

U.S. CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: THE IMPACT OF
THE MEPI PROGRAM ON YOUTH POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

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This research analyzes youth political involvement and civic engagement in the Middle East and North African (MENA) regions and the impact of the U.S. -Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) cultural exchange programs on MENA-U.S. relations after September 11, 2001. Specifically, this study will examine how such programs shape mutual understanding between the U.S. and the countries of the MENA region. The study is informed by the researcher's direct experience through the MEPI program in Leadership, Civic Activism and Citizenship at Georgetown University in 2007. This study also analyzes the impact of leadership styles, conflict resolution and group dynamics, political and social change initiatives, and the role of civil society in democratic processes in the MENA region.

This thesis also surveys the cultural exchange experiences of several young people from the MENA region through demonstrating the MEPI program's development, and analyzing the planning and design of different activities included in the program since its inception in 2002. Participants from five MENA countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and Lebanon) responded to a targeted online survey regarding the relationship between interest in political and civic engagement and the citizen uprisings in any of the five target countries before and after their participation in the program.

One of the key findings of this study clearly correlates with Edward Said's theory of Orientalism; studying the MEPI program, using textual analysis, highlights clear implications of superiority and dominance from the host culture, in this case the United States. In addition to the theoretical

outcomes of this research, the results also demonstrate that participation in the MEPI program is likely to increase interest in political issues among participants after they return to their home countries, particularly with younger participants. Gender, on the other hand, does not seem to affect the rate of political involvement among participants upon their cultural exchange experience.

Finally, this thesis calls for more interdisciplinary research on the impact of U.S. cultural diplomacy in the MENA region, particularly in the area of youth political and civic engagement.

To my loving parents, Mechehoud Rabah and Lobza Souad, who always encouraged and believed
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Being from the Middle East and North African (MENA) region allows for a different perspective in examining and interpreting U.S. soft power strategies in the MENA region through an American Cultural Studies lens. This unique perspective also allows a fresh voice to evaluate their impact and implications. Cultural exchange programs are an excellent case study site to examine the way cultural diplomacy reflects different perspectives, how the exchange experience impacts the participants, and to help explain outcomes and conclusions from a different point of view than that made by U.S. policy makers.

Although I have always been interested in examining the effect of U.S. cultural exchange programs on participants from the MENA region, this project officially started in October 2015, when I watched a video that went viral online. The video was posted by Lebanese activists to highlight some of the *You Stink* movement updates; the organization that led the 2015-2016 protests in Lebanon¹. The video featured one of the organization's founders and one of the most famous activists in the movement being arrested by the authorities in the middle of the protests, and people reacting to the ensuing scene. Following the significant impact of the *You Stink* Movement, a Lebanese electronic magazine *مناضاحية* (*Mena al-Dahya* / from the Southern Suburb) published an article in which they investigated the background and the origins of the founders and the creators of the *You Stink* movement. The article stressed a conspiracy ideology to explain and understand the protests and Arab Spring events in Lebanon and the region as a whole. Pointing at the United States as a main suspect for destabilizing the security of the country, the article also profiled the founder of the movement and his educational history. In addition to the profile of the activist, the magazine also profiled the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), a program that was introduced as part of the second Bush administration's

policy toward the region. Linking the activist's name to a program he was involved with as a student implies a direct accusation of double standards and distrust toward such policies and initiatives, which is not very surprising if you are from the MENA region. (The MENA countries are generally defined as follows: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen.)

Campaigns organized by *You Stink* and other movements in Lebanon do not seem organized so far, but they are all planned for sure...it seems that these are the same tactics used by the various relevant U.S. organizations to promote regime change. It is also estimated that the media coverage of this current moves paid, and this is part of the overall strategy. لحظة تأنيق الانشظي ح لية
 "طعري ضلكم" بلع عني ان²

Reading about this incident was one of the main motivations to initiate this research, and to examine the impact of such policies on the political engagement of the participants after they return to their home countries.

In reporting wars and conflicts, military policies usually take greater share of coverage comparing to other forms of powers, since the formers are more likely to cause immediate change and influence. Likewise, U.S. diplomacy post 9/11 took strong military approach that the second Bush's administration government had adopted. With the Iraq war taking place two years after the events, U.S. diplomacy policy seemed to focus on making instantaneous changes on the world's geopolitical map, mainly because the U.S. policies were more a propaganda for the war than a call for support to the country's decision to go to war (Melissen⁵⁷). Nevertheless, that aggressive approach itself has generated significant reasons to discuss U.S. foreign policy strategies in the world and throughout history especially when tested by major events like 9/11.

Therefore, soft power advocates should stimulate more research and policies to get better answers about what happened on September 11, and why it is essential to encourage changes in

foreign policy toward the Middle East and North Africa with the aim of empowering mutual understanding between the dominant cultures of the MENA countries and U.S., respectively. In fact, since 9/11, the American government has invested resources to open and maintain discourses between the U.S. and the Arab/Muslim world in general (Douglas and Neal 1). With that said, it is equally important for researchers to continue to examine soft power strategies, and provide updated feedback and criticism.

In December 2002, Colin Powell, the U.S. Secretary of State, announced the creation of the Middle East Partnership Initiative program, known widely by its acronym, MEPI. The announcement was part of his speech in front of the Heritage Foundation on December 12, 2002 (“The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative”). The MEPI program—as described by the Congress Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia Hearing Report in March 2003—was created “to bridge the freedom gap, the economic gap, and the education gap in the Arab world” (“Middle East Partnership Initiative” 2). MEPI officially started in the summer of 2003 with an initial budget of \$29 million USD and the intention of a higher budget for the following year (“The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative”). By 2005, MEPI had “spent its first \$100 million on programs that targeted Arab’s government agencies and employees including bureaucrats, teachers, parliamentarians, and judges” (Albright et al. 37). In fact, MEPI can be considered one of the first documented cultural diplomacy programs that have been established in reaction to the 9/11 attacks and that is still in operation.

MEPI and MENA Youth

The establishment of the MEPI program served as an attempt to introduce young people from the Middle East and North Africa to American society and the American way of life, and in return, to give Americans an opportunity to learn more about the Arabic/Islamic culture from the region's future generations. For almost thirteen years, MEPI has been bringing a yearly group of approximately 120 young undergraduates from different countries in the Middle East and North Africa to the United States, called the "Student Leaders Program" (SLP). The program operates on the local and regional level in the MENA region to stimulate change in different aspects of life within four fundamental pillars: political governance and participation, economic liberalization and opportunity, educational quality and access, and the empowerment of women. ("The Middle East Partnership Initiative Story").

The program conducts a competitive selection process that includes various aspects of the applicants' educational, professional, and personal lives. Besides the educational status requirements (participants must be undergraduate students), MEPI has initiated some other eligibility conditions for those interested in joining the SLP program. Qualifications include a record of high academic achievement, English-language proficiency, and age restrictions (between 18 and 24 years old). These candidates must be students and committed to civic engagement through the SLP. Additionally, candidates who have prior experience in the United States would be ineligible to apply. After meeting the requirements mentioned above, selected candidates are invited to participate in an interview as part of the second phase of the selection process, usually conducted by the American embassies in each country. The Public Affairs Office in conjunction with the local MEPI Coordinator/Administrator directs the MEPI recruitment process ("Student Leaders Program").

Divided into groups, the participants are assigned to one of the six universities affiliated with the program: Benedictine University (Illinois), the University of Delaware, Georgetown University (Washington, D.C.), Montana State University, Roger Williams University (Rhode Island), and Portland State University (Oregon) which joined the program recently, in 2012("U.S. Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative"). Each group spends six weeks participating in extensive cultural and leadership programs, where participants take classes on topics including the American political system, women's role in American society, and the American values of freedom of speech, volunteerism, and community service. Additionally, they engage physical culture by visiting many of the historical and cultural monuments in the country. Participants follow a one-month leadership training where they develop small projects to implement in their countries. The program also organizes follow-up conferences, usually held in one of the countries in the region a few months after the completion of the program, where "host institutes work with participants to implement civic engagement programs in their home communities." ("Student Leaders Program"). These conferences usually work as an opportunity to enhance the networking process between the students and the program's officers, as well as between the participants themselves.

Since the creation of the MEPI program in 2002, only a few researchers have examined the program (Salime; Wittes) or reported on cultural and professional exchanges funded through the program (Lengel; Cassara; El Bour and Azouz). Moreover, fewer scholars focused on the program's political perspective (Alterman; Wittes and Youngs). The experience of being a former MEPI program participant myself, at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, in 2007, inspired and informed the motivation to develop this research. Moreover, the significant

political and social changes that started in the MENA region since the Arab Spring in 2010 and 2011 require generating a discussion about the effects of U.S. cultural diplomacy in the region.

Changes in Political Infrastructures and Leadership

Since the explosions of riots and protests in late 2010, the Middle East and the North Africa region have experienced substantial changes in its political infrastructures, institutions, and the leadership likewise. Specifically, the region was heavily affected by the recent Arabic revolutions that exploded in various countries around the region that took down Zine El Abedine regime in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt, and later Gadhafi and Abdullah Salih in Libya and Yemen. In fact, on the one hand, these uprisings are the first significant movements of change in the region since European Colonialism in 19th and 20th Century; on the other hand, most of the MEPI program's assessment and analysis studies are dated before the revolutions. Thus, it is important to examine the aspects of American Cultural diplomacy programs and policies such MEPI in reflections to such significant changes in the region. Therefore, this study focuses specifically on the cultural dimensions of the so-called war on terror through conducting a case study of the Middle East Partnership Initiative program, focusing only on the political aspect of the program. This research examines the effect of the MEPI experience on the political interests and behavior of its former participants in Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and Lebanon. A survey is conducted from former MEPI participants, to examine the various changes in their behaviors and attitudes concerning the political life of their societies after the recent socio-political shifts in the Middle East and North Africa.

In order to examine the MEPI program after the 2010 uprisings in different countries within the MENA region lead by the Tunisian Revolution in 2011, it is critical to encourage research perspectives toward American diplomacy that specifically address cultural exchange

policies directed at the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The proposed study will give a different perspective of U.S. cultural diplomacy in the MENA region because it aims to examine the cultural exchange experiences of young people from the region in the United States through demonstrating the program's development and analyzing the planning and design of different activities included within its schedule in the past ten years. Five specific countries are targeted within my research: Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and Lebanon. Tunisia and Egypt were chosen to represent the first countries that were part of the Arab Spring in addition to Algeria and Morocco as examples of later uprisings. In fact, various articles have discussed the Algerian and Moroccan situation within the revolution movements around the Middle East, not only for anticipated protests in the two countries, but also to understand why the Arab Spring could not make it to both Algeria and Morocco³. Finally, Lebanon, which is arguably on its way to revolt, especially with the recent uprisings in August 2015 where protestors shouted similar slogans that were used during the Arab Spring. Obviously, the Arab Spring was a great inspiration for young Lebanese to call for change in their country. The central insight expected by the end of this study is the relation between the development of interest in political and civic engagement and the emergence or not of revolutions in the five countries studied.

Overview of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy in the MENA

Although the scope of this research does not allow a discussion of the history of cultural diplomacy in detail, it is important to present an overview of the concept, which, although it is not a new one, has become a critical element in contemporary international relations. The term *cultural diplomacy* means the exchange of ideas, values, and cultural traditions of two or more communities, countries, or cultures, as identified by the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy ICD⁴. Such exchanges serve as tools to create mutual understanding, promote a certain culture, or even

demonize another culture. Therefore, cultural diplomacy policies gained massive importance after the First World War and even more critical role by the end of the second one. Accordingly, it is inevitable to spotlight the U.S. cultural diplomacy when discussing public diplomacies and international relations in general, particularly due to the major role of the United States in the World Wars, especially the Second World War. However, focusing on the U.S. experience does not necessarily mean it is an ideal example, but mainly because the world as we know it today has been profoundly affected by the U.S. cultural policies.

Nevertheless, cultural diplomacy has been at the heart of American politics since the creation of the Republic, which is documented on various occasions throughout the history of the country. Thus, seeking cultural understanding between the United States and other nations is not necessarily a contemporary political policy. In fact, the archived lives of the founding fathers include numerous examples about the importance of cultural exchange and coexistence between different communities. In a letter to James Madison, dated 1785, Thomas Jefferson wrote “I am an enthusiast in the subject of the arts...as its object is to improve the taste of my countrymen, to increase their reputation, to reconcile to them the respect of the world and produce them its praise” (qtd. in Melissen 147). Similarly, U.S. political leadership has kept offering examples that showed the critical value of cultural exchanges within the U.S. foreign policy approaches. For instance, during the Buenos Aires Special Conference for the Maintenance of Peace in 1936⁵, President Franklin Roosevelt emphasized the need for “faith in the western world... [for] wider distribution of culture, of education, of thought, and of free expression” (qtd. in Hart 16). Cultural diplomacy policies and tools are usually assorted with soft power theories and philosophies because they aim to sell cultures and ideas. Additionally, the end of WWII marked a critical variation in the world’s ideologies and perplexities; with the Cold War at the heart of

that shift, the United States certainly played a significant role in outlining and designing the concepts, characteristics, rules, and the new order of the international arena. One of the most important approaches polished during the post-WWII era has been the concept of Soft Power, although the term itself was not used until Joseph Nye first coined it in 1990 (Snow and Taylor 3). Soft power strategies used after the Second World War mainly intended to win allies in the Cold War. As the country that came out of the Cold War leading the world, the United States needed more ideological allies than a traditional economic or military support. Thus, the American soft power embraces the idea of driving the other willingly to embrace the American values, the way of life, and culture. There is no doubt that the Cold War enriched the American soft power policy, not only due to the socio-economic and political race against the Soviet Union but also because the new role of the U.S. in the world enforced the necessity to develop and strengthen the cultural diplomacy policies toward various regions in the world.

The War on Terror and the Power of Culture: A Second Cold War?

Despite the clear implication of hard power policies in the 9/11 event and its aftermath, either by the aggressive nature of the events or by the military intervention in the Middle East a few years later, the events September 11, 2001, initiated a sort of second Cold War for the United States. Such comparisons would not be accurate until the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which led to the rise of hatred and opposition to the country's political decisions. In fact, the international community (and the United States, in particular) could find abundant examples from the 1960's Cold War history which would enrich the War on Terror's policies: "it was during the Cold War that America harnessed the power of culture as the stealth weapon against the US's enemy... Cold War cultural diplomacy contains valuable lessons for today's challenges" (Melissen 151-52).

Consequently, similar to the post-WWII and Cold War eras, the contemporary War on Terror developed the need to learn, educate, exchange cultures with the people responsible for the attacks, the people that change the history, politics, and international relations of the world in the 21st Century. Therefore, in addition to the military interventions in the region starting with Afghanistan in 2001, and the Iraq war later in 2003, cultural communications as well as Military considerations have shaped the United States' policy in the Middle East in the post-9/11 period. The educational and cultural exchange opportunities sponsored by the American government have mainly illustrated such cultural communications. Labeling these policies as cultural communications indicates a different framework for developing such programs other than that the United States is seeking mutual understanding, dialogue, and peaceful co-existence; which is the typical description of such cultural or educational exchange program created by the U.S. government.

The 9/11 events marked a noticeable change in focus on U.S. cultural diplomacy in the Middle East. A vast amount of literature was published in the aftermath of 9/11 to investigate the expected strategies of United States government in the Middle East, to explain the necessity to understand the culture, and the life of people there. However, the effect of the military interventions of the United States in the MENA region had overcome the efforts to either cover, improve, or consider the importance of the role of cultural diplomacy in explaining the circumstances of the 9/11 attacks. In fact, it is surprising that studies have given little attention to cultural diplomacy in reacting to the 9/11 events, considering that similar policy proved useful in past, particularly during the Cold War. In fact, cultural diplomacy was one of the primary strategies of the country at that time (Melissen 148). Thus, this research is specifically focusing

on the post-9/11 cultural diplomacy since it is examining a cultural exchange program that is sponsored by the U.S. State Department and directed at the Middle East and North Africa.

The Arab Spring on the Global Political Map

After 9/11, scholarship on the MENA region focused more on analyzing and understanding diplomacy toward the region. However, the surprising waves of revolutions in the MENA region that took place in some countries of the region and threatening other ones are definitely changing the political map in the world. Taking MEPI as an example, in the light of the new socio-political shifts in the region, will help undertake this new dimension in studying U.S. diplomacy in the MENA region. Mainly because the program has been given little attention when considering the changing policy of the United States toward the MENA region after the attacks of 9/11, although the program is literally one of the very first steps taken throughout this policy process.

The idea of MEPI is closely tied to civil society in the Arab World. It was designed to work in close collaboration with elements of change within those societies as Colin Powell explained in his first speech about MEPI: "We will work with parents and educators to bridge the knowledge gap with better schools and more opportunities for higher education" (Colin Powell statement, "The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative"). Thus, the program's goal is to provide knowledge and experience to young people from the Middle East and North Africa through tying them directly to public and private sectors in their countries to help develop the various fields of life in their societies. Specifically, the program's goal is to develop participant knowledge of global economics, politics and all aspects of civic society. Another major characteristic of MEPI is Leadership: the program's design focuses on choosing potential leaders from the region with a goal of developing their skills, knowledge, and background through the art of leadership.

Moreover, the geographical framework of MEPI is an interesting element in identifying the distinctive aspects of this program. The program serves only the Arabic countries in the region and Israel. The program's geographical framework is essential in analyzing the importance of the program because the concerned countries share a closely similar history, religion, culture, language, and even problems and challenges within their country of origin.

My Position as a Researcher

It is important for each researcher to recognize his/her position toward the conducted research study, and to examine both advantages and disadvantages of whatever status a researcher chooses to take. There two primary statuses, an insider and an outsider;⁶ or “those who choose to study a group to which they belong, [vs. those who] do not belong to the group under study (qtd. in Breen 1). Many scholars choose to do research in areas related to their personal experience, especially if these studies are related to cultural interactions.

Being a MENA citizen (Algeria-North Africa) and a MEPI Alumna (Georgetown University, 2007) surely works as a double-sided sword for the conduction of this study. I argue that being an insider resource, either concerning the geographical area or as a participant of the program network itself, offers an additional perspective in analyzing literature provided about the topic. In fact, one the most important advantages of conducting research as an insider is having better understanding of culture or cultural circumstances of the subject matter (Bonner and Tolhurst 8). With that said, this study aims to apply a different perspective, as a female Arab scholar and a former MEPI participant to, first, the analysis and the assessment of the MEPI program, and second, to the understanding of the U.S. soft power policy in the Middle East and North Africa.

Aims of the Study and Research Questions

The MEPI program focuses on four-dimensional areas: (1) political governance and participation, (2) economic liberalization and opportunity, (3) educational quality and access, and (4) the empowerment of women." ("The Middle East Partnership Initiative Story"). However, this study focuses only on the first dimension, the political aspect of the program, through examining the relations between the program's promotion of democracy and the developing interests related to youth civic engagement in the Middle East and North Africa. Therefore, this research is not an assessment of the MEPI program as a whole, but is rather an insight into one of the four pillars of the program, the political pillar. This study aims to review the implementation of the political goals of the MEPI program in light of the new uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, to what extent MEPI policies reflected the U.S. political intentions behind the program, and how participants position themselves in relation to political issues in their communities. Divided into two parts, this study looks first at MEPI-related documents published by various governmental sources, including the U.S. Department of State Online Archives, the Congressional Accountability Office, Congressional Research Services, and the Yearly Federal Budget Reports. For the second part, I conducted an online survey among former MEPI participants from the five target countries.

The first part of the study, or the textual analysis, is aimed at developing an analysis of the MEPI program, its creation, development, impact, and what goals it has besides Cultural Exchange and mutual understanding by examining the program design, promoting, and implementation. Furthermore, to what extent are MEPI's creators, officials, and promoters emphasizing the political pillar within the various spheres of the program, and how does the concept of Orientalism fit within these spheres? This thesis also presents an overview of MEPI's

budget based on annual reports submitted at different congressional hearings, and questions the reasons behind the persistence and the continuity of the program.

The conducted survey's purpose was to examine the effect of the MEPI program on the participants, and their political behavior within their communities upon their return from the United States. How does the program influence their interests in the political life of their countries after their MEPI experience, and to what extent do MEPI participants express intentions to play an active political role in their societies? Moreover, how do the participants' interests in more political engagements within their communities differ from one country to another, and how does it fit into the Arab Spring framework? Therefore, including the Arab Spring events in the stream of the study not only enriches the resources and scope of analysis within the research but also seeks to incorporate and understand the extent to which the recent uprisings in the Middle East could be influenced by such U.S. cultural exchange programs directed to the MENA region. In addition, the survey is designed to help to understand the participants' attitudes toward change based on where are they originally from in the region.

Developing answers to these issues will first require a different perspective in studying the MEPI program, through combining both the theoretical design of the program and its practical effect among the participants, particularly the political pillar. Integrating data for a final analysis of this study will provide an essential foundation for future research about the program, and most importantly, about the Arab Spring countries and the fast changes occurring within their communities.

Research Questions

1. What are the core basics of the MEPI program design, and how does the program emphasize the political pillar in its implementation and development?

2. How are the participants' interests in the political life of their countries influenced by their MEPI experience?
3. To what extent do MEPI participants express intentions to play an active political role in their societies?
4. How do the participants' interests in more political engagements within their communities differ from one country to another, and how does it fit into the Arab Spring framework?
5. What factors affect the level of engagement among participants?

Limitations

This study examines only the political implementation of the program in the MENA region by reviewing overall progress in the different countries of the area since its creation in 2002. However, the survey conducted is surveying participants from five countries only: Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Lebanon. The research's conclusions then will be limited to this geographical area. The reason behind choosing only these five countries is simply their roles in the Arab Spring. Thus, this study first examines Tunisia and Egypt, two countries that witnessed revolutions and radical political change. Next, it examines Algeria and Morocco, two countries that escaped the Arab Spring, yet, still suffer from political instabilities and serves as potential targets of uprising. Finally, this paper will examine Lebanon as an example of a country that might be on the verge of a revolution or political change, especially after the recent youth riots in August, 2015.

Moreover, the participants in this study are all former MEPI participants from Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, or Lebanon, they represent both male and female participants, and they are all 18 years of age or older. While this may or may not represent the whole of the targeted population, most surveys and polls usually have similar limitations. Female participants may not

fully represent the actual situation of women in the political field in all countries; this is mainly due to the social construction of communities in the region, as women are much less likely to develop political skills or behaviors because of the social rules imposed on female behavior in general. Finally, the data available about the program's progress, projects, and statistics are limited and they do not necessarily reflect the importance of the overall program itself. Additionally, due to privacy and confidentiality issues at the State Department level, it was difficult to access and collect new data from the cultural officers and the public diplomacy team responsible for the program, although they showed interest in helping to develop a research study about the MEPI program.

Summary

In the Michael Cox article, *"Paradigm Shifts and 9/11: International Relations after the Twin Towers,"* Cox argues that the danger of 9/11 was never the collapse of the buildings; the real danger was rather what followed with regard to the powerful American reaction, or what he described as "the biggest U.S. military buildup in over 20 years," in regard to the Afghanistan war, the Iraq war and various military and financial sources dedicated in the U.S. War on Terror (Par 1). In fact, soon after 9/11, the world realized that the international relations would go through drastic changes at various levels: politically, diplomatically, culturally, and even individually, especially with President George W. Bush's famous policy of "if you are not with us, you are against us." ("CNN.com 'You Are Either with Us or Against Us'") Nevertheless, in the middle of the tension between the United States and the Muslim World after the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. government adopted a number of cultural dialogues and mutual understanding initiatives that helped revive America's soft power strategies. One of the very first initiatives introduced only a few months after the attacks, and the subject of this research, was a cultural exchange

program called the *Middle East Partnership Initiative* or *MEPI*. This study examines the MEPI program as part of the U.S. cultural diplomacy in the greater MENA region. It mainly investigates the program's political pillar and effects on youth political involvement and civic engagements in their local communities. The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the topic of this research and examine its historical, theoretical frameworks. It also laid down the research questions, methodology, and main resources used throughout the study. Finally, this chapter discussed possible limitations and drawbacks that would occur throughout the stages of the study.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Literature about U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa is vast and remarkable, especially after 9/11 and the recognition of the importance of a cultural understanding of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA region) for U.S. foreign policy. It has become clear that Americans must learn about Muslim culture and beliefs, and put in solid action policies to help facilitate mutual understanding between the two cultures, probably starting with President G. W. Bush asking ‘*why they hate us?*’ during his address to a joint session of Congress on September 21, 2001 ("Washingtonpost.com"). Although this question did not necessarily mean, at the time, to call for learning about and understanding the culture in the MENA region, it shaped great part of reactions to the 9/11 events. In *9/11 Culture*, Jeffrey Melnick described how the question ‘*why they hate us?*’ was repeated incessantly in the weeks after 9/11 in newspapers, speeches and nearly any other American public forum imaginable (8). Therefore, policies have shifted to include people from the MENA region rather than engaging their governments and politicians (Bryson 3). The Middle East Partnership Initiative program embodies an outstanding example of engaging the people of the MENA region because it has been created to reach young students and leaders throughout the region, as youth participation will always become a crucial element in any effort that equates to change within any society.

Despite the large number of topics covered in explaining, interpreting, and evaluating the U.S. policies in the Middle East, the MEPI program has generally been overlooked in academia. In fact, scholars usually articulate difficulties along any attempt to assess or evaluate exchange programs. The U.S. State Department expresses that there are various obstacles in “establishing

direct causal links between public diplomacy programs and results” (“State Department Expands Efforts” 24). However, the program attracts a considerable number of young people from the MENA region (around 120 individuals each year) and has been operational since its creation in 2002 after the 9/11 attacks. Thus, because so little scholarly attention has been paid to this area, more research and studies should be developed to look at the impact of the MEPI program, especially with the emergence of Arab Spring movements within the region.

In reviewing the literature related to American cultural diplomacy and the MEPI program in the MENA region, this research moves from studying governmental documents, which have been published either in the State Department official online archives or through congressional committees, offices, and centers, to examining the assessments of MEPI that have been conducted since the creation of the program. In addition, the review will look at the countries subject of study, by presenting a short overview of the political situation and changes in each country over the last decade.

Government Documents

Since very little research has examined the MEPI program in detail, the State Department’s releases and records are essential to interpret the program’s design, goals, and policies. In fact, the U.S. State Department website offers an archival library for all fact sheets and speeches related to the MEPI program. An important observation can be made from going through the speeches and fact sheets provided, and that is the clear indication of the political perspective of the program. For instance, in the announcement speech of the MEPI program in 2002, Secretary Colin L. Powell stated that a “shortage of economic opportunities is a ticket to despair. Combined with rigid political systems, it is a dangerous brew indeed. So, along with freer economies, many of the people of the Middle East need a stronger political voice (“The

U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative”). On March 19, 2003, during the MEPI’s hearing before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia, the program creators chose to justify the budget’s request by claiming their goal as “establishing a free and fair electoral process”(“Middle East Partnership Initiative” 2). MEPI’s creators explained that the program aimed to educate voters, along with candidates, by strengthening political parties. Five years after the creation of MEPI, the State Department goals were more vocal concerning the program; in the fact sheet issued in May 2008, the Bureau of Public Affairs emphasized that it was necessary for the United States to provide full support to the communities calling for reform in the MENA region. Additionally, the information sheet stated that the MEPI program invested more than \$480 million to assist reforms in the region, funds primarily given to Non-governmental organizations (NGO’s). Also, they describe the focus areas of MEPI in the region where improving political processes and developing reform advocacy are at the top of these discussions (“Student Leaders Program”).

Moreover, the sub-committee’s hearings (like the 2003 hearing on the Middle East and Central Asia, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office’s report on foreign assistance to the MENA region in 2005) provide overviews of the program’s financial support and its effects within the region since its creation. These reports also reflect the criticism directed at the program’s policies and strategy of implementation since they provide a detailed description of the program, its goals, strategies, and its flaws. Another Government Accountability Office (GAO) report revealed that by 2005, MEPI had had projects in most of the countries in the MENA region, with the exception of Libya, West Bank, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, which would become a very active area in the following years of the project’s life (The Middle East Partnership Offers Tools for Supporting Reform” 7). These reports questioned

MEPI accountability again, as far as political reforms are concerned, about stating that no particular change occurred in the political field in any of the countries where the MEPI operates. On the other hand, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports in the same year that MEPI “represents a philosophical commitment to ensure that future U.S. economic aid encourages social, political, and economic reforms in the Arab countries” (Sharp 3).

Evaluation and Assessment of the MEPI Program

Overall, there are few analytical studies about the MEPI program, and fewer that assess its political perspective. For instance, although it is outdated, an article titled “The Greater Middle East and Reform in the Bush Administration's Ideological Imagination” by Donna J. Stewart in 2005 offered a significant analysis that looks at the political impact of the program. Stewart's ideological vision also focuses on the political pillar of the MEPI program and assesses its political based reforms. Although Stewart admits it was too early to assess the program's effect, she critically questions the effectiveness of the small projects and grants offered to the participants. Through her interpretation of the U.S. policy in the region, Stewart doubts the policy had as great an impact, in general, as the administration claimed. Also, congressional reports suggest little effect of the program in the political arena in the MENA region. For example, The Congressional Research Service Report to the Congress in February, 2005, indicated that MEPI will not motivate any political change in the region in a short time, due to the small scale grants the program offers the narrow projects participants undertake, and therefore it “will require patience and persistence from U.S. policymaker” (Sharp 6). Such analysis, though accurate to a far extent, is usually one-sided from a cultural perspective. Theoretically speaking, MEPI works on a subtle and narrow perspective in the region, yet examining the scope of the program's impact from a Middle Eastern view, not an American one,

may introduce a different perspective in measuring the effect of MEPI and probably similar policies.

Further studies, such as Alterman's 'The False Promise of the Arab Liberalism' in 2004, insist on the narrowed impact of the MEPI program either in shaking civic society or in increasing the possibility of change in the region. Alterman argues-probably very early - only one year after the establishment of the program -although it has a noble mission, the program could or had not reached a significant sector of the Arab civil society so quickly (83). Similarly, and in a considerably later study "The Middle East Partnership Initiative: Progress, Problems, and Prospects," by Tamara Wittes and Sarah Yerkes, the authors emphasized the importance of supporting MEPI programming with various policy tools for it to become more influential in shaping American policy in the region. The financial element continued to describe the academic interpretation of the MEPI program, only this time in a larger examination of the policy through Dalacoura's analysis "U.S. Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East since 11 September 2001: A Critique," in 2005. Dalacoura evoked a critical analysis of the U.S. policy in the MENA region in general, including MEPI as part of this review, again focusing on the declining budget and alliances with countries in the MENA region that more or less contradicts the assistance idea that the U.S. government is selling the MEPI and similar policies. What is especially interesting about Dalacoura's work is the detailed description of U.S. policies in different countries. The study was before the Arab Spring yet focused on some of the countries that would be at the heart of the revolutions movements in the region later on, like Egypt (977-78).

Other studies have looked at the program through a neoliberal perspective -"Securing the Market, Pacifying Civil Society, Empowering Women: The Middle East Partnership Initiative," by Zakia Salime, for example. Salime's article discussed the MEPI's legitimacy when dealing

with civil society, and offered an analysis of the program by questioning the assumptions behind the MEPI's focus on "civil society" and "women's empowerment," and its significance to neoliberal regimes of pacification and securitization. Salime ended the study with questioning the ability of civic agents to advocate for a richer political life in the region while remaining under oppressive regimes (743). Salime's inquiry, though asked before the Arab Spring movements began in the region, has unlocked the central question in this research. Would the Arab Spring inspire youth in the region to act, and to be more vocal toward the political situation in their own communities? Can political involvement become more visible within the civic societies throughout the MENA region?

Some analysts like Lorne Craner, the Assistant Secretary in The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor from 2001 to 2004 ("Biography: Lorne W Craner") used a positive tone in discussing the political future of the region. Craner's position during the second Bush's administration was to implement the Administration's general approach toward democratizing in the Middle East ("Biography: Lorne W Craner"). Therefore, his work expressed an optimistic opinion about a possible change in the region, specifically using examples from Egypt parliament elections in 2005, and opposition participation caused by the former regime (Craner). In his article "Will U.S. Democratization Policy Work?" published in Summer, 2009, in the *Middle East Quarterly*, Craner used the MEPI program as an example to illustrate U.S. goals for political change in the region by questioning U.S. policy for promoting democracy in the Middle East.

Ultimately, the various studies alternate between justifying and criticizing: justifying poor performance due to budget insufficiency or criticizing poor performance despite the high budget provided. Thus, it is clear that the budget is a major issue when looking at the outcome

and the impact of the MEPI program and its policies, especially when considering that the program offers a full financial support to bring the participants to the United States. Since the countries targeted are developing countries, known for having low average income for individuals, it is almost always difficult for participants to acquire the necessary financial funding for participation. Therefore, money is one of the strongest assets of MEPI; because it can literally change the lives of young people who would never be able to afford such an opportunity and get introduced to American culture, values, and way of life.

Works such “The Greater Middle East and Reform in the Bush Administration's Ideological Imagination” provided both criticism and justification for political impact of MEPI in the region. Dona J. Stewart criticized what she termed a failure in dealing to address a “democracy deficit,” claiming that the program administrators gave a little commitment to the political pillars of the program’s foundation. Stewart’s work also questioned the significant difference in the budgets offered to other policies in the region compared to the MEPI. However, Stewart, along with the majority of the reviewed studies, argued that the region would need decades to actually witness a political change or reform. Moreover, various literature questioned the possibility of any change in the MENA region and doubted that the MEPI program would have much impact on the political life there. Even later works such *Uncharted Journey: Promoting Democracy in the Middle East*, by Maria Ottaway in 2010, discussed the problem of credibility in promoting democracy through the MEPI program. Although Ottaway looked at the program through the view of some of the concerned countries, she highly doubted that the impact of the program would be strong unless a much higher budget would be provided for such opportunities (Carothers and Ottaway 183).

Furthermore, other scholarship has discussed various contradictions with programs like the MEPI, particularly after the Arab Spring, taking into consideration the alliance between the United States and the ousted regimes. One of the most common critics for the policies and programs that the United States established in the MENA region after the 9/11 attacks is the fact that the U.S. has always been an ally to the governments and regimes in the home countries of the participants in such programs. In fact, this change in the tone and form of policies toward the Arab world, in general, worried the region's governments and regimes. "Initiatives such as the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)... caused significant concern among Washington's regional allies, most notably in Cairo and Riyadh, who had to be reassured by senior administration officials that they were to be 'partners' in this policy rather than targets"(Kitchen 54). Thus, looking at the stagnation of the political environment in those countries, such programs and policies would hardly build trust with the participants, mainly due to the strong alliance between the United States and many of governments in the region.

Later evaluations of the MEPI signal a positive change in design and impact of the program. In *Democracy Promotion under Obama: Lessons from the Middle East Partnership Initiative*, after three years from her first assessment of the program, Wittes joined Masloski to offer a follow-up analysis to the program. Masloski and Wittes's work reported changes in the MEPI program's impact with a parallel emphasis on the political in the region. They particularly looked at Egypt's and Lebanon's parliament elections as an example of how MEPI helped training civil society officers and worked as a demonstrator for the benefit of integrating democracy promotion in the U.S. foreign policy. Masloski and Wittes argued that by 2009, the MEPI program had developed a more coherent, deliberate strategy, and more efficient implementation mechanisms: first, in building a network of Arab democracy activists who were

willing to accept American assistance, and second, in improving integration of democracy promotion in U.S. diplomacy in the MENA region (8).

However, the explosion of the Arab Spring in some countries in the MENA region has marked a significant change in the contemporary political map of the region, and it has also represented a critical challenge to the American policy makers to adjust to the new circumstances without losing alliances with both governments and people in the region. A review of the literature published during and in the aftermath of the Arab Spring shows a slight deviation in analyzing and discussing the MEPI program. A new research paradigm has emerged for studies related to Middle East history or U.S. policy in the region. Scholars did not necessarily link the revolution movements to the MEPI program or even to U.S. policy in general, but literature focused slightly more on politics, highlighting more the political pillar of the program, in addition to the strategies the program uses to fulfill the political goals of MEPI and its impact in the region. For example, in *“The Arab Spring: U.S. Democracy Promotion in Egypt,”* Snider and Faris emphasize only the political roles of the MEPI program when they discuss the Arab Spring and the U.S. democracy promotion in Egypt. The study is not centered on MEPI, yet it is interesting to notice the path scholars start to take within the new circumstances in the region. Although the article criticizes the American intervention in Egypt’s reform movements, the MEPI program still serves as an example to argue that U.S. assistance through such programs strengthens the political skills of the younger generations in Egypt.

Moreover, the State Department’s announcements and press releases also gave additional weight to the political pillar of the MEPI program through news around the region after the Arab Spring. For instance, in Washington, D.C. and in a daily press briefing, the MEPI announced that the program funded the National Democratic Institute to provide electoral observers to serve

during the 2012 Algerian legislative elections. (“Algeria-Election Monitors”). Additionally, “in 2012, and after a recently unstable situation Bahrain, the Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative announced \$555,000 funds for projects in Bahrain and Lebanon to 1. Strengthen...Civil Society Organizations; 2. Enhance Alumni Skills to Seize Opportunities for Civic Engagements; 3. Maintain and Strengthen Relationships with MEPI Alumni; and 4. Encourage MEPI Network Alumni to Remain Active in Civic Life” (“Announcement Modified for \$550,000 Funding for MEPI Alumni Network”). In Tunisia, the program’s office announced the launching of 214 new projects in the entire MENA region, with a focus on the countries that had or were experiencing democratic changes (“MEPI Launches 214 New Projects in 2012”). By April 2012, the program also announced the creation of local chapters in most of the MENA region’s countries to “provide alumni with opportunities to hone their advocacy skills, link up with other regional alumni, and find ways to become involved in their communities as volunteers, leaders, and reformers” (“MEPI Expands Alumni Network”).

Furthermore, also in 2012, the program announced a ten-week training program for civic activists and reformers, taught in Arabic (“Leaders for Democracy Arabic Program”). Leader for Democracy Training has been a very important step in the MEPI journey within the MENA region. First, because it takes place in an Arabic country (Lebanon), and second, it brings the program one-step closer to societies in the region as it cooperates with the American University of Beirut, and some civil society organizations. Such an opportunity could be interpreted as an important achievement of the program since it includes young people from the region. Also, it reveals the program’s recent emphasis on motivating political reform and promoting civic engagements (“Leaders for Democracy Arabic Program”). The various deviations and focus on the political pillar of the program were the primary motivation for this research, with a desire to

question the candidates' political involvement and the extent to which the program would motivate participants' political interests in their communities. Therefore, it is important to use the Arab uprisings to draw major connections for how scholars view such programs within the emergence of change movements throughout the region.

Overview of Targeted Countries Civic and Political Participation

Larbi Sadiki, a Tunisian writer, political scientist, and former scholar of the Carnegie Middle East Center, described the political status of the Middle East in the period from 1998-2008 by writing that "this period is momentous for democratization in the Arab Middle East... Elections are now everywhere but democracy nowhere. Elections are ubiquitous. But democracy is still awaited" (Sadiki 60-61). Sadiki's statement represents the general feeling within the Arab World for many years now, a kind of mutual feeling that links both governments and people. On one hand, governments need to show some change in their systems and strategies, but on the other hand, people need to see the much more crucial transformation in their political life to adhere to democracy in their part of the world. However, this research does not discuss political systems in the MENA region, yet, it looks at the development and transformation of civil society within the targeted countries in this study.

In *Arab Elites, Negotiating the Politics of Change*, Volker Perthes put together a series of very interesting articles from local writers which discuss politics of change in the Middle East, and also present a short historical overview of some countries - including all five countries targeted in this research. Although the book is somewhat obsolete, it serves as an important initial background to outline the major highlights of politics and civil society in the region, as well as the published literature specific for each country.

Tunisia

The 2010-2011 uprisings in Tunisia did not just change the history of the country, but also changed the rules of the political life all-over the region. Young people in Tunisia have been a great inspiration to their peers in other Arabic countries. Prior to 2011, Tunisia had two presidents for more than twenty years, but after the uprisings ended in 2011, the role of President has changed four times in less than five years. Such turnover is a clear reflection of the massive changes happening in the country since Mohamed El Bouazizi man set himself on fire in front of governmental headquarters in late 2010 (الشريب) ⁷. A 27 years old street seller from Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia who felt humiliated after being harassed by municipal officials in his town ("Mohamed Bouazizi: Tunisian Street Vendor and Protestor") ⁸.

For more than twenty years, Ben Ali and his family ruled the economic, social, and political life in Tunisia, and led the country to an extremely low standard of living and an increasingly dire economic situation, which is, unfortunately, not very different from other countries in the MENA region. Tunisia adopted Republicanism as their system of government and relied on the one-party state to operate (King 73). These kinds of governments usually lead to oppression of public freedoms and little to no public participation in political decisions within the country. In the Tunisian case, most of the civil society activities before the revolutions revolved around advocating against political prisoners and torture ("الكعنفية بن س- دور الامم المتحدة في") ⁹.

In fact, former temporary President Monsif Marzouki ¹⁰, discussed this in his book *The Twenty-First Century, century of Arabs Revolution*, and stated the harsh circumstances that he faced with fellow civic activists in standing against the Ben Ali regime (لامرزوقي) ¹¹. Another example of the complicated political life within the Tunisian Society is the *Tunisian Human Rights League* (*Al Rabita Al Wataniya li Defaa an Hokouk El Insaan OR Ligue tunisienne des*

droits de L Homme LTDH)¹², which has been legally unable to hold any conferences since 2005. However, analysts and observers of the region's history would consider Tunisian civil society stronger than its counterpart in other countries in the region, since it has more tolerant youth engagement, and holds distinctive gender laws¹³ and more liberal women's rights than other Arab countries (Angrist 551).

Despite their many limitations, Tunisian civil society managed to build a structure that launched the first flames of the Arab Spring. In 2006, Tunisian civil activists managed to bring together more than 18 opposition movements for discussion and conversation including the Islamist's movements, which "played a fundamental role in reducing distrust between ideological poles in the opposition they were included" (Angrist 558).

Similar to the Egyptian example, religion has also been characterized as part of the people's perspective of a post-revolution in Tunisia. The *Ennahda* movement (Renaissance), which is an Islamist political movement in Tunisia, won the elections after being legalized as a political party and ruled the country for two years before creating a coalition government and announcing the government resignation in 2014 (Angrist 562). Returning to Sarkissian's study about the relation between religion and political life in Muslim countries, religion seems to represent the immediate alternative of old authoritarian regimes in the region, which indicates inquiries about the causes of such choices. Although one might argue that Islamists in Tunisia are different from those in Egypt, a different interpretation of why choosing a religion to shake political life either in Tunisia, Egypt, and other countries in the region can be derived from Maalouf's concept of "Arabs indulgence toward terrorism" in *Disordered World* (xiii). Maalouf argues that people in the Arab World showed sympathy toward terrorist acts because they no longer tolerate oppression of their freedom. Therefore, if people would consider terrorism just

because it stands against their regimes in a way or the other, then probably they would not mind an Islamist government.

Egypt

Egypt has always been one of the most important strategic powers in the MENA region, not only to its Arabic neighbors, but to the rest of the world as well. The country adopted the Republican government and political system after the 1952 revolution, when the Free Officer Movement put King Farouk out of power, restored governance to the country, and declared Muhammad Naguib the first president of Egypt¹⁴(Marsot 126). A review of the history of the Republic in Egypt suggests that the descendant government should be more of an advocate for the values of democracy as a concept since its first revolutionary movement led by the Free Officers fought for representation and sought a voice for those who did not have one. Nevertheless, civil life in Egypt has experienced harsh restrictions, which is in fact not very different from other Arabic countries, either those targeted in this study or the rest of the region. A few years after the 1952 revolution, precisely in 1958, the government under Nasser's rule issued in emergency law that continued to rule the country for decades until it was discontinued in 2012. (”القانون 162 لسنة 1958 الم عرفي قانون الطوارئ”) ¹⁵ However, the civil society in Egypt has managed to pave its way through these difficult circumstances, and they helped fuel the revolution in January 2011.

Scholars who studied civil societies in the MENA region often considered religion as main variable to measure the development of civic engagement in these societies (Sarkissian 608). Although such an argument does not necessary mean that religion is the absolute motivation for all political and civic development in the region, it implies that religion does play a crucial role in the ideology needed to overthrow the (generally) similar structure of government

and life in these countries. In fact, Ani Sarkissian, an associate professor of Political Sciences at Michigan State University, presented a thorough analysis of this topic, featuring Egypt in various examples through the article “Religion and Civic Engagement in Muslim Countries” Sarkissian’s findings suggest that Islamic organizations attract a greater number of people who engage in civic activities (607). Regardless of the extent to which such findings would fit the Egyptian example, religious groups like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt are one of the main reasons for emergency laws in the country. From Nasser’s presidency, when he declared the party as a major adversary of the country’s future, to Mubarak’s presidency that lasted thirty years; Mubarak’s presidency saw a higher level of oppression, and the regime structured a much more restricted everyday political and civil life for Egyptians. Stagnation became the main characteristic of most political proceedings within their society.

The main and most substantial political movement that has attracted support from various groups and parties in Egypt was the *Kefaya*¹⁶ movement (*Enough*). Created in 2004, *Kefaya* set grounds for a brand new era in Egyptian political history through its first demonstrations on May 12, 2004, since it represented the first openly anti-Mubarak protests¹⁷ in Egypt (لأمعاطي 1939). Another influential group in the development of the political life has been *The 6 April* movement, created by youth activists within the workers strikes in 2008. The movement received massive criticism and even treason allegations, since its creators were mainly young people who are thought to be brainwashed by Western values and principles (لأمعاطي 1940).

Moreover, political life and civic engagement evolved to its ultimate form during the 2011 uprisings when the people found themselves obliged to form and organize a self-defense mechanism while facing major chaos throughout the country; this led to the emergence of what

Jennifer Ann Bremer called an ‘Authentic Civic Activism’ (Bermer 70). Youth movements and groups who organized the protests in January 2011 did not face Mubarak alone, but they ended up fighting his allies, journalists, intellectuals and even public figures, hence, creating a sense of belonging and unity within these young Egyptians (Bermer; Carrillo, Welsh, and Zaki). This helped unify people from different backgrounds together under a common cause, which allowed Egyptian society to witness, for the first time in a very long time, a substantial political involvement from the youngest factions of their population.

Youth political engagement certainly played a major role after the revolution and during the Presidency of Morsi, and it was able to maintain a certain level of influence on civil society and opinion in Egypt. This influence led to a military coup against Morsi’s regime and brought back the military system to the rule in a new, edited form. However, some public figures, intellectuals and politicians in Egypt would argue that the situation did not change in the country as far as political freedom and youth engagement is concerned. For instance, the latest Human Rights Watch report¹⁸ regarding Egypt reported cases of police brutality, security force abuses, due process violations, and mass death sentences (“Egypt”). Even the presidential elections did not represent a complete model of the principles of the 2011 revolution since there was no actual competence between the candidates, and General El-Sisi was the obvious winner. Although it is still too soon to evaluate the changes in the political life within Egyptian society, some scholars claim that the new system in the country does not provide high hopes for democratization of the country. For instance, Sowers demonstrated in “Activism and Political Economy in the New–Old Egypt” that the regime has not actually show any signs of change and innovation comparing to the old one. “Arbitrarily freezing funds and closing down charities and clinics of numerous organizations...the April 6 movement was banned in the spring of 2014...the al-Sisi

government's return to old scripts that offer little progress on political or economic inclusion” (Sowers 140).

Lebanon

Lebanon though one of smallest countries in the MENA region, has witnessed a series of tensions and conflicts over the last decades that have represented significant milestones in the history of the region. Lebanon is a Parliamentary Democratic Republic ("Overview of the Lebanese System Presidency of the Republic of Lebanon") that has 18 recognized religious sects and 7 different major political parties ("Things to Know about Lebanon's Government"). Therefore, this is a small geographic territory with significant social, cultural, political, and religious variations rooted the origins of the country's sectarianism¹⁹(Salamey 14).

The Civil War that began in 1975 signifies a major element in shaping and developing the government and politics in Lebanon. For 16 years, the war obliterated the people's right to change the government granted by the country's constitution, however, it also triggered the civil society in the country which served as an alternative for a strong central government ("Politics in Lebanon: Government"). Although such crucial challenges that faced the Lebanese civil society during the civil war would suggest a fully flourished present for the civil community in Lebanon, scholars like Antwan Masarrah suggested that the end of the war decreased the activity of the civil society in the country just like it fueled it at the beginning of the war. By the end of the war, the government was gradually being restored, people went back to relying on the government for various things, and motivations for maintaining their strong civil foundation disappeared (Masarrah 59).

However, the Lebanese experience in the field of civil resistance and activism is still considered as a quite developed version of civil societies in the MENA region. For instance, in

“The Development of Civil Society in Lebanon from the Ottoman Empire to the XXIst Century: A Driver of Political Changes?” Geoffrey d’Aspremont argued that the 2005-2006²⁰ instabilities in the country demonstrated the role of civil society organizations in shaping a political identity for the country away from religious or military influence. Organizations such as the Association for a Civil Action (APAC) (Association Pour une Action Civile) and the Al-Mouwatin (The Citizen)²¹, d’Aspremont suggests, played an important role in “promoting the role of civil society to demonstrate national unity and resistance to Israeli aggression, campaigning for the organization of municipal election in 2005”(d’Aspremont).

When the Arab Spring exploded throughout the region in 2011, Lebanon was not an exception. Protests started in the streets of Beirut and other Lebanese cities and towns, each calling for political and economic reforms. What made Lebanon’s protests unique was the people’s call to demolish the sectarian system that was established in the 1940’s. No substantial results came out of the 2011 protests, probably because of Lebanon’s unique situation (when compared to the other countries of the Arab Spring). Ayman Nabil, a Yemeni Scholar and writer, discussed this uniqueness in an article published on the Aljazeera website, titled “The Environment and Future of the Protest Movement in Lebanon”. Nabil emphasized the difficulty of comparing Lebanon to the rest of the countries’ region, arguing that neither the society nor the historical background of the country back the idea of an Arab Spring as it exploded and spread in 2011 (Nabil).

In “Lebanon Leads the Way: Forget the Arab Spring - Here Comes the Real Arab Uprising!”, Catherine Shakdam presents a slightly different view of the political movement and civil society in Lebanon in relation to the (2015) severe uprisings in Beirut following the waste crisis in the country. Shakdam suggested the possibility of an Arab Spring in the country, and

various news commentators and analysis adopted similar opinion at the time. The causes and issues that sparked the 2015 have not been solved yet, and the mood on the Lebanese streets has been moving from calm to angry throughout the past year. Will we witness another revolution in the region? Will it put an end to a sectarian system that has been legislated since the French occupation of the country?

The overarching political ideology and civil culture in Lebanon are different from the other countries that are the subject of this research, and different among countries of the region in general, by its religious diversity and state absence. The 1975 Civil War contributed in developing the foundations and tools of civic activism, while the Arab Spring did not add a sustainable level of change to the country.

Algeria

Algeria also has a Republican political system that is based on a one-party system, which is the political system demonstrated by the current governing party, *The National Liberation Front* (*Jabhat Tahrir El-Watani OR Front de Libération Nationale, FLN*). The ability to freely participate in political movements in Algeria is more restricted than its counterparts, Tunisia and Egypt, mainly because of the Algerian Civil War from 1990-2000, (or what the Algerians call the *Black Decades*), and the announcement of emergency law since 1992. As a result, people of the everyday Algerian civil society are relatively less experienced politically than many of their counterparts throughout the region. Algeria enacted its Emergency Law after the instability in the country during the 1990's, which remained in action until its repeal in 2011 as a reaction to the Arab Spring protests ("Algeria Repeals Emergency Law").

There are few, if any, detailed sources about the development of the Civic engagement policies in Algeria, as most reports are, at this point, completely outdated or have not yet been

the subject of serious academic research. There are, however, some articles and international NGO's reports that provide some insight into the topic. For instance, *Innovations in Civic Participation's* (ICP) latest report in 2009²² indicated that the intention of the Algerian government was to move toward a more open policy for youth engagement and civic participation, but there are not yet solid plans for a program to organize and improve the rate of youth civic engagement. Additionally, the Human Rights Watch's latest report (2015) regarding Algeria touched upon issues like freedom of associations, worker's unions, and expanding citizen's rights to freedom of speech²³. While the report suggested a slight improvement in the freedom of speech efforts, it expressed frustration with the Law 12-06 of 2012 that governs the creation and operation of any association in Algeria. In fact, the 12-06 law "requires all associations, including those previously registered, to obtain a registration receipt from the Ministry of Interior before they can operate legally [as it requires] Algerian organizations are to obtain prior government approval for their membership in an international organization" ("World Report 2015: Algeria"). There is much discord between the rhetoric and action of this government.

The Arab Spring has been a threat to the Algerian government since the uprisings started next door in late 2010; however, there have been no clear signs of the possibility of events like which happened in both Tunisia and Egypt. In fact, political analysts and academics alike predicted an Algerian Arab Spring since they perceived the perfect combination of issues within the Algerian example (Zoubir and Aghrout). Although the country witnessed a series of riots shortly after the Tunisian uprisings, the first uprisings to follow the Tunisian example, these protests failed to reach a revolution level. President Bouteflika soon promised to introduce a reform policy to create a "civil society and limit the political influence of the Department of

Intelligence and Security,” (DRS) (“Arab Uprising”) and the group at the center of the Arab Spring exploding around the region, Algeria held its 2014 presidential elections and bestowed Bouteflika a fourth term in power²⁴.

In analyzing the 2011 uprisings, various scholars examined the experience in Algeria and discussed the reasons behind the unsuccessful uprisings in the country. Articles like *The Arab Spring Exception: Algeria's Political Ambiguities and Citizenship Rights* by Boutaina Cheriet; and Zoubir and Aghrout's *Algeria's Path to Reform: Authentic Change?* both employed what is known as the Algerian exceptionalism or the Algerian exception. Both authors argued that the format and structure of the Arab Spring are not new to Algeria, as the country had its share of chaos and instability in 1988 following the radical protest and demonstrations by the youth of the country (Cheriet) (Zoubir and Aghrout 150-53). On the other hand, Volpi suggests in *Algeria Versus the Arab Spring* that the weakness of civil society in Algeria has been the main reason for keeping the Arab Spring at the door of the country. Additionally, he argues that “Algeria under Bouteflika had a freer and livelier civil and political society than Tunisia under Ben Ali” (Volpi 109). With that said Algerian Arab Spring has been delayed probably due to all the mentioned reasons, but mostly because the memory of the people in Algeria, unlike other Arabic countries, is still alive and full of horrible pictures from the Black Decades' archives, which does not allow for the optimistic voices of change that were the Arab Spring.

Morocco

Differing from the previously introduced countries, Morocco is a constitutional Monarchy with an elected parliament with an extensive and active civil society (Ashford). Youth movements and the civil society fueled one of the most important political changes in the country when they initiated protests in February 2011, in a simulation of the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia,

Egypt, and other countries. On February 20, 2011, young men and women from all over the kingdom went into the streets, following the example of their neighbors in Tunisia. The 20 February Movement included different political, social, and intellectual groups within the country which worked together to ask for critical political and constitutional change. These protests lead to the 2011 Constitution proposal by the King, in which he agreed to share his power by included voices of civil society in the political decisions of the country. The effect of the protests came to life through an official vote in July 2011. This change marked the Fifth Amendment to the Moroccan constitution since it gained independence in 1961. (114-15 غوردو)²⁵

Although the movement refused the proposal, the Moroccan media overall welcomed the changes, and many of the news articles reviewed showed a general satisfaction with the government reaction and King's suggestions. However, *Human Rights Watch* did not totally agree with Moroccan media networks, it stated in its published report for 2015 that "Morocco's 2011 constitution incorporated strong human rights provisions, but these reforms have not led to improved practices, the passage of significant implementing legislation or the revision of repressive laws" ("Morocco/Western Sahara"). In Addition, *Human Rights Watch* reported issues related to freedom of associations since, and similar to the Algerian case, the Moroccan government put various restrictions in place regarding registration for organizations. The report also highlighted prisons and the criminal justice system in the country. Overall, it seems that young people in the country are trying to lead an active civil life within society, but there is no actual push from the government to include young people in decision-making processes.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to synthesize literature about the MEPI program and comment on the various analysis, discussions, and assessments of the U.S. cultural diplomacy in

general, and the MEPI program in particular. Reviewing literature for this research divided into two parts, governmental records, and program assessments and evaluations. First, I reviewed government documents, which contain the various records about the MEPI program, speeches by government officials, fact sheets and press releases issued by different institutions, in addition to congress and committees reports concerning the program. Second, I reviewed the assessments and evaluation sections that include previous analysis and assessments of the MEPI program, its establishment, strategies, effects, and means of improvement. Most importantly, this chapter presented a general overview about the political profile of countries that are subject of study in this research; particularly looking at the structure of the political system in each country, the components of civic society, and major civic groups that influence political life within societies.

This chapter was designed to offer a thorough review of the previous literature concerning the MEPI program, with the hope of develop further discussion among the various scholars who examined the program in order to generate a synthesized point of view regarding the program creation, implementation, and development. Additionally, the political overview of the five countries studied connects the established analysis of the MEPI program in this research, to the major changes within the political life in these countries.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

As detailed in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to examine the effects of the post-9/11 American cultural diplomacy on young people's attitudes toward political involvement and civic engagement in the Middle East and North Africa region through a selected cultural exchange program, the Middle East Partnership Initiative. The program consists of four pillars: (1) political governance and participation, (2) economic liberalization and opportunity, (3) educational quality and access, and (4) the empowerment of women. ("The Middle East Partnership Initiative Story"). However, this study is precisely looking at the political pillar of the program and how effects the participants' attitudes and behaviors in relation to political involvement in their home countries, especially after the recent changes in the regions of the Arab Spring movements. Although the MEPI program targets an audience from different countries around the region, the study focuses only on five countries from the MENA region: Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Lebanon.

This chapter explains the research methodology of this study and the reasons for choosing it, and it introduces the targeted population, describing the surveying and data analysis process.

Theoretical Framework

Studying and analyzing international relations has always been a crucial issue in understanding the nature of policies and strategies between the world's countries. With the significant transformations in the world after 9/11, understanding these relations has become a major issue. Thus, politicians along with scholars have been trying to shape, change, and sometimes reformulate the nature of relations between countries that are major sources of tension in the world. The MENA region was at the center of these global political changes, both because

of the events of 9/11 in the United States and the events of the Arab Spring. Many theories and concepts analyze and examine the role of the United States in the region, mainly after the 9/11 events; today with the major transformations in the MENA region after the Arab Spring, more attention is given to this role. The MEPI program represents, in this research, a micro-reflection upon the development of the United States' position concerning the MENA region. I argue that the MEPI program is one of the most effective examples to use to study this relation because it was one of the very first cultural diplomacy policies in the United States issued after 9/11, and it is still a functioning program at the time of writing this proposal.

In studying the political pillar of the MEPI program, this research drew largely upon postcolonial perspectives and guidelines. The conceptual framework supporting this thesis is based on the notion of soft power as the new weapon to lead in the world. The director of the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University, Joseph Nye, in his book *Bound to Lead*, first introduced the term 'soft power' in 1990 as "a more attractive way of exercising power than traditional means...as the second face of power, which occurs when one country gets other countries to want what it wants" (166). In studying the MEPI program, this research looks at the design of the program as a policy, thus, in what ways exchange programs can be interpreted through the concept of soft power in foreign policy and the idea of leading the others to adopt your values and principles. Nye argued that the end of the Cold War marked the start of what he termed the "great Power shift" (155). Nye meant a change in the nature of our understanding of the term 'Soft Power' itself. That new understanding of power, according to Nye, drove governments to acknowledge the limitations of using military forces in solving conflicts since the end of the Cold War. At the same time, adopting soft power policies has been motivated by the fact that such systems cost less in terms of application and implementation. The challenge for

the U.S. then, he argued, was to develop its ability to lead other countries to do what the United States wants. Thus, by drawing these new characteristics of the challenges of the 21st century, Nye clearly reflects upon Great Britain's role as world leader in the 19th century and the challenges it faced. This reference in Nye's work has actively shaped this study through looking at the United States as a major world power that is implementing its cultural diplomacy policies to lead the Middle East into a better understanding of the culture, lives, and values of American citizens. This goal has not been probably the country's first interest after the 9/11 events. However, it gained a crucial importance after the War on Iraq, in particular with the significant decline in the popular image of the United States in the world (see table1,2).

Table 1: Rate of favorable opinions about the U.S. around the world

Favorable Opinions of the U.S.						
	1999/ 2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Great Britain	83	75	70	58	55	56
France	62	63	43	37	43	39
Germany	78	61	45	38	41	37
Spain	50	--	38	--	41	23
Russia	37	61	36	47	52	43
Indonesia	75	61	15	--	38	30
Egypt	--	--	--	--	--	30
Pakistan	23	10	13	21	23	27
Jordan	--	25	1	5	21	15
Turkey	52	30	15	30	23	12
Nigeria	46	--	61	--	--	62
Japan	77	72	--	--	--	63
India	--	54	--	--	71	56
China	--	--	--	--	42	47

1999/2000 survey trends provided by the Office of Research, U.S. Department of State

Table 2: Rate of favorable opinions of Americans around the world

Favorable Opinion of Americans					
	% very/somewhat favorable				
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%	%	%
Great Britain	83	80	73	70	69
France	71	58	53	64	65
Germany	70	67	68	65	66
Spain	--	47	--	55	37
Russia	67	65	64	61	57
Jordan	53	18	21	34	38
Indonesia	65	56	--	46	36
Egypt	--	--	--	--	36
Pakistan	17	38	25	22	27
Turkey	31	32	32	23	17
Nigeria	--	67	--	--	56
Japan	73	--	--	--	82
India	58	--	--	71	67
China	--	--	--	43	49

Source: "America's Image in the World: Findings from the Pew Global Attitudes Project." Street et al.²⁶

Global Attitudes Toward the U.S. Between 2001 and 2008

According to the Pew Research Center, global attitudes toward both the American government and American citizens decreased likewise, among both strong allies like Great Britain and non-ally countries like Turkey. Additionally, it is important to notice the parallel decrease in rates favorable to the United States as a country, as a system of government, and as individuals and communities. Consequently, such interchangeable positions between political and cultural field reinforced the need to shift focus from hard to soft power policies, which reinforce the importance of conducting more research on the American cultural strategies, and examining its major successes and weaknesses.

Besides looking at soft power strategies as a conceptual outline for the MEPI program, another theory helped frame this research, which is Edward Said's uniquely developed notion of understanding the western interpretation of the Orient, when he looked at the role of the West in general as dominating and imposed for its authority. Said's perspective is one of the most important concepts to reflect upon when developing a study related to the United States and its role in the Middle East. According to Said, Orientalism is a 'biased' perceptive of the Orient, where such perspective is used to generate domination and control over the East (36). Numerous arguments would serve as examples to illustrate this position of the West, for instance, the cultural interactions between the west and east and how they usually take a one-way stream of ideas from the west eastward either through introducing new values or changing existing ones. In this study, the MEPI program represents the west-eastward cultural interaction; Said says, "Orientalism is, after all, a system for citing works and authors" (23) and this study conducts a textual analysis for the published documents about the program, particularly the speeches delivered by the creators and developers of this policy.

Edward Said's analysis of the notion of the otherness in framing the West dominant relations with the East intersects, in many ways, to Fanon's discussions of racial adaptation, and post-colonialism, and relations between the colonizers and colonized. Said explains that the main purpose of Orientalism was to expand the post-colonial discussions beyond the geographical framework (350), and that is what Fanon did in *Black Skins, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon discussed the impact of the colonizers' profile as superior, white, and dominant in shaping the identity and behavior of the colonized in order to meet an acceptable standard, "In the colonial context, the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man's values" (43). This hegemonic nature of

the relations between the Orient and the Occident has been an essential structure of building the perspective beyond analyzing the MEPI program in this study.

Mixed Method Approach

A mixed method consisting of both quantitative and qualitative research tools was selected for this study, as it allows expanding perspectives within this research; also, it will serve to enhance the validity of the research results (Bouchard 268). Defining mixed methods in research is quite complicated since many researchers and methodologists have been trying to give an accurate interpretation to this methodology. For instance, *Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research* by Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, offers a thorough analysis of various mixed methods definitions by asking “31 leading mixed methods research methodologists from Tashakkori's "Bridges Website” (118) for a definition of mixed methods. Using the various collected definitions, the authors later presented a general definition of mixed methods research:

Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (123)

Mixed methodology as a term was not introduced until the second half of the 20th century in the Campbell and Fiske article, “Triangulation in the Evaluation of School System Interventions” in 1959, although the method itself existed prior to this publication, in early works within social sciences scholarship. Campbell and Fiske explained how mixed methods should be implemented to validate findings (Johnson et al. 113). Most of the scholarship defending the mixed methods approach argues that it is not necessary to replace either qualitative or quantitative approaches, yet using mixed methodology operates in a way to “draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies” (Johnson and

Onwuegbuzie 4). In fact, some scholars might decide to adopt a mixed method in an advanced phase of their research, due to the emergence of problems, concerns, or development; this is what is defined as the *emergent* mixed method design, as opposed to a *fixed* mixed method design (Creswell and Clark 54). For this study, the methodology has been predetermined within an early stage of the research process²⁷.

According to Creswell, six strategies can be defined within mixed methodologies based on the type and the method of collecting and analyzing data. This study uses *Concurrent Triangulation* strategy since it best fits the research objectives that require collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. Concurrent Triangulation is one of the most common strategies among the six, and is usually used “to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study” (quoted in Creswell 217). Phases of collecting data in this strategy happens at the same time, which shortens the time of collecting data comparing to other strategies that require longer time to implement like the sequential methods (Terrell 268); therefore, choosing this strategy best serves the restricted timetable of this research.

Concurrent triangulation strategy usually focuses equally on both qualitative and quantitative data, but one side could be used more dominantly while interpreting and analyzing data, which will help cover any weaknesses in both phases of data collection. For this research, a survey tool was designed to collect quantitative data, and a document analysis was conducted to collect qualitative data that corroborate the results of the survey. Moreover, no part of data dominated the other one; both types of data are integrated in the next chapter to examine the research objectives.

Primary Sources of Data

This research focuses mainly on archival materials from the U.S. Department of State electronic archival sources; those materials contain facts sheets, speeches, and press releases about the MEPI program since its creation. Most of the available data is dated from 2009 through 2011; pre-2009 government releases are not as thorough or as easily accessible. In addition, the study examined Congressional reports related to the U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East, and reports related to the program in particular, including Congressional Accountability service, hearing committees, and Congressional Research Service reports.

Additionally, a survey was conducted, polling former MEPI candidates from five different countries around the Middle East and North Africa region, which are Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Lebanon. No particular year of participation was imposed; all former participants from 2003 until 2015 could take the survey. The survey consisted of three sets of questions, defining three major elements that relate to the effect of the MEPI program on the political life of the former participant: first, they were asked about their attitude toward political involvement after participating in the MEPI program and returning home; next, they were asked about their political skills and behaviors; and finally, they were asked about their intended behavior toward political involvement in their home communities. Upon consent and explanation, the participants had access to the survey for three weeks (May-June 2016).

Research Design: The Importance of using both Quantitative and Qualitative

Analysis

The purpose of this study is not a full assessment of the MEPI program, and since there is a lack of research findings on this topic, it is recommended to add a qualitative part to confirm or validate collected data. On the one hand, the quantitative part of the study will mainly give a

fundamental outlook of the current attitudes, skills, and behaviors of the participants in relation to political involvement and civic engagement in their home countries. In conducting quantitative data collection, the research will measure three variables: participants' political engagement, attitudes toward political issues, and intentional political engagement. Variables that may cause a change in the results of the survey are gender, age, the varying amount of personal freedom and opportunity in each country, geographical location and history, and the year of participation in the MEPI program.

On the other hand, qualitative data will support the first part of this study for various reasons; first, since I am part of the MEPI network myself (Georgetown University-2007); this raises the issue of subjectivity and biased opinions. Qualitative document analysis then will enhance the credibility of the research findings, will offer a wide perspective to an in-depth description of the development of the political pillar of the MEPI program. Second, it will help synthesize information about the program design, press releases, speeches, and follow up projects in the five countries concerned.

Quantitative Data (Textual Analysis)

Featuring a variety of resources, the collection of qualitative data for this study focused on State Department online archives related to the creation, implementation, and the development of the MEPI program. Although it was difficult to access all of the documents needed for the analysis, mainly due to privacy issues related to such policies, the collected materials covered most of the program developments, anecdotes, and challenges. Divided into categories, data was sorted based on their definitions into five groups: fact sheets and press releases issued by the Department of State, speeches transcripts by program creators and government officials²⁸, budget

reports, and Congress reports and hearings. The number of the examined documents differs from one category to another due to access issue or availability.

Moving to the following step in the data's collection and analysis, a thematic coding system was used to examine the different documents. Each code had a title and a definition to increase the accuracy in defining themes and similarities between the inspected documents. The extracted themes will be identified and explained in the next chapter.

Quantitative Data (Textual Analysis)

For the quantitative data component, this study used a web-based survey (see Appendix B) directed at participants of the MEPI program since 2003 from the targeted five countries: Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Lebanon. The survey studies a sample of the MEPI community and it is designed to provide a description of attitudes among the MEPI participants²⁹. Survey research usually targets a group of people with the intention of extracting a description of their opinions, attitudes, or behavior with the intent of generalizing the descriptions and findings to the whole population that is the subject of the study (Creswell 13). In this case, the alumni network of the MEPI program.

Divided into three sections, the survey is designed to examine different perspectives of the effect of the MEPI's political pillar on the lives of the participants. First, a section to discuss the participants' political engagement, which includes four statements to describe possible activities and practices that demonstrate different types of political involvement like publications, speeches, and civic society projects. Second, a section to measure student's attitudes toward political issues in their communities after their MEPI experience; this section also consists of four statements that focused mainly on participants' opinions about their role in society in relation to political awareness and changes. Finally, the last section scans participants' intentional behavior toward

political involvement in their countries. This section includes two statements that question students' willingness to initiate and contribute to increasing political awareness and engagement within their local communities and countries³⁰. Each question within the three sections is designed to include all possible answers, to ensure an exhaustive list of the questions proposed. Also no participant is allowed to choose two answers at the same time, and instead, all attributes are mutually exclusive. Besides the three main sections of the survey, the collected data also includes participants' country of origin, age, gender, year of participation in the program.

Research Questions: Rationale toward variables and survey questions

Table 3: Research questions relation to variables and survey questions:

Variable Name	Research Question	Statements on Survey
Independent Variable 1: Participants' political engagement after the MEPI experience.	Research Question 1: How were participants' interests in political life in their countries influenced after their MEPI experience?	Section 1: Statements 1,2,3,4
Independent Variable 2: Attitudes and opinions about participants' role in society in relation to political awareness and changes.	Research Question 2: To what extent do participants develop an active position toward civic engagement and political change in their societies?	Section 2: Statements 1,2, and 3
Independent Variable 3: Intentional behavior toward political engagement.	Research Question 3: To what extent do MEPI participants express intentions to play an active political role in their societies?	Section 3: Statements 1 and 2
Dependent Variable: The MEPI program and the American Political Model	The MEPI Program	Section 2: Statement 4
Relating Variables	Research Question 4: To what extent the participants' attitudes toward change based on where are they originally from in the region. How do Arab Spring	Survey Results

countries effect these attitudes?

Upon the receipt of the Bowling Green State University (BGSU) Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) approval for the research survey, the participants received an introductory email that included short background about my participation in the program, a clear, detailed explanation of the purposes of the research, and the participants' precise role in this study. In addition, the email contained information about the consent form the participants were required to sign, and which was included on the first page of the survey through the link provided. Moreover, reminders were sent every three days for two weeks to enhance participation and spread the word about the survey among the MEPI network. Less than 20 percent of the subject responded after the first email sent to the participants, but this percentage increased gradually after each reminder. It is interesting to note that biggest boost of survey responses came after sending a participation email request through the Director of Business Development at Georgetown University's Center for International Education and Development (CIED), who is also responsible for leading CIED's Washington, DC-based programs (MEPI Student Leaders and Gateway to Georgetown). Two methods were used to reach participants: invitations were sent to private email addresses, which I had access to as a MEPI Alumni, and via social media groups and networks, including LinkedIn and Facebook pages of the targeted countries, and State Department Alumni websites. The first page of the survey contains the consent form³¹ for the participant to sign electronically before taking the survey.

Target Population

The participant population for this research is the network of the MEPI participants since it was created in 2002. The sample used in this study is categorized by location, since the research

is examining five particular countries in the MENA region: Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, and Lebanon.

The selection process started with verifying the lists of participants' names and emails through the State Department Alumni website, which gives access only to program officials and former participants. Then, five different lists were created, one for each of the target countries. Based on *mepi.state.gov*, the program has brought around 120 students each year, which makes the size of the subject population more than 1500 students from different countries around the region. There is no record within the program data of a detailed MEPI's participants' numbers from each country since its creation in 2002, and no answer was received from the State Department when contacted. With that said, out of an overall number of 240 surveys sent, 143 emails addresses have been extracted from the State Department Alumni website.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the research methodology, explain the reasons behind choosing it, and describe the various phases of its implementation. In addition, this chapter characterizes the main elements and procedures of the research methodology followed in this study by introducing the different stages of data collection and analysis. The next chapter will outline the results of data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

This chapter reports data collection results and evokes possible discussions and results. Following the triangulation method explained in the previous chapter, this section presents both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Quantitative data for the survey were analyzed using SPSS software, precisely T-tests, Correlations and ANOVAs measures. As for qualitative data, documents were examined, thematically coded, and presented. Both types of analysis are then interpreted in relation to the purposes of this research.

Textual Analysis

The qualitative data for this study included various types of governmental documents, which were reduced to three main sections: press releases, speeches transcripts, and fact sheets about the MEPI program. Data within each group of documents were thematically coded (using numbers 1 or 0 to indicate the theme) and analyzed separately; therefore, some themes may appear in more than one section. Similarities and relations between all the categories of documents are later analyzed in the discussion section of this chapter. Moreover, budget reports and congressional research reports about MEPI have been examined, and will be analyzed in the discussion section.

Press Releases

This section includes 20 published press releases and media notes related to the MEPI program that released whether through the online State Department archives (2001-2009), or the current State Department website. The data coding focused on documents related to the development and implementation of the Political pillar within the MEPI program, and various themes have been extracted. Some themes did not interpret any significant results to reports, as shown in fig.1. From there, the extracted themes were analyzed, and reduced to nine main themes.

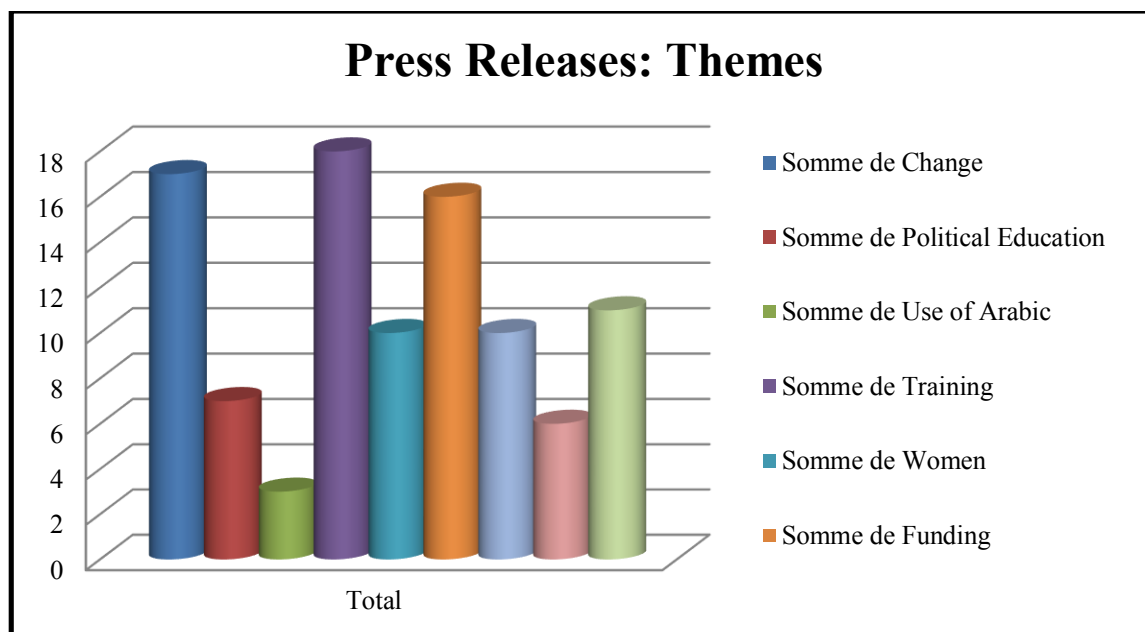


Figure 1: Themes of the first section (press releases documents)

Change

In developing and expanding its political pillar, the MEPI program highly promotes the concept of change for the MENA region, and most of the examined documents show that it is not only about the concept of change but most of the texts literally use the word ‘Change’ in their verbiage. In order to highlight how the program intersects with the aims and passions of the young generations in the region. For example:

“In the Middle East, the long, hopeful process of democratic change is now beginning to unfold.” ("Middle East Partnership Initiative ")

“Across the Middle East, a consensus is emerging on the need for change” (“Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative”)³².

Political Education

A few of the analyzed documents discussed funding or supporting political education in the MENA region. Although such projects may not give an immediate result, they build a stronger

civic society. Examples of projects related to funding political education are the production of an Arabic dictionary on Democracy ("Arab Graduate Students Produce Arabic Dictionary on Democracy"), and strengthening some universities in the region through partnerships with the MEPI program ("Seventeen MEPI University Partnerships Strengthen Regional Universities").

Use of Arabic Language

Only two documents in this category talked about using the Arabic language to maximize the reach of the literature to a broader network of people. First, it was necessary to create of a lexicon regarding democracy, a task undertaken by Arab graduate students in Tel-Aviv that includes "Arabic defining of 100 terms [selected and elaborated in a seminar sponsored by MEPI] on democracy and democratic governance." ("Arab Graduate Students Produce Arabic Dictionary on Democracy"). Second, the document called for an initiative by a local civic education network, created and funded by MEPI, to promote civic engagement in countries around the region. This network called *Arab Civitas*, used civic education programs of the Center for Civic Education in Los Angeles and translated them to Arabic; these programs were used in the networks' training in schools and organizations ("Arab Civitas Fosters Civic Education and Engagement in Schools and Communities").

Training

The MEPI program offers financial support and access to knowledge and information within various fields in the MENA region. This theme reflects documented goals of the program, providing the necessary skills for a proper participation and better engagement in the political life within the MENA region. These trainings are usually provided or supervised by the American partners of the program. For instance, in 2005, MEPI supported political skills training for women activists from Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Although the training

took place in Amman, it was conducted by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development ("United States Supports Political Skills Training for Arab Women"). Some programs offered by the MEPI program engage both local and regional NGOs, and activists like the MEPI Civil Society Awards, which funded several local NGOs, work toward increasing the level of political engagement in the region³³.

Women

Empowering women is one of the four pillars of the MEPI program (besides economics, politics and education). Taking into consideration that this study is looking at the political pillar, in particular, the topic of women comes up frequently, especially because many of the political participation training and civic education opportunities are targeted specifically toward women. However, as illustrated in figure1, the theme does not appear as much as other topics like funding, training, and change; this is mainly because the examined documents show that the theme is generally divided between the political field and the economic one, since MEPI also funds various business and entrepreneurship trainings and workshops³⁴.

Funding

Funding is a fundamental element for the goals of the MEPI program; the program was initially created to fund cultural policy diplomacy directed at the MENA countries to promote democracy and positive change in the region. Therefore, it was predictable for such a funding to emerge while analyzing the documents. The study focuses on promoting the U.S. government's efforts to fund such policies within the U.S. and abroad. Most of the examined documents with funding as a theme either promote all sorts of funds provided by the U.S. or conduct fundraising for the program.

Speeches' Transcripts

This category consists of 30 published transcripts of various speeches related to the creation, promotion, and fundraising for the MEPI program, and almost half of these documents focus on the political pillar of the program. A wide range of diverse speakers also characterizes this section, including Americans former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, former President George W. Bush, former Secretary of State Colin Powell, and former First Lady Laura Bush. Similar to the first section, various themes have been developed as illustrated in figure 2. These themes are reduced and discussed in the next section of the chapter.

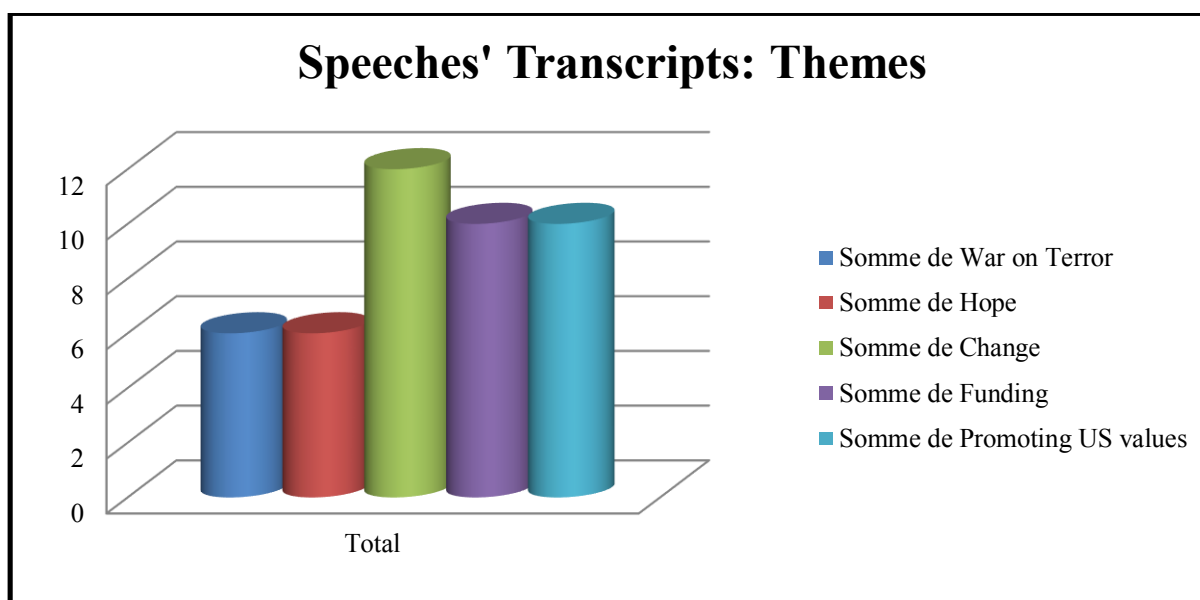


Figure 2: Themes of the second section (speeches' transcripts)

War on Terror

It is interesting that the war on terror is not the top theme in this category, as the 9/11 events are the main reason for the establishment of politics like the MEPI program. Though it is not the most common theme, this theme does appear in many documents dated during the early stages of creating the program. Some of the speeches that mention the U.S. War on Terror include

President George W. Bush's remarks in a commencement address at the University of South Carolina (2003), and the speech that announced the founding of the MEPI program, delivered by Colin Powell in front of the heritage foundation in Washington, DC (2002). For instance, the words *terror* or *terrorism* were used seven different times in Colin Powell's announcement of the program, yet when asked if MEPI was just another way to fight terrorism after the 9/11 attacks, he argued that the program is not necessarily associated with the 9/11 events. Moreover, he argued that it is simply what the U.S. should do to help develop the MENA region when he said "I think it is something that can be seen as totally separate from 9/11. We should do this because it is the right thing to do. The pillars I talked about, the programs I talked, about are relevant before and after 9/11" ("The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative"). Thus, the focus on building strong connections with people in the MENA region without a direct focus on terror events is probably why this theme does not frequently appear in this section.

Hope

Hope is one of the most important topics to report in this section, and is a theme that comes up often in this literature. In fact, the announcement speech of the program is titled "Building Hopes for the Years Ahead." Colin Powell, for example, also said: "Through the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative, we are adding *hope* to the U.S.-Middle East agenda. We are pledging our energy, our ability, and our idealism to bring *hope* to all of God's children who call the Middle East home." ("The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative").

Besides the fascinating fact of the use of the word 'hope' in most of the speeches related to the political pillar of MEPI as illustrated in figure 3, it is important to note that most of the speeches about the program are outdated, yet they are significant since they represent the foundations of the program and the ideas behind establishing this policy.

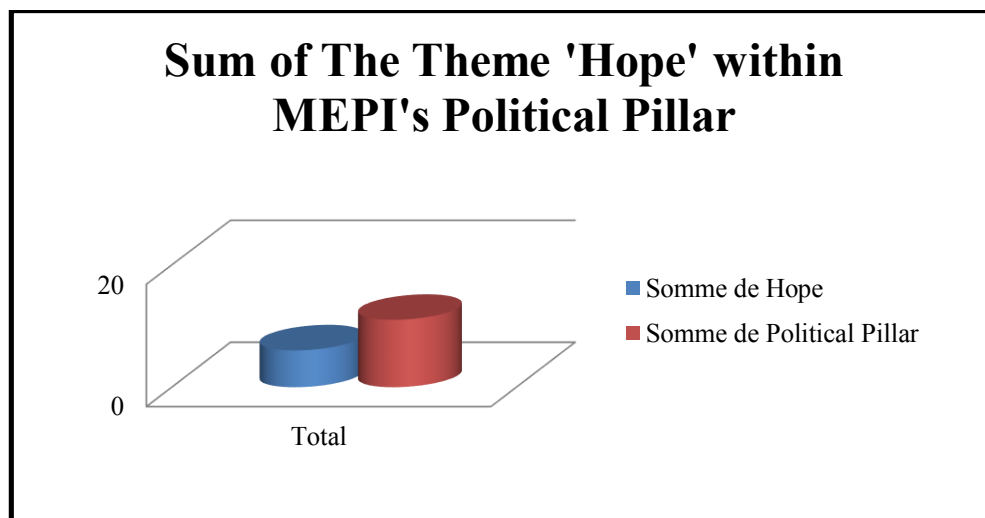


Figure 3: Sum of the theme 'hope' in comparison to the total sum of documents about the MEPI's political pillar.

For instance, in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2003, Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, William J. Burns, commented on the MEPI initiative that “there is some reason for hope ...we have secured initial funding and, together with our partners in the region, we are developing a set of promising pilot projects.” (“Priorities in the Middle East and North Africa”) Also, in his explanation of the political pillar of the MEPI program at the Wilton Park Conference in London, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, J. Scott Carpenter uses the word hope as well: “MEPI is providing assistance with elections in seven countries, and the recent elections in both Iraq and Afghanistan are reasons for hope, democracy—as you know—entails much more.” (“Reform in the Middle East: A Role for the U.S.”). The importance of this theme then is not exactly the frequency of appearances in the documents, but more the significance of the concept of rescuing the Middle East and offering hope for peace and democracy.

Change

Promoting change emerges as another theme in this section. Similar to the previous theme of hope, change appears with a strong frequency compared to the other themes analyzed for this paper. Deputy Assistant Secretary J. Scott Carpenter wrote:

Young people are showing their passion for change in the Middle East, and the U.S. is investing in their hopes for a brighter future. When the superficial changes have been made that we have the best opportunity to help reformers in the region move ahead to structural changes that will pave the way to genuine democracy and a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East. ("Transformational Diplomacy in Action")

Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, William J. Burns wrote, commenting on the establishment of the MEPI program), that “real and enduring change can only come from within, not as the result of outside preaching or prescription. But there is a lot we can do to help.”("Political and Economic Goals of a New Generation in the Middle East").

Funding

Similar to some of the other themes covered in this analysis, the topic of funding emerges to demonstrate the support offered by the program to various initiatives and communities in the MENA region. This section includes the location of each speech as a new pattern is to characterize the data that deals with funding for the program. As shown in figure 4, most of the speeches that are located in the U.S. illustrate a high frequency of the topic of funding.

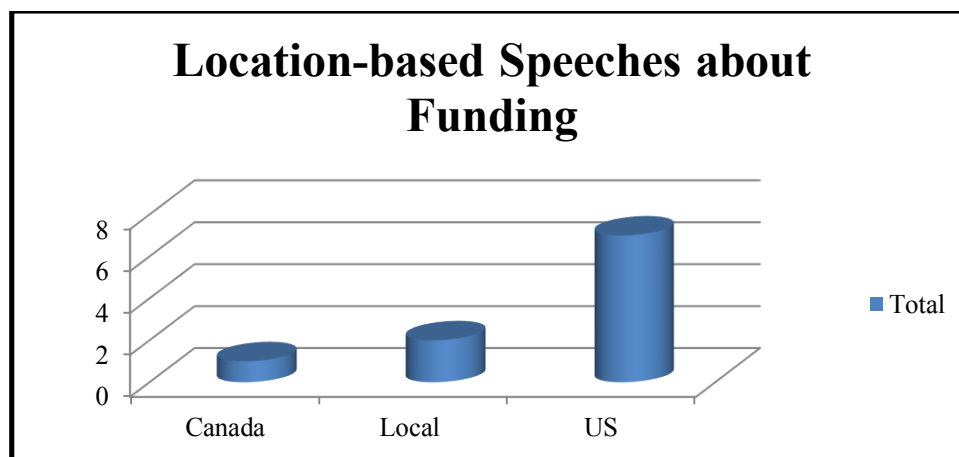


Figure 4: Sum of documents about funding with the second section (speeches' transcripts).

Promoting U.S. Cultural Values

The MEPI program is an American cultural diplomacy program that was designed, established, and implemented by the American government, thus, it should not be surprising that this policy is used to promote and spread American values, principals, and culture. Data shows that speakers emphasized introducing and promoting the American way in many occasions, which is a significant since it reflects the drawbacks of similar cultural diplomacies introduced after the 9/11 attacks. Further discussion about the significant of the emergence of such a theme is presented in the discussion section further in this chapter.

Fact Sheets

More than 75 documents were examined for this section, then reduced to 40 by eliminating the off-subject and unrelated ones. An examination of the documents showed that the political pillar takes considerable attention compared to the three other pillars (*see figure 5*), which seems to demonstrate the significance of this pillar in the establishment and development of the program.

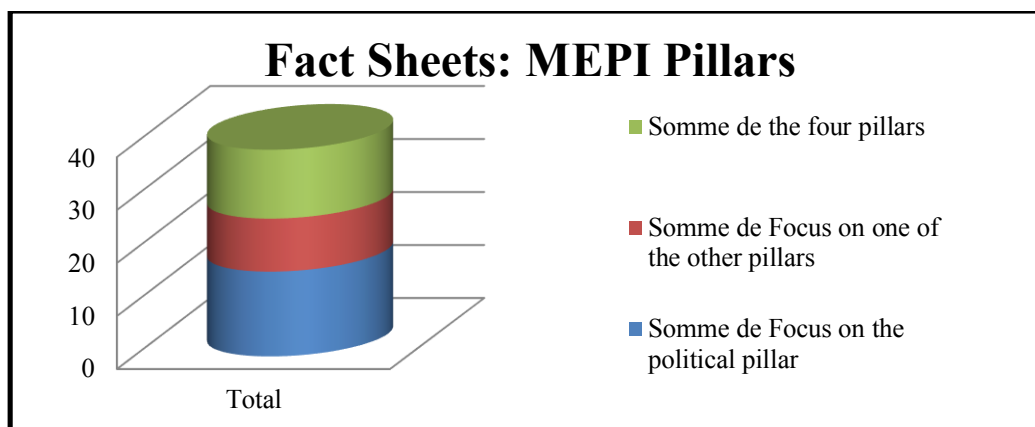


Figure 5: Sum of documents about MEPI's political pillar compared to the other three pillars

The themes in this category are fewer in comparison to the first two sections (see figure 6), although the overall number of examined documents is larger than the previous ones. The smaller number is due to the type of documents examined, as a fact sheet is a generally a shorter text that is straight forward and focused, and usually designed to deliver a single piece of information. However, the trio of themes (funding, training, and change) appear again in this section (see figure 6).

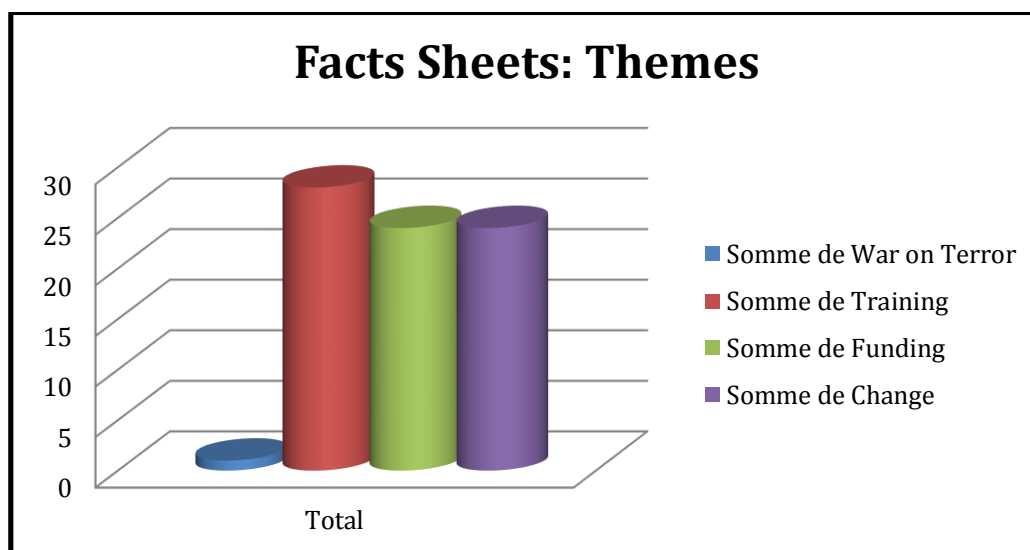


Figure 6: Themes of the third section (fact sheets)

Training

Most initiatives that are created, sponsored, or directed by the program tend to offer a certain level of training, skill, and guidance to communities around the MENA region. Most of the texts use indicator words like *learn*, *acquire skills*, *help*, and *support*. The analysis of this topic includes the location of the issued document, and it is important to note that the theme does not frequently appear in documents issued at the level of the MENA region (see figure 7).

The Bureau of Public Affairs described some of the results of the MEPI program as follows:

Participants traveled to the United States to learn new ways of doing business as they work to improve transparency, create jobs and boost economic growth in the region. Students learned about civic responsibility and citizenship and are now applying those principles to make a positive difference in their communities. Women formed legal and business networks, journalists acquired independent media skills.” (“Middle East Partnership Initiative Alumni Network: Accelerating the Work of Reformers”)

Additionally, in a note released in November of 2006, they wrote that “the Middle East Partnership Initiative provides tangible support to reformers in the region so democracy can spread, education can thrive, economies can grow, and women can be empowered.” (“Middle East Partnership Initiative”)

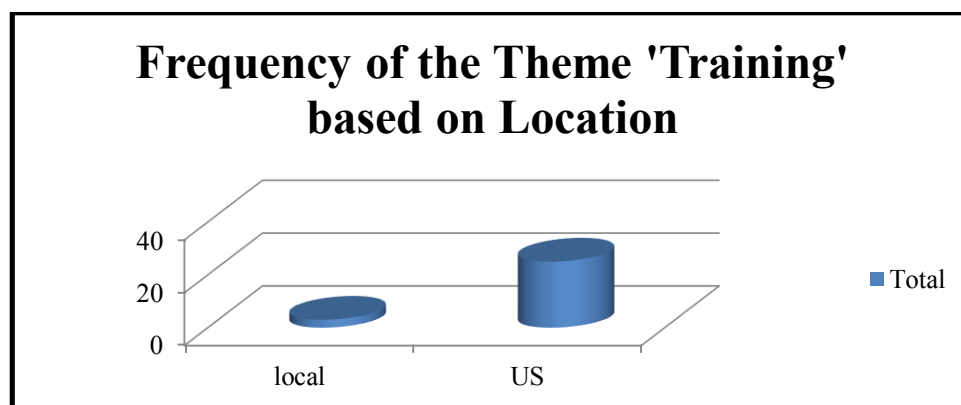


Figure 7: Location based sum of the theme 'Training'.

Funding

Similar to the previous sections, the topic of funding emerges in this category, mostly through reporting funds, and grants that the MEPI offers within the region. It seems that the reappearance of funding in this section is a healthy result for this research since this section is dealing with facts sheets which implement the frequent reporting of the distribution of the program's budget and funds. Thus, it is anticipated that the program's officials demonstrate in various occasions the types of funds the program is offering and its objectives and targets. The main observation from examining the documents in this section is that there are two main types of funding: grants and non-grants (see Figure 8). A grant represents a declared amount of money with a specific mission and a known beneficiary group; for example, the announcement of funding particular projects to support civil society organizations in 2010, the \$1.1 million grant to initiate working partnerships between universities in the United States and the Middle East in 2006. The second type of funding, or what is called in this section a 'non-grant,' is a more open-ended funding, used to support and encourage change in the region. Some examples of this kind of funding would be holding academic conferences and sponsoring workshops through the program.

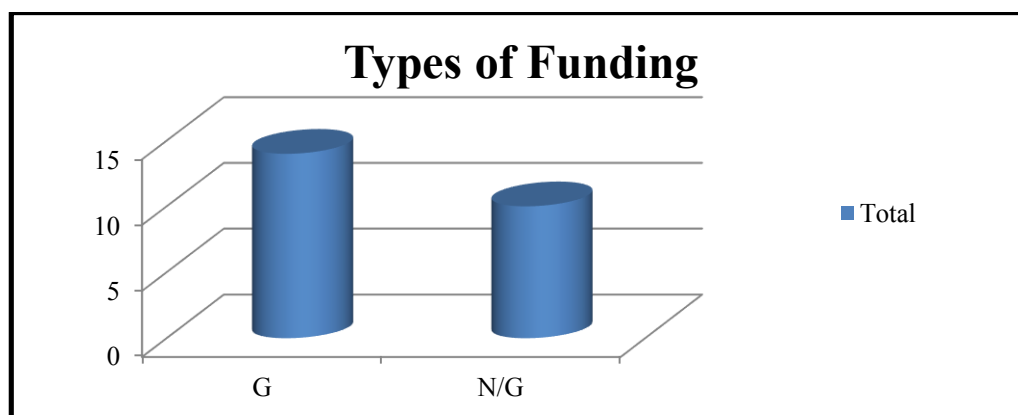


Figure 8: Types of funding in the third section (facts sheets).

Change

Although this theme appears in the previous sections, in this section, it appears in a slightly different context. It is more implied as a concept than the literal usage in the first section. Most documents represented announcements for new initiatives, grants, and partnerships. For example, “The United States supports reformers and their efforts to extend freedom and democracy in the Middle East and North Africa through the Middle East Partnership Initiative("Middle East Partnership Initiative: Working with Reformers to Strengthen Democracy and Opportunity"). Another announcement stated:

(MEPI) is pleased to announce a new award to support the ongoing Leaders for Democracy Fellowship project (LDF), which provides mid-career democracy advocates from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) with the practical skills and networking opportunities needed to build civic engagement and support citizen empowerment in the region. ("MEPI Announces New Funding for Its Flagship Leaders for Democracy Fellowship")

MEPI Post2010 News

Comparing to the State Department archives of the MEPI program (2001-2010), fewer documents are published on the State Department portal of the MEPI program. Most of the published news articles are promotional in nature, featuring either testimony from the participants or reports regarding the workshops and conferences help by the program. The political pillar of MEPI dominates this category, as well, mostly through demonstrating the civic activism knowledge that the participants gain throughout their experience. Below are some examples from the document analysis.

One of the students said in 2010 about his experience:

I came to the States to better understand how American society really works and what makes America great. For five weeks, day by day, I gained a clearer image of American politics, culture, history, and society. In retrospect, I admit that before I came, I had such a distorted image about America and Americans. ("MEPI Highlights: The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)")

Another student, one who was expelled from her university for her participation in protests and marches in her country, wrote:

My experience in MEPI and learning more about my rights as a human made me stronger after I felt that all doors were shut in front of me. I have learned that I have a lot of rights that I should fight for. Unlike my regime that fights peaceful protestors by guns and bullets, I believe that education will be a more effective weapon...I learned that silence does not make a change. ("MEPI Student Leaders Complete Annual Summer Exchange Program")

In commenting on the role of the MEPI participants, Dr. Walid Touma, Director of the University Enterprise Office (UEO); expects at least 5 percent of the students involved in the Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship program (TL) that his office manages to be actively effecting change in their home countries ("LAU News: Leaders of Tomorrow Take Charge Today").

Program Calendar

Available data featuring the detailed schedules of the program are few and far between - Portland State University is the only university among the six that publishes its MEPI program schedule online. The six universities that are part of the MEPI program, as well as the former participants, have been contacted to contribute in this study and share previous schedules of the programs. Very few responses were received from the MEPI students, and only Portland State University and Georgetown University shared their schedules from previous years. In addition to the limited number of documents available, all of the documents received are dated after the Arab Spring. Even with those limitations, it is still important to examine samples of the program's calendar and extract major similarities and core elements for this research.

Common themes emerged after examining the documents: the most anticipated ones like *leadership training*, *workshops*, *community service*, and *civic engagement* were apparent in the titles of the classes and sessions and in the discussions of cultural visits to different states and

communities around the country. However, the analysis of the schedules demonstrates more significant topics to discuss in this study; for example, there is an obvious focus in these program schedules on displaying the American models of democracy, freedom, and political systems. The schedules include sessions with titles such as :*Civil Society of America, Department of Government* (Georgetown 2015);*Diversity in 21st Century America* (Georgetown 2013); *The American Political System* (University of Delaware 2014); and *An Introduction to Democracy -- Democratic Institutions* (PSU 2015). Moreover, the calendars often include guest speakers and professors with Islamic/Arabic/Middle Eastern origins. Examples of the speakers include Dana Ghazi, ASPSU President and a Native Syrian, lecturing about Arab World Leadership and change (PSU 2015). Another speaker featured was Zeina Al-Nobani, a University of Delaware MEPI Alumni presenting about the Realities of Civic Engagement Projects (UD 2014). Additionally, schedules show a high level of consideration for the participant's religious activities and restrictions; for instance, the universities reserved time for Friday prayers and a fasting timetable if the program is held during Ramadan.

Survey Analysis

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the quantitative research tool in this study is an online survey conducted among MEPI participants from five different countries in the MENA region. There were 104 individuals that started the survey, but only 85 individuals who proceeded to the later sections. In analyzing the quantitative data, the software used to conduct tests and determine results in this study were *Microsoft Office Excel 2013* and *SPSS Statistics 23*.

Descriptive Statistics/Demographics

As mentioned earlier, a total of 85 individuals proceed with taking the survey, limited by the number of countries included in the scope of this study. Among the 85 respondents were 45

females and 40 males with an average age of 25.76 years. The number of male and female participants is relatively balanced, which will allow some insight or interpretation of the role of gender in reporting results in the next section. Moreover, the average age of male is slightly higher than that of female (see Table 4).

Table 4: Demographics of Age and Gender among the Participants

Survey	N	Mean	SD
Age	85	25.76	10.6
Male	40	24.87	12.4
Female	45	24.47	12.5

This data has been calculated using Excel 2013.

The demographics section of the survey also provided information about the countries of origin for each participant and the year of participation in the MEPI program. The highest number of participants came from Lebanon with 29.4% of the responses, followed by Tunisia with 20%, then Morocco 17.6%, and finally, Egypt and Algeria with 16.5% each. (see Table 5).

Table 5: The number and percentage of participants from each country.

Countries	N	Percentage	Male	Female
Lebanon	25	29.4%	11	14
Tunisia	17	20.0%	7	10
Morocco	15	17.6%	7	8
Egypt	14	16.5%	6	8
Algeria	14	16.5%	9	5

Data extracted using a Survey Monkey Data report and Excel 2013.

As for the year of participation, the more recent years scored the highest number of participants, while the number decreases as the years since participation increases. See Table 6 and Figure 9 for a detailed report of the number, gender and origin country of the participants.

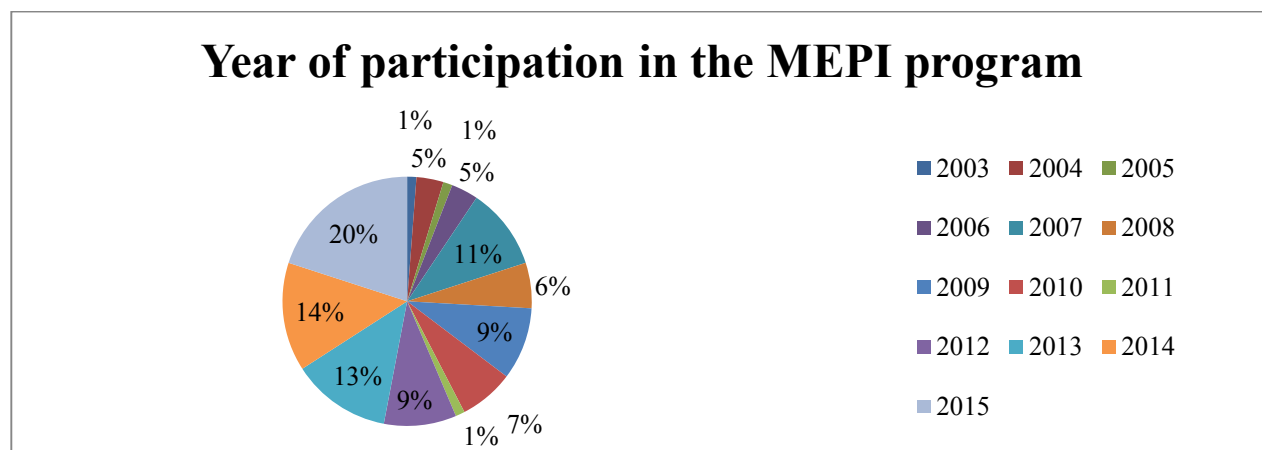


Figure 9: Distribution of the participants based on their year of participating in MEPI.

Table 6: Gender distribution based on year of participation

Countries	N	Percentage	Male	Female
2003	1	1.2%	1	0
2004	3	3.5%	2	1
2005	1	1.2%	0	1
2006	3	3.5%	2	1
2007	9	10.6%	6	3
2008	5	5.9%	1	4
2009	8	9.4%	4	4
2010	6	7.1%	3	3
2011	1	1.2%	1	0
2012	8	9.4%	6	2

2013	11	12.9%	7	4
2014	12	14.1%	5	7
2015	17	20%	7	10

Data extracted using Survey Monkey Data Results and Excel 2013.

Section 1: Political Engagement

Section one the survey asks about the participant's political engagement; it consisted of four main statements to describe the activities and practices that demonstrate different types of the students' political involvement in their local communities, such as publications, speeches, and civic activism projects. Statements are given a shorter description for the sake of reporting data (see Table 7). Participants responded to every statement using a five-point scale ranging from "Never" = 1 to "Always" = 5, and data were analyzed using Statistical package for social sciences. The highest means were 3.86, for the first statement, *"I participated in an NGO, political group, civic society development projects after I return home"*, and 3.69 for the fourth one, *"I met with follow MEPI alumni from my country."* The lowest score was to 2.40 for the second statement, *"I published, plan to publish, or tried to publish an article, paper, book about youth political involvement and awareness, or civic engagement in my home country."*

The results for this section suggest that participants were more likely to join NGO's and political groups than giving speeches or publishing articles and papers about politics in their countries after returning home after the program experience. A more detailed frequency test was run to examine each country; no significant difference has been recorded among the five countries. In other words, statements 1 and 4 received higher scores in all five countries (see Appendix C for Survey).

Table 7: Mean and standard deviation for statements in section 1 (Political Engagement)

Statements (Section 1)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.Civic Engagement	78	3.86	1.17
2.Activism (Publishing)	78	2.40	1.38
3.Activism (Speeches)	78	3.21	1.26
4. MEPI Networking	78	3.69	1.14

**The total number of students who took the survey is 85 but 8 participants skipped this section.*

Section 2: Attitudes toward Change

Section two of the survey measured the student's attitudes toward political issues in their communities after their MEPI experience; this section consisted of three main statements that focused on participants' opinions about their role in society in relation to political awareness and changes. The last statement in this section examined the participants' attitudes toward the American Political system. Similar to the previous section, statements in this category are using a five points scale as well, from "Strongly Disagree" = 1 to "Strongly Agree" = 5. Scores in this sections received higher scores comparing to the first section; with the highest of 4.38 to the first statement, *"I believe young people in my country can make Political changes."* The second statement, *"MEPI leaders are an important element in promoting political awareness among youth in my country"* received the lowest score, however, it is still a considerably high, 3.93. (See Table 8). In other words, participants have a positive attitude about their role toward political changes in their countries after participating in a MEPI program. A detailed test that looked at the means in each country separately shows that the results correspond to the general test, except for Morocco. In the case of Morocco, the third statement, *"participating in MEPI increases/ initiated*

my interest in political issues back home” received the lowest score of 3.79 while the second statement received 3.93 (see Appendix C).

Table 8: Means and standard deviation for section 2 (Attitudes toward Change)

Statements (Section 2)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.Belief in change	73	4.38	0.75
2.MEPI participants as element of change	73	3.93	0.83
3.MEPI effect on the participant’s political interests	73	4.00	0.88

* *The total number of students who took the survey is 85 but 12 participants skipped this section.*

The last statement in this section was separately analyzed because it serves a slightly different purpose than the first three statements in the section. Participants were asked to rate this statement, *“the American political model affected me positively,”* on a five points scale. Results reveal that the statement received a mean score of 3.73 which means that participants had a positive opinion about the effect of studying the American political system on their lives. A detailed test to examine the responses from each country shows Algeria with the highest mean among the countries with 3.93 (*see table 9*).

Table 9: Means and SD for each country from statement 4, section 1 (Political engagement)

Countries	N	Mean	SD
Tunisia	14	3.71	0.61
Egypt	13	3.62	1.04
Lebanon	18	3.72	1.12
Algeria	14	3.93	0.84
Morocco	14	3.73	0.93

Section 3: Intentional Behavior

This last section examines the participant's intentional behavior toward political involvement in their countries by measuring the individual participant's willingness to initiate and contribute to increasing political awareness and engagement within their local communities. The section consist of two statements: the first one represents a slightly passive form of engagement in political life while the second statement demonstrates a more active form of political engagement through giving speeches or workshops to increase people's political awareness. The second statement received a higher score than the first one, 3.82 to 3.97 (*see table10*). In other words, participants intend to more likely engage in an active form of political engagement. At the level of each country, only Tunisia showed a higher score for the second statement, while statement one received higher score with a very small difference from the other four countries (See appendix C).

Table 10: Means and standard deviation for Section 3 (Intentional Behavior)

Statements (Section 3)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Willing to attend event to discuss political issues.	71	3.97	0.81
2. Willing to give workshops to increase political awareness	71	3.82	1.06

* The total number of students who took the survey is 85 but 14 participants skipped this section.

Measures	Section 1				Section 2			Sec2	Section 3	
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	1	2
N	78	78	78	78	73	73	73	73	71	71
Mean	3.86	2.40	3.21	3.69	4.38	3.98	78	2.40	1.38	2.40

Std. Deviation	78	3.21	1.26	78	3.21	1.26	78	3.21	1.26	3.21
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**The total number of participants is 85. Some participants chose not to answer some questions, so the number changes from one section to another.*

T-tests

T-tests were used to examine any changes caused by the participants' gender or their country of origins. Each section of the survey was examined separately and results were analyzed at $p < 0.05$.

Gender

Independent Sample T-test was used to compare the means of male and female participants for political engagement, attitudes toward change, and intentional behavior.

Section1: Political Engagement

An independent-sample-t-test was conducted to compare the means of male and female participants for political engagement in their home countries. The test shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the scores between male and female in all four statements at $p < 0.05$ as shown in Table 11. In other words, results suggest that gender does not have an effect on participants' political engagement in their home countries.

Table 11: Independent t-test, section 1(Political Engagement).

Gender	N	Mean				SD			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
M	42	3.95	2.24	3.10	3.57	1.14	1.41	1.28	1.08
F	36	3.75	2.58	3.33	3.83	1.20	1.33	1.24	1.20
T (76)		0.75	-	-	-1.0				
p		0.45	0.27	0.41	0.31				

Section 2: Attitudes toward Change

An independent-sample-t-test was conducted to compare the means of male and female participants for their attitudes toward change in their home countries. The test shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the scores between male and female in all four statements at $p < 0.05$ as shown in Table12. In other words, results suggest that gender does not have an effect on participants' attitudes toward change in their home countries.

Table 12: Independent t-tests / section 2 (Attitudes toward Change).

Gender	N	Mean			SD		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
M	39	4.49	4.03	4.03	0.64	0.84	0.98
F	34	4.26	3.82	3.97	0.86	0.83	0.75
T (71)		1.25	1.02	0.26			
p		0.21	0.30	0.78			

Section 3: Intentional Behavior

An independent-sample-test was conducted to compare the means of male and female participants for their intentional behavior toward political engagement in their home countries. The test shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the scores between male and female in all four statements at $p < 0.05$ as shown in Table13. In other words, results suggest that gender does not have an effect on participants' intentional behavior toward political engagement.

Table 13: Independent t-test/section 3 (Intentional Behavior).

Gender	N	Mean		SD	
		1	2	1	2
M	39	4.10	3.74	0.68	1.06

F	32	3.81	3.91	0.93	1.02
T (69)		0.60	0.99		
p		0.13	0.52		
ANOVAs					

ANOVAs tests are used to detect differences between more than two groups of data; for this study, ANOVAs were used to examine differences between the five countries target of study, gender in the three different sections of the survey.

Section 1: Political Engagement

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to compare the effect of the MEPI program on participants' political engagement, first, by using the country of origins as a factor, and second, by using age. Results show that there was a significant difference between the countries in responding to the first statement within this section; *"I participated in an NGO, political group, civic society development projects after I return home,"* at the $p < 0.05$ level [$F(4, 73) = 3.50, p = 0.011$]. Considering this result, post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD tests were used to compare each country to every other country. Post hoc results indicate that Tunis, Lebanon, and Morocco differed significantly at $p < 0.05$, while Algeria and Egypt were not significantly different from the other groups. The mean score of for joining NGO's after returning home in Tunisia ($M=3.14, SD=1.16$) is significantly lower than Lebanon ($M=4.29, SD=0.95$); $t(33) = -3.17, p=0.03$, and Morocco ($M=4.33, SD=0.81$); $t(27) = -3.20, p=0.03$. In other words, these results suggest that participants from Lebanon and Morocco were more politically engaged through joining NGO's and political groups than participants from Tunisia.

Second, by age, results show that there was a significant difference between three groups of age in two statements within this section, precisely in the first statement; *"I participated in an NGO, political group, civic society development projects after I return home,"* at the $p < 0.05$

level [$F(2, 75) = 3.93, p = 0.024$]. Furthermore, Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD tests indicate that the first age group [18-25] and the third one [31-93] differed significantly, while the second group does not show any significant difference. The mean score of for joining NGO's after returning home among the younger participants ($M=4.19, SD=0.87$) is significantly higher than the older participants ($M=3.11, SD=1.36$). Moreover, ANOVAs results also showed a significant difference between the first and second age group in responding to the third and fourth statement, while there was no significant difference for comparing the third age group to the other groups. Hence, At the $p < 0.05$ level, the third statement, *"I gave speeches in class, university, TV, Radio related to youth political awareness and involvement, and/or civic engagement"* reveals a significant difference [$F(2, 75) = 4.25, p = 0.018$]. The mean score of using a more engaged activism tools to increase political engagements like speeches, and talks between the first age group [18-25] ($M=3.62, SD=1.01$) is significantly higher than the second age group [26-30] participants ($M=2.88, SD=1.38$). Additionally, another significant difference is indicated between the first and second group in responding the fourth statement *"I met with follow MEPI from my country"* at the < 0.05 level [$F(2, 75) = 11.7, p = 0.000$]. The mean score of the fourth statement which represents MEPI's networking degree demonstrated a significant difference between the first age group [18-25] ($M=4.24, SD=0.83$) is significantly higher than the second age group [26-30] participants ($M=3.06, SD=1.16$).

Section 2: Attitudes toward Change

By using countries of origins as a factor for the one-way ANOVAs tests to examine their means regarding participants' attitudes toward change and youth role in political change in their countries, results showed no significant differences, as determined by one-way ANOVA tests as explained in Table 14.

Table 14: ANOVAs for Section 2 (Attitudes toward Change)

Statements	F (4, 68)	P
1	1.26	0.29
2	1.45	0.22
3	0.88	0.47
4	0.22	0.92

Similar to the previous factor, age as well demonstrated no significant differences between the age groups in responding all statements in this section (*see table15*).

Table 15: ANOVAs for Section 2 (Attitudes toward Change)

Statements	F (4, 68)	P
1	1.14	0.23
2	3.40	0.039
3	1.55	0.21
4	0.17	0.83

Section 3: Intentional Behavior

ANOVAS tests within section three compare participants' intentional behavior toward political engagement in their countries using two factors, country of origins, and age. First, by using country of origins; results indicate that there were no significant differences between the means of countries as explained in Table 16.

Table 16: ANOVAs for Section 3 (Intentional Behavior)

Statements	F (4, 66)	P
1	1.88	0.12
2	1.98	0.12

By using age as a factor, results indicated a significant difference between the first and second age group in responding to both statements of this section: “*Willing to participate if invited to attend events in my country that discuss youth political involvement*” and “*Willing to give speeches /workshops to increase political awareness among youth if invited.*” While there was no significant difference for comparing the third age group to the other groups. At the $p < 0.05$ level, the first statement, which represents a slightly passive tool of political engagement reveals a significant difference of $[F(2, 68) = 5.94, p = 0.004]$ between the mean score of first age group [18-25] ($M=4.34, SD=0.59$) and the second age group [26-30] participants ($M=3.68, SD=0.90$). As for the second statement, which represents a more active tool of political engagement, another significant difference is indicated between the first and second group at the < 0.05 level, $[F(2, 68) = 8.36, p = 0.001]$. In other words, the mean score of the first age group [18-25] ($M=4.32, SD=0.59$) is significantly higher than the second age group [26-30] participants ($M=3.32, SD=0.74$).

The ANOVAs test provides further details to the first set of tests provide in this chapter; precisely analyzing the role of gender through two different tests, t-test, and ANOVAs. Gender is an important element in this study since it reflects the social norms and rules in the MENA region where women are still fighting to gain basic equal rights in society. Also, these tests provide a new level of analysis in this study that directly link both qualitative and quantitative sections through examining the difference between the participants’ responses based on their country of origins, which offer a strong indication of the discussions and results in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, this chapter summarizes and discusses the main findings of this study. It will also generate the general conclusions concerning the effect of the MEPI program on the political engagement of participants from Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, and Morocco. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the limitations of the research and considers suggestions for future research into U.S. cultural diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa.

Merging Results

This section uses the research questions posed in the first chapter as a framework toward extracting general conclusions for this study. Following the triangulation design, data can be discussed through different methods; for this research, quantizing was used to define the results section for qualitative data, while Microsoft Office Excel 2013 and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) were the software used to determine results in the quantitative data section. Both sections' results are merged in this interpretation phase on an equal basis in order to support the findings and the general conclusion. "The interpretation [phase] either may note the convergence of the findings as a way to strengthen the knowledge claims of the study or must explain any lack of convergence that may result" (Creswell and Plano Clark 183). Therefore, the integrations phase in this study will focus on covering the lack of data interchangeably.

Results of the documents' content analysis reinforce the survey's findings and tie them to a theoretical background and larger perspective of interpretations and discussion. For instance, the emergence of the promotion of change in the MENA region as a theme in the qualitative data section agrees with results of section two in the survey that showed that participants believe change can be conducted by young generations in the region.

Research Question 1

What are the core basics of the MEPI program design, and how does the program emphasize the political pillar in its implementation and development?

The main reason for using two types of data in this research was to cover as much of the research objectives as possible. For example, because the survey in this study is specifically designed to examine the political effect of the MEPI program, qualitative data results are more suitable to discuss this research question. Data analysis for this research's questions covered larger sphere than the MEPI program but looked at the policy as an entity and an approach of communication between the U.S. and the MENA region. Therefore the results of looking at the State Department Archival materials about the program distinguishes some characteristics that can be associated, first, to the design of the program, and second, the U.S. policy toward the MENA region.

The Alternative Hypothesis

In statistics, the alternative hypothesis is the rival of the general default position in a certain test or topic. Results of analyzing the documents about the post-9/11 U.S. policy and the creation and implementation of the MEPI program suggest that the U.S. government is offering, through this initiative, alternative perspectives either for the young students coming from the region or through funding events, workshops and organizations within the region (see Chapter 4 for examples). This idea of giving an alternative (American) view of culture, ways of life, and political systems to fresh new students coming from the MENA region is important. These students, who were probably always dreaming to of traveling to the United States and learn about the country, the people, the American way of life is important aspect of the MEPI program to

examine. In fact, responses in section two of the survey (see descriptive results, section two) give an idea about how participants described the effect of learning about the American political system. A considerably high mean was scored in this section, which confirms this idea of offering an alternative reality to the participants. An alternative reality in this concept does not mean illusion as much as it actually means new or innovative; MEPI offers young people from the region new skills, international knowledge, and positive energy to promote change in their communities. However, there are no strong indications of how the program approaches the issue of adjusting this reality to the varied range of societies' norms and systems within the region. At this time, it is mostly a one-sized-fits-all approach.

In 2014, Andrew Green, a former Ambassador to Syria and Saudi Arabia, wrote in the *Telegraph* newspaper:

Certainly, the situation across the Middle East is now more chaotic and dangerous than it has been for half a century. The enthusiasm of yesteryear for the "Arab Spring" has proved entirely misguided. It has led to chaos in Egypt and anarchy in Libya. Democracy is emphatically not the solution for extremely complex societies and Western meddling only makes matters immeasurably worse. (Green)

In fact, Western democracy is probably not a solution for change in the Middle East. The cultures are clearly different and what works for one will probably not work for another. However, democracy, in a Middle Eastern form, might be one. Connecting this suggestion to the discussion of offering an alternative perspective to the young leaders from the MENA region, it is important to argue that change is not an absolute value, and it has to exist in relation to various aspects of society. For instance, the examination of the program's schedules showed various meetings for the students with local NGO's and civic engagement initiative in the U.S. during their participation in the program. Such experiences, although knowledgeable for the participants, do not necessary offer strong arguments about how the program build upon this acquired

knowledge by providing, for instance, necessary training for those leaders to learn how to adjust certain policies and ideas to fit their communities. Therefore, initiating a form of change in any community has to be designed specifically to fit its laws and boundaries.

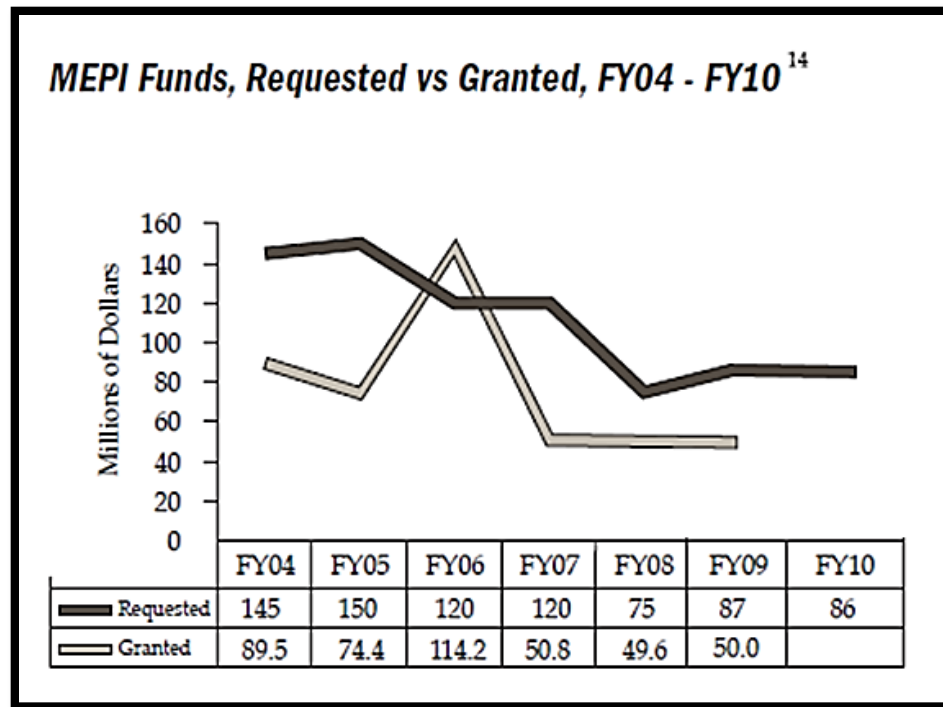
Shaking Civic Society

Since its creation, the MEPI program has been supporting more political engagement and civic activism in the Middle East and North Africa, which has been stated in various ways through the program's officials, its websites, and documentation. Content analysis results suggest that the program's endorsement of civic engagements and political awareness initiatives in the region are congruent with the promoting of change, and democracy, which certainly boost young leaders to undertake these opportunities and shake up the political life in their communities. However, endorsing such initiatives also raises various contradictions that can be considered as a possible drawback of the program implementation. For instance, the fact that many of the initiatives established in the region are funded by a country that is a strong ally to the authoritarian regimes in many of the region's countries is one of the main contradictions that prevent a larger effect of the program in the region. Obviously, the program cannot overcome such contradiction, because such change is greater than its range of influence.

Providing Financial Support

Financial support has always been a crucial element of cultural diplomacy throughout history; the Cold War, for instance, is the best example to reflect the importance of the financial support for a successful cultural diplomacy. The Middle East Partnership Initiative is no exception, probably a developed model of foreign policies' cultural strategies. The content analysis of the budget reports of the program showed a continuous struggle for the program's officials to obtain enough money to cover all of their plans and stated objectives. The concept of

comparing the American soft power policies to its hard power ones in relation to budgeting and governmental support had been discussed in various scholarships before, and it has been particularly discussed for the MEPI program (see Chapter Two, Evaluations and Assessments). The most recently updated grant budgets for the MEPI program were issued in the federal budget report of 2015, as explained in figure 10.



Source: McNerney, Stephen, and Cole Bockenfeld. "The Federal Budget and Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2015: Democracy, Governance, and Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa." <http://pomed.org>. N.p., n.d. Web.

Research Question 2

How are participants' interests in the political life of their countries influenced by their MEPI experience?

Results of sections one and two in the survey analysis illustrate that participants expressed that they were most likely to join an NGO or give speeches about political engagement and political awareness after returning to their home countries. At the same time, results confirm that the participants' interests in political engagement were initiated or increased after their MEPI experience, which matches the highlighted outputs of the program schedule analyses. The program's calendar analysis showed a focus on civic engagement classes, and workshops, in addition to possible inspirations that the young leaders acquire from meeting with various American NGO's and political activism groups. Moreover, the increasing interest of political engagement among MEPI participants upon their return home also reflects the status of civic societies and political engagement opportunities in each country. In fact, the description of the political profile of the countries that were the target of this study demonstrate the different complications with the political life in the region, which is a significant reason for those young people participating in the program; they are extremely ready to change their perspectives. In other words, the restricted regimes in the region produce a high level of willingness for change among the young generations.

Research Question 3

To what extent do MEPI participants express intentions to play an active political role in their societies?

The discussion of this question is related to the previous one in various aspects since it should be logical for participants to demonstrate strong intentions to undertake a dynamic role in the political life within their societies, and the results of section three that measured the participants' intentional behavior confirm this relation. However, the fact that the third section tells us that MEPI participants are willing to undertake a role of political activism in their

countries reflects a larger implementation of this research question. Results showed that an average percentage of 26.76% of the surveyed participants said they are currently attending events that discuss political issues or giving speeches and workshops related to political awareness and engagements in their countries. While an average of 43.66% said, they are highly likely to play such a role if they were offered an opportunity, this raises questions about the level of opportunity that each country has for those young people to develop a certain level of change and engagement in society, which is a deeper aspect to research in future studies. For instance, there is a large difference between the percentage of surveyed Algerians who express their willingness to be more political engaged and those who said they currently do, which reflect a lack of adequate opportunities for those young people to fulfill such a role. There is a difference also between the two groups in Tunisia, Lebanon, and Morocco, yet the percentage of the participants who are currently engaged in the political life is considerably high (*see figure 11*). This difference suggests that people in these three countries will probably show a promising level of engagement in the future.

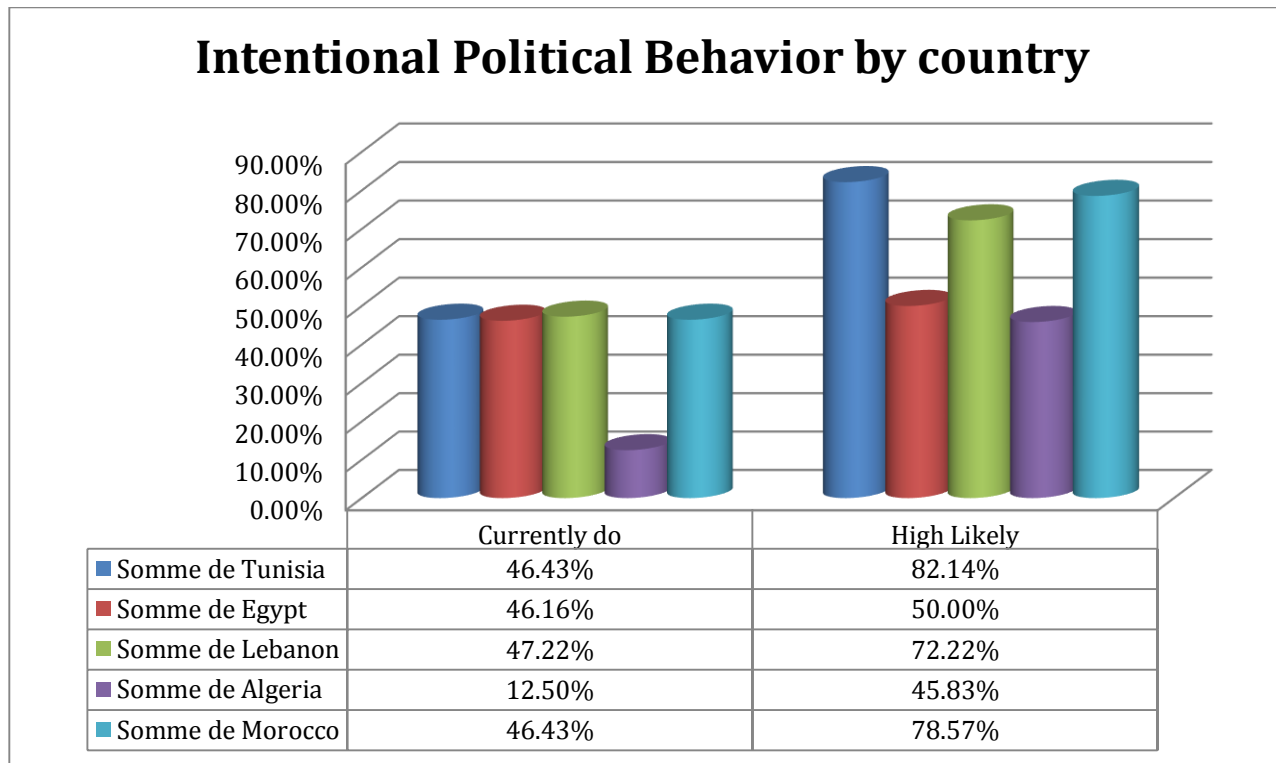


Figure 11: Intentional political behaviors by country.

Research Question 4

How do the participants' interests in more political engagements within their communities differ from one country to another, and how does it fit into the Arab Spring framework?

The purpose of including this research question was to examine the effect of the Arab Spring on participants which requires a comparison between countries. Although all five countries experienced some level of protests and demonstration in the wake of the Arab Spring in 2010 (See Chapter two, Countries Overview), the cases of Tunisia and Egypt are considerably different than the other countries. Results suggest that participants from Lebanon and Morocco were more politically engaged through joining NGO's and political groups than participants from Tunisia. There are two significant elements to discuss in this output: first, it seems contradictory that Tunisians would express a lower political engagement level than the Lebanese, while Tunisia is

essentially the birthplace of the Arab Spring. Second, Tunisians also express a lower level of engagement than their Moroccan peers who did not have an Arab Spring, in the full sense of the term. Although this output can be an important perspective to future research, it is also essential to report that no significant difference was recorded between the countries in responding to the rest of the survey sections. This reinforces the general description of the political arena in each country in chapter one; despite the Arab Spring occurring in various degree of intensity and form, societies within the examined countries share more similar cultural situations and challenges related to political engagement and activism than differences and variances.

Research Question 5

What factors affects the level of engagement among participants?

Results from the qualitative data analysis suggest that gender did not have any significant effect on the participants' political engagement in their countries, nor on their intentions to play a stronger role in the political life within their communities. While gender did not have any significant effect, age showed a significant difference in how MEPI participants evaluated their engagement in civic society and on their intentions to be more active politically. Younger participants seem to be more open to political engagement and more than likely willing to play a more significant role in spreading political awareness and lecturing about civic engagement. However, age did not demonstrate any difference in participants' attitudes toward change in their countries and the role of younger generations in conducting changes in their political life. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct more research on the older generation of MEPI participants to examine the changing views and attitudes of the participants as they move forward with their professional and personal life.

Theoretical Implications

The main theoretical framework for this research study is the concept of Orientalism, and how Western societies and governments, in this case, the United States, influence the content of the program design and promotion, represent facts, ideas, and generalizations about the MENA region. The theory of Orientalism was introduced more than 35 years ago, in the publication of Edward Said's book; moreover, it has become part of our language and terminology. The reason for choosing Edward Said's discourse of Orientalism was because it fits the cultural perspective that the MEPI program undertakes in its strategies and policies since Said focused more on the culture and literature more than viewing the economics factors. In an attempt to engage some of the factors of this theory, this study looked at the documentation of the MEPI program and analyzed the various themes that emerged frequently. In the spirit of Orientalism 'othering' concept, the document analysis extracted two significant themes that fell within the theoretical framework of this research study (see Chapter 4, Qualitative Data Analysis section). The use of the word HOPE in many speeches related to the program was a major output within the qualitative data section. This theme seems to implicitly link the situation in the MENA region to the program, in the narrow meaning of the theme, or to the post-9/11 Bush policy in a larger presentation of the theme, link it to the word and idea of HOPE. If we relate this to the second extracted theme of promoting U.S. values, it tells us that it is not any opportunity that will offer hope to the region, yet it is the American one, the policy that will support change, and offers hope to the people of the region. Therefore, policymakers in the U.S. have to draft their strategies to not portray the MENA region as a desperate part of the world where the superior western society is needed to spread hope and civilization.

Limitations

Besides the common research limitations of time, this study faced a challenge in collecting enough data about the program. Most of the documents related to the program were either part of a larger documents like the budget reports and some of the speeches, or pieces of articles and news published on various websites of the State Department. Moreover, one of the limitations of this research study was the age factor. The survey's results show difference in how participants responded to various statements based on their age, and although the sample used in the results did report significant outputs, it would be important to expand research within this group of MEPI participants (age between 31-39 years old). This group represents the oldest generation of the program, people who are supposed to be having a professional life, a family, and bigger responsibilities.

Furthermore, another limitation was in the demographics of the survey; another question about the current location of students should have been added to the section, in order to investigate the effect of the program on the participants' intentions whether to live in countries or aboard. Such piece of information would open a more important angle to research the effect of western cultural diplomacy.

Recommendations for Future Research

Scholars and policymakers need to continue developing research about cultural diplomacy and exchange opportunities particularly between Western countries and the Middle East and North African region. Since the 9/11 attacks, the MENA region has been a critical element in the world's peace and stability, and it is important to investigate possible options for mutual understanding between the two regions, while at the same time stopping any tool that aims to create further misconceptions and issues between them.

Research regarding the MEPI program strategies toward the MENA region should be conducted to examine the effect of the program on participants while they are in the U.S., and this could be done through interviews or even social media posts analysis, which has become an important part of young people's public lives. Another approach for future research might be to further test gender's effect on the program outcome. This research suggests that gender did not represent a significant difference in all five countries, which is an important evidence that MEPI's female participants in the region are paving the way for a more effective role for women in their societies. However further tests and statistics has to be conducted to generate more accurate conclusions about gender role among the participants.

CONCLUSION

Post-9/11 U.S. diplomacy toward the Middle East and North Africa represents a complicated combination of war policies and cultural interactions. This study provides evidence that the MEPI program has a strong, positive effect on the participants' political engagement and civic activism in their countries and societies upon returning home. Moreover, this research suggests that the Arab Spring increased the general interest in creating change in the region, while it did not necessarily show a difference between countries which experienced a change in their political systems like Egypt and Tunisia, and others which did not. Finally, policies like the MEPI program are often hard to evaluate or assess, and more data and resources would be need to conduct a full evaluation of the program's effect on all countries of the region.

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ENDNOTES

¹See "لحظة اعتقال الناشط علي حليمه" طبع، ريضكم " للشيخ سنيان" YouTube. aljadeedonline, 6 Oct. 2015.

² (The moment of arresting the You Stink Movement activist Assaad Thebian)

³ See Henry and Jang 101-126 chapter 5: Algeria and the Arab Uprisings, and Khan

⁴ See ("Institute for Cultural Diplomacy: What is Cultural Diplomacy? ") at *Culturaldiplomacy.org*.

⁵The United States called for Buenos Aires conference to "propose a series of government-sponsored technological and educational exchanges with the nations of Latin America" (Hart 3)

⁶ See Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, and Muhamad, Power and Positionality: negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures for more on Insider/Outsider researchers.

⁷(El-Shayeb 74)

⁸ See *Road to Revolution*. Dir. Dânia Lucas. Perf. Ivo Canelas. 2014. 2014. Film

⁹ "Pursuing resisting torture in Tunisia: The Role of Civic Society": This Article was published in the electronic magazine issued by the regional office of Amnesty International (Human Rights) in the MENA region. See ("مبتدري في ارض تلك عني ب: دور الامم المتحدة في تونس في نظم تلك والديلة, ") أحمكس عود.

¹⁰Monsif El Marzouki was president of Tunisia from 2011-2014. For more details, see Marzouki official website *Moncefmarzouki.net*

¹¹ (El-Marzouki 5)

¹²The Tunisian Human Rights League won a Noble prize in 2015. See ("*Telephone Interview with Abdessattar Ben Moussa, President of The Tunisian Human Rights League. "National Dialogue Quartet, The Official Website of the Noble Prize. [n.d.]. Viewed Apr. 26, 2016.*

¹³See King 78-79 for more details on the development of women rights in Tunisia since President Bourguiba.

¹⁴MuhammedNaguib was a president only for a year, from 1953-1954. Later he was forced to resign and was isolated in his house in Cairo by President Jamal Abdel Nasser. He mentioned in his diaries that he chose to resign due to problems with Nasser. However, he was surprised to read the revolution's command council announcement regarding his resignation in which the officers claimed that he asked for absolute control of the revolution and

government, which was not acceptable. Hence, his resignation was to be accepted.
(228–227 ق.ت. ٢٠١١ م.)

¹⁵(The 162 Law, also known as Emergency Law in Tunisia)

¹⁴ *Kefaya* or *Enough*(in English was the most influential changes movement that rooted for the 2011 revolution in Egypt. See “The Kefaya Movement: A Case Study of Grassroots and Reform Initiative” at *rand.org* for more details about Kefaya

¹⁷The National Defense Research Institute case study about *Kefaya* reported that the movement’s leaders were surprised from the massive popular support of their demonstrations against a fifth term for Mubarak or a power transfer to his son.

¹⁸Besides the 2016 Human Rights Watch report, previous reports (2014,2015) include violations related to political movements and civic engagement in Egypt.

¹⁹Lebanon adopts Consociationalism which is a form of democracy that seeks to regulate the sharing of power in a state that comprises diverse societies (distinct ethnic, religious, political, national or linguistic groups). For more details, see ("Consociationalism - Reut Institute"), and Salamey 14-16)

²⁰14 February - 27 April 2005 marked what is called as Cedar Revolution, which aimed for a complete withdrawal of the Syrian troops from Lebanon. 12 July – 14 August 2006. The 2006 Lebanon War which was a military conflict between Hezbollah and Israel.

²¹See Mapping “The Civil Society Organizations in Lebanon” for constitute of civil society in Lebanon and how it functions.

²²See ("Algeria." Global Youth Service Data Base, Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP). [n.d.]. Viewed May. 15, 2016.

²³See "World Report 2015: Algeria." *Human Rights Watch*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 May 2016.

²⁴See Zoubir and White 257 for more on Bouteflika and the Department of Intelligence and Security (DRS).

²⁵(Gourdo 114-15).

²⁶The Pew Research Center conducted in-depth interviews with about 110,000 people in 50 countries through their global attitudes project published in March 2007. (Street et al.).

²⁷See Creswell and Clark 56-59 for the full table of mixed method classifications.

²⁸ See “Middle East Partnership Initiative “on the State Department Online Archives.

²⁹See Creswell 155 for a detailed explanation of surveys targeted at a specific population.

³⁰See Appendix C for Survey's detailed sections and questions.

³¹See Appendix D

³²See "The Middle East Partnership Initiative" in The Online Archives for the U.S. Department of State.

³³For more details on the awards winners and their projects, see The Online Archives of the U.S. Department of State, MEPI program, MEPI Programs Answer Calls of Arab Civil Society; Capacity and Networks Grow.

³⁴For more on Business summits for women from the Middle East and North Africa see StateGov. U.S. Department of State Archives.

APPENDIX B: Specialized Terms and Concepts

Arab Spring: “A series of antigovernment uprisings in various countries in North Africa and the Middle East, beginning in Tunisia in December 2010” of 2010. According to the Oxford Dictionaries (“Arab Spring: Definition of Arab Spring in Oxford Dictionary”)

Congressional Research Service: It is a component of the Library of Congress, conducts research and analysis for Congress on a broad range of national policy issues. According to the CRS website (“Congressional Research Service Reports”)

Civic Engagement: In order to best serve the purpose of the research, this study is considering Putnam popularized definition of the concept as an engagement that “covers about everything from reading newspapers, political participation, and social networks” (Barrett and Zani 98–99)

Democracy Promotion: Prof. Hendrickson’s definition of the term best serves the content of this study. “Public diplomacy may be defined, simply, as the conduct of international relations by governments through public communications media and through dealings with a wide range of nongovernmental entities (political parties, corporations, trade associations, labor unions, educational institutions, religious organizations, ethnic groups, and so on including influential individuals), for the purpose of influencing the politics and actions of other governments.” (“Definitions of Public Diplomacy | Tufts Fletcher School”)

Governmental Accountability Office: An independent, nonpartisan agency works for Congress. It assists congress in meeting its responsibilities, and ensures the accountability of the federal government. GAO primarily works at the request of congressional committees or subcommittees. (“About GAO”)

MENA region: According to the State Department, it is the Near East region and it consists of the following countries (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen) (Department of State. The Office of Website Management)

Pillar: A pillar is an area of concentration within MEPI. MEPI has four different pillars: Democracy, Education, Women empowerment and Economy (Embassy, “About MEPI”)

Political Involvement: the term in this study is used within a wide scope of meanings to cover more than simply voting. Due to the geopolitical situation of the MENA region between totalitarian regimes and lack of interest in politics, a wide range of activities are considered as political involvement in this research, such as speeches, presentations, articles, intentional behavior.

APPENDIX C: Survey

Survey: This survey is to collect data for my thesis. My name is Meriem Mechehoud, I am a Fulbright grantee, and an MA student in the American Culture Studies program at BGSU. My Advisor is Dr.Khani Begum, an Associate Professor in the English Department at Bowling Green State University. My research is about American cultural diplomacy in the Middles East and North Africa relating to the State Department’s cultural exchange programs targeting undergraduates in the MENA region. The MEPI program is a sample of these programs and I am conducting this survey to argue to what extend the programs effect participants’ perception of their societies, their political interests, and civic engagement after interacting with American culture and society.

Purpose: This research is part of my thesis; there will be no benefit of compensation from participating in the study. This study is likely to yield the following knowledge: the cultural exchange experience for young people from the MENA region in the United States can affect their political involvement and civic engagement as far as their home countries are concerned.

Demographics:

Gender:Drop down question (Male/ Female)

Countryof Origins: Drop down questions (Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco)

Year you participated in MEPI: Drop down question (Years from 2003-2015)

I. Section One: Political Engagement

Indicate what is relevant to you (The statements were scaled from 1 to 5: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always):

1. I participated in an NGO, political group, civic society development projects after I return home.

-
2. I published, plan to, or tried to publish an article, paper, book about youth political involvement and awareness, or civic engagement in my home country.
 3. I gave speeches in class, university, TV, Radio related to youth political awareness and involvement, and/or civic engagement.
 4. I met with follow MEPI from my country.

II. Section Two: Attitudes Toward Change

Indicate what is relevant to you (The statements were scaled from 1 to 5: Strongly disagree, Agree, Undecided, Agree, Strongly agree)

1. I believe young people in my country can make Political changes.
2. MEPI leaders are responsible for promoting political awareness among youth in my country.
3. Participating in MEPI increases/ initiates my interest in political issues back home.
4. The American political model affected me positively.

III. Section Three: Intentional Behavior

Indicate what is relevant to you (The statements were scaled from 1 to 5: Highly unlikely, Unlikely, Maybe, Highly likely, Currently do)

1. Willing to participate if invited to attend events in my country that discuss youth political involvement.
2. Willing to give speeches /workshops to increase political awareness among youth if invited.

Appendix D: Consent Form

Dear MEPI students,

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey on **US Cultural Diplomacy in the MENA Region: MEPI Program Effect on Youth Political Involvement and Civic Engagement**. This is a research project being conducted by Meriem Mechehoud, a student at Bowling Green State University. It should take approximately **10 minutes**.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to develop an analysis of the MEPI program, its creation, development and impact. The program originally focuses on four-dimensional areas: Democracy, Education, Women empowerment and Economy, yet, this study focuses only on Democracy or the political aspect of the program through examining the relations between the program's promotion for democracy and the developing interests related to youth political engagement in the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, to looking at the different skills that the participants are supposed to acquire by the end of the program in order to develop political engagement in their home countries, and to which extent the design of the program could serve such goal.

Voluntary Nature

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

Benefits

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the MEPI program and its effect on the political involvement of participants in their home countries, their attitudes toward youth engagement and change.

Risks

The risk of participation is no greater than that experienced in daily life.

Anonymity

Your survey answers will be sent to a link at SurveyMonkey.com where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Survey Monkey does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. Only my advisor and myself will have access to your answers and survey data.

Contact Information

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact my research supervisor, Professor Khani Begum, phone: 419-372-8143, or via email at khani@bgsu.edu. You may also contact me via phone: 419-819-1359 or via email: meriemmm@bgsu.edu

Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the “Agree” button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years or older.
- You are a MEPI participant
- You are from Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt or Lebanon.

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree