most part the interaction on his page is constructive and Peres offers response in unique ways, fostering interaction and gathering feedback. One of these ways is to live-stream many of his global engagements.

For example, in late 2013, Peres organized an interactive Q&A event called “You Ask, President Peres Answers” on social media. The initiative is part of his online presence dubbed Peres 360, which creates “transparency and accessibility to the president through social media” (“President launches new Q&A app on FB,” 2013). Peres invited individuals from around the globe to post questions by October 31, 2013, from which Peres answered a selection personally. The questions asked ranged from topics on religion, Judaism, the future of the Middle East and the peace process to Israeli foreign aid, technology, science and even personal questions for Peres from people around the world including Israel, South America, the US, and Europe. Below is a screenshot (see Figure 20) of the posting
announcing the “You Ask, President Peres Answers” Q&A event, which was managed through Peres’s Facebook.

The initiative created a buzz in the traditional mass media and across social media. In just one day Peres had received 150 comments and the event information and link was shared 160 times (Singer, 2013). This is arguably a relatively large number for one day, given that is was a public affairs event. Furthermore, this initiative exemplifies all four components outlined in the framework: access, openness, commitment and credibility and as part of a larger social media presence, added further trust in his messages and actions given that they continue to align.

*Figure 20: Peres’s Facebook Q&A October 14, 2013 (Questions).*
The personal connection lends to the credibility of the event since Peres clearly outlines that this event is about his perspective on issues. Peres answered a selection of questions in a series of short YouTube videos with the original questions listed along with the name of the person that asked the question as depicted (see Figure 21).

![President Peres Answers!](image)

**Figure 21:** Peres’s Facebook Q&A October 14, 2013 (Answers).

The discussions included various topics and while Peres could only answer a limited number of particular individuals, he made an effort to respond to as many of the topics as possible when answering. His open nature and true sentiment of openness and commitment is evident in the following statement from an interview with *The Algemeiner*, an American Jewish new outlet:

> Asked if he was concerned that inviting questions from the public might attract the involvement of anti-Semites or enemies of Israel, Peres said that after spending so many years in public office, there is little that surprises him. ‘I’ve been in public life for a long time now and there aren’t many questions that can still surprise me! I hope to use this as an opportunity to engage with people in meaningful discussion, people who really want to know more about Israel and the Jewish people but I will answer all questions’ (Algemeiner Staff, 2013).

Furthermore, this type of event was not a solitary event for Peres, who had conducted numerous live-stream Q&A’s as President of Israel. The use of
such technology is relatively new, but Peres used the opportunity as often as possible to foster discussion in the hopes of understanding and peace. It is noteworthy is that Peres often made efforts to engage foreign publics on state visits and thereafter attempted to interact with Arab audiences as well.

Two more examples of this occurred in March and April of 2014. In March, Peres conducted a Q&A session specifically for Arab audiences and in April Peres made a state visit to China. The March Q&A was live-streamed with over 650 comments and questions posted. Some posts called Peres a “terrorist” and a “baby killer” with the “blood of innocent children” on his hands. Still other posts included images of swastikas with no words, a clear symbolic reference to Nazi Germany and the Holocaust or graphic images of dead children. Overall, the comments were positive, praising Peres for his efforts to reach out and bring peace (see Figure 22).

Figure 22: Posts from Peres’s March 2014 live Facebook Q&A event.
The event itself was a way to reach audiences that might not have the ability to interact with Israelis otherwise, therefore it offered both access to information and openness in regards to Peres’s willingness to share opinions and answer questions. Furthermore, Peres demonstrated his commitment to outreach, dialogue, and freedom of expression since these comments have not been removed or censored.

While in China, he used Weibo, China’s domestic Twitter style social media platform, to interact with Chinese citizens and in only three days, he was interacting in Chinese with over 100,000 (Na, 2014). He is one of the only world leaders with a Weibo page (see Figure 23).

![Figure 23](image)

**Figure 23:** Shimon Peres's Weibo page.

Moreover, according to Weibo, his page launch was the largest the platform had ever had (Berman, 2014; Na, 2014). While quantitatively that is impressive, the quality is of greater importance. Peres not only gained an impressive following, but also then engaged with the network answering
questions and exchanging thoughts and he even held an interview with prominent bloggers (Berman, 2014). More important than the numbers is the fact that his outreach offered Chinese an opportunity to inquire about Israel, gain insight and in many cases gain a response.

President Peres’s social media digital diplomacy outreach shows how interaction in social networks via social media can supplement social capital generation. As depicted in Table 10 below, the four elements of trust were present in the Peres 360 example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>STRONG; across all topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; no limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>MODERATE; on-going, but limited frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>STRONG; multiple sources &amp; participant content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Peres 360: element/presence degree scale.

In his social media digital diplomacy, Peres engages with social networks globally in an effort to increase the social capital of Israel. Given domestic rifts and growing international opposition towards Israeli policies and actions, Peres has found an opportunity in digital diplomacy. His messages are consistent, continuously addressing peace, innovation, science, education, and cooperation. These themes align with his personal action as well.

For example, Peres established the Peres Center for Peace and the Israeli Presidential Conference both focused on future peace and education. Such
initiatives and personal action demonstrate his commitment to these causes and to the relationships and networks included in the process, thus also adding to his credibility. His live-streamed and uncensored events offer access to information and include an aspect of openness to sharing ideas, opinions, and goals. Moreover, the trust he creates translates into social capital for Israel due to his position as President. Of course, his is not universally admired or trusted, but his efforts have been consistent and transparent and his ability to manage relationships with diverse networks, globally in face of growing unhappiness with Israeli policy, is a testament to his efforts.

5.3.3: A Facebook bridge to Arab & Persian publics

The MFA created a Facebook account on July 10, 2009. Refocusing efforts since 2001, the MFA has continued to restructure to adjust to new developments and innovations in ICT. I learned from my interviews with members of the MFA that a specialized social media unit, known as the Digital Diplomacy department within the Media and Public Affairs Division of the MFA, manages Israel’s e-diplomacy development including engagement via social media with digital social networks.

The MFA posts regularly and varies the topics of the posts between culture (art, sports, music, etc.), tourism and travel, business and economics and politics (domestic and international). Furthermore, although the MFA does not allow direct posts to its page, it allows all viewers to comment on its posts and occasionally responds to comments and questions within the conversations that ensue from its postings. The information provided by the MFA in its posts is also of various types including videos, mass media articles, political announcements and links to third
party, non-state, and NGO content (websites, Facebook pages, reports, etc.) such as Israel21c and StandWithUs, two Israeli advocacy groups that coordinate events and projects for diaspora communities and foreign publics.

Examining the general MFA Facebook page in regards to the research framework, results in the following evaluation: the MFA offers access to information, but limited openness and commitment, as the discourse around its initiatives and policies is restrained. Feedback regarding policies and or interaction with foreign publics is still less than desirable. In the context of a relational approach, this is an underlying impetus for participation via social media in social networks. Still, the credibility of the information is not in question even though not all will adhere to or agree with the statements, ideology or decisions of policy statements. In all, the MFA’s main Facebook page offers the possibility of reinforcing trust generally, although, this is likely to be with neutral or already friendly actors and audiences.

Intriguingly, it was not until almost two years later that the MFA created Arabic and Persian language outreach accounts on Facebook. The MFA established the Arabic and Persian Facebook pages on January 10, 2011 and February 22, 2011 respectively. The Arabic Facebook page (www.Facebook.com/IsraelArabic) now boasts over 291,000 likes, which is over double of that of the official English MFA Facebook page that has approximately 145,500 likes. At the time of this research, the Facebook page analytics state that the largest age demographic engaged on the page is 18-24 yr. olds and the city with the most activity is Baghdad, Iraq. With a much smaller number of likes, approximately 70,000, the Persian Facebook page’s
(www.Facebook.com/IsraelPersian) focus is interaction with Iran and the Iranian diaspora.

As would be expected, the city with the most activity on the page is Tehran, Iran and the age demographic that is most active is the 25-34 yr. olds. The interaction on both of these pages is high with the MFA responding often to additional comments made on its original posts. This interaction not only includes general statements, but often the MFA specifically address individuals that have asked questions or made statement.

Figure 24: Israeli MFA Arabic Facebook interaction.
Figure 24 depicts a screenshot as an example of this recent dialogue. As the outlined boxes highlight, the MFA engaged in the dialogue. This particular post discusses cultural issues faced in the Bedouin community. At the time of research, the post had approximately 28 comments, 128 likes, and shared 13 times. Of the 28 comments 4 (25%) were MFA replies that furthered discussion. The MFA does not always have the ability to respond to each comment, but this example is not an anomaly.

The Palestinians have never registered as a group of concern for either the Zionist or the Israeli diplomats whose focus was on relationship building with Europe, Russia and the US, while paying little attention to the Palestinian community. Over 65 years later this had changed little and the void created by an absence of interaction was filled by conflict and misunderstanding. “We started with zero and now we have something” (Dunayevsky, personal communication, August 2, 2012) is what Elad Dunayevsky, a social media strategist with the MFA, stated regarding the development of the MFA's Arabic social media accounts in my interview with him and members of the Digital Diplomacy team. Before creating Arabic and Persian Facebook accounts the MFA set-up an Arabic YouTube account (www.YouTube.com/user/Israelmfaarabic) in July 2008 and posted its first video on July 15, 2008 discussing Israel’s position regarding the prisoner swap with Hizballah. To date the YouTube channel has earned 1,800 subscribers and approximately 1.7 million views. While, the MFA maintains accounts in Arabic on Twitter, YouTube, and the website Altwasul.com, Facebook has become the most important channel.
Facebook offers the greatest opportunity to both bridge different networks and enter into or develop ties within networks that it otherwise would not be able to reach. Dunayevsky openly acknowledges that “some of the best examples we have of social media building bridges are through our Arabic accounts” (Dunayevsky, personal communication, August 2, 2012). Launched in early 2011, coinciding with the Arab Spring uprisings across the Middle East and specifically directed towards interaction with the broader Arabic community, this page’s main language is Arabic.

The MFA does not heavily censor this page, except in cases advocating for violence, but leaves both positive and negative commentary for all to see. Comments critical of Israel and Israeli policy are not removed, except in cases when the comments are clearly racist or call for violence (Ahren, 2012; Dunayevsky, personal communication, August 2, 2012; Morad, personal communication, August 2, 2012). The MFA states that they assume “most people that ‘like’ our pages in the Arabic community are not already friends or allies of the State of Israel,” but with social media we can interact and “when questions are posted, we do our best to answer them timely and accurately” (Dunayevsky, personal communication, August 2, 2012). The MFA sees its presence as vital since it allows Israel’s voice to be heard around the world.

As depicted in Table 11 below, the four elements of trust were present in the Arabic & Persian Networks example. Although, as noted throughout the research, context matters and given historical hostilities and on-going community segregation, the generation of social is possible, but limited in the short-term.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>STRONG; topics open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; no limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>STRONG; on-going interaction/language specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>MODERATE; multiple sources &amp; participants (Gov’t managed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 11: Arabic & Persian Networks: element/presence degree scale.*

Although the content is not always positive the MFA takes this quote by blogger and journalist Kara Swisher as hope: “People ask questions, people change” (Dunayevsky, personal communication, August 2, 2012; Morad, personal communications, August 2, 2012). The Arabic Facebook page does provide access to an audience that was previously unreachable. It will take time to influence attitudes and long-held images of Israel and Israelis, but “it is an investment in the future” (Ahren, 2012). Understanding that if this is true it will take time to change perceptions and even longer to see the change manifest itself in society.

5.3.4: @IsraelintheGCC: Israel’s virtual Twitter embassy

On July 18, 2013, Israel further expanded it digital diplomacy outreach to audiences in the greater Middle East, establishing a virtual embassy directed at the Gulf States on Twitter. The @IsraelintheGCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) Twitter account is the newest of Israeli’s digital diplomacy efforts aimed at P2P relations and created in the hopes of establishing or engaging networks for dialogue with the people of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain. Initially, the effort was very active and reaped attention online and in traditional media. The initiative fulfilled the necessary components in generating
social capital. However, a lack of consistency and engagement appears to have limited the ability of the virtual embassy to further a process of relationship building and mutual understanding.

In one month the @IsraelintheGCC account attracted 1,200 followers. About 18 months after the creation of @IsraelintheGCC, the Twitter account was following about 200 others, had approximately 1900 followers, and in its first year had tweeted only about 500 tweets. This does not tell much about the content. So has Israel been able to engage in dialogue? Is the digital diplomacy outreach reminiscent of a relational approach predicated on relationship building and communicative action in an effort for mutual understanding?

From an overview of the Twitter account and through cyber-ethnographic observation and interaction, it would appear the account had goals of engagement, but the implementation is perhaps incomplete. Tracing tweets back to the first one made in July 2013 (see Figure 25), the account appeared to garner both attention and interaction.

*Figure 25: First tweets of the Israeli virtual Twitter embassy @IsraelintheGCC.*
Traditional mass media outlets in the Gulf Region and globally reported on Israel’s move to open a virtual embassy in the region, with the *Financial Times* noting that Israel was using the virtual embassy to bypass the “diplomatic freeze” (Bekker, Kerr, & Allam, 2013). Likewise, although not always positive the Twitter account was receiving responses.

A month later, in August 2013, the MFA organized a discussion and conducted it in Arabic and English with topics ranging from politics and the peace process, to trade and relations between Israel and the GCC. Although, there is a great deal of misunderstanding and uneasy history between Israel and the Gulf states a number of Arabian Gulf residents “brushed aside formal restrictions and decades of suspicion by holding discussions with Israel” (Naylor, 2013). The dialogue did not appear one-sided or scripted. Exchanges between the Director General of the Israeli MFA, Ambassador Rafi Barak, and others seemed open with a back and forth exchange as shown in Figure 26.

Figure 26: Tweets from #EidTalk organized by @IsraelintheGCC August 2013.
In this example, the conversation deals with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More specifically, the discussion addressed thoughts about the return of Palestinians and a one-versus-two-state solution to the conflict. Ambassador Barak, when asked about the model of South Africa as a one-state solution, responded by saying that Palestine is the national home of the Palestinian people and Israel is the national home of the Jewish people. The discussion continued briefly about the feasibility of different solutions.

However, since that event there has been less activity. In the first month approximately 1,200 followers joined the account. Certainly, that growth is due to its newness and such a high rate of growth was not likely sustainable. In the subsequent 12 months, only 700 additional followers were gained. Again, this is still above average for twitter accounts, but a substantial slow-down in comparison to the initial growth. Likewise, the virtual embassy has been less active itself, posting on average about one tweet a day. Usually these tweets are simply informational tweets reminiscent of information dissemination or broadcast models. There is little interaction in regards to retweeting from other sources outside the Israeli government. Overwhelmingly, although the contents of @IsraelintheGCC tweets pertained to Israel on multiple different topics, retweets from other sources are often from one of the following: the MFA, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Ofir Gendelman, the PM’s Spokesperson for Arab Media, the IDF, and Peter Lerner, Israel Defense Forces Spokesman for International Media & Commander of the IDF Social Media activities. The downshift in intensity was noticeable enough that journalists in the Gulf region were unsure if it was still functioning a year later (see Figure 27).
Figure 27: Journalist tweet to @IsraelintheGCC on August 13, 2014.

As depicted in Table 12 below, the four elements of trust were present in the @IsraelintheGCC example initially. When launched, the virtual embassy in concert with on-going outreach and the #EidTalk event, which promoted transparent and open dialogue, offered the possibility of generating social capital. This model, as it appeared in the first few months, fulfilled the components of trust and reciprocity; access through the sharing of information and dialogue, openness through exchange of knowledge, ideas and concerns, credibility through a public transparent venue and presence of contradictory ideas and diverse sources, and finally commitment through engagement without censorship and by unscripted response. The virtual embassy and the Arabic and Persian Facebook networks discussed earlier resembled a move towards a more ‘true’ or ‘genuine’ dialogue as Fitzpatrick (2011) and Riordan (2005) and others have discussed. Of course, the generation of social capital is neither immediate nor guaranteed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>STRONG; across all topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; no limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>STRONG; open, on-going engagement (later WEAK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>STRONG; multiple sources/participants (later WEAK)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 12: @IsraelintheGCC: element/presence degree scale.
Moreover, the virtual embassy and the Arabic and Persian Facebook networks are at early stages in a process of relationship development or in producing a “common lifeworld” (gemeinsame Lebenswelt) (Habermas, 1984; Risse, 2000, p. 10). Given that the diplomatic and historical context between Israel and the Gulf states is one fraught with myriad difficult issues (Ahren, 2013a), this model allows for a slow and on-going process of argumentation suggestive of Risse’s (2001) argumentative rationality based on communicative action. This refers to the engagement and interaction between actors in search of and with the goal of reaching a common understanding or “reasoned consensus” (verständigungsorientiertes Handeln) through acts of understanding in order to “co-ordinate their action plans on the basis of shared definitions of the situation” (Habermas, 1984; Risse, 2000, p. 9). In this way the virtual embassy, like the Arabic and Persian Facebook networks, has the potential to further the process of public diplomacy through communicative action and a relational approach, assuming the goals are mutual understanding and collaboration.

Furthermore, this asserts Wellman et al.’s (2001) results that such social media implementation can have a positive effect on social capital, especially where other avenues to social capital generation are not possible. However, the inconsistency of activity and lack of on-going engagement affects credibility and commitment and therefore stifles the ability of this venue to deliver social capital. Thus, in the end the element/presence table changed drastically with both commitment and credibility moving down the scale towards WEAK, affecting the potential for social capital generation.
5.4: Conclusion: A New Hasbara Ahead?

The examples presented in this chapter on the Israeli case study help inform the analysis of digital diplomacy and social capital. The research has been concentrated on analysing if actors, in this case the state of Israel, can generate social capital via digital diplomacy and if so, then how? Traditional diplomacy moved to a more ‘public’ diplomacy and then further transitioned from a one-way public diplomacy towards a two-way model generally. Methodologically, the research advances both the idea that no one type (traditional or public diplomacy) operates in exclusivity, but that they supplement each other. Moreover, the use of social media aligns with the advancement of the two-way model in a relational public diplomacy approach. Social media digital diplomacy is a relational approach given the norms of bi-directional discourse, the flattened network structure as opposed to a hierarchical network structure, and a loss of control in favour or partnership.

Increasingly, since the 1980’s, the weakness of Israeli public diplomacy was highlighted. During the Peace for Galilee Operation also known as the First Lebanon War, US President Ronald Reagan commented that he was finding it increasingly difficult to sustain support for Israel, when public opinion in the US was being considerably influenced by pictures of death and destruction (Gabay et al., 2010, p. 144). Likewise, during the First Intifada, the Palestinians had been more effective than Israel diplomatically including “on the battlefield, in the halls of international diplomacy as well as on television and the Internet” (Gilboa, 2006, p. 715). While the issue of Israel’s image abroad has been a point of discussion in the government regularly, the divisiveness of domestic politics has often made it
difficult to come to consensus about the way forward. When there was opportunity for action the emphasis was on explaining deeds already conducted instead of including and considering public opinion in the lead up to action or during the decision-making or policy-making process (Gabay et al., 2010, p. 145). As the global society changed and Israel’s need for improved and effective public diplomacy grew, digital diplomacy—engagement in digital social networks—offered an opportunity for improvement.

Lessons gained since 2001 took time to work the way into practice and even in 2006 the public diplomacy of Israel was still regarded as the missing component in Israeli foreign policy (Gilboa, 2006). Since 2009, various Israeli government ministries and offices have experienced changes. Likewise, new digital diplomacy initiatives and projects have been conducted, which returns the discussion back to the main research question: has Israel generated social capital via digital diplomacy and if so how? In this chapter, I outlined the environment within Israel in regards to Israeli public diplomacy operations by briefly reviewing the historical context. Then I discussed the move toward digital diplomacy and early ventures such as Operation Cast Lead, the Mavi Marmara flotilla incident and Masbirim Israel campaign. These early endeavours proved unsuccessful in generating social capital useful to the state in public diplomacy.

To re-cap, the assumptions made in this case were that Israel recognized the need for an improvement in its public diplomacy, which I outlined in the brief historical overview. Then, improving public diplomacy due to global societal changes, included a focus on engagement. This was represented by social media digital
diplomacy, which also pushed Israel, at least theoretically, towards a relational approach to public diplomacy. Having established the progression and process towards social media digital diplomacy, as a relational approach I was able to examine Israel’s social media digital diplomacy against assumptions about social media use and social network engagement. The results provide new insight into whether Israel has been able to generate social capital, and how it was accomplished. In summary, as Table 13 below outlines, the examples analysed allow for an affirmative answer to the research question, but there are a number of caveats and plenty of room for further research.

Moreover, the results bring forth research questions not just about social media digital diplomacy, or public diplomacy, but also about deeper social issues within Israeli society that affect public diplomacy. These include the fractured national identity and the paradoxical adherence to a homogeneous Jewish state and a heterogeneous democratic state simultaneously. Furthermore, these points yield fresh questions regarding our previous assumptions of social media and social capital and their value in Israeli’s public diplomacy.

This table illustrates that social media can be a forum for public diplomacy. At points, Israel has been able to use digital diplomacy in a relational approach to generate social capital. However, context matters and it requires concerted effort, recognition of actors and actor-networks as full partners in dialogue, access to information, openness and the restraining of impulses to control messages, a commitment to relationship building, and credibility through accurate information and diverse sources, ideas, values, and norms.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EX</th>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PRESENCE DEGREE</th>
<th>SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mavi Marmara</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>WEAK; topic specific, one perspective</td>
<td>WEAK (BOND)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>WEAK; broadcast only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>WEAK; reactive explanation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>WEAK; single source, no or limited critique/discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masbirim Israel</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>WEAK; specific topics addressed</td>
<td>WEAK (BOND)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>WEAK; limited inclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>MODERATE; on-going, but specific &amp; limited frequency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>WEAK; controlled sources: opposing ideas ridiculed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peres 360</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>STRONG; across all topics</td>
<td>STRONG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; no limitations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>MODERATE; on-going, but limited frequency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>STRONG; multiple sources &amp; participant content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic &amp; Persian Networks</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>STRONG; topics open</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; no limitations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>STRONG; on-going interaction/language specific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>MODERATE; multiple sources/participants (Gov't run)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@IsraelintheGCC</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>STRONG; across all topics</td>
<td>STRONG → WEAK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>STRONG; no limitations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>STRONG; open, on-going engagement (later WEAK)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>STRONG; multiple sources/participants (later WEAK)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Entire Israeli case element/presence degree scale (EX=example/SC=social capital).
After an intense effort by the MFA and structural changes by the government to improve Israeli public diplomacy that were fuelled by unfavourable State Comptroller reports and academic and public criticism, issues remain. In its early attempts at using social media in digital diplomacy, the results were mixed. This was mostly due to a continued adherence to the institutional norms of Israel’s hasbara style public diplomacy that coveted control, information dissemination and explanation. In using social media the goal was to bypass traditional media offering an unmediated direct perspective for social networks and to engage with social networks to improve perceptions of Israel and develop relationships. To do this, I have cited research showing that trust is imperative. In the examples of the Flotilla raid and the Masbirim Israel campaign, the research found that trust is undermined by adherence to old norms that were no longer appropriate in the digital space of social media. In these instances, trust was generally unattainable, except from already staunchly pro-Israel networks. These examples create doubt in the general assumption that social capital generation is positive.

I argue that these initiatives generated social capital, but the social capital generated was bonding social capital and generated through by further dividing social networks. Israel generated social capital during the Mavi Marmara raid by controlling access to information, using social media to address and frame the situation in the traditional media and then actively working to demonize the flotilla participants and the Palestinians while at the same time reaffirming their position with little open dialogue. The social capital here resulted from the bonding with audiences and networks already staunchly friendly towards Israel including domestic and diaspora networks, but also foreign networks such as the right-wing
religious demographic in America. It took until 2013 for Israel to begin working toward reconciliation with Turkey by offering a formal apology in March 2013 and it appears a compensation agreement of approximately $20 million for the families of the killed flotilla participants will be finalized in early 2014 (Ozerkan, 2014). As the Flotilla episode exemplifies, acting unilaterally in an international arena first and later using social media to ‘make your case’ is a poor strategy to bridge divides.

The Masbirim Israel example generates social capital, but here again, it is generated via the deepening of divides between domestic, diaspora and allied networks and networks of publics traditionally regarded as adversarial towards Israel, such as the broader Arab community and specifically Palestinians, but even networks of ‘liberal’ European and Americans. By aggressively controlling messages, credibility is undermined. Using social media as a forum to impress further upon domestic, diaspora, and foreign publics, that Israel is a rational actor and right in its action is, as per Mor (2014), a clear example of rhetorical action that stand in contrast to communicative action. Assuming a singular truth that favours Israel and validates both its claims and actions creates a debate instead of a venue for engagement and understanding.

These examples embody an approach that is almost completely in divergence with the relational approach as described by academics such as Zaharna (2013) and Fitzpatrick (2007, 2011). This model of digital diplomacy will not produce social capital. Moreover, the use of monologue almost exclusively by the Israeli government in these examples, ignores Cowan & Arsenault's (2008) research
regarding the need for multiple type of communication such as dialogue and perhaps most importantly collaboration. By posting comments and materials critical of those that question or criticize these versions of truth, seriously restricts openness to partnership and dialogue, access to unbiased information and any sense of commitment to building an equitable relationship.

Alternatively, there have been some initiatives that have aimed to bridge across diverse networks, including Peres’s digital diplomacy as President of Israel and the MFA has made further strides in reforming Israeli public diplomacy both centrally in Jerusalem and at missions abroad as well. The development and maintenance of both an Arabic and Persian Facebook presence is one such illustration. More importantly, the MFA allows for direct interaction not only with the MFA but facilitates interaction across civil society in the region and further afield. Conversations about art, science, business and other cultural or economic topics via social media help build a broader picture of life in Israel and Israeli values.

Furthermore, Shimon Peres has used his popularity to generate social capital, by engaging directly with various networks. As shown, he allows access to information, which is perceived as credible because he allows both the production of information by others and the sharing of that information via his channels. He is open in perusing dialogue, providing information and seeking partnerships. Likewise, his rhetoric aligns with his actions whereby he gains credibility. His commitment to his relationships is marked by his follow-through and consistency. Both the Peres 360 campaign and MFA Arabic and Persian networks offer
examples of how the state can further tailor its use of social media to engage with social networks to produce positive social capital.

A further observation gained from the Israeli case study is associated with the recognition of social networks as actors. These actor-networks, as this research has designated them, are composite groups that include all elements of the network, human and otherwise. Where the social network as a composite actor was engaged as a partner the ability to create trust improved and thus the generation of social capital could occur. In the Masbirim Israel campaign, social networks were both regarded as a means to an end and as integrated partners. Generally, the campaign was an ineffective public diplomacy initiative because it used the networks to reinforce differences rather than bridge divides, but the campaign is a perfect comparative example in this regard.

The social networks that were regarded as actor-networks in partnership—the diaspora or Israel domestic volunteers—met with access, openness and a commitment to relationship building. In these social networks, the campaign was successful in building social capital. However, other social networks—foreign publics, especially those critical of the questionably credible information provided by the campaign—were seen more as a means to an end. When, these social networks were critical, engagement broke down. The various posts of satirical political cartoons mocking Palestinians and other Arab cultures by the Ministry and, in particular, the offensive statements of a high-ranking ministry official within the social network demonstrate this point. This example, given the segregation of different actor-networks, allows for an illustration of the benefits of
recognizing an actor-network in its entirety and engaging based on the four components of trust.

Finally, this Israeli case study offers new and exciting research questions to explore. One such topic has to do with the communicative style of the interlocutors. In daily conversation, one would expect a group's normal cultural style to dominate, which can lead to confrontation and misunderstanding. For example, looking at the MFA’s Arab Facebook page, we would expect that comments written would represent each group’s cultural communication style. In this case, we are likely to find the Jewish Israeli commenters using a Jewish ‘dugri’ style that is a more direct, assertive style prone to argument and interruption. Likewise, we would assume Arab commenters would use the Arab ‘musayra’ style, meaning ‘to accommodate’ or ‘to go along with,’ is a style based on repetition, indirectness, elaboration and effectiveness that works to create “harmonious social relations,” but is also indirect and focused on saving face (Ellis & Maoz, 2002, p. 182). Context is important to understand in a relational approach to digital diplomacy. The scope of this dissertation did not include possible issues dealing with the mediated nature of social media and conversational style. An interesting topic for future research includes assessing whether social media either mitigates or exacerbates some of the more troublesome characteristics of each culture’s typical intra-group discourse. Such research might add to our knowledge on the ability of digital diplomacy to build relationships through shared experiences by eliminating cultural misunderstanding inherent in language and expression.
There remain issues for Israel’s social media public diplomacy generally. The need to manage a national brand and improve its image requires effective public diplomacy and social media digital diplomacy can be effective. In the context of Israel, the constraints have included the divisive domestic political system, which is a reflection of the current national identity crisis and a predisposition for militarism. Since militarism still trumps diplomacy, there is often a misalignment between action and rhetoric. Social networks must feel incorporated into the process from the beginning, meaning that the organization of the state public diplomacy apparatus must be such that a free-flow of information is possible and that policy is not communicated as a finished product but that it is a process.

Trust is a key ingredient in generating social capital and it is created via the process. Messages disseminated by multiple state institutions vying for the attention of the same social networks creates confusion, which does not lead to trust. Israeli officials have noted internal conflict and responsibility crossover as a major detriment to Israel public diplomacy and it is clear via social media that there are conflicting strategies. As noted, the critical report by the Israeli State Comptroller in June 2012 regarding the May 2010 Flotilla incident makes similar observations. Contradictory messages of the MFA, MPDDA, IDF and PMO are detrimental. However, the recent consolidation of public diplomacy efforts of the MPDDA into the PMO is a welcome change. Still, a clear structure and strategy is essential regarding the responsibilities of the IDF Spokesperson, the PMO including the GPO, and the MFA. Such problems are not eliminated by engaging in social networks via social media alone.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Can digital diplomacy generate social capital and if so, then how? This dissertation set out to address this question. Undertaking this research was an attempt to trace how states have incorporated social media and the engagement of digital social networks into diplomatic practice. As stated from the outset, this movement toward digital diplomacy is part of the evolution of diplomatic practice and, more specifically, reflects the changes in global society that have affected public diplomacy and more generally international relations.

The vagueness that surrounds many of the concepts referenced in this research has created a certain ambiguity regarding the practical application of digital diplomacy initiatives. The empirical study presented helps peel away some of this uncertainty in regards to theory and application. Assessing success in public diplomacy is a subjective task, which is often a paramount concern for such investigations. Therefore, this research aimed to present a framework that was both contextually adaptable and broadly consistent. The framework provides a model for assessing the generation of social capital by using the mechanisms of trust and reciprocity as guiding premises.

An initial question is whether social capital matters in diplomatic practice and answered by the fact that soft power matters. This point is often explicitly stated, but even if it is not, it is implied. Thus, social capital, which is required for the exercise of soft power, matters a great deal. Hayden (2012) noted that the growing awareness and use of public diplomacy, and the proliferation of ICTs, means there is "attention and influence" afforded to and gained from communication-based
action (p. 278). In essence, this research proposed that analysing the concept of social capital was an appropriate next step in understanding the influence of communication-based action.

In diplomatic practice, and public diplomacy specifically, this is an important movement towards the search for a theory. However, any theory of public diplomacy will need to be contextually adaptable to be useful. Using the relational approach offers this flexibility. Understanding the component parts of the mechanisms of trust and reciprocity and their contextual meaning for any partner(s) engaged, offers a model for social capital generation. Mechanisms refer to those aspects that affect both the behaviour of the actors and the resources that are available to actors through network associations. As such, the relational approach incorporates structuration, which allows for changes in the environment based on the interaction of actors and actants.

A great deal of research has offered quantitative investigations. However, a combination of qualitative and empirical research remained a gap in the literature. Therefore, this research examined the connection between the relational approach to new public diplomacy in the digital realm—digital diplomacy—and its connection with the generation of social capital. The results confirm that it is possible to generate social capital through social media engagement in digital diplomacy. Moreover, the research reinforces the relational approach as an appropriate model for diplomatic engagement in digital social networks.

The first part of the research outlined the evolution of public diplomacy, showing
how the new public diplomacy includes various actors outside of traditional state-based organizations, new ICTs and approaches from other fields such as public relations and marketing to reach goals of mutual understanding through communicative action. There is a need for trust and obligations of reciprocity to generate relational social capital through the fulfilment of the components of these mechanisms: access, openness, commitment and credibility.

Linking of social capital to social media engagement in digital diplomacy created the basis of the research. The theoretical underpinnings of the research question assumed a move from hard to soft power that relied on the influence of ideas, norms and values. In this situation, the ability to shape these norms is of paramount concern in diplomatic practice. Therefore, establishing a theoretical model that created the most favourable environment for expressing and building influence is important. The research did this by intertwining the relational approach and the digital social environment. In this context, relationships develop through interaction, exchange, and the development of relationships.

Trust and social capital are not the same, but they are tied to each other. Still, social capital can emerge only when trust and reciprocity is developed. Indeed, both cases offered examples of this process. As stated, the aim of this dissertation was to explore whether social capital was generated through social media engagement in digital diplomacy. In digital diplomacy, information dissemination alone cannot mitigate the effects of underlying identity constructions, nor is it a panacea for image issues and/or bad policy. Instead, the examples strengthen arguments that public diplomacy is not a product, but a process.
The process, represented in this research as the implementation of communicative action through a relational approach, is about reaching mutual understanding. Interaction made possible through social media allows actors to re-construct social reality, exemplifying structuration. The levelling of asymmetries through a reconstruction of social norms is not guaranteed, but requires concerted effort by actors in dominant positions. For example, the state, in a public or digital diplomacy context, can manage power asymmetries already present in social structures and work to mitigate inherent biases in technologies.

If the goal of state-based digital diplomacy is to reach mutual understanding through communicative action based on argumentative rationality, as assumed in this research, than the generation of relational social capital is possible by assuring access, openness, commitment and credibility. However, the state undermines such results if it exercises rhetorical or strategic action based on instrumental rationality. As the case studies show, the manipulation of digital social networks is possible, but not sustainable. In cases where true commitment to communicative action was lacking, or where access and openness were manipulated, the ability to build relationships and trust are damaged, perhaps irreparably. In fact, during the research project my ability to collect data was already hampered by the actions of the US government in regards to online surveillance. Many were unwilling to participate or assumed I was an agent of the state.

The dissertation did not set out to answer any normative questions in regards to positive or negative ramifications of either social capital generation or use. Nonetheless, the examples examined in the case studies bring this point to the fore.
Interestingly, the association of social capital with exclusively ‘positive,’ ‘good,’ ‘peaceful,’ or even ‘utopian’ ideas is an assumption that does not hold. In fact, tightening relationships with some networks can further estrange other networks. This was discussed in regards to balancing brokerage and closure. Where one extreme or the other was noticeable, issues arose. This was most clearly noticeable in the Israeli case study in the example of the Mavi Marmara. The use of rhetorical action used difference to gain support from third parties and expanded division amongst groups instead of drawing them closer for possible mediation of issues. Therefore, we find two possibilities of social capital generation—affirmative or adverse generation.

Assuming the goal of diplomacy is to mediate estrangement, build shared experiences, and create understanding, a normative case could be made that affirmative social capital generation is the goal in diplomatic practice. This means that success in the generation of social capital is doing so without creating a situation in which division is used to increase the state's social capital. Israel, perhaps more than other examples shows that technology is not deterministic, but that context, implementation, and the social construction that occurs between actors and structures is important. For digital diplomacy to generate social capital, and form links across diverse networks, an actor or actors must be willing to change processes, perceptions and policy, and not just hope to changes others' processes, perceptions and policy. The context of the relations dictates the ability of actors to generate social capital, and then the exercise of social capital dictates its negative or positive character.
Diplomatic actors engaging in digital social networks create a situation in which each actor has access, according to Bourdieu, to varying amounts the social capital resources. In the digital diplomacy cases examined in this dissertation, the US and Israel have implemented ICTs in various ways, but mostly action remains strategic or rhetorical and the foundational rationality is instrumental. In the Israeli case, the Mavi Marmara and Masbirim Israel examples use technology to reinforce and control the narrative and power. Both are examples of rhetorical action using debate to justify and persuade third parties, rather than to reach mutual understanding. Here the development of social capital occurred, but the strong bonding capital generated is exclusionary, and therefore not relational in nature or useful in mitigating conflict. If this was the goal of the Israeli government, then it could claim success. However, such social capital does not offer long-term benefit or a sustainable relationship for future interaction and relies on favourable relationships with third parties for future security.

In the US, the ExchangesConnect digital diplomacy initiative exemplifies a relational approach using communicative action based on argumentative rationality. The goal is to develop broad reaching networks, build relationships and construct shared norms and meanings for on-going exchange. In this example, the generation of relational social capital is possible between individuals, which then aggregates to supply the network with social capital. Since this network includes US institutions, the state itself gains some access to these resources. These resources are not exclusionary and offer opportunities for further engagement to provide further social capital for future endeavours.
Likewise, the @IsraelinthGCC and USAdarFarsi virtual embassies are based on communicative action. Still, the structure of the networks limit some of the components needed to develop further trust. Both allow for access to information, however, restricting sources of information means that credibility suffers. The involvement of other non-state and civil society actors in the network would further bolster credibility, but would also demonstrate a greater commitment on behalf of the state to the network. The Democracy Video Challenge and Apps4Africa offer a good model in regards to including numerous non-state actors into a digital diplomacy initiative to develop greater reach, interest and success.

Moreover, as was demonstrated in the research, the online space does not operate distinctly and separately from the offline. This represents the “politics of public diplomacy” that Brown discussed, which creates issues for a truly symmetrical setting. Without symmetry in the relationship the possibility for true dialogue, the building of relationships, and the development of trust is hampered. Theoretically, the online, virtual or digital environment has the ability to flatten the asymmetrical nature of hierarchical structures, but this must be actively pursued by dominant actors. This asymmetry is manageable if the more ‘powerful’ or ‘influential’ actor wishes to mediate estrangement and alienation. In all, digital diplomacy offers new possibilities to generate social capital by reconstructing the social environment. In this environment, the state must engage with new actors in order to have influence.

The results of the research allow for an assertive claim regarding the ability of
digital diplomacy to generate social capital. This does not mean that all questions surrounding digital diplomacy, social capital, digital social network engagement, and all other associated issues are now resolved simply because there is empirical evidence that digital engagement builds relationships and offers influence and thus avenues to power. On the contrary, the research offers new questions for reflection. Normative questions about power asymmetries, surveillance, and privacy abound. Moreover, these questions are all connected to further questions about the future of the state, democracy, and personal and collective rights. Should such resources be cultivated and leveraged to promote change (or revolution) against other states? Does such strategic action deteriorate the influence of the social digital space? Is democracy limited by and/or does democracy limit engagement within social digital networks?

Finally, while new questions abound, the research presented in this dissertation addressed whether social capital can be generated through digital diplomacy social media engagement. In addition to exploring this question empirically, the dissertation was able to confirm a number of points regarding public diplomacy. As Zaharna (2010) noted, building bridges is a process, and that process requires quality not quantity, coordination not control, and inclusion not segmentation or division (pp. 166–173). Likewise, Cowan & Arsenault (2008) assert that cooperation and collaboration in diplomacy are necessary. This dissertation reflects on these points and confirms them in the context of the digital sphere.

This thesis also has relevance to points discussed by Pamment (2013) regarding the relationship between the interests of the state and the goals of public
diplomacy. I echo his final remarks that the way in which states and their public diplomacy organizations work has not changed enough. Essentially, within the state “the new PD is still propaganda in the age of strategic communication; but it could be so much more” (p. 136). The possibilities offered by engagement in digital social networks could alleviate common issues, if the institutions associated with the state and the structure of the state itself were more open to a process of reconstruction.
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