Soft Weapon: Cold War-Era American Propaganda in the Middle East (1947-1979)

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Soft Weapon:
Cold War-Era American Propaganda in the Middle East (1947-1979)

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Department of History
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts in History

by
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Atlanta, Georgia
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Abstract

Jean Anouilh wrote in 1952, “Propaganda is a soft weapon; hold it in your hands too long, and it will move about like a snake, and strike the other way.” When the Cold War began in the years following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union took up arms, but for the better part of forty years, these arms were “soft weapons” used to freeze out their political adversaries and spread their own values globally.

This thesis examines efforts made by the U.S. State Department and their representatives in the Middle East to influence Middle Eastern views of the US between 1947, the beginning of the Cold War, and 1979, the beginning of the Iran Hostage Crisis. It focuses on how the United States produced and altered its propaganda, both in content and medium, to adjust Middle Eastern perceptions of the United States. Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran serve as the central focus of this study; these three nations provide the best lens for examining U.S. efforts in the Middle East because of the U.S. economic interests, mainly in oil production, in the post-war period. This thesis argues that American understandings of the region tailored United States’ propagandist efforts to shape Middle Eastern perceptions of the United States and relations between the United States and the Middle East. Often underestimated in historic conversations on U.S.-Middle East affairs, understanding propaganda’s role in the formation of relations between the two regions allows for a better understanding of present-day interactions.
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Introduction

In March 1945, Colonel Harold B. Haskins sent a letter to Foreign Service Officer Wallace Murray detailing a conversation he had with President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In the letter he wrote:

The President inquired if American moving pictures were being furnished in the Near East, and suggested the possibility of even taking over at least one small theatre in various cities where American films of various kinds might be shown. I told him I had not seen many American movies in the Middle East except, of course, the usual run of Hollywood films, usually a year or two after they had been originally brought out. I told him I had seen, in Baghdad, where the British had shown documentary and educational films in public against the wall of a building, and that I thought perhaps something along those same lines could be done by us. He agreed that that was better than the idea of taking over small theatres since, in such outdoor shows, women as well as men could see them. Mrs. Roosevelt suggested that, to be effective, such films have to be specially prepared, having in mind the specific areas where they would be shown.¹

As early as March 1945, before the end of the Second World War, the Roosevelt administration and the State Department were already thinking about ways in which to influence the Middle East through propaganda. These ideas quickly grew, and when the Cold War began in the years following World War II, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) took up arms, but it was not only with guns and bombs. While the Soviet Union and the United States almost went to war in the first few years after the Second World War, by 1950, they had chosen “soft weapons,” such as propaganda, as a way to ice out their political adversaries and spread their own values to the rest of the world. It is during this period that the world realized the importance of cultural hegemony and soft power after World War II.

This thesis examines what soft power efforts were made by the State Department in the Middle East in order to influence Middle Eastern views and perceptions of the US between 1947 and 1979. In 1947, President Harry Truman introduced the Truman Doctrine, in which the US government vowed to protect democracy by containing communism to the Soviet Union; in the same year, the Soviet Union created Cominform, the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers’ Parties, whose purpose was to enforce communist ideology and political control in Soviet satellites. Both of these moments signified the start of the ideological conflict between the two world powers.

Beginning in Truman’s administration, the United States Department of State employed several new tactics and established new programs and agencies in response to a perceived growing Soviet influence in the Middle East. While the Truman and Eisenhower administrations were primarily motivated by goals of containment, later administrations focused on repairing American image abroad in light of the domestic turmoil surrounding the Civil Rights and antiwar movements. This thesis, therefore, traces the State Department’s propagandist efforts from 1947 until 1979, the year in which the Iran Hostage Crisis took place. The Iran Hostage Crisis marked, for the United States, the Soviet Union and Iran, a break from past precedent in international affairs between the three countries. The crisis signified a substantial change in relations between the United

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States and Iran and the US approach to the Cold War in the Middle East. Consequently, this thesis will not examine the Iran Hostage Crisis and focuses only the years between 1947 and 1979.

Three countries, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran, serve as case studies in order to develop a general understanding of the U.S.’s overall propagandist efforts in the Middle East during the Cold War. These countries provide the best lens to examine U.S. Cold War efforts in the Middle East for a number of reasons. First, their oil resources were of greater interest to the United States during the second half of the twentieth century. Second, other Middle Eastern nations such as Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria were often involved in wars and other conflicts that forced the United States to direct its propagandist efforts to Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. Furthermore, The United States’ State Department and its agents’ understanding of Middle Eastern sentiments towards the U.S. was heavily shaped by their involvement in these three countries.

This thesis focuses on how the United States produced and altered its propaganda both in content and medium, to respond to Middle Eastern perceptions of the United States as they understood it. It examines correspondences between the US Department of State and ambassadors stationed in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. In these correspondences, the State Department and its agents discuss their propaganda activities in the Middle East. This thesis argues that the U.S. Department of State’s propagandist efforts in the Middle East played a central role in the formation and evolution of U.S.-Middle East relations. However, these propagandists’ efforts were based on the ambassadors’ understandings of the Middle East. As this thesis will show, this is an important distinction because the strategies promoted by the U.S. were not necessarily based on true Middle Eastern
perceptions of the U.S., but merely on the ambassadors’ own understandings of how the Middle East perceived the United States. This inherently led to misinterpretation and the transmission of misinformation.

The United States’ relations with the Middle East were ever changing and dependent upon a number of factors: political alliances, resources, and fear of terrorism, to name just a few. It was during the Cold War, however, that the United States became deeply invested and involved in the Middle East. Spreading democracy, containing communism and tapping into the region’s resources led the United States to the Middle East, where it tried to use soft power to influence the politics and culture of the region. The U.S. produced and disseminated propaganda in direct opposition to Soviet propaganda in the region. Both countries aimed to expand their sphere of influence through the use of films, posters, pamphlets, bulletins and other propagandist materials. Ultimately, their efforts had a grave effect on future relations between all of the parties involved.

Literature surrounding the Cold War, the Middle East and the United States have provided a solid foundation for understanding US-Middle East relations. However, few historians have pointed to Cold War propaganda or soft power as the cause of the evolution of these relations and their current state. The majority of scholars have pointed to U.S. support of Israel and the Iran Hostage Crisis as defining moments in the relationship, but few focus on the period between these two moments. Although few scholars would argue that the Middle East was not important during the Cold War, there have been few monographs and essays written on the topic. All of these scholars have taken different routes to explore the United States’ involvement in the Cold War. It is
critical that a new historical angle focused on Middle Eastern relations be taken in order to fully understand the reach of American propaganda and the influence it had on politics. As the United States continues to use military and economic means to enter more conflicts and create more alliances in the Middle East, continued study and further understandings will be crucial to understanding how past relations have been formed and affected by soft power.

Many historians have focused broadly on the propaganda that the United States used during the Cold War. Shawn Parry-Giles examines the motivations fueling the formation of the United States Information Agency (USIA), created by President Eisenhower in 1953. In “The Eisenhower Administration’s Conceptualizations of the USIA: The Development of Overt and Covert Propaganda Strategies” (1994), Parry-Giles suggests that propaganda strategies became more centralized under President Eisenhower after he established the Agency, arguing, “In the end, the Eisenhower administration ushered in a new and more sophisticated approach to the practice of propaganda, aimed at both international and domestic audiences.”

Nicholas Cull builds on Parry-Giles’ work in his text, The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989 (2009). In it, Cull argues that the role of the USIA has been underestimated and underappreciated in American history and that it was formed because “America needed a permanent apparatus to explain itself to the postwar world.”

Similarly, in Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold

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War (2010), Laura Belmonte argues that the producers of American propaganda sought to manipulate foreign perceptions of the United States in the same way that missionaries had done during the 19th century, however, even they disagreed over “what values, symbols and people best exemplified ‘America.’” Although these scholars do not focus directly on the Middle East, their work is helpful in determining and understanding the effectiveness of propaganda as soft power in the Middle East during the Cold War.

Other scholars who have studied Cold War propaganda have demonstrated the importance of how Americanism is perceived abroad in the second half of the twentieth century, which this thesis shows is an important dynamic in the establishment of relations between the United States and the Middle East. This thesis uses Michael Kazin and Joseph McCartin’s definition of Americanism, in which Americanism is “an articulation of America’s rightful place in the world, a set of traditions, a political language, a cultural style pregnant with political meaning” because it encapsulates what the United States sought to impress upon the world during the Cold War. The United States produced propaganda to combat the international criticism of its dedication to civil and human rights in light of ongoing racism, racially motivated violence and segregation in the United States. Several scholars, notably Thomas Borstelmann, Penny von Eschen and Nicholas J. Cull, The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xiii.


Stephen Crist, have examined the effects of race politics in the United States on the US government’s actions abroad during the Cold War. One of the most influential scholars on this topic is Mary Dudziak, who has drawn connections between the Cold War, anticommunism and the Civil Rights Movement. In both “Brown as a Cold War Case” (2004) and “Josephine Baker, Racial Protest and the Cold War” (1994), Dudziak argues “Cold War concerns provided motive[s] beyond equality itself for the federal government, including the president and the courts, to act on civil rights when it did.”

Dudziak’s work is integral in understanding how domestic policy and events affected the United States’ actions abroad, especially as they related to manufacturing and promoting an American image.

On May 1, 1950, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson sent an airgram to diplomatic offices in Beirut, Damascus, Amman, Baghdad, Tel Aviv, Jidda, Cairo and Jerusalem, which concerned a news article that had begun circulating that discussed Anti-Americanism in the Arab World and outlined the changes that needed to be made to propaganda as a response to perceived Anti-Americanism. Acheson wrote, “Anti-Americanism is resurging in the Arab world…our best efforts must be directed toward stemming this tide of anti-Americanism…along the following lines: corrective versions

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[of this story] should be sent directly to outlets such as the Syrian newspaper…we must on every occasion reaffirm our current policy of impartiality in the Palestine dispute…[and] we must also seek to re-direct the attention of Arab peoples to their own internal problems…This program on the home front is already producing favorable results. It might also prove effective in the field.”¹⁰ It is through these sorts of correspondences that we can begin to understand the impact that both American understandings of Middle Eastern perception of the US and propaganda in the Middle East had on the developing relationships between the two regions.

Chapter 1: “Specially Prepared”: American Propaganda in the Middle East during the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations

The Cold War began soon after the close of World War II. Although ideologically and geopolitically different, the allies had come together to defeat Nazi Germany and its allies, but the United States (along with like Western nation-states) and the Soviet Union understood that their “success had always depended upon the pursuit of compatible objectives by incompatible systems.”¹¹ When World War II ended, both powerful nations were set on spreading their own ideals and values to then-uninfluenced nation-states in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The ideological differences between the United States and the Soviet Union brought about the Cold War; Stalin and the Soviet Union wished to dominate Europe and the rest of the world with its socialist and communist ideologies, while the United States recognized that it “could not continue to serve as a model for the rest of the world while remaining apart from the rest of the world…[and sought] global influence in the realm of ideas.”¹²

Since the Cold War used soft power as one means of confrontation, the United States focused on ideological containment, which they achieved through diplomacy and propaganda, in addition to physical containment (military interactions such as the proxy wars in Korea and Vietnam). U.S. Cold War policy sought to achieve containment of

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¹² Joseph Nye first coined the term “soft power” in the late 1980s. He defines it as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments” and “the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals and policies.” Joseph S. Nye, Soft Power: The Means of Success in World Politics (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), x.; Gaddis, 15.
Soviet ideals and values by promoting its own in the same target areas. Initially, the United States attempted this through economic and political means. However, the United States soon learned that while political, economic and military actions were influential, it needed to depend more on diplomacy and propaganda in order to protect its image during the Cold War.

The Cold War officially began in 1947. Although many events, including Winston Churchill’s Iron Curtain Speech, led up to this moment, it was in March 1947 that President Truman introduced the Truman Doctrine, in which he outlined the U.S.’s plans and goals concerning the Soviet Union and the threat of communism. A few months later, in November, the USSR established Cominform which sought to protect communism in the Soviet Union and its satellites and to strengthen its political control. These two actions, compounded by an American fear of communist attack and the USSR’s fear of American attack, started the conflict that would dominate the twentieth century until it ended in 1991.

The United States and the USSR had already developed interests in Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa during World War II, but as the Cold War developed in the post-WWII period, the United States and the USSR garnered a progressively larger interest in the Middle East. These interests led the two world powers into a soft power conflict over the entire region that greatly affected world relations in the second half of the twentieth century. In order to fully comprehend how the United States devised, implemented and altered its propagandist strategies in the Middle East during the Cold War, it is important to examine what drew the U.S. to the Middle East during the Cold War period. We must look at the political, economic, and cultural goals in the region and how they developed
as points of contention between the US and the Soviet Union after World War II. Overwhelmingly, oil and containment of communism drove the United States to become heavily invested in the Middle East during the second half of the 20th century.

As early as 1943, tension between the United States and the USSR existed over what to do about the Middle East. Many countries and territories in the region, notably Iraq and Iran, had fought alongside the Allied Forces against the Axis Powers. In 1943, the Allied Forces held the first of three wartime conferences at Tehran, Iran to discuss their military strategy against Germany and Japan. The “Big Three”—U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin—were all present at this meeting to discuss strategy as well as postwar settlements. At the conclusion of the meeting, the leaders issued a ‘Declaration of the Three Powers Regarding Iran,” in which they thanked Iran for its assistance in the war and recognized the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation.13 Although all three nations agreed to leave Iran (and presumably other independent nations of the Middle East) alone, this agreement set the stage for coming disputes over political and cultural influence in the Middle East between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States, for example, continued throughout World War II to survey nationalist movements in the Middle East to ensure that they were not influenced by socialist and communist ideology.14 Coupled with both nations’ need for the region’s


14 Michael B. Oren, Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 454.
natural resources, the issue over Iran would boil over into the second half of the century when each country competed for global hegemony.

At the end of World War II, the United States was the primary producer of oil for the West and its allies. By the time the war ended, U.S. oil companies had interests all over the world, and, they, along with the U.S. government, began to fear that they did not have enough oil for future disputes. The US believed its deteriorating relationship with the Soviet Union was a sign of impending war. The United States would be able to rely on its own oil reserve in times of crisis, but the government recognized that it would not be able to also meet the demands of the European markets, so they adopted a conservation plan.\(^\text{15}\) A part of this plan was to develop relationships with countries that had large supplies of oil. This led the United States to recognize the importance of a Middle Eastern relationship as a strategic solution to their concern about oil supplies.

One of the initiatives that President Truman and his administration developed to remedy worries about future oil shortages was to develop economic relationships with the Middle East through the Marshall Plan, otherwise known as the European Recovery Program. The Marshall Plan, named for Secretary of State George C. Marshall, was established in 1948 and allowed the United States to give $13 billion to Western Europe to help rebuild European economies after the Second World War. A key component of this plan was to alleviate European dependence on U.S. oil, and thus Middle East oil became one of the key commodities and factors in the plan.\(^\text{16}\)


\(^{16}\) Palmer, 362.
The United States needed Western Europe and Japan (who was also dependent upon Middle Eastern oil at the time) to be stable in order for the U.S.’s own economy to grow and prosper.\(^\text{17}\) Therefore, the United States’ interests in and dependence upon Middle Eastern resources consistently grew in the postwar era. In order to minimize the amount of oil exports from the United States, the U.S.-controlled oil companies in the Middle East lowered their oil prices in Europe. Consequently, European countries began to import more oil from the Middle East, which temporarily eased American worries of an oil shortage in its own reserves. Furthermore, when the United States did finally begin to experience a shortage of oil in 1948, the Middle East continued supplying Europe and Japan with oil and began supplementing U.S. oil needs.\(^\text{18}\)

In 1947, the Truman administration authorized the building of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline (TAPLINE) which would cross Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese territory, helping the economic development of recently-liberated Lebanon and also establishing stronger relations between the United States and the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia.\(^\text{19}\) With this plan, the United States hoped to solidify its presence in the Middle East and secure cheaper oil for rebuilding Western Europe. Once completed, the TAPLINE was able to carry 300,000 barrels of oil each day, making it the largest of its kind, and it would not be completed until 1974.\(^\text{20}\) The pipeline served to “resolve a pair of

\(^{17}\) Salim Yaqub, *United States and the Middle East: 1914 to 9/11* (Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses, 2003), 27.

\(^{18}\) Palmer, 368.

\(^{19}\) Yaqub, 29.

frustrating Cold War dilemmas: how to fuel the economic recovery of Western Europe without exhausting the oil reserves of the Western Hemisphere, and how to foster economic development and curb political instability in the Arab world.”

The TAPLINE also helped to draw the United States closer to Saudi Arabia, which was one of the Middle Eastern countries with the largest oil supply—enough “to meet the needs of the United States or Western Europe for decades to come.” In order to solidify the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, the Truman administration made two grand gestures in 1950: it pledged to come to Saudi Arabia’s aid if they were ever to be attacked by the Soviet Union, and it issued new tax regulations which made it cheaper for American oil companies to share profits with the Saudi Arabian government. In making this pledge and mutually beneficial financial arrangement, the United States created the beginnings of its long-lasting presence in the Middle East and its stance against Soviet interference in the region. This made the Middle East even more of a contention point between the U.S. and the USSR in the events that followed during the Cold War.

In addition to economic interests, U.S. political goals were also instrumental in making the Middle East a point of contention during the Cold War. As the Cold War matured, both the Truman administration and, its successor, the Eisenhower administration adopted policies that advocated containment. They wished to keep the

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21 Ibid., 256.

22 Ibid., 258.

23 Yaqub, 29.
Soviet Union’s socialist and communist ideologies “contained” to the East, and they vowed to actively work to keep it from spreading. On March 12, 1947, President Truman issued his now famous Truman Doctrine, in which he vowed to contain Soviet threats to influence to Greece and Turkey. He claimed that the integrity of the two countries “was essential to the preservation of order in the Middle East,” as well as for the West as a whole. This doctrine exemplified the U.S.’s mission to preserve the cultural and political influence of the United States had already existed in relation to the Middle East in 1947. Truman’s declaration that “it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures,” played on the American government’s moral obligations and strategic interests, arguing, “If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own nation.”

To achieve this goal, the Truman administration began disseminating propaganda throughout the world, including the Middle East. The administration used pamphlets, posters, flyers, bulletins, articles in local newspapers, movies and radio broadcasts throughout the Middle East in order to reach as many people as possible. A series of cables between the State Department and various U.S. agents stationed throughout the Middle East demonstrate the changes being made early in the Cold War to propaganda production and dissemination in the region. In a 1950 cable from the U.S. Embassy in

24 Oren, 481.

25 Yaqub, 29.

26 Oren, 482.
Iraq to the State Department, Ambassador Edward S. Crocker II discusses the success of a pro-American bulletin that was distributed in various parts of the Middle East. He reports that 820 copies of the bulletin, which had been written in Kurdish, had been sent out to Baghdad, Northern Iraq, Iran, Syria and miscellaneous locations, and writes, “[The Consulate’s contact person] gave assurances of the Shikkak leader’s continuing interest in receiving the Kurdish bulletin…The Iraqi government’s official attitude toward the bulletin continues friendly and favorable.”

Not long after the bulletins were sent out, the U.S. Embassy in Iran suggested that revisions to the aims and objectives of the United States Information and Educational Exchange Program (USIE) be made in Iran. Ambassador Edward Wells alerted the State Department that “the wave of interest and enthusiasm for the United States inspired by the visit of the Shah to America has begun to wane. It is being reflected by a growing idea that the USA is not seriously interested in the future of Iran.” A month later, the State Department received a list of suggested changes, including budget changes, new movies and a library from Ambassador Henry F. Grady who was also stationed in Iran.

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28 The USIE served as a precursor to the United States Information Agency which was established in 1953 by President Eisenhower.


30 Henry F. Grady to U.S. Department of State, (cable) July 6, 1950, NARA, Record Group 59.
One of Grady’s more important suggestions included a strengthened joint pro-American, anti-communist propagandist effort with the Iranian government, which, he reports, on October 19, 1950, had been successful. Grady lists a number of the successes of the collaboration with the Iranian government including “Mullahs in two mosques Tehran Sunday began public sermonizing against Communists. Iran radio recording these for twice-daily broadcasts which will continue next 20 days. One Mullah also sent on similar mission to Tabriz, another Kurdish capital.”

While ambassadors saw early success in Iran, this success was disrupted when Iran got a new director of propaganda. On January 6, 1951, the State Department received a cable from the Embassy in Iran, explaining, “Propaganda director Shahrokh dismissed yesterday. New propaganda director is Dr. Khanbaba Bayani…not known as pro-American and speaks little or no English. His brother Mehvi Bayani is head of National (public) Library and has been lecturing recently at VOKS (Soviet cultural center) Tehran…Will report further.” Later, Ambassador Grady explained that the Iranian propaganda director “expressed belief [that] Iran propaganda, for moment at least, must follow neutral line,” which disrupted the U.S.’s plans to continue disseminating


31 A Mullah is a Muslim learned in Islamic theology and sacred law; Henry F. Grady to U.S. Department of State, (cable) October 19, 1950, NARA, Record Group 59.

32 United States Embassy, Iran to U.S. Department of State, (cable) January 6, 1951, NARA, Department of State Lot Files 52-40.
anti-communist and pro-American propaganda in Iran both through physical bulletins and the Voice of America (VOA) radio broadcast.\footnote{Henry F. Grady to U.S. Department of State, (cable) January 10, 1951, NARA, Record Group 59. \url{http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%20015.pdf} (accessed February 26, 2016).} By August 1951, however, the United States and Iran had negotiated plans to bring a new Voice of America broadcast to Iran, produced in Kurdish. This broadcast would be experimental, “avoiding specific anti-Sov character of broadcasts…avoiding encouragement of Kurdish polit nationalism…[and encouraging] the support [for] central Iran government.”\footnote{Henry F. Grady to U.S. Department of State, (cable) August 6, 1951, NARA, Record Group 59. \url{http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%20027.pdf} (accessed February 26, 2016).} The Voice of America broadcast in Iran would be one of the more successful propaganda efforts in the Middle East, as the broadcast would last through the better part of the century.

In the spring of 1951, the United States Department of State received a series of communications from Edward Crocker, an ambassador in Iraq. On March 10, he discussed how posters capitalized on the issue of religion, detailing a display that “showed the Communist state as a big bully maltreating a man labelled ‘Religion.’”\footnote{Edward S. Crocker II to U.S. Department of State, (cable) March 10, 1951, NARA, Record Group 59. \url{http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%20021.pdf} (accessed February 26, 2016).} In an airgram on March 26, 1951, the ambassador responded to the State Department’s suggestion that leadership grants be given to some communist-leaning Iraqis, arguing that “the Embassy agrees with the Department in feeling that we should endeavor to reach
leaders who represent a wider range of political opinion than those persons already cooperating closely with the United States…[but] there is little purpose in inviting leftists, even as mildly pinkish as these men are…because they are probably not eligible to receive visas for the United States.”36 As in other places in the Middle East, the State Department and the ambassadors in Iraq failed to agree on a sensible and effective way to spread anti-communist propaganda in Iraq.

The State Department was also laying the groundwork for propagandist efforts in Saudi Arabia in the early 1950s. In June 1951, Ambassador Raymond Hare assured the State Department, “No Commie propaganda Saudi Arabia.”37 Two days later, William Eddy, a U.S. minister stationed in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, wrote a letter to Dorothy Thompson, an American journalist, notifying her that the Secretary-General of the Arab League and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem had agreed to promote a joint propaganda effort with Christians, and “[the King of Saudi Arabia] affirmed that both Christianity and Islam are threatened by Communism, their common enemy…therefore, Muslims in the East, and Christians in the West, should be allies in this trouble to defend their


historic faith.” Based on the reports from their agents thus far, the State Department began to believe that there was a promising future for democracy in Saudi Arabia.

In a memorandum from Glenn Abbey to the State Department in October of that year, however, Abbey warned that “anti-communist propaganda is not welcomed in Saudi Arabia by the Government nor are Saudis in general interested in such material. Poster campaigns and distribution of anti-communist pamphlets would almost certainly draw official protest from the Saudi government and would probably strengthen Saudi suspicions thus hazarding the balance of the USIE program.”

The United States saw this pushback throughout the rest of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. It is not until President Eisenhower comes into office, which also aligned with the beginning of a new king’s reign in Saudi Arabia, that the State Department again suggested pro-American propaganda in Saudi Arabia. In November 1953, the State Department received a cable from the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia that suggested that Vice President Nixon attend the coronation of the new king in order to demonstrate the United States’ wish for a friendly relationship with Saudi Arabia. However, the State

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Department’s requests to spread pro-American, anti-communist propaganda were rejected by the new king as well.

Notwithstanding its struggle in Saudi Arabia, the United States saw relative success in the Middle East in regards to its early propagandist efforts. What complicated the United States’ involvement in the Middle East, however, was the Israeli-Palestinian question. In 1948, the United States, along with other Western nations, supported the establishment of a Jewish state in the area known as Palestine. The partition plan adopted by the United Nations in 1947 gave part of Palestine, an area heavily inhabited by Arabs, to Jews. This plan further divided the Middle East along both political and religious lines. Arabs and Muslims in the Middle East were left alienated by the establishment of the state of Israel and vowed to fight it, making many Western nations, including the United States, an enemy by association.41 Furthermore, by the time the United States had begun establishing Cold War relationships in the Middle East, the Soviet Union had already begun distributing anti-US and anti-democratic propaganda that capitalized on the Palestine issue. Stephen Penrose, the president of the American University of Beirut, wrote a letter to the Department of State explaining, “Arab bitterness toward Israel and particularly toward the powers which brought it into being is played upon continuously. The frightful condition of the Arab refugees from Palestine is played up as being the result of the action of Western imperialism.”42


Therefore, while the United States hoped to lay roots for new relationships with Arab countries, it had to be cognizant of the perception of the United States as pro-Israel or anti-Arab and make legitimate efforts to combat any existing anti-US sentiment related to Israel. The efforts were only somewhat successful, however. In a 1951 memo sent from Under Secretary of State James E. Webb to James S. Lay, Jr., the executive secretary of the National Security Council, the State Department reported, “The outlook for maintaining the good-will and Western orientation of the peoples of the Near East improved during the period under review in both Israel and the Arab states…United States efforts to convince the Arabs of its impartiality as between them and Israel were also partly responsible.”

In November of that year, however, the State Department received a letter alerting them of an incident involving an American film and recommending that the embassy proceed slowly and cautiously with the introduction of any propaganda in the country. Ambassador Hare wrote:

> It has just been reported to me that there has been another in the series of incidents…In this case a senior Saudi military officer attended a movie shown on the airbase in Dhahran and took instant offense at a newsreel on Israel…We have said frequently in our despatches to the Department that precipitant action…would seriously endanger what little we have accomplished and would certainly force us to slow down our pace.”

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44 Raymond Hare to Frederick Awalt, November 25, 1951, NARA, Record Group 50. [http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%200042.pdf](http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%200042.pdf) (accessed February 26, 2016).
The Israeli-Palestinian issue loomed as an obstacle for the US in the Middle East throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In the early days of the Cold War, the United States recognized that because the Middle East was so close to the Soviet Union, it was already a region that would need special attention. They worried that if the Soviet Union was able to exert control or exploit resources and politically influence the Middle East, the United States would lose the war for global hegemony. In a cable from Henry F. Grady, who was stationed at the United States Embassy in Iran, Grady lists seventeen of the U.S. government’s objectives in Iran, one of which was to “create…an attitude toward the U.S. which will make them want to be aligned with the U.S., determined to resist Communism and, in the event of war, friendly and cooperative toward the U.S.”

Both the United States and the Soviet Union sought to have their ideology, democracy or communism, be the reigning ideology in the world, and they saw the Middle East as a vulnerable area to exploit. In realizing this, they made the Middle East one of the most, if not the most, important theatres of the Cold War.

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45 Grady to U.S. Department of State, (cable) July 6, 1950.
Chapter 2: Cold War Civil Rights: Domestic Concerns Infiltrate Propaganda
during the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson Administrations

At the outset of the Cold War, the United States was focused on spreading democracy and containing Soviet influence and communism. The end of World War II created a new world order whereby global hegemony would be the goal for the world powers, and the United States and the Soviet Union were both determined to achieve it. During the 1950s and the 1960s, however, the American government witnessed the height of the classical Civil Rights Movement, and Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson were forced to shift their Cold War goals both domestically and abroad. In addition to goals of containment of communism and acquisition of the Middle East’s rich oil reserves, the American government, through the Department of State, hoped to portray an image abroad that promoted American ideals and values, such as democracy, freedom, civil liberties and capitalism. Ultimately, these administrations hoped to control how Americanism, the articulation of American traditions, its political language and its culture, was perceived and understood in the Middle East during the Cold War, especially as the Soviet Union also sought to manipulate the United States’ image in the world.

The U.S. faced several challenges in promoting and maintaining this image abroad, however. Domestically, the U.S. witnessed horrific racial violence, a growing Civil Rights movement and more and more Americans calling for social change. In its foreign policy, in contrast, the U.S. continued to preached peace and democracy for all. Other nations, among them, the Soviet Union realized that Americanism was not what the United States wanted the world to believe it was and capitalized on it by questioning U.S. motives and values in the global arena. For example, the Soviet Union distributed
propaganda materials that depicted an African-American being lynched from the torch of the Statue of Liberty, insinuating that democracy, American capitalism and religion enabled the mistreatment of minorities.\(^\text{46}\) In the face of these allegations, the United States had to respond both domestically and globally—“Cold War concerns provided a motive beyond equality itself for the federal government…to act on civil rights.”\(^\text{47}\) Civil rights legislation was not just a matter of domestic policy; it was a tool used to advance American foreign policy during the Cold War.

In 1944, Gunner Myrdal wrote, “The Negro in America has not yet been given the elemental civil and political rights of formal democracy, including a fair opportunity to earn his living, upon which a general accord was already won when the American Creed was first taking form. And this anachronism constitutes the contemporary ‘problem’ both to Negroes and to whites.”\(^\text{48}\) Myrdal shed light on the hypocrisy of race relations in American “democracy,” and his report influenced the perceptions of the United States for many people throughout the world before the Cold War.

Once World War II ended, the USSR began using information about the treatment of African-Americans in the US against the US in the global arena. President Kennedy’s Secretary of State, Dean Rusk asserted, “Moscow would make the most of its opportunity to develop divisions within the free world and to be the champion of the colored races,”

\(^\text{46}\) See Appendix 1 for image.


and the Soviet Union did.\textsuperscript{49} It argued that American policy had not adequately addressed issues of equality for all Americans, and this problem would be the same for peoples of color throughout the world—especially in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Mary Dudziak best summarized the challenge the United States faced:

\begin{quote}
Such racism was not the nation’s private shame. During the postwar years, other countries paid increasing attention to race discrimination in the United States. Voting rights abuses, lynchings, school segregation, and antimiscegenation laws were discussed at length in newspapers around the world, and the international media continually questioned whether race discrimination made American democracy a hypocrisy.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

In addition to international criticism, the United States faced condemnation from its own citizens, who saw international criticism as a chance to express their grievances in the global arena. Civil rights activists such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and W.E.B. DuBois spoke out against violence and discrimination against African-Americans on international platforms. This was of course even more damaging to the United States image—if African-Americans themselves were confirming international suspicions, the situation would be worse. The government understood that “international criticism of racial discrimination in the United States, in particular, was to be avoided,”\textsuperscript{51} to the extent that they took steps to silence African-Americans and even “succeeded in persuading [Martin

\begin{footnotesize}


\textsuperscript{51} Borstelmann, Location 2396.
\end{footnotesize}
Luther King, Jr.] to cancel his scheduled UN testimony on apartheid in June 1963, to avoid the danger that our domestic racial policies will be made the focus of attention.”

Josephine Baker was another African-American who used her prominence and opportunity to speak out against U.S. domestic racial policies. Baker had moved from the United States to Paris in the early 1900s because, in Paris, she saw more equal opportunity as an African-American performer. However, her dual citizenship still made her aware and critical of the treatment of African-Americans in the United States. U.S. Cold War policymakers viewed her “as a threat because she used her international prominence to call attention to the discriminatory racial practices of the United States, her native land, when she traveled throughout the world.” Furthermore, Baker frequently spoke out about the U.S.’s inherently imperialist ventures in Latin America. In articles Baker herself penned for local Argentine newspapers, she made “constant references to ‘Yankee Imperialism’ and ‘Yankee Capitalism,’” which concerned the State Department. The United States government went to great lengths not only to silence Josephine Baker, but also to ensure that countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East were not privy to the things that she was saying. Her outspoken criticism of racial discrimination and imperialism worked in direct opposition to the efforts the United States had made to manufacture its image abroad.

52 Ibid., 2399.


The State Department faced similar problems in sending non-government employees out to spread this idealized image of the American experience. Ambassador Satch, the Department’s name for Louis Armstrong, was sent abroad to use his music as propaganda for Americanism. The State Department believed that American jazz music was a unique art form and therefore could be used to promote the benefits of life under a democratic government like the United States. However, for “ambassadors” like Louis Armstrong, this job was complicated, as they were merely pawns that the State Department used to show that life was wonderful in the United States, despite the fact that, at home, African-Americans were mistreated and did not have access to the same opportunities as white Americans.55

Due to international criticism, among other factors, American presidents had long realized positive government reactions to the Civil Rights Movement were necessary to quell domestic and international criticism, but they were slow and reluctant to make changes. In fact, in 1947, President Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights argued that civil rights abuses in the United States [needed to be] redressed [based on] “a moral reason—discrimination was morally wrong; an economic reason—discrimination harmed the economy; and an international reason—discrimination damaged U.S. foreign relations...[and] we cannot escape the fact that our civil rights record has been as issue in

world politics.”\textsuperscript{56} Nevertheless, the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson administrations continued to struggle with race as a domestic and foreign policy issue.

The country was entangled in a battle of ideologies and image, and if they wanted to be the champion of democracy, they would need to project an image to the world that did not include the disenfranchisement and murder of African-Americans. This was especially true in the Middle East where the United States was already attempting to create positive relations with Arabs, many of whom viewed the United States as pro-Israel and negligent of human rights. Their ideas were only being confirmed by the Soviet Union in propaganda that emphasized racial discrimination in the United States.

When Governor Faubus of Arkansas attempted to block nine African-American students from entering a white Little Rock high school, Confidential reported:

\begin{quote}
...he handed the Communists the handsomest gift they could have possibly received from any American. Four-fifths of the people of the world are colored. All over the world—in Asia and Europe, in Africa and the Middle East—the communists have invoked the name of Little Rock to tell colored people that the United States is a land of lynching and repression…Thanks to Faubus’ actions and the Red propaganda that plays upon them, no American can travel abroad without being asked by every foreigner about Little Rock.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

The United States, thus, relied heavily on diplomacy and propaganda to influence perceptions in the Middle East.

The Department of State used ambassadors in the target locations, such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran, to distribute propaganda by way of posters, pamphlets, bulletins,


speaker series and even radio broadcasts to tout a manufactured image of Americanism. In a cable from the U.S. Embassy in Iran, Ambassador Henry Grady wrote that they were committed to “promot[ing] understanding of the U.S. concept of human rights, of civil liberties and of government as the servant of the people rather than their master.”

Furthermore, the Department of State established new agencies and programs for the sole purpose of spreading Americanism in the East. In 1953, President Eisenhower established the United States Information Agency (USIA), which “awarded propaganda a more prominent and permanent place in the foreign policy apparatus of the United States Government…and cemented the growing importance of popular persuasion in foreign policy.” From 1953 forward, propaganda strategies blossomed and bloomed under Eisenhower’s administration. In 1955, the agency produced a booklet called My America, which featured biographies of 41 Americans with culturally diverse backgrounds who shaped the nation, in order to demonstrate cultural diversity, political freedom and social mobility. The idea was that these values and ideals could not be achieved in a society where communism was the reigning philosophy.

Along with political ambassadors and propaganda materials, the State Department’s use of Cultural Ambassadors was important in projecting a positive American image abroad. In the mid-1950s, the State Department began sponsoring tours

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58 Grady to U.S. Department of State, (cable) July 6, 1950.


of prominent American jazz musicians, such as Dave Brubeck, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and many others. The tours went everywhere from Sweden and Denmark to Iran and Iraq. They served to advertise jazz as a unique American art form that could only be achieved in a democratic society and demonstrate that African-Americans were treated fairly and had opportunities to advance and better themselves in American society. The State Department wanted these state-sponsored jazz tours to be “in essence a musical enactment of the principles of American democracy.”

Art was an additional weapon of democracy. The State Department sent several artists to various parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East who served as cultural diplomats and ambassadors in the same way that musicians did. Under the advisement of President Kennedy, the USIA sponsored artists’ residencies in Lebanon in 1963, which over the years, expanded to other parts of the world. Artists, like John Ferren, a champion of abstract expressionism in the United States, were supposed to demonstrate that individualism and freedom of expression were the driving force of the United States and ideals like this could not be achieved in any society where democracy was not the guiding principle. Americans believed that they were a nation that other nations would aspire to be and convinced themselves that they could spread their democratic capitalist society to the rest of the world without losing the essence of American exceptionalism,


but this image was challenged abroad by the Soviet Union and its ideological allies, especially as American race relations became more and more visible to the world.\textsuperscript{63}

Racial discrimination and violence was pervasive in American society. However, civil rights activists, especially during the mid-twentieth century, brought these issues to the forefront of international politics and challenged the U.S. government in the global arena. “The epicenters of racial tension lay in the American South…as the expanding civil rights movement encountered increasingly violent white resistance in the United States,” but the government had been largely ignoring it.\textsuperscript{64} This intensifying racial conflict, especially in the 1960s, had “threatened a crucial tenet of Kennedy’s foreign policy: what the State Department called the global U.S. strategy of fostering a cooperative community of free nations across the North-South dividing lines of race and wealth…[which] was integral, not peripheral, to the American policy of containing Soviet and Communist influence in the early 1960s.”\textsuperscript{65}

In the Middle East, the United States had to combat these issues head-on, especially under President Eisenhower. An ambassador assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad wrote to the State Department detailing the tactics they had used to influence Iraqi perceptions of America, democracy and capitalism through the use of films that featured characters from Middle East folklore. In one of the films, the businessman puppet, who evidently represented the benefits of American capitalism, said, “All the

\textsuperscript{63} Belmonte, 116.

\textsuperscript{64} Borstelmann, Location 1908.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., Location 1918-1921.
prophets who came called for equality, including Mohammed…After Mohammed came the intellectuals, amongst whom was Lincoln, and all of them aimed through their struggles at the equality of all peoples in the diversity of their classes and colors. Lincoln was not a Communist, nor was Mohammed. Therefore, whence did this ill-opinion that Communism is the principle of equality come?\textsuperscript{66}

U.S. policymakers took a number of steps to improve domestic race policy and hoped to influence American image abroad. A prime example of this is \textit{Brown v. Board of Education} (1954), which legally desegregated public schools in the United States. \textit{Brown} was a tool used to manipulate foreign perception of the international criticism of segregation and discrimination. Many argue that civil rights legislation was borne out of moral obligation or even exhaustion from dealing with the activists. After all, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion and national origin. It seemed obvious that this act signified a move toward morality and equality in the United States; however, this act, like \textit{Brown v. Board of Education}, was passed for the purposes of tailoring American image abroad. In the time leading up to the passage of this bill, Carl Rowan, the director of the United States Information Agency, wrote to President Lyndon B. Johnson, “All continents hail the imminent passage of the civil rights bill…[and] this was a great moment in history.”\textsuperscript{67} Rowan even told Johnson after his signing of the Act that “Your signature on the Civil Rights Act will set in motion a

\textsuperscript{66} Philip W. Ireland to the Department of State, (dispatch) July 18, 1953, NARA, Record Group 59. \url{http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%20101.pdf} (accessed April 12, 2016).

\textsuperscript{67} Dudziak, \textit{Cold War Civil Rights}, 210.
worldwide USIA campaign explaining its meaning;” the USIA had every intention of capitalizing on this moment because it understood the effects that domestic racial policies had already had on American image and knew that this reversal of said policies would have an equal, if not greater, effect. 68 In the Middle East, where ambassadors hoped “to build a concept of Americans as moral, just people who believe in the individual worth of a man regardless of his origin,” this campaign was helpful in reversing the image of Americans as discriminatory and racist. 69

The Voting Rights Act was signed with the same ideas in mind. Although Johnson had been reluctant to pass the act in 1965, he saw a need to pass one expeditiously after Bloody Sunday. 70 Abroad, the expedition of the act was well received; “in Paris, the Nation thought that Johnson’s call for a voting rights act demonstrated—if this was still needed—that the excesses of certain backward racists do not in any way represent the official or the private sentiments of the Americans.” 71 Whether or not this was true, this statement by the French demonstrated to the United States and its propaganda agencies and programs that the promotion of these historical moments had been working in the U.S.’s favor.

68 Ibid., 211.

69 Grady to U.S. Department of State, July 6, 1950.

70 Ibid., 231.

71 Ibid., 233.
The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, therefore, had a profound influence on foreign perceptions of the United States. The USIA publicized the success abroad to the United States public:

Commentators viewed the [Civil Rights Act] passage as the most important step forward in the American Negro’s struggle for equality since the Emancipation Proclamation; as a victory that will shape the future of the United States; as a turning point in American history; as enhancing the international influence of the United States, reinforcing the moral authority of the United States and its dedication to freedom and social justice.\footnote{72 United States Information Agency, “Foreign Reaction to Senate Passage of Civil Rights Bill,” June 29, 1964 quoted in Dudziak, \textit{Cold War Civil Rights}, 210.}

The acts combined were powerful in combatting the Soviet Union’s most powerful item of propaganda which had been “the alleged second-class citizenship of more than 15 million of [Americans]…[and] the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision [would] go a long way toward dissipating the validity of the Communist contention that Western concepts for democracy [were] hypocritical.”\footnote{73 \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, May 22, 1954, quoted in Dudziak, “Brown as a Cold War Case,” 36.}

The Cold War pushed the United States into a conflict that it had not seen before: one that did not require the military for any direct conflicts with the USSR because it was a war of ideologies, diplomacy and, most significantly, soft power. This soft conflict forced the United States to strengthen its propaganda strategies abroad but also to reevaluate its domestic policies. Domestic policy had a profound effect on how the U.S. was viewed—when its policies ignored, and even fostered, the political and physical mistreatment of African-Americans, the world watched and criticized its supposed democratic values, and when its policies appeared to support and protect African-
Americans, the world watched in awe and praised the government. This, coupled with the fact that the government and its propaganda agencies were aware of this influence, demonstrates that the U.S. altered its domestic policies in order to alter and tailor its image abroad. Redefining Americanism at home made it easy to redefine Americanism abroad.
Chapter 3: A New Focus: Cooperation in the Age of Nixon, Ford and Carter

Following more than 20 years of intense Cold War policy focused on containing communism and spreading democracy, the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations of the late 1960s and 1970s used different strategies in approaching Cold War. These later Cold War administrations favored cooperative collaboration with Communist countries over containment and focused their efforts accordingly. Vietnamization and the ending of the Vietnam War were the primary focus for both the Nixon and Ford administrations, while in the latter half of the 1970s, the Carter administration struggled with a number of issues regarding the Panama Canal, China, the Iran Hostage Crisis and the conflict between Israel and its Arab adversaries. While the Cold War continued, it took a backseat to other concerns and conflicts, and although the United States faced issues in the Middle East, its propaganda efforts in the region weakened. The Soviet Union had also weakened its propaganda efforts while increasing its military and political aid to support Arab nationalist groups who also opposed Western interference in the Middle East. During these administrations, the limited propaganda used by the State Department was focused in Iran, where the United States sought to strengthen its relationship.

Despite Nixon’s strong anticommmunist ideologies, during his administration, U.S. Cold War policies and goals began to shift substantially as Nixon focused more on managing the war in Vietnam than defeating the Soviet Union. His administration sought to ease the tensions with the Soviet Union that had grown in the 1960s. Furthermore, Nixon becomes the first American president whose administration viewed emerging China as a Cold War problem and thus begins pushing for rapprochement with the People’s Republic of China. The Nixon administration ushers in the era of détente.
beginning in 1971, reflecting a relaxation of tensions with the USSR and growing cooperation with China. Although relations between the Soviet Union and China had already begun deteriorating as early as 1960, Nixon hoped these strategies would further pit the two communist world powers against each other and weaken the communist bloc.\textsuperscript{74} Nixon’s administration was dominated by the ideologies of the Nixon Doctrine, which was introduced by President Nixon in 1969 in a press conference in Guam. It laid out the general ideology for foreign policy during the Nixon administration, whereby the United States would withdraw military support from its Asian and Middle Eastern allies and replace it with economic aid.\textsuperscript{75}

In 1972, President Nixon had a series of historic meetings in China, the USSR and other nations as part of greater foreign policy goals to improve the United States’ relationship with countries in the communist East. In February 1972, Nixon and his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, met with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in Beijing, which many scholars argue built “a bridge across 16,000 miles and 22 years of hostility.”\textsuperscript{76} The series of meetings that occurred in Beijing focused on Sino-U.S. rapprochement, with both nations agreeing that they could “build a new world, a world of

\textsuperscript{74} Relations between the People’s Republic of China and the USSR had already begun deteriorating in 1960, long before the Nixon administration. The United States’ involvement was only one factor in the dissolution of their relations. For further reading, see Lorenz M. Lüthi, \textit{The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).


peace, a world of justice, a world of independence for all nations,” despite the Soviet Union’s staunch criticism of the meeting and rapprochement as a whole.77 Just a few months later, Nixon’s historic meeting in the Soviet Union at the Moscow Summit marked a turning point in the Cold War as he attempted to usher in a new era of cooperation between the two world powers. Nixon hoped that cooperating with the Soviet Union would “represent American acceptance of the postwar status quo and serve as the peace treaty that had eluded Stalin and Truman and all their successors,” so he accepted and promoted the idea of détente.78 Brezhnev and the Soviet Union also embraced détente with the United States because “he wanted to lessen the chances of nuclear war and encourage trade with the West, and…he was worried about frontier clashes with China and the burden of defense expenditures.”79 In a speech to Congress just a few days after the Summit, Nixon claimed, “we could feel the quickening pace of change in old international relationship and the people’s genuine desire for friendship with the American people.”80

During his visit to the USSR, Nixon met with Premier Kosygin and General Secretary Brezhnev to discuss relations between the US and the USSR. This summit came only a few years after Brezhnev attempted to justify consolidating communism and the USSR’s power in light of the Prague Spring in 1968, arguing, “The weakening of any

77 Ibid.


79 Ibid., 242.

of the links in the world system of socialism directly affects all the socialist countries, which cannot look indifferently upon this."\(^{81}\) The most important result of the Moscow Summit was cooperation between the United States and the USSR, marked by the signing of the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) and an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty. With SALT I and the ABM Treaty, both sides agreed to limit the number of nuclear missiles and strategic missile defenses in an attempt to stabilize relations. Overall, “the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to conduct their relations according to the principles of ‘sovereignty, equality, non-interference in one another’s international affairs, and mutual advantage.’”\(^{82}\) These treaties and ideas would be revisited by the Ford and Carter administrations, leading to SALT II in 1979.

The major focus of the Nixon administration, however, was the Vietnam War. The war began in 1955 and served as one of the most important Cold War-era proxy wars, in which the United States backed South Vietnam, hoping to prevent a Communist takeover of the region. The United States faced criticism about its participation in Vietnam, and, after heightened involvement during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, President Nixon was forced to respond accordingly to the criticism. Nixon’s administration implemented the policy of Vietnamization, which called for “the complete withdrawal of all U.S. combat ground forces, and their replacement by South

\(^{81}\) Leonid Brezhnev, “Brezhnev Doctrine” (speech, Fifth Congress of the Polish United Workers’ Party, November 13, 1968); The Prague Spring of 1968 was a political uprising in Czechoslovakia, in which Czechoslovakia sought to lessen Moscow’s influence and control over the nation’s affairs.

Vietnamese…on an orderly scheduled timetable.”

Nixon argued that “we can persist in our search for a just peace through a negotiated settlement if possible, or through continued implementation of our plan for Vietnamization,” which aligned with his campaign promise of peace with honor. During the Nixon presidency, Cold War efforts in the Middle East diminished as relations with the USSR and China and Vietnamization took priority.

The U.S.’s efforts to maintain relationships in the greater Middle East began to diminish for a number of reasons. First, President Nixon was interested in developing a closer political, economic and strategic relationship with Iran. Second, many of the Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq were involved in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, which led the U.S. to distance itself and limit its interactions with the involved countries. Furthermore, ideological differences between the West and the Middle East became increasingly important as tension between Arab countries and Israel heightened. In a telegram from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Arthur Lowrie, the ambassador assigned to the embassy, wrote, “Most [Iraqis] as true believers in militant opposition to reaction (the monarchy) and imperialism (Israel, IPC and the U.S.) and their support for liberation and socialism (Baath Iraq). There is little U.S. can do to either influence them or get rid of them.”

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84 Arthur L. Lowrie to Department of State, (telegram) March 27, 1973, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969,1976, Volume XXVII, Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976. https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d206 (accessed April 12, 2016); The IPC was the Iraq Petroleum Company and Baath Iraq was a socialist party that rose to power in Iraq, who supported Arab nationalism, pan-Arabism and Arab socialism.
The United States’ involvement in Vietnam did not go unnoticed, and in some places, like Iran, it actually served as good propaganda. In 1969, the Shah of Iran praised President Nixon, proclaiming “how good it is that America finally has a President who has studied the world for twenty years and understands it…shouldn’t a President like this be given an opportunity regarding Vietnam?” This led the ambassadors at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran to suggest that their weekly flyer include images of the Shah and the President accompanied by the Shah’s remarks quoted on the cover. These remarks, however, were only the beginning of a strong partnership between President Nixon and the Shah of Iran.

In 1972, following his visits to China and the USSR, President Nixon traveled to Iran to meet with Shah Reza Pahlavi. Following years of propagandist and other state department efforts in Iran, US relations with Iran strengthened, and these relations were solidified by this meeting of the two leaders in Tehran. During this meeting, President Nixon and the Shah of Iran signed an arms agreement that allowed the shah to purchase any number of U.S. weapons he wanted (less nuclear weapons), which was “a highly irregular move, and a revolutionary change in both general U.S. arms sales policy and in U.S.-Iran relations.” This was a direct extension of the Nixon Doctrine, which deemed Iran and Saudi Arabia the twin pillars of the regional stability the United States ultimately

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sought. For the United States, the Shah became the guardian of its interests in the Persian Gulf. This strengthened relationship between the Shah of Iran and the United States government proved problematic for State Department ambassadors trying to control Iranian perception and opinion of the United States.

When President Nixon resigned the presidency in 1974, Vice President Gerald Ford assumed the presidency and inherited the foreign policy issues of his predecessor’s administration. Unsurprisingly, President Ford retained most of President Nixon’s cabinet, including Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and therefore, he left in place the strategies of the Nixon Doctrine. However, during his administration, détente with the Soviet Union began to crumble. Following Nixon’s resignation, Brezhnev sought to immediately meet with Gerald Ford to reiterate the USSR’s stance on its relations with the United States. At the Helsinki Conference of 1975, the heads of European nations and President Ford met and signed the Helsinki Accords, also called the Helsinki Final Act, which “recognize[d] the inviolability of existing European borders,” and it required all signatories to “respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief…[and] promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and freedoms all of which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person.” The Soviet Union reluctantly agreed to the human rights provisions with the belief that respect for the sovereignty of nations, which was also included in the Final Act, would protect it from Western interference in its affairs. However, détente dissolved as President Ford faced

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87 Leffler, 249; Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act, Helsinki, August 1, 1975, quoted in Leffler.
severe criticism from his own government and allies in Western Europe for his signature on the Final Act with allegations that he had abandoned Eastern Europe and the principles of democracy, and Brezhnev began to believe that the United States had only been willing to compromise when the USSR was weak, and “the real aim of the United States was to intimidate or blackmail rather than deter.”

Despite his reservations, Brezhnev and the Soviet Union held on to hopes for détente during the second half of the 1970s. Just before the inauguration of President Jimmy Carter in 1977, Brezhnev said firmly, “Détente means first of all the overcoming of the cold war and the transition to normal, stable relations among states. Détente means willingness to resolve differences and disputes not by force. Détente means a certain trust and ability to take into consideration each other’s legitimate interests.” Carter hoped to maintain the policy of détente with the Soviet Union, but, he too faced challenges from his own National Security Council adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who “worried that the Soviet Union’s growing military capabilities might tempt the Kremlin ‘to exploit Third World turbulence or to impose its will in some political contest with the United States.’

It is during the Carter administration that the Middle East becomes important again. The Carter administration focused on bettering American relations with Iran and its image in the Middle East, but ultimately American involvement in the Middle East led to a number of problematic moments, such as the Iran Hostage Crisis.

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88 Ibid., 254.

89 Ibid., 258.

President Carter inherited a strong relationship with Iran, made possible by Presidents Nixon and Ford. President Nixon and the Shah of Iran had established a very visible partnership—the Shah had publicly praised President Nixon, and they signed a deal guaranteeing the Shah of Iran unlimited access to U.S. arms, with the exception of nuclear weaponry. President Ford’s relationship with the Shah, while less visible, was strengthened by an Iranian plan “to build a massive nuclear energy industry…that would have given Tehran control of large quantities of plutonium and enriched uranium.” So it was no surprise that when President Carter became the presidency he inherited this fortified relationship. Although their relationship was complicated by President Carter’s dedication to global human rights reform, they praised each other, and the United States government remained dedicated to supporting him.

When President Carter became president, he promised the public that he would make human rights reform an integral factor of his administration, making it “a central, if not the central, theme of his foreign policy.” In his inaugural address, he said “The passion for freedom is on the rise…Because we are free, we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere.” His dedication to human rights, however, fell victim to the need for strengthened ties with Iran, and despite knowing about the Shah’s numerous

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92 Leffler, 263.

human rights violations, which included having outlawed political factions and ruled tyrannically, President Carter endorsed and even promoted him.

The friendly relationship between the two would not be received well by the Iranian public, despite propagandist efforts to assure Carter’s dedication to human rights reform. This is reflected in a cable from William H. Sullivan to the Department of State, in which he outlines Iranian responses to President Carter’s visit to Iran in December 1977 and to the propaganda surrounding his visit. He entitles the cable “Attack on US-Supported Publishing House” and writes, “December 22 Persian and English press reported attacks by ‘young men calling themselves students’ on Franklin Publishing Co. Printing Facility, offset press, which is joint US-Iranian Venture. Press reports said group damaged some equipment and shouted provocative slogans.”

Several months later, the United States Department of State received an airgram from Victor L. Tomseth, an ambassador assigned to the United States Embassy in Iran, in which he notes that propaganda supporting the Shah of Iran had proved ineffective and had actually fostered an anti-shah and anti-American sentiment among the public as many felt betrayed by President Carter, whom they believed to be a champion of human rights. He writes, “There was unanimity that the President’s recent declarations of support for the Shah and his government have not had a salutary effect, either in terms of encouraging ultimate political stability or in terms of the safety of American citizens resident in Iran…and

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public pronouncements of support for [the Shah] on our part in the face of this sentiment probably do little to enhance his ability to cope with it.”

As tensions heightened, the United States revised its propagandist efforts in Iran. Instead of producing more propaganda, ambassadors suggested that lessening the amount of propaganda overall would prove more beneficial. The Iran Hostage Crisis reflected tension that had been building in Iran for years while the United States promoted the Shah and itself in its propaganda. The U.S.’s lack of focused efforts on the Middle East due to more pressing goals such as détente, cooperation with the Soviet Union and Vietnamization, contributed to the failure of the propaganda in Iran during the Carter administration.

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Conclusion

In 1952, Jean Anouilh wrote, “Propaganda is a soft weapon; hold it in your hands too long, and it will move about like a snake, and strike the other way.” The Cold War positioned the United States and the Soviet Union against each other in an ideological conflict that shaped international relations for the better part of the twentieth century. They chose soft weapons, such as propaganda, for the better part of forty years, and the two world powers fought consistently for ideological supremacy in the world. The United States championed democracy and capitalism while the Soviet Union subscribed to communism and socialism. Their interests around the world in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia are often the focus of conversation about the Cold War, the proxy wars and the affected nations, however, both powers had interests in the Middle East, and each sought to solidify their power in the region before the other could get a chance. Each used propaganda as a way to wage war against each other in the Middle East. Between 1947 and 1979, the US made strong efforts to produce propaganda that placed the United States and its allies in a positive light despite the Soviet Union’s attempts to lay the groundwork for communism in Middle East. The US used posters, flyers, movies and radio programs to spread the ideas of Americanism, democracy, liberty, capitalism and anticommunism throughout the Middle East, and they focused their efforts in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. They targeted the nations where oil was rich and where they could wield the most influence.

Evident in its propaganda efforts, the United States sought to have cultural hegemony over the Middle East by painting communism as the enemy. Between 1947 and 1977, the United States laid solid groundwork for lasting relations between itself and Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran, with its strongest efforts being in Iran by the time Nixon became president. Despite Soviet presence and a number of communist sympathizers, the US managed to fight off any stronghold the Soviets wished to gain, and they successfully gained allies in Iran and Saudi Arabia through diplomacy and large propaganda campaigns.

By the last quarter of the century, the United States lost its strongest source of influence in the Middle East in Iran because of misguided attempts to promote the Shah of Iran. Their support and publicized promotion of the tyrannical leader would lead the US to lose its support in Iran and lead to the biggest moment in US-Iranian relations, the Iran Hostage Crisis. This was primarily due to the ambassadors’ misunderstandings of how the United States was actually being perceived by Iranians at the time. Their misunderstandings led them to make misinformed decisions about the propaganda program and ultimately promote ideas and people that the Iranian public rejected. This moment in history would mark the dissolution of relations between the two nations and the beginning of years of conflict between the US and the entire region. The crisis would shape how the United States interacted with Iran and the rest of the Middle East in the years following. The Iran Hostage Crisis would mark a shift in American foreign policy focus in the Middle East from Cold War to a newly devised War on Terror. Because of the collapse of the effectiveness of American propaganda in the Middle East, the relations between the United States and the Middle East would be entirely reshaped and redefined.
Appendix 1
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