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“A Battle for Hearts and Minds”: U.S. Public Diplomacy
in the Cold War Middle East

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“A Battle for Hearts and Minds”: U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Cold War Middle East

Christopher Goss and Richard King (Mentor), History

This paper analyzes the development of American public diplomacy in the Middle East region from 1945-1961. The purpose of the paper is to situate the public diplomacy effort within existing histories of the Middle East and Cold War propaganda and to analyze the methods used by the U. S. to shape foreign opinion. Analysis reveals that the U.S. felt the need to implement a foreign information program under President Truman, which was later expanded and corrected under Eisenhower, and included a switch from short-term objective seeking to long-term goodwill fostering. The methods were primarily focused on two target audiences: educated community leaders on one hand, and the masses on the other. This research highlights the successes of the previous U.S. public diplomacy program which was later revived post-9/11, but has struggled to reduce anti-Americanism.

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Abbreviation List:

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency
 IIA – United States International Information Administration
 NEA – Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
 NSC – National Security Council
 OCB – Operations Coordinating Board
 OEX – Office of Educational Exchange
 OIC – Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs
 OIE – Office of Information and Educational Exchange
 OII – Office of International Information
 OSS – Office of Strategic Services
 OWI – Office of War Information
 PSB – Psychological Strategy Board
 UAR – United Arab Republic
 USIA – United States Information Agency
 USIS – United States Information Service
 VOA – Voice of America

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks the Council of Foreign Relations sponsored an independent task force to focus on determining the current situation of anti-Americanism in the world.¹ That Task Force found that negative views of the United States and its policies were growing and concluded that the growth of anti-Americanism constituted a threat to U.S. national security. The Task Force advocated for a vast expansion of U.S. public diplomacy to counteract this rising tide.² Over the decade since the report was published global anti-Americanism has diminished; however, anti-Americanism in the Middle East remains incredibly high.³

Within its executive summary the Task Force claims the United States must, “create a strong and robust public diplomacy—one able to win hearts and minds.”⁴ The use of such terminology is a deliberate call back to United States’ public diplomacy during the Cold War. During the Cold War-era the United States also sensed a need for an expanded program of public diplomacy to fight the Soviet Union. Cold War historian W. Scott Lucas states quite clearly, “The Cold War was a battle for hearts and minds.”⁵ However in spite of this reference to Cold War-era public diplomacy and the apparent necessity of such programs in the Middle East there is remarkably little scholarship on how the United States conducted public diplomacy in the Middle East during that period. This paper is about the various ways the United States practiced public diplomacy in the Middle East in the years 1945-1961 as a method of obtaining its national objectives.

¹ Bloomgarden, Kathy, Henry Grunwald, David E. Morey, Shibley Telhami, Jennifer Sieg, and Sharon Herbstman, *Finding America's Voice: a Strategy for Reinvigorating US Public Diplomacy*, Council on Foreign Relations, 2003.

² Ibid.

³ Pew Research Center, “Global Attitudes and Trends” <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/chapter-1-attitudes-toward-the-united-states/> (accessed 2/6/2015).

⁴ Bloomgarden, 3.

⁵ W. Scott Lucas, "Beyond Diplomacy: Propaganda and the History of the Cold War." in *Cold War Propaganda in the 1950s*. edited by Gary Rawnsley, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 11.

The purpose of the paper is to situate the public diplomacy effort within existing histories of the Middle East and Cold War propaganda and create a single narrative of the program's development and changes over time. Additionally, it analyzes the methods used by the United States to shape foreign opinion. Analysis of the existing documentation reveals that the United States began to feel a need to implement a foreign information program in the late 1940s under President Truman as Cold War tensions began to rise. The program was later expanded and issues that plagued Truman were largely corrected under Eisenhower. These corrections included a switch from short-term objective seeking to long-term goodwill fostering during his second term in office after the Suez Crisis, but especially after 1958. The methods used by the United States were primarily focused on two target audiences: educated community leaders on one hand, and the masses on the other. As greater latitude was afforded to local offices toward the later 1950s American propagandists were able to better tailor their material to fit local interests.

There are several difficulties to studying public diplomacy in the Middle East, chiefly: what constitutes the Middle East, what is included in public diplomacy, and how does public diplomacy relate to foreign policy? For the purposes of this paper the "Middle East" will refer to the Arabic speaking countries from Egypt up to the border of Turkey as well as Iran. There are two reasons for selecting only these countries and not others that also share cultural ties such as North Africa, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan. First, American officials during the Cold War tended to group the former countries together based on regional objectives and threats.⁶ The rise of revolutionary nationalist factors made this particular region of "the Middle East" of special interest to American policymakers as they sought to ensure stability in the region and prevent Soviet influence. Second and derivative of the first reason is the volume of documentation. When

⁶ National Security Council, Executive Secretary Report to the United States, "United States Objectives and Policies with Respect to the Arab States and Israel" [Annex to NSC 129], April 7, 1952.

not speaking of the region as a whole, most of the documents focus on Egypt, Iraq and Iran. While Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and other countries are not fully ignored, there is a noticeable decrease in volume and outside of this region there is simply much less documentation.

A greater difficulty lies perhaps in determining just what constitutes “public diplomacy.” It is important to note that the terms propaganda, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, psychological warfare and information activities all refer to the similar strategies and oftentimes officials use these terms interchangeably. I prefer the term public diplomacy as it does not hold the same connotations and limitations that can be applied to other terms. However, it must be recognized that as part of the wider attempt at influencing foreign public opinion, outright “propaganda” in the form of leaflets or bulletins were not viewed separately from more inconspicuous events such as jazz performances or educational exchanges. American propaganda in the Cold War was handled by many different agencies from the United States Information Agency (USIA) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to private parties such as book publishers and included everything from traditional print and radio to the student exchanges and jazz concerts. As Cold War historian Kenneth Osgood notes, “The battle for hearts and minds was waged not just with words, but also with deeds—actions calculated to have an impact on public perceptions.”⁷ To encompass all of these traits our definition of public diplomacy must be flexible, but not so vague as to make a distinction from traditional policy useless. Thus in the context of United States’ Cold War efforts, public diplomacy can be understood as any action undertaken to advance national objectives through changes to public opinion.

⁷ Kenneth Alan Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2006), 5.

Understanding just how public diplomacy interacted with policy is another challenge and constitutes one of the primary focuses of this paper. Although considered by some to constitute the “fourth dimension” of policymaking alongside diplomatic, economic and military actions, public diplomacy was not always seamlessly integrated into the policymaking process.⁸ When William Jackson, head of a committee tasked by Eisenhower with evaluating overseas propaganda remarked, “the ‘psychological’ aspect of policy is not separable from policy,” he highlights one of the goals of U.S. policymakers at the time, if not the reality.⁹ In the earliest stages of the Cold War U.S. policymakers determined that the Soviet Union was outperforming the United States in the amount of propaganda created and that this disparity could be detrimental to US prestige and thus national objectives.¹⁰ The early Cold War served as a type of evolutionary process where various programs rose and fell in an attempt to realize a synthesis close to Jackson’s ideal.

The scholarship on United States Cold War public diplomacy is growing and experienced a large expansion within the past decade. Historians such as Kenneth Osgood, Scott Lucas and Gary Rawnsley have made large contributions to the understanding of the expansion of American propaganda activities and the psychological dimension of the Cold War.¹¹ Several works detail the institutional histories of the Voice of America (VOA) and USIA. They provide greater understanding of the institutions operating in the Middle East albeit not covering

⁸ Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: US Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950*, (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁹ “The Report of the President’s Committee on International Information Activities, June 30, 1953” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, National Security Affairs, Volume II, Part 2*, eds. Lisle A. Rose and Neal H. Petersen, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983.

¹⁰ University of Michigan. Department of Near Eastern Studies Letter from George Cameron to Edward W. Barrett. [Propaganda Activities in Iraq; Attached to Cover Memorandum], October 24, 1951. National Archives. Record Group 59. Records of the Department of State. Decimal Files, 1950-1954. (Document 35)

¹¹ Gary D. Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda: the BBC and VOA in International Politics, 1956-64*, (NY: Macmillan Press, 1996).

activities there extensively.¹² While scholarship exists on American intervention in the Middle East the psychological dimension is largely absent from these accounts with the exception of a few country specific articles.¹³ The most significant of these works focus on the role of the CIA in Iran and the overthrow of Mohamed Mossadeq.¹⁴ The most significant monograph on American Cold War propaganda in the Middle East is James R. Vaughan's *The Failure of American and British Propaganda in the Arab Middle East, 1945-1957*.¹⁵ Although Vaughan's account is the most significant work on the topic, only half of the book is dedicated to American efforts in the area.

This paper is divided into two parts and then further into chapters. The first part examines the formation and expansion of the American Cold War propaganda machine in general and how this manifested in the Middle East. Chapter 1 deals with American propaganda efforts from the Second World War through the Truman presidency. Chapter 2 focuses on the expansion and reorganization of propaganda activities from the beginning of the Eisenhower presidency in 1953 through the Suez Crisis in 1956. The Third Chapter finishes with the latter half of the Eisenhower presidency. Part two of the paper focuses less on the organization of propaganda activities in the region and more on the methods employed as well as issues related to implementing propaganda as a policy tool. Chapter 4 deals with the "how" of U.S. public diplomacy including an examination of the means by which American officials sought to influence public opinion from radio and print media to educational exchanges. Chapter 5

¹² Holly Cowan Shulman, *The Voice of America: Propaganda and Democracy, 1941-1945*, (WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

¹³ Ahmed Khalid al-Rawi, "the Campaign of Truth Program." in *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* ed. Philip Emil Muehlenbeck, (TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), pp. 113-138.

¹⁴ Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: the CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, (Granta Books, 2000).

¹⁵ James Robert Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda in the Arab Middle East, 1945-1957: Unconquerable Minds*, Cold War History Series, edited by Saki Dockrill. (NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

examines American policy objectives in the region through the lens of public diplomacy and the ways in which propaganda was hampered by various forces including tensions between agencies, British interests, and nationalism and concludes with an examination of the successes and limitations of the program.

Chapter 1: A Tenuous Start

American public diplomacy efforts during the Truman era were limited by a number of problems that prevented a truly cohesive propaganda apparatus from developing in the Middle East. Overall efforts were constrained by partisan politics, disorganization, and lack of funding. Significant progress in the Middle East was initially limited by a heavy focus on the Soviet threats to European interests. Comparing propaganda efforts during the Truman era with those during the war as well as the Eisenhower administration it appears as though the activities were in a state of hibernation at least until the Campaign of Truth—an injection of funds for the purpose of informing foreign audiences about the U.S.—began in 1950. However upon closer inspection, it is clear that without the initial strides made under Truman the subsequent successes in expanding American public diplomacy would not have been possible. Truman took the first steps in enacting propaganda tactics during peacetime and removing the majority of oversight of these programs from direct Congressional control by the early 1950s, thereby preventing Congress from questioning the program's activities and further reorganizing and downsizing it.¹⁶ The program during the Truman administration suffered from organizational flaws and inconsistent funding, but it was able to create the foundations of the program thereby allowing Eisenhower and later propagandists to build upon.

During the course of World War II the United States amassed a significant propaganda network between the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). James Vaughan states the number of people employed in propaganda activities at the end of the war was 5963, with an annual OWI budget of \$80 million.¹⁷ According to Kenneth Osgood, by the end of the war 30,000 people were directly involved with psychological

¹⁶ Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955*, (CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), xxii.

¹⁷ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 12.

operations and had a total annual budget approximating \$150 million.¹⁸ The discrepancy between these two numbers can be attributed to third and private parties who promoted American propaganda without being explicitly employed by the United States (the Writers' War Board for example), as well as organizations outside of the OWI who also conducted "psychological" operations. In any case, it is clear that the United States was expending a large amount of funds and labor to project the American image abroad and counter Nazi propaganda.

Following the end of the war, the American propaganda apparatus faced a massive reduction in size and funding. Dismantling of foreign information agencies was a logical step of post-war disarmament. Until this point it was a strange idea to allow propaganda to operate during peacetime and the public was wary of its use outside of war. Backlash during the 1920s and 1930s over domestic propaganda activities used in the First World War as well as perceptions of dishonesty connected with Nazi propaganda combined to create deep mistrust of propaganda in the public eye.¹⁹ Faced with mistrust from the public and skepticism from Congress, President Truman abolished the OWI in August of 1945. However, Truman believed that the operations conducted by the OWI were necessary to the future of U.S. policy and an integral part of foreign affairs. Truman managed to salvage some of the programs by transferring control to the Department of State. In doing so he was able to place the program under oversight from a historic and powerful agency that could weather Congressional onslaught.²⁰ This move had the effect of presenting the public diplomacy program as a long term fixture of American foreign policy tools rather than a temporary wartime construction. Archibald MacLeish, Assistant Secretary of State for Public and Cultural Affairs, was in charge of the Interim

¹⁸ Osgood, 31.

¹⁹ Parry-Giles, 4.

²⁰ Osgood, 32.

International Information Service. MacLeish worked with Secretary of State James F. Byrnes to facilitate a way to keep the program running.²¹

In December 1945 the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs (OIC) was formed to succeed the interim agency. This agency—also known abroad as the United States Information Service (USIS)—was charged with continuing to bring American propaganda to foreign audiences. After becoming assistant secretary of state in 1945 William B. Benton, a former radio advertiser, began the task of convincing Congress that the program was worth keeping. Benton faced two major challenges to his goal. First, Congressional opinion was such that “responsibility for telling foreigners about the U.S. should be left to private agencies of information.”²² Second, private news organizations had viewed the OWI as a possible competitor in the distribution of information abroad and convincing them to allow the OIC to enter the field posed a challenge.²³

Benton’s strategy was to convince Congress that the services provided by the State Department would not constitute propaganda, but rather an objective display of the facts of American life meant to educate foreign people. The State Department would work to supplement news agencies and would take a back seat to private news organizations where available. This idea became a core concept in later legislation in excerpts such as, “It is the intent of Congress that the Secretary shall encourage participation in carrying out the purposes of this chapter by the maximum number of different private agencies in each field consistent with the present or potential market for their services in each country.”²⁴ This style of operation came to dominate public diplomacy in the Middle East and played a unique role in the success of American

²¹ Shulman, 188.

²² Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 12.

²³ Parry-Giles, 5.

²⁴ Pub. L. No. 80-402, 62 Stat. 6 (1948), “United States Information and Educational Exchange Act” of 1948, (Smith-Mundt Act), U.S. Code 22 USC 1437 - Sec. 1437 Utilization of private agencies.

propaganda in the region. Meanwhile Benton contacted former OWI employees and various members of the media in a vast campaign to get the private media on his side. Ultimately, Benton was successful in getting the media to support his plans for a government sponsored information program abroad.²⁵

In spite of Benton's successes with the media he found no traction with Congress until early in 1948. In 1946, Republicans took control of both houses and slashed funding for the fledgling organization. At this point Benton controlled just 2648 staff and was allocated only \$13 million, which Congress further reduced to \$10 million in 1947. Looking solely at the official U.S. radio arm the Voice of America (VOA)—control of which had also been passed to the State Department in the postwar years—the organization suffered a loss of almost two-thirds of its personnel. The VOA went from offering services in over forty languages down to just twenty-three and the Arabic service was one of the many languages the program lost.²⁶ With massive cuts to funding and widespread lack of support, U.S. public diplomacy was left in dire straits. Yet, reorganization occurred once more in the summer of 1947, aimed at salvaging the program. The OIC was reorganized and renamed the Office of Information and Educational Exchange (OIE) although control of the organization still rested within the State Department.

Change finally came in January 1948 with the passage of the US Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948, also known as the Smith-Mundt Act. The act was introduced by Senator Karl Mundt (R-SD), a former teacher who recognized the value of educating others on “the American way of life,” and cosponsored by Senator H. Alexander Smith (R-NJ). This act formally allowed for an overseas propaganda service (as opposed to the interim activities supported by appropriations funding) by the United States during peacetime. It allowed “an

²⁵ Parry-Giles, 11.

²⁶ William A. Rugh, *American Encounters with Arabs: the “Soft Power” of US Public Diplomacy in the Middle East*, (CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 27.

information service to disseminate abroad information about the United States, its people and policies promulgated by the Congress, the President, the Secretary of State and other responsible officials of government having to do with matters affecting foreign affairs.”²⁷ At first glance, considering the previous attitude of Congress toward propaganda it seems surprising that the Smith-Mundt Act passed, let alone with the speed and support it garnered—including unanimous support in the Senate. However, as Shawn Parry-Giles has suggested, the passage of the Smith-Mundt act must be considered within the evolving Cold War atmosphere of the late 1940s.²⁸

Several key events converged to allow the Smith-Mundt Act to pass at the start of 1948. First, President Truman moved for the United States to provide economic support as well as civilian and military personnel to Greece and Turkey in response to unrest in both countries. This pledge codified U.S. policy to follow foreign advisor George F. Kennan’s ideas on “containment” or limiting expansion of Soviet influence, and was later referred to as the Truman Doctrine. During his statement he told Congress, “The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms” and in doing so aided the escalation of the Cold War.²⁹ Second, in June 1947 the United States began implementing the “Marshall Plan,” an economic recovery plan for European states ravaged by WWII. According to Truman, “The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife.”³⁰ Accordingly, the United States committed funds for the reconstruction of Europe to prevent communist and by extension, Soviet influence. Lastly, a Senate subcommittee traveled overseas in September and October of 1947 to investigate the need for public diplomacy

²⁷ Pub. L. No. 80–402, 62 Stat. 6 (1948), “Smith-Mundt Act.”

²⁸ Parry-Giles, 13.

²⁹ Truman, Recommendation for Assistance to Greece and Turkey March 12, 1947.

³⁰ Truman, Recommendation for Assistance to Greece and Turkey March 12, 1947.

during peacetime.³¹ This trip impressed upon several senators the need for the United States to counter misinformation abroad and recommend the passing of the act. Ultimately, the survival of the program was closely tied to the expansion of the Cold War. Osgood explains this relationship when he states, “diplomacy became an extension of warfare, and propaganda became a critical weapon in this new type of international combat.”³² Congress was not becoming more relaxed on the issue of peacetime propaganda, but rather as the “Cold War” took shape, it began to envision relations with the Soviet Union as more hostile and thus necessitating an enhanced public diplomacy program.

Shortly after the passage of the Smith-Mundt Act in January 1948, former Ambassador to Iran George V. Allen was selected to succeed William B. Benton as Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. This appointment was followed by another reorganization that abolished the OIE and established the United States Information and Educational Exchange program (USIE) which was divided into the Office of International Information (OII) and the Office of Educational Exchange (OEX). During this time the U.S. public diplomacy effort increased and greater funding allowed the program to expand, albeit slowly. It should be noted that in September 1947 the National Security Act created the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the National Security Council (NSC). Taking the place of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) the CIA also began to experiment with propaganda, although it was not until the 1950s that the organization was able to compete with the State Department. Osgood posits that the US propaganda effort was characterized by both “white”—open and official—and “black”—covert

³¹ Parry-Giles, 12.

³² Osgood, 33.

or off-the-books—propaganda put forward by the USIS and CIA respectively.³³ This distinction was not always applicable however, as many official programs had a hidden nature to them.

Although Truman was reelected in 1948 it was Dean Acheson's appointment as Secretary of State in January 1949 that marked another uptick in U.S. propaganda efforts. Acheson's appointment brought a more "militaristic" approach to the situation with the Soviet Union. Major events in 1949 that helped to advance the need for a more proactive approach to the Cold War include the forming of NATO as well as the Soviet jamming of VOA broadcasts both in April and the formal establishment of the People's Republic of China in October. Aside from a short distraction in which Edward W. Barrett succeeded George V. Allen only to be called up and challenged by Senator McCarthy on charges of communist infiltration of the State Department, the U.S. public diplomacy program only continued to grow.

A large expansion took place during 1950. In April the National Security Council put forward its advisory paper NSC-68 which advocated the expansion of American information activities. Also, President Truman launched his "Campaign of Truth," which promoted the need for enhanced information activities abroad to counter Soviet information activities. Truman's calls were further bolstered by the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950. In the Middle East the State Department recognized a marked increase in anti-American sentiment. A message from Secretary of State Acheson states, "Anti-Americanism is resurging in the Arab world. The bombings at our legation in Beirut and Damascus; vitriolic public statements by Syria's Dawalibi, Iraq's Suwaidi and other high officials; diatribes and fantastic rumors in the vernacular press of Syria, Egypt and Iraq; all testify to the rekindling of Arab animosity against the United

³³ Osgood, 30.

States.”³⁴ The VOA began Farsi Service broadcasts on March 21, 1949 and the Arabic service was resumed on January 1, 1950. Major book publishing service Franklin Publications was established in 1952 and major magazines such as the Lebanese “U.S.A. News Review” began circulation during the Campaign of Truth as well. By the early 1950s the Fulbright program had begun exchanging students with the Middle East. However while propaganda programs in the Middle East were increasing, the U.S. policy towards the region well into 1951 was primarily concerned with defending Greece and Turkey with some interest also focused on Iran.³⁵

The Campaign of Truth and increased Cold War tensions are reflected in increased funding for the information programs as well as a noticeable increase in documentation after 1950. One year after NSC-68 the program was reorganized once again and Truman established the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB). While previous reorganizations had been largely unsuccessful, the creation of the PSB in April 1951 helped to reign in an expanding bureaucratic apparatus that had begun to overlap and interfere with itself.³⁶ The PSB acted as an autonomous agency controlling and organizing all aspects of psychological warfare in the battle against communism. Far more ambitious than previous incarnations the PSB sought to tie propaganda, covert action, foreign policy and diplomacy into a single concerted effort. In doing so it sought to achieve victory over the Soviet Union in the battle for hearts and minds.³⁷

In spite of their ambitious goals, there was significant dissatisfaction with the international information programs toward the end of the Truman administration. Another State Department reorganization established the United States International Information

³⁴ Department of State Airgram from Dean Acheson, [Anti-Americanism in the Arab World], May 1, 1950, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State. Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

³⁵ Department of State Report, "Conference of Middle East Chiefs of Mission (Istanbul, February 14-21, 1951): Agreed Conclusions and Recommendations," c. February 21, 1951.

³⁶ Osgood, 43.

³⁷ Osgood, 44.

Administration (IIA) and neither the IIA nor the PSB much outlived the end of the Truman presidency. The Truman presidency in spite of its tumultuous start, laid the groundwork for the expansion of the propaganda apparatus that would take place under Eisenhower. While fraught with difficulty the members of the Truman administration successfully managed to enact legislation of a peacetime public diplomacy effort and construct a wide framework for later efforts. In the Middle East, major radio and print sources were put into place as well as several literature programs including independent publishers, the USIS, and universities. The work done during the late 1940s and early 1950s would enable the growth of US influence characteristic of the mid to late 1950s.

Chapter 2: Ironing out the Kinks 1952-1957

Under Eisenhower, the program was expanded in response to threat of revolutionary nationalism and the possibility of Soviet intrusion. However, while many of the organizational flaws were corrected during the first portion of Eisenhower's presidency, the program was still forced to react to short-term objectives that were prone to change; thus the program was unable to present a consistent message, hindering its effectiveness.

There are two main factors to consider when analyzing the development of Middle Eastern public diplomacy under Eisenhower. First, Eisenhower was a staunch supporter of propaganda and the 'psychological' aspect of the Cold War. He became the only president to appoint a propaganda advisor to the presidential cabinet when he appointed Charles Douglass (C.D.) Jackson—a protégée of Time Magazine's Henry Luce—in 1952.³⁸ Eisenhower had an active role in shaping national security affairs especially as they related to propaganda; Kenneth Osgood asserts, "Largely as a result of Eisenhower's personal leadership, psychological warfare assumed a place of prominence in the making of U.S. foreign policy in the 1950s."³⁹

Second, during the 1950s areas outside of Europe began to take on new importance in Cold War geopolitics. During the Truman administration Cold War containment strategy was largely focused on preventing communist infiltration of Western Europe. By the time the Eisenhower administration took office, fears had abated of a communist takeover of a weakened postwar Europe and priorities had shifted elsewhere. The Jackson Report, otherwise known as the *Report to the President by the President's Committee on International Information Activities*, states, "The immediate problem is the prevention of further Soviet territorial expansion, particularly in the Middle East and Southeast Asia where there is serious danger of continued

³⁸ Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: US Propaganda and the Cold War*, (PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 51.

³⁹ Osgood, 6.

deterioration of the free world's position."⁴⁰ Policymakers in America realized as early as 1952 that the position of the United Kingdom in the Middle East was probably going to collapse, and that a possible power vacuum caused by a French and English absence could leave the region open to Soviet infiltration.⁴¹ The possibility of the British withdrawal from the region, as well as growing revolutionary nationalist sentiment, convinced the United States that it was necessary to ensure that should any regime fall in the Middle East, the government that would follow would be pro-West, or at the very least non-communist.⁴² Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and Iran's Mohammad Mossadeq were two are just two examples of nationalist leaders who threatened U.S. interests; when Mossadeq's nationalization of Iran's oil fields created the Anglo-Iranian Oil Crisis, it resulted in the United States and United Kingdom conspiring to overthrow him primarily through negative propaganda.

It is against this backdrop of support for propaganda programs and increased interest in Middle East affairs that U.S. public diplomacy grew. It should be noted, however, that in spite of the Eisenhower administration's rhetoric in support of propaganda, many of the prior problems were still present. Lauren Belmonte posits, "the administration's strong support for propaganda activities did not stop the political machinations, fiscal uncertainties, and bureaucratic impediments that often undermined U.S. information programs."⁴³ While, many of these limitations did not disappear immediately during the Eisenhower presidency, it is clear that the programs enjoyed greater flexibility and power under Eisenhower than previously and that by the end of his presidency the U.S. public diplomacy program was in much better shape.

⁴⁰ "The Report of the President's Committee on International Information Activities, June 30, 1953"

⁴¹ National Security Council, Executive Secretary Report to the United States, "United States Objectives and Policies with Respect to the Arab States and Israel" [Annex to NSC 129], April 7, 1952.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Belmonte, 50.

While Eisenhower was not inaugurated until January 1953, he had already been making moves to implement his vision since November 1952. Eisenhower appointed C.D. Jackson to the presidential cabinet to advise him on propaganda in December 1952 before holding his first pre-inaugural cabinet meeting. Just six days after his inauguration Eisenhower commissioned an investigation into international information policies and national security. This investigation became known as the Jackson Committee after its chair William H. Jackson. William Jackson had previously served as Deputy Director of Central Intelligence and is credited along with General 'Beadle' Smith and Allen Dulles with the restructuring and expansion of the Central Intelligence Agency. With funding from the CIA, the Jackson Committee conducted a six month investigation of U.S. information services abroad and their relation to national security.

Before Eisenhower received the results of the Jackson Committee Report in June 1953 he encountered a significant challenge in February of 1953. Senator Joseph McCarthy once again targeted the State Department as part of his crusade against communist infiltration of the United States. Unlike his previous attempt however, McCarthy now had sufficient backing to conduct an official investigation into the department and bring it before a Senate subcommittee. McCarthy focused mainly on two organs of the State Department: the Voice of America and USIS libraries abroad.

McCarthy's investigation of the VOA concentrated on the perceived softness of criticism of communism among VOA broadcasts as well as what he saw as questionably placed transmitters. Viewed together he claimed that these constituted proof of a communist conspiracy in the State Department.⁴⁴ McCarthy's claims of the VOA's position are somewhat at odds with the reality of VOA programming in the Middle East during the same period. While McCarthy viewed the VOA as not promoting enough of an anticommunist stance, observers in Beirut in

⁴⁴ Parry-Giles, 110.

February 1952 noted that the VOA broadcasts were “too propagandistic.”⁴⁵ McCarthy’s pressures forced Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to fire VOA engineer George Herrick and accept the resignation of the head of the IIA Dr. Wilson Compton. While this struck a blow to the IIA and VOA in general, the broadcasts in the Middle East were already scant and arguably ineffective when compared with other more established broadcasts such as the BBC.⁴⁶ McCarthy’s inquiry may have deterred the VOA from adopting a less ‘propagandistic’ stance but the VOA during the Truman era and early Eisenhower years was still an afterthought.

McCarthy’s investigation of the USIS libraries had a greater effect on U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East. USIS libraries, in addition to USIS press releases and columns released to local papers, formed the mainstay of the American propaganda program. By 1954, the United States operated over forty libraries in the area stretching from the Middle East through Southeast Asia. As James Vaughan makes clear, the USIS libraries in the Middle East enjoyed an enthusiastic welcome coupled with significant readers and borrowers.⁴⁷ Thus, when McCarthy targeted the libraries as part of his investigation he struck directly at one of the pillars of the U.S. information program. Shawn Parry-Giles states “books were a key component of the State Department’s propaganda operation that were likewise integral to the Psychological Strategy Board’s (PSB) Doctrinal Warfare and Escapee Programs.”⁴⁸ This assertion is perhaps especially true in the Middle East when one considers the relative success of the U.S. library program when compared with the British counterpart during a time when the United Kingdom boasted higher production and dissemination as well as more entrenched programs than the United States in most other areas.

⁴⁵ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 37.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 33.

⁴⁸ Parry-Giles, 110.

McCarthy asserted that the USIS libraries were filled with books by communist or communist-affiliated authors and was able to convince other members of the subcommittee that the presence of such books was actively hurting the American effort.⁴⁹ In the end, the committee found that the State Department had sponsored communist affiliated authors and over 30,000 books were written by communists or contained a pro-communist message.⁵⁰ When one considers that the average USIS library contained 7,500-10,000 books, it is clear that at least several of the Middle East libraries were affected by this decision.⁵¹ The ultimate outcome was Dulles' issuing of Information Guide 272 which banned the use of communist material by the IIA in February 1953.

There are both positive and negative outcomes from McCarthy's investigation that shaped the U.S. public diplomacy program for at least the next two years. On one hand, McCarthy's criticisms of the program put pressure on the State Department to implement a more obviously heavy-handed attack on communism. Such pressures were at odds with recommendations in the Middle East at the time that recommended the United States begin to take a more neutral approach. In Iran specifically, the recommendation toward operations in the period during and after the Anglo-Iranian Oil Crisis stressed caution and neutrality to further good relations.⁵² In a telling memorandum from the U.S. Embassy in Iran to the Department of State in May 1953, Ambassador Loy Henderson refutes the claim that the USIS office in Iran had in any way been lax on its criticism of international communism. Henderson begins the memorandum by stating, "In view of the unfair and distorted criticism which has at times been

⁴⁹ Parry-Giles, 111.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 33.

⁵² Department of State Cable from Dean Acheson to the United States Embassy, Iran, [State Department Recommends Neutral Tone], July 18, 1952, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

made of the failure of the USIS office in Tehran to combat communism I have asked Mr. Wells [a Public Affairs Officer in Tehran] to prepare this memorandum.”⁵³ The memorandum demonstrates that while the USIS program in Iran attempted to be subtle to avoid criticism from the Iranian government it nevertheless worked diligently to promote the cause of the United States and fight communism.

On a positive note is the role McCarthy played in placing the U.S. information program further under executive control and further from Congressional oversight and possible meddling. Shawn Parry-Giles asserts that in respect to Eisenhower’s response to McCarthy, “Eisenhower’s silence fostered a revision in the propaganda program’s mission and structure, which further shifted the locus of power for propaganda operations from Congress and the State Department to the White House.”⁵⁴ McCarthy was successful in eroding trust in the State Department and prompting calls to lessen or separate the international information program from the State Department. As February 1953 came to a close, Eisenhower and Dulles separated the IIA from the State Department and appointed Dr. Robert L. Johnson director following Compton’s resignation.

The erosion of trust in the State Department’s ability to effectively oversee the international information program is visible in the suggestions put forth by the various committees tasked with analyzing the program and determining its future. In addition to the Jackson Committee, two other committees were also tasked with evaluating the international information program: the Hickenlooper Committee and the Rockefeller Committee. The Hickenlooper Committee was a public inquiry by the Senate under the leadership of Bourke B.

⁵³ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Loy Henderson to the Department of State, "Attaching Memorandum Entitled 'Report on the Use of Anti-Soviet Material within Iran during Period Covered by Last Two Years'," May 29, 1953, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

⁵⁴ Parry-Giles, 117.

Hickenlooper (R-Iowa) into the failings of the IIA in meeting the expectations placed upon it by the Senate.⁵⁵ The committee formed February 20, 1953 which places its creation during the center of the McCarthy investigation into the State Department and it is clear that its creation was spurred by the investigation. The ultimate consensus in the Hickenlooper Committee was that the current system was in some way flawed, although whether to split the program from the State Department or simply give it more latitude and discretion was still a matter of debate.⁵⁶

In contrast with the Hickenlooper Committee, the Rockefeller Committee—chaired by Nelson Rockefeller who later became Special Assistant to the President for Foreign Affairs—was much more firm in its conviction that the international information program should be removed from the State Department. The report was given to the president on April 7, 1953 and recommended the creation of a new foreign information agency under the supervision of the National Security Council (NSC). Keeping in mind that the NSC is a White House institution designed to coordinate Cabinet departments, such a move would place both covert operations (CIA) and non-covert actions under presidential control. The other recommendation of the Rockefeller Committee was that the VOA should only broadcast “official United States’ positions.”⁵⁷ Such a strategy is reflective of the atmosphere and thinking that characterized officials in Washington during the height of McCarthy’s power.

One of the issues with taking the stance that the VOA should only broadcast official policy is that it lacks the power of plausible deniability. Throughout the U.S. propaganda effort, one of the key themes was the presentation of material as a neutral or third-party when in fact it was actually U.S.-backed propaganda. One example of this is espoused in a telegram from Dulles to the embassy in Iran which stated, “It is sometimes possible for Department to inspire

⁵⁵ Parry-Giles, 131.

⁵⁶ Parry-Giles, 132.

⁵⁷ Parry-Giles, 133.

editorials or articles in the U.S. publications...Additionally, VOA might pick up such editorials or articles and play them on Persian program without any indication U.S. inspiration.”⁵⁸ The push for more obvious propaganda from Washington was certainly at odds with this policy and created a gap between the expectations at home and implementation abroad. The above telegram is dated June 26, 1953, which is after the committee’s suggestions had reached the president, and so it appears that as with Information Guide 272—which Dulles rescinded in March 1953—the impact of McCarthy on the program as a whole began to abate after the formation of the USIA.

The United States Information Agency (USIA) was created in June 1953 on the combined suggestions of the three committees. Shawn Parry-Giles notes that the Jackson Committee was the most influential in shaping the future of the U.S. propaganda program and that a key theme of the Jackson Committee Report was “that the U.S. propaganda program under Truman suffered from a lack of centralized leadership that resulted in confusion over the program’s mission.”⁵⁹ The report then called for the White House to take the reins on the mission and elevate the significance of the program in the overall Cold War effort.⁶⁰ The creation of the USIA was the final restructuring of the U.S. international information effort for the next 45 years and ended the constant bureaucratic shifts that had plagued the Truman programs.

Unfortunately, while the bureaucratic restructuring of the program was resolved the program once again faced budget concerns. Confidence in the program was still recovering from McCarthy’s onslaught and before the USIA could mount a defense Congress cut funding by 36 percent as well as reducing staff by 25 percent and closing 38 of the overseas posts.⁶¹ While such

⁵⁸ Department of State Airgram from John Foster Dulles to the United States Embassy, Iran, [Placement of Stories in U.S. Media], June 26, 1953, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

⁵⁹ Parry-Giles, 134.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency*, (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 64.

a reduction was a sharp blow to the agency as a whole, the program in the Middle East region actually managed to increase over this period thanks to increased U.S. interest in several key events.

The U.S. public diplomacy effort in the Middle East was spurred by two drastic events during the period from 1952-1957: the 1953 Iranian Coup and the Suez Crisis. While the rise of nationalism generally generated considerable U.S. interest in Iraq and Kuwait as well, it was these two developments that allowed the Middle East program to grow in the face of budget cutbacks.

The Mossadeq government and the 1953 coup provide an interesting case for the growth of U.S. propaganda in the region. The CIA was engaged in a massive propaganda operation aimed at destabilizing the regime and played a large role in the eventual 1953 coup. CIA propaganda was primarily aimed at undermining support for Mossadeq among the Iranian populace by demonstrating that his policies were inviting disaster and emphasizing that he was changing Iran for the worse. Declassified summary reports note, "In Iran, CIA and SIS propaganda assets were to conduct an increasingly intensified propaganda effort through the press, handbills, and the Tehran clergy in a campaign designed to weaken the Mossadeq government in any way possible." Additionally, "In the United States, high-ranking US officials were to make official statements which would shatter any hopes held by Premier Mossadeq that American economic aid would be forthcoming, and disabuse the Iranian public of the Mossadeq myth that the United States supported his regime."⁶² Thus the coup was made possible by both overt and covert public diplomacy. Examples of CIA propaganda show that the propaganda was written to appear as originating from Iranians themselves. Some were aimed at denouncing

⁶² Donald N. Wilber, CIA, Clandestine Services History, *Overthrow of Premier Mossadeq of Iran: November 1952 - August 1953* in *The New York Times*, March 1954.

Mossadeq's policies such as those on landownership or the army, "We too want to save Iran from the landowners but we wondered what Mossadeq does with this money. Does he use it to help our farmers buy their own land? No Mossadeq uses this money to build up his private spy service."⁶³ Other propaganda attempts were designed to reflect not on Mossadeq's policies but on souring public opinion and perceived negative changes, for example, "Ever since the alliance between the dictator Mossadeq and the Tudeh Party, Iranians have been less polite, less hospitable, and less tolerant. Iranians have been rude, rough, and unfriendly. Many of our people are acting more like Bolsheviks than like Iranians."⁶⁴ The CIA disseminated propaganda of this nature through Iranian intermediaries, and combined with other forms of U.S. public diplomacy, successfully contributed to a coup in August 1953.

Following the ouster of Mossadeq the USIA rapidly stepped up efforts in Iran to try and capitalize on the situation. Efforts to negotiate with the Iranian Censorship Commission which had been stalled suddenly shifted gears and the USIS began to prepare anticommunist films in Persian.⁶⁵ A concerted effort was made "To convince Iran leaders and public [of the] desirability [of] definitely aligning themselves with West" by citing the dubious nature of Soviet friendships, touting the history of U.S. aid to Iran as a way to overcome "outsider" stigma and prove a no-strings-attached relationship, and applauding the actions of Iranians who showed pro-West sympathies or actions.⁶⁶

⁶³ CIA, Propaganda Commentary, "Mossadeq's Spy Service," undated, CIA Freedom of Information Act release

⁶⁴ CIA, Propaganda Commentary, "Our National Character," undated, CIA Freedom of Information Act release

⁶⁵ United States Embassy, Iran, Public Affairs Officer Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the United States Information Agency, "Mo Pix: Recent Action by Censorship Commission in Connection with The Korea Story and Let Us Live," September 2, 1953, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

⁶⁶ Department of State Cable from Theodore C. Streibert to the United States Embassy, Iran, [Revitalized Propaganda Campaign for Iran; Attached to Transmittal Sheet], September 11, 1953, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

The increase in activity following the return of the Shah was focused on the Shah's pro-Western stance as well as the economic assistance provided by the United States.⁶⁷ Additionally, the USIS branch in Iran submitted a request for increased grant funding and an increase in staffing to meet the demand for USIS programs during this period.⁶⁸ This request for increased funding and staff is again reflected in the 1954 NSC plan for the region in which a greater role for the information program is elaborated. In describing the necessary actions it states, "Such an offensive will require, first, an expansion of USIS personnel and operating expenses in the nations of the Near East, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan of about 25% together with an equivalent increase in Washington backstopping and expenses."⁶⁹ This request was also coupled with a request for the construction of additional information centers, textbooks, radio programming, and study programs for people in leadership roles or possible futures in leadership.⁷⁰

Lastly, regarding the rise of U.S. propaganda efforts in the Middle East during this period was the deteriorating relations between Egypt and the British. Just as the Anglo-Iranian Oil Crisis prompted the United States to take a greater role in Iran, so too did the growing antagonism of Anglo-Egyptian relations allow the United States to play a larger role in the region as a whole as the British were forced from their areas of greatest control. As Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser rose to heightened prominence in the Arab nationalist scene during the mid-1950s, his anti-colonial rhetoric succeeded in diminishing British prestige in the region allowing the United States to increasingly fill the gap left by the British. The Suez Crisis

⁶⁷ United States Embassy, Iran Cable from Edward C. Wells to the United States Information Agency, [Media Guidance regarding Iran], September 15, 1953, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

⁶⁸ United States Embassy, Iran Cable from Edward C. Wells to the United States Information Agency, [Propaganda Focused on U.S. Aid to Iran], September 19, 1953, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

⁶⁹ United States. National Security Council Report, "United States Objectives and Policies with Respect to the Near East," July 23, 1954.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

marks a distinct shift of power in the Middle East where the United States becomes the hegemonic western power in the region supplanting the United Kingdom. This provided a boon to the USIS program as it was no longer forced to concede to British interests in some areas and compete for the same viewers.

In summation, the early Eisenhower era was still troubled by many of the same issues that had proved problematic for the Truman administration. Budget cuts and reorganization combined with the upheaval caused by McCarthyism and questions regarding the program's shortcomings. However, for all of the issues at the outset of the Eisenhower administration the program in the Middle East managed to grow sizably during this period. The emerging power vacuum in the Middle East necessitated increasing attention to the region made while stability in Western Europe allowed attention to be diverted from this previously priority area. Historian Wilson P. Dizard points out that by the late 1950s the USIA was in "healthy organizational shape."⁷¹ The program struggled during this period with adjusting to policy changes; however, this would change during Eisenhower's second term in office. Ultimately, it can be concluded that by 1957 the United States had supplanted Britain as the most prominent propaganda force in the Middle East and that the program there was growing steadily.

⁷¹ Dizard, 78.

Chapter 3: Shifting Priorities, the Program after 1958.

Following the Suez crisis and the declaration of the 'Eisenhower Doctrine' in 1957, relations in the Middle East were in dire straits. The institutional issues that had plagued the U.S. public diplomacy program were largely gone or mitigated but opposition to the overall policies of the United States were another story. Anti-Americanism abounded and as James Vaughan notes, "by January 1957, large swaths of the Arab world, particularly in the urban and intellectual centers, had come to regard the United States with deep suspicion, if not outright hostility."⁷² USIS agents were fighting an uphill battle and other foreign policy concerns began to take precedence over those in the Middle East. The U.S. program in the later Eisenhower years was categorized by increased latitude and decision-making at the regional and local levels, as well as a shift away from short-term programs toward a more long-term strategy of promoting goodwill and inculcating American values into future generations. This shift away from direct American meddling in the region toward accommodation was echoed by U.S. policy in the Middle East overall.

Increasingly those in the United States recognized that they were losing the battle for hearts and minds in the Middle East and heightened censorship limited USIS options. Barring several incidents in which USIS libraries and posts became the focus of violent attacks, the program continued to produce material. The decision to abolish the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) by President Kennedy in February 1961 further divorced the USIA from policy decisions and diminished the ability of the program to conduct propaganda as an extension of policy. At first these developments suggest that the program was less effective than in previous years; however, the program after this point is characterized by a shift from the primacy of short-

⁷² James Robert Vaughan, "The United States and the Limits of Cultural Diplomacy in the Arab Middle East, 1945-1957" in *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, vol. 6, edited by Jessica CE Gienow-Hecht, and Mark C. Donfried, (NY: Berghahn Books, 2010), 162.

term policy objectives to a long game of reducing anti-Americanism that is mirrored by the late Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations' attempts to reduce tensions between the United States and Nasser, as well as between the various states in the region.

In March 1957 Congress approved increased funding to the Middle East in an effort to combat the rising tide of anti-Americanism and ensure their ability to follow through on the declarations put forth by the Eisenhower Doctrine. This move illustrated that the United States was unwilling to let the Soviet Union gain any type of foothold in the Middle East, but it also demonstrated its commitment to fight Nasserism. However in spite of these measures, the U.S. relationship with the Middle East was at an all-time low. Nasser's Voice of the Arabs was drowning out U.S. attempts to utilize the airways and Nasser assailed the Eisenhower Doctrine as an effort by the United States to divide and conquer Arabs. His heightened prestige after his perceived success at Suez made him a powerful symbol for resisting the West and promoting change.⁷³ Historian Roby C. Barrett posits that under a constant barrage of propaganda from Arab nationalists, the United States was forced to switch strategies and search for a new paradigm with which to conduct diplomacy with the Middle East.⁷⁴

The creation of the United Arab Republic (UAR)—a fusion of Egypt and Syria—in February 1958 marked the start of this switch. Nasser did not support the full merger of the countries but his fear of a communist controlled Syria forced his hand. Although some were still suspicious of Nasser's motives—especially considering he made a trip to the Soviet Union in May—the United States began an effort to work with Nasser and to bring US-Egyptian relations out of a deep freeze.⁷⁵ Talks of reestablishing meaningful diplomatic relations with Egypt were

⁷³ Roby C. Barrett, *The Greater Middle East and the Cold War: US Foreign Policy Under Eisenhower and Kennedy*, (IB Tauris, 2007), 43.

⁷⁴ Barrett, 39.

⁷⁵ Barrett, 48.

already under consideration—at the very least between top officials like Eisenhower and Dulles—however the formation of the UAR provided the impetus for the United States to act.⁷⁶ The NSC had already expressed the possibility in late January of “Demonstrating to the Arab states that we are prepared to support political measures looking toward a system of strong and independent sovereign states in the area, including the union of two or more Arab states.”⁷⁷

These new efforts were tentative and could not be conveyed to the larger public for fear of alienating pro-Western states such as Lebanon who feared Nasser’s influence. Additionally the possibility that outright U.S. support for Arab nationalism posed a direct threat to pro-Western regimes and could facilitate Egyptian domination of the region could not be ignored.⁷⁸ More anti-American protests swept the Middle East in May 1958, the same month in which Christian President Camille Chamoun of Lebanon decided to suspend the single term served by Lebanese leaders. Since 1943 the Christians and Muslims in Lebanon had alternated control over the government, and Chamoun feared that the positive response of Lebanese Muslims to the creation of the UAR endangered the sovereignty of Lebanon. Chamoun’s fears caused him to reach out to the United States as well as the other members of the Baghdad Pact and paved the way for America’s decision in July of 1958 to send troops to the Middle East, which proved the definitive turning point for U.S. policy in the Middle East including the public diplomacy program.

On July 14, 1958 the Hashemite monarchy that the British installed in Iraq after the First World War was deposed by Arab nationalists within the Iraqi army. The forces that had been mobilized to offer support to Chamoun in Lebanon never made it past Baghdad. Both King

⁷⁶ Barrett, 47.

⁷⁷ NSC 5801/1: NOTE BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL ON LONG-RANGE U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE NEAR EAST, Washington, January 24, 1958.

⁷⁸ Barrett, 47.

Faisal II and Prime Minister Nuri al-Said were killed during the coup. The fall of one of the most pro-Western governments in the region was a significant blow to U.S. and British interests in the region. Prior to the coup in Iraq, Chamoun's petitions to the United States for military support had been unsuccessful; however, Eisenhower deployed 14,000 marines to Lebanon the day after the coup to preserve stability. The decision to deploy troops in the Middle East was condemned throughout the region. BBC documentation of the Egyptian radio broadcasts contains phrases such as "America is aggressing against the Lebanon," and "America is hurling its soldiers into the Lebanon."⁷⁹ Ultimately, the combinations of these events would force a change in U.S. policy toward the Middle East.

James Vaughan states that in regard to U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East, "The primacy of short-term political objectives, driven by the contingencies of the cold war, was thus quickly established."⁸⁰ By the late 1950s however, U.S. public diplomacy underwent a shift away from short-term objective seeking. Additionally Roby Barrett posits that 1958 marked the definitive turning point in U.S. diplomatic strategy toward the Middle East.⁸¹ He notes that prior to 1958 the administration's goals had been too high in seeking to exert control and address all the issues in the Middle East; after 1958 the strategy is much more focused on modest aims to reduce opposition to U.S. aims.⁸² Indeed a memorandum between Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles on July 20th explicitly states, "Mr. Allen Dulles said it is not only nationalism that is involved in the Middle East—with which we could reach an accommodation—but also pan-Arabism, which takes the form of anti-Westernism and opposition to Israel."⁸³ In spite of their

⁷⁹ Douglas A. Boyd, *Broadcasting in the Arab World: A Survey of the Electronic Media in the Middle East*, (IA: Iowa State University Press, 1999), 258.

⁸⁰ Vaughan, "The United States and the Limits of Cultural Diplomacy", 178.

⁸¹ Barrett, 40.

⁸² Barrett, 42.

⁸³ Memorandum of Conference With President Eisenhower, Washington, July 20, 1958, 3:45 p.m. Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, Staff Memos, July 1958, Top Secret, Drafted by Goodpaster on July 21.

misgivings regarding the new powers in the Middle East they concluded, “Mr. Allen seemed to feel we should make a deal with the new Arab groups. Mr. Allen confirmed that he suggested we learn to live with the new groups. The President thought it was clear we must win them to us, or adjust to them.”⁸⁴ I contend that this strategy continued into the propaganda efforts in the Middle East and marks a transition to a public diplomacy program much more in line with supporting nationalist sentiment as opposed to fighting a losing battle against it. The statement ‘we must win them to us’ was as much a reflection of using diplomacy to forge ties with the governments in the UAR and Iraq as it was winning acceptance of continued U.S. participation in the region.

In a National Security Council memorandum dated to July 24, 1958 USIA Director George V. Allen pushed for accommodation with nationalist forces in the Middle East; it states, “Mr. Allen argued for an adjustment with nationalist forces in the Middle East before it is too late.”⁸⁵ Just a week later on July 31 Eisenhower wrote in a letter to Dr. Edward Lee Roy Elson (later Chaplain of the United States Senate) that, “this administration has never been antagonistic to Arab nationalism...I think possibly we have failed to make this clearly apparent to our Arab friends.”⁸⁶ He then goes on to praise Allen and note that the USIA will follow a more consistent approach on this matter.⁸⁷ The NSC documentation from January had previously mentioned an increased effort on the part of the United States to foster goodwill in the region stating a desire to, “Strengthen U.S. training, cultural, educational, information, and personnel exchange programs, and stimulate private U.S. activities in the area, and continue technical assistance programs for these purposes. Seek to create a climate favorable to the United States through the

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ National Security Council Memorandum, "Statement by George V. Allen, Director, U.S. Information Agency, at the National Security Council, July 24, 1958", July 24, 1958.

⁸⁶ United States, White House Letter from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Edward L.R. Elson, [Response to Letter on the Middle East], July 31, 1958.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

maximum encouragement of effective direct relations between U.S. citizens and peoples of the area.”⁸⁸ This desire to foster goodwill had not been fully realized by July as indicated by Allen’s frustration. Thus we can look to Allen and Eisenhower’s comments at this time to truly reflect a switch in the U.S. public diplomacy program that mirrored the slower more measured approach to the Middle East.

One possible counter-argument to this interpretation is that John Foster Dulles quickly changed his opinion regarding the ability of the United States to accommodate Nasser’s version of Arab nationalism. In response to a letter from Eisenhower regarding two letters the president had received advocating supporting Nasser, he wrote the president on July 25th to state, “We are basically wholly sympathetic with Arab nationalism if it means a constructive and productive unity of the Arab peoples. Unfortunately, Nasser’s brand of Arab nationalism does not seem to be leading to that.”⁸⁹ However, while Dulles was not wholly convinced of the ability of the United States to accommodate Nasser, Eisenhower’s letter to Elson supports the idea that the administration would continue to do so. In any case it is doubtful that even the most skilled USIA propagandists could promote U.S. support of Arab nationalism as a whole while adequately underscoring the downsides of Nasser’s vision.

The final move by the Eisenhower administration to shape propaganda, if not specifically that of the Middle East was his ‘People-to-People’ campaign. In December 1959 Eisenhower launched a goodwill tour that encompassed nine countries including Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco, Tunisia, Greece, India, Spain, France and Italy. Such a goodwill tour by a president was unprecedented and started a long tradition of trips by US presidents. The USIA

⁸⁸ NSC 5801/1: NOTE BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL ON LONG-RANGE U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE NEAR EAST, Washington, January 24, 1958.

⁸⁹ *Letter From Secretary of State Dulles to President Eisenhower*, Washington, July 25, 1958 in FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1958–1960 VOLUME XII, NEAR EAST REGION; IRAQ; IRAN; ARABIAN PENINSULA, DOCUMENT 32.

capitalized on the event and made 'Ike' and the trip the highlight of much of the propaganda in 1959. It should be noted that while Eisenhower did visit Iran and several countries considered part of the 'Greater Middle East' including Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan, he did not visit any of the Arab countries in the core Middle East area. This is indicative of two realities, the first being the continuing tense relations between the United States and Arab states in the Middle East and the second being a shift in American diplomacy toward other countries in Asia and Africa that were considered vulnerable to Soviet influence.

When the Kennedy administration took over in 1961 it did not significantly alter the operations of the U.S. public diplomacy program in the Middle East. The quick response operating style that had characterized the early Eisenhower years had been fully replaced by the longer goal of fostering goodwill. Kennedy appointed CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow to head the USIA. In February 1961 Kennedy abolished the OCB which further removed the USIA from the policymaking process.⁹⁰ This move was somewhat reconciled by Kennedy giving Murrow a direct telephone line and inviting him to personally sit in on meetings, but Murrow chose to avoid using those options.⁹¹

Thus propaganda activities in the Middle East became less of a focus during the years after Eisenhower and before events of the Carter presidency brought more immediate attention to the region. Attention was increasingly given to Cuba, Vietnam, the Space Race and emerging developing countries in Africa and Asia. The USIA during this time generally saw an increase in budgets and a degree of stability perhaps unimaginable to propagandists of the late 1940s or early 1950s. USIA historian Wilson P. Dizard notes, "Perhaps its greatest gain from its past years of successes and failures was a deeper recognition that quick-fix solutions designed to influence

⁹⁰ Dizard, 84.

⁹¹ Dizard, 87.

overseas opinion almost never worked. In effect, the organization had settled down to the realization that any significant progress would be the result of steady long-term efforts.”⁹² Dizard’s interpretation of the USIA is emblematic of the operations in the Middle East in the time after mid-1958 and onward. American public diplomacy from the later Eisenhower years onward is characterized by this shift to long-term goals and a steady influence over values and cultural ties above swift changes to public opinion in the promotion of new policies in the region.

⁹² Dizard, 99.

Chapter 4: Evaluating U.S. Propaganda Methods

Just as the unique political occurrences in the Middle East necessitated U.S. propagandists to tailor their material to these events; the social and cultural situation of the Middle East also shaped both the materials and methods through which the United States could conduct public diplomacy. Print media such as books and magazines, radio broadcasts, and movies formed the mainstay of U.S. activities; however, these “traditional” means of propaganda were not the only means through which the U.S. attempted to influence Middle Eastern audiences and propagandists actively sought ways to inject psychological considerations into a variety of U.S. activities.⁹³ Educational exchange and cultural exhibits are just two examples of the nonconventional means through which the United States attempted to affect foreign perceptions of itself in the region. U.S. propagandists divided their projects toward two groups. To the literate population of the Middle East they targeted print media and educational opportunities in order to gain favor with powerful groups within the various countries. On the other hand, they targeted the masses mainly with culture and simple news stories to ensure stability.

The United States attempted to shape public perception in the Middle East in myriad ways including both overt and covert operations as well as the formation of a significant state-private network. The majority of operations covered in this paper concern what Kenneth Osgood describes as “white” propaganda activities; that is to say those activities pursued under the direction of the State Department or USIA and openly acknowledged as information programs of the United States.⁹⁴ Covert or “black” operations such as those conducted by the CIA have not been neglected; however, these operations must be viewed as short-term strategic maneuvers

⁹³ “The Report of the President’s Committee on International Information Activities, June 30, 1953”

⁹⁴ Osgood, 30.

compared to the more long-standing institutions that formed “white” operations. Additionally the state-private bonds that were created operated in a “gray” zone, and blurred the line between the white and black activities. Many of these agreements were officially sanctioned State Department activities though this connection was often hidden or not publicized—the connection between Franklin Publications and the U.S. government, for example.⁹⁵

Broadcasting and Radio Diplomacy:

On the surface one could conclude that due to the large role played by Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America in American propaganda activities in Europe, that the role of broadcasting in the Middle East would be similar. This is especially true when one considers the large illiteracy rate in the region which limited how much of the general population American propaganda could affect.⁹⁶ Additionally and of equal importance is the role of oral tradition in the Middle East that made radio broadcasting an ideal medium through which to conduct propaganda activities.⁹⁷ Lastly, access to radios increased drastically during the postwar period and by the late 1950s radios were widely available throughout the Middle East. Historian Douglas A. Boyd notes, “The ‘transistor revolution’ coincided with political movements in areas such as North Africa, Egypt, and Iraq” and proved powerful tools for inciting the public to action.⁹⁸ However in spite of all these factors American broadcasting in the Middle East suffered from a number of obstacles in the form of competing stations and lack of quality programming that prevented U.S. propagandists from fully utilizing the medium.

This is not to say that American radio broadcasting was a neglected avenue; indeed the possible benefits of radio almost necessitated the United States broadcast in the region. Middle

⁹⁵ Osgood, 301.

⁹⁶ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 35.

⁹⁷ Boyd, 4.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

East specialist Professor George Cameron from the University of Michigan told Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Edward W. Barrett in 1951, “I fear, however, that we have taken inadequate accounting of the tremendous power of the radio. In Iran, every teahouse possesses one, and the anti-British and sometimes anti-American propaganda has seriously damaged our position.”⁹⁹ The Voice of America, the primary vehicle for American radio propaganda, began broadcasts in Iran as part of its Farsi Service on March 21, 1949. The Voice’s Arabic service which had been cut in 1945 was resumed on January 1, 1950. As radio provided the avenue through which the United States could reach the largest number of listeners, the VOA even began broadcasting in Kurdish to rural parts of Iran and Iraq to counter Soviet broadcasting to those groups.¹⁰⁰ The operating hours of the VOA increased during the 1950s although they peaked during times of crisis.¹⁰¹ The VOA Arabic broadcasts peaked during the Suez Crisis in 1956 increasing their programming to over fourteen hours up from one hour thirty minutes.¹⁰²

During the early 1950s the VOA suffered from the same funding pressures and organizational errors that plagued the information program as a whole. During its first year the VOA Arabic only consisted of a half hour of programming per day. This was subsequently raised to one hour then again to three hours which continued until 1956.¹⁰³ When compared with the amount of programming being put forth by domestic broadcasts like Radio Cairo or even the popularity of BBC programming, it is clear that the Voice of America did not act as the dominant

⁹⁹ University of Michigan, Department of Near Eastern Studies Letter from George Cameron to Edward W. Barrett, [Propaganda Activities in Iraq; Attached to Cover Memorandum], October 24, 1951, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁰⁰ United States Embassy, Iran Cable from Henry F. Grady to the Department of State, [Kurdish Voice of America Broadcasts], August 6, 1951, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁰¹ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 226.

¹⁰² Rawnsley, 66.

¹⁰³ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 36.

radio station in the region. James Vaughan described America's entry into radio broadcasting in the Middle East as "both inauspicious and belated."¹⁰⁴

The VOA struggled to compete for listeners' attention with both the BBC and other services most notably Gamal Abdel Nasser's "Voice of the Arabs." When compared with the BBC the VOA was a much newer program and did not enjoy the base of support that the BBC enjoyed throughout the region. More notable is the perception difference between the two agencies. While Britain was more likely to be tied to notions of imperialism in the minds of Arabs, many viewed the BBC as more neutral and unbiased than the VOA. Vaughan points out that American officials noted the BBC benefitted from "seniority, experience and talent" and that "as far as Persian broadcasts were concerned, the 'BBC is the most popular. It has the best voices, the best talent, the best news and dramatic shows."¹⁰⁵

Part of this issue stemmed from the perception even among USIS staff of the VOA as overwhelmingly propagandistic and too obsessed with communism.¹⁰⁶ American observers criticized the VOA well into 1956 for its emphasis on propaganda over entertainment.¹⁰⁷ Gary Rawnsley notes that the VOA faced a challenge as, "professional journalistic aspirations and principles of VOA were often compromised by foreign policy objectives."¹⁰⁸ He then goes on to describe this challenge as generating an "acute identity crisis" for the VOA and it is clear that this identity crisis is present in the Voice's attempts to engage with Middle Eastern audiences.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore if we are to accept the idea that propaganda is most effective when it is judged to be neutral and held in high esteem by the intended audience, then it is clear that at the very least the

¹⁰⁴ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 37.

¹⁰⁵ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 37.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 39.

¹⁰⁸ Rawnsley, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Rawnsley, 15.

BBC was the superior broadcasting station. Indeed BBC personnel acknowledged their advantage as they could claim objectivity even as they designed broadcasts to coincide with British foreign policy aims.¹¹⁰ However, although the VOA was in competition with the BBC, many of their core objectives were similar. Thus the bigger obstacles to Voice of America broadcasts in the region were domestic radio broadcasts within the Middle East and the inability of the VOA to overcome them.

Rawnsley describes the Voice of the Arabs—the largest and most problematic program—as having two main functions: broadcasting propaganda abroad as well as attempting to manipulate rising Arab nationalist sensitivities. He notes, “Voice of the Arabs portrayed struggle in the most passionate symbolism – of Arabdom versus the West, Imperialism versus Liberty, Islam versus Evil – and this is exactly what Arab audiences wanted to hear.”¹¹¹ Douglas Boyd mentions that when he taught in Saudi Arabia in 1963 the students developed interesting perspectives as a result of radio broadcasts. He notes, “The Egyptian ‘Voice of the Arabs’ was popular during this period and various programs on the Egyptian station were very popular with the Saudi Arabian students. It became clear to me that what was broadcast was taken as the ‘truth.’”¹¹² Long and passionate speeches by Nasser captivated the public more so than anything the Voice of America could possibly hope to produce.¹¹³ Indeed Nasser’s control of Arabic was a far cry from the accents of VOA speakers which Egyptian listeners found to be “strange” and “hard to understand” if they were even able to gain clear reception.¹¹⁴ Thus, the failures of the VOA cannot be solely attributed to a lack of funding or inept programming, but more accurately

¹¹⁰ Rawnsley, 9.

¹¹¹ Rawnsley, 21.

¹¹² Boyd, xiii.

¹¹³ Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: from Triumph to Despair*, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 148.

¹¹⁴ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 37.

as a fledgling agency struggling to distinguish itself from British programming and unable to capture opinions in the manner Voice of the Arabs and similar programs could.

Cooperation between the United States and radio stations in Iran, Iraq, and even Egypt allowed American propagandists to spread materials while circumventing the credibility issues faced by the VOA. Before running into issues the VOA was able to establish an “intimate working relationship” with Radio Tehran.¹¹⁵ This included aiding the station with supplies as well as preparing USIE scripts to be read on air.¹¹⁶ A similar set up was present in Iraq where U.S. propagandists worked closely with Radio Baghdad, which the OCB would later consider upgrading in 1956 as a possible counter to Voice of the Arabs.¹¹⁷ Insight into the nature of the relationship can be gleaned from an Embassy memorandum from April 7, 1954 which states, “Much of the material being used in the Radio Baghdad campaign is being furnished by the USIS through the Director General of Propaganda.”¹¹⁸ This type of high level cooperation between USIS officials and government offices was not always the case, as evidenced by tensions in Iran however the most stunning partnership is that of the USIS and Radio Cairo. Cooperation with Radio Cairo ended after the Egyptian coup in 1947; however, by 1950 the USIS was once again working with the station. This partnership lasted throughout the 1950s in spite of diplomatic tensions between the United States and Egypt and a large portion of broadcasting material used in the Middle East was actually furnished in Cairo.¹¹⁹ Though not all

¹¹⁵ United States Embassy, Soviet Union Cable from Alan G. Kirk to the Department of State, [Voice of America and Radio Tehran], August 19, 1950, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹¹⁶ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State, "IE: Local Newspaper Item on USIE Radio Scripts," January 14, 1952, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹¹⁷ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 40.

¹¹⁸ United States Embassy, Iraq Despatch from Burton Berry to the Department of State, "Anti-communist Campaign on Radio Baghdad," April 7, 1954.

¹¹⁹ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 39.

of the programming that came from the partnership was “propaganda,” it still served a vital role in maintaining relations with Egypt and creating propaganda for elsewhere.¹²⁰

All things considered the American radio program was competing with more entrenched and popular programs that boasted further skill and ability; though to discount the program as a failure is to both undersell the cultural impact and later respectability of the program as well as discount the immense disadvantage the program faced. Without the cultural impact of American music some of the goodwill tours would have been less effective and until its cancellation in 1999 the Voice of America Arabic service boasted an impressive number of daily listeners who trusted the VOA for an accurate portrayal of American policy and relatively neutral portrayal of world events.¹²¹

Print Media: from Pamphlets to Libraries

While radio provided perhaps the most efficient way to reach the widest audience in the Middle East, it was print media that formed the mainstay of American propaganda in the region. The United States helped build libraries, distribute books and magazines, and crafted numerous pamphlets and newspaper articles for dissemination in the Middle East. Taking into account the literacy rates for the region as a whole it may seem odd that U.S. propaganda was largely based around print materials. While the United States did practice public diplomacy in its widest sense, by distributing propaganda to all people in a target area, they also made it a practice to focus on winning over specific people and groups to spread the message on their behalf. In discussing the Jackson Committee Report the State Department noted, “The Department agrees in general with the statement of purpose of the information program, although it believes that ‘foreign peoples’ constitutes too broad and too inclusive a target, particularly for a contracting program. The

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Sanford J. Ungar, "Pitch Imperfect: The Trouble at the Voice of America," *Foreign Affairs* (2005): 7-13.

Department would prefer a statement of mission indicating that the program is directed at groups and individuals capable of significantly influencing governmental actions and popular attitudes in other countries.”¹²² These so-called “molders of opinion” consisted of local mullahs, urban middle classes, university students and government officials all of whom would have been able to read American propaganda.¹²³

American propagandists were most interested in having leaders in the region spreading pro-American sentiments of their own accord. By having well-respected members of the community and those in positions of power spread pro-American—or at the very least anti-communist—messages, the United States could be assured that their message bypassed anti-imperialist sentiment in the region. Another consideration in focusing on “molders of opinion” can be attributed to America’s overall foreign policy goals in the region. With a few small exceptions, the foreign policy of the United States toward the Middle East was dominated by containing the influence of communism and by extension the Soviet Union. U.S. officials were not confident during this period that the governments in the region could provide lasting stability. In late July 1958 for example, George V. Allen noted the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq, “was always teetering due to lack of basic support among the people,” and called Jordan, “a synthetic country created after World War I, with no historic roots. Efforts to prop up the regime there were therefore doubly difficult.”¹²⁴ Fearing that government turnover could allow for a communist takeover of any one country, America’s propaganda program aimed to ensure support

¹²² S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, “Jackson Committee”, *Memorandum for the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary (Lay)*, Washington, October 1, 1953 in FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1952–1954 VOLUME II, PART 2, NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, DOCUMENT 372.

¹²³ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State, "IIA: Country Plan," April 28, 1952, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹²⁴ National Security Council Memorandum, "Statement by George V. Allen, Director, U.S. Information Agency, at the National Security Council, July 24, 1958", July 24, 1958.

among powerful actors so that even if a government change occurred the new government would be pro-West.

For most literate people in the Middle East, access to U.S. propaganda came in the form of articles and columns placed in local newspapers.¹²⁵ The State Department's Wireless Bulletin and later the USIA's Wireless File were disseminated by USIS field posts throughout the Middle East.¹²⁶ According to the Undersecretary of State H. Freeman Matthews, the bulletin served two purposes, "(a) To provide USIS staffs with fast official news and background material for placement in the foreign press, and (b) To keep post staffs informed of daily domestic and foreign developments to assist them in their official duties."¹²⁷ For the most part, USIS posts acted with a considerable amount of autonomy in deciding what material to distribute and how; this allowed them to tailor the material to needs of specific regions. Matthews stated, "As the enlarged field staffs have become more experienced and more familiar with their local problems, there has been a decided trend away from the mass-distribution or 'assembly-line' type of field operation and toward the selective-servicing, personal-influence method of operation."¹²⁸

The typical distribution of the file consisted of four different methods. "Press Releases" were quick single stories taken from the larger file and distributed to local press rather than the general public. Taken as a single story, the press releases stood a better chance of being seen than when they were part of the much larger bulletin file. Similarly, "Special Article Placement" consisted of placing selected stories of import in targeted local press and periodicals. Sometimes USIS staff could convince local writers to craft the stories themselves if given suitable

¹²⁵ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 23.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ 501/2-453: Circular airgram, *The Acting Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Post*, Washington, February 4, 1953— 7:10 p.m. FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1952-1954 VOLUME II, PART 2, NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, DOCUMENT 307

¹²⁸ Ibid.

background on an issue—a strategy that echoes the “Arab/Iranian voices” theme.¹²⁹ The “Official Bulletin” was a slightly longer report that consisted mostly of background information. This report was not actively distributed as propaganda except to some local opinion leaders and was mostly intended for U.S. consulates and the legation.¹³⁰ Lastly, weekly newsletters were a more locally tailored weekly or biweekly background and summary report that took the form of magazines.

The USIS weekly newsletters were able to project “how” and “why” insight into news reports as well as entertainment features to appeal to a wider base. According to USIS posts the weekly newsletters, “have enabled USIS to focus more attention on the longer-range significance of official U.S. news developments and tie their output more closely in with policy guidances.”¹³¹ The USIS newsletters formed the backbone of American magazine production in the Middle East. As noted by James Vaughan, “Under the USIA, the American magazine programme in the Middle East was dominated by two publications, *News Review/Al Akhbar* and *Al Sadaka*, produced in Beirut and Cairo, respectively.”¹³² The Lebanese “U.S.A. News Review” was a weekly magazine that mixed pictures, entertainment, and a news summary. The newsletter was released in 1950 and had a strong base in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq where Arabic circulation rose from less than 20,000 in 1952 to approximately 80,000 by 1956.¹³³ The Cairo based *Al Sadaka* began circulation in 1952 and maintained production of approximately 55,000 throughout the 1950s with most of its readers in Egypt.¹³⁴ Both magazine programs acted as a toned down version of the USIA Wireless File that stressed accessibility over strength of content.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 31.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Vaughan describes the content of these newsletters as “sugar-coated” and USIS officials noted that in some ways it was necessary to play the role of a tabloid to further their message.¹³⁵

Another important function of the USIS posts in the Middle East was managing USIS libraries. Kenneth Osgood notes that books formed the most important weapon of U.S. propaganda and that the production and circulation of books became a primary focus of the American propaganda program.¹³⁶ Osgood notes at least one source that described the USIS libraries as “the single most effective part of our entire information operation,” and while this statement may be excessive, there can be little doubt that the libraries found great success in the Middle East.¹³⁷ The program was widely distributed with over forty libraries throughout the Near East region (which includes but is not limited to the Middle East) by 1954. Reports regarding the libraries were mostly positive. The opening of the library in Cairo in 1946 was greeted as a significant development in cultural relations and the opening of facilities in Amman in 1953 was similarly greeted with enthusiastic welcome.¹³⁸

Daily visitors numbered in the hundreds however this number must be tempered against the types of visitors the library serviced. Dizard notes that large numbers of visitors could cause lines and that, “USIS libraries crowded with students and other readers throughout the day.”¹³⁹ While the library was primarily aimed toward and used by students, the democratic nature of the libraries meant anyone could enter. A particularly poignant example of this is noted by George V. Allen in an article he wrote for *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1961.¹⁴⁰ When acting as director of the USIA he asked a Jordanian student about her experience with the USIS library to which she

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Osgood, 294.

¹³⁷ Osgood, 295.

¹³⁸ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 33.

¹³⁹ Dizard, 154.

¹⁴⁰ George V. Allen, "Books and the American Image," *Atlantic (May, 1961)*: 78-79.

replied it had been discouraging and noted, “I took a book from the shelf and sat at a table to read. Next to me sat a Bedouin who looked as if he had just come from his cattle. His hands were filthy. I did not like to handle a book which has doubtless been held by hands like that, so I did not go back.”¹⁴¹ U.S. propagandists were primarily concerned with attracting students and educated elite over visitors such as the Bedouin man, however they believed any restrictions would go against the democratic nature of American-style libraries.

The success of the libraries is in part related to their perceived neutrality. Outside of the McCarthy investigations that resulted in the temporary removal of some books from USIS libraries—which nearly singlehandedly destroyed the credibility of the libraries—the libraries appeared to largely support a position of neutrality. Shawn Parry-Giles states that McCarthy was at least partially correct in his evaluation of the libraries. USIS libraries contained books with questionable communist ties as a means of “balanced presentation” that allowed the United States to express a commitment to freedom of information even as they consciously highlighted and downplayed some sources.¹⁴² Library materials were divided into four categories that dictated how much exposure a source was given among the general public: maximum promotion, normal use, conditional use, and not suitable.¹⁴³ Thus while U.S. propagandists carefully selected which books were seen most, they largely appeared as neutral information hubs. Additionally, local politics could also affect what libraries carried. In the Middle East USIS libraries did not carry Zionist material as it “would be impolitic to do so.”¹⁴⁴ However in spite of this policy at

¹⁴¹ Allen, 79.

¹⁴² Parry-Giles, 111.

¹⁴³ Jody Sussman, “United States Information Service Libraries,” (Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1973).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

least one gaffe exists where Zionist material was discovered in an Arabic post prompting an investigation.¹⁴⁵

Perhaps due to their success (the reason cited by U.S. officials) and overt connection with the United States the USIS libraries were prone to anti-American outbursts. The *U.S. News and World Report* detailed sixty-eight major incidents of damage to USIS libraries in the period from 1945 to 1965, a number confirmed by the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information.¹⁴⁶ The USIS libraries in Cairo and Alexandria were among the targets of a 1954 Israeli Defense Ministry plot to plant bombs and set fires to foment anti-Egyptian sentiment in the United States.¹⁴⁷ On July 20, 1957 a dynamite charge was set off at the USIS library in Beirut. Less than a year later, on May 10, 1958, the library in Tripoli, Lebanon was attacked, resulting in widespread destruction of books and forcing that location to close.¹⁴⁸ USIS libraries in Egypt also suffered a series of attacks in the early 1960s including a devastating attack on the Cairo location that forced relocation and caused damages in excess of \$400,000 USD. In 1961 the windows of the USIS Jefferson Library in Alexandria were smashed by protesting students.¹⁴⁹ In fact destruction of the plate glass windows that were nearly ubiquitous at USIS libraries was so common worldwide as a form of protest that it did not escape the domestic critics and cartoonists.¹⁵⁰

Lastly, in addition to providing libraries for Middle Eastern readers to access books, the United States also subsidized low cost book publishing and sponsored the creation of a state-private network that allowed massive numbers of American books to flow into the Middle East.

¹⁴⁵ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 33.

¹⁴⁶ "Around the World, Reds Burn U.S. Books," *U.S. News and World Report*, 57:62- 63, Dec. 21, 1964, and U.S. Advisory Commission on Information, Report to the Congress, Washington, D.C., U.S.G.P.O., 1965, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ Mark A. Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 2nd edition (Indiana University Press, 2009), 341.

¹⁴⁸ Rugh, 45.

¹⁴⁹ Rugh, 60.

¹⁵⁰ Dizard, 154.

The creation of material as well as the facilitation of works deemed useful to the program was a major feature of the U.S. program during the 1950s. State Department correspondence with one publisher noted in 1952, “shortly before the end of the fiscal year the Embassy at Cairo negotiated contracts with some five or six Egyptian publishers calling for the translation and publication of some fifty books.”¹⁵¹ By the end of this period the United States had become the number one exporter of books in the world and nearly two billion had been subsidized by the USIA.¹⁵² In regard to pro-Western manuscripts produced by the USIA, Osgood posits, “Undoubtedly many more were commissioned in the 1950s, as USIA correspondence files reveal that the stimulation of books was a routine practice of USIS posts abroad.”¹⁵³ The CIA also joined in the business of covert book publishing and distribution, because the agency also recognized the value of books as a strategic weapon. The CIA participation in the publishing business was obviously covert; however, even in cases where connections and funding from the United States were not “hidden” they were not openly known.¹⁵⁴

The formation of state-private networks was key to the American book distribution and especially important in the Middle East. For example Victor Weybright, founder and chairman of the New American Library, a New York based publisher, toured the Middle East in 1951 at the behest of the State Department. In a letter to the Assistant Secretary of State, Weybright discussed his cooperation in addressing the State Department’s requests for cheap book distribution. He underscored the furtive nature of his cooperation with the government by noting, “Actually, I leaned over backward everywhere I went to not involve any of your foreign

¹⁵¹ International Information Administration, Information Center Service Letter from Dan Lacy to Datus C. Smith, Jr. [Guidance for Franklin Publications], October 27, 1952, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁵² Osgood, 304.

¹⁵³ Osgood, 297.

¹⁵⁴ Osgood, 304.

representatives in distribution matters. Off the record, in certain places such as Egypt where exchange has to be contrived by the distributor that I established there, it would be embarrassing for the Government to be involved.”¹⁵⁵

The most prominent example of state-private cooperation in book distribution in the Middle East was Franklin Publications. While its services were eventually expanded worldwide, Franklin Publications was founded in June 1952 to provide books specifically to the Middle East. In its first year the State Department allotted \$500,000 in exchange for a contract with the publisher, the details of which stated, “Franklin Publications first operations under its contract with the Department will be in the field of translations and in the Arabic-language areas...the corporation hopes to be able to carry on a broader program of book publishing and distribution with foundation and other non-governmental support in general accord with the Department’s objectives.”¹⁵⁶ By agreeing to work in accordance with State Department objectives, Franklin Publications became a part of the American public diplomacy effort. This ensured a steady supply of pro-Western books to the literate population of the Middle East.

As with other government-sponsored book distribution programs, the connection between the State Department and Franklin Publications was obfuscated although not denied. Department correspondence with the company instructed the publisher to, “on one hand, avoid the kind of association with American political and information activities that would aggravate the suspicion as to your motives that will undoubtedly be encountered in any case,” while on the other hand, “be prepared candidly to admit that the operations of Franklin are aided by contributions from

¹⁵⁵ New American Library of World Literature, Inc. Letter from Victor Weybright to Edward W. Barrett, [Support for Publisher’s Tour of Middle East], November 6, 1951, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁵⁶ Department of State Internal Paper to the United States Legation, Jordan [et al.], “Franklin Publications, Inc.,” July 22, 1952, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

the State Department.”¹⁵⁷ Osgood points out, “By the end of 1960, Franklin Publications had printed some 10.5 million books,” and that “By 1965, it had helped to translate and to publish 43 million copies of 2,500 different titles.”¹⁵⁸ According to Dizard, “A decade after Franklin began operations, American books had captured 70 percent of the translated book market in Arab countries.”¹⁵⁹ Overall, the American print propaganda effort focused on balancing long term and short term public diplomacy. Franklin Publications and the USIS libraries formed a long term commitment to shifting attitudes in the Middle East while the Wireless Bulletin and smaller print operations attempted to steer short term opinion in favor of U.S. policies. Print media overall was focused on the much smaller literate population of the Middle East and was aimed at instilling pro-Western sentiment over a long period of time. By the later 1950s book distribution and libraries had started to eclipse propaganda in newspapers and even there the propaganda was much more subtle and seemingly neutral than during the 1940s and early 1950s.

Education as Propaganda

As students provided a unique opportunity to mold the opinions and attitudes of potential future leaders, the American propaganda program did not neglect any opportunities to reach such an important audience. Program plans in Iran note, “University professors and students, secondary school teachers and students, professional men, including government employees – are a most important group as they represent the public opinion molders, leading the multiplicity of movements now current in Iran.”¹⁶⁰ The USIS libraries and book translation and distribution programs were no doubt influential and form part of the American strategy toward students;

¹⁵⁷ International Information Administration, Information Center Service Letter from Dan Lacy to Datus C. Smith, Jr. [Guidance for Franklin Publications], October 27, 1952, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁵⁸ Osgood, 300.

¹⁵⁹ Dizard, 186.

¹⁶⁰ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State, "IIA: Country Plan," April 28, 1952, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

however, there were more overt attempts to capture young hearts and minds. American led universities and exchange programs formed the center of these attempts.

The United States boasted strong educational roots in the region that allowed U.S. propagandists a firm and trusted base from which to work; Vaughan points out, “the United States could look back on a distinguished history of involvement in Middle Eastern education dating back to the establishment of missionary colleges in the nineteenth century.”¹⁶¹ The most prominent university operating in the Middle East was the American University at Beirut (AUB). Founded in 1866 as a Protestant college, AUB formed the backbone of the American institutional education program and was recognized by American propagandists as a distinct cultural weapon when university policy aligned with regional policy. By the early 1950s enrollment approximated 3000 students, nearly half of the estimated 7000 students enrolled in American universities in the Near East.¹⁶²

However while the AUB represented a potent weapon for shaping young minds the degree to which the university actively aligned with U.S. policy must be evaluated to determine its place within the propaganda program. If the policy under Dr. Stephen B. L. Penrose Jr, president from 1948 through his death in 1954, can be taken as indicative of the larger attitude of the college then it stands to reason that the AUB did largely cooperate with State Department aims in the region. Penrose was concerned about active Soviet intrusion into the region as a whole and especially among the students. He wrote directly to the State Department to notify them of his concerns and detail his expulsion of a communist-affiliated student.¹⁶³ These actions indicate an actively pro-West attitude present in the university and cooperation with State

¹⁶¹ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 75.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Analysis from Stephen Penrose to the Department of State, "Comment on "The Soviet Challenge in the Near East"--Princeton, June 2, 1951," June 2, 1951.

Department aims. We know that as early as the Second World War, the United States was considering the use of American affiliated universities as cultural diplomacy tools and discussed the need for covert funding of the AUB and Robert College in Istanbul.¹⁶⁴ Özlem Altan-Olcay points to a 1961 report by the Middle East Survey Commission that holds two expectations of Robert College graduates, “First, Robert College graduates were expected to serve a significant purpose by building amiable bridges between the United States and Turkey. The writers also stressed the institution’s ability to form channels of communication and knowledge transfer.”¹⁶⁵ While the United States could not actively interfere with university business it was expected that the universities would follow U.S. policy generally and inculcate graduates with pro-Western lines of thought.

Outside of American universities in the region, students from the Middle East were also invited to study in the United States through various programs. Exchange students were expected to absorb American culture and ideals and return to spread these ideas in their native countries. The International Visitors (IV) program invited promising youths selected by USIS officers to tour the United States and view American life and ideals firsthand. A number of these visitors became prominent leaders in their respective regions, including later president of Egypt Anwar Sadat.¹⁶⁶ American propagandists noted these programs were capable of “modifying the competence and/or general attitude of an individual foreigner. Experience has proven that, when properly handled, it can have powerful psychological effects.”¹⁶⁷ Of these exchange programs none was more famous or widespread than the Fulbright. Founded in 1946, the Fulbright

¹⁶⁴ Karen M. Paget, “From Cooperation to Covert Action: the United States and Students, 1940-1952” in *The US Government, Citizen Groups and the Cold War: The State-Private Network* edited by Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford, (NY: Routledge, 2006), 69.

¹⁶⁵ Özlem Altan-Olcay, “Defining ‘America’ from a distance: Local Strategies of the Global in the Middle East,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 1 (2008), 38.

¹⁶⁶ Dizard, 189.

¹⁶⁷ Osgood, 304.

Program was named for Senator J. William Fulbright (R.-Ark.) who suggested military surplus be sold to pay for two-way educational swaps between the United States and foreign powers to facilitate cultural relations.

By the late 1940s, the Fulbright Program was making headway into the Middle East. An educational exchange deal was signed with Egypt in November 1949 and deals with Iraq and Syria were completed by the end of 1950. By the end of the 1950s the United States was hosting students from nearly all countries throughout the Middle East with significant numbers of students coming from Iraq, Jordan, and Iran.¹⁶⁸ American “Fulbrighters” in the Middle East also played a significant role by disseminating American ideology and acting as cultural ambassadors. State Department records state, “Prior to the program, there were no American professors in teaching positions in Egypt outside the American-sponsored institutions; today, American professors are not only accepted, but in demand.”¹⁶⁹ In Egypt, Osgood points out one Fulbright instructor who “distributed ‘innumerable’ USIS publications to approximately twenty different English-language clubs in local secondary schools.”¹⁷⁰ Like the American universities in the region, the Fulbright program and other exchange programs were highly successful in promoting American ideals among “target groups.”

Education and student transfer were key to American goals of influencing the future leaders of the region. By asserting the role of the United States in higher education they could simultaneously block the influence of communism in universities (which they believed could be a fertile breeding ground) and create an intellectual culture founded on pro-Western ideology. Combined with print media, these two areas were the most crucial to the U.S. public diplomacy

¹⁶⁸ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 77.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Osgood, 307.

program because they directly addressed American concerns of communism arising in young leaders and revolutionaries.

Cultural Diplomacy: Projecting American Life

Aside from educating the people of the Middle East to think like Americans and support American policies, another objective of the American public diplomacy effort in the region was the projection of the “American way of life” and what it meant to “be an American.” Dizard explains that while the “informational” programs and “cultural” programs were sometimes conceived of as separate, it was often difficult to make such a clear-cut distinction in practice.¹⁷¹ The USIS libraries, for example, were primarily geared toward information about the United States; but, they also held cultural exhibits on American life and held large collections of music as well as inviting musical performances and collaboration. Ostensibly by popularizing American culture the United States would enjoy greater support for its policies as American value systems were adopted by foreign peoples.

Cultural diplomacy was also intended to show solidarity of American culture with that of the Middle East. For example, Americans pointed to the religious nature of the United States and used the incompatibility of religion with communism to appeal to Islamic culture in the Middle East. In regard to the incompatibility of Islam with communism, embassy plans for Iraq note, “The Working Group should consider ways of issuing, on a continuing basis, material of the type that was contained in the Soviet Affairs Note on ‘Muslims in the USSR.’ The problem is ever present of convincing the educated Iraqis that conditions would be worse under a communist regime than they are in the Arab world today.”¹⁷² The United States was aware of and supported

¹⁷¹ Dizard, 176.

¹⁷² United States Embassy, Iraq Despatch from Burton Berry to the Department of State, "Special IIA Projects for Islamic Countries," October 1, 1952, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

attempts to gain the support of Islamic cultural groups to spread the belief that communism posed a threat and report on the activities of communist groups.¹⁷³ Eisenhower himself stressed that he was always quick to bring up the shared religious beliefs of the United States and those in the Middle East and stated, "I assure you that I never fail in any communication with Arab leaders, oral or written, to stress the importance of the spiritual factor in our relationships. I have argued that belief in God should create between them and us the common purpose of opposing atheistic communism."¹⁷⁴ The United States sponsored a number of exhibits and conventions; one such example is an 'Islamic colloquium' meant to bring together top scholars in the Middle East with American intellectuals. State Department documents provide a clear picture of the intent behind these conventions,

On the surface, this colloquium looks like an exercise in pure learning. This in effect is the impression we desire to give. IIA [International Information Agency] promoted the colloquium along these lines and has given it financial and other assistance because we consider this psychological approach is an important contribution at this time to both short term and long term United States political objectives in the Moslem area.¹⁷⁵ While cultural diplomacy took a variety of forms the most overt and widespread attempts in the Middle East were conducted through film and music.

The United States dominated film, more so than any other medium, and made it a potent weapon for cultural diplomacy. Hollywood's hegemonic control over production meant that while it was possible for Egyptian radio entertainment to influence the region based on quality, it was American films that worldwide audiences turned to for entertainment. As early as 1945

¹⁷³ United States Legation, Lebanon Memorandum from John H. Bruins [Influencing Public Opinion], February 26, 1952, accessed at <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/docs.htm> (last accessed 4/27/15).

¹⁷⁴ United States, White House Letter from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Edward L.R. Elson, [Response to Letter on the Middle East], July 31, 1958.

¹⁷⁵ Department of State Memorandum from Wilson S. Compton to David K.E. Bruce, "Colloquium on Islamic Culture to Be Held in September, 1953, under the Joint Sponsorship of the Library of Congress and Princeton University" [Attached to Cover Note Dated January 16, 1953; Includes Enclosure], January 13, 1953, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

President Roosevelt suggested the “furnishing of American moving pictures” in the Near East.¹⁷⁶ Colonel Harold B. Hoskins—an Arabist State Department official—noted that the British had shown films outdoors on walls which had proved effective. Roosevelt concluded this was perhaps better than using theatres because it would allow American films to reach both men and women (who would be otherwise excluded).¹⁷⁷ The idea of impromptu theatres led to the creation of the Mobile Film Unit, special models from the Jeep Willys company with reinforced roofs that allowed a projectionist to show films from atop the vehicle.¹⁷⁸ These mobile units also distributed publications, set up exhibits and met with local officials as part of their larger duties.¹⁷⁹ Lee Dinsmore, a PAO working in the Kurdish area of Iraq, embodied the best aspects of the mobile units; in addition to his duties he learned Kurdish and was instrumental in extending US educational exchange opportunities to young Kurds.¹⁸⁰

Internal documents from the Iranian Department of Propaganda captured by the United States give us additional insight into how the Mobile Film Unit operated and how it was perceived by locals and foreign governments.¹⁸¹ Initially most films offered were educational in nature, featuring some mention of US government sponsorship at the beginning, and were well-received; Iranian officials note, “A remarkable warm welcome is being given to our units now that people have learned more about the nature of their work. In very few places have they been

¹⁷⁶ Department of State, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs Memorandum from Wallace Murray to Archibald MacLeish, "Letter from Colonel Harold B. Hoskins" [American Movie Propaganda], March 21, 1945, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Lot File 54D403, 1920-1952.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Dizard, 169.

¹⁷⁹ Dizard, 170

¹⁸⁰ Dizard, 158.

¹⁸¹ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State, "IIA: Motion Pictures: Iranian Governmental Document Proposing Mobile Unit Operation Changes," January 7, 1953, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

confronted with opposition on the part of the people.”¹⁸² Sometimes American attempts at cultural diplomacy did not work as intended, especially when American materials highlighted the wealth disparity between the United States and more rural and impoverished areas in the Middle East. While these glimpses of Americana were meant to extoll the benefits of choosing the American system over communism, they sometimes led to difficult questions such as, “If one fourth of that amount [to produce a specific bulletin] was to be made available in medicines or in some other more tangible product of your country which could be used to lessen poverty or to better the health of my people, would it not be a far more successful propaganda approach?”¹⁸³ The Iranian document recalls a very similar story, “In some places the inhabitants asked for medicine rather than films but when our projectionists explained to them that first they had to acquire some knowledge and learn how to deal with a sick person.”¹⁸⁴ These mistakes were made with less frequency as the program moved forward. The United States became more familiar with local audiences and learned to which demographics it should target certain types of propaganda. The document also shows that the Iranian government was suitably impressed with the success of the Mobile Film Units; however, it expressed concern for the credit being given to the United States as well as the close relations between the units and the USIE offices, though this concern was expressed in January 1953 and dissipated following the return of the Shah and Mossadeq’s ousting in August.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Ibid. It is worth noting that both the U.S. and U.K. provided films of this nature around the world as part of their larger Cold War public diplomacy effort. Several poignant examples on the British side were created for Kenya and Tanzania and can be viewed online.

¹⁸³ University of Michigan, Department of Near Eastern Studies Letter from George Cameron to Edward W. Barrett, [Propaganda Activities in Iraq; Attached to Cover Memorandum], October 24, 1951, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁸⁴ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State, "IIA: Motion Pictures: Iranian Governmental Document Proposing Mobile Unit Operation Changes," January 7, 1953, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

The Iranian report also mentions the possible need to allow for films that were primarily intended as entertainment.¹⁸⁶ American officials had already recognized a need to provide content in a more entertaining and accessible form of propaganda film. In 1950 the Embassy in Tehran noted, “The Embassy wonders if, in the light of the increasing tempo of the cold war, Mr. Disney as a patriotic duty could be interested in preparing a film that could be used to defend democracy where the communist system is being touted loudly. The Iranian people like clever satire and the Disney style is known and liked here, therefore the combination of the two would provide a very strong media for putting across our message.”¹⁸⁷ Undoubtedly when it came to entertainment Hollywood, and by extension the United States, was the greatest force in the film industry. American films were routinely shown more often than other films, with only Egyptian numbers appearing somewhat comparable.¹⁸⁸ Vaughan tells us that Egypt became the center of a substantial film program with attendance ranging from approximately 100,000 persons in 1947—which he accurately points to as the low-point in post-war propaganda—to over 300,000 attendees in 1948.¹⁸⁹ These numbers did not refer solely to Hollywood productions but also USIS propaganda and educational films. There were occasional issues with these films along similar lines as those encountered in the Mobile Film Units such as depictions of American values differing from traditional values.¹⁹⁰

Lastly, the U.S. public diplomacy effort through film included the use of short newsreels. The USIA furnished a number of newsreels that were not attributed to the agency such as *News*

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ United States Embassy, Iran Cable from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State, "Motion Pictures-The Film Two Cities," May 16, 1950, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁸⁸ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 83.

¹⁸⁹ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 84.

¹⁹⁰ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 85.

of the Day (distributed by Fox Movietone) and 'KINGFISH.'¹⁹¹ In Iran, the Embassy in Tehran noted the success of their connection with the Universal International Newsreel stating, "In short, the theatrical distribution of this reel has been very successful to date and the Embassy hopes that the Department will continue to support the United Newsreel project," and that "The Embassy would like to see a wider theatrical distribution."¹⁹² While U.S. propagandists did face some challenges in getting wide circulation of the newsreels without alerting local exhibitors to their connections and thus tainting their popularity, it can be said that the US was generally very successful in getting their newsreels distributed and these were well-liked. The only mention of significant disturbance was following the screening of a USIA film on the Kennedy assassination in 1965. Even in this case however it was the USIS library that was attacked and connections between the film and attack are tenuous.¹⁹³

As a form of cultural diplomacy, music served to counter the belief that America lacked a definitive culture as well as make propaganda more palatable during broadcasts. Vaughan states, "Music, whether classical or popular, Western or Arabic, was often used by British and American broadcasters as a means of attracting an audience and 'sugaring the pill' of more overtly political propaganda content," and "American propagandists led the way in incorporating music into their national projection material."¹⁹⁴ In regard to classical music, American composers aided the State Department by dedicating concerts to specific Middle Eastern cities which were later broadcast on the VOA or local stations.¹⁹⁵ However the true strength of

¹⁹¹ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, pp. 34-35.

¹⁹² United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State, "Motion Pictures: Cooperation of American Newsreels," November 10, 1951, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁹³ James J. Halsema, *Field message from James Halsema, United States Information Service*, Cairo, Egypt to United States Information Agency, Washington, January 22, 1965, (Pepperdine University Libraries).

¹⁹⁴ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 88.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

American cultural diplomacy through music came in the form of a uniquely American genre—jazz.

Jazz and swing music were uniquely American in nature and one does not exist in the mind without the other. Jazz was increasingly popular in the Middle East, playing on VOA and local stations such as the Egyptian State Broadcasting (ESB).¹⁹⁶ Jazz was also bound to the racial issues inherent to the United States, issues that provided Soviet propagandists plenty of material to work with and made foreign audiences wary. The strategy employed by the United States to combat negative perceptions of American race relations was to admit their existence and claim that in spite of the current negative state of affairs American democracy allowed for future change.¹⁹⁷ The United States began a campaign to send abroad African-American talents who would espouse this message and sooth foreign audiences' concerns.¹⁹⁸ In the Middle East the most popular and powerful goodwill ambassadors were jazz musicians following the suggestion of African-American Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. that the United States use Dizzy Gillespie to allay overseas concerns.¹⁹⁹ The very first 'jam-bassador tour' led by Dizzy Gillespie in 1956 traveled through Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey.²⁰⁰ Penny Von Eschen posits that these countries were chosen deliberately in an attempt to fortify the Middle East from Soviet influence.²⁰¹ Some of the notable artists to visit the Middle East included Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck and Quincy Jones. Through live performances, radio

¹⁹⁶ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 89.

¹⁹⁷ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 12.

¹⁹⁸ Helen Laville and Scott Lucas, "The American Way: Edith Sampson, the NAACP, and African American Identity in the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* Vol. 20, 4 (Fall 1996): 563-590.

¹⁹⁹ Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*, (MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

²⁰⁰ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 90.

²⁰¹ Von Eschen, 32.

broadcasts and collections housed in the USIS libraries, the United States used the popularity of music to generate goodwill throughout the Middle East and encourage closer cultural transfer.

Chapter 5: The Program's Legacy

Having analyzed the historical context of the America's propaganda program and the methods through which it was implemented, an analysis of its successes and failures is also necessary. Several factors impeded the effectiveness of the program; however these impediments did not prevent the program from having any successes. Most of all, it is necessary to differentiate between any failings of the program due to ineptitude and poor implementation and those stemming from larger issues that were, frankly, beyond the scope of the program.

James Vaughan, in *The Failure of American and British Propaganda in the Arab Middle East, 1945-1957: Unconquerable Minds*, posits that the propaganda program of the United States was largely a failure due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its intended audience as well as a rigid focus on an agenda that focused on communism and the Soviet Union rather than more immediate regional issues.²⁰² Vaughan's definition of failure is based on, "the formulation rather than the reception of Western propaganda and makes no claim to have solved the problems inherent in any effort to appreciate the impact of propaganda upon a foreign audience."²⁰³ This paper takes a similar approach by omitting an in-depth analysis of shifting attitudes among Middle Eastern audiences.

Instead of focusing wholly on the success and/or failure of American propaganda in the region I seek to offer a differing appreciation for the planning and implementation of the program. Rather than place any failings of the program solely in the hands of American propagandists, I posit that U.S. officials were indeed aware of the issues of import to Middle Eastern audiences and that "orientalism" and myopia played a relatively small role in impeding propaganda efforts. By "orientalism," both Vaughan and I are referring to the term put forward

²⁰² Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 9.

²⁰³ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 5.

by Edward Said regarding an imagined and exaggerated difference between “Orient” and “Occident” by imperialist nations.²⁰⁴ Regional power struggles and an ingrained anti-imperialist sentiment largely relegated Western efforts to affect the region to a secondary status and guaranteed any propaganda effort would be at a disadvantage.

The first part of Vaughan’s argument details how Western policymakers operated under, “an analysis of the region and its peoples that was steeped in an ‘Orientalist’ tradition.”²⁰⁵ As a result of this orientalist view, Western propaganda efforts were discordant with the mindsets of those considered “politically conscious.”²⁰⁶ It cannot be denied that stereotypes about the Middle East abounded in the American consciousness, and indeed the region was considered separate from “the West,” but I contend that whatever orientalist stigma may have existed was largely contained in Washington and that the individual USIS posts were much more attuned to the needs of local audiences. Vaughan does note, “Orientalism, racism, anti-Semitism and other stereotypes did not necessarily dominate the formation of propaganda policy in the Middle East.”²⁰⁷ I assert that rather than calling attention to deficiencies in the American approach to regional diplomacy, instead any orientalism in Washington underscores a gap between American policy emanating from Washington and the propaganda program.

With the notable exception of former U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Jefferson Caffrey, the sources Vaughan uses to suggest an orientalist view among American officials are largely contained to documents originating from the PSB, NSC and the State Department. Such attitudes that existed in these departments may not have ever reached Middle Eastern audiences, especially if one recalls the shift in USIS operations mentioned by Undersecretary of State H.

²⁰⁴ Edward W. Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," *Cultural Critique* (1985), 90.

²⁰⁵ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 9.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 69.

Freeman Matthews from an “assembly line” publication of the Wireless File to a more concerted effort to tailor propaganda to local audiences.²⁰⁸ A 1953 letter from the American Embassy in Iraq noted dissatisfaction with the higher levels of the State Department stating, “there was not the necessary appreciation to get our point across,” and underscores the disparity between thinking in Washington and the field.²⁰⁹ Following a trip to USIS posts abroad, USIA Director Theodore Streibert decided that basic decisions should be left to USIS Public Affairs Officers and decided at the embassy level rather than in Washington.²¹⁰ In response to a State Department suggestion to screen the propaganda film *Two Cities*, propagandists in Tehran declined stating, “The Iranian people like clever satire and the Disney style is known and liked here, therefore the combination of the two would provide a very strong media for putting across our message. A technique of lampooning the communist system without mentioning it as such would be better received than the heavy-handed technique evident in TWO CITIES.”²¹¹ This statement reflects that local offices had a greater understanding of Middle Eastern audiences as well as the relative level of autonomy exerted by the field offices.

If there was a major issue between the regional offices and Washington, it was not that orientalism and racism tainted the propaganda program, but rather that the propaganda program and national policies were not fully integrated. Dizard notes John Foster Dulles and the NSC had a “disdain” for the USIA and that this limited the ability of the program to conform with overall

²⁰⁸ “Certain Changes in the Wireless Bulletin,” *The Acting Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Posts* Washington, February 4, 1953— 7:10 p.m. in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, National Security Affairs, Volume II, Part 2. eds. Lisle A. Rose and Neal H. Petersen, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983.

²⁰⁹ Department of State, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs. Office of Near Eastern Affairs Memorandum from Burton Berry to Henry Byroade, [Secretary of State's Understanding of Middle Eastern Problems; Attached to Cover Sheet Dated July 23, 1953], July 23, 1953, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Lot File 57 D 298.

²¹⁰ Dizard, 66.

²¹¹ United States Embassy, Iran Cable from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State, "Motion Pictures-The Film Two Cities," May 16, 1950, National Archives, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

American policies toward the region.²¹² This disconnect is also recognized by Vaughan although he recommends, “one should be wary of stretching the point too far.”²¹³ On the contrary the cooperation between the USIA and overall foreign policy objectives should not be overly relied upon. Throughout the Truman administration the propaganda program was largely excluded from policymaking. It was only after the Jackson Report and Eisenhower restructures that the program gained entry into the highest levels of policymaking through the OCB and NSC.

Though it may have attained a greater appreciation due to Eisenhower’s esteem for the program the USIA was unable to escape its outsider status in the policymaking process. Laura Belmonte tells us that throughout the Truman and Eisenhower presidencies U.S. policymakers “seldom accorded information activities status equal to other tools of U.S. foreign policy.”²¹⁴ On the other hand, Vaughan cites the Sprague Commission—a presidential committee to evaluate the implementation of the Jackson Report—as evidence of the propaganda program’s increased role in foreign policy.²¹⁵ This position differs greatly from Dizard who notes that while the commission validated the effectiveness of the program it lamented the USIA’s weak role in policy formation.²¹⁶ While Vaughan is somewhat correct insofar as the USIA was much more integrated than prior to the writing of the Jackson Committee Report, Dizard’s analysis is closer to the sentiment of the Sprague Commission which reads, “Thus personnel familiar with informational techniques and foreign public opinion are increasingly involved in the decision-making process. However, there appears to be a need for further improving their regular and

²¹² Dizard, 68.

²¹³ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 15.

²¹⁴ Belmonte, 94.

²¹⁵ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 15.

²¹⁶ Dizard, 79.

effective involvement in major policy problems.”²¹⁷ In regard to the Middle East, Gary Rawnsley posits that part of the failure of the Eisenhower Doctrine lies in the fact that the USIA was not heavily consulted beforehand and had it played a larger role in the policymaking process it could have advocated a more popular and better received reaction throughout the region.²¹⁸ Having considered all of these factors, the Jackson Committee Report’s assertion that psychological considerations were not separable from policy is perhaps best understood as a goal rather than the actual political reality.²¹⁹

Another consideration for the propaganda program’s integration with foreign policy objectives is the relation of governmental operations to private enterprises as well as cooperation with foreign programs. The Jackson Committee Report concluded that in regard to private organizations, “The gain in dissemination and credibility through the use of such channels will more than offset the loss by the Government of some control over content.”²²⁰ While this was a more viable approach for achieving success in a propaganda sense, it creates gaps between execution and planning. In a large number of cases the government actively took a backseat to private programs and foreign companies.²²¹ Relying on private and foreign representatives to disseminate propaganda holds a host of problems not least of which is how much of the confidential foreign policy can be shared. If the distribution options that were viewed as the most trustworthy were not trusted with the intimate details of the foreign policy, they were not being fully utilized. In some cases contacts were not always distributing material that could be

²¹⁷ Sprague, Mansfield. “Conclusions and Recommendations of the President’s Committee on Information Activities Abroad” December 1959 accessed at http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/45/sprague_report.pdf (last accessed 4/16/15), 59.

²¹⁸ Rawnsley, 63.

²¹⁹ “The Report of the President’s Committee on International Information Activities, June 30, 1953”

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 25.

classified as propaganda. For example, cooperation with the Egyptian Broadcasting Station was not always “strictly propagandistic” though it did contribute toward overall goodwill.²²²

Although a less propagandistic approach could limit the program’s integration with short-term policy objectives, it also provided for some of the greater successes of the program. Arguably the United States had the most success in its cultural operations as Middle Eastern audiences gravitated toward American music, movies and products. Describing the limits of U.S. cultural diplomacy Vaughan notes, “The primacy of short-term political objectives, driven by the contingencies of the cold war, was thus quickly established,” and concludes, “American cultural diplomacy was thus hampered by a school of opinion in the State Department that regarded it as ‘a minor appendage to Information, with little value or significance in itself.’”²²³ This focus on short-term objectives severely hampered the more successful programs that relied on a much longer strategy emphasizing gradual bonds developing between the United States and the Middle East. Major shifts in opinion were largely unsuccessful in short-term projects and Laura Belmonte accurately describes American propagandists as “whipsawed” as they attempted to adapt to ever-changing policy and domestic shifts.²²⁴

Other factors limited the program as well. Maintaining sufficient funding proved to be an issue throughout this era especially during the initial stages of the Truman administration. The Campaign of Truth was a much needed influx of funding; however, it proved to be an anomaly rather than the norm. Even as Eisenhower pushed for expansion of the program, Congressional disapproval and political maneuverings combined to ensure that a steady growth of the program was anything but assured. In spite of this, the funding for the program was relatively steady if not

²²² Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 39.

²²³ Vaughan, “The United States and the Limits of Cultural Diplomacy”, 178.

²²⁴ Belmonte, 94.

always guaranteed, and the program in the Middle East benefitted as the region increased in importance relative to programs behind the Iron Curtain.

As with the funding issues, bureaucratic disorganization and infighting continued into the Eisenhower presidency albeit as much less of a problem. Continual reorganizations were a theme of the Truman administration's attempts to construct the program and while they were greatly reduced thanks to the formation of the USIA, much of the competition and disdain for competing agencies continued. Relations between the USIA and CIA remained low throughout the period as the USIA considered itself to be the sole body responsible for psychological propaganda actions. The USIA viewed the CIA as overstepping its bounds and doing so in a wholly incompetent manner.²²⁵

The United States was also forced to consider British actions in the formulation of strategy, especially up through the mid-1950s. The United States took on a secondary role to the far more entrenched and experienced British program during its initial entry to the Middle East. Anti-imperialist attitudes forced the United States to tread a precariously thin line. On the one hand, it was necessary for the United States to show solidarity with its close ally, the United Kingdom. Any policies that seemed to condemn the United Kingdom explicitly would strain relations.²²⁶ On the other hand, the United Kingdom was quickly losing prestige in the Middle East and found it far more challenging to escape accusations of imperialist motives. In order to maintain the position that the United States was truly committed to the actual needs of Middle Eastern audiences and defend American credibility, it was necessary to either distance itself from British policy or attempt to otherwise convince those in the Middle East that British actions were truly beneficial. This approach reached a logical conclusion during the Suez Crisis. In order to

²²⁵ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 15.

²²⁶ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 180.

maintain its larger Cold War policies—including stable borders in the Middle East and the ability to admonish the Soviet Union for its actions in Hungary—the United States was forced to take a drastic turn from supporting the United Kingdom and France. Vaughan points out however, it was the British who failed to comprehend American policy and willingness to adhere to it and willfully split from the American program.²²⁷ In any case it is hard to argue that such a split was inevitable; however, the broad goals of the United States and the United Kingdom varied sufficiently to induce competition and mistrust that hurt the ability of the U.S. to pursue its own agenda. The United States only partially split from its partnership with the United Kingdom on this issue, but it was significant enough that when combined with the diminished British influence on the region allowed the United States public diplomacy to plot an independent course.

Conclusion

As this paper has demonstrated the U.S. felt the need to implement a foreign information program under President Truman, which was later expanded and corrected under Eisenhower, and included a switch from short-term objective seeking to long-term goodwill fostering. The methods were primarily focused on two target audiences: educated community leaders on one hand, and the masses on the other.

The American propaganda program in the Middle East during the early Cold War period faced a number of challenges stemming from systemic sources such as funding, organization and role in policymaking as well as from external constraints from foreign interests (both British and Middle Eastern), anti-imperialist sentiments, and the delicate balance between credibility and adherence to promoting policy. Many of the issues that hampered early attempts during the Truman administration were helped by the Campaign of Truth and the Eisenhower

²²⁷ Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda*, 190.

administration took these efforts a step further. The program was carried out through a variety of covert and semi-covert methods aimed at garnering credibility through apparently independent agencies. Many of these programs were successful at producing some shifts in public opinion, most notably the CIA operation to discredit Prime Minister Mossadeq in Iran.

Overall however it was not the short-term operations that were most successful but rather the longer cultural projection of the United States into the region. The United States capitalized on Middle Eastern audiences' desire for American books, movies, and magazines. Cultural trends during this period reflect a shift toward American dress and musical taste. The realization of the strengths of the long term approach only gained prominence toward the end of the Eisenhower presidency. Ultimately the propaganda program in the Middle East was an experiment in how best to conduct public diplomacy. American propagandists realized by the end of the period that building goodwill and cultural ties was a more effective strategy than playing damage control for unfavorable policies.

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