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# **Cold War Propaganda, US Prestige and the Eisenhower Administration: Implications from a case study approach<sup>1</sup>**

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Scholarly research in recent years has emphasized the elements of ideology and propaganda in the understanding of the nature and the features of the Cold War. As far as the US was concerned, the importance of cultural diplomacy and propaganda mechanisms grew as the Cold War began to consolidate. The Eisenhower administration elevated government propaganda mechanisms into an indispensable branch of US foreign policy. It is in this context that the present article examines a US government research project on the decline of US "prestige" abroad designed and implemented in 1953. Our aim is to explore the conceptual structure of the research project and its implications based on archival material of the Eisenhower administration. Our assumption is that the development of propaganda techniques was a gradual and evolutionary process associated with the acknowledgement that perceptions of policies may be as important as the policies themselves. Though in an embryonic form, the reports that are examined in the present article try to address complex issues relating to US image in the world and the appeal of Americanism incorporating working assumptions and methodological principles from the rapidly developing at the time social sciences.

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## Introduction: Cold War, Propaganda and the Eisenhower presidency

The Cold War has been described by many scholars as an ideological war par excellence (Kramer 21; Macdonald 187; Mueller 40). The element of ideology is essential in understanding the real nature of this non conventional form of confrontation and its implications. Directly related to the ideological character of the Cold War is the role of propaganda, the strategies and the techniques employed for its implementation. From this perspective the Cold War could also be perceived as a battle of competing propagandas. In this context, each superpower made a maximum effort to propagate the superiority of its economic and social model. Therefore the competition, both real and symbolic, between socialism and Americanism was of crucial importance to the US and the USSR. This development also involves the concept of an international audience, of a global public opinion to whom the two rivals are addressed (Engerman 41; Buck-Morss 1-13; Maier 16-20).

As far as the US was concerned, the importance of cultural diplomacy and propaganda mechanisms grew as the Cold War began to consolidate (Aguilar 8-54). While government propaganda mechanisms had also prominence during the Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt Presidencies, the novelty introduced by the Truman and Eisenhower presidencies was the propaganda mechanisms and institutions were employed in peacetime and not in wartime (Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency* xvii).

It was mainly after Dwight Eisenhower came to office however that this framework fully developed and evolved into an equivalent and indispensable branch of US foreign policy. Some milestones in this course of action were the evolution of Truman's Campaign of Truth into Eisenhower's Crusade for Freedom, the creation of the United States Information Agency in 1953, the shaping of the Eisenhower administration "New Look" national security Strategy (Lucas 279-302; Parry-Giles, "The Eisenhower Administration's Conceptualization" 263-276; Osgood 71-78). In this context, the line between the concept of front line and the home front dissolved and shaped the experience of what has been called "total cold war" (Osgood 1).

The development of propaganda institutions and functions was based to a significant extent on the work of two committees appointed by Eisenhower himself: the President's Advisory Committee on Government Reorganization (called the Rockefeller committee) and the President's Committee on International Information Activities (called the Jackson committee). The latter was focused exclusively on the restructuring and reform of propaganda activities (Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency* 129-130). The outcome was the emergence of a highly centralized and militarized propaganda framework which served to promote both at home and abroad two central myths at the context of US Cold War strategy at the time: 1) that the US - and also president Eisenhower personally - was the only credible guarantor of global peace and that 2) the US was not only a military but also a scientific superpower who was nevertheless unambiguously committed to the peaceful use of its scientific preponderance. On the other hand, it discredited the scientific advantages of the USSR especially as far as nuclear energy was concerned arguing that they were under the suffocating embrace of a highly centralized government mechanism

and that they served military goals. At the same time, US devoted significant effort and resources to its own military preparation for a potential war conflict. These propaganda aims were the core of two extremely important campaigns which were launched in 1953, namely the Chance for Peace and the Atoms for Peace campaigns (Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency* 151-166).

As far as the latter was concerned, it had to maintain a difficult balance between fear for the Soviet nuclear arsenal, and excessive fear for the implications of nuclear energy that might encourage neutralist tendencies, defeatism at home and negative attitudes towards the development of nuclear energy and weapons by the US itself. In this context, Atoms for Peace "sought to manage fears of nuclear annihilation by cultivating the image of the 'friendly' atom. By flooding the media with talk of the peaceful applications of atomic energy, the administration hoped to divert attention from the nuclear buildup taking place under the doctrine of massive retaliation" (Osgood 155).

An important change in comparison with the Truman propaganda campaigns was that there was special emphasis in promoting a positive message from US government agencies and sources, while negative and more defensive messages were left to "private" or "covert" channels of communication. A common myth that underlay both Eisenhower campaigns and its promotion had been grounded in the Jackson committee was the idea that the US foreign policy objectives could be identified with the interests of foreign peoples - both nationally and individually - thus creating and enhancing international support for American foreign policy (Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency* 136-137). To this end, it had been suggested by the Jackson Committee and by influential communication experts such as George Gallup that American communication strategy should be oriented to long-term goals; it should take into consideration the diversified nature of foreign audiences and formulate its messages based on simple terms and ecumenical ideals (Hogan 134-168).

These processes were also followed by significant increase in public spending as well as by a remarkable development of the social sciences in the direction of interpreting, predicting and shaping human behavior in the postwar period (Ball 81-86; Robin 3-15; Halliday 106; Friedberg 214). The development of sociology, political science, of the various branches of psychology, marketing and media studies can be seen in this context. They are also related to a series of institutional and political developments the most important of which is the enhancement of the executive branch over the legislative, and specifically of the presidency (Schlesinger x).

Questions have been raised in the literature as to ethical aspects of the activities of Cold War social scientists and communication experts in close ties with the US government and military establishment focusing on the blurring of limits between observing and shaping public opinion (Robin; Hogan 160-161; Simpson 1994). In any case, the remark made by Michael Hogan in this respect should be taken into consideration: "Literalizing the Cold War metaphor and conceptualizing domestic propaganda as 'education' for survival, few doubted the morality of their efforts to help win the Cold War" (160-161).

The appeal (or the lack of it) of the American economic, social, political and cultural model, what could be schematically summarized as Americanism, was directly linked to US foreign policy objectives and its perception of national security. Inside the US Americanism became the foundation of post-war nationalism which has been

described as mainly cultural because it had as a point of reference the achievements of American economy and industry, the values of individualism and consumerism, as well as the rise of living standards (Susman 26). The basic features of the American model – liberal democracy, capitalism economic, mass consumption patterns – were also perceived as being the guiding principles that would lead – if propagated – the rest of the world to the path of modernization and progress. This belief system combined traditional American exceptionalism with Cold War ideology and incorporated elements of the prevailing “modernization” paradigm shaping the perception of a “great American mission” in the world (Ekbladh; Fousek 5-6; Stephanson).

In this ideological and political milieu, the emergence of the phenomenon of anti-Americanism in the so-called western bloc, and especially in Europe was a source of great concern for the US government (Stephan 1-20; Isernia 57-92). This development was associated with reactions to the hegemony of economic and cultural Americanism, but also to US foreign policy in relation to the de-colonization process that led to the gradual liquidation of European colonial empires. In this respect, Mary Nolan argues that “competing Western European and American global visions dominated the first Cold War decade” (222). European anti-Americanism – among other things – undermined basic assumptions of the transatlantic consensus and the prevailing anti-communist ideology, as well as the belief in the superiority of Americanism. It is also worth noting that scholarly research also began to explore the causes and the features of global anti-Americanism. Similar attempts were carried out by the USIA all over the world under the guidance of the social psychologist Leo Crespi.

It is in this context that the present article examines a US government project inquiring into the decline of US “prestige” abroad designed and implemented in 1953 as a case study for the tendencies briefly described above. In particular we explore the conceptual structure of the research project and its implications based on archival material of the Eisenhower administration. This case study report is also supplemented by the analysis of a focused opinion survey that reflects similar concerns. Our assumption is that the development of propaganda into a crucial and equivalent branch of US foreign policy was a gradual and evolutionary process. It is also associated with the understanding of the importance of cultural diplomacy and with the acknowledgement that perceptions of policies may be as important as the policies themselves. A preliminary remark that is also worth making is that the documents analyzed in the present article employ the term propaganda and propagandists in relation to the US without resorting to euphemisms as will be the trend in the years to follow. There have been many attempts for a comprehensive and not disputed definition of propaganda which surely has strongly negative connotations. From the variety of the available conceptualizations of the term, we cite Osgood’s definition for propaganda:

[...] the term refers to any technique or action that attempts to influence the emotions, attitudes or behavior of a group, usually to serve the interests of the sponsor. Propaganda is often concerned with shaping the opinions and attitudes of the masses. The purpose of propaganda is to persuade-to change or to reinforce existing attitudes and opinions. Yet propaganda is also a manipulative activity. It generally disguises the secret intentions and goals of the sponsor; it seeks to inculcate ideas rather than to explain them; and it aspires to modify or control opinions and actions to benefit the sponsor rather than recipient (7).

## The 1953 US prestige abroad report as a case study: assumptions and implications

In July 1953 the National Security Council had requested the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) to prepare a study on the "reported decline in US prestige abroad" and to make suggestions on how the condition could be improved. However, the PSB was replaced in September 1953 by the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB). This action of the Eisenhower administration had been influenced by the conclusions reached by the (William) Jackson Committee and its new conceptualization of "psychological activities" as being inextricably linked to official US government policies and actions (Osgood 85-86).

In our presentation of the main findings and observations of the US prestige research project we will focus more on its conceptual assumptions and implications and less on the concrete content of the policies examined. A major preoccupation for the project team was the formulation of a definition for the concept of US prestige that would be appropriate for the purposes of the study. The PSB informal group meeting on September 2, 1953 was focused on this effort to propose a "workable" definition and to designate its components and its foundations. At this preliminary phase of the work, agreement was reached on the following guiding principles:

[...] prestige might be characterized as the attitudes of foreign policy makers towards the US whereby the US had the ability to further American national policy. Prestige might be classified as the ability to get other government leaders to do what America wanted. It was not foreign public opinion or even foreign press opinion, although each might be a clue as to the status of prestige. There was emphasis on the desire to develop a definition of prestige which would be specific but which would also be activist in character (Eisenhower Presidential Library [hereafter cited EPL]. "Memorandum." September 3, 1953).

It was also emphasized that the whole research project should take into consideration the prevailing "psychological atmosphere" naming European dissatisfaction with aspects of American policies and Britain's desire to play a leading role in world politics. Based on this sort of reasoning, the group decided to work on the conceptualization of prestige defined as "aptitude to obtain cooperation for the fulfillment of US foreign policy goals." From this starting point, they maintained that prestige is a relative quantity; therefore its content can be evaluated in relation to specifically designated policy goals. In this respect, the following clarification was also made: "A country which has limited foreign policy goals may have great prestige, although its aptitude to command cooperation is also limited." On the other hand, a country "with wide responsibilities," such as the US in the post-war global setting, "requires a comparatively enlarged prestige." Another point that was thoroughly analyzed was the source of prestige if defined as "aptitude to command cooperation;" it could be the result of the exercise of "force, bargain, persuasion, or example on reason or emotion." The argumentation was built on the assumption that prestige was a "combination of power and influence" with power being perceived as a rational element exercised through force or bargain and applied when the other party's goals are different from those of the United States. Influence, on the other hand, was thought to be an emotional element exercised by persuasion or example and could

have greater effectiveness insofar as the US and the other party have identical goals. (EPL. "Memorandum." September 4, 1953).

The draft report of the US prestige abroad project dated September 9, 1953 defines the concept of prestige as follows: "US prestige abroad is defined in terms of its ability to obtain cooperation for the fulfillment of foreign policy goals, and is assessable by the degree to which foreign peoples will accept US principles and cooperate in fulfillment of common foreign policy objectives." The influence of the behaviorist paradigm can easily be detected in this definition. It reflects a rather mechanistic perception that tries to maintain equivalence between belief systems, attitudes and patterns of action. The element of instrumentality is present in the overall analysis.

Based on this operational definition that we have cited the report designates the following three elements as constitutive of US prestige: 1) "an image of the United States," 2) "the effect of that image on foreign political behavior," 3) "the influence of that behavior on the ability of the United States to achieve its own, as well as mutually-held security goals." The report further focuses on a specific aspect of US image "which has major political relevance at the present time" that consists in the "US ability to negotiate outstanding differences with the USSR and to participate in a broad relaxation of international tensions." US image in the present report is seen in a very specific way, directly related to the curves of cold war politics (EPL. "Prestige study." September 9, 1953).

The draft working paper of the project dated September 4, 1953 had introduced the above mentioned definition of US prestige and elaborated on the concept of US "image" trying to identify its components stressing that the emphasis was placed on these components that had "political relevance" at the time. Therefore the working draft designated four major components of US image: 1. Political, 2. Military, 3. Economic, and 4. Social. The political component refers to world public opinion perceptions of issues relating to the Cold War confrontation, namely US attitude towards the USSR, its anti-communist strategy, as well as US relationships with Europe and the issues of European unification and German rearmament in particular, and finally US "colonial" policy and its relations with the Asian countries. The military component involves foreign perceptions on US strategy for dealing with communism ("Liberation" vs. "Containment" policy), its atomic energy policy, decrease on US defense spending, the Korean war, US base programs etc. The economic component involves perceptions of US trade policy, evaluations of the American domestic economy etc. Finally the social aspect refers to foreign perceptions of McCarthyism, US immigration policy and events such as the Rosenberg trial (EPL. "Prestige study-Working Draft." September 4, 1953).

In the following days the project team (Working paper dated September 9, 1953) issued a more elaborate definition on the concept of "American prestige" which is worth citing:

[...] the ephemeral conglomerate of the attitudes and reactions of the leadership or political elite of a foreign country or group towards the international actions and leadership of the United States whereby America can influence or compel that foreign group to adopt and follow courses of domestic and foreign action favorable to American objectives (EPL. "Working Paper for Prestigeless Prestige Working Group." September 9, 1953).

It is also emphasized that the foreign political group in question is best not to "be conscious that it is following or assisting American objectives." Instead, it is considered preferable if the perception of an "identity of interest" is established (EPL. "Working Paper for Prestigeless Prestige Working Group." September 9, 1953).

As a point of criticism one could argue that this definition exhibits an elitist bias as it focuses solely on the perceptions of foreign elites and seems to underestimate the factor of mass opinion and their influence on the shaping of foreign policy. However, this bias is easily explained by the fact that the sole priority of this inquiry is to facilitate the attainment of US foreign policy objectives.

The editors of the report also stressed the importance of the time factor in correctly assessing US prestige. In particular they insisted on a long-range approach in the subject, even though they acknowledged that prestige may be influenced (positively or negatively) by single events for a relatively short period of time. Their main argument however was that prestige is something that develops gradually involving a certain period of time. In this respect, they argued that "traditional policy attitudes" have decisive influence on foreign perceptions and could counterbalance the negative influence stemming from "specific American actions" (EPL. "Working Paper for Prestigeless Prestige Working Group." September 9, 1953).

The report also commented extensively – and controversially – on certain key policies of the Eisenhower administration. This fact, as will be pointed out later on, had a negative influence on the reception of the report by the Eisenhower administration. In specific, the report commented on the symbolic and discursive aspects of "containment" and "liberation" policies as far as US anti-communist strategy was concerned criticizing both in terms of the "emotional" and "moral" connotations of each term. It was argued that both the term "containment" and the term "liberation" enhanced fears of a nuclear world war in global public opinion and thus undermined US prestige at times. Though the foundations and the working assumptions of both policies were not put under question, their discursive framing was challenged. As it was explicitly emphasized "Liberation is a new catch word which, to non-Americans increases the threat of war since it explicitly necessitates the actual turning back of Soviet influence and power out of areas where it has clearly taken hold." It was also reported that Liberation policy had "caused fundamental changes in attitudes"; in the western world it had led to a decline in American prestige and to a challenge of US leadership enhancing feelings of uncertainty and fears for a war confrontation with the USSR. Moreover, it was argued that the discursive articulation of liberation policy tended to emphasize "the moral aspects of irreconcilability between Soviet and American principles" leading to a "black and white" reading of the cold war rivalry which was said to be "distasteful" to foreign leaders, and especially to Europeans who "would be the first to suffer" in the case of a war confrontation (EPL. "Prestige factor in Liberation versus Containment Policy." September 9, 1953). It is fair to say that the points of criticism raised here represent an essential criticism to a central policy of the Eisenhower administration.

Moreover, a subtle criticism to Secretary of State Dulles emerged as the report quoted his public statement according to which "we do not now have to be constantly taking international public opinion polls to find out what others want, and then doing what it seems will make us popular." The report commented that a total neglect of foreign public opinion and excesses in the US anti-communist attitude

and rhetoric in world politics involved the risk of its isolation from its allies (EPL. "Prestige study." September 9, 1953).

The issue of American atomic energy policy was also thoroughly addressed in the report and certain points of criticism were expressed on the policy and communication choices made by the US. It was recommended, among other things, that the US should place greater emphasis – at least as far as public discourse is concerned – on the "peaceful application" of atomic energy (EPL. "US Atomic Energy Policy." September 9, 1953). It is worth recalling that eventually the "Atoms for Peace" campaign evolved into a central policy of the Eisenhower administration and its global communication strategy (Osgood 153-180).

One of the most interesting aspects of the report is its conceptual and methodological assumptions. In this respect, it is worth exploring its perception of "US prestige" as a deliberate course of action that can be modified-as a self-correction process one could say. This line of inquiry stems from the phrasing of the following methodological principle: "A study of United States prestige can be profitable only to the extent to which we use it as a mirror in which to scrutinize the voluntary actions of our own or our own attitudes responsible for our ability or lack of ability in obtaining other peoples' support of our policies." From this starting point, the report traces three kinds of potential problems ("accidents" as it chooses to characterize them) to the US prestige: 1) the case of an "inadequate response to the challenges" arising for the US in international affairs, 2) "unreconciled conflicts" among the various US policy objectives, 3) problematic communication of the US messages to the rest of the world leading to a "misapprehension of our objectives." These sources of potential damage to US prestige are highlighted with recourse to two examples, the field of American economic relations and that of US relations with the colonized parts of the world and its response to the de-colonization process (EPL. "Prestige Study." September 9, 1953).

As far as the first issue is concerned, American economic relations are addressed in a broad sense involving also aspects of the American economic model in its internal manifestations. In this sense US prestige appears directly related to aspects of Americanism as an economic system. In particular, the report addresses the issue historically focusing on the post-war period. However, it comments that the Great Depression of the 1930s had a negative influence on US prestige which was counter-balanced by the successful-and within the democratic context-answer America managed to give to the economic crisis and by the rise of its productivity.

Continuing on to the postwar era, the report praises the Marshall Plan and US reconstruction policies and argues that they had an unambiguously positive and lasting impact on US prestige: "Here the response was commensurate with the challenge, and the success of the United States, illustrated by the admiration of its friends and the clamor of its enemies, was of a permanent nature." However, the report acknowledges certain weaknesses in this field that are attributed to problems in the communication pattern established for one and to contradictions between the aid programs and other US policies for another (e.g. trade policy).

The problems in the communication of the American aid programs are mainly associated with psychological factors involved in the process of granting and monitoring the aid to the recipient countries. The editors of the report criticize American actions and attitudes in this respect: "we let develop a certain sense of obligation,



a poor-relative complex." It also argues that the US ultimately failed in establishing a sense of mutuality and co-operating with the recipients of the aid. They also focus on the unfortunate handlings related to the termination of the aid in certain countries that created a set of "strains and stresses." A mild self-criticism as far as US handlings of the aid programs are concerned emerges in the following passage:

It is true that by seeking sometimes popularity rather than prestige, or by over-emphasizing the generous impulse-which contributed to our aid but was not the entire story-we have increased the strains and stresses. Being the benefactor, it was natural that we would believe in certain instances that we knew better than the recipient what he should do for his own good. It was unavoidable also that ulterior motives, such as the intent to dump surpluses, would be ascribed to us (EPL. "Prestige Study." September 9, 1953).

In any case, the editors of the report seem convinced that the most important negative implications were not associated with communication issues, but with the contradictions with other US government policies, such as trade and tariff policies, difficulties in discerning between economic and military aid, cold war barriers to East-West trade relations, all of which were perceived as an "unbearable burden" by foreign countries even if they were recipients of US aid. As the report concludes: "we gave to the beneficiaries reasons for placing on us the responsibility for their failures, we became in fact their scapegoat." And the more general conclusion reached is that American prestige is undermined when US policy appears to seek to fulfill "contradictory objectives."

The second major line of inquiry involves US relations with the colonized world as a source of negative influence on US prestige. The main problems emerging in this area are grouped into two categories: a) failure of US policy in addressing the challenges arising and b) a "breakdown" in the American communication mechanism. The term "colonial and semi-colonial areas" refers, according to the terminology of the report, "not only to South and Southeast Asia, Korea, the Philippines, the Middle East, and Africa, but also *mutatis mutandis* to certain countries under Communist control such as China, to Russia itself, to the European satellite states, to certain Mediterranean countries like Greece, and to South America." The common features that underlie this grouping are the so-called economic underdevelopment and the gradual steps towards "new forms of social or national organizations" (EPL. "Prestige Study." September 9, 1953). This perception of an evolutionary process is typical of the development and modernization discourse that prevailed in the US during the Cold War (Ekbladh 77-189).

The most important obstacle in the successful communication of the US with the underdeveloped countries was thought to be the existence of an "entirely different" cultural framework compared to that of the US and Europe. The language barriers are also mentioned as an important part of that cultural framework. Cultural difference in this context is evaluated as an impediment to communication. The persistence of these language and cultural barriers leaves small hope "that we can be understood by the peoples of these areas, and even less that we can understand them." In this reading, effective propaganda presupposes a minimum of mutual understanding.

The report also stresses the fact that American experience of these countries and cultures is in the majority of cases mediated and vice versa, their experience of

America is mediated and most often associated with (non popular) colonial powers. Therefore American prestige is influenced by perceptions of other western powers with negative implications. Based on a thorough analysis of this handicap, the report suggests that further direct contact between the US and the people of the "underdeveloped" areas should be systematically pursued in order to achieve solid and lasting results with US prestige. This remark is also sustained by the literature on anti-Americanism where it has been attested that anti-Americanism often seems to mix with pre-existing ideological constructions and attitudes such as anti-western legacies (Dawisha 72-72; Emdree 140-141; Hamid 100-101).

However, the editors of the report do not argue that any communication process with the colonized world is doomed to fail, but they stress that any such attempt should take into consideration the target-countries' ethical and moral codes and value systems. This remark is made with particular emphasis on the issue of promoting the values of Americanism abroad. It also points out that there is no way the US can successfully propagate on "criteria of morality" or "goal-images" that are utterly different from those nurtured in the context of the local culture. The report is explicitly critical on the limitations and failures of US propaganda in this central issue:

We may be right in ascribing to our philosophy of life a universal quality, but we should be very careful not to impose it or even propagandize it before being certain that the basic resemblance between our philosophy and their philosophy has been perceived and accepted. This we have not done. Our insistence in praising "the American way of life" has not done us any good in these areas. Our psychological strategy has failed to the extent that it rested on indiscriminate publicity of the things dear to us addressed to targets we inadvisedly assumed to be like us (EPL. "Prestige Study." September 9, 1953).

## **The reception of the US prestige report by the Eisenhower administration**

The memorandum submitted to the Vice President summarized the recommendations of the US prestige abroad project. As far as the executive branch of power was concerned it was suggested that the Eisenhower administration should disassociate itself from extremist political manifestations of anti-communism that had shaped the foreign perception of McCarthyism and encourage trade relations between the eastern and the western blocs. The report also advised the legislative branch to take initiatives in the direction of liberalization of US trade and tariff policies and the revision of US assistance programs shifting their emphasis from "aid" to "cooperation." It was also suggested that the US government should modify its actions in order to avoid complaints on "unilateralism" and to avoid "statements or actions" that would encourage the impression that the US is "hysterical on the subject of communism." Moreover, it was strongly recommended that the administration exploits the President's personal popularity abroad (EPL. "Memorandum for the Vice President." October 1, 1953).

However, the main findings of the US Prestige Project in terms of the decline of US prestige in the world were met with reservations and skepticism by the National Security Council in its meeting on October 1, 1953 where the President, the Vice-

-President, the Secretaries of State, Defense and the Treasury, the Director of Central Intelligence as well as other high-ranking officials were present. The report had been submitted to the NSC by the Operations Coordinating Board.

Charles D. Jackson – an influential advisor to president Eisenhower on psychological warfare and a member of the OCB – criticized the main arguments of the report as being “too pessimistic” and for implying, in his reading of it, that the damages suffered to US prestige were solely due to American actions, an interpretation which he characterized as “oversimplification.” In this respect, he considered the findings of the report to be a misleading and therefore “dangerous.” In his opinion the fall in US prestige was an inevitable consequence of the role the US had assumed as a global power. Moreover, he felt that this whole development was also due to a “European neurosis.” Jackson stressed out that even if the main recommendations of the report were to be adopted by the US leadership, this wouldn’t necessarily increase favorable attitudes towards the US (“we shouldn’t expect to be loved overnight” as he put it). He even questioned the necessity and the usefulness of such an emotionally based favorable attitude: “In point of fact, we don’t want to be loved anyhow but simply to be respected.”

President Eisenhower was, on his part, very critical of the basic assumptions and conclusions of the report. He questioned the skills and the loyalty of the people involved in the project. Moreover, he appeared skeptical of the New Deal and the Truman Presidency legacies. One can detect an implicit criticism of the conception and implementation of the Marshall Plan in this argumentation. According to the transcripts of the meeting:

The President said he had almost blown his top when he first read the report. It was obvious to him that many of the individuals overseas who had sent in the views out of which the report had been made, had been appointed to their jobs when they thought that the only way to assure the prestige of the United States overseas was to hand out money. Many of them were New Dealers with the result that the report was badly overdrawn and colored (FRUS, 1950-1954:1545-1548).

As far as the political identity and ideological orientation of those involved in the report are concerned, Jackson on his part noted that were “still termites” in Washington and “disgruntled eggheads” in the missions abroad who did not care to defend or to promote the positive aspects of the Eisenhower administration policies. Secretary of State Dulles, while he acknowledged that the fluctuations in US prestige abroad are an issue of interest, he prioritized the “great damage” that could be caused to the Administration should the report leak to the public. He also put the argument that there is another aspect-and in his judgment a more important one- to the concept of US prestige that is not addressed by the report, the internal aspect, the perception and evaluation of the US by the American public itself. In this respect, Dulles felt that US prestige, under the Eisenhower presidency, was “higher now than it had been for a long time.” Dulles concluded that the Council need not adopt the recommendations of the report. President Eisenhower agreed insisting on the fact that the report should “receive no circulation” and all its copies should be recalled. In his concluding remarks, Eisenhower also argued on the “ephemeral character of gratitude among nations” and he expressed his lack of trust in the stuff of American missions overseas pointing out the need to trace potential “traitors”

and to send observers that would be “really loyal” to his Administration (FRUS, 1950-1954:1545-1548).

The dismissive attitude of the Council as far as the report is concerned can be attributed to the lack of trust of a newly established administration to the diplomatic and intelligence establishment created by its predecessors with a very different political and ideological orientation. In any case, this bias results to a rather short-sighted and superficial reading of the US prestige report which initiates a fruitful inquiry into phenomena such as pro-Americanism and anti-Americanism in the context of the conceptual scheme of US prestige.

### **Other case study approaches to US prestige: the 1953 French Attitudes Survey**

Approximately at the same time with the US prestige project the Office of Intelligence Research was processing the findings of an opinion poll survey conducted by the French Institute of Public Opinion between January and February 1953. Parts of the survey were published by a French magazine and the Washington Post later that year, while the Office of Intelligence Research presented a thorough analysis of the entire survey for the Department of State (September 1953). In this section we present parts of this analysis as they are related to the questioning raised in the US prestige report (Roosevelt Study Center [hereafter RSC]. September 11, 1953).

In order to contextualize the analysis we should take into consideration that in the 1950s France represented a challenge for US foreign policy makers with its persisting anti-American trends (Toinet 133-141; Roger). A legacy of elitist cultural anti-Americanism that dated back to the Enlightenment (Roger 21-38) interacted with post-war fears for the prevailing of the American (or the “Anglo-Saxon”) cultural model thus eroding French cultural and national identity (Roger 439-480; Kuisel 119-135). Moreover, the populist right campaigned against the influence of the American economic model arguing that it undermined the traditional structure of French production and economy. Overall, after the Liberation in France had emerged a mood of national self-pity that was, to a great extent, associated with its economic decline as well as with its decline as a colonial power (Weber 560-571). In this respect, the crisis of French colonialism manifested in various occasions (e.g. the Indochina issue) evolved into a source of tension for French-American relations and of popular anti-NATO and anti-American attitudes (Smith 70-102; Grosser 557-561). Finally, French apprehensions for aspects of American ideology and political culture, such as McCarthyism triggered anti-American rhetoric. It is worth mentioning that the execution of the Rosenbergs (June 1953) provoked an outcry against the US; violent anti-American protests took place, while it was argued that the persecution was due to American anti-Semitism and an analogy with the Dreyfus affair was sustained (Glynn 498-518).

The survey that is here being presented focused on French perceptions of US policies, US and Soviet cold war propagandas as well as aspects of Americanism and the character of Americans. The main source of preoccupation for American analysts was that the majority of respondents could not mention spontaneously a post-war US action beneficial to France or a positive action in general that meets their

approval (60%). However, half of them couldn't think of any specific policy they disapproved. Consequently, the editors of the report concluded that this is a task to be fulfilled by US "propagandists." In the exact phrasing: "For the propagandist the implication is that there is a large proportion of a possible audience that is yet to be brought into the theatre of his operations" (RSC. September 11, 1953).

As far as the postwar role of the US as a superpower is concerned, the French felt that "American influence" was "too great" (39%) in relation to France and were favorable of French-American co-operation on a more equal basis. Two-thirds of the respondents expressed the belief that France is a target for American propaganda. Moreover, French public opinion appeared critical of the presence of US troops and the maintenance of US bases on French soil. Nevertheless, half of the respondents (47%) felt that an alliance with the US was "vital for France."

Another point that was emphasized in the American analysis of the French survey was the French perception of US motives in their global policy. The majority of the respondents believed that American actions were dictated by anti-communism and the "desire for commercial gains," while the view that the "triumph of democracy" was the primary motivation of US policy was not very popular to the French—to the disappointment of the analysts. In particular, according to the phrasing of the survey, 66% of the sample replied that the US policy in the world was dominated chiefly by "fear of communism," 59% by the "desire to gain control of world markets," and 30% by the "desire to have democracy triumph" (possibility for multiple answers). As far as the aspect of American economic motivations is concerned the report concluded that the perception of a US "economic imperialism" that threatened French interests had emerged. French public opinion seemed to believe that the country's economic independence was threatened more than other aspects of their life, for example political independence which was the second most popular answer. In the analysts' estimation this "was not an active propaganda problem" at the time the survey was conducted, but "it had a latent possibility of being an issue" (RSC. September 11, 1953).

In relation to the perception of Americanism which is a principal concern in this sort of reasoning, the report observes that the majority of the French seem to have a "vague liking for the US without necessarily admiring it." This "liking" is reported to have diminished since the last available survey dated back to 1939, but it was also noted that the US appeared more popular than the Soviet Union even by a small margin. Another important aspect of Americanism, in the structure of the survey, is the quality of power associated with the US. The analysts commented with satisfaction that America was viewed as "the powerful young giant" who is expected to be the most powerful nation in the coming fifty years (45% of the respondents stated the US would be most powerful vs. 19% for the USSR). However, French attraction to Americanism has its limits – "America is no promised land for the French" according to the report; the majority of respondents stated that they prefer life in their own country, even though they acknowledge that America is superior to material conditions.

The perception of the "American character" is also a central theme in the survey. According to the findings Americans are thought to be progressive, practical, wealthy, interested only in money and fiercely anti-communist. Despite being stereotypically perceived as rich, Americans are not considered to be particularly

generous which seems a contradiction to American analysts given the granting of US aid to France. In an effort to interpret this contradiction, the analysts point out the French feeling that Americans behave “in an irritating fashion, like poor relatives.” On the overall US role in the post-war period the French understanding is that of “a big child who meddles in affairs which aren’t his concern and understands little of Europe.” Nevertheless, the issue of the “American character” is of great importance to US cold war propaganda because it is directly related to the overall perception of the American economic, social and cultural model. In this respect, American analysts are concerned with what seems to be an emerging pattern in diminishing favorability for American character and they try to establish a correlation between this trend and aspects of US cultural and economic imperialism targeted to France. Their suggestion is that certain, carefully selected, commercial and cultural American products could significantly enhance positive perceptions of Americanism and the American character. The following quote summarizes this line of argumentation:

While the propagandist is mainly interested in such important exports as US foreign policy and troops, there are other exports which have their part to play in making or losing friends for the United States. The French like US canned foods, cigarettes, household equipment, and the French edition of the *Reader’s Digest*. They do not care for chewing gum, jazz, US films, and as far as Coca Cola is concerned, it more the pause that revolts than refreshes (RSC. September 11, 1953).

To sum up, the report on 1953 French attitudes survey addresses similar preoccupations for US propaganda mechanisms as the US prestige report. The report is focused on a country of the so-called western world and a recipient of US aid. Therefore a decline on US favorability ratings or limitations to the positive perception of Americanism are issues of great importance in the context of cold war rivalry between the superpowers.

## Conclusion

Though in an embryonic form, both reports try to address issues relating to the trends in pro- and anti-Americanism incorporating working assumptions and methodological principles from the rapidly developing at the time social sciences. In the following years, the United States Information Agency (USIA) under the guidance of innovative social scientists would carry out a wide range of public opinion surveys across the world in an effort to note down foreign belief systems and their constitutive elements relating to the objectives of US foreign policy. Nevertheless, these first attempts illustrate the main themes that would guide US state driven research in the field. Moreover, they have implicitly demonstrated the distinction between negative attitudes toward the US stemming from aspects of US policies (what America *does*) and from aspects of the American economic, social, political or cultural model (what America *is*) (this conceptual distinction is based on the work of Katzenstein and Keohane 2). Finally, they are a manifestation of the reflexivity of the Eisenhower administration in safeguarding the myth of US leadership as far as the “Free World” was concerned in the context of the Cold War rivalry.

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