

**Selling America, Ignoring Vietnam: The United States Information Agency in  
South Vietnam, 1954-1960**

by

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## **Abstract**

Once a neglected institution, the United States Information Agency (USIA) has recently received attention from scholars who wish to study American public relations, propaganda, and cultural diplomacy during the Cold War. Here, I present a case study of the USIA's activities in South Vietnam in 1954-1960 as a way to further investigate these issues. This thesis explores both the overt and covert aspects of the USIA's operations within Vietnam, and attempts to gauge the Agency's effectiveness. My study contends that forces internal to early American Cold War culture—racism and class—set the parameters of the USIA's mission, defined the nature of its propaganda, and ultimately contributed to its ineffectiveness. Saddled to their own set of racist and self-referential belief systems, USIA officials remained remarkably ignorant of Vietnamese culture to the detriment of their mission's success. As such, the central goals of the USIA's mission—to inculcate the Vietnamese with American liberal democratic values, to market the Diem regime as the legitimate manifestation of these principles, and to taint Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DVN) as a puppet state of the Soviet Union—never took hold. Following the pioneering work of Kenneth Osgood, this study also sheds light on the USIA's preference for “gray” propaganda: USIA-produced propaganda which appeared to emit from an independent or indigenous source. Whereas previous studies of the USIA have focused on the more overt forms of its propaganda, my work demonstrates that the bulk of the Agency's operations were of a more clandestine nature, utilizing private Americans and local Vietnamese agents to carry out its missions.

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## Introduction

In 1950, the United States was presented with a dilemma in Vietnam. In the wake of the 1949 Chinese Communist victory, the outbreak of the Korean War, and France's increasingly perilous grip on its Indochinese colonies, the logic of American power necessitated an increased American involvement in this nascent decolonizing nation. To American planners, however, the people of Vietnam posed a great challenge to US designs. As a high ranking member of the American State Department Policy Planning Staff bemoaned, "We sometimes tend to forget that the majority of Asians is a peasant [*sic*] steeped in Medieval ignorance, poverty and localism. Preoccupied with extracting a meager livelihood, his horizon barely extends beyond the next village". Added to this primitiveness and lack of spatial intelligence, the author went on to complain, was the fact that the Vietnamese were "insensitive to invocations on our part of the bonds of democratic ideology—which do not exist for them—or the desirability of preserving Western civilization".<sup>1</sup> By the end of this same decade, the US government had invested considerable amounts of money and manpower in an effort to correct this perceived failure of the Vietnamese character. At the centre of this American civilizing mission was US President Dwight Eisenhower's newly minted United States Information Agency (USIA)—an institution whose purported goal was "to persuade peoples that it [*sic*] lied in their own interest to take actions which were also consistent with the national objectives of the United States".<sup>2</sup> The story of this Agency's experience in Post-Geneva Conference 1950s Vietnam (1954-1960)—its

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in, Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950*. (London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000): 183

<sup>2</sup> Proposed National Security Council Directive To The United States Information Agency. FRUS 1952-54, 2, (2): 1724.

activities, its methods, its complexities and absurdities, and ultimately, its failure—is the major concern of this essay.

An in-depth examination of the USIA's mission in Vietnam raises questions which are pertinent to America's Cold War legacy, particularly in the realm of cultural diplomacy. What were the motives behind the US Government's creation of an official propaganda agency? What was the USIA's relationship to America's growing Southeast Asian empire? How did the USIA attempt to transmit its messages to its prospective audiences? What images of America did USIA officials present to the Vietnamese people, and what images of Vietnam were presented to this same group? How did the USIA fit into the larger state-building project under the Diem regime? What roles did private American businesses and local Vietnamese actors play in facilitating the daily operations of the USIA? What ideological conceptions motivated the USIA's involvement in Vietnam, and how did these same precepts shape the nature of the Agency's propaganda? What was the cumulative legacy of the USIA in Vietnam, and how do we gauge its effectiveness? Finally, how did the Agency's Vietnamese targets respond to the USIA's operations? Though all pertinent, it is these last three related questions that are the central preoccupations of this paper. At its core, this study contends that forces internal to early American Cold War culture—racism, and class—set the parameters of the USIA's mission, defined the nature of its propaganda, and ultimately contributed to its ineffectiveness. Armed with a self-referential ethos of paternalistic domination, USIA agents consistently ignored, misunderstood, and degraded a population that they were ostensibly seeking to create a common cause with. Rather than integrating the Vietnamese people into America's Cold War empire, this one-way process of attempted cultural penetration meant that the USIA's legacy in Vietnam was

essentially one of innocuousness. As will be clear from the following investigation, Vietnamese peoples from all ends of the social strata had scant use for the product that the USIA was peddling. By the end of the Eisenhower Administration's tenure, none of the USIA's central goals—to inculcate the Vietnamese with American liberal democratic values, to market the Diem regime as the legitimate manifestation of these principles, and to taint Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DVN) as a puppet state of the Soviet Union—had been achieved.

But why the USIA, and why 1950s Vietnam? To begin with, there is a dearth of scholarly writings on the Agency itself. Officially established as an independent agency on August 1, 1953, the USIA was a critical component of Eisenhower's broader goal of integrating psychological considerations into the formulation of American national security policy.<sup>3</sup> Despite its centrality to the Eisenhower Administration's psychological warfare strategy, the USIA has until recently been a neglected and misunderstood institution for historians. As Thomas Paterson has noted, "first-rate historical studies of the United States Information Agency are wanting".<sup>4</sup> Much of this inattention at least partly stems from the traditionally haphazard manner in which its records have been kept, as well as the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act, which restricted the Agency's self-publicity.<sup>5</sup> Because of these opaque traces, early drafts of the USIA's history were written by practicing or ex-USIA employees. Though these works offer useful insider accounts of the

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Eisenhower's commitment to psychological warfare, and the USIA's origins, see: Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 46-103.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in, Mark Haefele, "John F. Kennedy, USIA, and World Public Opinion", *Diplomatic History*, Vol.25 No. 1, (Winter 2001): 64.

<sup>5</sup> The Smith-Mundt Act, drafted by Congressmen Karl Mundt and Alexander Smith, outlined the parameters of US Information Programs. For details of its provisions and creation, see: Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), xiv, 36-42.

Agency's operations and bureaucratic turf wars, they have also tended to be superficial and biased—concerning themselves primarily with rationalizations of the USIA's programs and advice for future cultural diplomats.<sup>6</sup>

Much to our benefit, a gradual opening up and reorganizing of the archives, coupled with an increased interest in the cultural aspects of American foreign policy, has led to a re-evaluation of this long-neglected institution. Pioneering works by Walter L. Hixson and Kenneth Osgood, for example, have successfully contextualized the early history of the USIA within a broader effort by the American national security state to bring culture to the forefront of the Cold War contest between the US and USSR.<sup>7</sup> While this shift is most welcome, two critical facets of the USIA's history remain relatively unexamined. Firstly, case studies which offer a rigorous analysis of the specific contents of the USIA's messages—particularly outside of Europe—are still lacking. Although Marc Frey's *Tools of Persuasion: America's Modernizing Mission in Southeast Asia* provides a rare analysis of the USIA's attempts to influence the government and civilian populations of Southeast Asia, his emphasis on the regional component of the USIA's mission means that the specific operations within each country's missions are left peripheral to the analysis.<sup>8</sup> By focusing intensively on the USIA's propaganda within Vietnam, my work offers an alternative perspective: one in which the actual propaganda constitutes a major focus of the analysis. It is my conviction that through this mode of analysis we are better

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<sup>6</sup> . For some of the key texts outlining the history of the USIA, written by former officers, see, "Thomas Sorensen, *The World War: The Story of American Propaganda*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1968); Wilson Dizar, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004); and Cull, *The Cold War*. These works are effective in tracing the history and bureaucratic challenges that the agency faced, but often lack critical analysis.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War*; Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961*. (New York: St.. Martin's Press, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Marc Frey, "Tools of Empire: Persuasion and the United State's Modernizing Mission in Southeast Asia" *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 27. No.4 (September 2003): 543-568

able to grasp the ways in which USIA officials imagined both themselves and their Vietnamese contemporaries.

Secondly, as Osgood notes, “the fact that most USIA propaganda was unattributed to the United States government has not yet been explored”.<sup>9</sup> The following discussion addresses this oversight by placing a heavy focus on what would become a hallmark of the USIA’s early history: “gray” propaganda. According to early USIA manuals, “gray propaganda [*sic*] was designed to appear as if it emanated from a nonofficial or indigenous source”.<sup>10</sup> In the minds of USIA officials, this form of propaganda was useful because information was thought to be more believable if it came from a familiar, disinterested source.<sup>11</sup> Under this assumption, the USIA worked diligently to conceal its involvement—soliciting assistance from local media, intellectuals, and other leading opinion makers to proselytize on America’s behalf.<sup>12</sup> As the Agency’s first director Theodore Streibert remarked, these arrangements were used to shield the US from charges that it was engaging in propaganda activities abroad, even if in reality this was precisely the case.<sup>13</sup> While scholars have shied away from exploring this phenomenon, the critical role that these government/private arrangements played in the early history of the USIA cannot be overstated: As a board of consultants on intelligence activities in 1956 noted, “a very high percentage” of USIA propaganda was implemented through these semi-clandestine

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<sup>9</sup> Osgood, *Total War*, 389, n. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Osgood, *Total War*, 93.

<sup>11</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (hereafter USNA), RG 306, Box 14, “A Study of USIA Operating Assumptions: Volume 2,” December 1954, A-1-3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, A-13.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Information Agency: Strategic Principles. FRUS, 1952-1954, 2, (2): 1767.



networks.<sup>14</sup> Vietnam, as we shall see, was no exception and therefore provides us with an excellent vantage point from which to observe these elaborate arrangements.

Beyond adding these two pieces to the jigsaw puzzle of the USIA's legacy, this discussion necessarily encounters the daunting historiography of the Eisenhower Administration's legacy in Vietnam. Once dominated either by debates over "flawed containment" or historical blame, more recent analyses have complicated the picture by rescuing the issues of culture, decolonization, and neocolonialism from the periphery.<sup>15</sup> A major contributor to the first of these facets has been Seth Jacobs. While not discounting the role of geopolitical imperatives or anti-communism, Jacobs has convincingly demonstrated that pervasive pathologies within the American national security culture—namely, racism and Christianity—played critical roles in defining the American/Diem partnership.<sup>16</sup> Statler has likewise recast how we view this critical period in American and Vietnamese history by documenting America's conscious attempt to replace French colonialism with a superior American form of "neocolonialism".<sup>17</sup> Most promising to our analysis is Statler's decision to give as much attention to the Eisenhower Administration's attempts to Americanize Vietnamese culture as she does to American efforts at economic and political penetration. By examining a major tool in facilitating this process—the USIA—my paper further navigates some of the terrain already charted by Statler.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 97.

<sup>15</sup> For a succinct account the Eisenhower historiography and an expression of the "flawed containment" thesis see: David Anderson, *Trapped by Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam, 1953-1961*, (New York: Columbia University, 1989); xi-xiii; For an example of blame assessment, see Edward Cuddy, "Vietnam: Mr. Johnson's War. Or Mr. Eisenhower's?" *The Review of Politics*. Vol. 65. No. 4. (Autumn, 2003), 351-774.

<sup>16</sup> Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia*. (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Kathryn C. Statler, *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam*, (Lexington: University of Press of Kentucky, 2007).

Stepping outside the confines of the USIA and Vietnam War historiographies, I also weigh in on what Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht has labeled “The Grand Debate”.<sup>18</sup> From the intellectual and cultural explosions of the 1960s onwards, American foreign relations scholars have perennially engaged in an argument over the nature of American cultural expansion during the Cold War. If somewhat hackneyed, the questions that arise from this debate remain pertinent to the USIA’s history: Why did American “cold warriors” consciously export American culture to remote areas of the globe? Did peoples of others nations resist such intrusions? Why or Why not? Finally, were early Cold War American policymakers “cultural imperialists”—as “New Left” scholars such as William Appleman Williams have charged—or was the picture far more complex? And if so, in what ways?

As Hecht makes clear, it is this final question that seems to have aroused the most consternation. Once the dominant label for describing the US’ Cold War cultural expansion, the term “cultural imperialism”—“the use of political and economic power to exalt and spread the values and habits of a foreign culture at the expense of a native culture”—has recently taken a shellacking from a disparate group of counter critics.<sup>19</sup> According to these critics, cultural imperialism’s utility as an analytic concept is undermined by its “provincialism”, its failure to account for resistance from local actors, and its penchant for masking “anti-Americanism” as historical scholarship. As such, the more politically neutral term, “cultural transfer”—which proposes that cultural expansion ought to be viewed as “a continuous process of negotiation

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<sup>18</sup> Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, “Shame on Us? Academic, Cultural Transfer, and the Cold War—a Critical Review”. *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Summer 2000), 465.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 472.

among ethnic, regional, and national groups”—has been the preferred nomenclature since the 1990s.<sup>20</sup>

And yet, according to my own findings the term cultural transfer offers us little help in understanding the USIA’s early history—particularly within Vietnam. As the USIA was the American Government’s principal motor for powering the machine of American cultural expansion, this verdict does not bode well for proponents of this viewpoint. The fatal problem with cultural transfer, if applied to the USIA, is that it ignores the prism through which the early cold warriors viewed the role of culture in the rapidly shifting global politics of the early Cold War. To make sense of this criticism, we need only look at the comments of Streibert, a man who held no illusions about the USIA’s exact purpose. As he noted, because of the ideological character of the Cold War conflict, all of the USIA’s work constituted “political warfare”.<sup>21</sup> In the minds of men like Streibert, at stake in the Cold War conflagration was no less than the hearts and minds of the entire globe, and the major weapon in the US’ arsenal was propaganda. Thus, from its inception, the USIA was in the business of imposition, not mediation, negotiation, or dialogue. Interestingly, moreover, is that the principle targets of this form of political warfare were not those within the Soviet orbit, but rather consisted of “the uncommitted, the wavering, the confused, the apathetic, or the doubtful within the free world”; in other words, the USIA’s mission consisted of a concerted assault on the potential forces of neutrality within those nations outside of the communist yoke.<sup>22</sup> As we shall see, the Southeast Asian region to which Vietnam

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<sup>20</sup> For a summary of these arguments and various works dealing with this subject see, Gienow-Hecht, “Shame on US”, 479-494.

<sup>21</sup> Paper Prepared in the United States Information Agency: U.S. Information Agency Strategic Principles. FRUS, 1952-1954, 2, (2): 1762.

<sup>22</sup> Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 92.

belonged formed a significant portion of this nebulous bloc. If we are to study the USIA's involvement in Vietnam, therefore, a more useful methodology than cultural transfer—one which allows us to explore the various contours of coercion that the USIA employed, while also accounting for the limitations of its power and the Vietnamese people's responses to its overtures—is required.

## Methodological Considerations

To anchor the following discussion, I employ two analytic categories: race, and class. As the interplay of these forces, so endemic to America's post-World War Two ethos, defined, and ultimately undermined whatever chances there were of intercultural harmony between the American and Vietnamese peoples, an explanation of their meanings is in order. Once considered peripheral to understanding America's sordid involvement in Vietnam's modern history, a slate of new research has drawn attention to the critical role that racial ideology played in the formulation of American policy in Vietnam in the decades prior to the 1965 invasion.<sup>23</sup> However, the literature on racism and US policy in Indochina is far from monolithic. Mark Bradley, for example, observes that while from the early 1950s onward, the American perception of Chinese and Korean soldiers transformed from one of pejorative condescending to one of respect, the Vietnamese remained saddled to the label of an "unaggressive, non-mechanical, and un-material people".<sup>24</sup> Jacobs, on the other hand, documents that during this same period, Vietnamese people were thought by American leaders to be "exceptional in their adaptability to Western political and economic procedures and their gratitude for American tutelage." In this sense, they became a "superior breed of Asians".<sup>25</sup> That these two authors—using similar source materials, a similar time frame, and a similar analytic paradigm—could arrive at such drastically different conclusions, underscores the degree to which racial ideology as a methodological tool must be wielded with extreme caution. As Jacobs notes, racial stereotypes are "promiscuous

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<sup>23</sup>For an example of this diverse set of literature, see: Marc Frey, "Tools of Empire"; Seth Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin*; Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era*", (London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and, Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam*.

<sup>24</sup> Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam*", 184.

<sup>25</sup> Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man*, 17.

creatures”, infinitely malleable and capable of accommodating a plethora of contradictory notions.<sup>26</sup> Bringing epistemological clarity to the issues of race and American foreign policy is therefore an onerous task.

These councils aside, there is room for common ground between Bradley’s and Jacobs’ positions, as a unifying thread woven throughout their work—among others—is a strong sense of American paternalism. Regardless of whether the Vietnamese were model Orientals or epitomes of the apparent backwardness of the region, American tutelage was a permanent fixture. But what was the source of this paternalism? The answer to this question requires a brief examination of the oriental’s position vis-à-vis the 1950s American imagination. Firstly, I argue that orientalist prejudices help explain the American, and therefore the USIA’s mission in Vietnam. As Edward Said observed over three decades ago, “orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and...’the Occident’”, which worked as an instrument of western domination. If the “West” was adult, masculine, rational, and individualistic, the “East” was correspondently childish, feminine, irrational, and complacent.<sup>27</sup> Though Said was primarily concerned with the British and French conception of the Islamic World, a similar dichotomous distinction between America and the Far East saturated the minds of Americans in the early years of the Cold War—to a certain extent justifying, and even necessitating the projection of American military and cultural power into the region. As Christina Klein has demonstrated, this binary logic informed elements of post-World War Two “middlebrow” texts about Asia, such as *The King and I*, *Saturday Review*, and *Readers Digest*, in turn creating a racialized discourse about American/Asian relations which helped

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>27</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 2.

solidify an interventionist consensus within Main Street America.<sup>28</sup> In the upper echelons of American power, anti-Oriental sentiment also had its choir boys, with Eisenhower's personal envoy in the Vietnam, General J. Lawton Collins, warning Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in 1954 that democratization in Vietnam would prove difficult because of the "oriental psychology" of the country's occupants. According to Collins, this weakness inhibited the population from making the "mental adjustments" that self-determination required.<sup>29</sup> If American designs were to succeed in Vietnam, a radical reorientation of the Vietnamese psyche was therefore in order.

Such coarse orientalist frameworks undoubtedly had their adherents within America, but they were not hegemonic. Indeed, the post-World War Two period witnessed a break from the crude Social Darwinist notions of racial hierarchies within the social sciences to the more subtle forms of discrimination embedded in "modernization theory". According to Michael Latham, modernization theory rested on the following assumptions: 1) that a sharp dichotomy existed between "traditional" and "modern societies"; 2) that economic and social changes were closely related to one another; 3) that development towards a modern state was achieved in a linear direction; and 4) that developing societies could only enter into modernity under the stewardship of the "enlightened" developed nations.<sup>30</sup> However, as Bradley notes, "modernization theory reflected many of the central assumptions of the racialized cultural hierarchies" that had underpinned previous American missions throughout the globe.<sup>31</sup> Despite its watered-down

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<sup>28</sup> Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam*, 186.

<sup>30</sup> Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America*, 187.

academic tone, modernization theory did not replace orientalist racism, but simply merged with it to form the rather complex, and often contradictory attitude that defined the US' early experiences in Vietnam. Cumulatively, these mutually re-enforcing doctrines resembled David Theo Goldberg's characterization of liberal racism—one in which the "Other's" value is determined by their adherence to Anglo-Saxon liberalist norms such as democratic governance, rule of the market, and technological progress.<sup>32</sup> Armed with this ethos, US policy makers placed themselves atop a pedestal from which they cast a condescending gaze upon the supposed "backward" post-colonial states of Southeast Asia. This meant that while purportedly benevolent, American attempts at cultural transmission in these newly formed states were overpowered by a pungent odor of racist contempt. Thus, in the case of Vietnam, the USIA was charged with propagating notions of cultural harmony, modernity, and democracy to what high-ranking Americans still viewed as "a raggedy-ass little fourth-rate country".<sup>33</sup> Given these contradictory attitudes, a disjuncture between the USIA's lofty goals and its actual methods was bound to arise.

The USIA's paternalistic behaviour was furthered by the existing class biases of the American liberal elite who dominated the Cold War culture of national security. Though authors such as Alexander Woodside and Gabriel Kolko have demonstrated the integral role of class in defining the history of the Vietnam War, when analyzing America's role in the conflict, cultural theorists of international relations have left this issue largely unexamined.<sup>34</sup> Class interests and

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<sup>32</sup> David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Gabriel Kolko, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a War, 1940-1975*. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986); Alexander Woodside, *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976).



their corresponding prejudices, however, have played a critical role in American intellectual life—particularly in the domain of propaganda. In 1928, for example, the nation’s leading public relations theorist, Edward Bernays, remarked that,

Clearly it is the intelligent minorities which need to make use of propaganda continuously and systematically. In the active proselytizing minorities in whom selfish interests and public interests coincide lie the progress and development of America. Only through the active energy of the intelligent few can the public at large become aware of and act upon new ideas.<sup>35</sup>

Again, in 1941 Harold Lasswell, another theorist and advocate of the elite use of propaganda, gleefully boasted that “the modern propagandist, like the modern psychologist, recognizes that men are often poor judges of their own interests, flitting from one alternative to the next without solid reason or clinging timorously to the fragments of some mossy rock of ages”. The propagandist’s duty, therefore, was to frame peoples’ behaviour accordingly.<sup>36</sup> As America ascended to the status of the “Free World” hegemon, these views became globalized, with the American national security elite playing the role of the benevolent self-interested teacher to its docile, third world clients. Indeed, in the above passages, both men, who would later become cheerleaders for the expansion of the USIA, reveal a sentiment that is integral to understanding the USIA’s mission in South Vietnam: namely, that the Vietnamese peoples—as passive members of the lumpen-global masses—could be moulded into whatever image the USIA cast upon them. Stripped of their agency, the Vietnamese were envisioned as a vulnerable, unthinking horde, which in turn made American propaganda a moral and strategic necessity. As

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<sup>35</sup> Edward Bernays, *Propaganda*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1928), 31.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Said, *Orientalism*, 292.

a senior member of the USIA remarked about Southeast Asia in 1955, “one of the reasons the Communists are able to make their points is that the people to whom they are talking to do not know any better”—the Vietnamese’s yearnings for national community or land reform apparently not registering in the imaginations of USIA officials.<sup>37</sup> Putting an end to this dangerous state of childlike ignorance was an integral component of the American nation building effort in South Vietnam and the USIA would become the pedagogical apparatus for facilitating this development.

The interplay of these two forces—racism and class—is critical to our understanding of the USIA’s involvement in post-Geneva Vietnam. Ubiquitous throughout the intellectual culture of the USIA, these two notions defined the USIA’s objectives, characterized the nature of its propaganda and implementation, and ultimately contributed to its failure. When fused together, the USIA’s mission in Vietnam amounted to an attempt at cultural imperialism, but a largely unsuccessful one. While the USIA sought to alter the cultural DNA of the embryonic Vietnamese nation, the self-referential belief system of the Agency’s members led to a remarkably primitive understanding of Vietnamese culture—in turn alienating significant segments of the Vietnamese populous. In practical terms, this meant that the Agency’s legacy in Vietnam during these years was essentially one of innocuousness. To illustrate this argument, I will focus on the activities of the two most active sub-divisions of the USIA in South Vietnam—the Press and Publications Service (IPS), and the Motion Picture Service (IMS)—with a particular emphasis being placed on the methods of distribution as well as the content of the propaganda itself. Structurally, this paper organizes itself under four major sections. In the first

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<sup>37</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 43, “Bradford- Program in Indochina Geared to Individuals Because of Lack of Communication”, March 14 1956.

of these, I examine America's broader foreign policy in Southeast Asia and Vietnam's place within the US' expanding empire throughout this region. In my second section, I outline the USIA's specific mission in Vietnam, and uncover the state/private/local partnerships that were utilized to disseminate USIA-produced propaganda in a semi-covert fashion. My third section then offers the reader a window into specific USIA propaganda campaigns that were aimed at the Vietnamese population. Finally, in the fourth segment, I analyze the effectiveness of the Agency's various operations. Through this inquiry, we will not only gain a greater understanding of the USIA's role in the state-building project in southern Vietnam, but also shed light on the nature of the US' growing Cold War empire in Southeast Asia.

## Vietnam's Place in the American Southeast Asian Empire

To grasp US policy towards Vietnam in the early part of the 1950s, one must understand the significance of the Southeast Asian region vis-à-vis the expanding American empire.<sup>38</sup> In the imaginations of American planners, Southeast Asia—due to its dislocation from WW II, its revolutionary nationalism, its decolonization, its abundance of resources, and the 1949 communist victory in China—was an important, if threatening domain of American power.<sup>39</sup> The grim portrait of this region, and its implications to the American-led world order, were spelled out in a 1952 National Security Staff Study. The report carried dire warnings that communist advances in the region would force a quick realignment of forces within Asia and the Middle East towards global communism, which would in turn threaten “the stability and security of Europe”. Additionally, because of Southeast Asia’s critical role as a provider of natural resources and trade to Japan, a shift in the balance of power could threaten the Japanese economy and compel this rebuilding Asian powerhouse to join the communist orbit. Finally, the NSC authors warned that in the event of a global war, a communist infiltration of Southeast Asia would cut off American lines of communication and offer the Soviet Union a series of military bases which could be used to attack areas as diverse as Australia, the Far East, Africa, and the Middle East.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Here, Southeast Asia refers to Indochina (later Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos), Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

<sup>39</sup> McMahon, *The Limits of Empire*, 45.

<sup>40</sup> NSC Staff Study on United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Communist Aggression in Southeast Asia. February 13, 1952. *The Pentagon Papers* V.1. (Boston, Beacon Press, 1971): 375-376.

Combined together, these apocalyptic scenarios formed what Gabriel Kolko calls “the perfect integration of all the elements of the domino theory”.<sup>41</sup> The “domino theory”, which in its most simplified form argued that if any country succumbed to communist pressure, the likelihood of a neighbouring country collapsing also rose, came to define much of US foreign policy throughout the Cold War. Partially because of its proximity to Communist China, and partially because of Ho Chi Minh’s increasingly successful anti-colonial campaign against France, Vietnam became the key domino in this region.<sup>42</sup> Prevention of a communist takeover of the former French colony, therefore, was paramount.

From May 8, 1950 until July 1954, the implementation of this strategic imperative translated into a political and financial commitment to France’s war effort against Ho’s Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). In 1950 the US quickly moved to recognize the French-backed State of Vietnam—ostensibly led by the former Vietnamese emperor Bao Dai—and allocated over 15 million dollars in military assistance to the French army.<sup>43</sup> However, the French defeat at the military garrison of Dien Bien Phu on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1954, and the subsequent Geneva Conference—which temporarily partitioned Vietnam at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel pending reunification elections in 1956—compelled the Eisenhower Administration to alter its strategy, if not its goals.<sup>44</sup> Almost immediately after the Conference’s agreements—that neither the US nor the Government of South Vietnam actually signed—the Eisenhower Administration embarked on a massive state-building project, which by the end of its tenure had ballooned into a

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<sup>41</sup> Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, 76.

<sup>42</sup> Report by The National Security Council on The Position of the United States With Respect to Indochina, February 27, 1950. *Pentagon Papers* V.1, 361-362.

<sup>43</sup> Statler, *Replacing France*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> For an account of the Geneva Conferences proceedings, see, *The Pentagon Papers*, V.1: 110-178.

multibillion dollar endeavour comprising over one thousand Americans. Critical to the success or failure of this enterprise was Ngo Dinh Diem.

History's verdict has been so unkind to Diem that it is hard now to imagine why the US invested so heavily in this megalomaniacal client. In order to make sense of the American/Diem, it is crucial to note that the US followed a two-pronged strategy in Vietnam: the removal of French influence and the buttressing of an indigenous nationalist alternative to Ho's DRV.<sup>45</sup> On the surface level at least, Diem appeared to have fit this criterion.<sup>46</sup> As a man who had quarrelled with the French and fought the communists, Diem was by 1954 "one of the very few unequivocally anti-French and anti-Communist politicians" in South Vietnam.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the newly appointed Prime Minister had spent over two years in the US (1951-53), where he established ties with influential Americans, such as Senators John F. Kennedy and Mike Mansfield, who lobbied for his support from 1954 onward.<sup>48</sup> The result was that over the remainder of the decade, the US built around Diem "an entire bureaucracy" at the political, economic, and cultural levels.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> NSC Staff Study on United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Communist Aggression in Southeast Asia. February 13, 1952. Pentagon Papers, V.1: 378-379.

<sup>46</sup> Here I am using the conventional interpretation of US support for Diem. For an alternative argument—which cites modernization theory and religion as key factors in the US decision to back Diem—see, Jacobs, "America's Miracle man", 3-22.

<sup>47</sup> Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, 83.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph G. Morgan, *The Vietnam Lobby: The American Friends of Vietnam, 1955-1975*. (London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997): ix-xiii.

<sup>49</sup> Statler, *Choosing France*, 2.

## USIA Purposes, Structure, and Operations in Vietnam

A small part of this bureaucracy was the newly formed United States Information Agency. At a total annual budget that expanded from roughly 100 million dollars in 1954 to over 132 million by 1959, the USIA became the official means by which the American way of life was advertised throughout the globe.<sup>50</sup> Known as the United States Information Service (USIS) abroad, the agency, while technically independent, operated under the guidance of the Department of State.<sup>51</sup> Structurally, the USIA was headed by a Deputy Director, who by the end of the decade participated in the National Security Council (NSC), and was a member of the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB), the administration's centre for psychological warfare planning.<sup>52</sup> Below the Director stood the Office of Plans, which was responsible for formulating Agency plans and advising the State Department on international opinion trends.<sup>53</sup> These plans would then be distributed to four regional directors (Europe, the Far East, Latin America, the Near East and South Asia, and Africa), who would then interpret these plans and provide guidance to each individual country Mission (USIS)<sup>54</sup>.

Headed by a Public Affairs Officer (PAO), the USIS was tied directly to American embassies throughout the globe, and was therefore fully integrated into the broader diplomatic

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<sup>50</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 43, "1948-64: USIA Appropriations for FY 49 Thru FY 64", 2 July, 1964..

<sup>51</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 14 "The Agency in Brief: Summary of Laws and Regulations Historical Development, Organization and Mission, Description of Major Activities, Overseas Installations, Summary Budget Data." January 1959. C\_1-C\_6.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Created in 1953, the OCB replaced Truman's largely ineffective Psychological Strategy Board (PSB). As Osgood notes, the OCB was established as an adjunct to the NSC in order to implement psychological considerations into policy. Previously, the PSB had been attached to the State Department, which had lead to bureaucratic impediments. For details, see: Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 85-88.

<sup>53</sup> "The Agency in Brief," D\_2.

<sup>54</sup> The difference in acronyms was due to the fact that the phrase "Information Agency" had an intelligence connotation in many languages. See, Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 89.

mission in each country.<sup>55</sup> Despite their position at the bottom of the totem pole, the USIS officers in each respective country were assigned with critical tasks. Within each mission, the USIS ran five media services: 1) the Information Broadcasting Service (IBS), which operated the Voice of America radio program; 2) the Information Television Service (ITS); 3) the Information Centre Services (ICS), which maintained libraries; 4) the Information Motion Picture Service (IMS), which created and distributed films, photos, and newsreels; and 5) the Information Press and Publications Service (IPS), which monitored the press, wired US friendly articles to nations' private newspapers, and distributed propaganda pamphlets and leaflets. While headed by Americans, these operations were predominantly staffed and carried out by locals.

Throughout the globe, locals served three critical functions for the USIA. Firstly—and rather straightforwardly—they saved the Agency money. From its inception, the Agency was under constant congressional scrutiny from fiscal conservatives who questioned its value, and isolationists who held moral reservations against an official American propaganda agency.<sup>56</sup> As such, the USIA often suffered from crippling financial shortages. To keep budgets relatively low compared to other agencies within the national security apparatus, therefore, locals became a key means for maintaining sizeable staffs. More importantly, delegating the bulk of the propaganda work to foreign nationals allowed the USIA to engage in what would become a hallmark of much of its early work: the previously mentioned “gray” propaganda, which provided American attempts at indoctrination with an indigenous face. Lastly, locals were integral for their service as intermediaries. In Vietnam this dependence was amplified as the linguistic hurdles that USIA

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<sup>55</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 43, “1954: General Description of A USIS Mission and its Activities,” May 6, 1955.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).



officials encountered—for example, of the 28 American USIS officials stationed in Saigon in 1955, only one actually spoke Vietnamese—were a constant thorn in their side.<sup>57</sup> The importance of these indigenous agents can be demonstrated by their numbers, as by 1956, the total USIS staff consisted of 1,171 Americans and 7,116 locals, operating in 80 different countries.

Within the top 20 countries of USIA involvement, 6 came from the Southeast Asian region (Thailand, South Vietnam, Indonesia, Burma, the Philippines, and Cambodia), thus indicating the region's growing importance to American interests.<sup>58</sup> Though strategic hotspots such as India, Germany, and Austria received greater attention from the USIA, South Vietnam was far from neglected during the Eisenhower years. At a staff that by 1959 included 21 Americans and 210 locals on a budget of \$900,000, the USIS mission in Saigon was the 9th largest in the globe, and second only to Thailand in the Southeast Asian region.<sup>59</sup> Despite its modest means, the USIS in Saigon was at the centre of an ambitious and multifaceted psychological warfare program aimed principally at the South Vietnamese population. Immediately following the 1954 Geneva Conference, this propaganda arm of the Eisenhower Government facilitated the expansion of libraries, monitored the press, distributed anticommunist pamphlets, published a series of anti-communist films, circulated American music and products, ran overt and clandestine radio programs, created massive show exhibitions, and sponsored English language teaching programs throughout the country.<sup>60</sup> Tied directly to the Saigon

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<sup>57</sup> Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 82

<sup>58</sup> Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 93. The most important countries in descending order were Germany, India, Japan, Pakistan, France, Italy, Thailand, Austria, South Vietnam, Indonesia, Brazil, Burma, Philippines, Iran, Mexico, Great Britain, Egypt, Greece, Spain, Cambodia, and Hong Kong.

<sup>59</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 10, "Inspection Staff: Inspection Reports and Related Records, 1954-62", Aug 1 1961, E-3.

<sup>60</sup> Statler, "Replacing France", 206.d

Embassy and the United States Operations Mission to Vietnam (USOM), the USIS was an integral component of the Eisenhower Administration's fateful attempt to build a viable nation state under the stewardship of Diem.

Under a constantly shifting set of PAOs (George Hellyer 1953-54, Robert Speer 1954-1956, Robert F. Fleming 1957-1958, and Chester Opal from 1959 onwards), the USIS operated in Vietnam under two separate branches: a major one in Saigon and the other in the city of Hue, just south of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>61</sup> All of the agency's informational activities were coordinated by the PAOs through a loosely defined strategic rubric: 1) To "educate" the Vietnamese, particularly the elite, about the virtues of America's economic system, its political structure, and its contributions to world culture; 2) To facilitate the use of English as part of a broader regional strategy of turning English into the *lingua franca* of post-colonial Southeast Asia; 3) To convince the peoples of South Vietnam that Ho's DRV to the North was merely a pawn in Russia and China's global communist conspiracy; and 4) To portray Diem as a legitimate nationalist democratic alternative to the communist menace in the north. Noticeably absent from this list was any effort to understand or learn from the Vietnamese peoples themselves.

Below the PAOs, the mission was divided into two broad sections: the Cultural Section, and, pertinent to our discussion, the Information Section.<sup>62</sup> As its namesake suggests, the former section's major operations were of the cultural variety—English teaching, student exchanges, book translations, and educational seminars in American culture. The larger Information

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Although these two branches ostensibly held two distinctively defined domains, because both were part of a larger project of American indoctrination, there was considerable overlap between their operations.

Section's chief domain, on the other hand, was the art of propaganda.<sup>63</sup> If staff and monetary allocations are any indication, the two most important components of the Information Section in ascending order were the Press and Publications division, and the Motion Picture Unit. Let us first examine the former. At a staff of 36 (2 American officers and 34 locals) the Press and Publications service operated on a budget of \$154,191.52.<sup>64</sup> Its duties sub-divided by its namesake, this particular branch targeted South Vietnam's growing literate community with messages dictated by the strategic parameters outlined above. In terms of the press, the USIS involved itself with all of Vietnam's newspapers (14 Vietnamese, 10 Chinese, One English, and One French). Though these publications were characterized by "immaturity", rigid censorship, and small circulation numbers (Vietnam's leading newspaper held a circulation of only 65,000), as a medium that was perceived to be read by influential classes, the USIS placed considerable emphasis on penetrating the fourth estate.<sup>65</sup> One of the central means for achieving this task was the wireless file, which was used to distribute USIS-created articles to newspaper editors, foreign embassies, radio hosts, and foreign correspondents. These articles were in turn translated into local languages (usually Vietnamese or Chinese) by the USIS's Vietnamese staff, and would then be either directly printed in the local press, or more commonly used as background information for local journalists to use in their own articles.<sup>66</sup> Thus, traces of USIS involvement were often absent from the final product. In addition to the wireless file, the USIS press unit organized press conferences for Vietnamese and American officials, trained Vietnamese journalists in psychological warfare and the English language, and distributed materials

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<sup>63</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 10, "U.S. Information Service. Saigon-Vietnam, Organization Chart", Aug 1 1961.

<sup>64</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 10, "Inspection Report: USIS Saigon", August 1961, Page 18. 1960 figures.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, Page 19.

throughout the nation's high schools in an attempt to target the impressionable and increasingly literate youth.<sup>67</sup>

Outside of these relationships with Vietnam's indigenous press and institutions, USIA documents also indicate that the agency sought to solicit "patriotic private American businesses and non-Governmental groups" to implement their various propaganda activities.<sup>68</sup> As Eisenhower recalled, "A great deal of this particular type of thing would be done... through clandestine arrangements with magazines, newspapers and other periodicals, and book publishers, in some countries".<sup>69</sup> Though details about these kinds of arrangements remain sketchy, my own research has uncovered two publications in South Vietnam which fit this criteria: *The Times of Vietnam*, and *Viet-My* (Vietnam-America). Predictably, neither of these publications revealed their direct connections to the US Government. Concerning the former, for example, a surface level reading of *The Times* suggests that it was little more than a shortly lived English language newspaper—from 1956 until 1963 when it was burned to the ground on the same day that Diem was overthrown—in a decolonizing country which had scant appetite for such an enterprise.<sup>70</sup> Published under the auspices of *The Times Publishing Company*, *The Times* was technically a private newspaper and in appearance took on this characteristic. At a circulation that peaked at 8,000, the paper covered a broad array of issues, such as local news, sports, international events, and Vietnamese culture. Beyond its editorials, its articles adopted a neutral and factual tone, and were often lifted from other news publications and wire services,

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> U.S. Information Agency: Strategic Principles. FRUS, 1952-1954, 2, (2): 1767.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 94.

<sup>70</sup> Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man*, 2.

such as the *The London Times*, *The Economist*, and *Reuters*.<sup>71</sup> Further, news articles relating *The Times* to the USIS were almost non-existent, and those that did hint at this connection were superficial at best.<sup>72</sup> Finally, a glance at the 1956 editorial staff reveals names such as Nguyen M. Thai (news editor), Tran Long (General Manager), Le Ngo Nhi (Senior Editor), and Dinh Trinh Chinh (News Editor)—hardly the namesakes that we usually associate with the Anglo-Saxon dominated American national security culture of that time period.<sup>73</sup>

How then, are we to establish the networks that existed between these two enterprises? Firstly, we may follow the funding. While precise figures are unavailable, it is known that the US government subsidized *The Times* throughout its tenure.<sup>74</sup> We also know that the USIS was responsible for overseeing all American activity in the Vietnamese press. Thus, it is safe to conclude that some of the USIS's estimated \$900,000 budget went towards subsidizing this publication. More critically, while officially the *The Times*' editors were Vietnamese, Eugene Gregory, a USIS official and on and off member of *The American Friends of Vietnam* lobby group (AFV), covertly edited the paper.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, the associations between the USIS and *The Times* were more than casual.

This complex network of secret arrangements between the USIS, private lobby groups, and local Vietnamese writers was replicated in the case of *Viet-My*. At a circulation of 2,500, *Viet My* was a bilingual (English and Vietnamese) quarterly, published by the *Vietnamese*

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<sup>71</sup> This sample was taken from the May 5, 1956 edition.

<sup>72</sup> See for example, "Students in Journalism Visit The Times Offices". *The Times of Viet Nam*, (Saigon) April 12, 1958, Page 3. The article indicates that USIS officers visited *The Times* offices for advice. Most likely, the relationship was inverted.

<sup>73</sup> This sample was taken from the May 5, 1956 edition, Page 8. Despite this author's best efforts, no information could be found on these Vietnamese men. As such, the possibility that many of *The Times*' articles were ghost-written cannot be ruled out.

<sup>74</sup> Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man*, 2.

<sup>75</sup> Morgan, *The Vietnam Lobby*, 48.

*American Association* (Alternatively known as the American Vietnamese Association, or AVA)—a semiofficial American organization which was created in 1955 primarily to teach English.<sup>76</sup> While ostensibly private, the AVA was headed by the USIS’s English-teaching officer, Thomas Beary, and was funded by the cultural section of the USIS.<sup>77</sup> Similar to the case of *The Times*, therefore, *Viet-My*’s independent appearance betrayed its actual function as a tool of the American empire.

The USIS also operated its own publications division. Less covert than its operations with the press, the publications division circulated a number of periodicals which targeted elite members of Vietnam’s culturally diverse population. The largest of these by far was *Free World* (*The-Goi’I Tu-Do*). Published in Vietnamese, Chinese, and English, the magazine had a circulation of 90,000, and was distributed to teachers, businessmen, government workers, students, and the military. While *Free World* was published by the USIA globally, each mission ensured that over 50% of the quarterly’s content was locally oriented.<sup>78</sup> *Free World*’s Vietnamese content varied, but a number of common themes defined its output: 1) The political and cultural solidarity of Southeast Asia; 2) South Vietnam’s gradual modernization under the competent stewardship of the US; and 3) The nefarious designs of communist Russia and China, and Ho’s role as a pawn in these schemes.<sup>79</sup> Other notable publications included *Concept*, a trilingual “elite” journal, which at a distribution of 5,000 covered topics such as political science and literature; *Young Citizen*, a quarterly English language teaching aid/propaganda journal

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<sup>76</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 14, “*Viet My*. Volume V, No.3. Autumn, 1960”. Published by the Vietnamese American Association. *The Vietnamese American Association* was alternatively called *The American Vietnamese Association*.

<sup>77</sup> Statler, *Choosing France*, 207.

<sup>78</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 10, “Inspection Report: USIS Saigon”, August 1961, Page 18.

<sup>79</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 238, “*Free World*” Volume 2, Number 8; “*The-Gio’I Tu-Do*” Volume 4, Number 1.

aimed at and distributed to Vietnamese students; and *World Today*, a monthly Chinese language magazine with a distribution of 18,000.<sup>80</sup> Finally, the Press and Publications Section distributed a number of pamphlets in Vietnamese, English, and Chinese. According to 1960 figures, the Agency produced 51 different pamphlets at a total of 302,400 copies. While the majority of these were produced abroad, the four locally created Vietnamese language pamphlets held the widest circulation at a combined 130,000 copies.<sup>81</sup>

If the Press and Publications division solely targeted the literate elite, the Motion Picture Section's target audience was more diffuse. In a country where the estimated rate of illiteracy ranged from 60% to 85%, films became the crucial medium through which the USIS brought its messages to the South Vietnamese peasantry.<sup>82</sup> At an annual budget of \$251.895 and a staff of 74 employees (4 Americans, 59 local, and 11 local contractors), the Motion Picture section was the largest component of the USIS mission in Saigon, and according to USIS officer Douglas Pike, "was the biggest agency motion picture operation in the world" by the end of Eisenhower's second term.<sup>83</sup> While a certain degree of suspicion is healthy in assessing the USIS's claims about this program's reach, internal USIS reports suggest that its audience dwarfed the Press and Publications section considerably. Indeed, it was estimated in 1960 that the Motion Pictures sections' 13,672 programs reached a total audience of 9,109,560 people (2,037,077 urban,

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<sup>80</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 10, "Inspection Report: USIS Saigon, August 1961, Page 20.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Figures are taken from Frey, "Tools of Empire", 552.

<sup>83</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 10, "Inspection Report: USIS Saigon," August 1961, Page 23; USNA, RG 306, Box 6, "An Interview with Douglas Pike: February, 1989, Conducted by John Hutchison," February 1989, Page 23.

4,746,297 rural, and 2,326,186 military).<sup>84</sup> Because of these impressive statistics, USIS officers held the program in high esteem. As one member of the mission remarked,

Motions pictures carry the freight like no other medium in this country, combining the visual with the oral. This hurdles the barrier of illiteracy and adds the dimension of drama to the events depicted and the themes presented. Comments...indicate a high degree of effectiveness and receptivity.<sup>85</sup>

Thus, it was principally through one of America's most treasured mediums that its messages of benevolent leadership were rained upon its prospective third world subjects in South Vietnam.

In terms of output, the USIS produced three types of art—documentaries, newsreels, and locally produced films—while also importing Hollywood productions to be played in libraries and urban movie theatres. Similar to the Press and Publications Section, the Motion Pictures unit used semi-clandestine networks to conceal USIS involvement as much as possible. According to my own findings there were three primary ways in which this was achieved. Firstly, and most commonly, the USIS used local actors, script writers, and directors to create their films, while simply lending out their production equipment. Final products approved by the USIS would then carry the seal of the Vietnamese Information Service (see below), rather than that of the agency.<sup>86</sup> The intended result was that audiences would be unaware that they were watching an American sponsored film.

The second method involved the use of “Mobile Units”. A fascinating mechanism for distributing USIS propaganda, mobile units were large trucks which typically carried a film

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<sup>84</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 10, “Inspection Report: USIS Saigon,” August 1961, Page 24. Regrettably, there is no evidence which suggests how the USIS inspectors arrived at these numbers.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, Page 25.

<sup>86</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 43, “1956: Locally Produced Unattributed Films Most Effective in Far East,” 1956.



projector in the cab, along with picture displays and USIS-created propaganda pamphlets.<sup>87</sup>

USIS employees (often Vietnamese but occasionally American), would then drive these vehicles into the Rice Paddies or Highland regions which had low rates of literacy and often no electricity. As one USIS observer noted, these visits would create such a commotion that USIS officers were often forced to “disperse the crowd before film showings”. Whether this attention was due to a genuine interest in the USIS’s messages or simply a case of human curiosity is a matter for the reader to determine. Unsurprisingly, however, Agency officers assumed the former.<sup>88</sup>

Finally, the USIS mission in Saigon relied on the more conventional medium of commercial theatres. In this case, the agency ensured that Vietnam’s 170-180 movie theatres were saturated with a heavy dose of USIS-created newsreels and documentaries. In terms of the former, for example, the USIS’s estimated monthly average was an output of 35,000 newsreel showings (either agency supplied or locally created) to an audience of over 5 million. USIS produced documentaries, on the other hand, were of a more modest scale: 10 showings in 22 theatres per month, at a combined audience of 18,000. Like the elite journals streaming out of the Press and Publications Section, these documentaries were tailored to the more privileged sections of southern Vietnamese society. As always, USIS involvement in both the newsreels and documentaries was usually unattributed.<sup>89</sup>

To further conceal its involvement in informational warfare, the USIS relied heavily on one of its major contributions to the Diem regime: the Vietnamese Information Service (VIS).

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<sup>87</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 35, “New Display Panels for USIS Saigon Mobile Units,” November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1959.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 10, “Inspection Report: USIS Saigon”, August 1961, Page 24.

Consistent with its doctrines of liberal empire, the USIS immediately worked to create its own surrogate entity, the VIS, which by 1957 was a viable component of the Diem bureaucracy.<sup>90</sup> While details of this ministry's creation and function remain murky, enough information exists that we may cobble together a general picture of the relationship between the USIS and its Vietnamese offspring. As Hellyer recalled, in the first three years of its existence the VIS was entirely subordinate to the USIS. Unversed in the art of propaganda, the Diem government depended on the USIS to train employees, provide technical assistance, and produce propaganda materials for various regions in South Vietnam.<sup>91</sup> In other words, like much else in the Diem regime, the VIS was wholly an American creation. Despite the heavy involvement of the US government, all of these materials were distributed by VIS officials in the name of the Vietnamese government in an effort to obscure any US involvement. As Hellyer remarked with no sense of irony, this clandestine relationship allowed the Vietnamese government to "show the country that they [sic] had a strong independent government of their own".<sup>92</sup>

By 1957, the relationship between the two agencies had changed somewhat as the VIS began to take its direction from the Diem government, and became most notable for its rigid censorship of Vietnam's nascent press.<sup>93</sup> This, however, is not to suggest that the VIS became decoupled from its creator. Indigenous employees within the USIS often moved between the two agencies, and as US involvement in South Vietnam grew, the Americans continued to rely on the VIS to ensure positive press coverage of US activities in Vietnam and abroad, and that

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<sup>90</sup>USNA, RG 306, Box 43, "Working With Vietnam Information Service," May 14 1957..

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Woodside, *Community and Revolution*, 263.

distribution of USIS materials remained clandestine, as mentioned above.<sup>94</sup> Thus, the VIS embodied many of the complexities of the USIA's mission in South Vietnam: While technically independent, its existence was conditioned on the patronage of the US Government; While ostensibly part of the US' strategy of implementing democracy in Vietnam, it relied on a degree of censorship that disturbed even the USIS officials who had trained it; Finally, by providing an indigenous front for American propaganda, the VIS was a crucial component of the USIS' continued reliance on "gray" propaganda.

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<sup>94</sup> Statler, *Replacing France*, 270

## Themes and Campaigns: Selling the American World View

If an inquiry into the distribution channels of the USIS's propaganda reveals an agency heavily involved in the game of deception, but fearful of revealing its association with this very enterprise, what can be said of the propaganda itself? In the following section I offer specific examples of USIS propaganda that were distributed through these networks outlined above to their Vietnamese targets. In doing so, the reader will be offered an in-depth examination of the character of the propaganda itself—something that I have found wanting from previous studies. Let us then turn to the most durable issue for USIS propagandists, the 1954 refugee movement.

The 1954 refugee crisis was a consequence of the haphazard manner in which the Geneva Accords were arrived at on July 21<sup>st</sup> of that year. Giving the issue little thought as to how it would affect the future composition of Vietnam, the great powers signed onto the provision (article 14D) to allow people to relocate to either one of the new political entities within a 10 month window.<sup>95</sup> If the powers of the era treated this issue as an afterthought, the same can hardly be said for the Vietnamese peoples. From this single sentence emerged “the largest civilian evacuation in history”, as close to one million people—principally Catholics—fled south of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>96</sup> Faced with this daunting spectacle, America and France ran a coordinated effort, dubbed “Operation Passage to Freedom”, to ensure the refugees’ safe passage. Beginning on August 16, American and French ships boarded refugees at a port in Haiphong, where they would begin their three day journey to Saigon. Because of the shaky state of the Diem regime, American and French agencies were charged with providing shelter, food, internal transportation,

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<sup>95</sup> Geneva Conference: Indo China. 21 July 1954. *Pentagon Papers*, Document 94.

<sup>96</sup> Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man*, 130.

water, and medical care. Despite Diem's complete dependence on the two powers, the lopsided ratio of the north/south migration (roughly 800,000 fled south, while only 150,000 went north) resulted in a rare propaganda victory for the Republic of Vietnam (RVN).<sup>97</sup>

Hardly adverse to "[sic] exploiting the dramatic flight from North Vietnam", the USIA mission in Saigon saw the refugee issue as an opportunity to focus attention on the "growing effectiveness of the Diem government" in contrast to the "terrorism and duplicity of the Communist Vietminh regime in North Vietnam".<sup>98</sup> Consistent with its other programs, this was done at the official and unofficial levels, with the Press and Publications and Motion Picture sections at the forefront of this endeavour. From the overt end of the spectrum, the Press and Publications division created a large pamphlet titled, "Flight to Freedom: A Story of Courage, Sacrifice, and A Faith in the Free World". Though Eisenhower and Streibert had cautioned country missions against using "a propagandistic tone" in publications officially traceable to the USIA, the authors of "Flight to Freedom" seem to have been immune from this advice.<sup>99</sup> Chastising the authors of article 14D for not making the transfer period indefinite (refugees were barred from entering South Vietnam after May 19, 1955), the pamphlet described the migration as the "one of the most heroic episodes in the history of Viet Nam", and a "formidable popular verdict rendered in favor of freedom".<sup>100</sup> Additionally, "Flight to Freedom" attacked the DRV for violating the Geneva Conventions by obstructing the movement of people southward—in

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<sup>97</sup> Statler, *Replacing France*, 149-150.

<sup>98</sup> Status of United States Programs For National Security As of June 30, 1955: Part 6—The USIA Program. Washington, August 31, 1955. FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume IX, 544.

<sup>99</sup> The Director of The United States Information Agency (Streibert) to the President. Washington, October 27, 1953. FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume II, 1754.

<sup>100</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 14, "Flight to Freedom: A Story of Courage, Sacrifice, and a Faith in the Free World," March 2, 1955.

turn contrasting these actions with the benign assistance of Free World nations like the US, France, and the Philippines.<sup>101</sup>

In terms of the less official propaganda outlets, the shrillness of USIA propaganda was amplified. Perhaps most instructive of this phenomenon was the *Times of Vietnam*'s reportage of the issue. With the arrival of the refugees, *The Times* carried grim stories of malnourishment, forced labour, and political repression at the hands of Ho's agents.<sup>102</sup> To strengthen the impact of this propaganda offensive, *The Times* juxtaposed these tales with stories of successful resettlement projects under Diem's stewardship. For example, in one article, Cai Sun—a major resettlement project in the southern highlands—was portrayed as “a paradise for the refugees”, with cheaper rents than in urban areas such as Saigon, and some of the most fertile land in the country.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, if one's only source of information was *The Times*, he/she would be tempted to envy the lot of these traumatized victims of displacement.

The emotional appeals of the USIA propaganda offensive, however, were perhaps most powerful through the medium of film. A rare surviving picture from this era, the biblically titled “Exodus,” provides an ideal glimpse into the mindset of the USIS' Motion Pictures division. In many respects, “Exodus” resembles the dichotomous nature of the propaganda material previously discussed. The Viet Minh are degraded as treacherous pawns of the Chinese communists, while American officials are portrayed as the true friends of the Vietnamese peoples.<sup>104</sup> Yet through its personalized narrative, the film appeals to the emotions in ways which publications within the press were unable to do. The movie follows the life of “Kim”, a

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> “Life in North V.N. Described by Refugees” *The Times of Vietnam*, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1958, Page 5.

<sup>103</sup> “Cai San, Success or Failure”, 15.

<sup>104</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 10, “Exodus,” September 27 1957.

naïve nationalist who fought alongside the communists in order to overthrow French colonial rule. Though Cold War politics provides the background of the story, “Exodus” deals with the more personal effects of communism, including its impact on the individual, the family, and love. Upon his return from the battlegrounds of the resistance war, Kim finds himself hated and feared by his former friends and family, and rejected by his fiancé, “Mai”. Viet Minh agents then coerce him into spying on the northern refugees, an act he acquiesces in despite his feelings of betrayal. After returning from his mission, however, Kim finds that the Viet Minh have seized his former village, killed his mother, and enslaved his fiancé’s family. Enraged by these developments, Kim is reminded by his communist brethren that there is “no time for friendship, no time for religion, and no time for god” under a communist state. At the end of the film, Kim is redeemed only when he turns his back on the communists by freeing his fiancé’s father and brother, and enters an uncertain, but hopeful future in southern Vietnam with his beautiful wife Mai.<sup>105</sup> The film’s message, therefore, is deliberate and uncomplicated: it is only through abandoning communism that one may find love and be an honest member of the Vietnamese family.

The Passage to Freedom campaign, however, was not an entirely honest endeavour. As Jacobs has noted, the largely Catholic migration to the South was hardly spontaneous. Spearheaded by the infamous counter insurgency expert, Colonel Edward Lansdale, the CIA and the USIS jointly ran a coordinated campaign to magnify the numbers of anti-communist Catholics fleeing southward. Sharing the same desk, Lansdale and Hellyer forged documents indicating impending Viet Minh property seizures and anti-Christian atrocities. Most

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid

audaciously, the psychological warriors dropped leaflets out of airplanes with fake bombing targets in an attempt to spread rumours that the US military planned to launch atomic attacks above the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, and spread rumours that the Virgin Mary had abandoned Vietnam. For good measure the American Government offered refugees \$89 if they relocated to the South—a handsome sum in a country where the average income was only \$85 per year.<sup>106</sup> The apparent virtues of the newly-minted Diem regime, in other words, were hardly the only siren songs luring people south of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel.

While Passage to Freedom proved to be one of the USIS's more durable weapons in its propaganda arsenal, the remainder of the Mission's output was of a more thematic nature. To recapitulate, three thematic issues dominated the Agency's informational work: the virtues of American life, the evil nature of global communism, and the successes of the Diem experiment. Let us then turn to the first of these. From its inception, the USIA understood its global mission in the following manner:

The American people share fundamental beliefs and values with millions of other men and women who we are attempting to win to our side...these include belief in a Deity, in individual and national freedom, in the right to ownership or property and a decent standard of living, in the common humanity of men, and in the vision of a peaceful world with nations compromising their differences and cooperating in the United Nations.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Jacobs, *Americas Miracle Man*, 132-133

<sup>107</sup> The Director of The United States Information Agency (Streibert) to the President. Washington, October 27, 1953. FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume II, 1755.



Unsurprisingly, therefore, USIA propaganda about American society reflected these objectives. A major vehicle in this effort was the “People’s Capitalism” campaign—a program used throughout the globe.<sup>108</sup> Deliberately appropriating the rhetoric of Marxism, the People’s Capitalism campaign emphasized the cooperation between labour and ownership which existed in the US, and presented readers and viewers with impressive arrays of statistics demonstrating the superior quality of life that workers enjoyed in the Free World states when compared to their communist competitors.<sup>109</sup> In another widely used campaign, “Atoms for Peace”, the USIA highlighted the virtues atomic power, such as clean energy and medical technology. According to the various pamphlets and films produced for this campaign, atomic power could serve the interests of the third world nations through the development of life saving technologies, such as the X-ray.<sup>110</sup> Thus, while occasionally threatening them with nuclear annihilation, the USIS did its best to ensure that the peoples of Vietnam maintained a more nuanced perspective towards the coming atomic age.

Drawing attention to the economic and technological prowess of the American capitalist machine, however, was secondary to the USIS’ concern with countering negative perceptions of America. In a major USIS’s film production, “The Pursuit of Happiness”, for example, the Agency sought to curtail the view that America was an overly-materialist society—devoid of any spiritual depth. In the film, an unnamed narrator from an unknown country encounters America for the first time. Though initially overwhelmed by the speed of America’s cars, the size of its cities, and the pace of commercial living, the narrator’s views are slowly altered by his

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<sup>108</sup> For summaries of this program, see: Hixon, *Parting the Curtain*, 121-150; Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 270-276”.

<sup>109</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 6, “Peoples Capitalism”. Jan 1957. See also, Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 153-180

<sup>110</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 29, “Medicine: Atoms for Peace Series, Part II,” April 3 1955.

encounters with regular Americans named John (a farmer), Bill (an auto worker), Paul (a business executive), and Tom (a college student). Through his conversations with these four men, the narrator learns that Americans are a religious people, concerned primarily with the well being of their families and loved ones; in other words, he discovers that the American desires are identical to the rest of humanity. In the final scene of the movie, the narrator instructs the viewer that behind America's mass production and materialism is "man's eternal search for his own dignity".<sup>111</sup>

Countering the image of America's racist past and present, however, proved to be the most onerous task for USIS agents. From its creation, USIA officials in Washington understood that the issue of race was the Achilles heel of their cultural offensive towards the decolonizing states.<sup>112</sup> To blunt its potentially parasitic effect in Vietnam, the USIS mission adopted a mutually reinforcing strategy: downplaying racism's role in American life, while simultaneously emphasizing the achievements America's minorities—principally African Americans. For example, in an picture pamphlet "A Picture Story of the United States" (50,000 Vietnamese language copies were circulated as teaching aids), opposition to slavery was presented as an integral part of the intellectual tradition in the US, while Lincoln's Presidency was portrayed as being entirely premised on ending the evils of servitude. America's history of discrimination against Asians, on the other hand, was erased from this particular summary. Consequently, Jonathan's Hay's famous "Open Door Policy" was hailed as an important article in the defence

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<sup>111</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 37, "Pursuit of Happiness," Oct 15 1957, 1-21.

<sup>112</sup> Part 7—The USIA Program: January 1, 1954, Through June 30, 1954, Prepared by The United States Information Agency. FRUS 1952-54, 2, (2): 1780.

of a “Free China”, but the anti-Asian immigration policies that the US imposed on these same people during this same period were completely absent from the narrative.<sup>113</sup>

Film also played an important role, particularly in highlighting the achievements of African Americans. Newsreels presenting the triumphs of athletes like the famous track star Jesse Owens were shown from the theatre houses in Saigon to the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta.<sup>114</sup> Black contributions to the arts were also emphasized, as a “widely popular” movie about the life of Marian Anderson—whose musical career of triumph over adversity evoked the redemptive spirit of the American dream—became a fixture of USIS propaganda.<sup>115</sup> Again, USIA propaganda about African Americans was defined as much by what it left out: Noticeably omitted from these newsreels or documentaries were incidents like the Little Rock Crisis, or the lynching campaigns which cast a dark shadow over the idyllic 1950s lifestyle of Eisenhower’s America.

Given its relatively weak hand on the racial justice front, it is unsurprising that the USIS devoted a considerable amount of energy to anti-communist literature and films. Evoking the classic dictum that the best defense is a good offence, by 1955 roughly 70% of films produced by the USIA were of an anti-communist bent.<sup>116</sup> In Vietnam, anti-communist propaganda was of two different varieties, though there was significant overlap between these: propaganda which attacked communism at a global level, and propaganda which dealt more specifically with Ho’s northern regime. In the case of the former, USIS output was generally of a dichotomous nature, reflecting the bipolar ethos which characterized Cold War culture. A recurrent method was the

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<sup>113</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 7, “A Picture Story of the United States”, Dec 1, 1953.

<sup>114</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 31, “Our Times #20” (ND).

<sup>115</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 24, “Marian Anderson,” Feb 2 1956.

<sup>116</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 43, “Motion Picture Program: 1950-1957, Program Level,” (ND)

use of “factual” pamphlets to make its case against its ideological foe. For instance, in a pamphlet titled “Who has the Colonies?” the distinctions between Western colonialism and Soviet aggression were sharply drawn. According the pamphlet, Western colonialism was “the kind that since World War Two [sic] had granted outright independence” to over 700 million peoples, while Soviet “anti-colonialism” was portrayed as something which subjugated over 740 million people. To support these claims, the reader was presented with a list of countries who were freed by the western powers (India, Lebanon, South Vietnam, and the Philippines for example), and an opposing list of countries that had been conquered under the jackboots of Soviet expansion (Poland, North Vietnam, North Korea, and China, to a name a few).<sup>117</sup>

Another way of drawing attention to the evils of communism was to utilize specific incidents of Soviet indiscretions. Clips of the crushed 1956 Hungarian uprisings, for example, were shown in newsreels prior to regular film showings at movie theatres throughout Vietnam’s major cities.<sup>118</sup>

Closer to home, a movie titled “When the Communists Came” told the story of a Chinese refugee who suffered the horrors of famine, denouncement campaigns, and indoctrination under Mao’s communist reign. The movie’s final line serves as a broader metaphor for the USIS’s message towards the decolonizing states of Southeast Asia: If nations like South Vietnam did not join the American-led Free World, a similar fate, “with all its horrors and miseries [*sic*] would unfold in their own land”.<sup>119</sup> In the zero-sum game of the Cold War confrontation, USIS officials warned, minor nations could ill afford not to take sides.

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<sup>117</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 11, “Who has the Colonies?,” ND.

<sup>118</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 31, “Our Times #20,” ND

<sup>119</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 56, “When the Communists Came,” ND.

When applied more locally to the struggle within Vietnam, the bulk of the propaganda work was delegated to either private Americans or indigenous Vietnamese employees. Free of attribution to the USIS, rhetorical attacks against Ho were relentless and unambiguous, with Ho's North portrayed as a misery laden, totalitarian state; a place where religious and intellectual persecution had come to dominate political life to the point where the regime was perpetually on the brink of collapse.<sup>120</sup> To bolster these attacks, USIS propaganda sought to nullify the most potent ideological weapon Ho held at his disposal: his credentials as a committed Vietnamese nationalist. Thus, in the bilingual *Free World* magazine, Ho was lampooned as an "outsider" whose sole mission was to "bring death and destruction to Vietnam"<sup>121</sup>. Meanwhile, cartoons emasculating Ho as a surrogate of Mao and Stalin were widely distributed.<sup>122</sup> In other words, USIS propaganda reflected the official view held in Washington: that the conflict between the North and the South was explainable purely in terms of global communist expansionism and *Free World* resistance. The internal dynamics of Vietnamese history, therefore, were merely peripheral; the sooner the Vietnamese understood this "truth" about their own predicament, the better.

If Ho was degraded as a subordinate pawn of greater and more cunning men, Diem served as his romanticized foil as the USIS sought to portray him as a legitimate manifestation of

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<sup>120</sup> See for example, "Disillusioned, Vietnamese Escape From the North" *The Times of Vietnam*, (Saigon), July 28, 1956, Page 4; Nyuen Khang, "The Teacher's Lot in the Communist Zone", *The Times of Vietnam* (Saigon), August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1956, Page 10; "New Style Class Struggle" *The Times of Vietnam* (Saigon), August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1956, Page 8; "Get Tough Policy in North Viet Nam: Over 100,000 People Ask for Exit" *The Times of Vietnam*, (Saigon), July 8, 1958, Page 4; "Communist Viet Cong Face Critical Situation Following Failure of Economic And Social Schemes". *The Times of Vietnam* (Saigon), May 10, 1958, Page 5; "The Causes of Intellectual Uprisings in North V.N." *The Times of Vietnam* (Saigon), August 16, 1958, Page 5; "Life Beyond the 17<sup>th</sup>" *The Times of Vietnam*, (Saigon), September 27, 1958.

<sup>121</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 238, "Free World Magazine: Volume III, No.II," ND

<sup>122</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 12, "Post Publications 1953-1999", Sept 1966.

the noble liberal democratic traditions that they were purportedly instilling in the Vietnamese people. From the offices of *The Times*, articles spewed forth praising Vietnam's emergence as a constitutional republic under the stewardship of Diem, while the President was hailed as a modern version of Thomas Jefferson due to his tolerance of religion, his staunch nationalism, and his profound sense of history.<sup>123</sup> To further cement the linkages between America and Diem, a film depicting Diem's May 1957 visit to the US capital was produced and widely circulated in English, Cantonese, and Vietnamese. In the movie, Diem was shown visiting many of Washington's most revered monuments—from the Lincoln Memorial to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. As the film's narrator makes clear, just as these two shrines had come to represent the nobility of the American spirit, Diem had likewise “become a symbol of courage and patriotism” to the Vietnamese people.<sup>124</sup>

Weaving the emotional bonds of solidarity between America and Vietnam, however, ran the risk of presenting Diem as a paltry stooge of American imperialism, as the Viet-Minh had charged repeatedly. Consequently, the USIS also focused on the new leader's credentials as an independent nationalist. To this end, propaganda highlighted the emergence of an autonomous Vietnamese army, boasted of Diem's achievements in public health, and bragged of the country's new manufacturing prowess. US aid was mentioned, but emphasis was placed on Diem's direct involvement in all of these developments.<sup>125</sup> Cumulatively, therefore, the USIS's message could be interpreted as follows: While Ho stood as a proxy for the global communist

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<sup>123</sup> See, for example, “Due Process of Law” *The Times of Vietnam* (Saigon), May 12 1956, Page 1; Quang Minh, “Look at the Past and Think of the Future: From President Jefferson to President Ngo Dinh Diem”, *The Times of Vietnam*, (Saigon), May 12, 1956, Page 9.

<sup>124</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 24, “President Ngo Dinh Diem's Visit to the U.S.,” May 8 1957.

<sup>125</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 238, “Free World, Volume i-iv,” ND.

monolith, Diem was forging an independent Vietnamese state, guided, but not controlled by the benign hand of American world leadership. If the people of South Vietnam wished for a genuine nationalism, their choice was an obvious one.

## Gauging the Mission's Effects

But what can be said of the effects of this propaganda barrage? Attaining a precise answer to this question is a far from simple task. As scholars engaged in similar studies have pointed out, “assessing responses poses analytical and methodological challenges”.<sup>126</sup> The most critical of these is nature of the sources themselves. To my knowledge, the Vietnamese people—particularly the rural population—have left little direct evidence as to how they felt towards American propaganda efforts. Moreover, what information we do have regarding the effects of the USIS mission comes from surveys clandestinely contracted out by the Agency itself. Consequently, if one wishes to gauge the results of USIS propaganda, they must cope with the hermetically-sealed nature of the source material. Caveats aside, the situation is hardly hopeless. Despite their flaws, the USIS records contain enough useful data that we may ascertain a verdict as to the results of this propaganda offensive—and not a particularly flattering one at that. As the later developments of Vietnamese history appear to confirm this thesis, there is reason to be optimistic in our judgment.

At a cursory glance, however, this conclusion seems counterintuitive. Of the few polls embarked upon by the Agency, the results of the USIS mission come across as positive, with many of the USIS's objectives appearing to have been reached. Inculcating the Vietnamese with strong anti-communist beliefs, for example, was largely a success. In a survey of 300 senior students, 55% of respondents recorded a “bad” or “very bad” opinion of the USSR, while an even higher percentage (63%), held negative opinions towards Mao's China. Conversely, a small

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<sup>126</sup> Frey, “Tools of Empire”, 562.



percentage of respondents (5% for Russia, and 1 % for China), thought favourably of these two regimes (the remainder being neutral). Furthermore, when questioned why they disliked the Soviet Union, the number one reason among the students was the crushing of the Hungarian revolt—an issue that the USIS pressed forcibly from 1956 onwards.<sup>127</sup> Feelings towards the US, on the other hand, proved to be remarkably amiable. In the same survey, 87% answered that they “liked the US” because it “supported freedom by taking a firm stand against communism”.<sup>128</sup> In their mutual loathing of communism, therefore, the USIS and its targeted respondents demonstrated an impressive degree of solidarity.

Attitudes concerning American culture likewise proved favourable, as a majority of the students believed that American USIS imports, such as libraries, books, magazines, and jazz music all had a positive influence on Vietnamese society.<sup>129</sup> Other surveys demonstrated similar results. For instance, in a mixed group survey of soldiers and students, 93% of respondents said that USIA films gave them a positive impression of America. Within the same group, 86% answered that their views towards American use of atomic energy were improved after watching films produced for the “Atoms for Peace” campaign. The survey also indicated that the Vietnamese students and soldiers held the USIS in high esteem, as 96% of respondents thought that the Agency’s films were designed for educational purposes, while only 4% thought they were propagandistic. Perhaps most impressively, of those surveyed 100% felt that they learned new things about the US from USIS created or sponsored films.<sup>130</sup> On the surface level, therefore, the results from the surveys appear to confirm a central assumption behind the USIA’s

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<sup>127</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 1, “The Image of America Among Vietnamese University Students”, December 1959.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

<sup>130</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 70, “Research Report,” Jan 10 1958.

mission: that with the proper levels of indoctrination, targeted groups of Vietnamese could be molded into the anti-communist cold warriors that the US' empire-building project demanded.

As we know all too well, however, appearances can be quite deceiving. Firstly, we must consider the nature of the surveys' targets: an elite grouping of soldiers and students. This point will be elaborated upon momentarily; for now, however, it is sufficient to note that in focusing on the opinions of a narrow sample of people with close ties to the staunchly anti-communist Diem regime, the USIS was—by its own admission—preaching to the choir.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, a closer inspection of the surveys' results indicates a more ambivalent picture than the one presented above. For example, despite the “People’s Capitalism” campaign, only 24% of respondents in one survey felt that capitalism was “good” or “very good”, while 37% harboured negative feelings. The third-way socialist alternative of Nehru’s India or Nasser’s Egypt, on the other hand, was held in higher esteem with 54% feeling that it was the fairest economic system, and only 8% responding that it was unjust. Economic injustice was not the only aspect of American culture that the Vietnamese students found disturbing, as 68% of the respondents thought that the American Government discriminated “unfairly against racial minorities”. Here, the USIS was confronted with the limitations of its propaganda as neither the impressive achievements of Jesse Owens, nor the soulful harmonies of Marian Anderson, could mask the ugly dark side of American life. Finally, when asked “to what extent do you feel that the basic interests of Vietnam are in agreement with the interests” of the United States, only 13% answered that the two countries’ interests were “very similar”.<sup>132</sup> Given that the overall mission of the USIA was to convince people throughout the globe of this final point, the most charitable

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<sup>131</sup> “The Image of America Among Vietnamese University Students”, i.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 12, 25, 26.

conclusion that we may draw from the USIS surveys is that the Agency's legacy was a decidedly mixed one at best.

Now, a reader could surely interject that the small number of surveys conducted, coupled with the narrow strata of those questioned within these polls, demands that we exercise caution in drawing firm conclusions from their results. As such, it would be crude and immodest to assume that we can label the Agency's entire endeavour as a failure based merely on the findings of a few small surveys. Fortunately, with the benefit of hindsight we are able to consult the verdict of history—a far more impartial judge of a program's effectiveness than any pollster could ever envision. Here, a few basic exercises in deductive reasoning should prove adequate: If a major concern of the USIS was to inculcate the people of South Vietnam with an anti-communist ethos, and if by the end of Eisenhower's term the National Liberation Front's (NLF) power was growing, then it is safe to assume that despite the best efforts of the USIS, the appeal of communism, or at least its power, increased over Eisenhower's tenure. Again, if a major project of the Agency was to sell the benefits of the Diem regime, and this same regime collapsed in 1963 loathed and hated throughout the country, then logic dictates that the USIS's marketing campaign in favour of the Diem Government fell short. Finally, if the USIS was charged with creating bonds of solidarity between the South Vietnamese and American people, and if in just over one decade after its entrance into Vietnam, the US Government found itself at war not against the North, but against a popular insurgency in the South (with northern support), one can conclude that these efforts were either ineffective, or—at the very least—overshadowed by more powerful historic forces. Hence, my observation that the Agency's legacy could be characterized as innocuous.

Of course, given the relative simplicity of these arguments, it is hardly enlightening to merely postulate that the 1950s USIS mission in Vietnam was one of failure: the reasons for why this was the case must also be probed. To this end, two explanations are worth pondering. The first and most straightforward reason was that in Diem the USIS was peddling a lousy product. The colossal ineptitude of the US' Southeast Asian client has been well documented elsewhere, but a few key points are worth highlighting nevertheless. For starters, despite USIS propaganda to the contrary, Diem was not the modern day Southeast Asian equivalent of Thomas Jefferson. Though superficially containing many of the trappings of a formal democracy, Diem's regime was thoroughly authoritarian—most notable for its corruption, nepotism, and single-minded brutality. While drafting a constitution and creating a legislature, Diem ensured his dominance by adding provisions which allowed him to issue laws by decree and to pass emergency provisions without the legislature's approval.<sup>133</sup> Nepotism was likewise rampant, as Diem's relatives obtained powers over subjects as diverse as religion, foreign affairs, regional security, drug smuggling, and civil administration.<sup>134</sup> Most disturbing perhaps was Diem's appointment of his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, to the role of "political councilor", an innocuous enough sounding job title were it not for the fact that Nhu's chief function was to ensure administrative support of Diem through torture, assassination, and intimidation.<sup>135</sup> Indeed, according to conservative estimates, by 1960 the Diem Government had locked up over 50,000 political prisoners. Although communists were the official targets, prisoners also included union leaders, pro-French

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<sup>133</sup> Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin*, 88.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 87.

Vietnamese, or simply political opponents of the Diem clique.<sup>136</sup> Therefore, the USIS's claim that the new republican government ushered in "the end of feudality", appears disingenuous at best.<sup>137</sup>

In other areas of governance, Diem proved equally inept. On the critical issue of land reform, for example, Diem's policies were an unmitigated disaster. Given that at the beginning of his tenure 0.025% of the population controlled 40% of the rice-land, Diem and the US both understood that land redistribution was integral to the larger fortunes of the state-building process. However, through a mixture of incompetence and corruption, far more South Vietnamese managed to lose their land than gain it during the Diem years—a development that the communists were able to exploit with ruthless efficiency.<sup>138</sup> Diem's staunch Catholic nationalism also proved to be a liability in the multiethnic Buddhist majority nation. For instance, rather than gaining an ally in the predominantly anti-communist Chinese diaspora—which accounted for roughly 10% of Vietnam's population and held over one-half of its capital—Diem managed to alienate this important group by confiscating its property, liquidating its assets, and forcing its members to adopt Vietnamese names.<sup>139</sup> Other groups, such as the Montagnards—a semi nomadic Central Highlands tribe—suffered similar fates as Diem relocated 210,000 of the northern Catholic refugees into villages that the Montagnards traditionally regarded as their own. Even the majority Buddhist Vietnamese were subjected to Diem's bigotry as important posts in the government were reserved for practicing Catholics, and "spiritualism"—a deliberately vague term designed to scare Buddhists—was outlawed in 1959,

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<sup>136</sup> Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, 89-90.

<sup>137</sup> "The End of Feudality", *The Times of Vietnam*, (Saigon), July 14, 1956, Page 1.

<sup>138</sup> Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin*, 93-96.

<sup>139</sup> Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, 89.

the same year that Diem dedicated the estimated 90% Buddhist Vietnam to the Virgin Mary.<sup>140</sup>

In light of this summary of Diem's misdeeds (and an abridged one at that), it is unlikely that any amount of USIS propaganda could have altered the course of events which eventually brought down their Southeast Asian client.

However, though unassailable in itself, an exclusive focus on Diem's failures risks leaving out an important element of the Diem/USIS equation: the Agency's role in this fiasco. Here, it is helpful if we turn back to the methodology presented in the introduction: race and class. Admittedly, up to this point the racial and class biases that are so integral to understanding the USIS's role in post-Geneva Vietnam have only received passing mention. Let us then address this by turning back to one of the only pieces of direct evidence we have of the Agency's impact on elements of Vietnamese society: the surveys. As mentioned previously, the surveys suggest that the Vietnamese respondents had an ambivalent response to the USIS mission. Less has been said, however, as to what the surveys reveal about the USIS's officials' attitudes towards the Vietnamese people. Here, it is worth examining the class of people that were interviewed in greater detail. If we look back at the major student survey, for example, we learn that of the 462 students interviewed, the vast majority had fathers who were Civil Servants, Professionals, Traders, or Landowners. Conversely, only 2% of the students came from proletarian backgrounds, while none came from Vietnam's massive peasant class.<sup>141</sup> Similar patterns emerged elsewhere. In one case study on the impact of USIS imported Hollywood

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<sup>140</sup> Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin*, 91.

<sup>141</sup> "The Image of America Among Vietnamese University Students", 35. The breakdown of the father's occupation was as follows: 43% Civil Servant, 22% Professional, 16% Trader, 3% Landowner, 2% labourer, and 1% soldier.

films, 500 men were interviewed, all coming from “white collar,” well educated backgrounds.<sup>142</sup> Meanwhile, in another survey conducted to attain Vietnamese viewpoints on atomic energy, only Government Employees, Professors, Journalists, and College Students were questioned.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, according to my own findings, the USIA records contain absolutely no information on the attitudes of peasants throughout the 1954-1960 time frame. The question therefore becomes why?

The most tempting answer to give is that due to linguistic hurdles and their geographical remoteness from Saigon, surveys of the peasants would have proved a daunting task. However, one must be cautious in taking this explanation too far. Firstly, like many of its other operations, the USIS research and surveys were contracted out to local Vietnamese employees. In this case, the Agency created an entity called the “Vietnam Express”. Headed by Dang Duc Khoi, an official from the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry, the Vietnam Express was in charge of administering all of the USIS’s surveys throughout the country. Given that the Express was staffed by local Vietnamese, the linguistic barriers between the USIS mission in Saigon and the Vietnamese peasantry could have been easily overcome.<sup>144</sup> Secondly, the geographic restrictions did not prevent USIS officials from accessing the highlands or marsh areas, as already demonstrated by the Mobile Units used to disseminate propaganda films. If the USIS was able to show Vietnamese peasants these anti-communist propaganda films, then they would have been able to solicit their opinions on these same pictures.

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<sup>142</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 112, “Some Preliminary Highlights from a Survey of the Impact of Hollywood Films on White-Collar Viewers in Saigon,” ND.

<sup>143</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 21, “Untitled From: Saigon, To: United States Information Agency,” February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1958.

<sup>144</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 1, “Vietnam Express”, July 31 1959.

The more plausible explanation is that because Vietnam's peasant class was a marginalized, uneducated, and disenfranchized group, the Agency had little use for their opinions. Evidence of this attitude may be gleaned from the USIA's records. For example, the USIS justified its heavy reliance on students as a sample group because they formed "an important elite group affording the main reservoir of leadership in modernizing countries".<sup>145</sup> Again, in another survey—this one of readers of *Free World* magazine—the surveyors relied on students and professionals because they were thought to be the "opinion leaders" in Saigon.<sup>146</sup> The implicit corollary here, of course, was that those who were removed from the modernization project or the public sphere were of scant value to the USIS's endeavour. Indeed, the classist biases of the USIA officers, left little room for the opinions of a people generally thought to be antiquarian in their lifestyles or belief systems. As Statler has assiduously noted, the Vietnamese peasants were viewed "as clay on a potter's wheel to be molded" into whatever image was cast upon them by their social and intellectual superiors.<sup>147</sup> Ignoring the agency of this social group, however, proved costly as the peasants would provide the main reservoir of NLF support in the early years of the southern insurgency. Though the USIS regarded them as a peripheral group to their mission, the same can hardly be said of the NLF.

If the inherent class prejudices of the USIS's mission meant that significant portions of the population were treated as afterthoughts, the orientalist ideology of its staff ensured that the USIS's messages of freedom and equality were often greatly compromised. Far more explicit than the classist notions outlined above, evidence of the USIS's culture of racism is hardly

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<sup>145</sup> "The Image of American Among Vietnamese University Students", i.

<sup>146</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 112, "Saigon Media Research Survey," August 11 1959.

<sup>147</sup> Statler, *Choosing France*, 274.



controversial. Firstly, we must consider the nature of the mission itself: In assuming that it was beneficial to inculcate the Vietnamese with American values, and Anglicize their elite, the USIS demonstrated an acute degree of contempt for Vietnamese tradition. Cruder expressions of racism can be found within the Agency's records. A rather remarkable example was a 1960 research report on modernization's effect on Southeast Asia, which was used as a pedagogical tool for training USIS officials throughout the region. A few sample quotations from this study offer us a window into the mindset of the USIA:

Contrary to the basic sense of individual determinism commonly accepted in the West, the Asian lives in a universe determined by the will of God, not man.<sup>148</sup>

The temporary dominance of Karma and anti-materialism often justifies the lack of positive action...which in turn aids in discouraging mass political participation in economic and social programs.<sup>149</sup>

And finally,

The knowledge that the world is sorrow, that present suffering stems from a previous incarnation, that the only hope of peace of soul is not to improve this world, but to escape from it, are powerful reasons for inactivity...[which] often makes it difficult to help Asians help themselves.<sup>150</sup>

As Mark Bradley has wisely observed, the impressive military performance of the Vietnamese forces in the late 1940s and early 1950s against the French ought to have induced

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<sup>148</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 2, "Factors Influencing Change in Southeast Asia," July 22, 1960, Page, 1

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 2

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

some modesty into those who had previously espoused the orientalist canard of the “backward, lazy, and incompetent” Vietnamese.<sup>151</sup> Incredibly, however, such caricatures were so deeply imbedded in the psyches of USIS officials that they occasionally crept into the propaganda itself. Thus, in a 1958 article, ostensibly written to celebrate Vietnam’s progress, the following was written to a Vietnamese reading audience:

Asian temperament is not inclined (as yet) toward tolerance...Add to it the ignorance of the masses and their lack of interest or exclusion from government (it would be difficult to tell which causes which)...and one would wonder how a democratic system based on parliamentarism can ever work in Asia at all.<sup>152</sup>

A gifted ironist could have a field day deconstructing the hypocrisies and absurdities within the above statement. For our purposes, however, it is adequate to merely compare this comment to the ones which began this essay and note how little the American opinion of the Vietnamese had evolved within nearly a decade. At other times, this narrow minded view resulted in rather bizarre choices for propaganda, as in one case where the sub-tropical movie goers in Saigon were treated to a newsreel advertizing the virtues of downhill skiing.<sup>153</sup> Reflecting on his own experiences in Indochina, author Graham Greene characterized the typical American in Vietnam as one who was “impregably armoured by his good intentions and ignorance”.<sup>154</sup> One may choose to remain agnostic on the first of these depictions, but to the second, there can be little doubt.

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<sup>151</sup> Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America*, 184.

<sup>152</sup> “Our Republic, The Fourth Year”. *The Times of Vietnam*. (Saigon), October 25, 1958, Page 1.

<sup>153</sup> USNA, RG 306, Box 30 “Our Times # 17,” Jan 24 1956.

<sup>154</sup> Graham Greene, *The Quiet American*, (New York: Modern Library, 1955), 213.

## Conclusion

The Eisenhower Administration may have ended in 1960, but American involvement in Vietnam did not. To those who study the legacies of the American empire, this terrible chapter in Vietnamese and American history is familiar enough. Faced with an increasingly confident and violent southern insurgency, John F. Kennedy chose to escalate the American commitment, authorizing the deployment of 16,000 military advisors by 1963. With the CIA-supported assassination of Diem in November of the same year, the nine year American state-building project under Diem was effectively terminated, bringing with it jubilant and violent celebrations throughout the streets of Saigon.<sup>155</sup> Less than three weeks later, Kennedy would meet a similar fate, as Lee Harvey Oswald's bullet ensured a premature closure to the young President's tenure in office. By 1965, Kennedy's successor, the insecure Lyndon Baines Johnson, had converted America's mission in Vietnam to a fully fledged "Limited War"; thus introducing the Vietnamese to the horrors of saturation bombing, "free fire" zones, and extensive defoliation.

Nor did the USIA's commitment to the Southeast Asian nation disappear with Eisenhower's exit. With Kennedy's entrance into the Vietnam fray in 1961, the USIS mission's activities became more associated with anti-DRV psychological warfare and less concerned with either cultural diplomacy or propaganda.<sup>156</sup> Indicative of this shift was Agency's 1965 integration with the Joint United States Public Affairs Office, an institution principally

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<sup>155</sup> Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam*: 1. For details of the CIA's role in the coup see: Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*. (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 210-221.

<sup>156</sup> Statler, *Replacing France*, 272.

responsible for coordinating psychological warfare operations within South Vietnam.<sup>157</sup>

However, as Robert Kodosky demonstrates in his study of the USIS's activities during the Vietnam War, the intellectual climate of the Agency remained remarkably hostile towards the peoples it was allegedly helping. According to the author,

Americans put the Vietnamese into a well-defined and tightly sealed cultural box from where any escape proved impossible... They demonstrated a proclivity to objectify Vietnamese people, by stereotyping them as products of a static and primitive culture, removed from America not only by space, but also by time.<sup>158</sup>

The sense of *déjà-vu* here is palpable. Furthermore, Kodosky makes clear that this cultural ignorance poisoned the imaginations of USIS officials, in consequence rendering its psychological operations and propaganda barrages ineffective. Thus, in order to terrify the southern guerillas, USIS officials thought it wise to bombard their enemies with “weird electric cacophonies” designed to raise fears of evil “forest demons”, and attempted to drum up support for the RVN by dispatching “rural spirit” drama troops to villages.<sup>159</sup>

If such programs come across as disturbing or even perversely comical to the reader, they should hardly be surprising given my analysis presented above. As I have indicated, similar prejudices and absurdities plagued the Agency's mission in the decade prior to the war: Though lecturing the Vietnamese on the evils of global communism, the USIA made little effort to consult their targets on what they felt was the best form of government for their society. Though

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<sup>157</sup> Robert Kodosky, “The Consequences of Truth and Propaganda: American Psychological Operations in Vietnam,” (PHD diss., Temple University, 2005), 3.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 27.

“educating” people of the virtues of America’s history, culture, and its government, scant attention was paid to the rich cultural heritages that resided within the decolonizing region. Though ostensibly delegating much of its work to local actors, the Agency never dropped its self-image as a tutor to a not yet “fully rational, (or) educated” group of pupils.<sup>160</sup> Finally, though advertizing the virtues of the democratic way of life, the USIS abetted in propping up a ruthlessly authoritarian—albeit incompetent—regime. When examined from this perspective, the answers as to why the Agency failed in its mission seem all too plain.

At the root of the Agency’s failure—as well as the methods, character, and content—were the interrelated doctrines of orientalist racism and class biases. It is only through exploring these two concepts symbiotically that we may add conceptual clarity to the USIS’s capacity for cultural arrogance and its profound ignorance of the majority of Vietnamese society. As these two factors were integral—but not limited to—the whole US experience in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, there is reason to assume that this methodology could prove useful in examining the USIA’s activities in other nations such as Thailand and Cambodia, as well as “transnational” groups like the massive Chinese diaspora throughout the region.

Admittedly, certain chapters of the Agency’s early involvement in post-Geneva Vietnam remain to be written. While the preceding analysis has done much to illuminate the previously unexamined phenomenon of gray propaganda, local material produced by the VIS remains largely unexplored. Likewise, the voices of Vietnamese people who either participated in the creation of USIS programs or were on the receiving end, remain regrettably silenced. As those who lived through the Diem era have either deceased or entered their autumn years, the chances

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<sup>160</sup> Bradley, *Imaging Vietnam and America*, 186.

for researchers to discover these lost voices are rapidly shrinking. Fortunately, Vietnam studies scholars, such as Christoph Giebel, have begun to re-examine the 1955 to 1975 period within the South, calling for a re-emphasis on the “marginalized, silenced, and underrepresented” actors who lived through the Diem era.<sup>161</sup> Though we must be tempered in our enthusiasm, this new approach offers us a glimmer of hope in learning what the USIA was both unable and unwilling to; namely, how the people of South Vietnam actually felt towards the US involvement in their country, or the USIS mission in particular. Such an inquiry demands that scholars move beyond the comfortable confines of the archives, but also affords an opportunity to simultaneously delve into both the macro and micro implications of America’s Cold War empire.

Above all, my study points to the possibilities that a focus on propaganda has to offer to those still wishing to illuminate some of the dark corridors of what Henry Luce famously coined “The American Century”.<sup>162</sup> For in its ties to state power, its stature as a critical ingredient of public relations, its interactions with local populations, its influence from American domestic culture, its proclivity to blur the distinctions between the overt and the covert, and its capacity to straddle the line between the diplomatic and the coercive, a scholarly treatment of propaganda provides a vantage point from which to explore the complexities and interconnectedness of America’s Cold War experience. Admittedly, a full treatment of the implications of this trajectory exceeds the limitations of this discussion; however, in exposing the operations of the

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<sup>161</sup> Christoph Giebel, “Revolution, War, and Memory in Contemporary Viet Nam: An Assessment and Agenda. In, *Ruptured Histories: War Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia*. Ed. Sheila Miyoshi Jager, Rana Mitter, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 320.

<sup>162</sup> Henry R. Luce, “The American Century”. In, *The Ambiguous Legacy: U.S. Foreign Relations in the “American Century”* ed. Michael Hogan, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 11.

chief agency responsible for American propaganda in one small decolonizing nation, I have made a modest contribution to this endeavour.

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