

A CULTURAL EMPIRE? AMERICAN MARSHALL PLAN PROPAGANDA IN EUROPE



FOR EUROPEAN RECOVERY

SUPPLIED BY THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



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s4836732

MA Thesis North American Studies

Date of Submission: 5 March 2019

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all I would like to thank my supervisor, Frank Mehring without whose help and advice I would not have found this topic. Secondly, I would like to thank my parents and partner for their endless patience and support throughout the writing process. Lastly, I want to especially thank my sister for letting me write at her house, giving me critical feedback and helping me edit.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the potential of the United States as Cultural Empire during the Marshall Plan years by analyzing three selected posters from the poster competition in 1950 and the well-known emblem of the aid program. To be able to do so, this thesis presents a historic and political overview of the intentions of the Marshall Plan and subsequent American influence in Europe. This includes the discussion of the impact of the Marshall Plan in academic research over the past four decades, an overview of new developments in public diplomacy and public policy, the necessity for soft power, and importance of the positive projection of the ‘image’ of a nation in the ideological context of the Cold War. Juxtaposing the traditional meaning of empire to the newly suggested definition of Cultural Empire, with characteristics ascribed to Americanization, the myth of American Exceptionalism, and subsequent formation of cultural memory, makes for a coherent argument of how the Marshall Plan contributed to the status of America as Cultural Empire.

Keywords: Advertising, American Exceptionalism, Americanization, Cold War, Cultural Empire, Cultural Memory, Economic Cooperation Administration, Empire, Europe, European Recovery Program, Ideology, ‘Information,’ Marshall Plan, Poster Competition, Propaganda, Public Diplomacy, Public Policy, Strategy of Truth, World War II

INTRODUCTION

It is logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace¹

These famous words were spoken by George C. Marshall during his Harvard Commencement on 5 June 1947. He had seen the havoc that World War II had left behind in many European countries personally. The speech itself was a culmination of various other speeches and documents given by the President and other influential American officials, such as the ‘Truman Doctrine’ and George Kennan’s ‘Long Telegram,’ because at the time of this speech there was no plan in place for aiding Europe in their reconstruction (Gimbel 6). Following the Harvard speech, there appeared to be an increased urgency in finding the proper setup for an actual plan. After all, it proved easier to address the issues at hand than to transform “the abstract designs ... into credible proposals” (Ellwood 1992: 60). One thing the officials immediately agreed upon was that the “initiative must come from Europe” (Gimbel 11). Prominent officials of many Western European countries gathered in Paris to bring about a report that listed the needs and subsequent requests for their individual country so that they would be able to work on reconstruction (Behrman 111). Disagreement and discussion among American officials about how to best meet the needs of European countries continued throughout autumn and winter of 1947. After careful deliberation, the proposed plans for long-term aid were presented to Congress in December and finally, following more intense debate, signed into law on 3 April 1948 as the European Recovery Program under the Foreign Assistance Act by President Truman (Kilick 83). Since George Marshall had been the one to call for immediate aid to Europe publicly, the Program was more often than not referred to as the Marshall Plan, especially in the media (Fritsche 2). At the time of writing this research, just over seventy years have passed since its launch and since it is commonly remembered as the Marshall Plan I refer to the aid program as the Marshall Plan, or simply Plan, throughout.

The above quote from Marshall’s speech perfectly captures the position from which my argument for this thesis starts; namely, determining whether or not the ideological narrative that surrounds the Marshall Plan propaganda, or, advertising campaign, and new methods for conducting

¹ Quote from George C. Marshall’s Harvard Commencement speech on 5 June 1947. Source: marshallplanfoundation.org/speech

public diplomacy contributed to the United States being a Cultural Empire.² Marshall's words represent the myth of American exceptionalism. After World War II, Marshall, and many other American officials with him, strongly believed that the United States would take on a leadership role in the world because they were the only nation able, and willing, to provide the aid that the devastated European countries required (Kilick 156). Wartime production had indeed boosted the American economy which spurred modernization in the form of new critical thinking and many technological developments leading to the establishment of a mass production capitalist system and mass consumer society (Fritsche 5). The mass production and mass consumer culture of American society after the war made the United States the most modernized country at the time and these elements soon became almost synonymous with the 'American Way of Life' (Ellwood 1992:62). The challenge lay in how to convince Europe to accept American technologies so that they, too, could achieve a higher standard of living. The Marshall Plan represented a decisive leap from previous foreign relations and solidified the intention of the United States to project their power abroad (Behrman 332). The main message of the Marshall Plan was that the American way of life would be attainable to individuals in all participating European countries; 'You Too Can Be Like Us!' was the persuasive promise (Ellwood 1992: 89). The intention was that Europe would use American modernization techniques so as to become just as prosperous as the United States (Kilick 167).

But, was the Marshall Plan truly only altruistic in nature? Prominent scholars, such as Ellwood, Gimbel, Hart, Kilick, and Steil in the field of Marshall Plan research agree that the answer to that question is a resounding no. One of the reasons for that can be found in the context of the post-war relations, or, rather, tensions, between the United States and the Soviet Union. The relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States had deteriorated rapidly and had by 1947 developed into the Cold War; a "war of ideology of competing systems and ideas" (Behrman 339). The United States was aware of the relatively weak geopolitical position of the Soviet Union but feared that the appeal of communism in the, still struggling, European nations would pose a threat to the world order (Hart 108). This perceived threat served to speed up American development of strong new foreign policies to conduct foreign relations and make communism seem unattractive in Europe (Kilick 82). The Marshall Plan can be regarded as a good example of the assembled theoretical policy changes put in practice. In the context of the psychological warfare between the Soviet Union and the United States, it was certainly a powerful ideological weapon that the United States could wield to secure their leadership position in the Cold War (Ellwood 2012: 349).

² The definition of Cultural Empire and whether or not the United States can indeed be considered one during the Marshall Plan years is discussed in great detail in the third chapter of this thesis.

As ‘image’ became key in public diplomacy relations both domestically and internationally and public participation within it became increasingly relevant due to new mass media advances, American officials had to devise strategies that would ensure public support of the policies they created (Hart 120). Moreover, the Soviet propaganda condemnation of the Marshall Plan as being an “imperialist plot to take over the [European] continent” meant that American officials had to use this support and implement it in their diplomatic foreign relations to “take direct and positive action to meet [Soviet critique]” (Hart 129). Propaganda had become vital to the policies by 1947 as officials realized that simply presenting objective and factual information would not be strong enough to counter their new enemy in the ideological war (Hart 130). The goal of the American propaganda strategy was to “find new ways to translate the success of the American economic experience into recipes for salvation of others” (Ellwood 2012: 345). To achieve this, an enormous amount of cultural artifacts came with the implementation of the Marshall Plan that employed a broad range of the new media that was at their disposal; movies, documentaries, radio programs, newspaper articles, brochures, posters, and traveling exhibitions (Fritsche 2).³ By the end of 1949, the Marshall Plan propaganda campaign “had evolved ... into the largest propaganda operation directed by one country to a group of others ever seen in peacetime (Ellwood 2012: 372). The sheer scope of the propaganda advertising has also contributed to how we remember the Plan to this very day, planting it firmly within European cultural memory on a global scale.

INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL EMPIRE

By comparing and contrasting prominent Marshall Plan research and focusing on the cultural aspects that came along with it, I established a framework with which to decide on whether or not this contributed to the idea of America as ‘Cultural Empire’ during the Marshall Plan years. The ‘cultural’ part is crucial because ‘image’ became incredibly important in foreign relations due to the context of the Cold War (Maier 174, Hart 5). Therefore, soft power relations with a strong focus on propaganda advertising are the main focal point for Cultural Empire. I have further defined it as the dominant presence and persuasion of one nation to appeal to others so much that they want to emulate it and share in its successes. The Marshall Plan propaganda used to sway public support at home and in Europe, was also a powerful tool for the United States to counter Soviet propaganda and ensure communism would lose its appeal for the European countries. However, the persuasiveness of the American modern society that came through to Europe with the Marshall Plan

³ For further reference on how the United States conveyed their cultural influence through newly developed Cultural Diplomacy through films and education see also Frank Mehring “The Promises of ‘Young Europe’: Cultural Diplomacy, Cosmopolitanism, and Youth Culture in the Films of The Marshall Plan,” *European Journal of American Studies: Special Issue: Wars and New Beginnings in American History*, 2012. Source: <https://journals.openedition.org/ejas/9701>

advertisements are elements of soft power whereas “empire in the classic sense is usually believed, first, to expand its control by conquest or coercion, and, second, to control the political loyalties of the territories it subjugates” (Maier 24-25). In other words, an empire is more often than not created by hard power. While the Marshall Plan may have had underlying elements of containing communism and the powerful ideologies emanating from the Soviet Union, the United States deviated from the traditional elements that make an empire.

The cultural artifacts, or propaganda advertising, that I analyze in chapter four of this thesis consist of three selected posters from the Marshall Plan poster competition in 1950, and the Marshall Plan emblem. The success of Cultural Empire relies, in part, on the establishment of cultural memory. The reason for choosing these four propaganda artifacts is because these have been firmly ensconced in national and international memory of the Marshall Plan; recognizably so. An initial interesting observation is that the contest was held in 1950, around the half-way mark of the Marshall Plan years. The competition was set up by the Economic Cooperation Administration, or ECA, to try and promote ‘Intra-European Cooperation for a Better Standard of Living.’⁴ European artists from thirteen Marshall Plan countries participated, encouraged to depict European cooperation and economic reconstruction. The entries were sent to Paris to be judged by representatives from the different countries who had a background in arts and culture.⁵ Out of a tremendous amount of entries, twenty-five winning posters were selected that best represented the collaborative intention of the Marshall Plan and subsequent European integration. Most of the posters depicted American aid and the Marshall Plan “either explicitly or implicitly, as the key to salvation” (Leibfried 316). Each was then used, in one way or another, to promote European recovery as pertaining to the United States’ influence (316). This widespread public attention was incredibly important for the United States which is why I also discuss the Marshall Plan emblem. It is a piece of propaganda that was prominently visible all over Europe as it was placed upon every single item that came from the Marshall Plan ships. While it is small and only reads ‘For European Recovery supplied by the United States of America’ I believe there is more to it than meets the eye and thereby useful in my analysis of the United States as a potential Cultural Empire.

⁴ Published on the Marshall Plan Foundation website by C.Sonnier, 24 October 2014. Source: <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/blog/marshall-plan-poster-contest/>

⁵ C.Sonnier, 24 October 2014. Source: <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/blog/marshall-plan-poster-contest/>

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

During the research, I continuously had one central question in mind to ensure the coherence of my arguments, namely: How does the Marshall Plan propaganda advertising contribute to the potential of the United States as a Cultural Empire during the years in which the Plan was active in Europe? The final three chapters are structured around separate sub-research questions that, collectively, lead up to the answer to this main question. While each of the chapters have concluding remarks, I present the final answers to the sub-questions in the conclusion of this thesis because, together, they lead to the answer to the main question.

The first chapter starts with the assertion of key theories and methodologies which were drawn upon throughout. Firstly, public diplomacy and public policy play an important role throughout because I argue that the Marshall Plan is a culmination of the adjustments of the policies for engaging in foreign relations during the Cold War. In addition, the newly developed policies were centered around the appeal of the 'image' of a nation which meant that there was an increased focus of soft power relations and subsequent process of Americanization in Europe. These theories are later applied to the discussion of the United States as a Cultural Empire so the chronological framework provides an understanding of the context of the Marshall Plan. Secondly, to determine how cultural memory was formed around the Marshall Plan and the influence that may have had on the success of the Cultural Empire, I present an outline of the theories of cultural memory studies. This serves to form the basis for the discussion on the correlation between cultural memory and Cultural Empire, as well as the role of the Marshall Plan propaganda within it, in later chapter. This chapter is structured around the factual information that I deemed necessary for the rest of this thesis.

Chapter two presents the overview of the academic discussion of the impact of the Marshall Plan. It is important to understand where the academic discussion is headed and where it has come from. Bringing influential scholars from American Studies, Political Science, Political History and Cultural Studies together allowed me to form the framework for the other chapters so that my argument is logically situated within the existing scholarship. The chapter starts with the general consensus of the effects of the Marshall Plan that has been reached over the past four decades before moving on to the dissension which starts when considering the cultural elements, or propaganda, that accompanied the Plan; In how far have scholars over the past four decades agreed and disagreed on the political, economic, and cultural impact of the Marshall Plan in both the United States and Europe?

Next, in the third chapter I draw from the framework of the discussion of the Marshall Plan research in the previous chapter. However, the focus is on whether or not the United States can be regarded as a Cultural Empire during the Marshall Plan years. I have taken Hart, Maier, and de

Grazia's research on the United States as an empire as a starting point. Then compared and contrasted their work to my own interpretations to determine the feasibility of Cultural Empire. In addition, I discuss the importance of the formation of cultural memory for Cultural Empire. The questions that guide this research are: What does Cultural Empire entail? How does it compare and contrast to previous discussions of the United States as empire? To what degree does the formation of cultural memory inform the success of Cultural Empire?

The fourth and final chapter starts with an overview of the fact that propaganda had become an important part of foreign relations in the context of the Cold War. I present an analysis of three specifically chosen Marshall Plan posters and the MP emblem by way of a close reading which helps determine how the advertising has contributed to the United States as a potential Cultural Empire. The propaganda advertising I chose are immediately recognizable as belonging to the Marshall plan, so I will also outline how cultural memory ensured the success of the Cultural Empire through this imagery. The sub-questions informing this chapter are: In what way have the Marshall Plan posters and the emblem, as being prominent propaganda advertising, contributed to the potential of the United States as a Cultural Empire? And: How has the establishment of cultural memory around the propaganda contributed to the success of the Cultural Empire during the Marshall Plan years?

Finally, the conclusion presents the summary of all the chapters by answering the individual sub-research questions. Together that leads to the concluding discussion on whether or not the United States can be considered as a Cultural Empire during the Marshall Plan years because of the nature of the propaganda advertising that accompanied it and subsequent formation of cultural memory.

CONTRIBUTION TO EXISTING RESEARCH

By combining the work of many prominent scholars in the field of Marshall Plan research I present a clear overview of the debate of the impact of the Plan over the past four decades.⁶ In doing so I have created a framework from which I can assert my analysis of the impact of the propaganda advertising campaign that came to Europe with the Plan. There is a lot of published research that discusses the Marshall Plan from different backgrounds. I soon noticed that academia generally agrees that economic aspect of the Plan was not as far-reaching as originally believed, but scholars have varying opinions on the impact of the cultural aspect of the advertising of the Plan. With this discrepancy as the starting point and applying that to the aforementioned selected propaganda from the Marshall Plan, my analysis is easier to situate among the research.

⁶ I begin chapter two with the introduction of the academic scholarship and outline whose work I draw from; their respective backgrounds and perspectives.

I have drawn from three scholars⁷ who discuss the potential of American Empire and include the Marshall Plan years in their discussion. By comparing and contrasting their arguments, I can insert my definition of Cultural Empire and whether or not, with the Marshall Plan propaganda, the argument has merit. By analyzing the posters with help from the assembled research and including the Marshall Plan emblem, I offer a new perspective on the impact of these cultural elements of the Marshall Plan.

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this thesis, the focus lies on propaganda advertising and global projection of the 'image' of the United States during the Marshall Plan years to determine how that has contributed to the formation of cultural memory surrounding the Plan and thereby assessing the feasibility of American Cultural Empire. To do so I will refer to Europe as a whole but that does not mean that I take Europe to be one entity. The impact of the Marshall Plan and acceptance of Cultural Empire differed per country. The reason for discussing Europe as a whole is because the intentions of the United States for the Plan were the same for the countries. I discuss this at great length throughout the thesis and when required, draw from specific examples on reception in the Netherlands. Bearing in mind throughout that the devastated Europe during the Marshall Plan years was radically different from the Europe we live in today.

To prove my point for Cultural Empire, I chose three specific posters because, I argue, they best showcase how influential American culture was after World War II and during the Marshall Plan. The emphasis and selection is outlined in the fourth chapter. The reason for selecting the emblem as important for this influence is also highlighted in that chapter.

I do briefly touch upon the impact of the Marshall Plan films but only because the theories offered by various scholars⁸ can be applied to the analysis of the propaganda advertising. The reason for not mentioning specific films from the Marshall Plan is due to the fact that I focus on the poster and emblem, not the impact of the films.

⁷ Victoria de Grazia (2005), Justin Hart (2012), and Charles S. Maier (2006)

⁸ Sources used throughout this thesis De Grazia (2005 and 2009), Fritsche (2018), and references throughout footnotes about more information on specific films.

1: Theories and Methodologies

Situating New Perspectives among Marshall Plan Research

American Studies is a versatile academic field with ample theories and methodologies that proved helpful to situate my research among previously published Marshall Plan research. Moreover, the theories gave me the necessary tools for conducting this research and ensuring coherence. The main topic of this thesis discusses the potential of American Cultural Empire during the Marshall Plan years. By analyzing selected propaganda advertising campaign of the Marshall Plan, I can determine the impact and influence of American culture due to subsequent formations of present day cultural memory surrounding the Plan. American foreign relation politics underwent various changes during World War II and these became increasingly focused on culture in the ideological context of the Cold War afterwards (Steil 115). I argue that the Marshall Plan encompasses the practical implementation of the newly developed policies of the United States. The advertising, or propaganda, campaign that accompanied the Plan on a global scale ensured the formation of cultural memory in Europe and showcases the dominance and persuasion of American culture.

This thesis builds on research done by Justin Hart in *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformations of U.S Foreign Policy* (2012). In the book, he offers a historic and political overview of foreign policy changes from the start of World War II up until the Cold War, and offers an analysis of how these changes were implemented with the Marshall Plan. For the scope of this thesis I present a chronological overview of the theories on public diplomacy and public policy and take those to include elements of soft power, Americanization, and transnational flow of cultural norms and values. Set in the ideological contest for global leadership in the Cold War, cultural persuasion and appeal became increasingly dominant elements for engaging in foreign relations.

The propaganda of the Marshall Plan conveyed the changed policies as well as contributed to the transfer of American culture to Europe. In particular, the posters and emblem of the Plan because these have aided in the formation of cultural memory. That is why I also focus on the theories of Cultural Memory Studies. As a starting point, I considered various contributions in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (2008), edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. The theories allowed me to create the method through which I could assess the importance of cultural memory for the success of Cultural Empire by analyzing the Marshall Plan propaganda.

The historic-political overview and cultural memory theories made for the establishment of a framework for determining the influence and dominant presence of the United States in Europe

during the Marshall Plan. The relevance of the theories and methodologies discussed here is that they offer understanding and continuity for the rest of the chapters.

1.1 PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND PUBLIC POLICY

The Marshall Plan is the practical example of developments in public diplomacy and public policy implemented by American officials for engaging in foreign relations. The historic and political overview presented here therefore makes this the best theory for understanding its relevance in the context of the Cold War.

The United States emerged from World War II as a heroic global superpower “with a monopoly of political, economic, and military strength” (Van der Breugel 67). But this was not without its challenges. European nations were left devastated and had to deal with increasing political turmoil. The United States felt that, with the leading position of the British Empire declining, they were the only nation capable of filling the void and protect the Western World from falling prey to looming threats of communism coming from the Soviet Union (Gimbel 13). Although policymakers and diplomats in the United States had already started implementing new forms of engaging in foreign relations during World War II, these were relatively weak compared to propaganda operations of several European nations and the Soviet Union (Hart 7). The subsequent development of more sophisticated public diplomacy and public policy strategies after the war started including more overt forms of propaganda to solidify the assumed leadership role of the United States in the new global order (7). Justin Hart’s *Empire of Ideas; The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Relations* (2012) gives a chronological overview of said changes to foreign policy. I will apply some of Hart’s theories to the analysis of carefully selected visual propaganda of the Marshall Plan throughout this thesis. In addition, a number of other influential scholars, such as de Grazia (2005), Gimbel (1976), Kilick (1997), Ellwood (1992 and 2012), and Steil (2018), provided the theories to best explain how the Marshall Plan advertising can also be regarded as a type of soft power and form of Americanization.

As aforementioned, it was already during World War II that the United States started to establish a “new global project for attracting hearts and minds” (Hart 3). For this, American officials “came to appreciate the importance of a unified propaganda strategy” in which they employed new mass communication techniques (Hart 3). By the end of the war, propaganda had become an institutionalized aspect of foreign policy because it “could be kept at tolerable levels through low-cost initiatives” and ensure American global leadership in the minds of people without costly military initiatives (Steil 91). Due to this institutionalization, the State Department was reorganized to “accommodate that its responsibility extended beyond the parameters of classic conceptions of ‘Diplomacy’” (Hart 12). Referring to the division between these ‘classic conceptions,’ or formal

relations, engaged in by government officials and the informal relations, or 'new conceptions,' shaped by private media and citizens through new platforms that the mass media advancements made possible. Suddenly, individual Americans were much more easily able to access media and voice their opinions to either agree, share new ideas, or counter the arguments of officials (4). Moreover, American officials had to watch their words much more so than these new voices did publicly for "fear of losing credibility" (Hart 4).

Officials now faced the challenge of not just determining the 'image' of the United States itself, but also, its subsequent global projection (Hart 4). The image of a nation became linked to ideological messages that established the identity or reputation of a country (Pells 32). In the context of the Cold War, policymakers realized the importance of the image as it became "a critical tool of empire" that, if developed well could assure leadership in the changed global order (Hart 4). However, the new influence of private citizens through media outlets and increased tourism, had now become "an organic component of a broadened conception of what constituted foreign relations" (Hart 10). This new public and private participation meant that "ordinary people played the defining role in creating the image of 'America' projected to the world," and officials could only exert limited influence to direct that image (Hart 10). It made defining the image, and establishing policies accordingly, that much more challenging. The ideological component that came with the projection of the image became the new foreign policy or, as Hart argues, "Americanization became the antidote to colonization" (9).

In addition to the struggle of who controlled and defined the 'image' of America, the United States' officials became increasingly concerned with the well-established propaganda machines at work in other nations, especially the Soviet Union during the Cold War, whose governments controlled much, if not all, of the media output (Hart 7). The United States had to determine their role in the new world order after World War II as the "world's dominant power by every conceivable measure" (Hart 8). They were faced with geopolitical and ideological threats to this leading position from the Soviet Union, American officials recognized the necessity to "expand America's capacity to fight back" (Steil 316).

From the outset of World War II, the United States was convinced that they would come out of it "not just victorious but a hegemonic force unrivaled in the world" (Hart 8). Their conviction proved correct as after the war, they were the only nation economically, politically, and militarily strong enough to bridge gap created by the growing issues in regards to reconstruction in the struggling European nations (Kilick 88). The Marshall Plan can therefore be regarded as a good example of the successful changes in American foreign relations. The challenge was "how to manage without ruling, or perhaps how to rule without managing" (Hart 9). The solution to this issue was found on an ideological level and so-called 'psychological warfare'; employing cultural

persuasion to showcase the “latest accomplishments in American science, literature, the arts, and social reform” (Pells 35). In other words, convert people abroad to the ‘American way of life’ (Hart 9). This would allow for an extended influence without the necessary, and expensive, military strength, or hard power, to maintain it.

Hart defines public diplomacy as the “high-level contacts between the officially designated representatives of various nations” and that foreign policy “encompasses all aspects of a government’s formal approach to the external world” which include all types of official relations as well as military, economic, legal and cultural affairs (12). He then concludes that foreign relations “signifies the sum total of a nation’s contacts with governments and peoples of other nations” (12). All of these theories were put to practice through the Marshall Plan as the cornerstone of American foreign politics during the Cold War; “a policy of containment” aimed to halt communist ideals proposed by the Soviet Union (Steil 37). The Marshall Plan became “one of the largest propaganda crusades mounted during the postwar era” with which the United States effectively ‘sold’ the American ‘image’ to Europeans (Pells 54). A line was soon drawn through Europe, as policymakers ensured Europe that the Plan’s economic aid was the answer as it would help them “regain prosperity and security without resorting to autarky or authoritarianism” (Steil 340). Foreign policy increasingly depended on cultural appeal of the United States so the propaganda of the Marshall Plan played an important role in shaping the ‘image’ of America abroad.

In addition to being a tangible example of major developments in policies for engaging in foreign relations, the Marshall Plan can also be considered a form of what we would now call Soft Power. The United States attempted, and to some degree certainly succeeded, to win over the hearts and minds of Europeans through cultural persuasion. As Nye argues, soft power can be better to conduct global politics and create trust with as opposed to hard power, because of its persuasive elements. Soft power can help a country “achieve its preferred outcome in world politics because other countries want to emulate it or have agreed to a system that produces such effects” (Nye 51). Hard power and military strength could have potentially pushed European countries away from America as they had just come out of the ravages of war. The downside of soft power is that it is difficult to wield for government officials as well as measure its success because it consists of “intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions” (51). However, it is also exactly due to these elements that soft power can be effective to win over populations, both at home and abroad. The Marshall Plan can be considered a soft power policy, because it was accompanied by an enormous bulwark of cultural elements, such as films and advertising, that convinced the American population of its necessity and the Europeans of its benefits. The main message to Europe was that they should aim to achieve the American way of life, including the implementation of new technology that would lead to mass production techniques and mass consumer culture (Kilick 167).

After all, the United States had come out of the war victorious and were much better off than the majority of the European countries. The victory and subsequent elevated status as a global superpower also made it easier for America to influence other nations around the world with their ideas about politics, economics, military strength and cultural production (Campbell and Kean 17). The soft power in itself had an ideological component because it “orient[ed] people in social contexts towards accepting certain values as natural, obvious and self-evident” (17). The values including all that America relayed through their foreign policy.

The socio-political elements that accompanied the Marshall Plan are multiple forms of Americanization at work. The premise of the Marshall Plan was that Europe should learn from the United States and try to and be just like them (Ellwood 1992: 89). This would also greatly benefit the United States because they needed the European export markets for their surplus production (Ambrose and Brinkley 84). Definitions on what precisely Americanization entails have changed in scholarship, but is best summarized in a dictionary. Americanization means “to cause to acquire or conform to American characteristics, or to bring (something, such as an area) under the political, cultural, or commercial influence of the U.S.”⁹ This definition is part of the long-term goal that accompanied the Marshall Plan, namely that the American way of life was to become a part of everyday European life (Kilick 167).

1.2 CULTURAL MEMORY THEORY

To this day, Europeans and Americans alike remember the Marshall Plan. Certainly in many European countries the Plan’s history is taught about in schools, indicating its impact. Arguably, the propaganda propaganda that accompanied it had a large role to play in shaping memories around the Plan. Consequently, cultural memory formed which is why I regard the field of Cultural Memory Studies as necessary to understand the impact of the Marshall Plan.

The propaganda that accompanied the Marshall Plan ensured a formation of cultural memory. It helped shape an understanding of what the United States was doing as well as what it aimed to achieve. Cultural memory, or collective or social memory as it is also referred to, is always in motion by being negotiated, shaped, revised, and re-negotiated. This can be due to newly published critical scholarship or different voices coming to the foreground (Insurin 16). There is an enormous amount of scholarship nowadays that discusses memory. While each discussion is different, there are a number of similarities that the scholars agree upon in terms of defining its importance in relation to history and identity of nations and other more local collectives. As a starting point, *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (2010)

⁹ The definition as defined by Merriam-Webster. Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Americanization>

edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning discusses the basic outline of what constitutes cultural memory. The book contains a collection of influential scholarship that discusses memory in relation to history and identity as “the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts” (Erll and Nünning 2). This definition allows for the inclusion of a broad range of “phenomena as possible objects of cultural memory studies” which range from “individual acts of remembering in a social context to group memory ... to national memory with its ‘invented traditions,’ and finally to the host of transnational lieux de mémoire [or, sites of memory]” (2). The definition can be applied to the cultural memory that formed around the Marshall Plan in both a local and transnational context through the propaganda advertising.

Ludmilla Isurin’s *Collective Remembering: Memory in the World and in the Mind* (2017) discusses memory by using the Russian immigration to the United States as a case study. Her theories are useful for the discussion of how the visual propaganda material helped shape collective memory surrounding the Marshall Plan. Seeing as the Plan was a political and global program, *Memory and Political Change* (2012), edited by Shortt and Assmann, presents scholarship that discusses how memory can influence politics and vice versa. *Memory in a Global Age* (2010), edited by Assmann and Conrad, added research that examines how the exchange of people, ideas and media influenced cultural memory. All of these sources approach memory studies from different angles but agree on a number of basic defining characteristics. The first, and already briefly mentioned one, lies in the fluidity of memory. New evidence, new voices, generational discussions, new critical analyses and publications as well as media and advertising contribute to a constant negotiation regarding the formation of cultural memory (Isurin 16, Assman and Shortt 2012: 3, Assmann 2012: 55, Assmann and Conrad 2010: 9, Fortunati and Lamberti 128, Erll 2010: 7, J. Assmann 2010: 111). Another overlapping consensus is that memory is not individual but always part of a collective as informed by the community or nation in which people grow up (Erll 2010: 5, Isurin 18, Assmann and Shortt 14). This, in turn, contributes to the memory of a shared historic past and the formation of identity within local, national and even international collectives (J. Assmann 2010: 109, Erll 2010: 6, Fortunati and Lamberti 130, Isurin 18, Assmann and Shortt 4). A few scholars touch upon the concept of actualization of memory. They argue that for any memory to be formed or maintained, it must be actualized by a community which can be done through formal institutions such as museums and archives, the established historical curriculum in education, or commemorations and exhibitions (Erll 2010: 5, Isurin 24, Assmann and Conrad 6). Media also has an important role to play in these actualizations because it can change the narrative and more people in the private sphere were able to access it especially after World War II and during the Marshall Plan years (Zierold 399). To this day, new, or digital, media contributes to the understanding and memory of the Marshall Plan because the information is readily available to us through the internet.

Finally, a number of scholars discuss the increased impact that globalization has had, and continues to have, on the formation of cultural memory on a local, community, and national level. Jan Assmann defines the process of globalization as “a process of general dissemination ... across political and cultural boundaries and of the ensuring integration of various, previously isolated zones into one system of interconnections and interdependencies, where all nations, empires, tribes and states cohere in some way or other through political, economic or cultural relations” (2010: 121). The changed world order that emerged at the end of World War II as well as new mass media technology and tourism added to this process and metaphorically made the world smaller and more connected. It also links back to the argument that memory is always in motion because globalization “is a world in motion” (Assmann and Conrad 2010: 1). Where people move, memories move along with them which allows cultural memory to enter the global stage (2). This, in turn, makes memory a powerful agent of change in political affiliations (Assmann and Shortt 2012: 1). However, it is important to bear in mind that, as the initiators, American cultural memory formed differently from that of Europeans, as they were on the receiving end.

1.3 CONCLUSION

The ideological, cultural and political character of the Marshall Plan makes for a convincing argument as to how it aided the United States in maintaining their status as superpower during the Cold War. As ‘image’ and propaganda became formal instruments for foreign relations, the Plan can be seen as the embodiment of American politics in the postwar era to combat perceived threats coming from the Soviet Union. American officials had to convince Europe that the success of American methods, could also help them in the reconstruction process and lead to prosperity similar to what Americans enjoyed. However, with new voices in the public sphere through new media platforms, officials faced the difficult task of shaping the ‘image,’ knowing that their control over it was limited.

The increased importance of cultural appeal through the projection of the ‘image’ of the United States meant that the Marshall Plan was accompanied by an enormous amount of propaganda aimed to clarify the intentions behind it. It is also through this propaganda that cultural memory formed. Ongoing research into the impact of the Plan and attention to it in education ensures that the Marshall Plan has become a historic and political form of cultural memory that is still constantly being altered on a global scale.

2: CONSENSUS AND DISSENSION IN MARSHALL PLAN

SCHOLARSHIP

Seventy years ago on 5 April 1948, the European Recovery Program was signed into law by President Truman. The Program became commonly known as the Marshall Plan. It was a large-scale and long-term aid program to support the reconstruction of European nations that had been devastated by the Second World War. Since the termination of the Plan, scholarship has become ever more critical in discussing the effects it had on European economic recovery and cultural exchange as well as the contribution to the changed world order. Overall, scholars agree on how the Plan started and was implemented but there is dissension regarding how much influence it had on European culture. This chapter discusses the consensus and divisions among scholars on how influential the cultural elements of the Marshall Plan have been. I am bringing together dominant voices in the field of Marshall Plan research over the past four decades, including Greg Behrman (2007), David Ellwood (1992 and 2012), John Gimbel (1976), Victoria de Grazia (2005 and 2009), Justin Hart (2012), John Kilick (1997), Rob Kroes (1981), and Benn Steil (2018). Each scholar brings their own respective background into the research to add a variety of approaches and perspectives on the impact of the Marshall Plan. Predominantly, these scholars have backgrounds in American Studies, Cultural Studies, History, Political History, and Political Science.

2.1 POLITICAL CHANGES

In this first section, I present an outline of the developments in political changes in public diplomacy and public policy in the context of the aftermath of World War II and beginning of the Cold War. The perspectives of the scholars whose theories I drew from are predominantly from the field of American Studies and political science.

In the period after World War I the prevailing political climate in the United States was isolationist (Ambrose and Brinkley ix). At first, the United States did not respond to the increasingly elaborate propaganda machines that multiple European countries, such as Nazi Germany and later the Soviet Union, had established to broadcast their messages abroad (Hart 7). This changed on the eve of World War II as American government officials “imagined themselves assuming the mantle of global leadership” (Hart 7). The problem was that American public diplomacy was not able to compete with the propaganda that came from Nazi Germany (Hart 7). That did not mean American officials and policymakers did not do anything. On the contrary, they had been considering what constituted foreign policy and busy trying to “develop new strategies to deal with changed realities

and eventualities” (Hart 41). Private media started playing a larger role as private citizens had easier access to modern media platforms. Henry Luce published an article in his magazine *Life* in early 1941, appealing to American citizens to embrace a leadership position in the global world; calling for an ‘American Century’ (Hart 45). Modern media developments meant that news spread quicker and reached more people, both nationally and internationally, more easily. Policymakers soon realized that domestic political affairs were also of consequence on a global level (Hart 58). Especially because, as Hart argues, ‘image’ became more important for conducting cultural diplomacy, the definition of culture was broadened to “include everything that contributed to foreign perceptions of ‘America’” (58). Furthermore, propaganda started playing an increasingly important role in foreign relations (Hart 70).

At the end of World War II, the global order had been altered rather extensively as Europe was left ravaged, while the United States was victorious and experienced unrivaled economic growth (Kilick 155, Maier 191). Thus, American officials had been proven correct in their assumption that they would take on the role of global leadership. This new role of the United States brought new challenges. It meant more perspectives, information and opinions that could influence the official communications of the government through mass media (Hart 76-77). It became imperative for the United States to protect their image on a political, economic and cultural level because the mass media that “propelled American ideologies into the furthest corners of the globe could be used to attack and undermine the American Century” (Hart 108). The relations between the United States and Soviet Union became increasingly strained. The United States changed their public diplomacy strategies by drawing upon ideological messages to garner support from people, both domestically and globally (Hart 120). One of the most, if not the most, excellent examples of the implementation of these new public diplomacy and policies can be found in the propaganda that was distributed along with the Marshall Plan.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, there was not yet a reason to believe relations between the Soviet Union and the United States would deteriorate. President Truman regarded Stalin as a moderate (Nye 156). In 1946, George Kennan, the American foreign Ambassador in Moscow, sent what we now know as his ‘Long Telegram’ warning the United States about the true intentions of Stalin. Kennan warns that “no one should underrate [the] importance of dogma in Soviet affairs” (The “Long Telegram” in Merrill and Paterson 193). This dogma being rooted in Marxist beliefs that portrayed the international world as a threat to political order and that only socialism would be able to ensure a safe world order (193). Kennan summarizes that the Soviet Union is convinced that to be able to secure their power in the global arena, American culture and authority must be uprooted. He continues to point out that the Soviet Union has an “elaborate and far flung apparatus for exertion of its influence in other countries managed by people whose

experience and skill in underground methods are presumably without parallel in history” (The “Long Telegram” in Merrill and Paterson 194). Arguably the most pressing concern Kennan addresses is how the United States would counter Soviet foreign politics as it presented the “undoubtedly greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced and probably the greatest it will ever have to face” (194). He ends the telegram with four bullet points that sum up his observations and a call for action from the United States because “Gauged against the Western World as a whole, Soviets are still by far the weaker force ... their success will really depend on degree of cohesion, firmness and vigor which the Western World can muster” (194). In other words, Kennan calls for action and unification before the Soviet Union is able to gain more power over the West. He ends on a high note by claiming that it should not be difficult for the United States to counter the Soviet propaganda with “any intelligent and really constructive program” because said propaganda is perceived as untruthful outside of the national political influence they exert (The “Long Telegram” in Merrill and Paterson 195).

This telegram in combination with the poor results of the Moscow Conference strained American and Soviet relations and led to the speech President Truman gave in early 1947 convincing Congress of the need to act. Kennan’s analysis allowed for “the intellectual justification for a policy of containment” with the United States on the frontline (Ambrose and Brinkley 81). Therefore, Truman proclaimed that the role of the United States was to protect free people all over the world and that if the United States should “falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world - and we shall surely endanger the welfare of this Nation” (Truman’s speech in Merrill and Paterson 202). The ideological language used to advocate for necessary changes in foreign relations came to be known as the Truman Doctrine; understanding ‘anti-communist’ and ‘free people’ as being synonymous (Ambrose and Brinkley 82). From here on out, the United States became determined to aid “free peoples to maintain their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarianism regimes” (Ellwood 1992: 69).

The problem was that the European nations had not progressed as well as the United States had hoped they would have. Any prior signs of recovery were “disrupted in 1947 by severe economic and political crises” (Kilick 65). American officials concluded that perhaps they had underestimated the extent of the destruction caused by the war. Imbalance and an increasing Dollar gap left European nations struggling to fund necessary import goods. A pressing concern for the United States as their economy had boomed so much during the war that they needed their European markets for their surplus production (Behrman 78).

2.2 EMERGENCE OF THE MARSHALL PLAN

This part presents a factual and historic overview of the announcement and implementation of the Marshall Plan. It is important as background information because it outlines the historic and political context in which the Plan was operational in Europe. I build upon this information in the discussion of Cultural Empire in the next chapter, as well as the analysis of the Marshall Plan propaganda in chapter four.

After the Truman Doctrine, foreign policy officials debated how to best “project America’s power into the European situation in new ways, ways intended to bring radical short- and long-term changes in economic structures political prospects” (Ellwood 1992: 82). Arguably, the Doctrine had paved the way for larger changes in foreign policy than would have perhaps been possible before (Ambrose and Brinkley 84). After the Truman Doctrine public support for any other actions of the Administration had died down significantly (Ellwood 1992: 80). General George C. Marshall had seen the devastation in Europe firsthand. Bestowed with the title ‘the Organizer of Victory’ by Winston Churchill publicly, he was a leading authority and well-respected public figure (Ellwood 1992: 83). Marshall and other leading American officials, such as Kennan and Dean Acheson, worked on a plan that would convey the seriousness of the situation in Europe without causing a surge of panic both in and outside of the United States. They would have to convince Congress to act “without provoking accusations of failure and a massive isolationist movement” (Ellwood 1992: 84). This led to Marshall’s famous speech on 5 June 1947, detailing the condition in Europe and the role that he believed the United States had to play in the reconstruction. The most important aspect was that Europe had to regain confidence in their economic future while at the same time stressing that the required policy “is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos” (Ellwood 1992: 85). This suggested that the Soviet Union would also be included in the potential offer of aid from the United States. Next, Marshall invited the European nations to come together and discuss what would be necessary to “give proper effect to whatever action might be undertaken by this government” (Ellwood 1992: 85). The European governments were to take the initiative whereas the United States would take on a supporting role in the establishment of a plan and any further assistance required “so far as it may be practical to us to do so” (86). Finalizing his speech with the call to his audience to “face up to the vast responsibility which history has clearly placed upon our country” (Ellwood 1992: 86). At the time of the speech, there was no plan (Gimbel 15). In fact, the speech combined a number of ideas and suggestions from various other prominent American officials, including Dean Acheson, George Kennan, William L. Clayton, and Arthur Vandenberg (Gimbel 15). Afterwards, Marshall referred to his own speech as “something between a hint and a suggestion” (Gimbel 86). He disliked the fact that both the President and media had started calling the aid program the Marshall Plan (Steil 211).

It can be said that the speech is what started a furore among officials to come up with a plan. The initiative had to come from Europe and they had to ensure that it could yield both short term and long lasting effects. It made 1947 a tumultuous year for foreign diplomats as they faced a lot of opposition from both Congress and the American public (Ambrose and Brinkley 88). However, the rhetoric of the speeches and public debate that led up to the formation of the Plan was rooted in ideology, with phrases such as this being not only America's, but also the World's best hope against any threats of totalitarianism or a repeat of World War II (Behrman 159). This, arguably, worked in the public diplomacy officials' and policymakers' favor because it helped them garner public support and convince Congress of its need. They spoke of the advantages that a foreign trade program could present to the United States and suggested that with the altruistic intentions it would present "a hard-headed venture in the promotion of peace and security" (Gimbel 278-279). After much debate and alteration, the Foreign Assistance Act was finally signed into law by President Truman on 3 April 1948. Still, the uncertainty and scope of the aid remained a point of contestation. After all, in theory the it sounded promising but "there were no guarantees that the Plan would work" (Behrman 165). Gimbel argues that this Act, that provided the legal base for the Plan, "was actually a series of pragmatic bureaucratic decisions, maneuvers, compromises and actions" (277).

Finally, scholars bring up the fact that the Marshall Plan represented a confidence of American officials that American methods were superior and that only they possessed the know-how and power that could aid Europe in its recovery (Kilick 88).¹⁰ The economic boom and subsequent mass consumer culture in the United States was the most advanced at that moment in time and would "guarantee higher living standards and lasting economic growth" (Fritsche 5). The changes in policies of conducting foreign relations reflected this. Whereas the Truman Doctrine "constituted the political-military tool of the new American policy; the Marshall Plan was its main political-economic instrument" (Van der Breugel 69). Academics point out that although the main goal of the Marshall Plan was to aid the economic recovery of European countries, it did not help as much as was previously believed. However, the economic aspect cannot be separated because it is "rooted in the same ideology" (Fritsche 229).

2.3 CULTURAL ELEMENTS OF THE MARSHALL PLAN

The disagreement of the impact of the Marshall Plan in academic scholarship starts when dealing with the cultural or medial elements that accompanied the Plan. These elements include film, radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, exhibitions, the role of Hollywood and other forms of advertising. Academics have different perspectives on this side of the plan. Some scholars are quite positive

¹⁰ See also Ambrose & Brinkley 1997: xii, Ellwood 1992: 23, Fritsche 2018: 103, de Grazia 2005: 338, Campbell & Kean 2016: 17, Hart 2012: 8, Steil 2018: 161, Pells 1997: xiv.

while others offer a more critical take. The most obvious division discussed here is between two positive analyses in research of the cultural side of the Marshall Plan by, predominantly, de Grazia (2005 and 2009) and notable references in Behrman (2007) and the much more critical approaches of, among others, Hart (2012), Ellwood (1992), Fritsche (2018), and Steil (2018). Interestingly, almost all scholars recognize that especially the films and advertising made use of newly designed propaganda techniques but they disagree on the level with which it was used and whether or not it was rooted in ideological language. As mentioned in the introduction, I will not mention specific films. Instead, I drew from existing scholarship on the Marshall Plan films and applied those theories to the discussion of Marshall Plan propaganda. It is also important here to address that the Smith-Mundt Act in 1948 in the United States aimed to stop any government division from using propaganda in their foreign relation programs (Hart 133). However, the ECA found many clever ways in which this could be circumvented because it “authorized the government ... to use all its educational, information, and propaganda resources in the cultural and psychological confrontation with the Soviet Union” (Pells 62). So long as the ECA claimed that Marshall Plan advertising would only “disseminate objective and factual information to educate and inform the people” (Pells 13).

In her article “Visualizing the Marshall Plan: The Pleasures of American Consumer Democracy or the Pains of ‘the Greatest Structural Adjustment Program in History’?” (2009) Victoria de Grazia argues that the Marshall Plan’s “primary goal or effect as being ‘mass-consumer democracy’ is wrong headed” and that to be able to analyze the films of the Marshall Plan properly, a new approach is necessary (26). One of the reasons she gives is that the ECA employed European filmmakers, suggesting an equal collaboration between United States officials and Europeans. The American officials in Europe charged with the advertising strategies of the films had a clear intention of what the films should be about and what messages they wanted to convey through them (108). It is more plausible therefore to argue that the ECA was careful to choose filmmakers who agreed with the ideals of the plan and willing to work for them (Fritsche 239). The fact that most films, at the start at least, focused solely on new American production techniques for the economic recovery of Europe also supports this (Fritsche 27).

De Grazia, then, argues that instead of saying the goal of the Marshall Plan was ‘mass consumption’ it would be better to say ‘higher standard of living’ (2009: 26). Interestingly, throughout this research she conflates this ‘higher standard’ with the ‘American way of life.’ Suggesting that the Marshall Plan aimed to promote “a better deal for workers” rather than merely achieving political democracy, through the idea of what Maier called ‘politics of productivity’ (de Grazia 2009: 26). While the productivity argument indeed means that it appealed to many people across the political spectrum regardless of social status, it also points to an underlying appeal that moves the political implications to the background in favor of making it an economic argument

(Fritsche 104). Therefore, de Grazia's argument is lacking in depth. Another contradiction can be found in the suggestion that the Plan did not want to sponsor any collective forms of consumption (de Grazia 2009: 27). Yet, one of the main elements that was promoted was production and consumerism to emulate the 'American way of life' so as to provide a stable base for the reconstruction of Europe (Maier 214). Indeed, "Planning goals insisted on achieving recovery" (de Grazia 2009: 27). However, de Grazia neglects to make any reference to the underlying aspect of wanting to remake Europe in the image of the United States, because the United States was at that moment in time the most modern and powerful nation (Fritsche 16, Kilick 167).

Fritsche and Hart mention the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 which was put in place to ensure that, legally, any government advertising was not allowed to be direct propaganda (Fritsche 13, Hart 133). This did not mean that the films did not employ more covert propaganda with emphasis being put on the informative nature. Film was a decidedly great medium to employ because rather than spelling anything out, the images shown, conveyed exactly what American methods and techniques could mean for Europe. So when de Grazia mentions "narrative restraint" in the films (2009: 29), she might be correct in the sense that it should better be referred to as self-glorification. It is easy to agree with the fact that the advertising strategies of the Marshall Plan "were reconceptualizing traditional propaganda as mass marketing" (de Grazia 2009: 30). However, the fact that this advertising then employed "non-ideological language" and had a "measured tone" is not so easily claimed (2009: 30). In fact, the opposite may well be true as the films could easily be regarded as more covert and subtle propaganda, but propaganda nonetheless, with the messages of advertising clearly being that Europe should learn from America (Gimbel 269). Ellwood backs this up with claiming the Europeans were "often struck ... [by] the sheer utopianism of the ERP, the massive abstractions, illusions, and ideological constructs that characterized so much of the original design" (2012: 385). The European nations that received the aid signed individual bilateral agreements with the United States that more often than not stipulated that they had to aid the advertising strategies to promote the plan among their people (Behrman 208). Add to this fact that 'image' became one of the most important elements of new designs of foreign relations, and the language used throughout was ideological (Ellwood 1992: 93), de Grazia appears to overgeneralize the less obvious propaganda a bit too much.

Compared to the well-established and government controlled propaganda campaign that came from the Soviet Union, de Grazia is correct in suggesting a certain level of narrative restraint from the United States (2009: 32). The reasons for this, however, are easily found in the fact that new mass media technology had allowed for many more private voices that also weighed in on discussions that the government put forward (Ellwood 2012: 373). This means that while being more restrained on the surface, the United States had to find ways in which they could change their

policies constantly and use the public media to their advantage. In addition, American officials referred to their media output as fact-based information (Fritsche 13, Hart 130). The films, according to de Grazia, also showed restraint because not once did they promise a complete and total makeover of European society (2009: 33). I believe that this is an incorrect assessment because the rhetoric that surrounded the Plan drew attention to the superior strength of the United States. Making them the only nation powerful enough and successfully modernized that they could help European nations move forward. Europe was perceived as backward and in need of American know-how to recover from the war (Maier 191, Kilick 66, Kroes 9, Steil 161). In other words, Europe could only become equally prosperous if they followed the American example. That does not sound like restraint but ambition instead.

Unexpectedly towards the end of her article, de Grazia brings up that she is not claiming that the films were not propaganda (2009: 34). Although it seems that this is exactly what she is trying to suggest up until this point. A number of times, de Grazia mentions that the Marshall Plan films were not propaganda on account of it having been produced by the ECA; an official agency, and therefore not being propaganda because that was not allowed. While true that it was illegal for the government to produce propaganda, the officials most assuredly found ways to present it as information instead, claiming to tell the truth and accusing others of lying (Hart 79, Steil 183). Also, the ECA did provide the funding for the propaganda campaign of the Marshall Plan (Ellwood 1992: 156). The messages of the Marshall Plan films and other advertising can be considered as “an invitation to follow the American example all the way” (Ellwood 1992: 227-228). The Marshall Plan also profited from the influence that Hollywood had already established in Europe. It was “both a powerful and influential promoter of American goods and the American way of life” (Fritsche 235). Hollywood was able to reflect a reality through a “more or less distorting mirror” which made American culture inspiring to many Europeans (Waller 95). European nations were not able to counter the ideological advertising either because there were more pressing concerns at hand for their reconstruction (Ellwood 1992: 161).

What is most notable about de Grazia’s article is that it seems to entirely ignore the roots of the Marshall Plan advertising: ‘You Too Can Be Like Us!’ (Ellwood 2012: 345). As well as Truman’s and Marshall’s speeches that gave it the rhetoric needed to change the foreign relations policies. Furthermore, four years before this article was published, de Grazia’s book *Irresistible Empire* (2005) argues that the United States had started to project an image of ‘Market Empire’ globally in the early twentieth century. This meant a cultural movement of ideas from the United States, through Hollywood, the Marshall Plan and consumer advertising, to Europe. It is confusing then, that she would go against her own argument without making a mention of it.

Behrman's book *The Most Noble Adventure* (2006) makes interesting claims about the ideas behind the Marshall Plan and many of them are in line with the other notable scholars in the field of European Recovery research. However, he is decidedly more positive and less critical than many of the others. One of the ways in which that comes to the fore throughout is his exaggerated language. In the conclusion, he explains his choice for the title of his book by calling the Marshall Plan a "shared national adventure" which had everyone's support (341). He states that the Plan was not intended to be imperialist because the United States was not looking to expand their territory, with military force, in Western Europe (89). There may be elements of truth to his argument but it seems he glosses over the, perhaps, less altruistic elements of the Marshall Plan in favor of focusing on the good aspects. This presents a one-sided view which leaves out any mention of troubles in domestic politics that would influence the 'image' of America abroad as well as anti-Americanism in Europe.

2.4 CONCLUSION

There is a consensus in scholarship regarding the start and implementation of the Marshall Plan and its economic impact in Europe. Kennan's 'Long Telegram' warning the United States government of the perceived threat he felt the Soviet Union posed, paved the way for the Truman Doctrine aimed at shocking Congress into taking action against the Soviet Union and paved the way for Marshall's speech calling for immediate foreign aid. This, in turn, inspired the changes in public diplomacy and policy and the role the United States would come to play in the world as a global superpower. A final note of agreement is that the perceived economic benefits that the Plan would arguably yield, may not have been as far-reaching as was previously thought.

The debate among scholars starts when looking at the cultural elements of the Plan. Some scholars are more positive of the plan while others are critical and suggest that the plan made use of newly designed covert propaganda strategies that could be passed off as informative and fact-based to counter the onslaught of the Soviet strategy. It ensured the dominance of the United States was well established and to a degree showing their power across the world, moving to block Soviet access and appeal in Europe. The positive versus critical debate is interesting because it shows different points of view that bring to the fore elements that one might otherwise not have considered. The main focus of de Grazia's and Fritsche's research are the films, but their arguments apply to other forms of Marshall Plan advertising as well.

Predominantly, my argumentation is more in line with the critical side because, even with the Smith-Mundt Act, the cultural artifacts of the Marshall Plan were ideological and applied new mass marketing strategies to emphasize its truthful character in comparison to the lies that the Soviet Union distributed. By outlining the consensus and debate I have established a framework which forms the basis and general overview of what came along with the Marshall Plan in Europe.

In the next chapters, I use this discussion to pinpoint whether or not the 'information' campaign of the Marshall Plan was successful for the potential of American Cultural Empire by analyzing American presence in selected propaganda advertising.

3: CULTURAL EMPIRE? THE NEARNESS OF THE UNITED STATES

*If having an empire is defined as possessing formal sovereignty over overseas or contiguous territories, such that all political decision-making must originate in, or be ratified by, Washington, then no, the United States is not usefully construed as an empire*¹¹

A number of academic books have been published that discuss the role of the United States in the context of ‘empire’ from the birth of the Republic until today.¹² For the scope of this research I focused solely on the ones that applied the argument of empire to the Cold War period, especially including the Marshall Plan. Charles S. Maier’s words above clearly convey that the United States does not conform to what constitutes as empire in the classic, or traditional, sense and I agree. In his book *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (2006), Maier does not argue for or against American empire but, instead, explores and outlines what it means for a nation to be considered an empire in the first place.

Justin Hart argues that many American officials themselves certainly believed that the United States would come to be seen as an empire after World War II as their influence abroad spread (2). He traced the developments of public diplomacy and public policy for engaging in foreign relations, during and after World War II, to determine whether or not the new policies can indeed be considered imperial in *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy* (2012).

Contrary to Maier’s historic approach and Hart’s political framework of the role of the United States after the war, Victoria de Grazia takes on a cultural perspective in her work *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (2005). She considers the United States to be an “empire without frontiers” which relied on the persuasiveness of their culture to reign as a Market Empire on a global scale (2005: 3). Drawing from the discussion of Marshall Plan scholarship in the previous chapter and the discussion surrounding American empire presented by the three scholars listed above, I examine the idea of the United States, not as an empire but as a Cultural Empire instead. By first presenting an overview of the traditional understanding of ‘empire’ and juxtaposing that to my proposed definition of Cultural Empire and

¹¹ Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors*, 2005. p. 66

¹² Earlier works include Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993, Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, 1993. Newer works returning to the discussion of US empire started noticeably after 9/11 and often turn to the Cold War period: Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire: In the Making of U.S. Culture*, 2002. Victoria de Grazia, 2005 as discussed, Charles S. Maier, 2005 as discussed, Justin Hart, 2012 as discussed, and the latest: A.G. Hopkins, *American Empire; A Global History*, 2018.

drawing from theories of public diplomacy and public policy, the theories of soft power, Americanization, the myth of American exceptionalism, and cultural memory, I can determine its feasibility.

3.1 DEFINING EMPIRE

The term ‘empire’ has been applied to nations since antiquity. At its core, empire comes from the Latin ‘Imperium’ meaning “supreme administrative power, authority,”¹³ referring to the Roman “power to command (including control of the armies and the power to put to death)” (Maier 36). The implication was that this ‘power to command’ included non-Romans as well, which is how the term empire came to be understood as the “rule over others” (Maier 36). Nowadays, it is defined as “a group of nations or peoples ruled over by an emperor, empress, or other powerful sovereign or government.”¹⁴ The term empire is so broadly defined that academia have discussed it from various angles.

As aforementioned, Maier refrains from judging on whether or not he believes the United States should be referred to, or be considered as, an empire. His book serves to compare “some of the recurring elements of empires and asks to what extent the United States shares these attributes” (3). The reason for this is that he believes the term to be “so polarizing that readers never get past the definition” (3). Instead Maier claims that while the United States may exhibit many characteristics of what being an empire entails, he is more interested in outlining the parallels between established, well-known, historical empires and America’s Ascendancy respectively. The process by which empires are characterized often starts with “military expansion and conquest abroad, and sometimes the expansion of authoritarian power at home” (Maier 7). They are political organizations wherein the “social elements that rule in the dominant state ... create a network of allied elites in regions abroad who accept subordination in international affairs in return for the security of their position in their own administrative unit” (Maier 7). The dominant state can then be referred to as the ‘metropole’ and the administrative unit would be the ‘colony.’ Historically, empires are also concerned with what Maier calls “civilizing missions” (19). These include “the diffusion of cultural styles, the propagation of world religions, the suspension of practices perceived as barbaric” and on occasion “bringing peace and the rule of law or defending what [they] have defined as freedom” (Maier 19). Therefore, for a nation to be considered as an empire in the traditional sense, it would have to employ some form of all imperial characteristics.

¹³ The digital version of the Lewis & Short Latin-English dictionary, originally published in 1879. Source: <http://www.romansgohome.com/spqr>

¹⁴ Translation as provided by the online Harper Collins dictionary, originally published in 1979. Source: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/empire>

Contrary to Maier's historic discussion of the parallels between known empires and the potential American empire, Hart starts from the supposition that American policymakers firmly believed that the United States would win World War II and come out as "a hegemonic force unrivaled in the world, if not in the history of the world" even before they had entered into it (8). While they may not have used the term 'empire,' many policymakers certainly believed the United States to be an empire that was as "powerful as any empire in modern history" (Hart 7). This brought with it the sense that the United States would surpass the British Empire in terms of global dominance but "faced the rather interesting dilemma of how to fashion an imperial strategy different from the European model they hoped to succeed" (Hart 8-9). American officials worked to develop their public diplomacy strategy by trying to extend their influence abroad. In doing so they hoped to convince other nations of the appeal of the American 'Way of Life' without having to employ any expensive military power and maintain their leadership position (Hart 9). Hart argues that "ideological crusades had always been at the center of popular understandings of America's role in the world" (9). That is to say, the United States has always operated from the understanding that they held an exceptional position in the world and would therefore also have an exceptional role in the changed global order after the war.

Foreign relations became centered around the appeal of the 'image' that the United States was able to project abroad as this "became a critical tool of empire" in the context of the Cold War (Hart 9). American ambitions to increase the appeal of their mass production techniques and mass consumer society would thereby fulfill the ideal of the 'American Century' after the war and solidify their position as global superpower. It meant that public diplomacy and public policy were expanded to include cultural persuasion by establishing an 'empire of ideas' (Hart 11). By giving an overview of the changes made to foreign policy objectives, Hart points out that the cultural elements became both increasingly important and much more challenging due to new mass media platforms that subsequently made individuals "an organic component of a broadened conception of what constituted foreign relations" (10). Not only did the influence of private media impede the development of the 'image' of America and make the projection of their power more difficult, its reception abroad also proved problematic to measure properly (Hart 201). But this was the risk of the type of empire that policymakers had worked toward promoting; the "undeniable by-product of their determination to spread the American dream" (Hart 201).

Contrary to both Hart and Maier, who mainly track the political implications of empire and apply that to the position of the United States after World War II, de Grazia focuses on the cultural influence of the United States to argue for the status of empire. Empire, she argues, is defined as a "formal system of hierarchical political relationships in which the most powerful state exercises definitive influence" with often well-established frontiers (2005: 6). However, United States'

ascendancy post-World War II did not adhere to these criteria. Instead of being an empire in the classic sense, de Grazia considers it to be a Market Empire (2005: 3). Market Empire, she claims, started at the beginning of the twentieth century but was firmly established after 1945, as the United States were determined to convey their benevolent superiority on an international level (2005: 3). De Grazia adds the ‘market’ aspect because she draws comparisons to what Geir Lundestad previously termed ‘empire by invitation’ suggesting America’s imperial characteristics as benevolent and welcomed elsewhere (2005: 6). The United States, then, operated as a Market Empire which dominated with the “pressures of its markets, the persuasiveness of its models, and, if relatively little by the sheer force of arms in view of its wide power, very forcefully by exploiting the peaceableness of its global project in a century marked by others’ as well as its own awful violence” (de Grazia 2005: 3). In other words, the imperialist tendencies covered cultural and economic markers rather than instigating military force; making it a Market Empire instead according to de Grazia. From the beginning of the Cold War, Western societies in Europe “resolved to build anew on the basis of the right to a decent standard of living” as they struggled to recover from the ravages of the war (de Grazia 2005: 5). The United States was adamant that they had to counter any potential appeal of communism and aimed to convey their power through culture to achieve this. The Marshall Plan is where the Market Empire became especially visible as it tried to persuade European countries to model their cultures after the modernized consumer democracy that made all Americans so, seemingly, prosperous (De Grazia 2005: 5).

3.2 AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

The myth, or ideology, of American exceptionalism dates back to the birth of the United States of America as European settlers ‘started over’ in the New World. This history allowed them to grow and develop differently from the Old World from which they came and created a “deep-seated preoccupation with national self-definition” (Campbell and Kean 3). This difference does not just encompass the “separateness and uniqueness of [America’s] own particular heritage and culture,” it also conveys the “exemplary status as the apotheosis of the nation-form itself and as a model for the rest of the world” (Kaplan 16). Similarly, Pease argues that exceptionalism “includes a complex assemblage of theological and secular assumptions out of which Americans have developed the lasting belief in America as the fulfillment of the national ideal to which other nations aspire” (7). The United States personified the perceived values and ethics necessary for prosperity and wanted “to apply those same virtues to other peoples and the way in which nations dealt with each other on the international stage” (Campbell and Kean 302). However, exceptionalism does not mean the same thing to every individual American, rather it operates as a “fantasy through which U.S citizens bring ... contradictory political and cultural descriptions into correlation with one another through

the desires that make them meaningful” (Pease 8). In other words, exceptionalism holds different meanings for individual Americans depending on what they consider most important to them.

As early as the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville prophesied about “future American greatness and ... of America’s missionary role in the world”¹⁵; a type of political rhetoric that can certainly be detected in the development of new foreign policies implemented after World War II. The ‘missionary role’ fits within the ideology of exceptionalism but serves to make it paradoxical. On the one hand, the United States wanted other nations to share their values and create a “borderless world where it finds its own reflection everywhere” but on the other hand, that means that they lose their identity and with that, the ideology of exceptionalism (Kaplan 16).

After World War II, and certainly during the Cold War, the ideological rhetoric of exceptionalism remained firm. The position of the United States was unique compared to Europe also because of their distance to the war. They fought a capital intensive war, boosting their economy and productivity drive and spurring modernization (Maier 196). Moreover, as the liberators of Europe, the United States had a “moral responsibility to the war-torn nations of Europe” because they were the most powerful and least touched by the war (Hart 126). Officials were convinced that “a massive transfer of American organisational [sic] skills and management techniques was needed to stimulate and insure a ‘lasting’ revival of European industry” (McGlade 26). Many American officials presumed that the “American pattern of development had some kind of general application” which would come to “justify persuading peoples to accept American ways” (Campbell and Kean 306-307). They had allegedly found the “right combination of industrial structure and government intervention to achieve high productivity” leading to the subsequent rise of the mass consumer democracy that would certainly work to rebuild Europe as well (Kilick 88). In essence, the ideology of American exceptionalism soon “promoted an understanding of the United States as the standard for the future of democracy that Europe should emulate” (Pease 10).

From the outset of the Cold War, the United States declared its global commitment to saving the world from communism (Ambrose and Brinkley xii). Domestic debates about the role that the United States should play in the world were reflected in their foreign policies (Campbell and Kean 304). The living standard of the general population became an “everyday element of the struggle among great powers for global leadership” (de Grazia 2005: 76). The myth of American exceptionalism became both a political doctrine as well as an individual justification that “enabled U.S. citizens to define, support, and defend the U.S. national identity” (Pease 11). American officials had to ensure that the ‘image’ of the United States would indeed convince Europeans to follow in American footsteps.

¹⁵ Quoted in Campbell and Kean p. 302.

3.3 AMERICANIZATION

Out of the ideological belief of American exceptionalism grew the conviction that American culture was to be broadcast globally, convincing ‘others’ to emulate the American way of life. After the Second World War, the United States “would be the only country left to serve as a world cultural magnet” (Hart 50-51). Whereas before the war foreign relations “represented a series of decisions conceived as the extensions of nationalist imperatives within the global arena” the changed reality of the global order meant that cultural exchange suddenly took a front seat role (Hart 60). Persuasion and ‘image’ became increasingly important elements in politics because “[n]othing like culture adds value - and values - to power” (Ellwood 2012: 3). The nation that was best able to structure their cultural power would become the “leading model for modernity” (Ellwood 2012: 3). The cultural angle allowed the United States to “demonstrate her ‘native confidence’ in what she stood for: not just a political and economic system which had produced ‘the highest standard of living the world has ever known,’ but one capable of extension and improvement to meet modern needs and desires” (Ellwood 1992 76-77). In other words, their policies should convince Europe that they wanted what the United States offered in terms of culture and high standard of living.

This type of ideological rhetoric then informs the agenda in the political sphere and makes for intangible power resources, known as soft power (Nye 51). Although it is difficult to measure in terms of successes and certainly much more difficult for officials to control, it can be incredibly effective to win over other nations (Nye 52). In the postwar world, America employed soft power because it made it much easier to convey their intentions and successes abroad to the war-torn European nations (Nye 52). The projection of the ‘image’ of the United States had to convince European nations of the honorable intentions of the Marshall Plan while simultaneously convincing Europeans that the American way of life would ensure prosperity for all. If nothing else, American officials had to shape their policies so as to “counteract the growing feeling abroad that the U.S. [was] embarking on a period of commercial imperialism” as the propaganda of the Soviet Union proclaimed (Hart 104).

With increased availability of mass media, American images were quite easily spread through magazines and Hollywood films showing Europe the attractions of the American way of life (Kilick 167). American culture was interesting in Europe and seemingly “invaded Europe close on the heels of its victorious armies” (Kroes 11). Basically, the Americans “were the new Romans,” almost mythical in the eyes of many Europeans as “representatives of a high technology culture, consummate organisers [sic], postmasters of practical intelligence” (Kroes 9). They introduced the newly liberated Europeans to distinctively American norms and values as well as cultural items such as films, music, comic books, and new fashions (Fritsche 223). Europeans started looking to

the United States for new trends as they were saved from ongoing oppression during the war (Waller 97).

Using cultural influence as a persuasion technique has come to be understood as Americanization which encompasses a “particular distinctive form of modernization, superimposed with great political, economic and cultural force” (Ellwood 1992: 236). Americanization in that regard did include elements that could be perceived as cultural imperialism; “representing those at the receiving end as passive victims of America’s cultural and economic might” (Fritsche 8). It is true that the European nations were not able to counter the onslaught of American ideology and “were expected to get on the team as quickly as possible” (Ellwood 1992: 161). It is also true that, at least to some degree, American “efforts to transfer their values and ideas were successful” because European society and culture changed quite drastically after the war (Fritsche 233).

However, it is wrong to suggest that Europeans simply took over American values and culture. For that reason, Americanization soon came to be understood as a “process of transfer and adaption of American - or what is considered American - products, culture, norms and practices” (Fritsche 8). American officials created policies that merged the myth of American exceptionalism and mass consumer democracy by showcasing the “most credible, alluring way forward from recovery to modernisation [sic] in a hundred different ways - personalities, products, magazines, advertising, films, television, fashions, ‘lifestyles’” (Ellwood 1992: 227). However, the process of Americanization also acknowledges that culture cannot simply be forced upon others but that a nation’s “ideas are transferred through a process of negotiation that involved the active participation of the recipients” (Ellwood 1992: 234).

There are limitations to how much influence a country can exercise abroad, regardless of how powerful they are (Ambrose and Brinkley 75). The projection of the ‘image’ of America set the playing field for American officials from which they shaped the policies accordingly. However, they had limited control over it because the “nation’s image ... grew organically from the perceptions that people abroad formed about the attitudes and actions of people at home” (Hart 109). In other words, the mass communications techniques allowed for more public voices and more public opinions to, both positively and negatively, influence the image that officials broadcast. The officials were forced to recognize these new voices on the international stage (Hart 117). European countries could, in theory, resist the influence of American culture; “to take what they wanted from the American model and to cultivate their own version of neo-capitalism” (Ellwood 1992: 236). But in reality this proved difficult due to the sheer amount of the ideological advertising made available to individual Europeans, especially through the Marshall Plan propaganda.

3.4 ASSESSING CULTURAL EMPIRE

As a starting point for Cultural Empire, I compared and contrasted Maier's established framework on the characteristics of 'empire,' the political implications of the 'Empire of Idea' as Hart discusses, and de Grazia's argument for 'Market Empire.' All three point out that, while perhaps not stating it outright, there was certainly a belief among many American officials that the United States would be an empire as it was the most powerful nation in the world after World War II. The development of new public diplomacy and public policy methods point toward the belief that America had to take the lead in the world, especially as the British Empire crumbled. However, the United States would not be similar to the European empires because of their historic difference and ideology of exceptionalism. In addition, they did not colonize but Americanize instead (Hart 9). De Grazia's analysis of Market Empire puts emphasis on this cultural projection of the United States across the world, suggesting that this is another reason for why it differed from previous empires.

It may seem that my argument bears similarities to that of de Grazia's but this is not the case. I disagree with her assumption of the establishment of the Market Empire. She seems to simply accept that it began at the start of the twentieth century, accompanying mainly Hollywood's appeal and without any need for military intervention (2005: 6). Suggesting that because there was no military conquest, nor an extending of national borders, that it is a Market Empire rather than a traditional empire. I believe that her argument is incomplete because she leaves out a crucial factor; namely that the United States did wield their military strength, twice in the timeframe that de Grazia discusses, namely during both World Wars. and she makes no mention of the impact, or lack thereof. While I agree that the United States might have had no need to continue using their military strength to win over Europe, especially after World War II, because they had already clearly proven their ability to do so, it did have an impact on people globally which is why I believe it should be included in the discussion of the United States as empire, regardless of the type.

Some scholars claim that soft power cannot sustain this leadership alone because it relies on hard power to support it.¹⁶ Not only had the United States helped in the liberation of Europe, showcasing that they were definitely powerful enough to sustain their position with hard power, they also had a monopoly on the atomic bomb (Steil 91). This, coupled with the victory status, makes a compelling argument for 'hard power by proxy' to maintain their leadership position in the global sphere. Adding another reason for me to argue for Cultural Empire instead. Soft power was enough. It enticed Europe to take America as the leading example of modernization as the culture they conveyed was quite readily accepted. Europe wanted to incorporate elements of United States culture to aid their own recovery (Kroes 9). The destruction left by the war meant social reform was

¹⁶ See for reference: Maier 2005: 75, Ellwood 2012: 458, Nye 2014: 52, Hart 2012: 72, Van der Breugel 1982: 70

already on its way, so why not take to a country that, arguably, was so successful and wealthy already (Waller 97).

As I have already outlined above, empires are created through hard power. While the United States did not use this during the Marshall Plan years. For that reason I argue the need to broaden the definition of empire to include persuasion through soft power relations. I suggest that Cultural Empire consists of the dominant presence and persuasion of one nation to appeal to others so much that they want to emulate it, and take part in its successes. In the situation after World War II this persuasion includes propaganda advertising. The ideological battle that ensued between the Soviet Union and the United States made it crucial for the latter to make their modern society much more appealing so that communism would lose appeal in Europe (Hart 9). Soft power also became more important because, not only is hard power expensive to use, there is reason to question whether it would have worked in America's favor as Europe had finally been freed from Nazi oppression during the war. The fact that many American policy makers operated from the idea of America as a benevolent and inviting empire, including the myth of exceptionalism as example for others to follow, and 'image' of a nation becoming key in foreign relations, only strengthens the idea of Cultural Empire; as the influence in Europe was sustained by 'only' soft power.

Maier argues that some scholars have agreed that "if the United States is an empire, it is an unprecedented one: without imperial borders, without conquests and utterly benevolent in intention" (4). He counters that while they did indeed not exercise direct rule nor extend their borders, they did want "loyalty to its leadership and policy" (62). While empires need soft power to be successful and can have lasting effects on shaping the cultural appeal of the dominant power, Maier claims that it "evaporates if there is no hard power in reserve" (65). I do not believe that this argument rings true for American Cultural Empire in Europe in the period following the Second World War. The appeal of American culture was tangible and they had shown their ability to wield extensive hard power in the war. I would argue that American soft power has proven itself to be so successful that we are still under its influence today. After all, do we not eat at MacDonald's, watch the newest Hollywood-produced blockbusters, and use iPhones?

Cultural Empire, therefore, does not revolve around hard power and expansion, but instead functions through the employed ideological rhetorics and persuasion techniques through mass media and advertising to make itself so appealing that the receivers would want more of it. In addition to that, it also relies on remembrance. Cultural memory is a decidedly prominent factor for the success of Cultural Empire. As new media technology allowed for new voices in the global arena, this has played an important role in shaping the memories of Europeans and Americans alike. Cultural memory is formed successfully if the representation of a memory is actualized by, first, individuals to then inform the collective, because without it, the memories will be "nothing but dead

material, failing to have an impact” (Erl1 2010: 5). The fact that American soft power policies, with the Marshall Plan at the helm, were so successful that we are still constantly discussing and re-evaluating our perceptions of it, is proof that the established persuasive impact of the Cultural Empire during the Marshall Plan years was successful.

3.5 CULTURAL EMPIRE DURING THE MARSHALL PLAN YEARS

Taking the discussion into the Marshall Plan years, I omit one vital element ascribed to empire immediately: Military conquest. Europe had just been liberated from oppression during World War II. The changes in American foreign policies I outlined in chapter one, can quite easily be seen as put in practice with the Marshall Plan. As I defined before, Cultural Empire consists of persuasive methods of public diplomacy and relies on this soft power to have influence that appeals abroad, which is certainly embodied in the Marshall Plan. As the discussion of Marshall Plan scholarship in the second chapter outlines, the consensus among scholars is that while the economic aspect was not as important as it was thought to be, the cultural elements and subsequent changes in foreign policies mattered all the more.

Europe had to be convinced that they wanted what America offered. The policymakers worked to promote American “ideas and capital and influence to penetrate areas that might potentially be walled off by others” (Maier 9). The United States did not force the Marshall Plan onto Europe, instead it sought support “through shared goals, economic support, cultural policies, and sometimes undercover subsidies” (Maier 35). The rhetorics that ‘sold’ the plan to Europe, became increasingly ideological as officials worked to convince Americans and Europeans alike that the Marshall Plan “was America’s best hope, the world’s best hope ... to preserve the victory against aggression and dictatorship” (Behrman 159). This rhetoric inspired a sense of altruism and went hand in hand with a “psychological boost” that inspired confidence in Europeans to help with their postwar recovery (Behrman 335). In essence, the Marshall Plan was outlined simply, elegantly and practically by placing emphasis on American-style modernization through mass production and efficiency (Kroes 9). The Plan “spread the glamour of the American Way of Life” and led to the development of a climate of “cooperation or coordination ... as the result of social integration at a high level of acknowledgement of values” (de Feyter 58-59). Basically, American values were considered necessary for successful reconstruction. In that sense, their power was “turned into American influence by their comprehensive and systematic insistence on the individual, subjective dimensions of the recovery-modernisation [sic] process” (Ellwood 1992: 227).

The success in conveying the necessity of the American model through the Marshall Plan can be found in the officials’ constant re-evaluation of diplomatic strategies and adjustment of messages to ensure they were heard (Fritsche 19). The officials were convinced that the Plan could

help Europe “be more like America (or as America imagined itself to be)” (Ellwood 2012: 521). Through immense propaganda advertising that came with the Plan, the Europeans were invited to follow in America’s footsteps with documentary films showing them how to do it and where it could lead them (Ellwood 1992: 228). Although new policies were being developed and there was an increased emphasis on ‘image’ it turned out to be much more challenging to project the “self-evident rightness of the Plan’s goals and methods” abroad (Ellwood 2012: 375). The Marshall Plan allowed the United States to show their immense wealth and power. Compared to Europe, the location and sheer size of the United States meant that they worried less about any attempts for oppression or hostile invaders (Maier 195). This advantage, combined with the ideology of American exceptionalism, the United States was able to put forward an “empire of production” in which ‘productivity’ came to appeal as much as the status of citizenship had done in the Roman Empire (Maier 195).

Empires have, traditionally, looked beyond their own borders to exert control, often because of a sense of superiority and need to civilize (Maier 19). I argue that the Marshall Plan was the United States’s program to practice control outside of their own borders. Many American officials were convinced that the American model of mass production and mass consumerism was the key to a better life, so they would teach Europe how to become like them and share in this prosperity (Maier 193). The fear that communism might appeal to European nations who were in turmoil, “prompted American exertions of power” so that they would not “fall under the influence of a major adversary, territorial or ideological” (Maier 35). The major adversary had, by this time, become the Soviet Union. The newly developed public policies “aspired to an ambitious ‘forward’ policy ... and did not wait upon the Soviet threat” (Maier 156). The Plan quickly became a “centerpiece of America’s early postwar policy of containment” (Behrman 338). It also “epitomized the American commitment to sustaining a transnational economy” (Maier 214).

The American influence reached countries across the world and ensured the position of the United States as global superpower. They did not employ their army to conquer Europe because their persuasive policies, or propaganda, was successful enough to attract Europeans into the American sphere of influence. That is not to say Europe just took over American culture to make it part of their own societies. There was distrust, so-called anti-Americanization, among Europeans who found the American influence too dominant, their propaganda too apparent, or did not want to accept American values as their own (Inkelaar 28). Again, historically, all empires have had to deal with types of resistance to the dominant power (Hart 8). That is another reason why the United States was a Cultural Empire during the Marshall Plan years. Europe may not have been strong enough to combat American ideologies and bulwark of cultural influences, they took some from it and appropriated it to suit their national cultures. The relationship between the United States and

Europe was unbalanced and unequal during the Marshall Plan (Pells xv). However, Cultural Empire ended with the end of the Marshall Plan because, even though the United States remained a superpower, Europe recovered and was able to counter American dominance, making the relationships much more balanced even if not entirely equal.

The Marshall Plan was so influential and its psychological impact so life-altering that it contributed to social changes in many European nations (Fritsche 233). This left a lasting impression on those people who encountered the aid from the Plan on a daily basis. On top of that, new scholarship on the effects of the Plan is ongoing, with new voices adding new perspectives, it is taught about in history classes at high schools all over Europe, and featured in exhibitions¹⁷ or part of the Cold War collections in history museums. The more a past event is discussed, researched, or featured in exhibitions, the more it shapes cultural memory (Isurin 16).

3.6 CONCLUSION

By outlining the definition of empire and how this has been perceived differently by Maier, Hart, and de Grazia, I have established the starting point from where I brought in the potential of the United States as a Cultural Empire instead. The role of the United States after the war, does indeed not match the definition of empire in the classic, or historic, sense. Compared to the historical examples such as the Roman Empire and the British Empire, the United States did not employ military conquest to subjugate European nations, did not physically expand their territory abroad by annexing Europe, nor exercise direct control over others. What they did have during the Marshall Plan years, is a strong global leadership position with appealing cultural impact, and the expectation of loyalty of those countries receiving the aid. The myth of American Exceptionalism as well as Americanization contributed to how American policymakers employed soft power to engage in foreign relations. The fact that their leadership was accepted in Europe is why the United States can be considered as a Cultural Empire as opposed to a traditional empire, with the Marshall Plan ensuring their global superior position. The fact that American culture is still noticeable in Europe today proves that the ideological rhetoric and Marshall Plan propaganda was successful in forming cultural memory. Therefore, there was no need to behave like an empire in the traditional sense.

Cultural Empire ended when the Marshall Plan did because as Europe was rebuilding and regaining confidence, they no longer relied entirely on the United States to support them. The next chapter presents an analysis of the selected propaganda that accompanied the Marshall Plan to

¹⁷ An example the traveling exhibition called ‘The New Marshall Plan in Europe 1948/2018: Memories, Discoveries, Lessons?’ Starting at Radboud University Nijmegen, 5 November 2018, author present. Moving to Kleve, Germany, 28 November 2018.

pinpoint how the dominant presence of the United States infringed on European lives on a daily basis to prove that there is merit to the assertion of the United States as a Cultural Empire.

4: MARSHALL PLAN PROPAGANDA: PERSUADING THE PEOPLE

After all, if Europeans regarded the recently proposed Marshall Plan as an imperialist plot to take over the continent, as Soviet propaganda proclaimed, then the US government might as well take thirteen billion dollars and light it on fire in the Capitol rotunda¹⁸

Justin Hart's words perfectly capture the necessity of powerful public diplomacy and public policy in the context of the Cold War. The Soviet Union propaganda campaign was unyielding, especially aimed at the Marshall Plan and presented an ideological threat (Steil 37). The fact that the Europeans accepted the American aid, though there was distrust, indicates that the developed American propaganda managed to indeed counter the Soviet Union.

The historic and political discussion of the previous chapters lead up to this chapter, which focuses on how cultural artifacts of the Marshall Plan were developed and distributed at home and abroad to ensure its support among the American people and positive welcome in Europe. The focus lies on three selected posters from the poster competition in 1950, and one obvious element of propaganda, that is often overlooked; the Marshall Plan emblem, which was placed on every single item that was sent to Europe. These four propaganda elements have played an important role in informing the cultural memory of the Marshall Plan that remains to this very day. I also chose them because there are recognizable elements of the ideology of American exceptionalism, and thus showcasing the success of the cultural influence of the United States during the Marshall Plan years.

The chapter starts with an outline of the dominant propaganda strategies employed by American foreign policymakers and what the intentions were of the propaganda that accompanied the Marshall Plan. For the scope of this chapter the focus is on the Marshall Plan posters and emblem. While I do mention the Marshall Plan films, it is only to draw parallels or emphasize a specific point. I highlight the theories of American Exceptionalism and Americanization coupled with the developments in foreign policy that can be detected in the three selected posters and the well-known emblem. In doing so, I determine the legitimacy of the United States as a Cultural Empire during the Marshall Plan years.

A final important note is that throughout this chapter I use the terms advertising, 'information,' and propaganda interchangeably.

¹⁸ Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas*, 2012. p. 129.

4.1 AMERICAN PROPAGANDA ADVERTISING

After the Second World War, American officials and policymakers “came to appreciate the importance of a unified propaganda strategy that capitalized on proliferating access to various forms of mass communications” (Hart 3). Compared to the propaganda machines at work in Nazi Germany and later the Soviet Union, the initial developments of the United States during the 1930s and 1940s were “often portrayed as a weak and largely inept response ... or as an inevitable, almost unconscious, reaction to the evolution of communications technology” (Hart 7). On the eve of America’s entry into World War II, American officials “developed a concrete plan of action to realize the long-standing goal of broadening the cultural program” (Hart 46). “exhibited an extraordinarily frank engagement with the relationship between culture and empire and the ways that cultural relations would shape perceptions of the United States in the postwar world” (Hart 46-47). The officials soon realized that domestic politics would impact foreign relations and contributed to the perceptions that shaped European views regarding the United States (Hart 58). Many officials did still believe in a strict difference between propaganda and cultural relations, “their interest in shaping perceptions of the United States through culture and communications led them to take an ever-greater interest in the means of modern mass persuasion” (Hart 58). Essentially, propaganda became an institutionalized element in foreign policies (Hart 70). Propaganda itself was not a new invention within diplomacy. World War I had started the moment that the United States as well as other governments “made systematic use of modern media to rally their people behind the war effort” (Fritsche 12). It grew in the interbellum “both in the field of business advertising and in the marketing of government policies” (Fritsche 12). But it was during and after World War II, on the eve of the Cold War, that propaganda advertising became a “far more explicit and better theorized” element of foreign diplomacy (Hart 88).

Propaganda has quite negative connotations as the word itself is frequently “associated with manipulation and deception” which is why American officials were more keen to refer to their propaganda campaign as information distribution (Fritsche 11). In doing so, the officials were adamant that their ‘information’ was truthful while ‘others’ distributed propaganda, or falsehoods (Hart 79). That did not mean Americans agreed that the so-called ‘strategy of truth’ was appropriate to use in foreign policy (Hart 79). Proponents argued that the ‘information’ had to place emphasis on the “strength of its institutions - its systems of education, its culture, its social legislation, and its labor organizations” (Sherwood qtd in Hart 89). Opponents disliked the fact that it seemed that diplomats “often simply told the Congress, the press, the American people, or whomever, what they wanted to tell them at a given time, and they often did so without regard for what was true and accurate” (Gimbel 273). With the onset of the Cold War, the methods changed as American officials turned “repeatedly to the techniques of American advertisers” to distribute the ‘image’ of America

abroad (Hart 88). Advertising methods had also undergone modernization with “slick packaging and catchy sloganeering” (Hart 89). This stemmed from a fear that the United States was not doing enough to convince the rest of the world of its intentions; lacking a “clean sales pitch to rival the appeal of communism” (Hart 129). It was no longer enough to simply present objective facts in foreign policy; they had to react in some fashion to “the charges brought to bear against us” (Hart 130). There was just one issue in the form of the Smith-Mundt Act which was passed in 1948. It aimed to put an end to governmental organizations employing propaganda as a strategy to win support (Fritsche 13, Hart 133). Because this act encouraged American officials to use all cultural means at their disposal to combat the ideological onslaught emanating from the Soviet Union, it allowed them to easily pass off their advertising as truthful ‘information.’

4.2 MARSHALL PLAN PROPAGANDA ADVERTISING

As discussed in chapter two, the Marshall Plan required a lot of work to pass through the Congress. It eventually did so, while simultaneously winning the support of the American public, through a highly successful and incredibly extensive publicity, or propaganda, campaign (Hart 124, Fritsche 5). The media also played an important role in the acceptance of the Plan by referring to the ERP as the Marshall Plan; after George Marshall’s speech at Harvard. This “branding effort was just the first piece of an elaborate public relations strategy” (Hart 125). Seeing as the aid program is still popularly known as the Marshall Plan, the effort was clearly successful. The increased propaganda working to gather support for the Plan domestically went hand-in-hand with a more forceful approach in the foreign propaganda campaign (Hart 128). American officials were convinced that because the publicity campaign had worked to win support at home, they would have to continue a similar approach to make Europeans receptive and well informed of the intentions of the Marshall Plan. The ‘information’ had to be extensive enough to “convince the Europeans of the of the superiority of the US-liberal-capitalist model and its ability to guarantee higher living standards and lasting economic growth” through the Marshall Plan (Fritsche 5).

Marshall Plan propaganda began in earnest in the summer of 1948, overseen and funded by the Economic Cooperation Administration, or ECA for short (Ellwood 1992: 156, Fritsche 5, Pells 53). The ECA officials were all Americans working in Europe as information and aid distributing officers (Fritsche 167). They were very much aware that for the propaganda to be successful they would have to learn about their audience; the Europeans. The key was to find out what the Europeans preferred and create sound strategies to best distribute and develop the Marshall Plan propaganda (Fritsche 189). The surveys they undertook “aimed to assess Europeans’ knowledge of and attitude towards the MP so that the propaganda effort could be concentrated on those regions where people were most skeptical” (Fritsche 191). Therefore, the propaganda advertising had to be

able to convince these skeptics that the intentions of the United States were altruistic, while simultaneously emphasizing the necessity of large-scale economic and social reforms, and assuring Europeans that the coveted high standard of living would be attainable in the near future (Fritsche 21).

The mass media advancements had made the “broad ideological appeal” of nations a central element for foreign relations; their “creeds, norms, and culture, incarnated in functioning institutions both public and private, should serve to enhance its legitimacy” (Ellwood 2012: 458). By developing sound ‘information’ policies the United States was able to transmit this through the Marshall Plan advertising quite well. It allowed them to broadcast their successes while at the same time sharing it with Europe so they, too, could prosper. Seeing as this made America appear larger than life to many, it helped to ensure their global supremacy, or, rather, maintain their status as Cultural Empire. Europe, on the other hand, was trying to gain back their confidence and focus on the postwar reconstruction process, they were unable to “combat the immensely ideological rhetoric of the Marshall Plan propaganda” (Ellwood 1992: 161). On top of that, the bilateral agreements that the individual European countries went into with the United States, to get the aid, stated that Europe had to promote publicity for the Plan. Each country was expected to publish about the aid according to the ECA standards (Behrman 208). This meant that events to welcome the ERP ships were organized, new radio programs set up, pamphlets and posters were printed, and various types of films were released (Behrman 209). The basic goal was to promote the scope and results of the Marshall Plan and ensure Europeans would be made aware of the fact this was coming from America (Inklaar 27).

In the initial stages, the Marshall Plan propaganda was obvious, although published as ‘information.’ In the later stages, especially towards the end, it became increasingly covert and subtle. Officials selected “mediating agents, local intellectual leaders, and opinion-makers who had become convinced of the worth of American values, and of some of the lessons American experience held for the future of Europe” hoping that this would yield a “successful and distinctive American method for picking out and hopefully influencing the future rules of allied nations” (Ellwood: 2012: 434). In other words, the more subtle nature of the propaganda was modeled after new methods which made it look like regular advertising.

The policies American officials worked on for projecting the ‘image’ of America abroad proved risky as it was an ideological issue (Hart 200). Due to that it was also incredibly difficult to rely on, or even measure, whether or not the results would come out as intended (Ellwood 2012: 434). The context of the Cold War, and subsequent emphasis on the ideological rhetorics and psychological impact of foreign relations, meant that the United States had to ensure that they would be able to counter the “massive propaganda counter-offensive” that the Soviet’s newly

established 'Cominform' agency produced (Ellwood 1992: 161). The previously clear-cut lines "between cultural promotion and psychological warfare" were obscured, meaning that the push to build supremacy "appeared intrusive, artificial, politically as much as culturally motivated, and over-reliant on the fluctuating spiritual power of [in this case American] leadership" (Ellwood 2012: 433).

The overarching impact of the Marshall Plan propaganda meant that cultural productions were employed to "promote American socio-economic standards and values" as a fundamental component of American culture in general (Fritsche 8-9). Since the 'image' of a nation had become directly linked to its appeal and certainly an immediate element of foreign relations, the main goals of the Marshall Plan propaganda was that Europe was made well-aware of the aid. On top of that the propaganda aimed to convince Europeans of the necessity of the Plan and to ensure that these were accepted as truthful and honest (Fritsche 11). The ECA was in charge of promoting this propaganda and published an enormous amount of material to distribute the messages through brochures, leaflets, posters, films, photographs, but also by promoting fairs and exhibitions. It is estimated that approximately ten million Europeans were reached in this way (Behrman 238).

Films proved a great way to reach even more people because cinema was popular in liberated Europe. It had the added benefit of being able to reach a much more diverse and widespread audience; including all age groups, various ethnicities, the lower educated, and the illiterate as well (Fritsche 5). Some of the films were only short documentaries, others could be much longer and even quite humorous, some were obviously intended as propaganda, and still others would be much more subtle but all of them had one thing in common; they were made to "educate Europeans about the Marshall Plan or to advance one of the plan's objectives" (Behrman 239). The films are predominantly explanatory and aimed at "promoting the policy of productivity" that should convince the audience of the "superiority of the liberal-capitalist model" (Fritsche 11-12). Hollywood films appealed to European audiences even more and "had far more influence over time for good or ill than any instrumental cultural policy could produce" (Ellwood 2012: 433). Hollywood undoubtedly helped promote the propaganda efforts employed by the ECA, and other American officials, because it contributed to the Europeans' perceptions of the United States; showcasing the appeal of American culture. Or, as Behrman explains; "the information and propaganda efforts would help to form their views not only of the Marshall Plan but of America itself" (Behrman 239-240). Hollywood reflected the American way of life and influenced the 'image' of America as something Europeans would want to strive for as well (Waller 113).

Scholars widely agree that the Marshall Plan was, and still is historically, the most expressive form of propaganda employed by one nation in a time of peace that has had a lasting

political, psychological, and cultural impact in the world.¹⁹ The slogan of the Marshall Plan, proclaiming that ‘You Too Can Be Like Us!’ held such wide appeal in Europe at the time that American culture was welcomed with open arms. The unprecedented amount of propaganda advertising of the Plan succeeded “to bring that promise home to Europeans everywhere” (Ellwood 1992: 227).

4.3 THE POSTER COMPETITION

As I argued in chapter three, the United States can be considered a Cultural Empire during the Marshall Plan years. The reason for that has to do with the propaganda advertising that accompanied it and purported American dominance and presumed cultural superiority in Europe. One of the ways in which this argument can be proven is through the Marshall Plan’s ‘Intra-European Cooperation for a Better Standard of Living’ poster competition in 1950. European artists were invited to create posters that “represented the theme of cooperation and economic recovery.”²⁰ Thirteen²¹ Marshall countries participated and thousands of posters were submitted. A panel of twelve²² judges from the different countries would select the best ones. In the end, twenty-five posters were selected that best represented the theme of cooperation and integration.²³

It is interesting to note that, while the Marshall Plan aid started coming to Europe in 1948, this competition was held two years later. One of the most compelling reasons was that by this time Europeans were well-aware of the Marshall Plan and its aid mainly due to the extensive American-made propaganda advertising outlined above. In fact, Europe was more confident in its reconstruction process and the appeal of communism had started to weaken. But, the removal of trade barriers and subsequent European unification, was not going as well as the United States had hoped (Behrman 237). This makes a strong case for why exactly the poster competition was held at this moment. The majority of Europeans were well aware of the Marshall Plan aid. Some countries,

¹⁹ See for reference Berhman (2007), Fritsche (2018), Hart (2012), Maier (2006), Ellwood (1992 and 2012), and Steil (2018).

²⁰ Outline on Marshall Plan Foundation website. Source: <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/marshall/the-marshall-plan/marshall-plan-poster-contest/>

²¹ Confusing note: Some claim that 13 countries participated while others say 12. I chose to believe 13 out of the 17 countries took part in it because the Marshall Plan foundation website lists 13 countries entered into the competition. Source: www.marshallfoundation.org/blog/marshall-plan-poster-contest/

²² Published on the Marshall Plan Foundation website by C.Sonnier, 24 October 2014. Source: <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/blog/marshall-plan-poster-contest/>. CSonnier writes that out of the 13 submitting countries, twelve judges were selected with backgrounds in fine arts professions.

²³ Published on the Marshall Plan Foundation website by C.Sonnier, 24 October 2014. Source: <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/blog/marshall-plan-poster-contest/>

like the Netherlands, felt that the Americans wanted too much attention for the Marshall Plan with the 'information' campaigns (Van der Hoeven 11). The United States also had a different approach to the publicity than the Dutch would have preferred; too much emphasis was put on the humanitarian and benevolent intentions of the Marshall Plan (Inkelaar 28, Van der Hoeven 115). On top of that the Dutch, and most of the other European countries as well, were less positive about propaganda because they had been occupied and confronted with propaganda on a daily basis during the war (Van der Hoeven 118).

The Marshall Plan propaganda had become more informative by 1949 but the Dutch officials still feared that it would disfranchise the people too much (Van der Hoeven 113). Arguably, the ECA simply changed tactics by involving the Europeans directly. Just like they employed European filmmakers to produce some of the documentaries for the Marshall Plan, the European-made posters would positively contribute to the idea that this was "propaganda made by Europeans for Europeans" (Fritsche 2). This circumvented not only the Smith-Mundt Act but also suggested that the American officials listened to the needs of their audience and made them an equal part of the American Cultural Empire. As Maier argues, empires encourage participation of those "who bear testimony to the 'idealism' of the imperial conqueror" (46). It is considered to be more fulfilling because the subjugated voices would equally contribute to the shaping of history as part of the dominant power (Maier 46). Although the poster competition was an ECA initiative, the fact that this was advertising made by Europeans them in accordance with the myth of American exceptionalism, would allow American officials to claim that they were not forcing their ideologies onto Europe. Moreover, the fact that Europeans made it implied that it was different from ECA publications, or other American propaganda initiatives, justifying American claims of cultural superiority that Europe welcomed (Pells 237).

Another reason for the competition to be held in 1950 was that the Americans were not satisfied with the progress of European integration, a push for the "removal of trade barriers and inter-governmental institutions to aid in trade."²⁴ The United States policymakers had expected that Europe would start to emulate their economic, political, and social structures and ideals as the Marshall Plan continued to be active in Europe, which is why they steadily "added ... a remarkable set of tools for broadcasting the lessons of the American way to the Old World" (Ellwood 1992: 161).

²⁴ Published on the Marshall Plan Foundation website by C.Sonnier, 24 October 2014. Source: <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/blog/marshall-plan-poster-contest/>

4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE MARSHALL PLAN POSTERS

The twenty-five selected winning posters mostly depict a representation of America's role in the reconstruction process in Europe in various ways; a helping hand, climbing upward, a key, new flowers blooming, white doves, etc.²⁵ The posters therefore are proof of how American culture and ideals influenced Europeans. To show how exactly the posters convey American narratives, I selected two that quite obviously refer to the American presence. They differ from the other winning posters because they convey elements that can be perceived as in line with the rhetoric of American exceptionalism as well as showcase the success of the presence of the Cultural Empire. The third poster I chose won the competition. At first glance this poster differs from the other twenty-four because it lacks an obvious reference to the United States that is prevalent in the others.

The first poster²⁶ appears to bear resemblance to the *Statue of Liberty* but upon closer inspection it resemble a conceivably more powerful figure; the Greek Goddess Athena, daughter of Zeus and Goddess of War and Wisdom. Greek gods and goddesses are always depicted in an immediately recognizable way because of "content and attributes, such as dress, objects carried, accompanying animals and physical appearance" rather than any inscriptions (Carpenter 35). The goddess Athena can easily be recognized in the imagery because she is always shown wearing a full-length dress, with full body armor and a helmet with sash while holding a spear and shield (Pfeijffer 19). Often she is shown holding either an owl, for wisdom, or a dove, for victory.

On the poster, the figure is wearing a dress, her hair is the shape of a helmet with the sash covering part of her head and she is holding a spear and a dove. The spear a reference to fighting and the dove a symbol of peace, or victory. The fact that she is facing the dove suggests that there is no more need for battle because peace reigns; befitting the time in which this poster was made.

This reference to Greek antiquity, by so prominently featuring Athena in the middle, struck me most about this poster and is enough reason for me to argue that this is also why it was chosen as one of the winners. In mythology, Athena was known for her practicality and looking for peaceful solutions rather than engaging in battles as she loathed bloodshed. However, should fighting be inevitable, then she was invincible because of her superior strategic and tactical acumen (Pfeijffer 19). I draw a parallel here between Athena's attributes and American exceptionalism. The United States had initially not wanted to play a role in the Second 'European' war (Steil 2). But,

²⁵ All posters can be viewed on the Marshall Plan Foundation website: <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/posters/scarf-made-flags-european-nations/>

²⁶ Poster featured here on the right "Scarf made up of the flags of European nations," made by Guiseppe Groce, Italy, 1950. Selected as one of the twenty-five winning posters. Source: <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/posters/scarf-made-flags-european-nations/>

from the moment they entered, officials were convinced that they would come out superior and unrivaled in the new global order (Hart 8).

Athena was described as generous and benevolent (Pfeijffer 19). Characteristics that the Americans assuredly believed themselves to possess with the Marshall Plan as proof of just how committed they were to aiding the devastated European nations. The sash draped across Athena's head and shoulders is made up of the flags of the participating European nations. This suggests that she will carry them with her. If the United States is, indeed, personified in the figure then this makes a case for the role they played in aiding European recovery. Athena was also portrayed as one of enchanting beauty (Pfeijffer 20). Due to the influence of Hollywood and various other media channels during the Marshall Plan years, American culture was alluring to the majority of Europeans and generally well received. The Marshall Plan advertising showcased the beauty and appeal of the American way of life, persuading Europe to emulate it.

Turning to the lower half of the poster, Athena's legs, or perhaps better referred to as a dress, appears to be made up of stone bricks on the bottom. It suggest both that the ground is being built back up and turning more solid. The fact that it then turns white and leads me to believe that she is growing out of this solid ground. One of the roles that the United States took upon itself after winning the war, was the commitment to stabilize Europe with the Marshall Plan and aid in their rebuilding process. The factory in the background is linked to the reconstruction as well because, with smoke coming out of the chimneys, it appears operational. The emphasis is on the productivity drive, the United States focused on conveying the successes of their modern mass production techniques. The fact that the factory is operational implies that the European productivity is steadily growing again. Lastly, the wheat in the foreground can have two implications; fertility and successful harvests, and the wheat brought to Europe on the Marshall Plan ships. The first Marshall Plan ships brought wheat with them to help Europe through failed harvests after the destructive winter before the Plan started (Killick 124). Soon the new American harvesting machinery would make harvesting faster and easier in Europe, allowing for growth in capacity after having suffered in the aftermath of the war.



The next poster²⁷ was chosen for a similar reason to the first. Although the presence of the United States is less obvious in this one. There is, again, a reference to antiquity. This time the resemblance of the figure is to Atlas, a Titan in Greek mythology, who was punished by Zeus to carry the Heavens on his shoulders for eternity (Graves 144). On images and as statues, he is usually shown carrying the earth on his shoulders. In the poster, Atlas is made up of two halves; black on the right and colored with the different European flags on the left. I argue that the black side of the caricatured figure of Atlas represents the United States. The globe he is carrying on his shoulders features the Western European countries. The right side of the globe, where the American continent should be is black, or in the shadows. The black shadow on the globe goes all the way down to Atlas's head, which is why I argue that the United States is the black side; they are in the background, supporting or carrying, while Europe is in the foreground, being held up and growing.

The globe is cut off on the right where, geographically, the Soviet Union should be. The black hand is also not supporting that part of the globe. This is ambiguous. On the one hand it could suggest that the United States was so powerful that there would be more they could carry, but on the other hand it suggests that this side of the globe is no longer important and has faded into the background. Communism had, by the time this poster was made, lost much of its appeal as the European nations got stronger and more confident in their recovery process. The words at the bottom translate to 'Unity through Collaboration' with the Dutch words 'Samen' linked by chains. This refers to the idea of integration quite literally; the chains connecting them together. The fact that both words are linked indicates that there is strength in numbers. Again there is an element of American exceptionalism. The half with the flags suggests that all of these European nations combined have the same strength as the United States does alone.

The final poster I selected won the competition.²⁸ This poster has been discussed by Stephan Leibfried from a political science perspective.²⁹ It differs from the other selected winners because the obvious reference to the United States is suspiciously absent at first glance. The shape of the ship is the word Europe, and the sails are the flags of the Marshall Plan countries. It was not uncommon for artists and filmmakers to use the ship as a metaphor for the Marshall Plan aid that

²⁷ Poster featured here on the left "Samen Werk, Samen Sterk," made by F.J.F. Nettes, Netherlands, 1950. Also selected as one of the twenty-five winning posters. Source: <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/posters/samen-werk-samen-sterk/>

²⁸ Poster featured here on the right "All Our Colours to the Mast," made by Reijn Dirksen, Netherlands, 1950. Selected as the winning poster for the Marshall Plan competition. Source: <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/posters/marshall-plan-poster-colours-mast/>

²⁹ Leibfried published it in a German Law Journal in collaboration with Susan Gaines and Lorraine Frisina (2009). The main discussion is what the poster, and newer adaptations of it, meant for European unification in the Marshall Plan years as well as the implications of the European Union in relation to the United States.



came to Europe as it “function[ed] not merely as a mobile bridge between the United States and Europe, but, ... reconnect[ed] European nations forcefully separated by the war” (Fritsche 143). In this poster, I agree with Leibfried that the ship is a “metaphor of the ship of state ... offer[ing] a new, utopian, and yet utterly familiar solution: a European structure that resembled traditional formulations of statehood, but was comprised of individual member nations, which, together, would guide and propel Europe on a single course” (Leibfried 316). The ship appears strong and proud, braving rough waters as if “emerging from the dark mists of a stormy past” (317). Indicating that they would emerge from the war strong and unified with the words at the bottom; ‘All

Our Colours To The Mast’ highlighting the need for collaboration. At the same time the ship does not appear sound, as it misses a hull and the ‘flag sails’ are not attached to a mast. However, the ‘flag sails’ are noticeably catching the wind to push them forward which could again point to the need to work together to get stronger and move forward to reach the common goal of, considering the time in which it was made, European unity as the United States pushed for.

The poster gets confusing when trying to find the American presence in it, or a clear reference to how the Marshall Plan aid would assist in the unification of Europe. But, there is a little golden image on the bow of the ship, a figurehead. I thought that this was perhaps a caricatured representation of the eagle on the Great Seal of the United States. Leibfried makes a mention of the image as well, but speculates that it could be the “winged cap of Hermes... messenger of the gods and patron of trade and commerce” (Leibfried 319). Whether it is a print of the bald eagle or Hermes’ hat, it could both refer to the United States being in command; steering Europe in the right direction so that they would profit and join in on the successes of the American ‘way of life.’ Finally, because the ship is sailing west, I claim that this is the course toward modernization that the United States encouraged Europe to follow.

4.5 ANALYSIS OF THE MARSHALL PLAN EMBLEM

Soon after the first ships carrying Marshall Plan aid arrived in European harbors in 1948, everyone started recognizing the emblem of the Marshall Plan. The propaganda advertising clarified the

intention behind it and the role of the United States within it. By the spring of 1950, the Marshall Plan had become a permanent fixture in Western Europe and most people would come across the aid products on a daily basis (Behrman 292). American officials felt that they had to ensure Europeans knew that the United States was behind the aid, lest the Soviet Union would claim it as theirs (Steil 214). One of the most visible advertisements, was the Marshall Plan emblem. This was put on every single item that left the ships to be sent inland. The emblem itself became a symbol for the intention of the United States and the help and relief that it brought European nations. (Behrman 292). I believe that this is the most overlooked piece of essential propaganda that the United States



distributed throughout the Marshall Plan years.³⁰ The emblem was on every single item that came from the ships which is why I argue that it is the most obvious, yet covert and subtle, propaganda.

The emblem is a red, white and blue shield with the words ‘For European Recovery: Supplied by the United States of America,’ printed across the middle.³¹ There are four white stars in the blue top, and seven red and six white stripes. Together, the four stars and thirteen stripes make seventeen; the number of European countries who received the aid. I do not believe that to be coincidental, rather each of the European nations is represented in the shield this way. Arguably, the stars represent the countries that required, and received, the most aid from the plan, which were Britain, France, Italy and (West-) Germany (Steil 342). The American flag is based on the same principle; each star represents a state and the thirteen stripes refer back to the original colonies. The shape of the emblem as a shield is a logical choice because a shield means protection. In this case the United States is the protector, stressing that with the sentence printed in the middle of it, coming in to ‘shield’ Europe from any further distress and protect them from perceived outside threats. The perceived threat in this case being communism and the ideological threat of the Soviet Union against the Marshall Plan. Seeing as the public diplomacy and public policy that the United States

³⁰ The only source I have been able to find to comment on the looks of it is Wikipedia. Behrman, Ellwood (2012), Steil and Fritsche merely mention the emblem in passing but do not linger on the reasons.

³¹ As shown here on the right. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_Plan#/media/File:US-MarshallPlanAid-Logo.svg

had continued to develop at this time, with ‘image’ being central the Marshall Plan emblem is the archetypal American symbol.

An immediate comparison to the emblem can be drawn to the national flag; ‘The Stars and Stripes’ because of the colors, the stars, and the stripes. Another similarity can be found in the Great Seal of the United States.³² The eagle holds the exact same shape of shield, but the colors are reversed: six red and seven white stripes and it does not have the stars. Again the resemblance makes the Marshall Plan emblem unmistakably American. The sentence in the middle merely functions as the confirmation of what the emblem itself as a symbol already conveys. Illiterate people, or children who could not yet read, would also be able to immediately recognize the emblem and know that it came from the United States.

Since the emblem was on all items that came from the Marshall Plan ships and so quintessentially American, even without the sentence, it can be considered as highly successful and influential propaganda of the Marshall Plan. By arguably having the European nations represented in the stars and stripes on the shield, the Cultural Empire showed its might and conveyed its dedication to protect.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The changes in American public diplomacy and public policy culminated in the systematic use of propaganda in the context of the ideologically charged battle of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. American propaganda aimed to convey their role in the world as victorious superpower while simultaneously countering the onslaught of charges against them coming from the Soviet Union. The so-called ‘strategy of truth’ would certainly help the United States during the Marshall Plan years by offsetting their intentions to the threat and lies of communism. Regardless of the restrictions placed on the use of propaganda by American official agencies by the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948, the ECA found ways to circumvent it by either referring to their propaganda advertising as information, or employing Europeans to do it in their stead. The MP posters and films that were made at the behest of the ECA, in line with American policies, would be used to further convince Europe of the

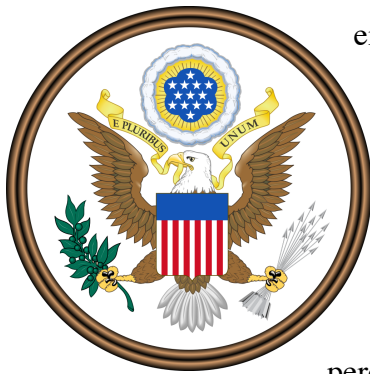


³² The Great Seal of the United States as shown here on the left. Source: <https://diplomacy.state.gov/exhibits-programs/the-great-seal>

righteousness of the Plan. Moreover, they convey the message of superiority of the United States with the slogan of the MP that ‘You Too Can Be Like Us!’ Suggesting that if Europe followed the American example, that they would also prosper and obtain what the Americans already professed to have: mass consumerism, mass productivity, and the highest standard of living for every individual.

The propaganda advertising of the Marshall Plan helped position the United States as a Cultural Empire. By analyzing the three posters and emblem, I can conclude that, because they were received positively in many, although not all, European countries, it was successful propaganda that persuaded Europe to accept the United States as their example. The posters, while made by Europeans, convey elements that appear in line with the ideology of American exceptionalism,

American success, and certainly also America as example. The emblem,



embodying so unmistakably the United States, reached people in Europe on a daily basis making this the most important piece of Marshall Plan propaganda. The fact that it appears to represent the various European countries through the stars and stripes and it being a shield suggests clearly, even to the illiterate, that the United States were the protectors and were committed to ‘shield’ Europe from any other perceived outside threats.

The dominance of the American presence in individual Europeans’ lives through the Marshall Plan propaganda advertising and European employment to help make the advertising, persuaded and influenced Europe on all levels. Even though there were countries who felt the propaganda was too much and too utopian, yet so persuasive that many wanted to have what the Americans already appeared to have; modernization techniques contributing to the high standard of living. This is why I argue that the Marshall Plan propaganda was definitely successful in elevating the position of the United States to Cultural Empire in the new global order in the postwar world in the context of the Cold War.

CONCLUSION

*Finally we must have courage and self confidence to cling to our own methods and conceptions of human society. After all, the greatest danger that can befall us in coping with this problem of Soviet Communism, is that we shall allow ourselves to become like those with whom we are coping*³³

I began this thesis with the words that George C. Marshall spoke during the Harvard Commencement speech in 1947. The speech urged the United States to act and ‘save’ Europe from the devastation caused by World War II and culminated in the development of the largest peacetime aid program; the European Recovery Program, or as soon commonly referred to by officials, citizens, and media alike; the Marshall Plan. It seemed only fitting therefore that I end this thesis with the concluding words of George F. Kennan that he sent from Moscow in 1946. In the ‘Long Telegram,’ as it was called, Kennan conveys his observations of the threat that the Soviet Union could pose to the newly liberated countries in Europe if the United States did not act soon. His words above demonstrate both his belief in the superiority of American society and the fact that the United States must act to contain any potential expansion of communism into Western European countries. Kennan urges the Congress and President not to underestimate the power and intentions of the Soviet Union, even though they were weaker, and had suffered more damage during the war, than the United States. The telegram one of the first official documents that addresses the need for the United States to act if they were to ‘save’ Europe from falling prey to communism. It provided enough basis for Truman to give his famous speech, known as the Truman Doctrine, to Congress calling for the containment of Soviet expansionist methods, and a few weeks after that, culminated in the famous Marshall Plan speech in 1947.

There is a lot of scholarship that discusses the origin of the Cold War and certainly also discussing the role of the Marshall Plan within it. American Studies is a great field of research with many different perspectives offering the opportunity to approach topics from various angles to see them in a new light. This is what I have done as well. For the scope of this research I relied on the theories on the developments in public diplomacy and public policy, during and after World War II, as well as cultural memory. The main fields I drew from were American Studies, Cultural Memory Studies, History, Political History and Political Science which allowed for a varied approach and presented the information needed to present a coherent framework along which I was able to

³³ ‘The Long Telegram’ by George F. Kennan, 22 February 1946. Source: https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/6-6.pdf

structure the main argument, namely; the position of the United States as a Cultural Empire during the Marshall Plan years.

The dominance of the American Cultural Empire ended with the end of the Marshall Plan. This does not mean that American presence in Europe disappeared, but that the closeness and persuasiveness of American culture waned. The United States was so influential in Europe during the Marshall Plan and has not been able to recreate that after it ended. It has been over seventy years since the European Recovery Program passed Congress and began to deliver aid to devastated European nations but it is still prominent in people's minds. After having done extensive research over the past few months, the realization of just how much work is out there hit me. The narrative is constantly changing because of new perspectives offered by scholars coming from varying fields of academia. I discuss the importance of the Marshall plan in the context of historic and political changes for engaging in foreign relations through newly developed public diplomacy and public policies. The most important changes Hart identified is the increased emphasis on 'image,' and with that cultural appeal, of nations in the ensuing ideological context of the Cold War and the use of propaganda as institutionalized element to foreign relations. Using Hart's chronologic discussion on the implemented changes, I was able to create the framework that informed the discussion on the impact of the Marshall Plan.

Seeing as the narrative is always changing because of new perspectives offered on the Marshall Plan I noticed many general agreements on how the Plan worked to ensure the leadership position of the United States after the war. The United States wanted to ensure that communism had no appeal so the Marshall Plan aided them in this quest, as it allowed for American culture to penetrate European society. While scholars also agree that the economic impact of the Marshall Plan was not as far-reaching as intended, most emphasize the fact that the intentions with which the Plan was presented led to a psychological boost that helped to restore European confidence in their abilities to build themselves back up from the ruins of the war. In addition to that, American culture reached individuals at all levels and therefore quite easily managed to influence European lives.

There is much discussion on the impact and persuasive techniques employed to convey that Europeans would do well to copy the American way of life to be able to reach similar levels of prosperity that Americans enjoyed. Some scholars, such as de Grazia (2005) and Behrman (2007) are much more positive about the impact of the propaganda that accompanied the Marshall Plan, while others, such as Hart (2012), Ellwood (1992 and 2012), and Steil (2018), are quite critical and point to the ideological and non-altruistic nature of the 'information.' I am more inclined to lean toward the critical side of the discussion because that disseminates the propaganda and places it in the context of the time; looking at how the United States employed new advertising techniques to counter increasingly aggressive Soviet propaganda that tried to undermine the Marshall Plan as

American imperialism. By discussing the agreements and disagreements on the reception and influence of the Marshall Plan in Europe, I was able to draw parallels between the differences and offset my discussion within it.

5.1 CONCLUDING CULTURAL EMPIRE

In the third chapter, I presented the following definition of Cultural Empire: The dominant presence and persuasion of one nation to appeal to others so much that they want to emulate it, and take part in its successes. In order to determine the feasibility I juxtaposed it to the established meaning of empire. The United States met the following characteristics of empire in the traditional sense; they exerted control and influence in Europe, they employed the native populations, they held a position of dominance, they believed that they had a missionary role with the Marshall Plan, and they most assuredly had attractive soft power relations. However, the United States did not exercise military conquest, or hard power, nor did they expand their physical borders into Europe. As established, Cultural Empire means having persuasion as the most important element for control, which led me to conclude that the United States can indeed be considered as a Cultural Empire during the Marshall Plan years instead. American culture was appealing, the Europeans accepted American leadership as they had liberated them from Nazi oppression. The Americans implemented the unprecedented large-scale aid to help European nations rebuild and recover from the desolation of World War II. Its lasting success being that the propaganda, or truthful ‘information’ campaigns, that accompanied the Marshall Plan left palpable impressions in Europe which played a role in reshaping the European social order and modernization techniques.

The Marshall Plan is part of European history, taught about in history classes at schools, frequently discussed in academia, and featured in museums and exhibits, ensuring remembrance. Cultural Memory formed around the new policies and ensured that we would remember it up until today. Cultural Empire cannot be successful if its cultural influence is not accepted by the intended audience. Even though not all Europeans were equally accepting, the general consensus is that American culture was accepted and appropriated in Europe. Thus, the psychological effects that came with the propaganda are the most important argument for the status as Cultural Empire.

5.2 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The main research question along which I conducted the research for this thesis to ensure its coherence was: How does the Marshall Plan propaganda advertising contribute to the potential of the United States as a Cultural Empire during the years in which the Plan was active in Europe?

To be able to answer it, I presented the historic, political and cultural developments of the United States in the context of the Cold War and analyzed three Marshall Plan posters and the

emblem to determine in what American cultural influence was tangible in Europe. The reason for choosing these specific propaganda items is that they best convey the influence that American culture had in Europe. The posters have elements of the myth of American exceptionalism and Americanization, showcasing that Europeans took over certain elements attributed to the United States and proving just how much American culture penetrated the daily lives of many West-Europeans. The emblem is the most overlooked propaganda because it was on all items that came to Europe and ensured that individual Europeans were made aware of who was helping them rebuild and restoring confidence. American culture entered Europe with the presence of the heroic soldiers who had freed Europe from Nazi oppression. They brought new values with them, and having suffered years of oppression, the majority of Europeans were keen to learn from the superpower.

The Marshall Plan propaganda contributed to Cultural Empire because it amplified the presence of the United States in Europe and showcased how Europeans appropriated it, ensuring the formation of cultural memory without which the Marshall Plan would not have had such far-reaching psychological effects. The Plan's slogan that 'You Too Can Be Like Us!' shines through in the posted competition depicting American cultural elements.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although I argue that Cultural Empire ended when the Marshall Plan did, I have also mentioned that the presence of American culture remains tangible to this day. Arguably, the presence of the United States diminished slightly after the Plan ended but I believe this would make a good topic for further research. After the Plan ended, European countries were more confident which meant they needed the United States less. It would be interesting to find out how exactly each country specifically responded to seeing the Marshall Plan emblem on a daily basis as well as discussed the poster competition and entries specifically.

In addition, I mention that American exceptionalism plays an important role in the success of Cultural Empire. Interesting parallels could be drawn to the contemporary political relationship between Europe and the United States as well as the political rhetoric under President Trump. I believe that a good case can be made for the return of the myth of American exceptionalism in how the Trump administration places emphasis on the need to put America First: Returning to the need to take on the leadership role bearing similarities to how near the United States was to Europe during the Marshall Plan years.

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