FRAMING, PUBLIC DIPLOMACY, AND ANTI-AMERICANISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Executive Summary

Increasingly, the US State Department is relying on efforts of public diplomacy to improve America's image abroad. We test the theoretical efficacy of these efforts through an experiment. Participants in our experiment were recruited in six locations in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. All but those participants randomly assigned to a control group read a quote about the US. We varied attribution of this quote to President Bush, an Ambassador, an ordinary American or to no one. We then asked respondents a battery of questions about their opinions of the US before and after a long discussion with other participants about the US. We find that the identity of the messenger matters, as those who read the quote attributed to Bush tended to have lower opinions of the US. These views, however, partially dissipated after the discussion. When the discussion took place among people with higher pre-discussion views of the US, individual views of the US improved. However, when there was a large range of views in the discussion, post-discussion views of the US got worse when controlling for all other variables.

Introduction

The United States suffers from an "image problem." In a recent paper, Beissinger and Bush (n.d.) identify three clusters to the US's "imperial" reputation; the US is popularly associated with the "forceful subjugation of society," with "unilateral hierarchy," and with the "illegitimate use of force." Moreover, this bad reputation is likely to be "sticky," and its durability can condition global publics to continue to apprehend US actions in particular, negative ways, thus ensuring (at least in some parts of the globe) a vicious cycle. Prominent State Department reports (e.g., United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy 2008), though, assume that this reputation can be reshaped through public diplomacy if the Department of State recruited diplomats with the communication skills necessary to influence foreign publics.

What, if anything, can or should be done about this image problem? There are three clusters of possible approach. First, *materialist-realpolitik* approaches typically contend that the United States need not be concerned with its images abroad; no particular expenditure of resources or time is needed or justified. *Realpolitik* should govern US foreign policy, and, while some degree of image making might enhance the US's ability to pursue its material self-interest, an overriding concern with the perceptions of those abroad would erode the US's capacity to achieve its goals.

Second, *materialist-globalist* approaches advocate major changes to US foreign policy— toward greater internationalism, less power-laden diplomacy, more commitment to international normative structures, and so on. Those arguing from these perspectives tend likewise to be unconcerned with the US's image problem. To them, the US's image is a simple product of US policies; to change the image of the US requires a change to US policies. It is in this sense

materialist, rather than ideational.

While those committed to the first two perspectives find little reason to take seriously the image problem the US faces, a third perspective, which might be broadly labeled *ideational-voluntarist*, deems the image problem worthy of attention and potentially amenable to change. It is ideational in the sense that it takes ideas, images, and subjective perspectives seriously—not as epiphenomena of some underlying material "base," but as causally important in their own right. It is voluntarist because it envisions that a potentially significant margin exists to affect the causal impact that ideas have. It does not deny the existence of a material reality (e.g., concrete US foreign policies on trade, the environment, democracy promotion, and anti-terrorism), but rather argues that this material reality is made *meaningful* through the ideas that shape human interpretations. Nor does it deny the role that structures play in constraining the voluntary action of individuals who seek to shape the causal impact of ideas, but rather argues that we should not underestimate the room for agency within seemingly iron-clad structural constraints. To say that ideas matter and that there is room for agency is not to say that they determine everything. Indeed, this paper suggests important limits to both, while arguing that the scope for how they matter is nonetheless worthy of more scholarly attention.

Those who discuss "public diplomacy" are guided by such *ideational-voluntarist* assumptions. They contend that the image problem the United States faces is, in part, a problem of communication. If only the US could do a better job of communicating to global publics the normative value of its foreign policy endeavors and orientations, it would make headway in solving the image problem. No advocate of public diplomacy would pretend that hardened enemies could be swayed by such communicative efforts, but they would claim that "marketing" US-friendly ideas in the "marketplace of ideas" is essential to maximizing the potential of global

publics to be pro-American.

Do such "marketing" efforts actually have an effect? This paper tests efforts to sway opinion in two ex-Soviet Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) countries through an experiment.[1] Some participants in our study read a statement that could be considered typical of an ideational effort to communicate a positive image of the US. By comparing their responses to those of participants who did not read this statement, we sought to determine the effects that *framing*, the selective presentation of a set of ideas or views about an issue, has on popular attitudes about the United States. Further, we varied the attribution of the statement to see if the *source* influenced their opinions. Following the presentation of a message about the US and the completion of a short survey, the participants took part in a group discussion. After the discussion, a second survey with many of the same questions designed to gauge opinion towards the US was administered to see if any *framing* or *source* effects on attitudes were durable.

Central Asia in Context

To say that the US has an image problem in Central Asia (as it does elsewhere) is not to dismiss it as fleeting, epiphenomenon, or easy to address. In fact, it could be that when negative images become lodged in everyday social imaginaries, institutionalized informally in a society's political structures, and routinized and normalized in a society's political culture, they may be particularly difficult to address. Centuries of anti-Americanism in Latin America make the case elegantly (McPherson 2006). If "good policy" could solve the image problem, there would be more variation in attitude towards the US over time in any given context.

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[1] Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are left out of the analysis because conducting focus groups or distributing questionnaires on these topics in these two, hard authoritarian contexts was not possible Moreover, after Uzbekistan severed is basing agreement with the United States in 2005, perceptions of the United States became a particularly politically sensitive topic in that context.

Central Asia is a region where, until recently, there has been little direct contact with the United States. As a result, any problems with the U.S. are truly more about "image" than about "action," since even a light U.S. foreign policy footprint in the 1990s in the region was accompanied by important changes in how Central Asian publics viewed the U.S. (Schatz 2008). Clearly, the U.S. as a symbol was as important as, if not more important than, the US as an actor.

The fact that the data for this study come from Central Asia is significant. First, Central Asia is majority Muslim, a particularly important yet unexplored terrain for discerning the potential impact of framing efforts. Second, Central Asia has developed an ambivalent general attitude towards the United States (Schatz 2008). It harbors neither the largely anti-American sentiments of parts of the Middle East, nor the largely pro-American sentiments of parts of Bosnia, Albania, and Kosovo.[2] As a result, this region represents a most likely case for marketing messages to influence subjects. Moreover, opinions about the US are likely to be less ingrained in Central Asia than in geographic regions with a long history of interaction with the United States. If the messages have no influence in Central Asia, they will be even less likely to succeed elsewhere. Finally, the region is of crucial relevance to foreign policymakers. The implications for the security of Afghanistan and Pakistan, for example, are enormous if the US develops or cannot effectively manage a serious image problem among Central Asians.

Theories of Framing and Persuasion

Asking what, if anything, can be done to improve the US's image abroad raises questions about how people generate political opinions and how other people and future events can change those opinions. Even for individuals who are not politically engaged, the normal social

interactions of daily life provide a variety of potential sources of political information that establish the foundations for the beliefs underlying opinions. In the absence of direct personal experience with a particular policy (such as US "imperialism" or foreign intervention), these sources include mass-media communication (including fictional entertainment such as American movies and television shows), speeches by educators, religious or community leaders, and informal conversations with friends, families and co-workers. These encounters may make certain pieces of information more pertinent (priming), help people organize or interpret the information into a particular perspective (framing), or thoroughly revise one's beliefs about the policy (persuasion).

Message frames play an important role in the construction of political opinions by selectively emphasizing a set of considerations about an issue, providing alternative definitions, constructions or depictions of a policy problem. Framing effects occur when people who receive these frames emphasize the same considerations when constructing their opinions (Jacoby 2000; Nelson and Oxley 1999). By focusing attention on this set of considerations, exposure to different frames causes people with similar belief structures to come to different conclusions about an issue (Gamson 1992; Zaller and Feldman 1992). This may be especially true for ambivalent people who hold conflicting beliefs about an object, since different frames influence which of these beliefs plays the largest role in the construction (or articulation) of the opinion. Beliefs themselves do not change; only their order of importance to the decision-maker or relevance to the formation of the opinion changes.

Since framing works by influencing the importance of these beliefs, framing only indirectly influences opinions. In contrast, persuasion directly revises beliefs. What was once

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seen favorably is now seen as unfavorable or vice versa. For example, consider the question of whether the US does much harm or good to the world.

To answer this question, someone may consider "good things" that the United States does, such as distributing foreign aid, leading disaster relief missions, and making available vast capital markets to foreign companies. These "good things" may be balanced by thoughts about cultural imperialism, the US's production of enormous amounts of greenhouse gases, recent military interventions, and other actions. A frame that emphasizes the US's meager per capita spending on foreign aid would likely increase the likelihood that America would be seen as doing more harm than good. Such a message would not affect *beliefs* about the positive value of foreign aid. A persuasive message would influence beliefs about the positive value of foreign aid. For example, this message might claim that US aid comes with strings, creates dependency or causes countries to fail to develop their own economies or reform their domestic institutions to enable durable growth. As a result, what was once seen as a good thing – foreign aid – would now be seen as harmful. As seen in this example, framing and persuasion work through different processes, but have the same net effect: an increase in the likelihood that the United States is seen as doing harm. A single message can be both persuasive and change the decision-maker's frame.

In this paper, we focus on framing. Following Chiozza (2007), we assume that many people possess both positive and negative images of the US. Which of these beliefs and images are most salient could determine whether or not they view the United States favorably or unfavorably. The success of a frame depends on a variety of factors, including the recipient of the message, the content of the message, the subject matter, and the messenger, as we briefly summarize below.

For questions like attitudes towards the US, pre-existing perspectives and biases of the decision-maker should influence acceptance of the frame (Entman 1989, Graber 1988, Brewer 2001, Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2001). Because framing is a memory-based process, the recipient's mental capacity and habits also affect the likelihood that the frame will shape his/her perspective. Individuals with a strong psychological need to evaluate their lives and environment are less influenced by recent information because their opinions are based on a larger collection of information built up over time (Jarvis and Petty 1996, Druckman and Nelson 2003). "Easy" issues that the recipients are more familiar with, and more likely to hold an opinion on, are less susceptible to message framing effects than issues that are more technical and not as well understood (Joslyn and Haider-Markel 2002).

How recipients perceive their current state of affairs also makes a difference. Prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979) argues that people make judgments relative to a reference point, focusing on the magnitude of change from that point. They assign values to the perceived gains and losses from that reference rather than the value of the final assets. This leads to risk-averse behavior when people feel prosperous relative to the reference point and to risk-embracing behavior accepting behavior when they feel disadvantaged. There is conflicting evidence regarding whether frames that present policies or situations in a positive light are more influential than those that depict the same issue in a negative light or in terms of losses (see Smith and Petty 1996 for a review). Options that minimize such losses, or trade-offs between gains and losses, or are identified as the status quo are often more desirable for individuals (Simonson 1989; Moshinsky and Bar Hillel 2005).

Exposure to conflicting frames or views may cause them to cancel each other out, but some frames are more influential than others and some receive greater scrutiny than others.

Frames that activate ethical considerations of what is right and wrong tend to be more influential than those that activate material concerns (Shah, Domke and Wackman 2001, Druckman 2001). Unexpected messages are closely scrutinized (Smith and Petty 1996). Frames that induce feelings of threat appear to be very influential and trigger combative, angry responses (Gordon and Arian 2001, Huddy et al 2005, Merolla and Zechmeister 2006.). Frames that induce anxiety increase risk aversion but are relatively less influential.

If the frame is attributed to a knowledgeable or credible authority, the frame is more likely to be accepted (Bianco 1994; Buda and Zhang 2000; Dholakia and Sternthal 1977; Iyengar and Kinder 1985; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Page et al. 1987, Druckman 2001, Lupia 2002). Receivers are more likely to agree with a speaker with whom they share (or expect to share) some measure of personal, partisan or ideological affinity (Kuklinski and Hurley 1996; Nelson and Garst 2005; O'Keefe 2002; Zaller 1992). Conversely, if bias is perceived on the part of the speaker, the message may be discounted (Joslyn and Haider-Markel 2002, 2006). When the message is inconsistent with the receiver's expectations, a message is likely to be more heavily scrutinized (see also Ziegler, Diehl and Ruther 2002).

However, research done in the United States on domestic political opinions suggest that the effect of receiving a frame from an esteemed authority can be invalidated by subsequent interpersonal communication or group deliberation about an issue if the group includes people with opposing views (Mutz 2002; Druckman and Nelson 2003). These discussions may cause participant opinions to converge (Vinokur and Bernstein 1978), but a contentious debate may also lead to a strengthening of pre-existing attitudes (Sieck and Yates 1997). If the group is homogenous, one study suggests that the views of the group may become more extreme after receiving a frame (Isenberg 1986). Group decisions are also more likely to select risky or

extreme options (Rutledge 1993). However, very few studies have been conducted outside of North America and Western Europe, so little is known how group dynamics influence opinion in other cultural contexts. Furthermore, there are no published studies that we know of that have specifically examined the effect of group conversations on views of the United States.

Research Design and Hypotheses

We sought to evaluate two questions relevant to issues of framing and public diplomacy. First, are popular attitudes about the United States amenable to framing effects? Second, do any measurable framing effects enjoy a degree of durability? We addressed these questions through an experiment combining a survey and a focus group in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan conducted in 2007.[3]

Before the discussion about foreign affairs began, participants received a survey that asked questions about their views on foreign affairs, including, *inter alia*, a question that introduced a paragraph-long statement framing the United States as a place of religious tolerance and a good place to be a devout Muslim.[4] Specifically, the statement offered (in Russian, Kyrgyz, or Tajik,[5] depending on the target group) the following:

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[3] Heartfelt thanks to research colleagues who acted as moderators for the focus groups: Sunatullo Jonboboev, Alla Kuvatova, and Abdurahim Juraev (Tajikistan), and Nurbek Omuraliev and Jomart Sulaimanov (Kyrgyzstan).

[4] Real-world frames are often more varied, more ambiguous, and often exist in competition with other frames. To make the analysis tractable, we restricted ourselves to a specific frame.

[5] Schatz drew up the original questions in English and worked with native Russian speakers to create a Russian version. He and the native Russian speakers together ensured the faithfulness of the Russian version. In turn, this Russian version was translated into Kyrgyz and Tajik by native Kyrgyz and Tajik speakers. To ensure the accuracy of these versions, they were "back-translated" into Russian by different native speakers than those who did the original Kyrgyz and Tajik translations. Schatz evaluated these back-translations for their faithfulness to the Russian version.

America rejects bigotry. We reject every act of hatred against people of Muslim faith… America values and welcomes peaceful people of all faiths -- Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and many others. Every faith is practiced and protected here, because we are one country. Every immigrant can be fully and equally American because we're one country. Freedom of worship is an American value, and more than 2 million American Muslims are associated with more than 1,200 mosques in the United States.[6]

The attribution of this survey varied randomly within each assembled group. The first version attributed it to "George W. Bush, President of the United States." The second version attributed it to "the newly appointed Ambassador of the United States to [your country]." The third attributed it to an ordinary American, "Joseph Johnson, an American citizen who has been living in [your country] since 1994, married to [titular] citizen." A fourth version included the statement but did not attribute it to anyone, allowing us to isolate the framing effects of the statement from any changes in opinion as a result of varying the attribution of the statement (Druckman 2001). As a control, a fifth version of the survey did *not* include the statement.

After reading the statement, respondents answered identical[7] surveys, including four questions about their attitudes towards the United States designed to detect whether the introduction of the message shaped opinions. These questions were as follows:

A. Overall, your opinion about present-day U.S.A. is ____?

B. Do you think that the US [brings more harm than good]?

C. Do you think that your country generally should support the US efforts?

D. In general, do you approve of the methods and means that the US uses?

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[6] We wanted to create a plausible frame and therefore based it on US government publications, specifically:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/04/20020430-5.html and
http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/2002/10992.htm.

[7] A few questions about the statement and the source were necessarily omitted.

These questions were similar enough to be combined into a single index of expressed attitude about the US.[8] We use this battery to examine whether attitudes towards the US changed after exposure to a statement. We also examine the likelihood of respondents agreeing with the statement.

After all respondents completed the survey, the discussion leader (an experienced local researcher trained by one of the principal investigators) moderated a discussion about foreign affairs and the role of the United States. The discussion lasted between one and two hours. After the discussion ended, the leader administered a second questionnaire to each subject. This questionnaire repeated the battery of questions about their attitudes about the US With the answers to these questions we can observe the effect of changing the attribution of the frame on opinions towards the U.S after the discussion. We also observe how individual opinions change as a result of the discussion and the characteristics of the group.

This research design provides an opportunity to examine the efficacy of one effort at public diplomacy on opinion immediately after the message is received, and after the recipients of the message have an extensive opportunity to discuss its content and other aspects of US politics and society. This design will provide some insights into how effective we might expect public diplomacy to be in communities we expect may be similar to others around the world. This research also provides us with an unusual opportunity to contribute to the literature on framing effects and the question of whether these effects are durable beyond a few short minutes after a message is received.

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[8] To confirm whether the survey items seemingly measure the same underlying construct, we rely on Cronbach's alpha, a common coefficient of scale reliability. The Cronbach's alpha for the pre-discussion battery was 0.8; the post-discussion measure was 0.82. Both measures far exceed the minimum coefficients necessary for social

Description of Sample and Data

We recruited subjects to participate in what we called a "discussion about foreign affairs"; for their involvement, they received nominal compensation. Recruitment took place through the personal networks of moderators and their contacts.

"Snowball" recruitment is appropriate for several reasons. First, network-based behavior is typical of ex-Soviet societies; in contexts where personal relations are paramount, cold-calling or broadly advertising a study would likely compromise the validity of responses. Second, focus groups are constituted not to be representative, but rather to generate in-depth, thoughtful responses. Third, the survey was conducted with a narrow goal in mind (to evaluate framing effects) that we had no reason to believe correlated with any of the selection principles. Our Central Asian participants brought to the discussion a set of prior beliefs and ideas that we expect was not greatly dissimilar from the broader society in which they lived.

To make a causal claim in a between-subject design, we only needed to randomly assign the study participants to each of the experimental conditions. In this way, we could be confident that any differences between the conditions were the result of the experiment. We double-checked that no group was overrepresented in any conditions and did not bias any of the conditions by comparing key demographic and attitudinal variables between the conditions. With this population and this design, we have sufficient experimental control over a range of different demographic groups to provide a demonstration proof that framing effects can affect the broader population in the ways we have hypothesized.

In total, we recruited 121 respondents, evenly split between the two countries (for details, see Appendix). Twenty-six participants read the statement attributed to the ambassador, and

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scientists to trust the reliability of the scale (see Appendix for more details and the distribution of responses for each survey item).

twenty-five read the statement attributed to the ordinary American or Bush. Twenty-four respondents read the quote without any attribution and twenty were randomly assigned to the control. 118 respondents provided legible answers for the complete battery of pre-discussion questions. 116 completed the full battery of post-discussion questions, 113 of whom completed the pre-discussion battery. 55 respondents identified as Kyrgyz, 54 as Tajik, four as Russian and five as "other."

In Kyrgyzstan, we recruited 29 respondents in Bishkek and 32 in Osh. In Tajikistan, 19-21 respondents participated in each of Dushanbe, Khujand, and Kulyab. There were a total of twelve group discussions in these five locations. Eight to twelve participants took part in every group discussion, but most contained ten or eleven participants. All but one group contained at least one member assigned to each experimental condition; seven out of twelve groups contained at least two participants assigned to each condition. The sole exception was an eight-person discussion in Kulyab that did not include a respondent assigned to the control.

Each of the five locations where surveys and discussions took place has distinctive characteristics. Bishkek and Dushanbe are the capital cities of their respective countries. They are more densely settled, more urban, more linguistically and culturally Russified, and have denser personal, cultural, and communication links with the West than do the other cities. Osh is Kyrgyzstan's second-largest city, has closer ties to the agricultural sector, is less Russified, and is linked by its physical geography and ethnic composition to Uzbekistan. Likewise, Khujand is Tajikistan's second-largest city, has closer ties to the agricultural sector, and is linked by its physical geography and ethnic composition to Uzbekistan. In these senses, Bishkek and Dushanbe share some principal similarities, while Osh and Khujand share other crucial similarities.

Kulyab is different. A small city of approximately 80,000 inhabitants, it lies at a geographic remove from both Dushanbe and, especially, Khujand. Its economy is deeply tied to a struggling agricultural sector. Crucially, the Kulyab region includes Dangara, the birthplace of President Rahmon, who has distributed patronage to much of the Kulyab-born elite, although this patronage appears to have had little discernable impact on the life of ordinary Kulyabis. Whereas Khujand in the north is the *former* site of (Soviet-era) political power and Dushanbe is the site of *formal* political power today, Kulyab is the site of *informal* political power in the country.[9]

While Central Asian cities, like cities elsewhere, are complex and have diverse populations, these general characteristics provided an opportunity for recruiting participants in the surveys and discussions. Since focus groups are designed to assemble those from roughly similar social backgrounds as a way to engender discussion, we looked to Dushanbe and Bishkek for Russified participants, for those with high levels of interest in foreign affairs, for female participants, and for those with higher education; we looked to Khujand and Osh for variation in religiosity; and we looked to Kulyab for less educated and more rural participants (see Appendix for profiles of each of the discussion groups).

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[9] For an in-depth discussion of the role of various informal networks in Tajikistan and elsewhere in Central Asia, see Collins (2006). See also Schatz (2004).

Results: Effects of treatments

Figure 1: Aggregate Views of US by Experimental Condition
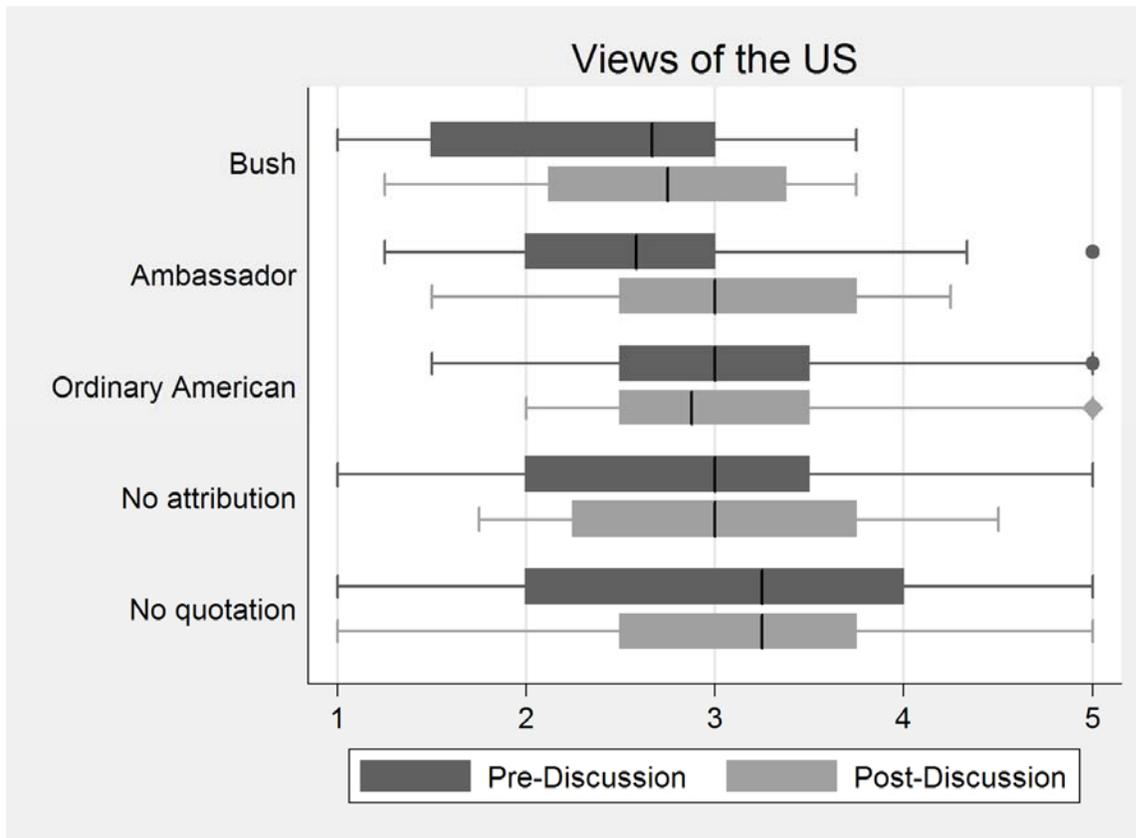
In Figure 1, we present the opinion of the respondents in each condition for four variables: agreement with the statement (measured using a six-point scale), the index built from the battery of questions about US foreign policy (a five-point scale) from before the discussion and after the discussion, and the change between the pre-discussion set of answers and the post-discussion answers. From Figure 1, one can see that when the statement was attributed to President Bush, respondents reported less agreement with the statement and had a lower opinion of the US. On average, agreement in the other four conditions exceeded four on a six point ascending scale, but in the one condition where the quote was attributed to Bush, the mean level of agreement was only 2.92. The difference between the level of agreement in this condition compared to the no attribution control was statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ (d.f. = 92, t =3.8,

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two-tailed test), so we can be confident that the difference was not the result of chance. The average level of agreement was highest when the message was attributed to the US Ambassador. This pattern of results indicate that compared to the control, respondents were more likely to resist the message when it was attributed to President Bush, and more likely to accept the message when delivered by the Ambassador. However, the average level of agreement for those who read the quote attributed to the Ambassador was not significantly different than the average level of agreement when the quote was unattributed or attributed to an ordinary American.

The resistance of the respondents who read the message attributed to Bush was also reflected in their responses to the questions about their opinion of the US (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). As mentioned above, four of these questions were combined into one index ranging from 1 to 5 summarizing their opinions. Prior to the discussion, respondents who read the message from Bush, had the lowest average opinion of the US, 2.42. The mean opinion of the rest of the sample was more than a half-point higher, 2.96. This difference also was statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ (d.f=116, t= 2.46).[10] Surprisingly, on average, the group with the most positive views of the US before the discussion was of those who had not read the statement.

The differences between those who read the statement attributed to Bush and respondents in the other conditions shrank after the discussion. The average opinion of those who read the message attributed to Bush was 2.68, nearly one-quarter point higher than the pre-discussion opinion of the US. This level of opinion is still statistically significantly different from the average of the other conditions and the average response in the control condition, but at the more generous $p < 0.05$ level of confidence (d.f.=112, t= 2.1 and d.f.=42, t=-2.4).

The average opinions of those who read the quote attributed to the US Ambassador

changed even more than those who read the quote attributed to Bush. The change of 0.32 points meant that the average opinion of respondents in this treatment was little different than the opinion of respondents who saw the same message attributed to an ordinary American, an unattributed quote or no quote at all.[11] The average post-discussion views of the respondents also did not significantly vary across each of the locations.

Across these latter conditions, the average opinion of the US was slightly higher than 3, the midpoint on the scale. Recall that respondents randomly assigned to these conditions had a higher opinion of the US immediately after reading the message. After a conversation in which respondents heard the views of peers (many of whom were more favorably disposed towards the US), the adverse source effects in part dissipated. These marginally more positive (but still ambivalent) views of the US appeared to be more durable or persuasive over the course of the conversation. 71% of the respondents had the same or a higher view of the US after the discussion.

The post-discussion opinion concordance among the participants is also reflected in the standard deviation of their views. This measure of dispersion decreased from 0.98 to 0.85. This decrease was statistically significant at the generous $p < 0.1$ level (one-way, f=1.35, d.f. 117,115), but was not large enough to be significant for any one treatment group. Figure 1 depicts this result graphically: the darker boxes (pre-discussion) are generally longer than the lighter boxes (post-discussion). This suggests that while there was more agreement among participants, there was less consensus within each discussion group than the mean index scores indicate. To better understand the sources of this variation and how the frames influence those opinions, we turn to

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[10] The one-way ANOVA confirmed that differences in the pre-election index of opinion towards the US were significant.

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individual-level analyses. This multivariate analysis is especially important for this unusual

research design with respondents in five locations across two countries, since it allows us to

statistically control for individual-level characteristics as well as qualities of the group assembled

at each location (including discussion leader). Doing so increases our confidence in the validity

of the aggregate results.

Results: Individual level analyses

1. Agreement with the statement

We model agreement with the statement as a function of the experimental condition, the

location of the experiment, whether or not the statement reminded the respondent of something

that they had heard before, age, religiosity, and two indicators of the respondents' knowledge of

politics: education level and how often they discuss foreign affairs. We analyzed the data using

an ordered logit, which fits a nonlinear regression model that makes no assumption about equal

distances between categories (see Table 1). By identifying constants demarcating the divisions

between each category, the model estimates the distances between categories. The size of the

coefficients can then be evaluated relative to these distances to get a sense of the magnitude of a

one-unit change in each independent variable.

Our analysis confirms that reading the statement attributed to Bush decreased the

likelihood of agreeing with the statement. The model predicts that those who saw the statement

attributed to Bush, ceteris paribus, were predicted to give answers one or two points lower on the

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[11] The far right column of Table 1 is the cumulative average of the difference between each participant's post-discussion opinion and the pre-discussion opinion by condition, not the difference between average level of pre-discussion opinion and average level of post-discussion opinion.

agreement scale than those who read the unattributed statement (see Table 1).[12]

An advantage of using an ordered logit is that the results can also be interpreted using predicted probabilities. Compared to respondents who read the statement without attribution, the odds of disagreeing with the statement are 5.83 times larger for those who read the statement attributed to Bush, holding all other variables constant. Equivalently, the odds of agreeing with the statement are 82.9% smaller for those who were randomly assigned to read the statement attributed to Bush.

In contrast, when holding all other variables constant, the odds of agreeing with the statement are 54.3% *larger* when the statement was attributed to the ambassador. However, we cannot be sure that this change is different than zero because the coefficient is not statistically significant.

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[12] This estimate is arrived at by comparing the coefficient for reading the statement attributed to Bush (-1.763) to the distances between the constants. The absolute value of -1.763 is larger than the distance between the 4th constant (2.305) and the 3rd constant (1.478), so if all other variables were the same, the difference between reading the statement attributed to Bush and reading the unattributed statement is enough to decrease the level of agreement from the "agree in general" (the fifth category, above the 4th constant) to "rather not agree than agree" (the third category, below the 3rd constant). However, the coefficient is not necessarily large enough to result in a change large enough to move two categories from the highest level ("agree completely") because the distance between the 5th constant (5.519) and the 4th constant (2.305) is greater than the absolute value of -1.763.

Table 1: Ordered Logit Regression: Agreement with Statement

DV= Agreement with statement (six-point scale)	
Independent Variables	
Experimental Conditions	
Bush	-1.763***
Ambassador	0.034
Ordinary American	-0.423
Locations	
Bishkek	2.201**
Osh	1.963**
Dushanbe	1.659*
Khujand	1.126
Frequency of discussion of foreign affairs	0.086
Religiosity	0.303
Age	0.015
Post-Secondary Educated	-0.563
Quote reminds you of something heard before	-0.33
1st Constant	-1.354
2nd Constant	0.5
3rd Constant	1.478
4th Constant	2.305
5th Constant	5.519***
R^2 (McKelvey and Zavorina's)	0.275
Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01	

Each of the experiment locations was entered in the model as dummy variables, except for Kulyab, the reference category. We used Kulyab as the reference category because of its distinctive characteristics: respondents in Kulyab, on average, agreed less with the statement, were among the most religious, were the least well-educated and reported the lowest levels of interest in following foreign affairs. The coefficients for the other locations can be interpreted as

indicating the difference between residing in that location and respondents in Kulyab.[13] Compared to those in Kulyab, respondents in all of the other locations were significantly more likely to agree with the statement when controlling for all other variables. This difference was statistically significant for every location except Khujand.

Across the locations, more educated respondents were more likely to disagree with the statement. The odds of agreeing with the statement are 43% smaller for respondents with a post-secondary education relative to their less-educated peers, holding all other variables constant. Similarly, those respondents who said they were familiar already with the content of the statement were also less likely to agree. Surprisingly, when controlling for all other variables, religious respondents were more likely to agree with the statement. However, these results should be interpreted cautiously because none of the individual-level control variables was statistically significant on its own, probably as a result of the small size of the sample.[14]

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[13] When using dummy variables as independent variables in a regression, one category (in this case, one location) must be the omitted reference category. The choice of references is at the discretion of the analyst and does not change the overall fit of the model. When a city other than Kulyab is used as a reference, the coefficient for Kulyab is large, negative and significant, but the other locations are not significantly different than the reference category.

[14] When this analysis is repeated without the experimental conditions and/or the locations, the signs of the coefficients of these demographic variables did not change. Similarly, omitting these variables from the analysis did not substantively change the estimated effects of the other independent variables, as the direction, size and significance of the coefficients barely changed (results available from the authors).

Table 2 Regression: Pre-discussion opinion of the US

DV= Index of four variables		
Independent Variables	Coeff,	
Experimental Conditions		
Bush	-0.567*	
Ambassador	-0.313	
Ordinary American	0.087	
No Attribution	-0.006	
Locations		
Bishkek	-0.55	
Osh	-0.389	
Dushanbe	-0.23	
Khujand	-0.499	
Frequency of discussion of foreign affairs	0.149	
Religiosity	0.019	
Age	0.020*	
Post-Secondary Educated	0.597**	
Quote reminds you of something heard before	-0.201*	
Constant	1.864**	
Adjusted R^2	0.12	
Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01		

2. *Opinion of the US*

Two regression analyses analyze opinion of the US (measured using the index of four questions described above) before the discussion (Table 2), and after the discussion (Table 3). When analyzing opinion towards the US before the discussion, we find one experimental effect: respondents who read the statement attributed to Bush supported the US by 0.564 fewer points compared to those who read the unattributed statement when controlling for religiosity, engagement in politics, age, education and prior familiarity with the statement. This result is consistent with the effect found in the previous analysis and the differences in average opinions across the conditions (see Figure 1).

Although the discussion leader or the location of the experiment should not influence pre-discussion opinion, we included the location as an independent variable because participants in each location had a common set of characteristics (described above, including geography). We use this dummy variable to capture the clustering of these characteristics in a study with a relatively small –n. Compared to Kulyab, there were no significant effects of location on pre-discussion opinion of the US. Instead, after controlling for location and experimental effects, we find that older respondents had a higher opinion of the US than younger respondents, and those who reported hearing the statement previously had a lower opinion of the US. Even though respondents with a post-secondary education were less likely to agree with the statement, all things being equal, they had a more favorable opinion of the US.

In Table 3, we analyze the same index of opinions towards the US based on questions asked after the discussion. In this regression, we are especially interested in understanding how the group discussion influenced the longevity of the opinions shaped by the frame. So, in this analysis, our independent variables include the dummies for each experimental condition and each location. Location captures the effect of any one discussion leader (one discussion leader led discussions in each location) and the group characteristics.

To capture dynamics of the group discussion, we also include the mean pre-discussion opinion of each group. This will tell us whether the average opinion of the group as a whole influenced individual opinions. A second variable is the standard deviation of the opinion for each group. A high standard deviation indicates that there was a wide range of opinions among the participants of the discussion group, while a low number reflects a consensus around the mean. We also include the pre-discussion opinion in this analysis to see whether those who initially expressed favorable opinions of the US continue to express favorable opinions. The

inclusion of this variable should also capture all variation stemming from exogenous sources of [pre-discussion] opinion, including the significant experimental result shown in Table 2 and the demographic variables included in that analysis.[15]

Recall that attributing the statement to Bush lowered opinion of the US in the pre-discussion analysis. If this effect completely dissipated, we would find a positive coefficient for that dummy variable, indicating that respondents in this treatment would "catch up" to respondents in the other treatments. Instead, the coefficient for only one experimental condition was much different than zero (the coefficient for those who read the quote attributed to the ambassador) and none were significant. This indicates that the effect of attributing the statement to Bush only influenced pre-discussion opinions, but that this effect was not completely undone during the discussion.

Consistent with our aggregate analysis, our regression analysis indicates that positive views of the US were durable. Holding all other variables constant, respondents with a favorable opinion of the US before the discussion also had a favorable post-discussion opinion of the US. For every point increase in pre-discussion favorability, post-discussion opinions rose by 0.572 points. Because this coefficient is less than one point, it indicates that those with the most favorable opinions tended to have a slightly less favorable opinion after the discussion compared to their peers. This result is consistent with the aggregate indicators that opinions were more in tune after the discussion.

Even after controlling for pre-discussion opinions, we find that the discussion did significantly change opinions. Respondents in groups with a more favorable average pre-discussion opinion of the US had a more positive post-discussion view of the US when

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[15] We re-ran this analysis with these exogenous demographic variables and found none of them to be significant

controlling for all other variables. However, respondents in groups with a wide range of opinions tended to have less favorable opinions of the US. For each point of standard deviation in group opinion, individual opinion of the US decreased by 0.420 points.

The group characteristics in each location also had a significant effect on opinion towards the US. Opinions of participants in Khujand were 0.740 points higher (more favorable towards the US) than those in Kulyab, even after controlling for each discussion group's characteristics and each individual's pre-discussion opinion. Respondents in the two Kyrgyz locations, Bishkek and Osh, also had a significantly better opinion of the US than those in Kulyab. The difference between Dushanbe and Kulyab, though, was not significant when holding all other variables constant.

Table 3: Regression analysis: post-discussion opinion of the US

DV= Index of four variables	
Independent variables	Coeff.
Experimental Conditions	
Bush	-0.01
Ambassador	0.237
Ordinary American	0.011
No Attribution	0.05
Locations	
Bishkek	0.409*
Osh	0.561**
Dushanbe	0.268
Khujand	0.740**
Discussion group's mean opinion of US	0.264**
Discussion group's standard deviation	-0.420*
Pre-discussion opinion of US	0.567**
Constant	0.465
Adjusted R^2	0.54
legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01	

and only slight changes in the size of the other coefficients. (These results are available from the authors.)

Conclusions and Implications

This study tested the effect of frames and source attribution in the context of "public diplomacy" efforts in majority-Muslim Central Asia. As expected, our sample population appeared to be ambivalent about the US and its foreign policy. In this environment, we expected to find that efforts to spread a positive message about the US would prove fruitful. The brief statement we showed study participants, though, did not seem to have a very large impact on their opinions. What did have an effect, though, was to whom the statement was attributed. The existing literature emphasizes the need for the source to be credible for a frame to be effective (Druckman 2001); we find that attributing the statement to President Bush, or even to the US Ambassador, caused respondents to be less receptive to the message. Thus, low source credibility may not merely cause individuals to discount a frame (in which case, we would see no change in receptiveness to the message compared to control); it may cause the frame to have an effect in the *opposite* direction.

Our data suggest several important conclusions related to framing and public diplomacy. First, the statement that depicted the US as a place of religious freedom and a good place to be a practicing Muslim, in and of itself, had little effect on subsequently expressed attitudes about the US. Expressed attitudes about the US among those who received the statement without attribution and among all those who received the statement (with varying attribution) either had lower opinions of the US or did *not* differ significantly from the control (which received no statement). At first blush, this suggests that a single message on one subject has little effect on overall opinion towards the U.S.

In the real world, however, every message has a messenger, whose identity influences how people receive the statement. The data suggest that varying the attribution of the statement

has an appreciable effect on expressed attitudes. First of all, those who received the statement attributed to President George W. Bush were significantly less likely to agree with the statement and had lower views of the US. We interpret this as confirmation that Bush's poor reputation in the region causes individuals to discount, and perhaps even call into question, the veracity of his statements.

By contrast, those who received the statement attributed to the Ambassador were more likely to agree with the statement. Although the effect could not be established as statistically significant, this finding suggests a greater willingness to accept the Ambassador's statements at face-value. Perhaps the Ambassador's relative credibility is related to his/her being viewed as non-partisan or his/her having already established visible contact with local population in-country. More study is required to tease out these possibilities and their possible significance.

Second, our data suggest that the Bush-source effect—clearly the most pronounced of any source effect we could discern—partially dissipates after participants have engaged in discussion. This is consistent with the broader literature (Mutz 2002; Druckman and Nelson 2003) that suggests that framing effects which are initially strong may weaken when individuals deliberate or discuss their views subsequently with others who have opposing viewpoints. Clearly, the effect of framing is up against other effects—in this case the effect of peer group dynamics. More work has to be done here, as well, to gauge the longevity of a framing effect in an environment where the US is in the news and a topic of conversation among friends.

Third, our post-discussion results suggest that peers had a rather large impact on opinions, especially relative to the source and framing effects. Individuals who discussed the US in a group that held relatively more positive views of the US prior to the conversation were predicted to have more positive post-discussion opinions of the US even when controlling for

their own pre-discussion opinion. There also was an overall shift in opinion in favor of the US after the discussion, which may have been partially the product of the personal views of the moderator (a local). However, those in groups that included individuals with a wide range of views tended to have dimmer views of the US at the end of the event. Future investigations might want to gauge the effectiveness of attributing a message to a fellow national (see Cialdini 2001)

What are the implications for public diplomacy? The study confirms that framers do not have *carte blanche* to manipulate a gullible public. Crucially, they are constrained by how credible they appear to be. The study confirms that in Central Asia, President Bush's poor reputation affects how individuals apprehend the US as a global and regional actor. The impact of the frame attributed to the Ambassador, while more tempered, nonetheless suggests that the consequences of Bush's poor reputation may outlast the change in administration in 2009. In short, it may be that negative views of US government officials—and therefore the limits to their capacity to engage in effective public diplomacy—may be an unfortunate legacy of recent years' developments.

Moreover, framers are not only constrained by their prior reputation; they are also constrained by the environment in which they deploy their frames.[16] For the purposes of streamlined presentation, this study assumed that only the United States is engaged in framing efforts. This simplification belies a more complex reality, in which foreign governments (China and Russia come to mind for the Central Asian region) and many societal actors are also active. Soft power (Nye 2004) is clearly not only available to the United States, as Hill (2006) reminds us about Russia's ongoing influence on post-Soviet space. Moreover, social groups constantly

propagate their images of global actors such as the United States in ways that may be inconsistent (as is often the case with Islamist actors) or generally consistent (as is often the case with human rights groups) with the preferred renderings of US public diplomats (Schatz n.d; McAdam 2007). To be effective, therefore, public diplomacy requires not just thoughtful repetition and accurate targeting; it requires attention to what "competitors" in the "marketplace of ideas" are attempting to "sell," how effective they are, what "market niches" they occupy, and what approaches to public diplomacy are therefore most likely to succeed.

A further aspect of the environment constrains framers. The brief quotation about one aspect of the United States—its commitment to religious pluralism—did not affect opinions in the direction desired by those who would deploy such a frame. By contrast, a wide-ranging discussion about the United States *did* appear to influence opinions; after the discussion, participants had more positive (if still ambivalent) views of the US. These results remind us that the US is a complex, multidimensional object, with an image that is complicated and drawn from a variety of positive and negative attributes. Any efforts at public diplomacy via framing should recognize that even the most positive, persuasive message must compete with a multitude of other pieces of information about the US. Such a positive message might be expected to temper animosity, but it should not be expected to erase inimical information or views.

Our study nonetheless gives us reasons to believe that public diplomacy—whatever its limitations—under circumstances might be effective. Variation in framing effects, source credibility and the changes in opinion as a result of the group discussion suggest the theoretical possibility of restoring the credibility of the US government and, therefore, of people who speak on its behalf. The fact that framing effects partially dissipated after discussion should be

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16 See Entman (2008) for an attempt to provide a conceptual framework for the empirical study of what he calls "mediated public diplomacy" in a complex environment.

interpreted in the context of the experiment. For analytic traction, we introduced only one statement. In the real world, a single, short-lived positive depiction of the US would likely drown in a sea of alternative images of the US; its effect would therefore likely be negligible. Thus, the lack of durable framing effects may be related to the fact that the participants were only exposed to the information once. If the advertisements of commercial products are any guide, to be durably effective public diplomacy would likely have to be deployed regularly, repeatedly, and with sensitivity to the background characteristics of the target population.

Finally, our study raises the intriguing possibility that wide-ranging discussions about the United States may be more effective in shifting opinions in a positive direction than framing efforts. Moreover, such a wide-ranging discussion may touch upon many aspects of the US; doing so may trigger a shift in attitude more effectively than a narrowly targeted frame could. More research is required to determine the efficacy of such discussions, not to mention their practical feasibility, as compared to narrow framing efforts.

In short, this study strongly suggests that, to be successful, framing efforts must consider source credibility, the impact of peers on people's opinions and the general environment in which the message is provided, since the framed message will not be the only source of information about the US.

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Appendix

Study, Design, and Description of Sample by Location

Country	Location	Group #	Num. People	% Female	Avg Age	Avg Q7	Avg Relig	% College Grad	Avg View US (pre-discussion)	Std. Dev. View US (pre-discussion
Kyrgyz	Bishkek	1	10	0.80	29	3.6	2.4	0.9	2.3	0.41
	Bishkek	2	9	0.33	28	3.8	1.9	1	2.7	1.3
	Bishkek	3	10	0.50	42	3.5	3	0.8	3.4	0.43
	Osh	4	12	0.33	30	2.8	2.2	0.67	2.4	0.98
	Osh	5	11	0.09	37	3.7	3.1	1	3.4	0.8
	Osh	6	9	0.11	34	3.7	2.9	0.22	2.7	0.92
Tajikistan	Kulyab	7	10	0.00	34	2.9	3.7	1	3.4	1.5
	Kulyab	8	10	0.00	32	2.5	3.2	0.1	2.4	0.62
	Dushanbe	9	11	0.18	30	3.1	3.3	0.91	3	0.96
	Dushanbe	10	8	0.63	28	3.5	2.8	1	2.9	0.76
	Khujand	11	10	0.40	32	2.9	3.2	1	3.4	0.78
	Khujand	12	11	0.00	28	3.5	4.4	0.64	2	0.78
Total			121	0.28	32	3.3	3	0.77	2.8	.98

Questionnaire Wording of Dependent Variables and Distribution of Responses

Did you agree with the statement?

	Percent
Not at all	8.51
Generally not	14.89
More not agree than agree	14.89
More agree than not agree	15.96
Agree in general	41.49
Agree completely	4.26

N = 94

The index of opinion towards the U.S.A. was comprised of the following four survey items:

	% Pre-Discussion Responses	% Post-Discussion Responses
A) Overall, your opinion about present-day U.S.A. is:		
1- Very negative	11.8	4.3
2- Mainly negative	26.1	22.2
3- Neutral	25.2	29.9
4- Mainly positive	23.5	30.8
5- Very positive	8.4	8.6
6- No opinion	5.0	4.3
N =	119	117
B) Do you think that the US:		
1-brings significantly more good than harm	10.2	6.9
2-brings more good than harm	16.9	25.9
3-brings as much good as harm	32.2	36.2
4-brings more harm than good	15.3	17.2
5-brings significantly more harm than good	14.4	6.0
6-no opinion	11.0	7.8
N =	118	116
C) Do you think that your country generally should support the US efforts?		
1 - no, this is a very bad idea	13.7	7.8
2 - generally this is a bad idea	19.7	19.8
3 - not sure whether this is a good idea	24.8	31.9
4 - generally this is a good idea	20.5	30.2
5 - yes, this is a very good idea	7.7	3.5
6 - no opinion	13.7	6.9
N =	117	116
D) In general, do you approve of the methods and means that the US uses?		
1-Yes, approve completely	6.0	2.6
2-Overall, approve	16.2	20.7
3-Rather approve than not	16.2	23.3
4-Rather not approve than approve	18.8	26.7
5-Categorically not approve	23.1	17.2
6-No opinion	19.7	9.5
N =	117	116

To assemble the index, all "no opinion" responses were dropped. The order of (B) "do you think…" and (D) "approve of the methods and means…" were reversed so that the scales ascended towards positive views of the U.S.A. Then the computer combined the four variables. When combining the pre-discussion responses, STATA calculated Cronbach's alpha (a standard measure of scale reliability) at 0.8 with an average interitem covariance of 0.74. The Cronbach's alpha for the post-discussion index was 0.82 with an average interitem covariance of 0.59.