



INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF DIPLOMACY
EDMUND A. WALSH SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

TALKING WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD: IS THE MESSAGE GETTING THROUGH?

Session Three of Three Sessions

Projecting a Positive American Image

JOHN DWYER
Coordinator for International
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U.S. Department of State

Dwyer emphasized two things: the event of 9/11, and the response—both diplomatic and personal—that the State Department has taken in the last several months.

On September 11, two officers started a new web page called, “The Response to Terrorism”, which included messages designed for the Muslim world; the page was the most visited issue-based site in the history of the Internet. It was also the most visited page in the ten-year history of IIP’s web site at the State Department.

Three to four weeks after 9/11, IIP started to create a new web site highlighting Muslim life in America. It describes how immigrants are integrated into the United States; it is updated daily and available in several languages. On November 9th, IIP produced the publication, “Network of Terrorism”. Although not widely circulated in the United States, more than 1.3 million copies were printed for distribution abroad, and well over 2 million additional copies were reproduced in other forms in the foreign media. The Italian magazine *Panorama* and the Arab magazine *Al Watan* both published it, and it appeared as a centerfold in 45,000 copies of *Newsweek*, which is circulated in 36 languages, including French, Spanish, Chinese, Swahili, Arabic, Turkish, and Japanese, among others. 7,000 copies were distributed directly to the members of the Jap-

anese diet, and, in Kazakhstan, the American ambassador hand-delivered several copies to the Kazakh heads of government.

This is not a white paper, or a government publication of that nature. IIP’s goal has always been to tell America’s story, and they did so with careful attention to pictures, the kind of language used, and the layout of the presentation. It took six weeks to complete the project: three to develop the story and three to find the pictures. The finished product is a fine piece of work done by true career professionals. It communicates a message that local embassies can reformat to fit the audiences of their particular countries; they intentionally left a few extra pages that local representatives could use at their discretion, e.g. the embassy in Germany distributed the publication along with pictures that German schoolchildren had drawn post-9/11.

Dwyer gave a few examples of other ways IIP is working to improve communication between America and the Middle East. They recently put live movies on their web site. Although many parts of the world lack high-speed Internet connections, more than 100,000 people downloaded the production.

Another major initiative links secondary schools in the Middle East with their American counterparts, expands the teaching of geography and social studies, and promotes an exchange of students and teachers between the two regions. Also, the Bureau of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs expanded the Fulbright Scholars program, English language teaching, and teacher training in the Middle East. Public Diplomacy officers work with local and state

governments, as well as national governments, and promote active sports and music exchanges to reach younger audiences.

In short, Dwyer said, “9/11 was a watershed—and we in the field of public diplomacy will never look at our job the same way again.”

MOUAFAC HARB

News Director

Voice of America’s Middle East Radio Network

Harb came wearing two hats—speaking to us both as a government employee and as a journalist. For four months, he has been involved in the development of the Middle East Radio Network (MERN), launched recently in Amman, Jordan; Kuwait; Abu Dhabi and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. He said that this effort had been discussed long before 9/11; it simply picked up steam after the tragedy, when people clearly saw the need for it.

Today, 60% of the Arab population is under the age of 30, and MERN wants to reach this audience. Whereas television is an art of programming, radio is an art of formatting—and so MERN is developing according to a young format. Their broadcast is built around two main tenants: news, and music—with both English and Arabic lyrics—broadcast without promotions. Three weeks ago, they started broadcasting sports and health, all done in a way that will attract active listeners. MERN realized that the Arab media consumer is often highly educated and skeptical, and that just broadcasting a presidential speech would not be enough to communicate its message. MERN’s style of broadcasting is modeled after successful radio stations in the United States, but since the Arab world is not ‘one-size-fits-all’; MERN realizes that it must tailor its broadcasts to the region. They use regional streams, similar to the system of national networks and local affiliates in the United States. They are projecting a very regional image, with DJ’s speaking in the local dialects. MERN wants people to sound local to attract local listeners.

Harb said that MERN is not in the business of making policy—only of reporting the news. However, because they are funded by the American taxpayers, they will make sure that people are listening to issues important to Americans. They ask themselves, is the story relevant? Do people care about it? Frequencies are also a very important element of the project—FM is much more desirable than AM, and they broadcast accordingly. MERN reporters go out and interview Arab people; one Arab leader

recently asked them, “What took you so long to do a project this?”

Harb then wanted to change hats and describe his personal views regarding the message the U.S. sends to the Arab world. “There is a reason why 9/11 happened, and it may not be that we are doing something wrong; it may be that we are simply not doing what is right. We once thought that, if we convinced the Arab world that Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda were responsible for the attacks, we would arouse anger toward terrorist organizations. In this, we have succeeded. Now, we must convince the Arab world that terrorism is morally unjustified, no matter what the situation—and in this, I do not think that we are doing enough.”

KENTON W. KEITH

Senior Vice President

Meridian International Center

Ambassador Keith expressed agreement with many comments made by his fellow panelists, and said that he would focus his remarks on Afghanistan and his recent tenure as Coalition spokesman in Islamabad. In that position he faced the world press on a daily basis. Most of the time, the world press was represented by CNN, but more than half of the press was usually Islamic. He did his best to reach out to that press.

Ambassador Keith saw his job in Islamabad as two fold:

First, the U.S. and the Coalition were “taking a beating” from Abdul Salam Zaeef, Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan, who was spreading lies and misinformation. There was no one on the scene to challenge him and go on record to counter his statements until Ambassador Keith was sent out.

Secondly, the message had to be delivered that we were not fighting a war against Islam. The Taliban insisted that our actions were not in response to September 11, but rather part of the longer and deeper war against Islam.

Looking at 9/11, the reactions throughout the world—including the Muslim world—were everything the U.S. could have hoped for. There was a real outpouring of sympathy for the American people. While many Americans saw a few moments of jubilant reaction on the West Bank, which, in retrospect, might have been mainly stock footage, none of the sympathetic reactions were shown, except in European coverage. Nevertheless, the reaction in the Middle East was very positive and very important.

After the Coalition military action began in October, the Taliban Ambassador had his heyday, making accusations of a war against Islam, pointing at what was happening in Iraq and Kashmir, charging indiscriminate bombing of civilians, and citing large numbers of American casualties and numbers of American bombers downed. But, the worst accusation was that there were vast numbers of innocent civilians indiscriminately killed.

An element of distrust of the U.S. colored everything. Interviews with Islamic journalists were all conditioned by a sense of an attack on Islam. This was the fundament of dealings with the Islamic press and continues today.

Has the U.S. succeeded with public diplomacy as we define it? On balance, there has been progress in limited ways:

We have made a strong case in establishing the culpability of Al Qaeda in the 9/11 attack.

We have established that the prosecution of the war has taken great care to spare innocent civilians and avoid civilian casualties. Journalists who have visited the front have come back impressed by that.

What are the lessons drawn from our experience in Pakistan and Afghanistan?

We have to show up and have the right public diplomacy resources. We can't continue to dismantle our public diplomacy resources as we have over the past years. While it is encouraging that the State Department is seeking additional resources, this should just be a first step as much more is needed.

There must be better coordination between civilian and military public diplomacy efforts. The military have much more money and are where the fighting is taking place. There should be coordination between what civilian practitioners know needs to be done and what the military practitioners have the resources to do.

We should seek and embrace coalition. The charge of unilateralism hurts us both in terms of public opinion and access to needed resources.

We must broaden and deepen the dialogue between Americans and Muslims. If there is to be a successful effort, it must be long-term. Even if there were to be policy changes, issues of poverty, humiliation, and Muslims' problems with their own governments would still exist. The dialogue needs a long-term commitment.

One of the most effective means of dialogue is through exchange programs, which must be expanded. The Administration should seek and Congress should fund major exchange initiatives between the U.S. and the Islamic world.

MR. RAMI G. KHOURI

**Jordan-based Syndicated Political Columnist
Nieman Fellow, Harvard University**

Mr. Khouri said that he has seen very few successes and many failures of U.S. public diplomacy in the Arab-Islamic world. He stated, however, that the real problem is not U.S. public diplomacy, but U.S. diplomacy and U.S. policies.

There are no simple solutions to the distrust between the United States and the Arab-Islamic world. American public diplomacy tends to see the world as a battle between Popeye and Bluto.

We must look at five distinct elements of the U.S. image in the Arab-Islamic world in order to find answers as to what we are doing wrong and what we are doing right. (Mr. Khouri noted that he uses "we" because he is a dual national; he is an American citizen, since he was born in the United States, as well as a Jordanian citizen and a Palestinian national.)

The first element is the impact of American foreign policy on the Arab-Islamic world over the last forty or fifty years. Most people in the Arab-Islamic world perceive the impact to be negative—cumulatively negative, continuously negative, and increasingly negative. Most Arab-Muslims feel that as a result of the U.S. government's direct and indirect actions in the Middle East, their living conditions have gotten worse, and their sense of dignity has been degraded. While some of these grievances are legitimate and others are not, it is imperative to come to grips with them, rather than sweeping them under the table. The United States' pro-Israeli tilt in the Arab-Israeli situation is one of the most powerful reasons why people are so critical of it.

The second element is American values, as practiced in the United States. Those who know American society have great admiration, respect, and awe for many aspects of it. Many feel angry, however, because American foreign policy often contradicts all that is great about the United States. Trying to tell the world about American values is a lost cause because there is nothing wrong with them; they are good values. Arab-Muslims know this; that is why they send their children to college here, immigrate here, and want to do business with Americans and buy American technologies. We need to understand the contradiction between the goodness of American values at home and the destructiveness and hypocrisy of policies that promote values abroad that are not American.

The third element is the substance and style of the U.S. message. The substance of the message is

defined by what the United States does. Americans and others say, “judge us by what we do and not by what we say.” That is what the world is doing; it is judging the United States by its actions and not by its rhetoric. Style is also critically important. U.S. administrations have talked in a style that is generally perceived to be arrogant and dictatorial, laying down ultimatums in a style that smacks of imperial arrogance—even when the United States is pursuing what appears to be a just cause, such as the elimination of terrorism. People have risen up against the arrogance and autocracy of their own governments; if the United States is going to communicate with a style and a substance that are both problematic, then anything the United States says is going to fall on deaf ears.

Fourth, we must examine the condition of the people to whom we are talking. The communication process includes the message, the messenger, and the person receiving the message. If the messenger and message are not credible, and if the people receiving the message live under difficult circumstances, the communications process falls apart. In the Arab-Islamic world, most of the people to whom we are sending messages live in distressed states and most are very vulnerable economically, politically, environmentally, and demographically. What they want to hear from us is a policy that implements the good values of the United States.

Finally, what the United States really needs to do is talk *with* the Islamic world and not *to* the Islamic world. There needs to be more dialogue rather than one party dictating to the other and the other, in retaliation, threatening the first.

Overall, there is a massive incongruence between the good values of the United States as practiced within the United States, the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, and the perception of America in the Arab-Islamic world. Thus, there is widespread opposition to U.S. policies; out of this opposition emerge small groups of terrorists who carry out criminal terrorist attacks against the United States. Furthermore, U.S. officials and the U.S. public react to this by misunderstanding the meaning of this cycle. For example, reading the Quran is not the way to learn about the Arab world. We need to learn nothing about Islam in order to figure out why people are attacking us. The condition of life of the people who live in Islamic societies is the problem, not the religion. People are asking the wrong questions like “Why do they hate us?” What we are getting is a grotesque, neo-colonial, neo-orientalist intellectual rampage across the mass media asking the

wrong questions about why people believe as they do in the Islamic world.

Where is the United States successful? The United States is most successful when Americans act as Americans—interacting in business, education, culture, music, and technology—all contexts that are far away from American foreign policy. What should we do? There are several answers: listen more carefully to what people are saying; engage them in a real dialogue; be more humble; understand that there are many shared values among our different cultures and address those shared values; practice what we preach; and look at the policy criticisms that the United States gets and see which policies can be changed. The single most effective way for the United States to change anti-American sentiments throughout the world is to promote the same values abroad as we promote in this country—practice what we preach.

MR. KARIM RASLAN

Malaysia-based Lawyer and Columnist

Islam is an enormously diverse civilization that incorporates many different communities. Raslan remarked that Americans have the idea that all Muslim states are backward and impoverished, but this is not the case in Malaysia. Malaysia is not a failed state. Malaysia is the largest trading nation in the Muslim world; it exports one hundred billion dollars worth of goods and services—2.5 times the amount of India. Furthermore, the GDP per capita is equivalent to that of Mexico and Brazil. If you go around in the rural areas, you do *not* see a dehumanized population. You see a population that has been given water, electricity, roads, and education. The government has been very successful in providing socio-economic services. Therefore, Islam does not mean backwardness and it does not mean failure. In the recent economic crisis of 1997, powered by the political destabilization when the trouble arose between Anwar Ibrahim, who was ousted by Prime Minister Mahathir, nobody died—even though there was an unprecedented degree of political turbulence. This shows that Muslim states can be orderly. Raslan remarks that the strict gun laws in Malaysia, whereby owning a single uncertified bullet can result in the death penalty, reinforce order and stability in the country.

Malaysia is also a country with a substantial number of non-Muslims—45% of the population. This creates its own tensions, and the non-Muslim population is, in many ways, the engine of

economic growth. In order to retain peace and stability, an understanding has had to be hammered out over the decades as to how rights and obligations are dealt with across the racial divide. This has required enormous efforts domestically. Overall, it has demanded engagement across a religious divide which is not Christian-Muslim, or Muslim-Jewish, but Muslim-Chinese-Malay. It is a completely different engagement that has been very successful. Often, in order to prevent an outburst of racial strife, this engagement has to go behind closed doors. Sometimes if you allow the “hotheads” and the charismatic political leaders to launch into ethnic accusations, before you know it, you have strife in the streets. Malaysia relies on strict internal security.

Before 9/11, the American government was incredibly critical of the Malaysian Internal Security Act because it allowed the Malaysian government to arrest people and detain them without charging them. Since 9/11, there has been a round of applause by the U.S. government about the Act saying “use it, and use it on every conservative extremist that you can find.” The hypocrisy is startling.

The rhetorical level on which President Bush and his speechwriters are operating suggests that they believe Bush can talk to Omaha, Nebraska one minute, and to the rest of the world the next—and the audience can decide the audience to which Bush is delivering. This idea is wrong. On CNN, every time the president does something, it is breaking news across the globe. If Bush is assuming global leadership, he has to take responsibility for his language, as do those who write for him. If Americans are really keen to improve their international image, they should either close down or retool CNN. There is nothing that causes more outrage in my part of the world than some of the coverage coming out of the predominately American-owned media. *Time* magazine released a recent issue with a map of Malaysia on the front saying, “the center of global terrorism.” It was such gross editorializing that even the State Department sent the FBI to the region to do a tour and apologize and say, “No, this is incorrect.” If any place is the center of global terrorism, it has to be the States and Germany, where most of the attackers organized. The people who staff the media have to learn that they do not have to be the flag carriers for the American way. They in themselves are undermining the credibility of the American way by doing this. U.S. journalists need to report the news and not attach themselves emotionally to an American agenda.

Finally, the United States is reluctant to engage with the Islamic conservatives. If you do not engage

the conservatives, how will you communicate your message? In Malaysia, many of the ideas of the elite have driven public policy, but that may not be the case forever. It behooves American foreign policy to reach out into the most conservative, religious communities—those who are in the majority in some countries—and talk to them and listen to them. Talk *with*; don’t tell.

DISCUSSION

Question Mr. Khouri, you mentioned that when Yassir Arafat says that he is willing to be a martyr, it is rhetorically akin to an American saying, “give me liberty or give me death.” We’ve heard the word martyrdom several times in the past few months. Can you please elaborate on the meaning of this term so that Americans can better understand its implications?

Khouri I am not an Islamic scholar, but the answer does not lie in Islam. This point is comparable to the civil rights movement in the United States. The answer did not lie in the Bible, only confidence lay in the Bible. The answer lay in human nature. Universally, people want to live in dignity and equality. People talk in these terms all over the world. People who have not found a civil societal, a diplomatic, or political way to achieve dignity and equality have turned to acceptable and unacceptable means of violence to achieve their ends. There is no one answer to your question. Usama bin-Laden and Yassir Arafat are not the same. Arafat is resisting the last colonial enterprise, and bin Laden should be charged as a criminal. You have to analyze these words in the vocabulary of human experience. The same way that Bush says ‘wanted dead or alive.’ You have to analyze language with depth and honesty.

Raslan In Malaysia we are familiar with suicide bombing, but it is not Arabs and Muslims. Look at the case of Sri Lanka. In Malaysia, there is an understanding about economic deficiencies. Pragmatic policies are where you will succeed.

Harb But there are three examples where there was a public diplomacy, and not a foreign policy, failure. (1) Iraq. The number one killer of Iraqis is the Iraqi regime. No one talked about it. When oil for food started, the official Arab world discovered the sufferings of the Iraqi people. It was a public diplomacy failure. (2) Muslims died in Bosnia, and USA went there to defend them. Chirac comes first in polls as the best foreign leader, yet France did little in Bosnia. Another public diplomacy failure. (3)

Martyrdom. Suicide bombing is a cult—a hip thing among young people. It is not caused only by poverty, evidenced by the well-off Saudi Arabian bombers of Sept. 11.

Keith Political Islamic groups like Al-Qaeda are extreme, but not a large number. Islam has been hijacked by political figures. Martyrdom has peer pressure to exacerbate the problem. In regard to Iraq, I've spoken to Arab leaders and they tell me that they know Saddam Hussein is bad, but, if they don't help the people of Iraq, they will be then be faced with a generation of Iraqis who will never reconcile themselves to their government.

Question Explaining America to the Muslim World is a problem, but explaining the Muslim world to Americans is even harder. Specifically to Ambassador Keith, are you reporting to the White House? They don't seem to be informed and seem to have marginalized the experts.

Keith In Islamabad there were reports from the White House, from State, but we were on receive more than send. Our goals were clear-cut from the beginning. Our job was not what the U.S. Ambassador's job to Islamabad was. She was there to keep the White House informed, and she and her staff did an excellent job.

Harb There is a brief from Public Diplomacy that goes to the White House everyday about situations in the Muslim world. It is read, and from time to time we see its direct effects. It is an active, two-way street.

Question What are your thoughts on what effect American popular culture can have in the region? How can we use it more effectively, or is it hopeless, and should we try other mediums. For example, popular culture in the form of jazz has been used as an effective diplomatic tool.

Dwyer It is clear that Charlotte Beers has been focused on reaching younger people ever since she started at State. Colin Powell has appeared on MTV worldwide, and there were audience debates both before and after the program. We will return to print magazines, which I unfortunately had to cut in 1994 due to budgetary reasons. Now we have a commitment for more money, and we're starting them up again. We want to reach an age group between 18-25/30 years old. American popular culture is the most powerful vehicle in the world. It is a new approach that evokes different meanings.

Harb We are trying to do exactly this. American popular culture dominates in the Arab World—we want to take advantage of it.

Khouri I think the best way is through meetings between Arab Muslims and Americans. Spend more money on exchange programs. I am concerned about trying to appeal to the youth, as it runs a high risk of demeaning people. A cultural veneer can be misunderstood. Do you want us to wear blue jeans and forget about public policy? The Voice of America is straightforward, but the Voice of America becomes overwhelmed by other Arab messages. Handle public diplomacy and popular culture with care. Most importantly, stop the contradictions between rhetoric and action. Send people to the Middle East. I can't think of any American tourists that have been threatened in a non-war situation. It is safe in Arab countries.

Harb But this is why we're changing the format of radio in the Arab World, and we will not do so in a condescending way.

Dwyer Appropriateness of message. We are addressing this, working hard to formulate this. We are talking to Muslim Arab-Americans, something that we never did before. If the U.S. government can't tell its own story, then we can't rely on others to do it for us. The government can do it best. And a lot of this has come to light and is related, now, to 9/11.

Audience Comment The situation is worse than you have presented it to be. Directly linked to that, there is a problem with the U.S. media and what it presents to Americans, especially on the Palestine/Israel conflict. There is utter one-sidedness and oversimplification. The ability of government personnel to tell the story is hampered by the mis-education of the public. Mis-education about the conflict does a grave disservice. The government has to say something.

Question To what extent is the official voice of the U.S. government hampered in the Arab World, if that voice is automatically discredited?

Khouri It varies in different circumstances. The government changed public policy in the Palestine/Israel conflict last month, which was better for Palestine. But it was not commented on in the Arab World. The move has been drowned out. It was, however, an amazing change, so it will positively affect American credibility.

Keith Credibility depends on the events. During the Gulf War it had high credibility, now less so.

Audience Comment I am an Arab who grew up in America and my life, according to general stereotypes, is full of contradictions. As an American Muslim I feel marginalized, however. We are afraid

of the homeland security issue, and we have to keep publicly proving our Americanness. We are afraid of

being labeled by stereotypes.

BIOGRAPHIES

JOHN DWYER

**Coordinator for International
Information Programs
U.S. Department of State**

John Dwyer has been the Coordinator of the Bureau of International Information Programs at the State Department since October 1999. His status is that of an Assistant Secretary of State within the Department.

His immediately previous assignment was that of Deputy Associate Director for Information at the United States Information Agency before it was consolidated into the Department of State. He is a career foreign service officer whose overseas assignments include Bolivia, Venezuela, Mexico, and three tours in Brazil. In the United States, he also had served as USIA's Director of the Press and Publications Division and as its Deputy Director for Latin America.

His professional recognitions include: the 2000 Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Public Diplomacy granted jointly by the Fletcher School, Tufts University, and the Department of State; the Department of State Superior Honor Award in 1998; and the 1996 USIA Equal Employment Opportunity Award. In 2000, Mr. Dwyer was chosen to attend the Seminar for Senior Managers in Government at the John F. Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University.

Previous to the Foreign Service, Mr. Dwyer was Assistant Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies in Spanish at Yale University, and the head of Latin American Intercultural Studies at Simon's Rock College, now part of Bard College. From 1985 to 1987, he was the Managing Director for Latin American Affairs at the Americas Society/Council of the Americas in New York City.

Dwyer received his B.A. from the University of Connecticut, an M.A., M. Phil. and Ph.D. from Yale University. He has lectured at numerous universities in the United States and throughout Latin America, and has published more than sixty articles in Europe, Latin America and the U.S. on various topics of U.S. and Latin American literature and culture. His publications also include a book of personal poetry published in Spain and the English translation "A Vida e a Morte de M. J. Gonzaga de Sa," a novel by Brazil's Lima Barreto. He has also served

on the editorial boards of "Review Magazine" in New York, and the "Foreign Service Journal" in Washington.

This summer John and his family transfer to Italy, where he will serve as Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs at the United States Embassy in Rome.

MOUAFAC HARB

New Director

Voice of America's Middle East Radio Network

Mouafac Harb, who was selected for the position of Director of Network News within the Voice of America's Middle East Radio Network (MERN), comes from the *Al Hayat* Arabic Daily Newspaper and *Newsweek* where he had over 12 years of journalistic experience, specializing in Middle East issues. He served as Washington Bureau Chief and Senior Editor of *Al Hayat*, a leading Arabic newspaper; General Manager of Radio and Television at the National Broadcasting Network in Lebanon; and Production Coordinator and Middle East Consultant for various organizations.

In his new position, Mr. Harb will serve as a Senior Advisor to the MERN Director and to the International Bureau of Broadcasting (IBB) and VOA senior management to develop plans for establishing the new Middle East Broadcasting Network. He will be responsible for providing accurate, comprehensive, objective news and information for radio, Internet, and possibly TV programming in Arabic and will oversee a staff of news writers, editors, correspondents, and producers in Washington, as well as stringers in areas of the U.S. and bureaus throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Mr. Harb has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Radio and Television from the George Washington University and has done graduate work in telecommunications and economics. Mr. Harb is fluent in the Arabic and French languages.

KENTON W. KEITH

Senior Vice President

Meridian International Center

Ambassador Keith assumed the duties of Senior Vice President of Meridian International Center in late 1997 after a career as a Foreign Service Officer

with the United State Information Agency. His primary responsibility at Meridian is management of the professional exchanges activities associated with the State Department's International Visitor Program. He retired from USIA with the rank of Career Minister.

At the time of his retirement, Ambassador Keith was Director of USIA's Office of North African, Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, managing field operations, public diplomacy activities and budget for the Agency's largest geographical bureau.

From 1992 to 1995 he served as Ambassador to the State of Qatar. Previous assignments were Counselor for Press and Cultural Affairs in Cairo, Senior Cultural Affairs Officer in Paris and various posts in the Near East and Brazil. In 1996 Ambassador Keith served as USIA representative to the inter-agency planning team charged with designing the reorganization of foreign affairs agencies.

Ambassador Keith has received two Presidential meritorious service awards and various individual and group superior and meritorious honor awards, including one for his work at the 1991 Middle East peace conference in Madrid. He is a Chevalier in the French Order of Arts and Letters, an honor conferred by the French government in recognition of his contribution to cultural and educational exchange between France and the U.S.

Ambassador Keith serves as chair of the Alliance for International Cultural and Educational Exchange. He is currently president of the Association of Black American Ambassadors.

Kenton Keith was appointed the Department of State's Special Envoy to Islamabad from November 2001 to January 2002 to set up and direct the Coalition Information Center in Pakistan and to serve as the spokesperson on Coalition activity in Afghanistan. This included briefing world media on developments in the military, political and humanitarian objectives of Coalition nations in the conflict against international terrorism following the attacks on the United States in September 2001.

A native of Kansas City, Missouri, Keith is a graduate of the University of Kansas with a major in International Relations. Ambassador Keith served as an officer in the U.S. Navy from 1961 to 1965. He is married to the former Mireille Luc and has two grown children.

RAMI G. KHOURI

**Jordan-based Syndicated Political Columnist
Nieman Fellow, Harvard University**

Rami George Khouri is a Palestinian-Jordanian and U.S. citizen whose family resides in Amman and Nazareth. He is spending this academic year as a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University and is a member of the Brookings Institution Task Force on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World. He is an internationally syndicated political columnist; book author; host of Encounter, a weekly current affairs talk show on Jordan Television; general manager and co-owner of Al Kutba, Publishers, in Amman, Jordan (Al Kutba was the Nabataean goddess of the scribes); writer and presenter of Jordan Ancient Cultures, a weekly archaeology program on Radio Jordan; and consultant to the Jordanian tourism ministry on biblical archaeological sites. He is a Senior Associate at the Global Affairs Institute, Maxwell School, Syracuse University (NY, USA); Fellow of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (Jerusalem); and Associate Fellow of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (Amman, Jordan).

Mr. Khouri was editor-in-chief of the Jordan Times for seven years, and wrote for many years from Amman for leading international publications, including the Financial Times, the Boston Globe and the Washington Post. He often comments on Middle East issues in the international media, including the BBC, U.S. National Public Radio, CNN, and others, and lectures frequently at conferences and universities throughout the world. He is the chief umpire for Little League baseball in Jordan.

He has BA and MSc degrees respectively in political science and mass communications from Syracuse University, is married to Ellen Kettaneh, and has two boys at university in the USA.

MARJORIE RANSOM

**Project Director, ISD
Panel Moderator**

Marjorie Ransom's career of 30 years brought her to the rank of Career Minister, the second highest in the Foreign Service.

She served throughout her career in the U.S. Information Agency, specializing in cultural exchange, press, and education. A Middle East specialist and Arabic speaker, she served as the first female officer in Amman, Jordan in 1963 and sub-

sequently headed Public Affairs sections in the American Embassies of Sanaa, Yemen; Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; Damascus, Syria, and Cairo, Egypt—the last a section so large it exceeded many embassies in size.

In 1995–1997, she served a second tour in Damascus, Syria in a key State Department job, that of Deputy Chief of Mission, the number two job in the Embassy. During that time there were seven trips by the Secretary of State in a valiant but unsuccessful quest for a peace agreement between Israel and Syria.

From 1997 to 2000, she was the Director of the Department's three foreign press centers in Washington, New York and Los Angeles. In that capacity, she led the U.S. government effort to inform foreign journalists in the U.S. and through them large foreign audiences abroad about U.S. policy, society and institutions.

With her husband, also a Foreign Service Officer, she pioneered in tandem assignments, serving with him (a State Department political officer) in the same embassies three times. The overlap and difference in their interests made for a rich family life for their three daughters, now all graduated from college and launched in careers of their own.

In November 2000, Ms. Ransom retired from the Department of State to devote more time to her family and to her extensive personal interests: U.S. public diplomacy towards the Middle East, researching, cataloguing and documenting her considerable collection of the folk silver jewelry of the Middle East and Central Asia and volunteer activities in prison ministry and mentoring a District of Columbia public school student.

KARIM RASLAN **Malaysia-based Lawyer and Columnist**

Karim Raslan is a thirty-eight year old Cambridge University educated lawyer and author.

He is a Founding Partner of Raslan Loong—one of Malaysia's leading corporate law firms. With six partners and twenty—five associates, Raslan Loong specializes in banking, corporate finance, capital

markets, insolvency, restructuring and information technology work. Raslan Loong has acted for countless leading multinational clients including Credit Suisse First Boston, Citicorp, ABN Amro and AIG.

He is also the author of *Ceritalah: Malaysia in Transition* which has been described by Nobel Laureate, Sir V.S. Naipaul as “educated and elegant” and *Heroes and Other stories*. *Ceritalah* has been reprinted four times and *Heroes* twice since their initial publication in 1996.

His weekly syndicated column *Writers Journal* is published by *The Business Times* (Singapore), *The Star* (Malaysia), *Sin Chew Jit Poh* (Malaysia), *The Jakarta Post*, *The Nation* (Bangkok), *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), *Ming Pao* (Hong Kong) and *Sydney Morning Herald*. Over one and a half million people across the Asia-Pacific read his column every week.

He is on the International Council of the Asia Society, New York. He has spoken at countless high-level conferences (including the recent World Economic Forum in New York). He has been quoted extensively in the international media—including *Le Monde*, *Les Echos*, *NRC Handelsblatt*, *The Financial Times*, *TIME*, *NEWSWEEK*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Boston Globe*.

He also contributes opinion pieces on Asia-Pacific and Islamic Affairs for both regional and international newspapers, magazines (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, *The International Herald Tribune*), TV (*CNN*, *CNBC*) and radio.

He has recently been a Fulbright Scholar at Columbia University, New York from November 2001 until February 2002. He has been working on a project entitled “Freedom of Expression in Islamic Societies”.

On his return to Malaysia he will be launching his third book *Ceritalah 2: Southeast Asian Journeys* in Spring 2002 and his first novel *Desire* in Fall 2002. *Desire* is the first volume of an anticipated Quartet tracking the lives of a Malay Muslim family from the 1930s to the present day. His short stories have been published in the leading British literary journals, *Granta* and *Wasafiri* and anthologized by Penguin.