Contemporary Embassy Planning:
Designing in an Age of Terror

by

Ian Houseal

A Master’s Project submitted to the faculty
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Regional Planning
in the Department of City and Regional Planning.

Chapel Hill

May 2007

Approved by:

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ADVISOR
PREFACE

In October, 1999, former Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, along with former Secretary of Defense, Joseph Cohen, spoke to a small group of college students in the Edmund Muskie Archives at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. Albright said she was there for personal reasons; Muskie had been a career mentor of hers. The College requested time for a discussion with students. She conceded to a group of no more than thirty. I had the opportunity to be one of those students.

The topic of discussion was freeform and covered a wide range of issues from national defense to foreign relations. Toward the end of the question and answer session, Albright put forth what issue was on her mind and left us with a simple statement. “Terrorism,” she said, “was the next threat the world faced.” These words have resonated with me since. Terrorism entered the American consciousness in the United States on September 11, 2001 with the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. But, terrorism has in fact been part of American foreign relations in force since the 1980’s.


Only two previous terrorist attacks against American embassies were of the magnitude of those in Tanzania and Kenya. One was the 1983 car bombing of the American embassy in Beirut, Lebanon which led to the development of the Inman standards for embassy planning; a watershed set of recommendations that have framed embassy planning since. The other event
was the Iran Hostage Crisis from November 4, 1979 to January 20, 1981. Edmund Muskie was Secretary of State during that time period.

Edmund Muskie, had been a US Senator, Maine State Governor, and ran for vice president with Hubert Humphrey against Richard Nixon. In 1980, he was appointed Secretary of State by James Carter after Cyrus Vance resigned following a failed secret mission attempting to rescue eight US service men from the American embassy compound in Tehran, Iran. Secretary Vance had opposed the rescue mission. As Secretary of State, Muskie spent his tenure attempted to bring the hostages home by diplomatic means.

In her visit to the Muskie Archives, perhaps Secretary Albright was looking for alternatives and guidance from a past Secretary of State for addressing terrorist attacks on diplomatic facilities. How was diplomacy, and the physical structures that house diplomatic mission to proceed in the new age of terror? Would the future hold embassies built as fortresses, walled off from the countries in which diplomacy was to be carried out, presenting America to the world as defensive, arrogant, and fearful, or would the United States have an embassy construction program and design ideal that projected a positive image of the United States to the world? These are questions I would like discuss throughout this thesis.
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I. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism and the resultant policies for embassy planning have had a dramatic effect on the way the United States designs its embassies. This, in turn, has had an effect on the perception of America abroad. The purpose of this thesis is to answer the following question: In what ways has the advent of global terror in the world manifested itself in the planning and designs of American embassies, and in particular, in their siting and urbanistic participation of the American embassy in a host city? Furthermore, what perceived image does this project to the world?

The fear of terrorism has caused embassies to be located distant from city centers, with high wall surrounding compounds, and buildings that look and function like military fortresses. Currently, only under special circumstances are embassies located in city centers, in the traditional places of prominence significant to the host city and the United States. These situations are becoming few and far between. Assuming city-center locations requires visionary attention by the Heads of State from participating countries, by diplomats, and transnational agreements that are based on a future of mutual understanding about the importance of statesmanship. With a handful of exceptions, the American embassy is now a self-contained compound. This compound is a facility that fulfills all the needs of the embassy staff; a city within a city, or in the case of the contemporary embassy, a city removed from a city.

The United States -- and the State Department -- faces a serious dilemma in planning its embassies abroad. On one hand there is the need to provide safety for State Department employees. On the other hand, there is the need to put forth a positive image of America abroad. Throughout the history of the diplomacy in the United States, the American embassy has expressed a carefully cultivated image of America abroad. For example, after World War II, the United States wished to characterize the country through an architectural motif of openness in the design of American embassies to differentiate itself from the Soviet Union.

Currently, the desires of America to be projected to the world through embassy design
are unknown. Embassies are by-and-large military encampment-like compounds that put forth a
default image of America as defensive and hiding behind walls. The de-emphasis of the embassy
building by the State Department as a symbol of diplomacy and democracy only leads to more
ambiguity about the United State’s intentions in a host country and to the world, leaving the
interpretation of the symbolism of embassy up to those that are most influenceable by ideas of
terrorism and the negative views of American policy and action.

This thesis builds on Jane Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America’s
Embassies*, published in 1998 -- an excellent resource for the historical context of the planning
process of building American embassies. The book describes the eccentric figures who
determined the style, form, and placement of the American embassies on the landscape, along
with a compelling story of the processes that have shaped the current state of American embassy
planning.

What is most eerie about this book as a source on security in embassy design and
planning is its year of publication. The year, 1998, marks the date of the Dar es Salaam and
Nairobi terrorist bombings. The last chapter is titled “Targets for Terror,” although Loeffler
never discusses the Dar es Salaam and Nairobi bombings. Her book was published before the
bombings as if begging for others to continue the discussion.

Nine years after Loeffler wrote her book, the history of the terrorism and the American
embassy is a little more robust. We are now in the Age of Terror and from a local level to
a national level our policy and design decisions about cities, buildings, and of course, the
American embassy, are permeated with designing for an age of terror. In the nine years since
Loeffler wrote her book, there have been new terrorist attacks, a standardization of the embassy
construction process, and new if not better ideas about how diplomacy should be carried out.
Loeffler begins a discussion of the effects of terrorism on American embassy planning. This
thesis will add to that discussion with the goal of contributing to the evolving American embassy
planning process.
This thesis is divided into three sections. The first section will give background into the history and policies that have shaped American embassy planning. Special attention will be placed on the symbolism of the American embassies throughout history. This is important because it shows how the United States has been as deliberate as possible in putting forth a positive image of America abroad. This review also reveals the processes by which embassies were sited, and the effects of embassy placement and design on host cities.

The second section considers the embassy as a particularly appealing target for terrorism and outlines the events and policies that have shaped American embassy planning in the Age of Terror. The current policies and practices of the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations, housed in the State Department will be covered including Standard Embassy Design and the Design/Build Program now in effect.

The third section analyzes four embassies according to their urbanistic participation within a host city. Contemporary embassies come in two types: Embassies with great symbolic importance and embassies that are built as enclave-like compounds. The embassies analyzed include the American embassies in Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Ottawa, Berlin, and the future embassy in Baghdad.

The fourth section is a concluding discussion about the importance of the American embassy as a symbolic gesture and its importance to putting forth a positive image of America abroad. The United States embassy program is currently suffering from a severe identity crisis. Establishing an identity (whatever that identity may be) for the American embassy should be of utmost important to American diplomacy.
II. SYMBOLISM OF AMERICAN EMBASSIES

The design of American embassies is deeply tied to the image that the United States tries to project to the world. The embassy has significance to the United States as well as the host country and city in which it is placed. To the United States, the embassy represents an idea of how the nation wishes to be viewed in the world. To the government of a host country, the American embassy is a marker of investment by the United States in their country. To the people of a host country, the American embassy represents a conduit for voicing their concern to the United States and a place to protest against the United States and everything it should and should not be.

Because of this symbolic importance in a host country representing national power and prestige, American embassies are targets for terrorism. People of a country, expressing discontent for America, American policy, or American actions have often responded by throwing rocks, jumping fences, or demonstrating outside the United States embassies around the world. For the most part these attacks have resulted in relatively minor damage to American embassies; broken windows or vandalism being the extent of the damage. Although violent in some cases, this type of attack has been tolerated by the American government.

The price of providing added protection has been also been high, both in terms of architectural changes to accommodate new terrorism requirements in the building design and in terms of dollar cost to a budget already strained by funding cuts.1 Ron Robin in *Enclaves of America* writes, “This channeling of anti-American sentiment into attacks on buildings rather than Americans themselves has led growing numbers of observers to the conclusion that the physical representation of American power abroad - in particular, a new generation

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of architecturally innovative embassy structures - were uncomfortable symbols of intrusion.”

--and in most cases a likely choice for channeling discontent with America. Whether the
current State Department would like to admit it or not, the American embassy will always be
a symbolic gesture in a host country. Whether it is open or separated by a wall, the American
embassy projects an image to the world.

American embassy planning can be roughly divided into four periods that align with
watershed periods in world history. The first period of embassy planning in the United States
was from 1925 to 1945. During this period embassies reflected America’s own struggle
with its own identity as a world power and a new player on the global economic stage. This
period saw embassies that were associated with colonialism in third world countries including
the Philippines in South East Asia to Peru and Mexico in Central and South America. The
embassies of this period tended to locate in downtown locations to support their business
interests and begin to showcase the United States as a world player.

The second period of embassy planning was the post World War II period. During
the Cold War, the politics of Soviet containment was the guiding motivation for U.S. policy
abroad. The American embassies in this period focused on notions of democracy, openness,
and finally regionalism. They were located in downtown locations to showcase the United
States as a world power. The architecture of this period was boldly modern, the antithesis of
the Soviet Union’s classicist architecture, and displayed ideals of progress, technology, and of
course freedom and openness.

The third period of embassy planning was the post-Soviet period. In this period, the
United States entered many ex-Soviet bloc countries to show that U.S. was concerned with
the future of these new countries, again touting democracy. Because of the short time frame
of this period, not many embassies were actually constructed. Most of the embassies were

purchased, and located in downtown locations. The architecture of this period was neoclassical and represented a return to statesmanship by the United States and also reflected prevailing post-modern styles in the U.S. architecture profession’s return to the traditional.

The forth period of embassy planning and the focus of this project is the contemporary period. The architecture of this period inadvertently stressed standardization and colonialization, a return to the early years of embassy planning. The walled fortress representative of this era of embassy design tends to be sited in locations far from city centers. Any deliberate ideas about what image an American embassy should project to the world is left undefined by America. The embassy, without a purposeful design concept or symbolism has defaulted to a fortress, representing America as having aggressive intentions in a host country.
EARLY EMBASSIES- FROM NO HOUSE TO PLANTATION HOUSE

The year 1926 can be thought of as the beginning of American embassy planning. Landmark legislation before that date included the passing of the Lowden Act in 1911, which enabled the government to buy and erect buildings abroad. With the passing of the Foreign Service Building Act in 1926 a commission was formalized to oversee the purchase and construction of foreign buildings and gave the State Department the ability to finance these projects. From that point on the development of the American embassy has been a uniquely American endeavor engaging competing interests involved the symbolism of the American embassy. The early development of the embassy planning process during the early period critically defines the role that the embassy would play as a symbol of America abroad.

The symbolism of American embassies in the early years of its existence moved from being attempts a defining an American identity as compared to Europe in the beginning of the period to being an economic compliment driven by the American business community abroad. Standardization and then colonialization became the driving symbols of American personified in the American embassy towards the end of this period. The embassy was represented using the colonial house and later a plantation house was used to signify the American image abroad. Both of these images latched on to the American house as symbolic of America abroad.

The American embassy had a rough start, suffering from under funding and lack of attention to the importance of such an endeavor, but some of the most important administrative groundwork and symbolic gestures of America abroad for embassy planning were developed in these early years. The first ambassadors were neither called ambassadors, nor were initial embassies seen as something that Congress felt that they should spend Federal dollars in constructing. Ron Robin in Enclaves of America quotes an American Embassy Association story about the existence of ambassadors in the initial years of the United State’s diplomatic program. He writes, “A distinguished-looking American wandering the streets of London during

a typically dark and wet evening attracted the attention of a passing policeman. “What are you
doing walking about in this beastly weather?” the officer queried. “Better go home.” “I have no
home,” Joseph H. Choate replied, “I am the American ambassador.”

The ambassador or rather, head of the diplomatic activities for a country did not even
carry their current title because the new American democracy did not want their representative
abroad to have “aristocratic-sounding titles.” Congress was not willing to give a title to the
diplomats of the state or fund them for what they were doing. It was somewhat ironic that the
young American democracy that did not want to seem aristocratic to the world and themselves
relied upon the aristocracy because only wealthy individuals had the means to hold foreign posts
with little to no pay.

It was not until 1893 that the true title of ambassador was used for an American diplomat
abroad, but even with title, ambassadors lacked pay or place of residence. The first official
ambassador was Thomas F. Bayard, appointed by President Grover Cleveland. Bayard was
stationed in London. Even with such a title, Bayard and subsequent ambassadorial posts in Paris,
Berlin, and Rome, were without official diplomatic residences or office. The ambassador still
had to be independently wealthy to afford housing and offices, but had now gained a title fitting
to their aristocratic financial background.

It was not until 1909, with a growing trend towards professionalism in American
government, and a growing foreign business sector with growing business interest abroad, it
was successfully argued that the United States needed dignified embassy buildings to house
their ambassadors. The American Embassy Association (AEA), sponsored by American
businessmen with interests abroad argued that it was “undemocratic to require personal wealth
as a prerequisite to foreign service.” United States Congressional Representative, Frank Lowden
said to congress, “No position should be beyond the reach of the trained, but poor man…We
have boasted through our history that this is a country of homes…Shall the nation alone be

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homeless.”

After Lowden’s convincing speech, February 1911 saw the passing of the Lowden Act, authorizing a maximum of $500,000 to be spent annually on buildings abroad, with a maximum of $150,000 to be spent in any one place. Although the Lowden Act gave the mandate to build, there was no formal building program for embassy construction, but there were now funds for embassies and ambassadorial residences.

The American Embassy Association, essential in passing the Lowden Act continued their crusade to support their own interest abroad by forming an alliance with the new class of professional diplomat. American business interests abroad by the beginnings of the twentieth century “accepted the need for the visible hand of government in negotiating favorable international trade agreements and sustaining access to foreign capital.” The professional diplomat was now detached from the aristocratic beginnings of the profession and together they formed an alliance. The embassy became a way to get a house and office for the ambassador and a symbol and advocating platform for American business abroad.

It was not until the passing of the Foreign Service Building (FSB) Act of 1926 was a formal program established to oversee the purchase and construction of foreign buildings and finance these projects. The bill authorized $10 million for the purchase, alteration, and repair of property for use as diplomatic facilities. A commission was established to oversee the program. This commission was called the Foreign Service Building Commission (FSBC). An amendment was passed in 1928, strengthening the FSB Act to dispose of real estate and to hire staff for technical assistance. This Act as amended is the legislation that gives the present Office of Overseas Building Operations authority to construct embassy buildings just as the FSBC was able to do the same.

Between the passing of the Lowden Act and the passing of the FSB Act, embassy construction and acquisition proceeded in a piecemeal fashion; sometime purchasing property

6 Ibid., p. 16-17.
and sometimes using the money to repair damaged buildings. Adding to the piecemeal approach to embassy planning during this period, with the end of World War I, finding themselves elevated to world power, a still young America, perpetually measured themselves against Western European countries, chose palace-like houses to symbolize America abroad to merely claim a place of power as compared to Europe. Before 1926 the choice to purchase oversized houses was compounded by the unavailability of funding and a government mandate to plan and build embassies.

The first grabs at property for embassy sites after funds were made available were buildings that were available because of their colossal size and non-functionality for anything else. When looking for buildings for embassy facilities, the buildings typically available were large, palace-like, houses. In 1924, the State department purchased a suburban villa in Oslo which was once the residence of Alfred Nobel. (See Figure 2.1) The department also purchased the seventeenth-century Schoenborn Palace in Prague in 1925.8 These buildings were huge and palatial and signified the first attempts at representing America abroad. The still very young United States was constantly measuring itself against the Europe that it was leaving behind.

After 1926 there was a dramatic shift in embassy planning with the interests of the AEA leading the way. AEA realized that a symbolic appearance of America abroad would promote “product awareness” promoting their business interests abroad. To the AEA, the embassy should represent the machine age of the early twentieth century. It was believed that the embassy should be standardized product itself, to further represent the product that was intended to be sold.9

Stated publicly, the American Embassy Association said that a standardization of

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8 Ibid., p. 67.
9 Ibid., p. 71.
appearance was intended to “deflect criticism from palatial embassies and remove the sigma of aristocratic airs. Standardization processes were the epitome of a democratic doctrine; they restricted extravagance and produced a dignified, sober, and creditable image of a nation.” The American Embassy Association continued that repetition and simplicity “would be distinctive of our country and at once recognized. Standardization as a symbol was used as an exemplary of democratic values and capitalistic interests that the United States should emulate in their foreign presence.

Although working under different motives the FSBC was looking for a model to for American embassy design. With the general rejection of Beaux Arts monumentality in America in the late 1920’s, the search for an original American architecture was all the rage. The FSBC saw greatness in the American colonial tradition in architecture and looked to the colonial American house type for as a new model for the American embassy. Carter’s Grove, Monticello, Homewood, and the White House were looked to for inspiration. The American house represented historic continuity, implied endurance, stability, and strength; all important features of a country trying to put forth their interest abroad.

Modern architecture, representative of the machine age was shied away from because it did not as of yet represent the stately and self-esteem needs of a growing America trying to define themselves as American. It would not be until later that modern architecture becomes the defining style of architecture defining American democracy.

The FSBC’s first attempts to articulate their desire of an American architecture abroad was a program of stamping of “little White Houses all around the world.” Programmatically, the White House model worked quite well. It included an office wing, living quarters, and ceremonial section. It was colonial architecture and uniquely American. The replication of the White House as an embassy ended abruptly when the symbolic relationship to the executive

10 Ibid., p. 71.
branch was realized by members of the committee.\textsuperscript{12}

Instead of using the White House as the form for the embassy, the southern plantation was chosen instead. (See Figure 2.2) The southern plantation was believed to represent a positive image of America that was different than the negative views of cowboys or yankees that might poorly represent America abroad. A resurrection of the southern gentlemen and a noble way of life was being mainstreamed in American society and this was carried to the design ideology of the FSBC. In Central America and China, the State Department planned replicas of southern plantations manors. On the downside, these embassies were just as they were in the South “icons of paternalism, physical representations of a master-subject relationship that the United States aspired to maintain in these regions.”\textsuperscript{13} They had the effect of representing America’s dominant power over the country in which they were located.

Additionally, colonial architecture in American embassies also represented a way to avoid contamination from foreign ways. The architecture was not a melding of cultures. It was an imposition of solely American values and an American architecture on foreign lands much like the compound plan that the American embassy uses today.

According to Robin, the embassy as a design gesture would also act as a surrogate to military colonial ventures. The reality was that the symbolic presence of America in foreign


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 6.
lands would be initially more politically feasible than a physical presence. The lobby for American embassies pushed this forward. Robin writes, “Given the new developments in communication, advocates of embassies declared, there were alternatives to European-style empires as safeguards of the nation’s legitimate concerns in foreign lands.\textsuperscript{14} The symbolic nature of the embassy would become a trailblazing ideal for colonial interest abroad and uniquely American.

It might not have been considered or cared for, that these symbols of colonial domination would become targets of frustration in the future by the countries that the United States business community had set up shop. As a result of these first embassies, the United States had a created a unique form of asserting themselves abroad different then any other country. The United States had come to define itself as a young nation involved in matters of state. The government had placed its mark in foreign lands using symbols of the American presence abroad. The symbol was colonialism and business interests abroad. The embassy had become a support facility for carrying out American foreign business abroad.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 20.
In 1947, Truman’s presidential order called for the containment of Soviet expansion. With this presidential order, American embassy planning would enter a new phase of expansion with symbolic importance attached to the ideologies of freedom and democracy and everything the Soviet Union was not. Through the period that became known as the Cold War, the United States was to commit extensive economic and military resources to halt Soviet growth and the spread of communism worldwide. With an added need to increase pro-American sentiment and build worldwide support of democracy, diplomatic and military plans during this period included military bases, strategic defense pact, economic aid, information dissemination, and of course embassy construction.

Through the period after World War II, the symbolism of America abroad changed. Colonialism and protection of business interests abroad was not the greatest driving force in embassy planning. Instead, a cultural war of global magnitude was a driving force in the embassy planning process. During the post-war period, the embassy building morphed from the residential house that had previously symbolized American culture to a building that was to reflect the universality of openness and democracy, demonstrating the greatness of the United States over the Soviet Union and progress and freedom that the Soviet Union was unable to match. The international style of architecture was used as the first form of modern until it was denounced for its likeness to the international style of the United Nations building. The association of the architecture with a political perspective known at “internationalism” drove a feared of foreign involvement in U.S. interests.15

Later during this period, fearing a backlash from countries imposed upon by the United States, the idea of openness and democracy was to expand to include regional context, concerned with being sympathetic to a local regions culture. This period saw the entrance of the modern office tower into the embassy architectural lexicon, but it also saw a backlash by Congress.

having to do with oversight of the embassy construction program. It was not until the late fifties that any policy was laid down for embassy construction.

During this period, the top priority areas for embassy construction were the nations that were seen as prime targets for communist expansion. There was no policy that said that these locations should be targeted first, but they were targeted nonetheless. The State Department began projects in Germany, Greece, Turkey, Iran, India, and Pakistan.

New embassy construction was also seen by the State Department as part of the effort to counterbalance Soviet influence in the Third World.\textsuperscript{16} The need for embassies in these countries was greatly symbolic. A demonstration of American cultural greatness represented in the American embassy was absolutely necessary to the United States to curtail the communist threat.

Not only was the change in the American embassy during this period driven by a symbolic need. It was also driven by new building technologies that were available and a need to house a growing embassy staff and technology. In addition to the State Department officials accommodated in embassies, representatives from many other governmental agencies needed space in the embassy complex. These included the Department of Defense, Commerce, Agriculture, and Justice, as well as the Public Health Service, and the Veterans’ Administration, and the Central Intelligence Agency.

The United States Information Agency was another presence that swelled the embassy staff and the facility size. Researchers, writers, teacher, librarians, and other people were sent to embassies through this agency to counter the communist challenge through the dissemination of information about the United States, its democratic values, its history, its culture, and its arts. A new label was attached to this sort of democracy as “public diplomacy” versus the more traditional diplomacy of statesmanship. In the traditional sense, diplomacy was restricted to government officials, “distant from ‘the people.’” Under a Cold War mode of operation, it was increasingly important to sway public opinion and the United States Information Agency was charged with reaching out to the populous, and introducing them to the United States, its

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 40.
government, and its culture.¹⁷

Foreign Service personnel also had a small, yet significant, role to play in the expansion of the embassy construction program. Complaints from Foreign Service officers and staff had an influence on the location of new facilities, but to a small extent. In replacing dilapidated and inadequate facilities, the State Department attempted to target the worst cases as top priority after the areas that held symbolic importance for containment of communism. The embassies that were the most inaccessible, with the worst climates, and the fewest amenities, such as air conditioning were targeted by the State Department for attention.

Although strategic fortification was not yet considered necessary during the post-war period, security needs also contributed to a growing building program. Until the Cold War, security with regard to embassy facilities had to do with theft, burglary, unauthorized, entry, and fire. The beginnings of data transmission and communication technology led to an enlargement of the embassy’s need for space. This was driven by Cold War threats related to sensitive information. Protecting sensitive political activities and communication equipment required specially designed spaces with soundproofing, climate control, and limited access. Balancing the increasing need for privacy and physical security of sensitive information with the need for public access to consular services became a driving need in embassy planning.¹⁸

This period also saw modern architecture make its entrance into embassy design. Modern architecture is often thought of only as an architectural style, but was also a construction system based on new building technologies and system for adapting to new programmatic needs in buildings. New building technologies made the office tower possible. New construction technologies allowed a building to go up without a drastic reduction in the efficiency of the building as was the case in buildings of the past. Architecture was no longer limited to thick structural bearing walls and chopped up interior space of the previous age. With the new technologies available in building construction and the growing need for space in the American embassy the residential prototype of the early period became obsolete.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 43.
¹⁸ Ibid., p. 105.
These new technologies also became the showcase for American culture on foreign soil. Showing the technological advancement of the United States when it came to structural technology became important to the nation over time. Glass and steel were symbolic of progress to those involved in the American embassy planning process and it was believed that this was important to the cultural battle of the Cold War.

The modern design represented by the glass and steel structure that came to represent the openness of American culture was not a concerted effort by the multiple actors involved in the planning process. There is no overwhelming evidence that the changes in the design of embassies were part of a deliberate desire by the United States or its public servants to move embassies towards an image of modern architecture. It is known that the construction technologies available and the changes in the programmatic requirements of the building demanded a new building type, and modern was the result of this demand. The symbolism of the open plan associated with embassies of this period was only pushed by a handful of figures independent of each other and was never a deliberate national policy.

The first postwar projects were designed by cautious and traditional-minded architects who were housed in the Office of Foreign Building Operations (FBO) under the State Department. The early embassy buildings were residential and modeled after large houses. These traditionally designed buildings included office buildings in Canberra, Tehran, and Brussels. Projects in Naples and Ankara were designed by private architecture firms, but still were traditionally minded. Paul Franz Jaquet, head of design staff for the FBO at the time, was the designer of the Canberra embassy. (See Figure 2.3) It was a two story red brick building
with two chimneys and dormers. It was an office building designed to look like a house.

Leland King admired Jaquet’s design and felt that colonial architecture and domestic associations were particular appropriate to the location and symbolism of America abroad. MIT Dean John Ely Buchard condemned the design in 1955 and distained the idea of a universally appropriate architecture based on traditional American values. Canberra, he said, had nothing in common with the landscape of Virginia and it made no sense to building a Williamsburg colonial house at that location.

Other embassies also moved timidly forward in the early buildings constructed in the post-war period. Another embassy designed by FBO staff was the embassy in Tehran in 1948. This building was dubbed “Henderson High” after the ambassador who arrived after construction was complete. The building had the likeness to a high school building. (See Figure 2.4) The embassy built in Ankara in 1953 was a study in Beaux-Arts monumentality, but it was one of the first trials at expressing a public purpose and importance in an embassy project.

As time progressed more and more jobs were being awarded to private firms whose work were recognized as being both architecturally distinguished and boldly modern. Under Leland King assistant director of the FBO and supervising architect of the FBO the embassy building program underwent a major symbolic and programmatic change under the tide of change caused by the Cold War.

It was Leland King alone who changed the style of the American embassy from

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19 Ibid., p. 55.
20 Ibid., p. 56.
21 Ibid., p. 56.
22 Ibid., p. 37.
traditional to modern. The desire to change to a new style might have been associated with the response to the previously constructed buildings including the embassy in Canberra or the embassy in Tehran. The first two modern embassies were finished in Rio de Janeiro and Havana in 1952. Both buildings were disastrous. Rio’s embassy partially burnt down months before construction ended. It was realized that if the architects had followed local construction codes, fire stops would have prevented the fire spreading throughout the building. (See Figure 2.5)

Havana was also a disaster. The glass and steel building was oriented north/south, supposedly to catch the ocean breezes, but without any louvers to shade the building the office tower was incredibly hot. (See Figure 2.6) Air conditioning was needed immediately and even after it was installed it was unable to keep up with the heat gain caused by the purity of the modern design and the glass that it provided. Although both buildings were disasters, they did bring the idea of the office tower to American embassy design. These two buildings are thought of the first post-war buildings that represented a growing idea that the embassy could represent openness and democracy.

The Havana embassy was built using thirty percent foreign credit and seventy percent dollar expenditure. The waste was intense. The steel for construction came from Belgium. The cement came from France. Elevators, movable partitions and other special equipment came from England. Furnishings were manufactured in Paris. The concrete cladding was made from ivory-colored travertine imported from Italy. The FBO, charged with overseeing the
embassy construction “purchased furnishings because architects liked them.” The sitting areas of the Havana embassy were furnished with reproductions of the Mies van der Rohe Barcelona chair.23 The ambassadors complained bitterly, but to no avail. Leland King continued building modern embassies.

Ralph Rapson continued the construction of modern buildings in Europe. In response to the urgent need for office space and housing in Europe, the FBO began preparing plans for modern facilities in Madrid, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Oslo, and The Hague. The American embassy in The Hague was designed by Ralph Rapson. (See Figure 2.7) The design called for a three story glass-walled building raised above a recessed lobby on stilts. The building design was an open plan and privacy was none existent for employees.

In Stockholm, Rapson designed a modern building and in the process pointed out some of the serious oversight problems that the now massive FBO was having. Rapson remarked that there was no program for these embassy buildings that he was being asked to build. No design directives were given by the FBO in Washington or the regional office in Hague. The only group that had an interest in the design of the embassy was the Swedish architecture and planning community. They asked that the building be lowered to respect the residential character of the neighborhood. Other than that request the embassy began construction quickly. The building was of the international style and boldly modern.

Even after the first policies set forth by the FBO, modern remained an entrenched architectural style in the design of American embassies, although this time it moved towards contextualism. Under the Eisenhower administration, with Deputy Secretary of State Wailes’s directive to “go Georgian” the architecture of American embassies remained dutifully modern.

23 Ibid., p. 67.
Nelson Kenworthy, Leland King’s temporary successor as director of the FBO after King was fired for allegations of excess and waste, tried to approach building needs of the American embassy with an open mind. He was a truly modern man. In 1954 he presented the FBO’s first architectural policy proposal to the new Architecture Advisory Committee charged with reviewing plans for embassies. It stated:

The policy shall be to provide requisite and adequate facilities in an architectural style and form which are distinguished, will reflect credit on the United States, and increase goodwill by intelligent appreciation, recognition, and use of the architecture appropriate to the site and country. Buildings shall be dignified and economical to build, operate, and maintain.24

With this policy he assured Congressmen that “We are neither committed to glass fish bowls, nor to Georgian tradition.” At the first ACC meeting Kenworthy’s policy statement was endorsed by all the committee members and an added philosophy on the importance of local history, the exploration of newness, and the need to focus attention on the “American” identity of the work.25

The design of the American embassy was becoming more interested in the context of the modern building.

Although the American embassy as modern might have had its foes in Congress and abroad, architects were not among them. Architects saw the program as a means to showcase modern architecture and increase recognition for their profession. Popular publications such as Time and Life featured articles that helped to create popular awareness of modernism. They

24 Ibid., p. 120.
25 Ibid., p. 124.
applauded the use of modern architecture and focused on it as a direct and deliberate challenge to the recycled classicism favored by the Soviets.\textsuperscript{26} The symbolism of the architecture used by America abroad was counter to the old style favored by the communist threat.

Kenworthy was aware that modern architecture was already an asset abroad. The modern construction techniques that it demonstrated and its symbolic power were important to the role that the United States wanted to project. Modern architecture was more spatial then massive and a direct response of the leaders of modern architecture against repressive governmental regimes. As a mater of fact many of the modern architects of the early 1950’s were from the “old world” and had experienced the oppression that modern architecture was countering. Glass and openness served the purpose of the symbolism of American democracy better than brutal or consciously monumental concrete buildings or neoclassical grandeur would serve. A reproduction of a model based on tradition would also serve only to replicate colonial attitudes.

The physical presence of new American buildings was a clear indication of American activity engaged abroad. The Great Seal and the American flag were the two national symbols used to identify all embassy buildings built during this period. The American eagle was also used to accent a highly symbolic building along with the title, “Embassy of the United States of America,” another icon of American symbolism. The prominently placed flagpole and American flag would often be mounted on the embassy roof as a locator and a signal of American presence in a city. During this period there was very little need to downplay the presence of the American embassy.

At the same time, the modern embassy building in its shear size contributed to symbolize imperial power of a growing nation especially in third world countries. The new embassies were big and they were different. In these places the embassies represented an architecture of imperialism. Rather than merely announcing the coming of age of a new power, the embassy represented intrusiveness and fundamental inferiority of a host nation.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 138.
It was held constant through the post-war period that the glass curtain wall was favored over any other exterior treatment. The reason lies in the symbolism of openness. Even in climates where the glass wall was not appropriate, sun shading devices such as the screen and louvers were used to protect the glass wall. Glass hidden behind sun shading devices still signified openness. This can be seen in examples from India, Jakarta, Nagaya, Basra, and Singapore. (See Figure 2.8) This design decision was more of an architectural fashion rather than an architectural response to climate control.

In Paul Rudolph’s scheme for a desert climate in Amman, he suggested small, slit-shaped windows deeply recessed into masonry walls, a climate responsive design decision. The FBO director requested Rudolph revise the scheme and come up with one that looked “less like a fort and more like an embassy.” The FBO wanted to see an embassy design that was more symbolically open even though the building was more climatically responsive and would have resulted in cost savings for the State Department. This example shows how deeply imbued the desire to express democracy through openness in the architecture of the embassy remained through this period.

Around 1957 the AAC renamed to the Architectural Advisory Panel (AAP) began voicing concern about all-glass buildings. Security was not yet on the radar of the embassy construction program, but architectural appropriateness for select sites was. It was also questioned whether

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a glass structure in Mexico City was contextually appropriate. The embassy design for Dublin by John Johansen was reworked five times before being rejected completely for being “out of character for Dublin.” The scheme was a concrete frame filled with glass. The AAP said that the building “lacked solidity, which was considered more important in Dublin than a glass cage type of design.”

(See Figure 2.9) The building that Johansen finally built in Dublin is considered the last embassy project that an architect was able to put design ahead of the many other factors that shape embassy design, most notably, security.30

Questions were also raised about the embassy building that was to be identified with the government also being identified with a structure that was representative of big business. The office tower of the embassy building was uncomfortably close in appearance to the corporate headquarters. The office tower now being used by corporations was uncomfortably similar to the symbol of the image of the embassy. This was beginning to make people worry about the image of America abroad.31

With the first policies that the FBO had put in place that began to talk about appropriate to site and country, the FBO’s idea of what was symbolic of America was beginning to change. It had changed from the raw openness of glass, to a modified glass structure covered with screen or louvers, to a new notion of the democratic world that nods to the cultural context of where the building was being placed. Regionalism was entering embassy architecture by 1957. The ACC praised Morris Ketchum’s design for the embassy in Rabat. They said that no one “could accuse

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29 Ibid., p. 177.
30 Ibid., p. viii.
the United States of being a war-like country when it builds embassies with this character.”

The design had made a link to the native architecture of the country and this to the FBO was an act of a peace-loving country, creating goodwill through architecture. It was also a desire to avoid the accusation that foreign buildings were a mere export from the United States, a theme that rises from the early period of embassy architecture.

In Ghana, the embassy design was uniquely contextual. At first the architect found very little inspiration in designing this embassy. Harry Weese, the architect, only saw the urban sprawl of the capital of Ghana, Accra comprised of mud houses, tin shacks, and the imported European styles that were represented in the more affluent neighborhoods. He felt that an ordinary office tower would not fulfill the goals of displaying the diplomatic mission of the United States. Weese found his inspiration while on a visit to a rural village. He designed a structure perched on a set of spear-like posts resembling the white-spiked palace of an African chief he had visited. (See Figure 2.10) The design of the American embassy had begun to find meaning in context. This would continue for a time.

Most of the embassies of the post-war period were located in downtown areas, generally near other government and diplomatic buildings in the capital cities of the host country. The sites in which they were located were purchased by the FBO after the war, or were gifts from the foreign governments to encourage the United States to locate there. In some cases properties where exchanged. The FBO chose sites that were prominent and were accessible to the general public, and were also convenient for American businessmen, government officials, and

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diplomats.\textsuperscript{34}

The architectural program during this period tended to be of two types: A block plan with offices situated on either side of a central corridor, or a courtyard plan with perimeter offices. Building where either located in prominent urban locations as in such embassies as The Hague, bordering on public sidewalks and dealing with an existing streetscape. Other embassies were constructed as compounds set apart from their surroundings by walls, fences, and open space. The old American embassy in Baghdad was located just outside the old city, on the banks of the Tigris River adjacent to the royal palace. (See Figure 2.11) This embassy compound included a three-story embassy office building, an ambassador’s residence, staff apartments, garages, and storage warehouses. The Baghdad compound was used as a model for later projects in Mogadishu and Islamabad, where Americans lived and worked in a single protected place. Congress objected to this style of “ghetto” living by Americans abroad, arguing that Americans should not be isolated from local life. The State Department favored the compound model because of economic saving and efficiency.\textsuperscript{35}

Toward the end of the post-war period, the threat of attack against embassy facilities was beginning to make a mark on the design of embassies. The Korean War and Vietnam War had begun and the United State’s involvement abroad was less diplomatic and more military. With its building program constantly under review for symbolism and security and the projects always involved in protracted internal negotiations meant that the FBO operated in a stop-and-go mode throughout the 1960’s and well into the 1970’s. In a major shift from its most active period in


\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 170.
the mid-1950’s, when it met nearly monthly, the AAP met only once or twice a year during the 1960’s and considered only a handful of projects. The AAP met more frequently in the 1970’s, but many projects presented to the panel were never built. The embassy planning machine was at a virtual standstill in the later part of the post-war period. It would not be until the 1990’s that the embassy machine would be up and running again.

The post-war period saw an extraordinary metamorphosis of the American embassy, from the traditional house of the early period to the modern office tower of the post-war period, housing a growing staff engaged not only in statesmanship, but also war on a cultural level. The American house would never again be a form that the embassy would find meaning. The embassy was wed to the office tower and with this form, modern architecture. Competing interests within the United States from the professional architects to Congress was involved in shaping the embassy’s form. An internal power struggle had begun that would eventually lead to the contemporary situation that we are now in.

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36 Ibid., p. 239.
The post-Soviet period of embassy planning was relatively short as compared to the other periods in the history of the American embassy, but focused on prominent locations for siting American embassies and led to a drastic shift in construction delivery method employed by the State Department -- the results of which are the drivers of today’s embassy construction program.

In reality the post-war period only centered on about 14 years of construction in its heyday, while the post-Soviet period of embassy planning occurred in about two years. This period of embassy construction occurred directly following the collapse of the Soviet Union, when there was a brief influx of foreign interests into ex-Soviet countries. This period was also a consolatory step by the State Department as a result of a lack of funding for embassy construction following instigation of the Inman standards and the draconian standards it required for new embassy construction.

The embassies in the post-Soviet period were neo-classical in style and were not constructed by the United States, but rather existing buildings were purchased in downtown locations. (See Figure 2.12) The buildings of this period symbolized the United State’s interest in newly independent countries and were well received at the time of purchase. This period also reflects a shift in the architectural consciousness of the American public from modern to post-modern and a return to traditional styles. Generally, security was not taken into consideration in the purchase of downtown buildings. A diplomatic presence in ex-Soviet countries was seen

Figure 2.12: American Embassy in Minsk, Belarus (1991)
as more important than constructing expensive embassy compounds that adhered to security standards.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the United States found itself confronted with the challenge of establishing diplomatic representation in the fourteen newly independent states. The State Department wanted to move quickly to show American support for the new governments, and to forestall a resurgence of communism in those countries. The Secretary of State, James Baker, asked former ambassador, Nicolas Salgo to select and acquire suitable office space at locations in each of the newly independent states.

It was first discussed that embassies could be newly constructed or flown in as prefabricated units, but Salgo realized that there were existing buildings in these new countries that were adequate for diplomatic facilities and locating in these facilities was preferable to the timeframe involved of constructing new buildings, prefabricated or not. Additionally, with the Cold War no longer driving decisions, display was a less important factor and the urgency of moving out of hotel rooms and into actual office space took precedence. Congress would have needed to approve the funds needed to finance new construction, and new embassies would have taken many years to build. It was decided that leasing land made the most sense, recognizing that there was a need to show that the U.S. government took these newly formed states seriously.

Although there was very little institutional memory within the State Department because of staff changeover and the thirty-year time difference from the last massive upheaval of world order, Secretary Baker may have recalled what happened when many African states became independent in the 1960’s. The United States had rushed to bring embassies to these countries that eventually fell into civil war and the symbolic modern American embassy lost purpose. Baker’s decision may also have been based on an understanding that Congress may have doubts about the region’s stability and questions the wisdom of massive capital investment in places that were politically unstable. The sudden decision of Kazakhstan’s president Nursultan Nazarbayev to relocate the capital from Almaty to the remote northern city of Akmola was further proof that investment in such a place may be risky.37

Given a small budget to carry out this task by Secretary Baker, Salgo acquired distinguished looking bargains in downtown locations in the capitals of the newly independent states. He had a personal preference for traditional looking architecture. He acquired property in downtown locations. (See Figure 2.13) The leasing of properties in downtown locations reflected the past although in this case, the United States was not encumbered with struggling with their identity compared to Europe. This time they had their own diplomatic agenda; to show support and possibly gain friends, stem a resurgence of communism, and possible form business partnerships. This was the last time the United States would locate embassy building in downtown locations without great exception.

The post-Soviet embassy leasing spree marked a new age in embassy planning for the FOB. It began a dramatic shift in the way the FBO conducted business. Neither new designs for embassies to be located in the Baltic States or the renovation schemes were presented to the Architectural Advisory Board for review. The FBO had switched to a new form of construction. The Design-Bid-Build system that had dominated the embassy planning process for the last 70 years was being replaced with a design/build model of construction. Under this new delivery method, buildings could begin construction before they were completely designed, resulting in great cost savings, but also switching the balance of power away from the professional architects and the review boards to the construction managers. Design/build projects of the post-Soviet period completely bypassed the review process and repercussions of this practice are the mode of operation today.
III. MEDIEVAL MODERN- CONTEMPORARY EMBASSY PLANNING

The contemporary American embassy manifested in the prototypical Standard Embassy Design (SED) is a result of two factors. One is the threat of terrorism and the policy changes that such threats have produced; the other is the power struggle that resulted in a shift from design-bid-build to design/build in the 1990’s. With this shift, embassy design became standardized and political power shifted from the professional architect to the construction manager. In earlier periods, architects have held the power in embassy planning, while at other times they have been marginalized. Today, the architects have been largely marginalized and the power is held tight by the State Department. The contemporary American embassy, as a result, is a standard prototype design that can be put anywhere on the world with the idea of cutting costs and providing security for the facility.

The present Standard Embassy Design (SED) construction program is the largest embassy construction program ever under taken by the State Department with a price tag of $3.5 billion for embassies currently under construction by the Office of Overseas Building Operations (OBO). (See Table 3.1.) The embassy in Iraq tops the list at a reported $612 million. The embassy in Beijing is not much less, at $434 million. While the embassy in Beijing is in a downtown location, taking up an entire city block, the embassy in Iraq covers 104 acres on an island outside of the Green Zone. As a result of the SED method of supplying embassies, fortress-like compounds are being built across the globe.

It is theorized that the shift in the design of embassies in this period is the desire to de-emphasize the building and emphasize the deeds of diplomacy. It was in the early 1960’s that the State Department began to reduce the profile of the embassy building. Tucking the embassy behind high walls, a new architecture of simple structures and compounds, all deliberately inconspicuous, was a “standing decree and part of the ‘low profile’ of Americans” abroad.38 The political call by Secretary of State Rice over the past year for “Transformational Diplomacy” has

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only strengthened this call for inconspicuous diplomatic architecture.

On the other hand, the high walls and fortress-like buildings may represent something else to the world. It is debatable whether an inconspicuous American embassy has been the result of SED attempts to de-emphasis the building. By raising walls and building fortresses, American embassies may be showing a disregard for the world around them and may appear more threatening then unobtrusive.

Over the past fifty years there have been a handful of attacks against U.S. embassies resulting in loss of life and destruction of property. At the same time, security of the American embassy is a relatively new requirement for embassy construction. A policy for securing embassies only entered the State Department’s toolbox in the early 1980’s with notorious Inman standards. The greatest effect of the Inman standards on embassy design pertains to the 100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Millions of Dollars</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abuja Annex</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accra</td>
<td>90.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algiers</td>
<td>90.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Athens Annex</td>
<td>77.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>612.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>434.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>143.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bogotá Annex</td>
<td>28.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazzaville</td>
<td>74.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ciudad Juarez</td>
<td>96.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
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<td>Guangzhou</td>
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<td>Jerusalem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johannesburg</td>
<td>88.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karachi</td>
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<td>90.7</td>
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<td>Khartoum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khartoum Annex</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kigali</td>
<td>106.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kolonia</td>
<td>5.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,505.3 million</strong></td>
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foot setback requirement inferred to State Department policy and the treatment of the exterior of the building to be strong enough to resist a car bomb attack from a 100 foot distance. No longer could buildings be cased in glass and set close to city streets as they were in the past. The symbolism of the American embassy was becoming more opaque and less transparent.

The Inman standards were heeded in some situations and disregarded in others. The post-Soviet period in particular showed blatant disregard for the Inman standards. The Inman standards were only made law in 1999 with the Secure Embassy Construction Act which required adherence to the 100 foot setback requirement and a waiver only by direct order from the Secretary of State.39

Before the Inman standards were developed there were attacks on American embassies that eventually led to the designing of more secure embassies. The first attacks were only considered minor security threats, nothing of the magnitude that organized terrorism would inflict on the embassy structure or its employees. Although the earliest attacks barely registered to America at home or the State Department, framing the current attitudes about security in embassies began in 1959. In that year, 10,000 Bolivians stoned the American embassy in La Paz. This was a symbolic gesture by the people of Bolivia against American involvement in Latin America. The result of this attack was a call for walls and better security. With this event, the United States began to build a defensive embassy program.

Security officially entered into the embassy building program consciousness in 1964 when James Johnson reported on recent findings on the subject of embassy safety. Johnson was director of the FBO after 1961 when another director of the FBO, William Hughes, was fired. Johnson cited the need for perimeter fencing, reduction in glass area, and protection of openings at new embassies. He asked that this be done “without obvious offense to the host country or misrepresentation of our own fears.40

In the early 1960’s as the United States was engaged in the Vietnam War another wave of

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attacks threatened embassy security. When a mob attacked the American embassy in Moscow 200 windows were broken on the lower levels. In other places across Eastern Europe, mobs also expressed their discontent about American activities abroad. In both Budapest and Sofia windows were broken at the American embassies in these countries. In Saigon, in 1965, three embassy employees were killed as a result of an embassy attack. Such incidents provoked anger and dismay in Congress and led to calls for better overseas security.\textsuperscript{41} Perimeter security including high walls and fences were constructed and testing of blast-proof construction materials such as laminated glass was commenced.

The 1970’s saw another slew of embassy attacks resulting in property damage and loss of life. In 1973 the American embassy in Khartoum was attacked by angry protestors. In 1974, the embassies in Athens and Kuala Lumpur were also attacked. In 1976, an ambassador was assassinated in Beirut. The Iranian Hostage Crisis took place in 1979, when 63 diplomats were held hostage from November 4, 1979 to January 20, 1981, in the American embassy in Tehran, Iran. During this time period critical call for embassy security was growing louder. In the time between 1975 and 1985, there were 243 attacks and attempted attacks against U.S. diplomatic installations.\textsuperscript{42}

The 1979 crisis in Tehran demonstrated to the State Department that American diplomats could not longer rely on local authorities for protection. The Iranian government made no effort to provide assistance to the American hostages. As a result of this attack, the State Department moved to increase marine guard detachments at embassies. The FBO built guard stations for the marines outside existing facilities at sensitive posts and installed security checkpoints in embassy lobbies.

High steel fences were erected at Munich, Madrid, and Brussels. FBO retrofitted other properties, notably London, Oslo, Dublin, and The Hague, with surveillance equipment and concrete vehicle barriers disguised as planters. Barriers disguised as planters were an attempt

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 241
to hide the fact that the United States had increased its level of security. The flower box was a vain attempt at recalling an age gone-by where security was less of a concern. The windows in the embassy at Dublin were coated with a gold laminate for blast protection. The gold laminate was a way to upgrade the building’s security without having to find a new building location that was blast secure. The gold laminate holds the glass together when there is an explosion. Similar technology is currently used in homes as a deterrent to break-ins. In addition, to make the architecture of the embassy less vulnerable, the FBO prohibited the use of exterior sunscreens and stilts.43

The threat of terrorism forced a change in the fundamental thinking about U.S. embassies, which were viewed until the 1970’s as prominent and accessible public buildings to be seen, used, visited, and admired by American citizens and their foreign hosts. Until the hostage crisis in Tehran, they were viewed as inviolate public buildings, as symbol of America’s greatness. As these assumptions became less and less realistic over time with the growing number of attacks against American embassies, the architecture of the embassy gradually became less distinctive in design, less open, and more defensive in plan, and less accessible in location. The glass box, once symbolically important in the Cold War, was no longer useful as a design paradigm.44

In early contemporary embassies, even before the Inman standards were enacted, embassy projects showed a heightened concern for safety. Architects began a design move towards massive and imposing structures that dwarfed surrounding buildings and spaces. Two such embassies were built in Dhaka and in San Jose. (See Figure 3.1) The FBO also completed the embassy in Kuala Lumpur in 1983 which was similarly designed with safety as the highest

44 Ibid., p. 243.
priority. (See Figure 3.2) The building had no windows within fifteen feet of the ground, a nine-foot wall wrapped around the site, and its balcony rails are bulletproof shields for the windows beyond. According to George Hartman, the designer, the embassy was actually a reinforced concrete pillbox disguised as a house. “It looks friendly,” he said, “but it’s built like a fortress.”

The terrorist attack on the American embassy in Beirut in 1983 marked a watershed moment for embassy planning. On April 18, 1983, a suicide bomber carrying 2,000 pounds of explosives gained access to the embassy compound using a van that was believed to be stolen a year before from the embassy. The explosion killed 63 people, 43 of whom were embassy staff, and wounded 100 people. Some believe that this attack marked the unofficial declaration of war against the United States by Islamic terrorist groups. Nonetheless, the bombing of the American embassy in Beirut marks a watershed moment for embassy security. This attack instigated a drastic change in the way that embassies would be designed from then on.

As a result of the Beirut terrorist attack, Congress authorized a study of the FBO and embassy planning in 1984 called the Future of Embassy Design. The study was prepared by the National Research Council (NRC) and its Building Research Board. The NRC committee made a series of recommendations about the physical embassy security including the way an embassy site was evaluated and selected, how the site was planned and designed, how the architecture of the buildings was programmed, and the architectural structural system of an embassy building.

Although a 100 foot setback is not mentioned directly in the recommendations, the committee recommended a site size and perimeter standoff distance “large enough to implement

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45 Ibid., p. 245.
a mandatory setback distance.” The committee asked that this setback be required unless otherwise waived by the Under Secretary for Management of the FBO. A setback distance is mentioned at other times throughout the recommendations of the NRC including a site perimeter that will protect “embassy facilities from standoff or drive-by attacks, and from thrown explosives.” It was ultimately left up to the FBO to decide what required setback would be best.

In the program of the embassy building the NRC recommendations included separation of building uses according to risk and functionality. The recommendations also asked for safe havens within the embassy structures.47

The recommendations were asking for design that was less open and the committee was aware of the dangers of this request in terms of the architectural symbolism. It is interesting to note is the stance this report took on the standardization of embassy design. The committee was very concerned with the direction their recommendations would lead the embassy construction program. The recommendations that were made were prescriptive enough that the NRC feared little room for architectural design and adaptation to context. The report stated that they “did not condone the construction of standardized or prototype embassy buildings to satisfy the requirements that are established.” They felt that the design guidelines, criteria, and requirements “imposed by the State Department should be formulated and evaluated in terms of desired performance attributes and not in terms of fixed, rigid, standardized, or uniform design solutions.”48

Following this study, and taking the glory for the changes both reports would make to embassy design, the Inman report was issued on June of 1985. The Inman report was named after Admiral Bobby R. Inman the appointed head of the Advisory Panel on Overseas Security responsible for the Inman report. Inman was former head of the National Security Agency and had also been second in command at the CIA. The panel concluded that a massive increase in funds for security upgrades and new construction was needed to “correct the security deficiencies of office buildings of the Department of State and the other foreign affairs agencies abroad.” The Inman report specified stringent security standards to be implemented at all U.S. embassies.

48 Ibid., p. 36.
embassies regardless of location and identified 126 buildings needing major security overhauls or replacement. It also called for the formation of a new Bureau for Diplomatic Security within the State Department and a Diplomatic Security Service charged with an array of new security-related functions.49

The Inman report was a comprehensive look at the security of diplomatic facilities. Recommendations covered embassy security issues ranging from personnel security to protection of foreign dignitary missions in the United States. The Inman report is far less clear and systematic then the NRC report’s guidelines, but the Inman report was a successful catalyst for changes to the design of the American embassy. The panel recommendations included security improvements such as increased personnel security through added Marine Security Guard detachments “assigned to all highly sensitive posts and to all embassies where conditions permit.” Physical security recommendations called for a complete revision of the physical security standards to “include state-of-the-art, physical security concepts.” Physical security standards were to be applied to the diplomatic facility as well as ancillary facilities and residential facilities. It was also recommended that guidelines should be established for the “effective use of armored vehicles and other security equipment.” 50

At a regional and site level the panel believed that the existing Department of State standards for embassy security did not adequately address perimeter security- including walls, gates, guards, and vehicle barriers. The Inman report was not afraid to recommend standardization of design and it did just that in establishing a list of five objectives to increase security at the State Department’s 262 overseas posts. The panel report states directly that “it would be ideal, from a management point of view, to establish one set of physical security standards for all foreign affairs agencies.” Regardless of global location, however, the panel was convinced that the agencies must follow a set of locational physical security standards. The panel recommended five objectives for addressing this goal including location, co-location, proximity, architecture, and adequate funding. The panel reported:

50 Ibid., Principal Recommendations.
• **Location** is the paramount consideration in the avoidance of assault and penetration of every kind. Being on the busiest or most fashionable, street or corner may have been an asset in earlier days; today it is a liability.

• **Co-location** with occupants whom the United States neither chooses nor controls presents a substantial risk for assault and penetration.

• **Proximity** is a vital concern when other buildings abut or are so close that modern electrons and audio techniques can make it extremely difficult to safeguard national security information.

• **Age, architecture, and design** are crucial to the ability to defend against penetration and assault. Many buildings simply cannot be upgraded to the standards that are necessary today.

• **Adequate funding and new approaches** to overseas construction are essential.

  The old, business-as-usual approach cannot meet the new requirements.”

It was concluded by the panel that 126 of the 262 overseas posts needed replacement because the posts did not meet minimum physical security standards for construction quality and distance from external perimeter barriers, or shared a ‘common wall’ with adjacent structures, or shared the structure with non-US Government tenants, and thus did not completely control the building. Most importantly in establishing the panel’s call for standardization is the statement from the report:

"Another lesson the Department of State has learned in the past twenty years is that things change. The peaceful neighborhood, city, or country of yesterday can be a hotbed of terrorism, insurgency, or violence tomorrow. Buildings that were designed, located, and constructed most carefully in the past may now be unacceptable from a security standpoint.”

51 Ibid., Physical Security.
52 Ibid., Building Program.
Standardization and security of the embassy facility was seen as the way to address the changing world. Locational objectives set forth by the Inman panel would frame the future of the embassy program after that date. New embassy buildings were to be located far from city centers to meet the locations and security solutions recommended by the Inman report.

The Inman report beat the National Research Council report to the punch because Admiral Bobby R. Inman was the chairperson. The NRC was not able to get their report to press until six months later. By then, the Inman report had already made waves. The report prompted immediate congressional action. Congress approved a five-year plan with a $2.1 billion authorization for security improvements. The full implementation of the Inman recommendations would have meant the wholesale replacement of U.S. embassies around the world. To implement the Inman recommendations, the State Department would have abandoned its downtown embassies, including those in London, Dublin, Paris, and The Hague, in favor of more secure locations that could meet the 100 foot setback requirements distant from government and business centers and generally far from a city.

In the construction of the American embassy following the first terrorist bombings, the Department of State had done its best to show that terrorism was a localized problem and could be thwarted with a deliberate show of force through the design of more fortified embassy buildings. This attitude is still the mode of operation today. The embassy compound at Mogadishu illustrates the fallacy of this belief. The wall no more than a symbolic gesture of strength against an unknown foe and when under pressure of attack are rendered useless.

The embassy compound in Mogadishu was one of the first projects designed during what some FBO staff architects now refer to as the “dark ages of Inman.” The embassy compound spread over nearly 50 acres and adjoined another 50-acre tract use as a golf club although the terrain consisted of nothing but dirt. The compound consisted of a chancery, a USIS library, health unit, dining facilities, shops, and additional buildings. The compound was occupied in 1989. Although using local themes to decorate the gate, walls, and grilles, they were made of reinforced concrete and steel unlike earlier ones made of concrete blocks or wrought iron. See
Figure 3.3: Plans of Destroyed Embassy in Mogadishu, Somalia (1984-1990)

Figure 3.4: Former American Embassy in Mogadishu, Somalia (1984-1990)
Figure 3.3 and 3.4 for plans and images of the American embassy in Mogadishu.

Wracked by civil war in the city, the embassy compound was abandoned in 1991. In a last minute escape, the embassy staff was extricated from the embassy by helicopter as an angry mob climbed the walls. All the support staff from the country who remained in the compound were murdered. See Figure 3.5 for an aerial of the compound today. The new embassy can be seen to the east forming a barracks-like train of buildings within a less sizable compound. Nothing remains of the embassy compound except some tracks in the dirt where the internal roads of the compound passed. The walls of the embassy could no more stop then angry mob then it could defuse the situation from happening. As a security measure, the reinforced concrete wall encircling the compound was ineffective in preventing the total destruction of the embassy and the symbolic gesture of strength was easily overcome by the mob.

It is difficult to imagine how embassy projects of such scope and size could fit into any foreign urban landscape. Given the standards set forth by the Inman report and the array
of facilities needed at an embassy site, it was not hard for the State Department to justify the choice of large and relatively remote sites, dismissing the criticism from so many years of these types of installations as “ghettos” insulating Americans from the very people they were suppose to be seeing and getting to know. In the past Congress had urged the FBO to make its buildings approachable so that foreigners would feel comfortable about the United States and about its substantial foreign presence in a host country. But it is not easy to disguise a building and compound of that size. Whether it was designed to be low-slung and unobtrusive or not, a wall of 10 feet or higher on a 50 acre compound, will stretch about 1000 feet if the compound is square in shape; this is incredibly hard to hide. The new site requirements developed by the FBO to meet the Inman standards mandated compounds that were huge. The design controls created new compounds that were imposing and forbidding and symbolic of America at the dawn of the age of terror.

What set Inman compounds apart from earlier buildings was ultimately their immense size, their relative isolation from the city, and the tremendous cost associated with the construction of these projects. The construction costs drove the FBO’s building program to its knees. The FBO could not afford projects of this size. Replacement of the existing embassies that the Inman report demanded was all but impossible. The pace at which embassies were constructed dropped dramatically in the late-1980’s through the 1990’s.

The building program of Inman era compounds is basically the same from compound to compound. The only thing that varies is the exterior decoration according to the cultural context in which they are placed; a surface treatment, or a little make-up to hide the monster behind. Architects were asked to adhere to the Inman standards and devise an architecture that portrayed openness, freedom, and some sense of the American spirit. But of course, the attempts were in vain.

The Inman-mandate policy to situate embassies at remote sites has had mixed results. At Amman, for example, the embassy moved from a tight downtown site to acres of scrub desert at the far city limits. (See Figure 3.6) Once it became home to the U.S. embassy compound,
the remote locale attracted new development, including apartments, luxury villas, shops, and public transportation, turning the former remote site into an exclusive district. In Bogotá, the new embassy now attracts office and apartment development to a relatively undeveloped area that the city wants to improve.53

In Lima, the threat of danger kept people from visiting the American embassy when it abutted a busy downtown street and was surrounded by Peruvian tanks and armed soldiers to protect against bombs and attacks. Fearing a similar situation as took place in Tehran where the military would not provide support for the facility, to escape the danger and congestion of downtown, and to procure a large enough site, the State Department purchased a polo field located in a Lima suburb. The choice of the site was out of convenience. It was not near any other embassies. The size and undeveloped nature of the polo field brought the American embassy to its present location. See Figure 3.7 for an aerial photograph of the current American embassy in Lima. Worried residents opposed the move, fearing that the new U.S. embassy would attract congestion and danger to their residential neighborhood. They protested the project as an intrusion, but to no avail. The location policy set forth by the Inman standards had undeniably changed the perceived centrality of the U.S. diplomatic presence. Ironically, the new suburban embassy, “highly fortified as it is, may be no more accessible or inviting than its downtown precursor” situated behind a shield of military forces.54

It was recognized by the FBO that no building could be perfectly protected as the Mogadishu experience demonstrated, and combined with a general lack of funds, the Inman standards were reevaluated in the early 1990’s. Rather than implementation of all the standards everywhere, the department moved towards a site by site evaluation method. This paved the

54 Ibid., p. 252.
way for the post-Soviet period of the American embassy. A willingness to waive specific requirements meant that symbolically important but “vulnerable” embassies could remain in cities such as Rome, The Hague, and Oslo; where office buildings abut streets and do not even approximate a reduced setback requirement.

It was not until 1998 that there was another massive terrorist event that attracted world and national attention. There had been other attacks of, but none were of the magnitude as the embassy bombing in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. This attack marked another dramatic shift in policies and designing of the American embassy. On August 7, 1998, 257 people were killed and over 4,000 people were wounded by simultaneous car bombs in the capitals of Kenya and Tanzania. (See Figure 3.8 and 3.9) This attack prompted another report and another set of recommendations for improved safety. This time, the prototypical design of the SED compound became the end result.

On January 9, 1999, the Report of the Accountability Review Board for the Bombing
of the US Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania was completed that was strikingly similar to the Inman report that was published 14 years before. This report was nicknamed the Crowe Report, after Admiral William J. Crowe who chaired the committee. The report’s key recommendation were for increased physical security centered on viewing every diplomatic post as a potential target of terrorism, immediately implementing physical security upgrades and counter-surveillance measures for embassies not meeting the Inman standards, and most importantly reorganizes the organizational structure of the State Department with the objective of placing security of employees as a top priority.\textsuperscript{55} Again the problem was funding.

Finally, on March 23, 1999 a law was passed that brought relief for an overstretched embassy construction program struggling to buy property that could house the immense building program and huge setback requirements that were needed to ensure a level of safety for diplomatic employees that was sufficient. The law was titled the Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act of 1999. It appropriated $3 billion to be dispersed over 5 years from 2000 to 2004.\textsuperscript{56} As part of the law, the State Department was required to prioritize the embassies with the highest security threat. This list was later re-termed the Long Range Overseas Building Program, a classified document specifying the priority list of embassies to construct.

The Act went further in defining the embassy designed for terror. The law required that all US governmental agencies except military will be located on the diplomatic compound. Although the Inman report had recommended that agencies consolidate to a single compound, it was optional that other governmental agencies would be located on site. This new stipulation requires that CIA, USAID, Department of Agriculture, Peace Corp, and other government agencies...

\textsuperscript{56} Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act of 1999.
agencies locate on the site. It is questionable whether this requirement was made for security reasons, the purview of the law, rather than for consolidation of facilities and cost savings. This requirement put to rest the long standing debate dating from the late 1940’s as to what would be housed in a diplomatic facility. It also set in stone the embassy compound as an entity on the landscape. With this requirement, hiding the United State’s governmental agencies in dispersed locations became virtually impossible.

In the Inman period of design, the 100 foot setback was required by administrative policy. There was no formal law that dictated that an embassy needed to adhere to this setback. With the 1999 Act this changed. The 100 foot setback was set. Only by the approval of the Secretary of State could this condition be waived.

On March 20, 2003 the General Accounting Office issued a report on the current conditions of overseas diplomatic facilities, including security, maintenance, office space, and information technology. The report provided some preliminary observations regarding the State Department’s efforts to improve facility conditions by replacing existing buildings with new, secure embassy compounds. Among the highest priority standards not met were the 100 foot setback, perimeter walls and fencing, anti-ram barriers, blast-resistant construction techniques and materials, and controlled access to the compound. Eighty-nine percent of all diplomatic facilities did not meet the 100 foot setback requirement. In other cases, embassy buildings were

![Figure 3.9: Destroyed American Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya (1998)](image-url)
located directly adjacent to gas stations.\textsuperscript{57}

The GAO report and testimony effectively handed control of the embassy construction program over to the State Department’s structural engineers, blast technical manuals and the design/build model. It was the basis for switching to a fully design/build construction method. Since then there have been only a handful of design-bid-build projects. The professional architect and the Architectural Review Board were been taken completely out of the picture. The power struggle had successfully shifted from the architect to the construction manager.

On March 12, 2001, Major General Charles E. Williams was appointed as Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Office of Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO). Two months later, the FBO was upgraded to Bureau level, reorganized, and renamed Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO), reporting to the Undersecretary for Management, with General Williams as Director and Chief Operating Officer.

Since General Williams reorganized the Bureau every foreign building project has been fast tracked. Fast tracked is another term of design/build. He also created an industry advisory panel to help with best construction management practices and created a Long-Range Overseas Buildings Plan. Since 2001 the OBO has opened 15 new embassy compounds with an additional 40 under design and construction. The total construction budget for the current embassies under construction is roughly $3.5 billion.\textsuperscript{58}

The amount of expenditure by the State Department for embassy construction is an amount unprecedented in the history of the embassy. The last great spending spree began 1946, when Congress authorized the use of foreign credit to acquire foreign buildings and property. But that amount only included $125 million for foreign buildings broken down into $15 million in appropriations over twelve years and $110 million in foreign credit to be spent over five years. The original Inman era spending only accounted for a grand total of $2.5 billion.

To cinch the deal and their control over the process, the OBO developed a Standard


Embassy Design (SED) for almost all of its embassy projects. The SED was developed by URS Corporation, a global engineering design firm specializing in government and large capital projects. The SED lays out the process for planning, designing, and building new U.S. embassies and consulates. It consists of documents that lay out site and building plans, specifications, design criteria, and application manuals describing methods of adaptation for a specific site and project, and contract requirements. Prescriptive requirements and required architectural and engineering concepts are intended to ensure that new facilities are safe, secure, and functional.59

Standard Embassy Design (SED) projects come in three sizes: small, medium and large. The SED uses the design/build method of construction, enabling the State Department to construct more embassies like these in a shorter period of time.60 See Figure 3.10 for an image of the Standard Embassy Design prototypes. Only 17 years later and the State Department have forgotten the words of the National Research Council not to create prototype designs. If only the NRC was prepared in 1984 to state why prototype designs was a mistake.

According to the AIA, “The SED was intended to serve as a starting point for the design of embassies and consulates in places such as Cape Town and Tashkent that do not typically receive the same level of design attention and funding as embassies in major world capitals such
as Beijing, London, or Paris.” Of the 40 embassies in the construction phase of development, only Berlin and Beijing have been deemed to necessitate special attention and funding. The rest of the world has been deemed less important and a standard, walled fortress is the building of choice.

The result of SED is that embassies around the world are starting to look more like suburban municipal buildings located in remote locations, hiding behind defensive walls. The basic size of each of the prototype plans, each built on a 10-acre site will result in more embassies being pushed to the outskirts of towns and out of downtowns. When asked by a Washington Post reporter if the OBO was going to put up cookie-cutter embassies around the world, Joseph Toussaint, managing director of project execution at the OBO responded, “No. We want to make the embassy fit in as a good neighbor.”

That is a question that needs to be answered. How does the embassy fit in as a neighbor?

The contemporary American embassy no longer makes a grand architectural statement of American ideals. Instead, it is a walled-off, low-slung, concrete box; indistinguishable from any small-town municipal building constructed in the 1950’s to the 1990’s except for the formidable security attached to the building’s program. The new generation of American diplomatic facilities largely resembles building-industry “product” rather than buildings of a dignified institutional character. “If that is true then we will have to wait for America’s new embassies to live out their shelf lives of 40 to 50 years, pray that the terrorist onslaught abates in the meantime, and hope that we can build more beautifully the next time around.”

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IV. EMBASSY ANALYSIS- INTERACTION WITH THE CITY

To gain a greater understanding of the symbolism of the American embassy and how it interacts with a host city and country, and to discover if --in fact -- the embassy based on the Standard Embassy Design is a good neighbor, a basic urban analysis will be carried out. Urban analysis methods will be utilized including assessment of the embassy from a regional context, local context and the immediate site design.

Background about the site and embassy will be provided, with special attention paid to symbolic importance to diplomatic relations between countries. The regional context analysis will examine the embassy location relative to city-center, as well as the relationship to the dominant regional street structure. The local context will offer a comparison of the embassy structure and site relative to the surrounding buildings through a grain comparison. The general street pattern will also be studied in this analysis, as well as the embassy’s participation therein. In analyzing the immediate site design, vehicle and pedestrian approaches will be assessed, along with the buildings and sites relationship to the street. The relationship of the embassy building to the surrounding buildings will also become visible using this analysis tool.

The embassies assessed here include those recently constructed or soon to be completed. Two contemporary types of embassies are being designed by the OBO: Embassies with strategic symbolic importance that represent a strong diplomatic relationship between countries, and the embassy compound type, where security concerns override those of symbolic diplomacy. Five embassies were chosen for analysis. The embassies assessed in this analysis include facilities in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Nairobi, Kenya, Ottawa, Canada, Berlin, Germany, as well as the future embassy compound in Baghdad, Iraq.

Terrorism has had an affect on their design as will become clear. Two of the embassies are located in downtown locations and the 100 foot setback requirement has been waived, but security has been innovatively provided. The other three embassies are Standard Embassy Designs. The 100 foot setback has not been waived and it is important to assess the compounds
interaction with the city since at least 39 more of these types of compounds are to be built around the world, symbolic of the United State’s interest in a country.

The information used to conduct this analysis was acquired through Google Earth and satellite data from 2007. The exact dates of the orthographic survey are not known. In most cases, cloud cover was not an issue, and reliable accuracy could be estimated assuming an elevation of 2000 feet above ground according to the Google Earth elevation scale. Photographs and information about the embassy sites was found from a variety of sources including Google Image and State Department Embassy Website.

The analysis will keep the scales constant across the different sites from the regional context to the site scale. All regional context analysis is at the same scale. All local context analysis as well as site context analysis is also at the same scale. This offers the opportunity to compare the location, size, context of embassy compound or building.
The construction of the Ottawa embassy was originally started in the mid-1980’s but was halted after the Beirut bombings and the newly enacted Inman standards came into being. The proposed site at the foot of Parliament hill was too small to provide the required 100 foot setback. After contemplating and rejecting a move out of the city proper, the State Department decided to waive the Inman standard requirements and proceeded to design and build a new building on the 2.2 acre site where the building is today.

The American embassy in Ottawa had an extensive review process. The design had to win approval from the State Department’s Architectural Advisory Board and a panel of architects, landscape architects, and planners representing Canada. The final design was presented to the Canadians on April 19, 1995, the same day as the Oklahoma City federal building bombing. Again, the project was halted. After two years of further delays to reassess the security of the project, the building began construction in 1997 and finished construction in 1999.63 (See Figure 4.1)

The American embassy in Ottawa can be thought of as the earliest medieval modern embassy project that offers a better alternative to embassy design and planning. The extra attention that was put into this building shows a commitment between the United States and Canada. Although this cooperation may not be possible in all locations, the building and its placement is an example of a best case scenario. The Ottawa embassy demonstrates added attention paid to its close neighbors. Security concerns have not outweighed the importance of a symbolic gesture of an embassy building located in a downtown location close to government

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buildings. Statesmanship is stressed and the continued relationship between allies as resulted in a building that mediated between some of the necessary safety requirements such as thick walls and the need to locate in a downtown area. It is unfortunate that the planning process that occurred in the Ottawa example is not possible in more places.

Regional Context

The project was seen by Canadian officials as a way to stimulate to the local economy, boosting the slumped construction industry and bring new life to the Byward Market area of downtown by attracting tourists. But unlike other Inman projects, this project fits well into the fabric of the city. Instead of setting itself apart in a 10 to 20 acre walled compound, the American embassy in Ottawa accommodates itself to the existing streets and even to existing vistas. The building is located in downtown along a major thoroughfare that brings car traffic in from across the river to the north. It is located in close proximity to the Parliamentary building and the National Gallery of Art. See Analysis Ottawa.1 for a map of the regional context of the American embassy in Ottawa.

Local Context

The embassy acts as a bridge rather than a barrier, according to the architect. Two major street arteries pass on either side of the building. To the west a park opens up for a grand view of the building and the water beyond. Major governmental buildings are located to the west. The central business district is located to the south. The composition of the building structure changes to the northeast of the embassy building to residential townhouses and lower residential

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64 Ibid., p. 257.
beyond. It is clear that this area is somewhat in transition, but affluent. The grain of the embassy building is in keeping with the surrounding buildings. The embassy building is also cognizant of the existing street pattern leaving it undisturbed. See Analysis Ottawa.2 for a map of the local context of the American embassy in Ottawa.

Site Design

The Ottawa embassy was designed by David Childs of Sidmore, Owings, and Merrill. The building is highly fortified on one side and covered with glass on the other. Glass was used on one side and concrete on the other with evenly spaced windows. To the architect, the transparent glass represented openness and democracy. The entire building looks like a ship with a center glass atrium. (See Figure 4.2) A diplomatic entrance faces MacKenzie Avenue to the west and a consular entrance is located on Sussex Promenade to the east. (See Figure 4.3) The building is set back from the street on both sides. On the west side the setback is greater, measuring roughly 60 feet. On the east side the setback is roughly 30 feet. The west side of the building includes an arcing sidewalk from the north side of the building to the south side of the building. There are no visible vehicle approaches to the building. Parking appears to be available in surface parking on a street nearby. Street trees act as a screening device for the lower stories of the building, while curbside bollards prevent vehicle access to the interior of the site. Since the setback is minimal there must be preventive measures to ensure that vehicles will not stop in front of the embassy or the perceived risk of attack in this way may be deemed low enough to justify the minimal setback. See Analysis Ottawa.3 for a map of the site design of the American embassy in Ottawa.

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65 Ibid., p. 256.
Ottawa Regional Context

- **Downtown District**
- **New Embassy**

*Analysis Ottawa.1: Regional Context*
Ottawa Local Context

Embassy Building

Analysis Ottawa.2: Local Context
Ottawa Site Design

Embassy Building

Analysis Ottawa.3: Site Design
DAR ES SALAAM

Following the bombing of the American embassy in Dar es Salaam in 1998, the United States set about building a new embassy compound at a distance from the original location, based on the Standard Embassy Design Guidelines set forth by the OBO. The New Embassy Compound housing the American Embassy officially opened March 04, 2003. (See Figure 4.4) The current ambassador used the dedication of the embassy to highlight the United State’s resolve in the fight against terrorism through the design of the new building. Under Secretary of State Greene stated in the dedication of the new facility:

“From our new Embassy today, we rededicate ourselves to broadening and deepening our engagement with the 35 million citizens of Tanzania. We will use this wonderful facility, one of the highest-tech, most secure Embassies in the world, as a platform from which to strengthen and further the ties that bind the American and Tanzanian peoples together. But as we move forward in that effort, let us never forget the men and women, Tanzanian and American, who served proudly, bravely, and forthrightly, here and paid a price in blood for the ideals that both our nations hold dear. It is to them that we dedicate this building today.”

The Dar es Salaam New Embassy Compound Project used the Design-Build model, as compared to the traditional design-bid-build model which usually took 60 months or more to complete, but with the urgent need in 1998 for replacement facilities for the Dar es Salaam embassy staff, OBO opted to fast-track the entire project. Five years later the project was completed. According to the Dar es Salaam diplomatic staff, construction benefited from a

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Figure 4.4: Design Perspective of the American Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (1998-2003)

single point of contact for contractual purposes, faster delivery time, and reduced exposure to legal claims.\textsuperscript{67}

Regional Context

The embassy site was selected under the joint agreement of the government of Tanzania and the State Department. The OBO selected an old drive-in movie theatre to suit the compounds size and location needs. “Dar es Salaam city planning officials and municipal authority had visions of triggering development in other parts of the City of Dar es Salaam away from the downtown area.” The project has spawned new construction and significant renovation in the neighborhood. New construction includes the new Church of the Latter Day Saints, the new Regional Office for Tanesco Electric Supply Company, the Royal Plaza Shopping Complex, an array of Total/Gap/Oil-Com fueling stations, the President’s Hotel Building, Tan-Rose Video Store, Anghiti Restaurant, and more tenants moving into Shoppers’ Plaza.\textsuperscript{68}

From the analysis of the regional context of the new embassy in Dar es Salaam it can be seen that the new embassy was located in a position distant from city center. The approximate distance as the crow flies is about three miles. See Analysis Dar es Salaam.\textsuperscript{1} for a map of the Dar es Salaam region. As compared to the location of the old embassy that can also be seen on the map of the Dar es Salaam region, the distance is not much greater, although the destroyed embassy was located in a much more prominent location; along the side of a major street artery through the city. The current embassy in Dar es Salaam does not have a location of prominence along a prominent regional street corridor.

It is also questionable whether the location of the new embassy was truly intended to be a catalyst for development. The northern section of the city, where the embassy is located and up to the peninsula to the north east, is the most affluent area of the city.\textsuperscript{69} As will be seen in other analyzes, American embassies tend to locate in the protective cluster of expatriate communities and affluent neighborhoods.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
Local Context

Even at the dedication ceremony, the division of the embassy from the surrounding city was made clear in its separateness embodied in its campus-like facility layout. OBO Director Williams spoke about the embassy highlighting that the new building was “undoubtedly among the most sophisticated in Tanzania” and the largest diplomatic compound in Tanzania. A campus-style facility it spreads out over twenty-two acres in the municipality of Kinondoni in Dar es Salaam. (See Figure 4.5)

From the analysis of the local context of the new embassy in Dar es Salaam it can be seen that the new embassy is not well integrated with the surrounding city. See Analysis Dar es Salaam.2 for a map of the local context of the American embassy in Dar es Salaam. Looking at the grain of the surrounding buildings it can be deduced that the American embassy is situated in a transitional area between a more affluent area of the city and a poor, if not just older section of the city. To the west, housing is more evenly spaced and more orderly, with greater separation between buildings. To the east and north, the buildings are smaller and more haphazardly situated, forming a maze like pattern between houses. Just south of the embassy is a cul-de-sac with some smaller housing and some tiny apartment like structures. Directly to the northwest of the embassy compound, a plaza-type mall can be seen along with a soccer field to the north. Directly to the southeast of the embassy compound are some two to four story apartment buildings.

The embassy is located just north of a major thoroughfare, with divided travel lanes, and is oriented to a major road that runs northwest-southeast. To the east, strengthening the argument

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about the transitional nature of the location of the embassy site, the streets are ordered in a grid-like manner. To the north and northeast of the compound the street pattern dissolves to fill the spaces in between the houses in an organic manner.

The embassy compound does not integrate itself into the fabric of the city at this scale. Directly to the east of the compound, a street dead ends into the wall of the embassy compound. The scale of the building is fitting with the grouping of shopping mall like buildings that share the center of the area analyzed, but the scale of the embassy dwarfs the scale of the surrounding residential buildings to the east and the west.

It may be that the embassy will act as a catalyst for development of the site. The more chaotically organized area northeast of the site may be seen by the Dar es Salaam government as a blemish on an affluent area. The presence of the American embassy at this location may be strengthening this divide.

**Site Design**

The embassy compound is trapezoidal and gently slopes to the north. All of the buildings on the compound are just slightly visible above the perimeter security wall. The compound is divided into two functional areas. One includes the two main structures: the Chancery and the USAID building. The other functional area consists of six support structures, staff and visitor parking, and a land for future development. According to the Embassy website, the street setback is sufficient for infrastructure development and potential road expansion.71

The compound includes 125,000 square feet of office space. The Embassy website stated that it was the architect’s charge to create a facility that had “no negative impact on the Msasani area environment and infrastructure while making every effort to conserve power, fuel, and water—all relatively expensive in Tanzania; the appropriateness of the compound with reference to its location on Old Bagamoyo Road; and the need to provide an inviting facility equally welcoming to both employees and users.”72
The compound houses its own waste water treatment plant, domestic water treatment plant, and reverse osmosis system to provide potable water, fire sprinkler system to extinguish fires, fire detection system, and its own collection of art. The site features include trees and shrubs, along with “a spread of sidewalks, seating areas, and an asphalt road” that encircles the entire compound. The embassy website states that there are lots of opportunities for meditative walks and outdoor seating areas. The entire ceremonial entry drive is lined with trees-palm trees on the exterior half and flame trees on the interior half.\textsuperscript{73}

From the analysis of the immediate site design of the new embassy in Dar es Salaam it can be seen that the new embassy is not well integrated with the surrounding city. The major vehicle approach is via the road to the southwest. A parking lot and service entrance impede a grand vehicle approach for dignitaries. The building although properly oriented to the sun, does not present itself to the major street to the southwest. The building is far to the back of the site, relying on a high wall as the street façade of the building. See Analysis Dar es Salaam.3 for a map of the immediate site analysis of the Dar es Salaam embassy.

The compound is much more conducive to pedestrian access than to vehicle travel. Pedestrians can only access the site on the south side of the compound. Sidewalks are provided from what appears to be a bus pull-off to an embassy gate. A sidewalk meanders through the site to an annex of the embassy structure on the south.

The architecture of the building is dressed with local wood and stone. Mazeras stone, from the East Africa Region, clads the façade of the building and on the perimeter compound wall. Mninga hardwood is used on the exterior façade of the building. Although the building is clad in appealing materials, this is not evident in an observation of a photograph highlighting the

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
façade of the embassy building. (See Figure 4.6)

The old embassy, destroyed in 1998, is better fit into the surrounding community. See Dar es Salaam. 4 for a map of the old American embassy in Dar es Salaam. Situated in an affluent neighborhood, the American embassy was located directly across from the French embassy. Both embassies were walled, but the setback from the street was minimal as compared to the new embassy.

Returning to the symbolism of the embassy, the one element of the project that is visible throughout the compound is that of the “American flag perched high atop the 25 meter flag-pole.”74 It is a sign of the extended American presence in Tanzania and of the fight against terrorism. At the new embassy in Dar es Salaam, the United States has put up their wall and staked down their flag to lay claim to the ground that the new embassy stands on as if daring the next attack against a bigger and better fortress.
Dar es Salaam Regional Context

**Analysis Dar es Salaam.1:** Regional Context
Dar es Salaam Local Context

Embassy Complex

Analysis Dar es Salaam.2: Local Context
Dar es Salaam Site Design

New Embassy Building

Analysis Dar es Salaam.3: Site Design
Dar es Salaam Site Design

Scale

0 500 1,500 Feet

Old Embassy Complex

Analysis Dar es Salaam.4: Old Embassy Site Design
BERLIN

The threat of terrorism may be less in Ottawa than in Berlin. On the other hand, the new American embassy there, currently under construction, is adjacent to the Brandenburg Gate on the Pariser Platz in a very symbolic location in the heart of Berlin. (See Figure 4.7) It is estimated to cost $143 million by the time it is completed. If the Inman standards had been applied to this project the building would have required a suburban facility. Instead, a downtown location with immense symbolic importance was chosen. The location is the site of the demolished Berlin Wall that once divided the city, and is the historic location of the U.S. embassy before World War II that was never occupied. Through the design and location of this embassy, the United States has made a strong statement about the continuity of German-American relations into the future.

According to the State Department, John Quincy Adams was the first diplomat assigned to Germany in 1797. The Blucher Palace on Pariser Platz was purchased in 1930. Before the new embassy could be occupied, the palace was gutted by fire. Then during the War, the palace was heavily damaged. Following the War, the Palace was demolished by the East German

Figure 4.7: Site Plan of the American Embassy in Berlin, Germany (2007)
government in 1957. And following that the land was part of the non-accessible border zone between the East and West Berlin.\textsuperscript{75} 

The State Department signaled its desire to proceed with the historic site by holding a major design competition in 1995. The finalists included: Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates; Bohlin Cywinski Jackson; Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates; Robert A.M. Stern Architects; Kallmann McKinnel and Wood; and Moore Ruble Yudell.\textsuperscript{76} The design chosen was full of American iconography including scrolls representing the Bill of Rights and important phrases from the US Constitution.

As with Ottawa decisions were made that focused attention on the symbolic importance of the site versus security given utmost priority. A narrower street setback was a compromise to a place of prominence within the city. The new American embassy in Berlin will be both a reflection of America while at the same time complementation to the architecture of the very historical setting in the heart of Europe. Special attention was given to the Berlin site, symbolically placing the new embassy on a pre-war site straddling the now demolished Berlin wall signifying importance to Germany and Europe. The building is an excellent example of how security requirements and beauty can be integrated, symbolizing the United States as cognizant of the threat of terrorism and the important role that the embassy will play in symbolizing America. (See Figure 4.8)

Regional Context

The location of the American embassy in Berlin is both as symbolically important site and an important site as related to its proximity to the downtown area. The embassy is located at the intersection of two major thoroughfares radiating to the west, north and south. See Analysis Berlin.1 for the regional context of the American embassy in Berlin.

Local Context

Working closely with the State Department and the urban planning authorities of the City of Berlin, the new building was able to meet site, architectural, security, and program requirements. The American Embassy closes the last frontage on Pariser Platz. The building is of the same grain as the surrounding buildings fitting well with the existing block structure of the city. The building mediates between the downtown blocks and a large open space to the west. See Analysis Berlin.2 for the local Context of the American embassy in Berlin.
Site Design

The embassy building does an excellent job of providing vehicle and pedestrian approaches to the building as well as orienting itself to three streets. Major pedestrian access is via Pariser Platz, which has the added security benefit of being devoid of vehicle traffic. (See Figure 4.9) To the west, a vehicle pull off lane is provided, but its access is limited by bollards that can be removed. The distance is roughly 50 feet from the curb to the wall of the building on the west side of the building. On the south side of the building the setback is about 70 feet. As with Ottawa, the building is screened from view by trees. (See Figure 3.10) The exterior treatment of the building is a wall with small window apertures most likely designed to resist a car bomb from a fifty foot distance. See Analysis Berlin.3 for the immediate site design of the American embassy in Berlin.

Compared to the old embassy site in Berlin, the new design will add security to the design of the embassy. Making security accommodations to the embassy, the streets around the embassy have been closed using barricades disrupting traffic flow in Berlin’s grid-like street pattern. To the west an entire block is used for parking by embassy staff and to house security buildings. See Analysis Berlin.4 for the immediate site design of the old American embassy in Berlin.
Berlin Regional Context

- Downtown District
- New Embassy
- Old Embassy

*Analysis Berlin.1: Regional Context*
Analysis Berlin.2: Local Context
Berlin Site Design

Scale

Feet

0 500 1,500

New Embassy Building

Analysis Berlin.3: Site Design
Analysis Berlin.4: Old Embassy Site Design
Following the bombing of the American embassy in Nairobi in 1998, the United States constructed a new embassy compound at a distance from its original location based on the Standard Embassy Design Guidelines set forth by the OBO. The AIA publicized the embassy as “meeting the challenge of blending highly secure, traditional architecture with local building materials and a welcoming façade.” The AIA committee that voted on a design award for the project in 2005 stated, “We’re giving this a prize with the hope that the Department of State continues to commission good architecture that’s responsive to history, and context, and technology—and that they don’t default to just doing one cookie-cutter embassy after another,” the jury said. “This embassy is important because of its history. And it’s nice that is has a delicate screen surrounding it and a defined entryway that welcomes people.”

(See Figure 4.11) It is questionable whether the embassy deserves the prize considering how it relates to the surrounding community. No one will actually ever get to experience the time taken to design the new Nairobi embassy.

The Nairobi compound does appear unobtrusive in its specific context surrounded by an expatriate community and the UNEP campus. Although not having any relationship to the street that it is adjacent to, the embassy may just succeed in hiding far from the city center, behind a tall wall. The street has become less inviting because of its presence, but maybe the embassy staff can carry out their duties their without interference.

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Regional Context

Less is known about the siting of the American embassy in Nairobi, except that it is distant from the city-center -- roughly 3.5 miles as the crow flies. The embassy is located near a major regional artery that heads north out of the city. An undeveloped area lies between it and the city. It is assumed that this undeveloped area is a mountain range. Only one road crosses this undeveloped area creating a security risk for diplomats traveling to the city. A shopping mall can be seen in aerial photography to the north of the embassy site. See Analysis Nairobi.1 for a map of the regional context of the American embassy in Nairobi.

Local Context

From the analysis of the local context of the new embassy in Nairobi, it can be deduced that the embassy is located in an expatriate community. Building spacing is large and the shape and height of the buildings suggest residential development. In the eastern section of the analyzed area, the United Nations Environmental Project (UNEP) building is located. Other large structures can also be seen in the vicinity that may be other embassies. The American embassy has located in a cluster of affluent development.

The building does not have a positive relationship to the streets to the north and east. Hidden behind a wall, the building is neither oriented to the sun or to any geographical feature or road. Although the building and the complex dwarfs the surrounding buildings in size, it does not drastically disturb the street pattern. It is unlikely that the surrounding community minds that the embassy is there since the surrounding housing most likely works at the embassy and the UNEP building. The entire community enclave seems to have been constructed within the past twenty years as part of the growth of the UNEP campus. See Analysis Nairobi.2 for a map of the local context of the American embassy in Nairobi.
Site Design

The embassy compound is rectangular in shape. All of the buildings on the compound are just slightly visible above the perimeter security wall. It is assumed that the compound houses its own waste water treatment plant, domestic water treatment plant, and water supply. The site features an asphalt circular driveway, what appears to be a service entrance to the northwest, a diplomatic vehicle entrance to the west and a pedestrian entrance to the southeast.

From the analysis of the immediate site design of the new embassy in Nairobi, it can be seen that the new embassy is not well integrated with the surrounding city mainly because of the setback and the imposing wall on all four sides of the compound. The main pedestrian entrance is wedged between a parking lot a tall building to the south of the compound. Service buildings and the longest section of wall abuts the street to the north rendering the street unimportant to the embassy complex. The main entrance to the embassy compound is through a parking lot to the east, stressing the American reliance on the car and a view that this is the exported ideal of choice. See Analysis.3 for a map of the immediate site analysis of the Nairobi embassy.

The new facility differs in many ways from the old. The destroyed embassy in the Nairobi downtown was located at an extremely prominent location on the major intersection in the downtown, and occupied a corner lot; the surrounding building were of similar grain and fit well with the surrounding city structure. No wall was apparent around the perimeter of the building. See Analysis.4 for a map of the immediate site analysis of the old Nairobi embassy.

The architecture of the new embassy in Nairobi itself is appealing to the eye, but would only be apparent to someone inside the compound. The pedestrian and vehicle approaches on the east side of the compound never have a good look at the award winning façade (See Figure 4.12) of the building and the recessed side yard to the north seems an unfortunate attempt to provide an exterior space between the building an the service area of the building since those who would be waiting to gain access to consular services would have to wait in the parking lot outside the walls.

Figure 4.12: Facade of the American Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya (1998-2003)
Nairobi Regional Context

- **Downtown District**
- **New Embassy**
- **Old Embassy**

*Analysis Nairobi.1: Regional Context*
Nairobi Local Context

Embassy Complex

Analysis Nairobi.2: Local Context
Nairobi Site Design

New Embassy Complex

Analysis Nairobi.3: Site Design
Nairobi Site Design

Scale

0 500 1,500 Feet

Old Embassy Building

Analysis Nairobi.4: Old Embassy Site Design

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The future site for the new embassy in Baghdad will consist of 104 acres fronting an artificial lake adjacent to the Tigris River in close proximity to the “Green Zone.” (See Figure 4.13) The current projected cost, according to the OBO is $612 million up to fiscal year, 2006. President Bush has requested $1.3 billion for the project according to a report to Congress; if approved this would make the Baghdad embassy the most expensive embassy in United States history easily toping the costs for the new downtown embassy in Beijing by roughly $200 million. The Baghdad embassy will also cover more land area than any embassy in history. The compound will house 1,400 personnel in 21 buildings including two diplomatic office buildings, homes for the ambassador and his deputies, an apartment building for staff, a swimming pool, gym, commissary, food court, and an American Club.

The embassy will be entirely self-contained, including on-site power, water, and sanitation. It will, of course, also be surrounded by high walls and blast deflecting berms. It is rumored that the compound will even contain anti-missile defense batteries. Setbacks from the street will easily exceed 100 feet. The buildings walls be 2.5 times the standard to resist rocket blasts, and five high-security entrances, plus an emergency entrance/exit will be provided. The site will be located on land that was ceded to the United States for this purpose. It is not clear whether the United States paid for the site or made a fair exchange considering the value of the property.

Completion is slated for June of 2007. (See Figure 4.14 for progress on the project) The

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new embassy is being built by a First Kuwaiti Trading and Contracting with migrant South-Asian laborers typically from the Philippines and Indonesia. There have been allegations about brutal and inhumane working conditions, “breaking every US labor law.”79 According to the Associated Press, the prime reasoning for using foreign labor was to avoid having Iraqis learn too much about the compound and how it is designed and protected. A total of six contractors are working on the project, five of which are American firms.80

Adding to growing trouble associated with the embassy and dissolving image of the American embassy in Baghdad, Iraqis have been complaining that the US and Middle Eastern contractors have been brought in to do the work the Iraqis could do. The assumption is that people from outside the country will not remember or will not talk in the future. It is the opinion of Terrell Arnold, retired Senior Foreign Service Officer that from the Iraqi perspective “the more offensive assumption behind not using Iraqis to work on the new embassy is that the Iraqi people will always be opposed to the Americans that any Iraqi knowledge of how the new embassy is put together could be dangerous to American health. Thus, a “we-they” psychology…is being


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*Figure 4.14: American Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq under construction*
designed into the future layout of the American presence.” A colony of American officials and families inside a fortress will only reinforce such a psychology.81

The embassy does signify American involvement and commitment to the region for years to come. With such an outlay of so much capital the United States has put down roots in the region. The question is whether the roots that have been put down are diplomatic or military.

Regional Context

The embassy site is located along the Tigris River, south of the Green Zone. See Figure 4.15 for an image of the location of the future embassy site. The embassy site is an island only accessible by bridge to the north and south and by a causeway to the east. The island was the site of a park and was the site of an affluent exurban neighborhood. It is assumed that the site is in the flood plane. Bermed wall are visible along the banks of the Tigris River at this bend where the embassy is to be located. A four lane bridge passes just to the south of the site heading east and west. The building is relatively close any center in the city although the center of the city is undeterminable at this point. The Green Zone represents most likely site for the capitol and governmental functions and this area is located just to the northeast of the future embassy site. See Analysis Baghdad.1 for a map of the regional context of the American embassy in Baghdad.

Local Context

Since the future embassy is under construction and no aerial photographs are available of the construction process other than the beginning stages along the Tigris River, it is difficult to compare the compound to surrounding buildings. Assuming that the embassy compound will be square in shape to give a conservative estimate for the area that the embassy will occupy in the future, one side of the embassy compound will be roughly 2000 feet. This length approximates the eastern side of the island. The compound will be at leas that distance to the west.

The existing street pattern that the embassy will be replacing is visible in Analysis Baghdad. From the aerial photography it appears that the foundation that were removed from this site are residential. The remains of pools and driveways can be seen suggesting that this was an affluent area of the city. Other houses that are still standing appear to be farms because they cluster at road intersection and contain land that is being farmed. The future embassy compound has no context as it relates to the surrounding city at this scale. The embassy site will be as large as the Vatican and as large as about a third of the entire green zone. The embassy site is similar to the other Saddam-era monuments that are sprinkled throughout the city; its monumental scale is ironically fitting to the city’s structure. It is a walled enclave surrounded by moat and a wall, a virtual city within a city.

Figure 4.1: Location of the Future American Embassy highlighted in pink
Baghdad Regional Context

Downtown District
New Embassy Site

Analysis Baghdad.1: Regional Context
Baghdad Local Context

- New Embassy Site (104 acres)
- Walls Built in 2006

Analysis Baghdad.2: Local Context
V. CONCLUSION- THE IDENTITY CRISIS OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

On January 18, 2006, Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice outlined her vision of Transformational Diplomacy as rooted in public diplomacy:

“To bring America’s story directly to the people and the regional television media in real time and in the appropriate language” with diplomats “traveling to their area of responsibility more regularly than ever, using their expertise and experience more effectively abroad...” “To reach beyond the borders of the traditional diplomatic structures and beyond foreign capitals, diplomats will move out from behind their desks into the field, from reporting on outcomes to shaping them. 21st century technology will be used to engage foreign publics more directly via the media and Internet, and to better connect diplomats in real time.” 82

This rhetoric sounds very familiar to Cold War foreign policies to “change the hearts and minds” of people about the United States and show the superiority of the United States as compared to the Soviet Union. This time it is assumed that Rice is talking about the War on Terror and the cultural battle associated with that fight. But, how can this happen with the embassies isolated on compounds, in expatriate communities with no attention paid to the symbolism that of the United States embassy represents to the world?

Rice’s plan for Transformational Diplomacy does not address the embassy. It should, because the embassy represents one of the most compelling images of America to the world whether or not one is intended. As Loeffler writes in a more recent article about the identity crisis of the contemporary American embassy, in establishing America’s diplomatic presence abroad, no factor,
“is more tangible than the size and prominence of the embassy building. The same visual
cues that convey the key democratic ideals of openness and accessibility can transmit
vulnerability, while the embassy that conveys strength and impenetrability can transmit
aloofness, anxiety, and an absence of goodwill. The lack of fit between an embassy’s
“personality” and its purpose as a quasi-public building means that the American
presence becomes more schizophrenic as it become more defensive.”

The de-emphasis of the architecture, site design, and context of the American embassy is
contributing to the attitude that the United States is constructing walled compound that show
military aggressiveness and inconsideration for host countries around the globe.

The urban analysis of the contemporary American embassies from a regional context to
a site design context echoes the conclusion that the American embassy is suffering an identity
crisis. Embassy placed in downtown locations pays special attention to the symbolic relationship
between the United States and the host country, are far better integrated into the host city, and
arguably represent a far better image of an America abroad then the compound, removed from
the city center, surrounded by walls.

The SED compound shows fear for the outside world and inadvertent aggressiveness to
a host country through the wall and the relationship to the outside neighborhood. The disregard
for surrounding street patterns shows arrogance on the part of the United States. Lining the street
with maintenance buildings or placing the building on the site in such a way that access is only
available through a parking lot shows that the United States is unconcerned with the wellbeing to
surrounding communities. In some places, such as Dar es Salaam, where the embassy compound
has been placed between an affluent community and a poorer community the embassy compound
only further the divide between the United States and world. Streets terminating into the walls
of the American embassy represent the diplomacy of the United States as barrier building rather
than bridge building.

The scale and monumental-like qualities of the embassy compound in Iraq is an urbanistic and symbolic mistake. It dwarfs all embassy projects to date. It might not even be possible to call it an embassy with the massive defensive posture it has taken on the landscape and the fortifications it has made. It is a military fortress, not an embassy. How will diplomacy ever be carried out from such a goliath? No wonder no diplomats have wanted to locate to this facility.

Although it may be the wish of the State Department to de-emphasize the architecture of the embassy, to make these facilities less obvious targets, the symbolic importance of the embassy has not been given enough consideration. The wall, cutting the embassy off from its neighbors and fortress-like appearance projects a sense of fear and ambiguity about how the United States wishes to be viewed abroad. The State Department must represent the United States in a positive way through the symbolism of its architecture, or risk negative interpretations and further misunderstanding. SED is not fulfilling this function and may actually be aggravating the situation.

It could be argued that standardization shows a maturing of American embassy planning. The diplomacy rises in importance and the structure representing the deeds becomes less visible. But, again, how can you hide a monster of a compound? On the other hand, standardization of the embassy becomes a division between the first world and third world pointing to a contradiction in the idea of Transformational Diplomacy about the image of American abroad. Extra attention is given to established global power such as in Canada, Germany, England, France, and China in embassy design, while the rest of the world has to accept a repetitive module that recognizes a host country as nothing more than a possible security threat in a “changing world” and the embassy as necessary function for world security.

Where is the idea of America and public diplomacy in the third world? It is not enough to say that the United States will move beyond the walls of the embassy compound, the United States must have a compound that is fitting in image to its policy. A Mexican waiting outside
the American embassy in Mexico City should not be basing his understanding about American border control and immigration policy on the long line and wall that encircle the compound. He should be basing his understanding on a better image of the United States if America is to actually make progress in this new global age.

Throughout the history of the American embassy, the United States has always put forth an image of what it would like to represent to the world. This has not been without criticism. In the early years of embassy planning, Congress criticized the American embassy, likened after the White House as symbolic of the executive branch and undesirable as an image of America abroad. In the post-war period, the international style was criticized because it placed bureaucracy above representative government and was also not an image to project to the world. The defiance of the fortress structure in the face of terror and the compound or enclave was warned to be a “ghetto” by Congress in the years past. Should we now disregard that warning?

The contemporary American embassy needs to establish an identity and quick, whatever that identity might be. The future will always allow for that identity and image to change. The walled fortress and no set idea about an image to project to the world is not an acceptable representation of the United States abroad.
WORK CITED


Embassy of the United States, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Website.


