The United States Information Agency and the "New Look": France and India, 1953-1961

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THE UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY AND THE “NEW LOOK”:
FRANCE AND INDIA, 1953-1961

by

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B.A. December 2002, Old Dominion University

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ABSTRACT

THE UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY AND THE “NEW LOOK”: FRANCE AND INDIA, 1953-1961

Leanne Alicia Sutton
Old Dominion University, 2007
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This study examines the creation of the United States Information Agency (USIA) under the guidance of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and looks at the place of the Agency in the “New Look.” The US Information Agency was an important “soft” tool in the American struggle with the Soviet Union for preponderant influence around the world and played a part in the American effort to maintain the balance between the Communist and Free worlds. This study takes a deeper look at the work of the Agency in two case studies, which examine the work of the USIA in France, a reluctant US ally, and India, a leading country in the Non-Aligned movement. These countries are of particular interest to this study because they both viewed the United States and the Soviet Union as moral equivalents and wished to remain independent from the Cold War conflict. Limited funding placed constraints on the Agency’s ability to accomplish its goals in these countries. Too often, the American message failed to consider these countries’ point of view and the strong anti-Communist message of the US Information program contrasted sharply with the Soviet message of peace. The information program was most successful when it relied upon messages that were sensitive to these countries’ deeply held beliefs and when it utilized methods that were effective in reaching a large portion of the population.
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In recent years, historians have placed new emphasis on the cultural aspects of the Cold War, recognizing that "soft" cultural weapons were at least as important as more traditional "hard" weapons in the superpower contest for preponderant influence around the world. By contrast, American policymakers understood the importance of cultural weapons as early as the 1950's; this is most clearly evidenced in the improved status of the information program within the United States government during this time.

The administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower, cognizant of the psychological dimension of the Cold War, believed that American national security would be more easily maintained against the perceived communist threat if the bonds between the United States and its allies were promoted abroad. In addition, the administration wanted to encourage the uncommitted nations of the world to recognize the beliefs and aspirations they shared with the United States. A strong program promoting these commonalities would serve to augment the standard foreign policy weapons of military and economic aid. In Eisenhower's "New Look" therefore, information and propaganda activities would be used to win support for US policies abroad. The administration perceived such activities as vital to the maintenance of the United States' newfound position of world leadership. The Soviet Union's extensive propaganda program posed a threat to US power and influence, and if Communism was to be contained the United States would have to match Soviet efforts in the realm of information and propaganda.
Under the direction of President Eisenhower, the ideas behind the "New Look" led to the creation and use of the United States Information Agency (USIA) as a means to reinforce world support for US policies and to combat the spread of Communist influence abroad. This study examines the place of the USIA in the New Look, the development of the USIA as a tool of foreign policy, and the Agency's efforts to advance the administration's foreign policy directives. Two case studies of the USIA's operations, one in the Allied country of France and the other in the Non-Aligned country of India, will serve to examine the local conditions and constraints under which the information program operated. This study will also demonstrate that despite the President's personal support, the challenges the Agency faced abroad were further complicated by congressional budget cuts at home. All of these factors contributed to both the strengths and the weaknesses of the US information program as it attempted to strengthen the American position in world affairs vis-à-vis that of the Soviet Union.

In his influential 1941 article in which he called for the United States to accept and actively pursue a position of world leadership, Time editor Henry Luce dubbed the 20th century the "American Century." Eisenhower biographer Blanch Wiesen Cook called the Eisenhower era "the height of the American Century," noting the expansion of US influences abroad.¹ She viewed Eisenhower's presidency as a "global mission," a campaign promoting free trade and economic development abroad, the extension of democracy and protection of peace, and the liberation of Eastern Europe from its Soviet "masters." To Eisenhower, it was fundamentally important to American interests to promote the continued military and economic strength of its West European allies.

through NATO and other collective security measures. The president hoped to promote free trade and economic integration in the region while working to prevent the spread of Communist influence in Western Europe. This area was of particular importance to the formal general, a loyalty stemming from his experience as the leader of the Allied forces in World War II and his subsequent NATO command. Eisenhower also endeavored to gain friends among the newly independent “Third World” nations of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. These areas were of interest to the United States because of their perceived susceptibility to the Communist threat and because of their wealth of raw material sources.²

In their study of Eisenhower’s strategy in the Cold War, Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman identify the president’s “Great Equation” as the guide for US foreign policy. This equation called for the use of military, economic, political and psychological force to ensure the security of the Free World.³ In his First Inaugural Address, Eisenhower unveiled a national security policy that accepted the idea that a precarious balance existed between the Capitalist and Communist worlds. John Lewis Gaddis pointed to this speech as a statement of Eisenhower’s belief that for this balance to be maintained, “no further victories for communism anywhere could be tolerated.”⁴ This fear that the enemy would be able to achieve world dominance is identified by Philip M. Taylor as the inability of either side to understand the other “except as a reflection of


itself." American and Soviet leaders believed they were caught in an ideological struggle for world leadership. Historian Kenneth Osgood, who saw the immediate postwar period as "a phase in the Cold War where psychological, ideological, and cultural factors predominated," echoed this belief. He suggested that as the Cold War set in, it became clear that the main battles between the United States and the Soviet Union would be fought not with military means, but rather would be a "contest for hearts and minds."

In his examination of Eisenhower's national security policy, Saki Dockrill noted that the president understood the Soviet threat to be more than a military or nuclear threat. Instead, "the Eisenhower administration saw the Communist threat as a combination both of Soviet military power and of a gradual Soviet political, psychological, and economic encroachment into the West." The outcome could depend on which player put more emphasis on winning over world opinion. Similarly, USIA veteran Fitzhugh Green argued that ideological competition, particularly for the loyalty of the third world, was part of the superpower contest for preponderant world influence.

In his first State of the Union address in February of 1953, Eisenhower discussed the country's information program and affirmed his belief that for national security policy to be effective, "careful formulation of policies must be followed by clear understanding.

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of them by all peoples. A related need, therefore, is to make more effective all activities of the Government related to international information...A unified and dynamic effort in this whole field is essential to the security of the United States and of the other peoples in the community of free nations. There is but one sure way to avoid total war – and that is to win the cold war.”

The activities that Eisenhower officially called “information” can be described in a variety of ways. Osgood pointed to ‘psychological warfare,’ ‘propaganda,’ and ‘psychological strategy,’ as terms used privately by government officials to refer to what they publicly called “information.” An understanding that the dissemination of information is a part of all of these activities is a good basic explanation of the aforementioned terms; however, Osgood does not make the necessary distinction between psychological warfare and propaganda. In his book Propaganda and Psychological Warfare, Terrence Qualter defined propaganda as “the deliberate attempt to form, control, or alter the attitudes of other groups by the use of the instruments of communication, with the intention that in any given situation the reaction of those so influenced will be that desired by the propagandist.” According to this definition, the use of media tools abroad such as print, film, television, radio, and even libraries and information centers, for the purpose of influencing foreign attitudes and reactions to US foreign policy, is propaganda. Qualter insightfully noted that propaganda must be

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11 Osgood, Total Cold War, 8.

adapted to its intended audience if it is to be effective.\textsuperscript{13} Robert T. Holt and Robert W. van de Velde, both former military men, defined propaganda as "the attempt to influence behavior in the direction of some relatively specific and explicit goal by affecting through the use of mass media, the manner in which a mass audience perceives and ascribes meaning to the material world."\textsuperscript{14} Both definitions acknowledge that it is the goal of propaganda to affect the perceptions of a specific audience for a specific purpose in order to accomplish the goals of the propagandist.

The ultimate intention of propaganda is to persuade. Thomas Sorensen, author of \textit{The Word War} and a longtime USIA official and alumnus of the Eisenhower administration, also discussed the purpose of propaganda, calling it "the selective but credible dissemination of truthful ideas and information for the purpose of persuading other people to think and act in ways that will further American purposes."\textsuperscript{15} Sorensen’s Agency expertise makes his definition the logical choice to accept as the definition closest to the official US Information Agency understanding of propaganda.

One of the most important characteristics of the United States propaganda program was a commitment to the maintenance of truthful standards. Osgood noted that United States propaganda did not use deception or half-truths to influence others; such techniques could potentially backfire on the official US government propaganda program. Rather, US propaganda emphasized facts but chose the words and facts they presented carefully, so as to gain the most benefit for the Information Agency’s efforts

\textsuperscript{13}Qualter, \textit{Propaganda}, 64.


while maintaining an image of objectivity. Sorensen explained USIA techniques by saying “we did not lie, or distort the news, or subvert the media, but neither were we disinterested. We accomplished no miracles but had we not been propagandists we would have accomplished nothing.”

Osgood explained that the US Information Agency engaged in two types of propaganda: “white” and “grey.” As the official voice of the United States government, the Agency relied upon open techniques to persuade its audience, using overt or “white” propaganda. This type of propaganda was clearly marked as a product of the USIA. Its creation and dissemination was fully attributed to the Agency and to the United States government. The Agency did not limit its output to official materials but also utilized “grey” propaganda. This type of propaganda was not labeled as USIA material in order to reach those who might not have looked at official US propaganda. Grey propaganda was attributable to the United States, meaning that the US government could safely admit responsibility for this type of material if necessary and still maintain a reputation of honesty. For example, USIS engaged in this type of propaganda “by providing well documented background material to respected local writers whose articles then appear in various publications under their own names with no attribution to USIS.” Sorensen discussed the reasoning behind the Agency’s use of this type of propaganda, saying “not

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16 Osgood, _Total Cold War_, 255; Rubin, _Objectives_, 119.

17 Sorensen, _Word War_, x.

18 Osgood, _Total Cold War_, 93.

all Agency materials carry the USIA label – that is, are attributed to USIA when they reach their audience and it is not desirable that they should. Such a label is bound to be a notice to the reader to ‘watch out, this is something the Americans want me to believe’.

Propaganda is just one component of psychological warfare. Qualter described psychological warfare (psych-war) as “propaganda tied in and coordinated with military, political and economic strategy and policy.” Thus psych-war occurs when propaganda is used in conjunction with traditional foreign policy tools that employ economic, military, and diplomatic means. In his explanation of psychological warfare, Osgood noted that psych-war was practiced so as to exploit “the power of the media in order to mobilize mass support for desired policies.”

According to Holt and van de Velde, for US psych-war to be successful, the organization in charge of propaganda activities needed to be of equal prestige with agencies using the other major instruments of statecraft. The full coordination of information programs and economic, military, and diplomatic initiatives was necessary for the government to fully exploit all of these tools of foreign policy. Thus if psychological warfare was an essential element of national security policy, the use of propaganda and information by the government was a necessary and important component of that foreign policy, like other traditional foreign policy tools.

While the United States government had always used propaganda and information techniques in some capacity, it was not until after World War II that an official peacetime

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20Sorensen, _Word War_, 64.
21Qualter, _Propaganda_, 103.
22Osgood, _Total Cold War_, 16.
23Holt and van de Velde, _Strategic Psychological Operations_, 75-76.
government information program was created. In August of 1945, President Harry Truman abolished the wartime Office of War Information (OWI), established a transitional information program in the form of the Interim International Information Service within the Department of State, and ordered that a new and continuing information program be developed. The new program came into existence on January 1, 1946, as the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs (OIC). The following year, funding cuts prompted the reorganization of the information program into the Office of International Information and Educational Exchange (OIE). In January of 1948, Congress passed the US Information and Educational Exchange Act, better known as the Smith-Mundt Act, which provided the basic charter for a permanent overseas information program. A year later the State department again reorganized the information program, this time into the International Information and Educational Exchange Program (USIE). The metamorphosis of the information program continued through the last year of the Truman administration. In early 1952, the administration created the International Information Administration within the Department of State, as part of a continuing effort to “maintain and further strengthen integration of the United States international information and educational exchange programs with the conduct of foreign relations generally.”

In June of 1953, under the guidance of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the new overseas information program settled into the form it would maintain throughout the Cold

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War, that of the United States Information Agency. The USIA received policy guidance from the State Department, but its status was that of a fully independent agency within the executive branch in control of its own information policies. Its mission was not just to disseminate information about America in hopes of creating favorable world opinion, but also to influence foreign public opinion leaders in an effort to meet specific objectives. If the elites were persuaded of the benefit of cooperation with the United States, foreign policy objectives would be more easily met.\(^{27}\)

The information program was important not only because of its use in persuading others to support US policy, but also for its role in the superpower contest for world influence. United States national security policy acknowledged Soviet use of political warfare “to exploit differences among members of the free world, neutralist attitudes, and anti-colonial and nationalist sentiments in underdeveloped areas.” To meet this challenge, “the US should take feasible political, economic, propaganda and covert measures to exploit problems for the USSR.”\(^{28}\) Eisenhower acknowledged the problem of Communist propaganda, saying “the Communist propaganda machine tirelessly tells all the world that our free enterprise system inevitably must collapse.” He charged the US Information Agency with countering these attempts to prevent the success of US policies and objectives as it worked to “combat propaganda with truth.”\(^{29}\) Abbott Washburn, the deputy director of USIA from 1953-1961, spoke to the growing importance of the information program in countering the communist threat: “International


\(^{28}\) NSC 162/2, FRUS, 1952-1954. 2(1):581, 595.

communism has in recent years posed the greatest challenge to the principles for which this country stands...its emphasis has tended to shift more and more into the psychological realm as outward tensions have relaxed. It is for this reason that we here are convinced that USIA’s role has taken on heightened significance and urgency.”

Scholars have been divided about the primacy of the USIA within the Eisenhower administration. Cultural and intellectual historian Richard Pells indicated that that US Information Agency was treated with “indifference” by both the president and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles during the Eisenhower years. To him, “neither Eisenhower nor Dulles regarded USIA as a pivotal agency in the conduct of foreign policy.”

Thomas Sorensen, a USIA official under Eisenhower, supported these ideas, noting that the president considered the Information Agency to be a secondary agency “of peripheral values.” Sorensen claimed that Eisenhower showed no interest in its daily functions, preferring to deal with the USIA through Dulles, who was even less interested in taking foreign awareness and public opinion of the United States into his foreign policy considerations.

Robert T. Holt also identified the US Information Agency as secondary, particularly because the USIA Director did not have significant access to the president, but only a monthly meeting at the White House.

Yet Eisenhower created the United States Information Agency as part of an effort to improve the effectiveness of the US foreign policy apparatus. Although the


32Sorensen, Word War, 81.

Information Agency was a secondary agency within the Eisenhower administration, its work was of utmost importance to the United States as part of an effort to maintain effective leadership of the free world while at the same time combating the spread of Communist influence in the world. In late October of 1953, the president approved NSC 162/2, which established Eisenhower’s overall national security policy and New Look strategy. This document divided the world into three areas: (1) the “Coalition,” which included the states allied with the United States, (2) the “Uncommitted” areas of the world, the states the United States hoped to bring into alliance, and (3) the “Soviet Bloc,” the states already lost to Communist imperialism. The USIA concentrated its efforts on those areas that were both accessible to the US and where the US also had a good deal of interest in influencing public opinion abroad in hopes that foreign audiences would favor the United States and its policies.

The USIA may not have been in the first tier within the executive branch; however, its work was an important part of the Eisenhower administration’s efforts to maintain the upper hand over the Soviets in the Cold War. The competition between the superpowers was not limited to military and economic efforts, but extended into the realm of public diplomacy; under Eisenhower, information policy became a greater part of the United States efforts to maintain its alliances, woo the uncommitted nations of the world, and combat the spread of Soviet Communist influence throughout the Free World. The next chapter provides a general examination of the status of the United States Information Agency within the New Look, and presents an overview of the Agency’s mission and objectives and its operations abroad. The case studies on France and India

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that follow look at the US information program’s efforts to promote the American position as leader of the Free World in both allied and uncommitted countries. An examination of USIA programs in France, the oldest but often the most unwilling of America’s allies, provides a compelling picture of the US struggle to maintain its position of influence abroad. Finally, a study of Agency efforts in India presents an excellent example of the challenges faced by US information practitioners in uncommitted countries. Together these snapshots of US information efforts abroad illustrate the successes, challenges, and failures faced by the US Information Agency in the period under review.
CHAPTER II
THE "NEW LOOK" AND THE UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

National Security policy under Dwight D. Eisenhower called for the United States to spread its ideas and expand its influence throughout the world. At the same time, the US also worked to lessen the relative influence of the Soviet Union. The United States information program administered by Eisenhower and designed to protect US interests abroad, represented an effort unparalleled in the history of official US Government information and propaganda programs. Eisenhower's commitment to the use of psychological warfare is evidenced in his attention to the subject from the very start of his presidency. One of his first actions upon assuming the presidency was to order that foreign information programs be scrutinized in great detail, in an effort to improve upon what he had inherited from President Truman. Eisenhower announced that he had appointed a committee to analyze the information program and make recommendations for its improvement. One of a handful of government committees investigating US information programs abroad, the President's Committee on International Information Activities examined the foreign information program of the United States with the goal to improve the program's effectiveness as a tool of foreign policy. This committee came to be known as the Jackson Committee and its recommendations heavily influenced the creation of the US Information Agency.

The Jackson Committee evaluated previous incarnations of the United States information program and noted that Truman's "Campaign of Truth," had been initiated in

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1Cook, Declassified Eisenhower, xix.
1950 "in an effort to counter hostile Soviet propaganda."\(^2\) Although the information program under Truman aimed to maintain standards of honesty and credibility, its strident anti-Communist approach often sounded more like pushy salesmanship than an unbiased information program. The "Campaign of Truth" has been described by at least one historian as "too shrill, too evangelical, too single-minded in warning foreigners about the evils of Communism and the menace of the Soviet Union."\(^3\) The Jackson Committee determined that information programs had suffered during the previous administration because they were too aggressively anti-communist, overly propagandistic in tone, and lacked effective coordination. As a result, "anti-communist propaganda may antagonize more foreigners than it convinces." Instead, the Committee suggested that "objectivity should be paramount" and US government information programs should "avoid a propagandistic tone." To be effective, propaganda "must be dependable, convincing, and truthful."\(^4\)

The Jackson Committee based its recommendations on its assumptions about Soviet policy: "the purpose of the Soviet rulers is world domination" and "Soviet rulers are employing and almost certainly intend to rely heavily on political warfare techniques in carrying out their drive [for world domination]." The Committee was certain that "the Kremlin will intensify its efforts to isolate the United States and to promote dissension within and between members of the free coalition and also attempt to exploit the


\(^3\)Pells, *Not Like Us*, 65, 83.

weaknesses and gain control of other non-communist countries.” This Communist drive for world domination would continue indefinitely and US policy had to be based on the acceptance of this danger.

The Jackson Committee report posited that all government actions, whether diplomatic, economic, or military, have a psychological element. Consequently, the goal of the American foreign information program should be to support those actions, using propaganda and information techniques to the advantage of the United States in order to reduce the spread of Soviet-Communist power and influence. The report advised that “propaganda is most effective when used as an auxiliary to create a climate of opinion in which national policy objectives can be most readily accomplished. It must perform the function of informing foreign peoples of the nature of American objectives and of seeking to arouse in them an understanding and a sympathy for the kind of world order in which the United States and other free nations seek to achieve.”

The primary recommendation of the Jackson Committee report was that the US information program should be detached from the State Department and an independent agency should be created under the NSC to assume responsibility for all official government information programs. As USIA Director Theodore Streibert recalled, “based on this report primarily it was then decided that this was an important enough activity to warrant setting it up separately as a separate agency under the President’s aegis

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and giving it this importance and this opportunity to function on its own. Although the Jackson Committee Report was not released until June 30th, President Eisenhower had already approved Reorganization Plan no. 8 on June 1st, which was based upon the recommendation of the Jackson Committee and would take effect August 1st 1953. This plan authorized the reorganization of the official US information programs into one independent agency, the United States Information Agency.

When Eisenhower re-organized the information program, USIA was placed under the guidance of the National Security Council (NSC), the foremost government committee for national security and foreign policy. President Eisenhower directed that USIA should “report to and receive instructions from me through the National Security Council or as I may otherwise direct.” Speaking to Congress on the reorganization, Eisenhower explained that meeting the challenge of world leadership required the United States to “achieve the most efficient and cohesive possible organization for the conduct of our foreign affairs.” In order to “correct deficiencies” inherited from the previous administration, a new, separate information agency must be created to “provide real unity and greater efficiency” for the international information program. In order to lead the free world effectively, the United States had a responsibility to “keep official United States positions before the governments and peoples of other countries.”

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8 The Reminiscences of Theodore Streibert (10 December 1970), on page 34, in the Columbia University Oral History Research Office Collection [hereafter CUOHROC].


Eisenhower’s partial reorganization of the executive branch in 1953 was intended to integrate psychological strategy more completely into the foreign policy process. As the blueprint for the New Look states: “United States policies must be designed to retain the cooperation of our allies, to seek to win the friendship and cooperation of the presently uncommitted areas of the world, and thereby to strengthen the cohesion of the free world.” By 1955, the US information program, recognized as an essential part of national security policy, was intended “to deter Communist aggression, maintaining and developing in the free world the mutuality of interest and common purpose, and the necessary will, strength and stability, to face the Soviet-Communist threat and to provide constructive and attractive alternatives to Communism, which sustain the hope and confidence of free peoples.” This strategy of psychological warfare was “the best hope of peaceful resolution of Soviet bloc-free world conflict.”

Having seen firsthand the benefits of psychological warfare in the Second World War, Eisenhower understood that in a world where military conflict was not a realistic solution to ending global competition, it was important to build up the psychological considerations of US foreign policy. In July of 1953, upon nominating Theodore Streibert to be the US Information Agency’s first Director, Eisenhower stated, “it is not enough for us to have sound policies dedicated to the goals of peace, freedom and progress. These policies must be made known to and understood by all peoples.

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throughout the world. That is the responsibility of the new United States Information Agency.”"

Speaking to the staff of the newly created US Information Agency later the same year, President Eisenhower described the development of his belief in the importance of information activities abroad. In his experience as general, he had found that often even well educated people knew little about the United States and its policies. “This conviction is a very old one with me… it was more than 11 years ago that I went across the Atlantic to assume heavy duties in connection with World War II. From that time on I have often been abroad and spent a great deal of time there. It has been almost frustrating to realize how little people in so many areas – and many of them classed as normally well-educated people – knew about the United States. And this had very grave consequences from time to time.” As a result, he explained, “I became one of those who believed that this Government policies could not conduct satisfactory foreign relationships unless it did something very positive in the way of letting the world know: (a) what is deep in the American heart; (b) what is the general psychological reaction of Americans to a given set of human problems; and (c) what are the qualities or the motives that characterize the things – inspire the things, America is trying to do in the world.”

He assured the staff of his support for their work, saying, “what you are here for is so important, what you are going to do and what you are doing is of such significance not only to us but to the world, to peace, that the last word I should like to say is this – my

16Eisenhower, Public Papers, 1953: 527.

17Eisenhower, Public Papers, 1953: 753; see also Osgood, Total Cold War, 47-49.
pledge of support." Eisenhower's belief in the importance of the information program to US efforts abroad was well known to USIA officials. As Theodore Streibert explained, "the President took a great interest in" propaganda and was "certainly receptive to it, highly so, and understood it thoroughly." Abbott Washburn also remembered the president's opinion about government information activities, and recalled how "the president had been impressed by the effect that [psychological activities and propaganda] operations had had on undermining the morale of the enemy in World War II, and thus shortening the war and saving lives."  

The president considered "soft" information activities to be as important in the cold war conflict as more traditional "hard" weapons; this was reflected in the independent status he gave to the information agency within his administration. Former USIA director Arthur Larson, discussing Eisenhower's views on the value of the information program, maintained that "Eisenhower's conviction of the Agency's importance is best reflected in his insistence that it must be a separate agency." Henry Loomis, whose long tenure in the USIA included positions such as head of USIA research operations and director of the Voice of America, suggested that Eisenhower felt the information program should act as an independent agency because while the State Department made policy, "it couldn't run anything." That being the case, the government

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19 The Reminiscences of Theodore Streibert (10 December 1970), on page 5, CUOHROC.

20 The Reminiscences of Abbott Washburn (20 April 1967), on page 42, CUOHROC.

information program would be more efficient and more effective if it were separated from the State Department.  

In his firsthand account of public diplomacy in the 1950's, longtime USIA official Wilson P. Dizard noted that the “establishment of the United States Information Agency in 1953 gave new status to information and psychological factors in the formation of our strategic policies” in part because of the Agency’s new place within the framework of the NSC. The Director of USIA was invited to meet one on one with the President at least once a month. Abbot Washburn, Assistant Director of USIA throughout Eisenhower’s time in office, remembered “the Agency reported directly to the President, who took a keen interest in its operations. He wanted to see us on a regular basis, whether or not we had particular problems to discuss with him. Often Ted [Streibert, first Director of USIA] would take other agency officials over to the White House for these meetings.”

How much of a role the USIA director took in NSC discussion is open to question. It is difficult make a definite conclusion about the director’s level of participation in such meetings. According to at least one source, although the director was sometimes invited to attend National Security Council meetings, he was not an active participant, speaking only when answering questions. According to Wilson Dizard, who worked as a USIA official in Southeast Asia during the Eisenhower years, “key officials in the Eisenhower administration,” did not see the usefulness of the information program,

23Henry Loomis, quoted in Tuch and Schmidt, ed., Ike and USIA, 50.

24Abbott Washburn, quoted in Tuch and Schmidt, ed., Ike and USIA, 11.

which affected the significance of USIA. He called the Agency’s influence “at best sporadic” and commented on the lack of a significant role for the information agency within the NSC structure.26 However, USIA Director Theodore Streibert, describing his participation in NSC meetings said “I sat in on all sessions of the National Security Council. I thought it was a good idea that I should be in on discussion on the formulation of policies and speak up if there were adverse public affairs aspects to what was being considered.”27 As Dizard said, this was the first time the information program had officially participated in the development of foreign policy. It was also, according to Dizard, “recognition of the growing importance of popular persuasion in foreign policy.”28

Although USIA had become an independent agency within the executive branch, it was still dependent upon the Department of State for foreign policy guidance. The US Information Agency’s First Report to Congress reported that “close and effective relations with the Department of State were established immediately upon creation of the new Agency, maintained on a daily contact basis,” but other accounts suggest that USIA, like its predecessors, struggled to gain the respect and cooperation of the State Department.29 An early study of the objectives of the information program listed a variety of barriers to this cooperation: “lack of advance planning, failure to articulate


28Dizard, Strategy of Truth, 43.

definite policy on crucial issues, reluctance to release policy statements, [and guidance that was] unclear, unrealistic, and prolix."\[^{30}\] Abbott Washburn noted that one of the Agency's early problems was that it did not have enough policy information. When he first came to USIA in 1953 as deputy director, he asked his secretary for NSC documents, but was told that they did not have any NSC documents in USIA, which impeded his ability to support US foreign policy. This problem was addressed within a year, when USIA was provided with regular access to NSC documents.\[^{31}\]

It could hardly be considered coincidental that the information program's increased access to NSC policy documents followed shortly after Eisenhower's government reorganization efforts and the resulting higher status of USIA within the administration as an independent agency. In addition to increasing the stature of the information program within the federal government under the guidance of President Eisenhower, the presence of the Agency director in national security meetings also worked to improve the effectiveness of USIA material in terms of support for national security policy. The NSC reported in early 1955 that the Agency Director's "attendance at NSC Meetings resulting in greater familiarity with highest national security policy, and the reasoning behind it, has proved of great value to the Agency in attempting to bring its varied operations more squarely into line behind the national purposes they are designed to support."\[^{32}\] A small step had been taken in addressing coordination problems. Full knowledge of national security policy was essential for information strategy to be


\[^{31}\]Abbott Washburn, quoted in Tuch and Schmidt, ed., Ike and USIA, 45.

effective. Further evidence of the improved status of the information program within the Eisenhower administration is given in the testimony of the US Information Agency’s first Director, Theodore Streibert. Years later, when asked if the Eisenhower administration had a lasting effect on the US information program, Streibert replied that “Eisenhower’s backing of it [the information program], his use of it, has really established it as a more or less permanent arm of the government needed to maintain the position of the United States in the world.”

“The Mission of the United States Information Agency,” directed the USIA to show other countries of the world that United States policies and objectives were committed to the expansion of “freedom, progress and peace.” This mission would be carried out “(a) By explaining and interpreting to foreign peoples the objectives and policies of the United States Government, (b) By depicting imaginatively the correlation between United States policies and the legitimate aspirations of other peoples of the world, (c) By unmasking and countering hostile attempts to distort or to frustrate the objectives and policies of the United States, and (d) By delineating those important aspects of the life and culture of the people of the United States which facilitate understanding of the policies and objectives of the Government of the United States.”

It was essential for the Agency to support US foreign policy, to promote access to information abroad, and to persuade others that American values and beliefs were like their own. In doing so, the Agency was to be truthful and honest, and to maintain a

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33 The Reminiscences of Theodore Streibert (10 December 1970), on page 35, CUOHROC.

positive focus while admitting and acknowledging American flaws.\textsuperscript{35} The Agency should not be overbearing or condescending in its approach, but should fulfill its objectives "so that others will understand the honesty of our purposes, the integrity of our position, and will in the long run, in this cold war, come to believe more and more in this form of government."\textsuperscript{36}

This fit together with a national security strategy which said that the United States must "maintain and develop in the free world the mutuality of interest and common purpose, the confidence in the United States, and the will, strength and stability necessary to face the Soviet-Communist threat and to provide constructive and attractive alternatives to Communism, which sustain the hope and confidence of the free peoples."\textsuperscript{37} The information effort encouraged support for American hopes of "a peaceful world community of free and independent states with governments chosen by their people." A strong, democratic United States would lead the world to the achievement of this goal.\textsuperscript{38} The ultimate test of Agency programs came down to one simple question: "does it help support and explain our foreign policy in terms of other’s legitimate aspirations?"\textsuperscript{39}

Although the level of anti-Communist sentiment in Agency output varied over the course of the Cold War, it was a constant part of the attempt to counter the enormous amount of Soviet propaganda in distribution.\textsuperscript{40} One of the USIA’s long-term objectives

\textsuperscript{35}Rubin, \textit{Objectives of the US Information Agency}, 27.


\textsuperscript{38}Rubin, \textit{Objectives of the US Information Agency}, 220.


\textsuperscript{40}Rubin, \textit{Objectives of the US Information Agency}, 22, 220.
was to “expose international communism in its true light, as Red colonialism.” 41 The Agency worked to accomplish its mission by “countering communist lies and distortions and spreading forcefully and factually the truth about the policies and aims of the United States.” 42 It not only worked to promote its government in a positive light, but also to defend against negative ideas about America in an effort to maintain the United States position of world leadership. 43 To prevent the spread of anti-Americanism, Agency posts were directed to present “to foreign audiences the positive nature of US policies and actions, and [focus] attention on the continuity of the achievements of our policies.” 44

The final objective of the US Information Agency was to describe the central beliefs that guided the development of American life and culture. The effort to foster a favorable opinion of the US abroad would be an important step towards building a peaceful world community. The information program worked to convince other nations that looking to the United States for leadership would help to improve the quality of their citizens’ lives. The promotion of ideas such as freedom and democracy would help to create a positive view of the US abroad with the intention of making foreign peoples more responsive to American needs. 45

Yet the information provided had to be trusted as reliable. The Agency worked to maintain a high level of objectivity in order to boost the credibility of the information


45Joyce, Propaganda Gap, 74.
program that had been damaged by what Eisenhower saw as the excessively propagandistic and blatantly anti-Communist approach taken under Truman. The US Information Agency’s *First Report to Congress* explained that “under the new Mission, the Agency is concentrating on factual, objective news reporting and appropriate commentaries designed to present a full exposition of important US actions and policies.” The “tone and content is forceful and direct” while “strident and propagandistic material is avoided.” Agency officials hoped that a straightforward approach to news would not only enhance the credibility of the information program but also distinguish USIA output from more strident Soviet propaganda. At the same time, USIA was selective in its publications, manipulating the choice of information to further US objectives. Program materials were carefully chosen to convey specific ideas. Information materials would emphasize, gloss over, or even exclude data, depending on US propaganda needs.

The US Information Agency’s main objective was to influence public opinion abroad. The best way to win public opinion was to first learn about the foreign audience. Any attempt to explain commonalities would fail unless it was based on detailed knowledge of foreign life and culture. As Thomas Sorensen explained, to be successful in the world of propaganda, USIA practitioners needed to speak the language of the audience they wanted to persuade, and have at least a basic understanding of the people’s “history, aspirations, prejudices, motivations, and thought processes.” USIA officials understood that each program had to “be couched in terms of local tradition, history,

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48 Joyce, *Propaganda Gap*, 84.
religious feeling, language and culture. Sorensen also made the point that the practitioners of US information and propaganda abroad should be equally educated about their own country and its "people, history, culture, and policies." To be successful in developing support for US policies among allies and uncommitted nations alike it was critical for US foreign policy to reflect an understanding of the beliefs and standards common to the American public and peoples overseas. The United States needed to promote the standards it believed to be universal in order to foster widespread support for US policy.51

In addition to knowing and being to connect to the history and culture of its audience, USIA had to be able to gain access to the people it wanted to reach.52 However, it was often difficult for the USIA to reach a large portion of the population. In places like Western Europe, where formal media such as newspapers and magazines, television, films, and publishing houses had an established presence and where a large portion of the population was also literate, the Information Agency was able to spread its message to a larger portion of the population. Conversely, in many places access to news media and other information outlets was limited for a large portion of the population. In some of these situations the formal media were not as able to reach the masses, because of the lower level of education and less development in the country. The Agency’s budget constraints also forced it to limit the number of projects undertaken by US

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50Sorensen, Word War, 57.

51Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 129.

information officials in a country at one time; this meant that the information program was not always able to expand its output to accommodate the needs of the illiterate masses.

In its first year of operation as the US Information Agency, Congress reduced funding for the information program to just under eighty-five million dollars - a thirty-six percent cut from the previous year’s budget. This is in direct contrast to Eisenhower’s position of support for a larger information budget. Speaking to the American Newspaper Publishers Association in 1954, Eisenhower declared “Our United States Information Service, cooperating with similar efforts by friendly nations, seeks to combat propaganda with truth. Every dollar we put into it, when wisely used, will repay us dividends in the triumph of truth and the building of understanding.” USIA’s appropriations fell again the next year; in 1955 funds available to the information program totaled seventy-nine million, despite the president’s assertion the same year that “it is of the highest importance that our program for telling the truth to peoples of other nations be stepped up to meet the needs of our foreign policy.” In his 1956 State of the Union address, Eisenhower asked Congress for “a substantial increase in budgetary support of the United States Information Agency.” The following year, the president again requested that Congress “increase appreciably the appropriations” for USIA. Funding for the information program increased slowly until it peaked under Eisenhower


at $115,289,000 for Fiscal Year (FY) 1957.\textsuperscript{57} The increase did not last long and the next year information funds declined again to $98 million in 1958 and back up to $105 million in 1959. This amount remained steady through the end of the Eisenhower administration.\textsuperscript{58} The president’s persistent requests to Congress for increased appropriations illustrate his continued desire to provide more funding for the information program. In his memoirs, Eisenhower complained about Congress’s decision to appropriate much less for USIA than he requested, saying, “I was disappointed by this irresponsible diminution of an agency on the front line in the cold war.”\textsuperscript{59} The roller-coaster-like changes in funding levels hampered the US information program’s ability to expand its efforts around the world. George Allen, USIA Director from 1957-1960, echoed Eisenhower’s discussion of the Agency’s limited funding, explaining that “we had our difficulties with the Congressional committee each year...there were a lot of people who though the Information Agency was not here to stay, that it was essentially a wartime operation and ought to be discontinued. Other people just didn’t like propaganda very much.”\textsuperscript{60}

To make the most of its limited resources, the US Information Agency catered to select target audiences. In most cases, the bulk of US information output was aimed at the elite population of a country. Agency officials overseas would “analyze the social

\textsuperscript{57}US Information Agency, 8th Report, 31.


\textsuperscript{60}The Reminiscences of George V Allen (9 March 1967), on page 125, CUOHROC.
structure and determine which individuals or groups [were] of most influence and how to reach them.” According to Agency reports, “in some countries this might mean only a handful of leaders. In some areas, whole blocs of people may be involved – educators, labor unions, church leaders, business or political organizations. In others, the program may be aimed at the whole population.” In some countries, national policy was determined by political leaders who rarely took public opinion into consideration. In other places, opinion leaders included elites such as intellectuals and educators, religious leaders, government officials, military officials, labor leaders, mass media operators such as publishers, editors, writers and people in radio and film, and student groups. The Agency provided local editors, reporters, and writers with easy access to US policy statements, comparable to the information they provided to American officials. This was done in part in hopes that news about America published abroad by the local press would be viewed more fairly by foreign readers, who otherwise might be biased if they knew the information came from the US government. Thomas Sorensen observed that the Information Agency generally targeted people involved in political and economic affairs, including “not only policy-makers but also those who influence policy-makers and those who are not in power but are likely to be.” Depending on the region, influential women or local ethnic or cultural leaders could also be a target of the information program.

63Bogart, Premises for Propaganda, 52, 56.
64Elder, Information Machine, 2.
65Sorensen, Word War, 63.
Often, USIA attempted to influence individuals who might otherwise act to prevent their governments from working with the United States.66

When Theodore Streibert took the reigns as director of the newly formed United States Information Agency in late 1953, he worked to improve the way the information program operated. One of his first actions was to identify geographic areas abroad where USIS already operated and to put an assistant director in charge of each area. USIA operations were divided into four areas: Europe, Middle East-South Asia, Far East, and Latin America.67 The Agency generally operated in areas where it had the greatest freedom to function, targeting "areas of maximum program opportunity." The areas that USIA had open access to did not always correspond with those areas that were the most important to the success of US policies and objectives. The information program had limited access to some areas which made it difficult to influence public opinion in favor of the United States.68

In general, USIA activities in Eastern Europe were severely restricted. Although US policy towards the Soviet Bloc spoke of liberation in the early years of the Eisenhower administration, USIA activities were limited by Soviet policy. The Agency had difficulty influencing public opinion in this area, and even if it had had access to a larger portion of the population, public opinion generally did not have a great deal of influence over the Communist leaders of the Soviet Bloc. As the information program was not able to operate at its full potential in Eastern Europe, the Agency’s activities in

66Sorensen, Word War, 63.

67Fitzhugh Green, American Propaganda, 31.

68Bogart, Cool Words, 55.
that area do not provide a good indication of how the USIA operated in general, and so will not be discussed in detail. This study therefore focuses on USIA operations in the West and the Third World.

The two case studies that follow take a closer look at USIA operations in France and India. The Agency faced challenges in both countries in its efforts to create a climate of opinion favorable to the United States. Both French and Indian beliefs about the Cold War, collective security, and the imminence of the Communist threat diverged greatly from US positions on these matters. In particular, France presents an interesting case study because of the existence of strong Communist sympathies during the period under review, particularly among French intellectuals. Yet France was a crucial ally, with developed mass media and a highly literate population. India, by contrast, was non-aligned – its struggle toward development made for an even more challenging situation. The US viewed non-alignment as a threat to the US strategy of collective security, but newly emerging nations were a prize that both the US and the USSR sought to win. However, this competition, coupled with India's resolve to avoid outside interference, made the task of the USIA a difficult one.
Western Europe was a major battleground in the United States effort to combat the spread of Communist influence abroad during the Cold War. The maintenance of US national security depended on the preservation of strong Western European allies, particularly during the early years of the superpower conflict. In its effort to maintain a strong position of leadership in this vital area, the Eisenhower administration was faced with the challenge of overcoming strong feelings of anti-Americanism and neutralist leanings. In France, the picture was further complicated by sympathy for Communism, generated by the Party’s record as a leader in the Resistance during the Second World War. These ideas flourished in part because of the deep seated mistrust of the United States in France, and the alternative political, economic and cultural model the US presented. As a result, US information programs in France, working in part to show the similarities between the two nations, were an important part of the effort to achieve US Cold War objectives in the area. In this chapter, the relationship between the United States and its most reluctant European ally, France, will be explored. Of particular interest are the differences in worldview between the two countries, and the influence of this phenomenon on the effectiveness of US information programs in Western Europe.

NSC 162/2, the blueprint for Eisenhower’s New Look national security strategy, identified allied support as vital to US interests around the world. The United States ability to respond to a Soviet military attack depended on access to bases in allied countries. To the Eisenhower administration, it was essential that US allies view the
United States as a world leader who worked to protect their interests as well as its own. As NSC 162/2 noted, “Our allies must be genuinely convinced that our strategy is one of collective security. The alliance must be rooted in a strong feeling of a community of interest and firm confidence in the steadiness and wisdom of US leadership.”

One year after the adoption of NSC 162/2, the National Security Council reiterated the importance of its European allies to national security by stating that “major allies will continue to be essential to the US to prevent the loss of major free areas to Communist control and the gradual isolation of the US.” Western Europe was of particular interest to the United States in the early years of the Cold War because it was “a major source of free world power, provides our principle allies, and plays an essential role in preventing Soviet expansion.” Yet NSC documents called attention to the fact that “allied opinion, especially in Europe, has become less willing to follow US leadership.” The council gave a variety of reasons for this reluctance, including the allies’ perception that the US was obsessed with anticommunism, the fact that the allies “tend to see the actual danger of Soviet aggression as less imminent than the US does,” and the belief that such an inflexible attitude toward the Soviet Union would “indeinitely prolong cold war tensions.” In August of 1954, the NSC determined that “divisive factors” among United States allies included “increasing fear of the effects of nuclear weapons, differing estimates of the nature and imminence of the Communist threat, distrust of US national purposes and leadership, political instability and economic

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weaknesses of some of our allies, conflicts regarding trade policy and economic integration, historic hostility between certain allies, and differing approaches to colonial problems." The United States clearly had many obstacles to overcome to achieve its goal of strengthening its position of leadership in the area.

In September of 1954, President Eisenhower approved NSC 5433, "Immediate United States Policy Toward Europe," which explained US objectives in the area. Washington hoped to strengthen the bonds between NATO partners in Western Europe so as to deter the Soviet Union from expanding its area of control beyond the Soviet Bloc and advocated economic and political integration on the continent as a way to bring strength and stability to the region. Actions would be taken to "reverse divisive trends in Western Europe by developing political and economic strength and cohesion which will enhance the European capacity and will to resist Communist subversion and neutralism." The Eisenhower administration hoped to persuade its allies that "US policies and actions take due account of their security," and that it was necessary "to halt further significant Communist expansion, direct or indirect."

In France, where political instability and economic weakness were serious problems, these divisive trends were of particular concern. The French Fourth Republic, founded in 1946 after the fall of the Vichy government, saw no fewer than 25 different governments and 18 prime ministers before its collapse in 1958, with the longest lived ministry lasting for barely a year. Economic hardship also affected the domestic

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situation in France as the government invested heavily in infrastructure and industrial development, while funding for consumer goods, housing and other social services was in short supply.  

The immense challenges faced by the French government in the early post-war period were, to a certain extent, self-imposed. French defense spending exasperated its internal problems as the former imperial power fought desperately to hang on to its colonial holdings in Indochina and Algeria. The negative repercussions of France’s unsuccessful attempts to cling to its position as a great power included growing foreign debt, budget shortages and persistent inflation. The cost of living in France continued to rise as the government increased defense expenditures; one example of this can be seen in the prices of consumer goods, which increased by forty percent between 1951-1953.  

The unsteady domestic situation in France affected Washington’s ability to realize its policy goals for Western Europe, when, after working for months to bring about European integration through the European Defense Community (EDC), the French rejected the agreement despite various American efforts to make it acceptable to them. The French government, reluctant as ever to rearm Germany, could not reach an agreement about the EDC even though they had initiated the plans for the defense pact in the first place. US policy addressed this issue, acknowledging that France’s rejection of the planned EDC had created an obstacle to the success of US plans for the area, and directed that the United States should “seek to induce France to cooperate in achieving”  

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10Judt, *Postwar*, 209, 152.

11Judt, *Postwar*, 244-245.
the US "program of action." The American Ambassador to France, Douglas Dillon, explained that the necessity of French cooperation was such that "despite the sometimes carping criticism of the US on the part of Frenchmen, it is important for our government to recover and maintain the confidence of a people whose views are often irritating but whose friendship for the US is so important to our own security." American officials tolerated the French attitude of superiority because they considered France to be a key ally.

Much of this tension between the two allies originated in the French desire to overcome the humiliation of surrender and occupation during the Second World War and to regain the position it held in the world prior to the devastation of the world wars. While the French people grudgingly accepted the need for collective security, they were conflicted in their reaction to the American military presence in France. France welcomed NATO and American military bases for the socioeconomic and security benefits they generally brought, but viewed the American presence as a threat to French national independence. Many in France did not wish to participate in the cold war struggle between the superpowers, wishing instead for an independent path. Many French intellectuals suggested that their country should serve as a world leader and mediator between the United States and the Soviet Union. A French system somewhere

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13Ambassador Douglas Dillon to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, 4 August 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, 6(2):1375.
in between capitalism and communism, or a “third way,” would create another option for other nations to look to for leadership.\textsuperscript{15}

For French elites on all sides of the political spectrum, including intellectuals, leaders of the media, politics, and business, the desire for a separate path was a matter of identity and culture. The French believed they had a unique cultural identity to uphold and to protect. They also believed that other nations should look to France as a higher form of civilization, with its ideas of rational thought and skill in the fine arts. The intellectual elites, whose voices were influential within their own country, pledged to protect French culture and society from negative outside influences such as the conformity and consumerism of American culture.\textsuperscript{16} Unlike the elites, French popular opinion did not hold American popular culture and consumer products to be dangerous. The average French citizen enjoyed the benefits of modernization and US economic aid.\textsuperscript{17} They also enjoyed the same recreational escapes from the drudgery of everyday life. The differences of opinion between France and America were related to the influence of the intellectual in society. The intellectual view of the United States provided the basis for French anti-American ideas.\textsuperscript{18}

The French elites based their views of the United States in part on their own self-identity. Perhaps the biggest threat to French culture in the elites’ estimation was America, which was equated with consumer society, a high standard of living, leisure,

\textsuperscript{15}Pells, \textit{Not Like Us}, 67.

\textsuperscript{16}Kuisel, \textit{Seducing the French}, 110-123

\textsuperscript{17}Kuisel, \textit{Seducing the French}, 35.

comfort, and the prospect of personal advancement – all things welcomed by the French in general but the elites were afraid that Americanization would dilute their culture. Many elites believed that these benefits came at the expense of true culture and would inevitably lead to endless consumerism and conformity. American mass production made a high standard of living possible but also caused everything to be the same, with no room for personal freedom of choice. Perhaps the worst American sin of all was the democratization of culture. French elites viewed American popular culture as base and common compared to French high culture. They did not share the U.S. presentation of the war as a contest between good and evil.\textsuperscript{19}

The political ideas prevalent among the French people during this time, particularly in elite and intellectual circles, were part of the reason for the decline in the American position in French opinion in the early 1950's. These ideas included neutralism, anti-Americanism, and sympathy for Communism. Neutralist ideas were "characterized by disagreement with the aims and policies of both sides."\textsuperscript{20} Most French people favored neutralism as an ideal path that would enable France to become an intermediary between the two blocs, rather than be dominated by either superpower.\textsuperscript{21} Neutralist ideas, then, were directly related to defensive French nationalism, which endeavored to maintain French national independence against outside influences.\textsuperscript{22} The

\textsuperscript{19}Kuisel, Seducing the French, 110-123


\textsuperscript{22}Marcus, Neutralism, 36.
Parisian newspaper *Le Monde*, which was widely read by French elites, reflected these neutralist ideas strongly during the 1950’s.\(^\text{23}\)

Similar reasoning inspired Anti-Americanism. The decline in French prestige stood in stark contrast to the rise of American power abroad. Many in France resented the fact that their liberation from Nazi control had been brought about by American forces, and the subsequently increased American presence in their country was seen as a form of occupation. This was combined with a general suspicion of US policy among the French population, particularly because of the preeminence of military considerations in US strategy.\(^\text{24}\) In this manner of thought, the United States was a self-interested monster seeking to eliminate French political, social, economic, and cultural independence. French identity was at risk if America was allowed to continue its domination of Europe.\(^\text{25}\)

Some French intellectuals were also sympathetic to Communism; they contrasted the limited influence of high culture in the United States with the position of intellectuals in the Soviet Union, where they were supposedly central figures in Soviet society.\(^\text{26}\) This sympathy to Communism cause French elites to be less judgmental than the US towards the Soviet Union.\(^\text{27}\) They tended to see the two superpowers as analogous, arguing that

\(^{23}\text{Pells, Not Like Us, 67.}\)

\(^{24}\text{Marcus, Neutralism, 17, 23.}\)

\(^{25}\text{Kuisel, Seducing the French, 16.}\)

\(^{26}\text{Jüt, Past Imperfect, 202-203.}\)

\(^{27}\text{Jüt, Past Imperfect, 145, 150.}\)
because each system had flaws, they were morally equivalent and thus neither system was in a position to criticize the other.\textsuperscript{28}

The US Information Agency had to consider the cultural beliefs and desires of its audience if the information program was to have any true success, but Agency programs in Western Europe during the period examined in this study have been criticized as patronizing and condescending.\textsuperscript{29} For example, J.A. Raffaele, in his study of the USIS in Italy, asserted that Agency programs in Europe were based on a “premise of superiority” and an “attitude of moral indignation,” which created a “widening gap between the US view of realities and that of its allies.”\textsuperscript{30} While this study looked to USIA programs in Italy, it provides an indication of the general perception of the USIS held by Western European countries.

During its first year of program activity, the United States Information Agency worked to develop global themes. These included the following: “The United States stands for and works tirelessly for peace; In the unity of the free world lies our best chance to reduce the Communist threat without war;” and “The Communist party or movement is a foreign force directed from Moscow or Peiping for expansionist purposes – for ‘Red Colonialism’.”\textsuperscript{31} USIA also initiated a cultural campaign to “make the American way of life better understood.” In Western Europe, the US Information Agency sought to increase personal contacts with European leaders, and to promote

\textsuperscript{28}Judt, Past Imperfect, 172-174.


“collective security, European unity, Atoms for Peace, socioeconomic reconstruction, and US-European cultural unity.”

The US Information Agency considered the vast Soviet propaganda program to be one of its biggest challenges. After the death of Stalin, new Soviet leadership began a propaganda offensive emphasizing peaceful coexistence. Although the US dismissed this as a mere gesture, the appeal of the Soviet message could not be denied. As a USIA intelligence summary explained, as part of the Soviet effort to establish “a world Communist order,” the “Communists use the propaganda weapon in coordination with military, diplomatic, and economic weapons.” This posed a threat to the success of American policy goals abroad because the primary goals of Communist propaganda were “to divide the nations of the Free world and, particularly, to isolate the United States; to soften up areas which seem vulnerable to Communist conquest; and, where that is impracticable at present, to foster anti-Americanism and neutralism.”

America’s own policies contributed to the Agency’s dilemma. In August of 1953, Ambassador Dillon reported that French confidence in US leadership had declined sharply since the beginning of the year. There were a variety of causes of this decline. Most importantly, the French did not approve of the extreme anti-Communist campaign waged by Senator Joseph McCarthy, which they viewed as a major problem in the United States. Dillon explained that the biggest reason for decreased French confidence in the US was the fact that the Eisenhower administration did not condemn this behavior, as

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"behavior which the French associate with dictatorship cannot be indulged in any instance by the world's leading democracy and leave confidence in that country as a leader of the free world intact in France." Other reasons for low confidence in American leadership included distrust of US intentions, resentment over Washington's tendency to act without consulting its allies, and French responsiveness to Soviet peace initiatives. Influential groups affected by this lack of confidence included the French press, government, businessmen, and intellectuals.

Ambassador Dillon advised that if the United States wished to restore its reputation in France, it should make a "constant effort to counteract" issues such as McCarthyism that reflected poorly on the US as an "example of democratic comportment." The United States should endeavor to demonstrate that its policies were designed with peace in mind rather than conflict, and that "we sincerely consider them as partners, equal in rights if not in strength, not satellites." Dillon addressed the nature of the problem when he said that the French had "lost faith in the US as a symbol of freedom and tolerance," and warned that they would "start looking elsewhere for protection of national security."

According to a 1953 USIA report on public opinion in France, while "most of the French would like to have some sort of alliance with the US in which France has more

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34 Dillon to Dulles, 4 August 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, 6(2):1372-1373.

35 Memorandum by the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State (Hanes) to the Secretary of State, 3 April 1954, FRUS, 1952-1954, 6(2):1405-1406.

36 Dillon to Dulles, 4 August 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, 6(2):1374.

independence,” almost half of those interviewed “favor an alliance with the US in any case, since it is vital for France.” The majority of the French people did not see themselves as being very knowledgeable about the United States and hoped to know more. They believed that “the US should make a greater effort to inform the French about life in the US.” At the same time, more than half believed the United States was actively engaged in propaganda in their country. Many Frenchmen believed that American policy was driven by “anticommunism and the desire to control world markets,” while others saw US policy as idealistic in its desire to promote freedom, democracy, and peace.

While many in France accepted the necessity of alliance with the US given the tensions of the cold war, their opinions about America were mixed. The same report explained that “most of the French see ‘the American’ as being a progressive, practical person, rich, interested only in money, and too much hypnotized by hatred of Communism.” Additionally, ‘the American’ was seen as “a big child who meddles in affairs which aren’t his concern, and understands little of Europe.” Clearly, based on the information in this report, the USIA had a long way to go towards improving the status of the United States in French public opinion.

The United States Information Agency was known abroad as the United States Information Service (USIS). In July of 1953, the USIS Country Plan for France was approved by USIA. This plan stated that “the overall goal of USIS is to make France a

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close, staunch and vigorous friend and ally of the United States...so that France will continue to associate herself with us, morally, materially, and spiritually in the struggle against world communist and Soviet imperialism. While this was the overall goal of the Agency in France, the country plan enumerated six more specific objectives. First, the information program was to “stimulate French confidence in the Government and people of the United States and in the United States’ policies, objectives, programs and actions.” Secondly, USIS should “help consolidate the non-Communist elements in France and make them an effective force in Western defense.” The third objective of USIS in France was “to reduce Soviet-Communist power and influence.” Fourth, USIS should “strengthen the traditional bonds and working relationships between the peoples of the United States and France.” The fifth USIS objective was “to strengthen the orientation of the French Government and people along lines favorable to continued cooperation with the United States in international action for mutual security.” Finally, USIS was to “develop sound economic and social foundations in France.”

The Country Plan also identified what it called “priority target groups” among the French population, a list that was quite long and aimed at reaching producers of information rather than consumers. The press was cited as the “most important single factor in creating French opinion, inasmuch as the average Frenchman learns virtually all he knows about current political, social and economic events through his newspapers, radio and newsreels.” Other priority target groups included national and local


government leaders and officials; educational, spiritual and intellectual leaders; students; literary, theatrical and artistic leaders; and non-Communist labor leaders and workers, management leaders, and agricultural leaders. 

In addition to global themes formulated for use in every region, USIA set specific themes to be emphasized in France. In 1954, the information program began to address one of the major trends in Europe, the spread of neutralist sentiment. Officials recognized that the relaxation of Soviet control after the death of Stalin had made it increasingly difficult to bolster support for the continued buildup of Western defenses. The Agency had to make a “major effort to counter this trend and reduce the undesirable effects of neutralist statements,” and to encourage popular support for NATO. Hand in hand with this effort, the USIA would “expose the French Communist Party as the antithesis of preservation of France as a nation.”

The Agency also emphasized its cultural program in France. Beginning in 1955, USIA began to expand its cultural programs in general. Theodore Streibert recalled that in the early days of USIA the president took note of the effect the Soviets were having by sending exhibits and performers abroad, and took the initiative to ask Congress for an appropriation to increase these types of activities in an effort to better meet the challenge of the Soviet propaganda offensive. The president was successful in his request and as Streibert explains, “we proceeded to have pretty good exhibits in some of these trade fairs, and this was the start of sending philharmonic orchestras, performers and such

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46USIS Paris, “USIA CA 1370 to all USIS posts,” 8 June 1955, 14, File General and Classified Subject Files of the USIA office, 1946-55, Box 18, RG 84, NA.
things overseas. This is a good example of how he picked something right up, saw the value of it, purely propaganda, and personally went after it..."  

The US Information Agency’s 4th Report to Congress, covering the period of January 1- June 30, 1955, highlighted the principle activities of the Agency over the previous half-year. According to the report: “The Agency energetically carried out its responsibility of achieving maximum psychological benefits from activities supported by the President’s Emergency Fund: US participation in international trade fairs and presentation of American cultural attractions to audiences overseas. Using press, radio, films and personal contacts, USIS representatives increased the size of attending crowds and heightened the favorable impression made by these events.”

One of the objectives put forth in the USIS Country Plan for France was to strengthen the bond between the people of the US and France. The Plan explained that this would be accomplished in a variety of ways, including: “Creating a better understanding in France of American institutions, ways of life and achievements in all important fields of endeavor; Dispelling French fear of American political, economic or military domination by demonstrating that the United States has responsible intellectual leadership producing constructive thought throughout the whole range of intellectual endeavor; [Showing ]the high quality of America’s varied achievements in the fields of cultural endeavor; Demonstrating that the two countries are linked by close spiritual, moral and cultural ties of long standing.”

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47The Reminiscences of Theodore Streibert, on page 12, CUOHROC.


As the Agency increased its efforts in the realm of cultural propaganda, it emphasized "America's appreciation of France's leading position in the stream of Western culture and acknowledges America's cultural debt to her." One of the highlights of the US cultural program in France was the "Salute to France," a cultural project presented in Paris by USIA in the spring and early summer of 1955. A report compiled by USIA officers explained that this "gesture of friendship and respect" was intended to serve two purposes: "to honor the cultural heritage and achievements of France and to display American cultural achievements to the French people, who, like many Europeans, tend to be blinded by American material accomplishments to American achievements in the arts." A special booklet about the program printed by USIA in Paris explained that the events of the Salute would allow the French to "découvrir l’Amérique," to discover America. The program would be "une veritable revelation," – a true revelation of American culture for the French public. The booklet acknowledged the influence of French artists upon American art, noting that "France, plus que tout autre pays, a contribué à cette éclosion": France, more than any other country, has contributed to the blossoming [of American art]. The official program for the "Salute to France" further explained that the purpose of the cultural events was to pay tribute to the French culture: "Salut a la France est un hommage adressé à la culture française par les Américains."
The “Salute” brought a variety of American artistic offerings to France. The first exhibit of the cultural program, entitled “50 Years of Art in the United States,” featured American paintings, sculpture, and photography. This was followed a few weeks later by an exhibition of 19th century French masterpieces on loan to the USIA from American museums and private collections entitled “From David to Toulouse-Lautrec.” Classical offerings included a concert by the Philadelphia Orchestra, and a performance by the New York City Ballet. Two theatrical offerings, Rogers and Hammerstein’s Oklahomaa and Thornton Wilder’s The Skin of Our Teeth, rounded out the program of the “Salute to France.”  

While it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the “Salute,” the Agency looked to two sources for solid evidence of the program’s success: the reactions of French critics and French editors’ acceptance of the “Salute” as news of interest to a large percentage of the population. The Agency considered the program to be an “outstanding success” by both accounts. According to USIA attendance figures, four thousand people were present at the opening of “50 Years of Art,” which was a record crowd for an opening at the Musee National d’Art Moderne, where the exhibit was on display. The event also received a wide array of press coverage throughout the provinces of France, although critics reactions to the display of American art were mixed: “both highly praised and hotly opposed as being either too modern or not modern enough.” The success of

Oversize Scrapbooks, 1947-58, Box 3, RG 306, NA.


this event can be linked to the French curiosity about American art and French interest in the types of art featured in the show.

The second event of the “Salute to France” was deemed “a sensation.” More than 200,000 people visited the Orangerie to see “From David to Toulouse-Lautrec,” which set a record for the highest attendance for an exhibition in Paris since 1939. Press coverage of the event was extensive, and USIA estimates boasted that “the space devoted to the Salute in French newspapers and magazines was equal to more than a thousand full columns of the New York Times,” an extraordinary achievement for an Agency program. The USIS report on the event stated that “practically every non-Communist newspaper in France ran articles on the show, many of them devoting full pages to reproductions. All leading magazines ran stories, many accompanied by several pages in color.” The demonstration of American appreciation for French art was incredibly successful because it acknowledged the French preeminence in art.

French reactions to the musical and theatrical offerings included in the Salute were mixed. The quality of the Philadelphia orchestra was acknowledged to be quite good, and USIA noted that the orchestra “successfully affirmed its stature as one of the great orchestras of the world.” Oklahoma, with its celebration of the American frontier, was not as successful. The French had less interest in this type of entertainment and the show did not draw in large crowds. The Skin of our Teeth was the most popular of the dramatic offerings of the “Salute to France.” USIA attributed the play’s popularity to the “star-studded cast,” featuring Mary Martin, and Thornton Wilder’s “continental wit”

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which was well-received by critics and the general public alike.\footnote{USIS Paris, “Salut a la France,” 11, 15, 17.} The French appreciated the play’s more European style sense of humor.

According to USIA reports, the “Salute” was accepted by many in France as “new evidence of US cultural maturity.”\footnote{NSC 5525, \textit{FRUS, 1955-1957}, 9:537.} USIA officials closely examined a wide cross section of articles published in the French press about the “Salute” in order to determine in part French popular reaction to the USIA program. The European edition of the \textit{New York Herald Tribune} wrote that while “bringing ballet, music and drama to Paris may seem like an approximation of carrying coals to Newcastle,” the “Salute to France” placed “some of the brightest ornaments of American cultural life...on display in France as a tribute to French leadership in the development of Western culture [and] mutual respect and understanding between the two nations are certain to be enhanced.”\footnote{\textit{New York Herald Tribune European Edition}, Paris, March 11, 1955, in USIS Paris, “Salut a la France,” 24.} A later edition of the same paper said that “even Communists agreed that the show of American owned French masters is one of the greatest Paris art triumphs in years. It is sad France ever let such treasures get away, but warmest thanks must go to the Americans for risking their precious pictures on the high seas in such a touching gesture of good will, most French newspapers agreed in many columns of comment.”\footnote{\textit{New York Herald Tribune European Edition}, May 18, 1955, in USIS Paris, “Salut a la France,” 24.} \textit{Vogue Paris} exclaimed that the “exposition ‘Of David to Toulouse-Lautrec’ gives us a flattering image of the richness of the public and private American collections. It honors the taste of certain collectors on the other side of the Atlantic who bought what very early we ignored, and
who continue to buy from our young painters... It illustrates finally an aspect of American philanthropy, that of a rich amateur who fills the museums of his country with gifts with an aim of forming the spirit and the taste of his fellow-citizens."\(^{62}\) In the *Tribune*, Art Buchwald commented on the success of the Salute as a response to the success of the Soviets in cultural propaganda: "There is no doubt that the decision to get in the cultural cold war was prompted by the success the Russians and Iron Curtain countries have had in Paris in the last few years. In any case, whatever the Salute costs, it still has made an effective impact on the French, and in comparison with the prices of planes, guns and ships these days, the cost is infinitesimal for the amount of good that had been achieved."\(^{63}\)

These press comments about USIA’s "Salute to France" suggest that the selection of French paintings and description of the exhibits as a tribute to French culture and its influence on American art demonstrate an understanding of the French people’s ideas about their country’s status as the birthplace of civilization and defender of high culture. Many in France were impressed by the American collection of French works of art. The widespread interest of the French in the "Salute to France" suggests that the promotion of American cultural and artistic achievements was an effective approach to the challenge of meeting one of USIA’s objectives in France. The "Salute to France" was a successful

\(^{62}\) *Vogue Paris*, "La Peinture Française Venus d'Amérique Pour Deux Mois.,” in USIS Paris, "Salut a la France," 19. Translated from the French; "L'Exposition 'De David a Toulouse-Lautrec' nous donne une image flatteuse de la richesses des collections americains publques et privees. Elle honore la sérété du goût de certains collecteurs d'Outre-Atlantique que surent acheter très tôt ce qui nous meconnaissions, qui continuent d'acheter notre jeune peinture... Elle illustre enfin un aspect de la philanthropie americaine, celui du riche amateur qui comble de ses dones les musees de son pays le but de former l'esprit et le goût de ses concitoyens."

part of the US Information Agency’s efforts to strengthen the bonds and relationships between the peoples of the United States and France, to create a better understanding of America in France, to show the high quality of America’s cultural endeavors and to acknowledge the French preeminence in art.

The US Embassy in France took advantage of this success in May of 1955 and explained to the State Department that “the ‘specifically anti-Communist approach’ is probably not the most effective in France and that a more positive approach regarding our own system would be better...We point out the truly outstanding success of “Salute to France” in this country as an example of what can really be done in the cultural field...”

Not only was the exhibition itself popular but the press publicity on the “Salute to France” continued to provide USIA with opportunities to give the French public more information about America. In conjunction with the “Salute,” the Museum of Modern Art in New York sent USIS Paris a collection of documentary and experimental films, and the information program issued a notice about the public showings of these films. Two days after this information was released, USIA ran out of tickets to the film showings which were completely booked. USIA noted that “The success USIS Paris met with these film showings gives another indication of the interest which can be aroused in Paris where entertainment competition is high if USIS Paris can offer more such interesting material keyed to French tastes.”

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Less impressed than the French public, Congress cut funding to the information program by sixteen percent in 1957. Added to their general suspicion of “soft” weapons in the Cold War, Congressional leaders were unhappy with then USIA director Arthur Larson, mainly because they considered his earlier writings about the Republican party to be too partisan. The cut in funding meant that Agency funds had to be allocated carefully to best meet the objectives of the information program. Although the need for the US information program in Western Europe and in France continued to be great, in the latter half of Eisenhower’s presidency USIA’s focus began to move away from Western Europe and toward the developing world in response to increased Communist attention to that area. The Agency redistributed its funding to “emphasize the most crucial areas of the world and the means of communication that are most effective in each area.” As a result, funding for Agency programs in Western Europe was cut by almost a third, “more than that of any other area.”

During this time, US relations with France began to worsen. A USIA report on public opinion published in August of 1957 stated that of all countries in Western Europe, “American prestige is lowest in France [and] feelings of mutual interest with the United States are very low in France.” The previous year’s international conflicts over the Soviet repression of the Hungarian Revolution and the US reaction to the Suez crisis inspired an increased fear of war in France and brought criticism of the United States’ presence in Europe. Distrust of the United States continued to grow, especially in

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France, because of “difficulty understanding the motives of US policy.” NATO continued to be a major US policy issue, and the Information Agency continued to work to promote “Western Europe and NATO as the cornerstone of US national policy.” United States information efforts in Europe continued to promote European integration, disarmament and mutual inspection programs. Following de Gaulle’s return to power in 1958, rising French nationalism exacerbated differences between the two nations. According to a State Department estimation of the situation, “most of our problems in NATO and in the UN in some way involve the French. The over-all state of our relations can only be summarized as unsatisfactory.” It was hoped that the United States would be able to “smooth...down the generally ruffled nature of French feathers.” But the money to do this through USIS was not available because of the funding cut and subsequent shift in focus to the Third World.

The following chapter discusses the US information program in India. Like France, India hoped to maintain an independent status in world affairs. Also like France, India did not view the Soviet Union with suspicion. India was, however, more favorable towards the United States and did not share the anti-American attitude of the French elites. This should have made information work there easier but as a newly independent nation working to solve its problems through development, other factors made it difficult for Agency officials to accomplish their goals for the information program in India.

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71 Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant) to Acting Secretary of State Herter, 28 November 1958, FRUS, 1958-1960, 7(2):124-125.
As the Soviet Union’s interest in the newly independent nations of Asia and Africa began to increase in the early 1950’s, the United States became increasingly concerned with establishing a stronger position of leadership in these areas. Many of the newly sovereign countries in the developing world desired to be independent from both superpowers, not wanting to lose any of their newfound autonomy. As the self-proclaimed leader of the non-alignment movement which was gaining favor throughout Asia and Africa during this time, India provides an interesting case study of US efforts to build relations with the newly sovereign nations. US policy makers viewed the Indian decision to pursue a separate path in international affairs as a threat to the US strategy of collective security. Concerned about increased Communist interest in the world’s largest democracy, US policymakers acknowledged that it was vital to US interests to counter these efforts. These two challenges were compounded by the political, economic, and social problems India faced in its efforts to build strength as an independent nation. The United States Information Agency played a key role in the US effort to spread its influence in India in the 1950s, and these efforts are of particular interest to this study because of the controversy surrounding the Agency’s work in this area during this time.

United States policy under Eisenhower called attention to the importance of winning the friendship and support of the uncommitted nations of the world for the sake of US interests around the globe. Policymakers determined that these nations were “unsure of national interests or so preoccupied with other pressing problems” that they
were reluctant to formally ally themselves with the West. Thus it was important for the
US to “seek to win the friendship and cooperation of the presently uncommitted areas of
the world” and to encourage the unaligned nations of Asia and Africa to develop into
“more stable and responsible nations, able and willing to participate in defense of the free
world,” in order to build the strength of the United States and its allies.¹

US leaders feared that if uncommitted nations did not align themselves with the
United States and instead chose to lean toward the Soviet Union, this could be the
deciding factor in the superpower contest for world supremacy. US policy identified the
uncommitted and underdeveloped nations of the world as the “most likely targets for
communist expansion, particularly in Asia.” In order to prevent Communist expansion,
policy dictated that every effort should be made to “gain maximum support...for
collective security measures.”² The strategy for building relations with uncommitted
nations was to “seek cooperation on a basis of mutual self-respect without attempting to
make active allies of those not so inclined, and refrain, as far as possible, from taking or
supporting actions counter to anti-colonialism and legitimate nationalism.” In addition to
developing closer associations with these countries, the Eisenhower administration hoped
to hasten economic growth in underdeveloped areas, with the goal of helping these
nations so they would be able to help themselves.³ American policymakers put forth
more specific objectives for South Asia. As early as June of 1953, US officials showed
interest in South Asia because of its “potential strategic and economic value to the West.”

They worried that the Soviets might take advantage of the areas vast resources and determined that “its loss to Communist control would be a serious psychological and political blow to the West.”

While the Eisenhower administration’s concern with South Asia was stated early in the president’s first term, United States interest in India developed more slowly. Indian leaders were committed to principles of democracy, independent economic development, anti-imperialism, and social reform. The Indian government did not wish to become involved in the Cold War struggle between the rival superpowers, and chose to follow a policy of non-alignment. This choice was inspired by the principles of *Panchshila*, which called for “mutual respect for each other’s territory and sovereignty, mutual non-intervention in each other’s internal affairs, equality of mutual benefit, mutual non-aggression, and peaceful coexistence” in foreign affairs. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharal Nehru believed that these principles must be followed to ensure India’s autonomy, which he held to be vital to the preservation of peace in India and the world.

Nehru believed that India must build its own strength instead of relying on other nations. As a new nation working to recover from years of colonial domination, efforts to meet the needs of the Indian people and to combat hunger, poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment were of primary importance. For Nehru, this meant that national interests must guide India’s participation in international affairs, regardless of the superpower

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conflict. A country of diverse traditions, the Indian national culture had historically shown an aversion to absolute or extreme positions. Instead, emphasis has traditionally been placed on the idea that all things are relative, that good and evil exist side by side, and that compromise and tolerance are good and necessary. These principles guided India’s participation in international affairs, and as a result India chose to follow its own path rather than participate in the Cold War, a conflict of which it did not approve because it went against the principles of Panchshila.

For India, non-alignment meant freedom to make its own decisions, to agree or disagree with the Americans and the Soviets, or, to follow an independent path. It would allow India to pursue peace and to avoid world tensions that would inevitably detract from the pursuit of Indian national interests. This policy also afforded an opportunity for India to establish a position of leadership among newly independent nations in Asia and Africa and to serve as a path between the blocs. Indian leaders also hoped to mediate between the superpowers in an effort to relax world tensions. By and large, the choice to preserve Indian autonomy in foreign policy was supported by the general population. Nehru’s international stance reflected a deep understanding of the nation’s cultural traditions and also appealed to educated Indians who felt a deep sense of pride in their country.


\[9\] Misra, *India: The Cold War Years*, 34.

\[10\] House, “Noncommitted and Nonaligned,” 72.

US leaders understood at least in part the Indian position on foreign relations and recognized that “the different traditions, institutions and current attitudes” of the area, often made it difficult to see that both countries were working for the same goal. Policy makers saw that Nehru’s greatest aspiration was peace, which was necessary for the economic improvement India desperately needed. Indian plans for national development, essential to India’s vitality as an independent nation, would be disrupted if India became involved in a war because of unnecessary alignment. Washington understood that India’s long history of subjugation to European imperial powers and experience with racial discrimination had created feelings of deep resentment against colonial powers among the Indian people. Indian leaders objected to the United States’ close association with “European colonialism, economic imperialism, and color discrimination.” This created an “emotional barrier in South Asia to closer relations with the United States” because of India’s strong anti-colonial position.

The policy of non-alignment was one of the main causes of hostility between the United States and India, despite American policymakers’ basic understanding of the Indian government’s reasons for not wanting to be drawn into the superpower conflict. From the US perspective, collective security was not only an essential part of the effort to insure national security; a shared defense burden would preserve the health of the American system and thus the morals and values of the American spirit. Nehru’s tendency to treat the two superpowers equally infuriated American officials, who did not

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15 S.N. Misra, India: The Cold War Years, 108.
view the Cold War as a mere contest for power and influence but rather an epic struggle between the forces of good and evil.\textsuperscript{16}

Traditional beliefs in pacifism influenced Indian ideas about US collective security policies. To Nehru, military alliances, though designed to discourage hostility, generally created an atmosphere of fear and distrust that threatened world peace.\textsuperscript{17} Washington accepted that India would not be persuaded to change its policy of non-alignment, regardless of superpower efforts; Pakistan thus made a better choice to add to the US security arsenal. Although they expected the decision to create conflict between the United States and India, US officials decided the action was necessary to protect US collective security interests.\textsuperscript{18} As anticipated, India leaders viewed the US military alliance with Pakistan with suspicion, fearful that this military aid might be used against India. Many in India resented the United States for introducing the Cold War and the tension that came with it to the Indian subcontinent and the Indian government became even more determined to continue its policy of non-alignment, which it believed to be more positive than collective security as an approach to world affairs.\textsuperscript{19}

While Americans may have viewed the Soviet Union as the enemy and Communism as a repugnant ideology, Indian perspectives were very different. Nehru and other Indian leaders believed that India was threatened not by outside Communist influences, but rather by the danger that democracy would fail to meet the needs of the

\textsuperscript{16}McMahon, \textit{Cold War on the Periphery}, 40.

\textsuperscript{17}House, “Noncommitted and Nonaligned,” 73.


\textsuperscript{19}Misra, \textit{India: The Cold War Years}, 107.
Indian people. Indian leaders tolerated the Communist Party in India because its existence was part of the multi-party democratic process and believed that the Communists could only gain power there if democracy did not meet the needs of the people. Unhappy with their nation’s low standard of living, the Indian people were discontent and dissatisfied with the opportunities available to them, an issue US policymakers expected to become “increasingly significant.” Indian leaders understood that their country’s greatest threat was not Communism but hunger, poverty, illiteracy, and a general lack of development, all of which demanded attention. They feared that if Cold War tensions distracted the Indian government from its primary objective of development, internal discontent might present an opportunity for indigenous Communist influences to take control.

Although Prime Minister Nehru and his non-communist government were believed to be solidly in power, the Eisenhower administration considered India to be a country where “economic, social, and political backwardness” threatened government stability. Such were the kinds of conditions on which Communism thrived. Early US estimates of the Communist Party’s standing in India described its position as weak with widespread discontent among its 40,000 members. However, the fact that the Communist Party of India (CPI) and its supporters were the main opposition to Nehru’s Congress Party concerned US officials. Even though US officials believed that the Communists would not be able to take power in the Indian government, they recognized

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20House, “Noncommitted and Nonaligned,” 73.


22NIE 79, FRUS, 1952-1954, 11(2):1073
that this did not detract from the Communist ability to provoke trouble within the nation.23 US leaders feared the growth of Communist influence within India because of the Indian government’s reliance on socialist planning methods to achieve rapid economic development and to increase overall production, which Indian leaders viewed as the only solution to their nation’s problems of hunger, and unemployment. Indian leaders saw the achievements of the Soviet Union, such as the speed of its industrialization and improvements in production through a planned economy, as examples to follow. Although the Indian government looked to Soviet planning methods for guidance on how to accomplish their development goals, the Soviet Union was not involved in the development of the Indian Five-Year Plans.24 However, the Indian choice of an economy based on planning did bring the nation closer to the Soviet Union, particularly in 1956 when the Soviets agreed to assist India in building a steel plant in Bhilai.25

The work of the United States Information Agency was a part of the US effort to build support within India for the American position in international affairs. US national security policy advised that the US should “vigorously pursue effective information and educational programs designed to broaden support for actions consistent with US policies and to diminish susceptibility to communist appeals.”26 In the first year of the Eisenhower administration, the US Information Agency worked to accomplish a variety

25Chandra, Mukherjee, and Mukherjee, India After Independence, 159.
of objectives in India, including: “to help Indian democracy succeed, to encourage susceptible students and intellectuals to respect and develop democratic values, to increase understanding of US foreign policy and US institutions, to help Indians see the incompatibility of Communism with the best in Indian life and thought, to refute Communist distortions of US policies and actions, and to help the Indian Government’s efforts to make the 5-year plan succeed.”

The information program relied upon a variety of methods to accomplish its goals. USIA’s operation in India included four major posts in New Delhi, Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta, as well as four smaller posts in Bangalore, Lucknow, Hyderabad, and Trivandrum. The Agency also operated libraries in each of these cities. The USIA press program expanded personal contacts with newspaper editors and journalists, and provided them with background information on US policies and actions as well as articles on labor, women, youth, science, health, medicine, and more. The Agency publication program included a local paper called the American Reporter, which it described as a “fortnightly tabloid newspaper” published in English and a few of the native Indian languages. Added to this was an extensive program that published various types of pamphlets, some of which featured speeches made by American officials or historical figures, while others discussed the benefits of capitalism. A number of pamphlets were published about the American desire for peace or the threat of Soviet aggression, while others described some facet of American life, culture, or history. They included titles

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28USIS New Delhi, “Memorandum from Robert Ehrman to William Williams.”
such as “Can America Afford to Disarm,” “Lincoln the Great Liberator,” “American Productivity and Full Employment,” “Portrait of an American Town,” “Is Peace Profitable for the USA,” and “Soviet Rulers Can Stop the War Whenever They Want To.” The Information Agency also sponsored a book translation program, which published titles such as “Animal Farm,” “The Eagle and the Bear,” “Eleven Years in Soviet Prison Camps,” and the “Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin.” USIA rounded out its media output with film and radio programs. Other important US Information programs in India included the Exchange of Persons Program and the College Contact Program, which brought American intellectuals, businesses leaders and officials to speak to thousands of university students. These efforts were particularly important because of the large quantity of Communist propaganda directed at young Indian intellectuals.

Although the Information program utilized a variety of media outlets in an effort reach the Indian population, one of the main problems encountered by USIA in India was that of access to the population. A report by the Agency’s Office of Research in September of 1953 addressed this issue, explaining that “obstacles to communication may be divided into three categories: physical (terrain is rough, hard to pass) and technical, social (caste stratifies society, creates a pluralistic society with different types of ideas, tastes and values) and linguistic. The uneven distribution of the population, the asocial groups and stratified groups, the multiplicity of languages and the various dialects within them make the formal media’s task of communication exceedingly difficult.” The formal media such as radio, press, and film, could only be relied upon to reach a limited


30 USIS New Delhi, “Memorandum: Robert Elrman to William Williams.”
audience, those who lived in larger cities and towns. This contrasted greatly with the Communist propaganda effort, which aimed at reaching not just opinion molders but also the masses. They relied upon pictures and exhibits to reach the illiterate masses and also utilized the large indigenous Communist presence outside of the cities to reach people in small towns and rural areas. The same report made note of the fact that “it is the rural areas in which the Communists have fertile fields for exploitation.”

Despite Indian progress towards development in its first decade as an independent nation, during the period under review only about twenty percent of the Indian people were literate. The majority of USIA activities therefore targeted the elite population of India because of its perceived ability to influence the illiterate masses.

In addition to the problems of communication with the extensive Indian population, USIA faced resistance from the Government of India, as the following episode, which occurred at the same time as the April 1955 Bandung conference, illustrates. At the conference, leaders of the recently independent Asian and African states gathered in an effort to find a way to reduce their dependence on outside forces. They also hoped to forge a path different than the one dictated by the constraints of the Cold War conflict. On April 20, 1955, N. R. Pillai, the Secretary-General of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, discussed US information library activities in India with US Ambassador John Sherman Cooper. Pillai explained that it was a decision of the Indian

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34 McMahon, The Cold War on the Periphery, 224.
cabinet that the United States should not open more USIS centers but should begin to “gradually discontinue” those already in place except for those in cities where a US consol general was present. Cooper passed on the details of this conversation to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, explaining in a telegram that Pillai’s justification for this decision was that the “Government of India wanted be in position to prevent other countries (by implication Russia) from expanding their propaganda activities, and to do so it [is] necessary United States be put on restricted basis to establish principles of equal treatment.” To Cooper the impetus for this decision came in a speech given by Indian Prime Minister Nehru a few weeks earlier, in which he discussed the issue of foreign propaganda within his country, calling attention to this competition for influence in India, saying it was “a tamasha (a shindig or big do) the way protagonists of American and Russian way of life came and pitched their flags in India, distributed their leaflets and books, [and] castigated India that she was neither here nor there.”

The State Department’s April 22nd reply to Ambassador Cooper expressed concern over these developments, calling USIS library activities “one of the most effective aspects of our informational program in India.” The telegram also explained that closing even one of the libraries which had been established with the permission of the Indian government “would have unfortunate psychological effect [on] Indo-American relations.” Cooper was directed to make an effort to stall the Indian decision to close existing USIS centers and reading rooms.


Pillai. He explained the US position on USIS centers but agreed to cooperate in not
opening any new centers. Pillai said he “understood fully” and Cooper came away from
the conversation with an understanding that the United States was “under no pressure to
reduce [the] scale of [US] operations.” In the same exchange Pillai discussed foreign
propaganda in India, saying that the Government of India was concerned and was taking
steps to limit its spread to prevent outside influences from undermining the Indian
government.37

Although this conversation seemed to indicate that the Indian desire to close some
of the USIS centers was no longer an issue, the subject was again revisited in August of
1955. Pillai explained that Nehru had “decided as GOI policy that information centers of
foreign countries could not be maintained except at locations of Embassy and Consular
offices,” because these were official locations of foreign governments. As a result of this
decision, Pillai asked that the US close all centers except those in Delhi, Bombay,
Madras, and Calcutta. However, another matter that came up in the same conversation
led Cooper to believe the Indian decision to limit USIS centers was not based wholly on
Nehru’s new policy on foreign information centers but instead resulted “from dislike and
suspicion of [the] information program emphasized in my talks prior reported.” A letter
written by a USIS Public Affairs Officer in India earlier the same month had been sent
out to inquire about interest in a possible visit to the United States. The letter asked that
the recipient provide their name and information “for recommendation should
opportunities ever arise.” This letter had been addressed to Shive Nath Katju, the son of
India’s Defense Minister, one of Nehru’s family friends, who “had not requested [to] visit

37 USIS New Delhi, “Telegram no. 1622,” 26 April 1955, File General Records of the Department of
State, 1955-1959, Central Decimal File: 511.91/1-655, Box 2229, RG 59, NA.
[the] US and [the] letter had been interpreted as improper.” Indian officials viewed USIS contact with such a close family friend to be improper.

Cooper explained to Pillai that the letter was generally only sent to people who had previously expressed interest in the United States and that “if the issue was simply one of procedure and possible impropriety, it was a matter which could be discussed and corrected and information centers should not be closed on such incident.” When asked about the letter, the Public Affairs Officer responsible for sending it explained that although Katju had previously shown interest in visiting the US, Katju’s answer was that the inquiry was “offensive to him.” However, the same letter had been sent to others throughout India who had indicated interest in the US and no offense had been taken by any of the other recipients of the letter. To Cooper, the incident had evidently become such a large issue because “Katju had communicated with [his] father who had raised [the] question [of the] issue with Nehru.” The US Ambassador also made a point of stating that it was a serious issue to the United States if the letter incident led the Indian Government to believe “that program of USIS was directed against GOI.” As Cooper said, “I raised these two questions because the introduction of the letter incident did not seem to accord with [the] GOI position that closing of centers was solely one of policy applying to all countries.” The State Department response to the revised Indian policy on foreign information centers expressed concern about the effect the request to remove USIS centers would have on relations between the two nations. It explained that the “information centers in question were established with the objective of Improving Indian-

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39USIS New Delhi, “Telegram no. 388.”
US relations" and reiterated the US government position that US information center activities in India were “a benefit to the areas which they serve.”  

A month later, the issue seemed to have dissipated as the Embassy reported that in conversation with Pillai, the Indian diplomat indicated that “nothing had been said or done [about the issue] by GOI since my last report.” Embassy officials believed that the situation in India was “more favorable” towards US information activities. This conflict over US information activities came out of the Indian aversion to interference in its internal affairs and demonstrates the Indian sensitivity to such activities that could have resulted in a serious setback for the US information program. In any case, Indian leaders dropped the issue and from all indications it was not visited again. However, it does shed light on the sensitivity of the Indian government to outside interference. In this context it is easy to see why Indian leaders were sensitive to outside interference in the internal affairs of the Indian government. They expressed concern about the activities of the US Information Agency because they saw the propaganda work of other countries as a threat to Indian sovereignty. 

The challenges to the US information program in India did not end when the Indian government decreased its efforts to limit the presence of the USIA within its borders. While the USIA’s diplomatic response to the challenges faced in India may have prevented the closing of USIS facilities, it could be that the Government of India became less concerned about the growth of American influence as the Communist

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presence in India increased. The signing of a Sino-Indian treaty in 1954, which settled a border dispute between India and China, and the exchange of visits between leaders of the two countries later the same year provided evidence of an improving relationship between the Indian and Chinese governments. At the same time, the relationship between India and the Soviet Union seemed to be growing as Nehru and Khrushchev each paid visits to the other’s country in 1955. Indian leaders were impressed by the speedy industrialization of the USSR and, instead of turning them down as the Eisenhower administration would have liked, were open to Soviet offers of trade and economic aid.\footnote{US Information Agency, \textit{5\textsuperscript{th} Report to Congress: July 1- December 31, 1955} (Washington DC: US GPO, 1956), 17.} It was during this time that the US Information Agency began to take note of “Russia’s persistent wooing of India.”\footnote{US Information Agency, “IRI Intelligence Summary: Worldwide Communist Propaganda Activities in 1954,” 15 February 1955, File Office of Research: Special Reports, 1964-1982, Box 11, RG 306, NA.} US officials held that one of the main goals of Soviet propaganda was “to soften up areas which seem vulnerable to Communist conquest; and, where that is impracticable at present, to foster anti-Americanism and neutrality.”\footnote{Robert Schulman, \textit{John Sherman Cooper: The Global Kentuckian} (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 72.} Reflecting on Khrushchev’s visit to India, Ambassador Cooper noted that “wherever they went in India, they campaigned, they gave the United States the devil... It was fascinating to see how well they’d prepared, for they played on every Indian problem, they touched on every one of India’s sensitivities against the United States. It was for me a valuable lesson in the careful and thorough preparation and appropriate propaganda of the Soviet Union, which must be continuously watched by the US.”\footnote{McMahon, \textit{Cold War on the Periphery}, 216-219.}
The inability of the United States to compete with the more advanced Communist propaganda effort was of great concern to US information program officials in India. US officials were concerned that the Soviet propaganda efforts would move India further away from cooperation with the United States. This was coupled with the fact that the worldwide Soviet propaganda effort at the time was exponentially greater than the American program. A 1955 US estimate of Communist spending on propaganda and other activities in India was as high as $2,000,000 a month. United States spending in India for an entire year amounted to only half of that — USIA allotments for its program in India were just under $1,300,000 in 1955. Also in 1955, an opinion poll conducted by the Information Agency noted that the Indian public seemed to have a better opinion of the Soviet Union than the United States. When asked “Do you feel there is a foreign government that is willfully preparing for a war of aggression,” seventy-nine percent of those who said yes (37% of those polled) specified the United States as the aggressive country. When questioned further about which side they would take in the event of war between the US and the USSR, half of those questioned said they would remain neutral, but most of those who would take sides (15%) would choose to support the USSR.

Comparatively, the Agency had limited success in affecting Indian attitudes about the United States. USIA emphasized the American desire for peace, US support for the independence of all free nations, and the defensive nature of American military power.

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and disarmament efforts. The information program was charged with working to correct wrong ideas about the US, and demonstrating the honorable and positive nature of the United States.\(^4\) However, in early 1956 a report by the NSC determined that “no progress” had been made toward the goal of bringing India closer to the West, and US officials were concerned that India seemed to be leaning closer to the Soviet Union.\(^5\)

The next year, the Eisenhower administration concluded that the ability of the United States to influence affairs in South Asia was “severely limited.” At the same time, the NSC added Communist China to its list of threats to American security, and identified India as “the leading political contender with Communist China in Asia,” noting that “in recent years both the USSR and Communist China have waged an intensive campaign to roll back the free world position in South Asia.” As India and Communist China were the only major competitors for the position indigenous leadership in Asia, the strength of democracy in India became an increasingly important issue to US policymakers during this time.\(^6\) US national security policy demonstrated the Eisenhower administration’s concerns that if this area were to fall under Communist control it could spark a “chain reaction,” the effects of which might be felt in Western Europe. The strength of democracy in India continued to be vital to US interests in the area, as “a strong India would be a successful example of an alternative to Communism in an Asian context and would permit the gradual development of the means to enforce its external security interests against Communist Chinese expansion into South and Southeast Asia.”\(^7\)

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\(^6\) NSC 5701, 10 January 1957, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, 8:30, 34.

NSC 5701, a 1957 revision of US policy toward South Asia, reiterated the fact that American security would best be served by strong governments that were friendly to the US and like-minded in their opposition to Communism. American officials counted the preservation of Indian national independence as vital to the protection of American interests in the area. The policy paper made note of increased Soviet efforts to “roll back the free world position in Asia,” pointing to diplomatic, economic, and propaganda initiatives put forth by the USSR. In a memo to the Department of State, USIS-India expressed concern that Communist expansion in the area was eased because of the India view that the US and the USSR were one and the same, explaining that “the Government’s determination not to take sides between Washington and Moscow tends to place the two sides on the same moral footing in the public mind and thus establish a measure of respectability for the Communist position which is only partially discounted by the Government’s well known aversion to the growth of Communism in India.”

By 1958, USIA officials had become even more concerned about the growth of Communist propaganda in India. Agency posts emphasized this fact in their reports, and urged the United States to make a greater effort in the contest for world influence. Officials noted that the disproportionate level of funding available to the Soviet propaganda apparatus compared to the amount available to the US program, a discrepancy clearly evidenced in the difference in the size of their respective target audiences. The Communist propaganda offensive targeted a broad segment of the

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53 NSC 5701, FRUS, 1955-1957, 8:30.


55 USIS New Delhi, “Despatch 1373.”
population, whereas the US program’s intended audience was very small. The main US information target audience consisted of those identified as “opinion molders,” however, in comparison Communist propaganda strategy was also directed “towards labor, students and the masses in recognition of the fact that a vote is a vote and that direct appeal to workers and peasants may be the best way to utilize the propaganda potential available through members of the CPI.”

Despite officials’ earlier concerns about the US program and their suggestions for improvement, little seems to have changed in terms of the target audiences and projects undertaken by the Agency in India. If the US information effort was to compete with the Soviet propaganda effort India, it was crucial that USIA get its message across not only to the opinion leaders in India but also to the masses. A large population combined with a democratic form of government meant that the number of people they were able to reach could be the deciding factor in an election – as shown by the success of the Communist Party of India (CPI) in winning control of the congress in the Indian state of Kerala the previous year. US information officials in India again stressed the need to respond to the success of the Soviet propaganda offensive by making a greater effort to reach the Indian masses, particularly in the rural areas.

Arthur Goodfriend, who served as the Public Affairs Officer in Delhi beginning in 1957, explained in The Twisted Image, a recounting of his time with USIS in India, that the genius of the Soviet propaganda strategy lay in the fact that it recognized the power of the masses.

To arouse and direct the masses was the Communist goal. The Soviets were awake to the awesome reality of the popular franchise, common in newly

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56USIS New Delhi, “Despatch 1373.”
independent states. They also understood the isolation of illiterates from the political machinery. In these two factors they saw their chance. Ferreting out areas in other societies where permanent tensions existed, where one class or another suffered from a sense of discrimination, where people hungered for food or status or freedom, the Soviets presented the Communist Party as the political instrument of the workers and peasants.\footnote{Arthur Goodfriend, \textit{The Twisted Image} (New York: St Martin's Press, 1963), 45.}

Tom Allen, the USIS Cultural Affairs Officer in Delhi, took Goodfriend under his wing when he first arrived in New Delhi. Much of Goodfriend's initial information about the situation in India in regards to the information program came from Allen, who, when asked about the opinion of the masses explained "we have very little contact with the masses. We know almost nothing about them. But it's out there in the mofussil – the countryside – that the Communists are making hay!"\footnote{Goodfriend, 78.} Goodfriend succinctly put into words the primary difference between the propaganda strategies of the United States and the Soviet Union: "USIS aimed at the pinnacle of India's population; Communism burrowed at the base, driving toward farmers, workers, minor government officials, and educated malcontents." He went on to explain that USIS activities were concentrated in large cities but "as for the villages, in the USIS scheme of things...they don't exist."\footnote{Goodfriend, 106-107.} USIS-India did not have the transportation needed to reach the rural areas or the manpower necessary to reach the large rural population.

The Communist propaganda successes in India resulted in part from the massive support system already in place within the country. An Agency report discussing the vast Communist propaganda effort at work in India during 1956 explained that "a broad base for the effort had been built in the past in India. There existed a sub-continent-wide
network of front organizations, publishing houses and local branches of the Communist Party. These were strategically located and commanded influence and resources well beyond the 100,000 members of the Party.\footnote{USIS New Delhi, "Communist Propaganda Activities in India in 1956," 10 June 1957, File Office of Research: Intelligence Bulletins, Memoranda and Summaries, 1954-1956, Box 5, RG 306, NA.} An example of the disparity between the information and propaganda programs of the superpower rivals within India can be seen in the area of publications. Compared to American publication efforts which consisted of the \textit{American Reporter}, the single paltry newspaper published by USIS, the Communist Party published anywhere from twenty to forty newspapers and magazines in India at any given time, the majority of which were published in a variety of local languages. In fact, the primary Soviet publication in India, \textit{Soviet Land}, a fully illustrated magazine focused on India and published twice a month in nine Indian languages as well as English, had recently been expanded from twenty-four to forty pages. Each issue also included a supplemental lesson on the Russian language.\footnote{USIS New Delhi, "Despatch 1373."} USIS officials noted that while Communist magazines such as \textit{Soviet Land} were "well edited and attractive journals, profusely illustrated, and with much use of color...the USIS has nothing here to offer of similar quality and attractiveness."\footnote{USIS New Delhi, "Communist Propaganda Activities in India in 1956."} The Soviets use of color and images was an important feature considering the extensive nature of illiteracy in India. In addition to press and publications, the Communist propaganda effort also relied upon an extensive book publishing program supported by no fewer than eighteen publishing houses, as well as Soviet and Chinese radio broadcasts, Soviet and Communist bloc film presentations, trade fairs and exhibits, and dramatic performances and festivals. The dramatic
performances and festivals "combining entertainment with an ideological message" were of particular importance to the Communist propaganda effort in that they were produced as part of an effort to reach the masses.\footnote{USIS New Delhi, "Communist Propaganda Activities in India in 1956."}

Also, the message that the Communists were working to get across was very much in line with Indian ideas of Panchshila and peaceful coexistence, and with the Indian desire to follow a separate path in world affairs. The same report explained that Communist propaganda emphasized the following themes: "India is accepted by the USSR as one of the great powers of the world, whose history, culture, and developing economy is greatly admired by the Soviet people; The USSR and especially Communist China have many mutual bonds with India – a long history of peace and friendship, common religions, similar problems of economic development, the same resistance to Western imperialism and European domination, and a common cultural background."

The Communist propaganda apparatus also emphasized its support of the principles of peaceful co-existence and Panchshila: "The Five Principles (Panchshila) are conducive to peace, friendship and co-existence, and are applicable beyond the Asian area where they originated. If practiced by all countries, they would eliminate the power bloc groupings which only result in tension and war."\footnote{USIS New Delhi, "Communist Propaganda Activities in India in 1956."} Conversely, the themes emphasized in US information output did not take the beliefs and values of the Indian population into account, instead, Goodfriend wrote, it was "so excessively American-centered as to be
virtually valueless in India. To much of it stressed divisive factors, such as America’s higher living standards, or accented the frivolous aspects of American life.”

The USIS Country Team strongly recommended that as a minimum response to the massive Soviet propaganda effort, *America Illustrated*, the single magazine already published by the Agency should be distributed in English. Also needed was an American magazine comparable to *Soviet Land*, the quality of which vastly outshone US efforts. Further, the exchange of persons program, which brought American specialists such as professors, journalists, editors, law experts, athletes, economists, business leaders and other leading professionals to Indian colleges and universities, should be emphasized and USIS language capacity increased. USIS also suggested that more exhibits should be brought to India, noting that “as the one medium that has demonstrated appeal for all Indians from Prime Minister to peasant, exhibits provide possibly the best means available to us for reaching masses of people.”

One of the most successful exhibits produced by USIS in India was the Family of Man exhibit shown in Bombay and Ahmedabad in early 1957. In the latter city the exhibit was open for twenty-nine days and drew nearly 200,000 visitors. This success came in part as the result of the use of special buses provided by the local government in Ahmedabad, which went out into the surrounding towns and villages in an effort to reach the rural population. A report to Agency headquarters in Washington the incredible turnout to the event was described as follows: “Throughout the 29 days it was people,

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65 Goodfriend, Twisted Image, 108.


67 USIS New Delhi, “Despatch 1373.”
people, and more people. They came by bus, rickshaw, and bicycle; on camel-back and in bullock carts; many came on foot from villages 10-15 miles away. Although the great success described in this report seems to be the exception rather than the rule in India, it is an example of how USIS could be very successful in reaching a large portion of the population.

Later in 1958, USIS New Delhi again broached the subject of stepping up the US information program to match the Soviet propaganda offensive. Compared to the Communist effort in India, USIS admitted that “although USIS is making fair headway within the limits of its resources, the hard fact is that in many important respects the US is hardly in the competition.” The Country Team reiterated the proposals made earlier that year, stating that “the official Indian climate is more favorable to an enlarged US information program than it was some years back” - a likely reference to the Government of India’s 1955 efforts to limit the spread of USIS library centers. Even with the proposed expansions, US propaganda efforts would still be “far below the level of current Communist propaganda efforts [and] without such a supplemental program the US efforts in India would be at so low a relative level that the US voice in India would be effectively drowned out.”

The 1959 USIS Country Plan for India demonstrated an understanding of the weaknesses of the US program, saying that “for the future several essentials need to be

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70 USIS New Delhi, “Despatch 673.”
taken into consideration: the nature of the message to be delivered, to what audience it is to be delivered, and by what media it is to be delivered.” The Plan went on to state that in terms of the message spread by the US information program, “a positive message dealing with desirable aspects of the US (or the West) is more valuable than a negative message dealing with the ills of Communism.”

Also, to be able to compete with the Communist propaganda effort, USIS-India recognized that it needed to expand its intended audience, although this would admittedly be difficult given the limited funding available. Most importantly, “the principle areas for expanded operations to reach larger audiences, or to reach them with greater impact, should be (1) college students, (2) labor, and (3) rural leaders.” Finally, the method of getting the US message across would have to be adjusted to meet the needs of the Indian population. The Plan admitted that “the greatest media emphasis has been on the written word – press, pamphlets, books, information libraries.” In order to succeed in India, “USIS should plan also to put greater emphasis on audio-visual and simplified reading materials, to greatly expand exhibit activities in provincial cities and towns...and utilize exchange of persons programs for emphasizing activities with youth, labor, and rural leaders.”

These are all areas in which the Communist propaganda effort had considerable success. USIS officials in India demonstrated a clear understanding that the Agency needed to adjust its methods and messages to effectively reach India’s large and diverse population. Perhaps the most important reason to revamp the program in India was also


stated in the proposal for 1959, which reiterated the fact that “for years to come, the [propaganda] contest will continue to determine whether India is to develop as a democratic, economically sound member of the Free World or is to gravitate into the Communist orbit.”

Given the examples in this chapter, it is clear that the US Information Agency encountered difficulty in accomplishing its objective in India for a number of reasons. Wary of threats to its sovereignty, the US information program faced opposition by the Indian government. At the same time, USIA faced the challenge of the Soviet propaganda offensive throughout the developing world. US information officials in India were not able to accomplish their objectives because the program lacked the resources needed to be more effective in the face of the Soviet propaganda challenge.

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CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

The work of the US Information Agency was an important part of the Eisenhower administration’s effort to incorporate psychological warfare strategies into the New Look. The United States hoped to maintain its alliances around the world and at the same time to build friendships in the third world. Eisenhower’s understanding of the importance of “soft” cultural weapons is seen in his efforts to improve the US information program, which provided necessary support for American foreign policy initiatives by explaining US policies and objectives to foreign peoples, and by working to create a favorable climate of opinion towards the US abroad. In the face of Communist political, economic, and psychological efforts to influence world opinion in their favor, the United States Information Agency played a part in the American effort to maintain the balance between the Communist and Free worlds and to gain an advantage over the Communists in the Cold War conflict.

This study has explored USIA operations in two very different areas. The case study on France looked at USIS operations in an allied country while the case study on India offered a similar glimpse into USIS operations in an uncommitted country. However, the difference between these two areas was not limited to their position in world affairs. In France, a country with a long history as a world leader in the area of intellectual thought and high culture, the professional media held a long established and influential position within the country. A large portion of the French population was literate and looked to the media, intellectuals and other elites for the majority of their
information on political, social, and economic matters. In such a highly developed society it was easy to move around the country because of the ease of modern transportation and because modern communication methods were readily available. This provided the information program with ease of access to the majority of the French people.

In India, the situation was very different. The sheer size of the country made it difficult for the Agency to reach many of the Indian people. Add to this the much larger population, the difficult terrain and lack of infrastructure, and it is easy to see why the USIA was more limited in its ability to accomplish its goals in India. The lower level of development in India affected the Agency’s ability to reach a larger portion of the population. More than eighty percent of the Indian population was illiterate. The majority of the Agency’s output was intended for those who could read and was not suitable for use with the Indian masses.

Despite the differences in the circumstances in these two countries, the USIA targeted its activities in both locations toward the elites. In France, this was an effective strategy because of the influential position of elites in the country and because of general population’s open access to media output. However, in India, with its much larger and more diverse population, the US information program would have been better served by targeting a larger portion of the population. Unlike in France, the masses did not look to the elites for guidance. Thus targeting the elites in India did not provide nearly the same benefit to the information program as it did in France. Others who would have likely made better targets included those in positions of influence in smaller cities and towns as well as rural and tribal leaders, particularly because those in elite circles had little contact
with the illiterate masses and even less influence. Although USIS officials in India recognized the importance of these target groups, available information shows that efforts to reach those portions of the population did not come to fruition. The staff, relatively few in numbers given the large area of responsibility, made it difficult for the USIS to expand its operations outside of the large cities where its operations were based. This meant that the vast portion of the Indian population residing in rural areas was largely neglected in USIA operations.

Another great disparity between the circumstances under which the US information program operated in France versus India involved differences in language. In France, the Agency was able to focus its operations more succinctly because it only had one language on which to focus – French. In India, although English was spoken by a large portion of the population, the many different languages spoken throughout India made it difficult for the USIA to focus its efforts. Instead, the information program was forced to expand its output to incorporate material translated into the handful of languages spoken by the greatest majorities of people. The Agency’s limited budget did not allow for the expansion in the number of languages in which its material was published. This meant that the Agency could not reach those who were part of more obscure language groups.

However, there were also quite a few common threads in the case studies on France and India. Both countries made efforts to pursue a path independent from the superpower contest between the United States and the Soviet Union, for similar reasons. The strong anti-Americanism of the majority of intellectuals in France, coupled with the equally strong desire to regain France’s position as the leader of world culture and
civilization, led many to hope that their nation would regain its position as a world leader and that other nations could look to France for a “third way” or a path in world affairs extraneous to the Cold War. The French disdain for US policy and distaste for collective security policies is easy to understand given French neutralist leanings and beliefs that their own civilization was superior and should not be led by an inferior entity. India had very different reasons for its pursuit of an independent path. India’s long history of civilization and tradition, coupled with its strong anti-imperialist feelings meant that it too did not look favorably on the United States efforts to spread its influence around the world. Additionally, India viewed the Cold War as a distraction from more vital issues, such as India’s internal problems with hunger, illiteracy, and unemployment. Instead, India hoped for peaceful co-existence and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations so it could address its own needs without unnecessary distractions.

French and Indian attitudes toward the Cold War were similar. Both France and India looked at the US and the USSR as moral equivalents. While US leaders saw the contest between the two superpowers as a contest between the forces of good versus evil, right versus wrong, and freedom versus oppression, the Cold War was viewed very differently in both France and India. One thing held in common between France and India was their distaste for American collective security measures. Neither country believed the Soviet Union should be feared as an aggressor the way the US officials would have preferred. Instead, many in both France and India viewed the United States as the more aggressive of the two superpowers. The strong anti-Communist message of the US Information program contrasted sharply with the Soviet message of peace. In France, distrust of American motives coupled with strong communist sympathy made it
difficult for USIS to accomplish its goals by relying upon anti-Communist measures. In India, the hopes for rapid development led to a preference for Soviet planning methods as the way to solve its domestic problems. In both France and India, the Soviet message of peaceful co-existence was much more popular than the negative anti-Communist messages spread by the US information program. Too often, the message the US was attempting to get across was not compatible with these two countries' point of view.

Given the French and Indian outlook on world affairs, it is obvious that a purely anti-Communist message had little chance of success in either country.

Finally, the Agency’s limited funding affected the ability of its programs in both France and India to accomplish their objectives. The US Information Agency’s total budget was very small compared to that of the Soviet propaganda effort. The Agency’s difficulties in convincing Congress of its funding needs meant that it was not able to improve its existing programs let alone expand to address its information needs around the world. While the USIS officials working in the countries examined in the case studies often recognized the need for improvements in the US information program, they were generally limited in their ability to facilitate these changes. While its programs in France appear to have been more successful, the limited funding available to the Agency as a whole meant that money had to be diverted away from Western Europe to areas in more danger of being affected by growing Communist influence. In India, although information officials recognized the needs for an expanded program and for new methods of spreading the US message to the rural population in the face of the expanded Communist propaganda offensive, the Agency was not able to make the necessary changes because of its limited budget compared to the vast size of the population.
Although the US Information Agency had a few small successes, overall it was not able to provide much support in India for US foreign policy initiatives.

There are some general conclusions that may be drawn from the case studies on France and India. First, it was difficult for the US Information Agency to accomplish its goals because of the limited funding available to the overall information program. The Agency also was limited in its success when it did not take into consideration the beliefs, attitudes, culture, and general circumstances in countries where it operated. More often than not, USIS output of an anti-Communist nature was not successful. In both France and in India, this was because the two superpowers were viewed as equals, with neither country seen as better or as worse than the other. Strong anti-Communist leanings were not present and so it did no good for the Agency to attempt to convince the people otherwise. Another finding is that sometimes reliance upon formal media outlets was not the best method to accomplish the goals of the US information program. The Communists seemed to have recognized these points and implemented their information programs with these ideas in mind. USIS output was often too American-centered, and stressed divisive factors while the Soviets recognized the importance of crafting a message of peace that would be persuasive and also took into consideration a country’s unique internal situation and worldview.

Eisenhower’s belief in the importance of the information program is evidenced in his continuous efforts to improve it; the president requested a final study of US information efforts near the end of his presidency. The President’s Committee on Information Activities Abroad, better known as the Sprague Committee, concluded that while the US information program had “become increasingly effective,” their report
made note of the “necessity of continuing improvement in this aspect of government, on
an orderly but urgent basis.” While it was not always as effective as it could have been,
the US Information Agency did develop into a more mature tool of foreign policy under
the guidance of President Eisenhower. In his last State of the Union address, Eisenhower
applauded the development of the information program during his time in office, saying
“The United States Information Agency has been transformed into a greatly improved
medium for explaining our policies and actions to audiences overseas, answering the lies
of communist propaganda, and projecting a cleaner image of American life and culture.”
Yet he could not convince Congress to provide the funding necessary for the program to
achieve its full potential. In his memoirs, the president wrote of his efforts to support the
information program because “the Agency was a non-military arm of defense and a voice
of our foreign policy, both of which would be helped by achieving genuine understanding
among the peoples of the world.” Regrettably, “the Agency had never been popular with
the Congress.”

Given the understanding of the information program’s deficiencies demonstrated
by Agency officials abroad, the US Information Agency would undoubtedly have been
able to improve its programs around the world with more Congressional support.
Working with the limited resources at its disposal, the Agency was successful when it
relied upon messages that were not in direct opposition to a country’s deeply held beliefs
and when it used methods that were effective in reaching a large portion of the

1 The President’s Committee on Information Activities Abroad, Conclusions and Recommendations of
the President’s Committee on Information Activities Abroad, DDE Office Files, Reel 26, 2.


population. Overall, if the Agency had relied upon a more positive message and adapted its output to meet the needs of its audience it would have likely been more successful in its work to create a favorable climate of opinion abroad in support of Eisenhower’s global mission to build collective security and to prevent the expansion of Communist influence abroad.
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