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Media Infrastructure as Smart Power in the Case of the Educational Film, Radio, and Television Center of Turkey, 1949–1973

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Abstract

This article identifies and examines how United States Information Services (USIS) agents developed, managed, funded, and sustained a media infrastructure to facilitate communication between the people and governments of the United States and Turkey. The central focus of this analysis is the Educational Film, Radio, and Television Center of Turkey (EFRTC; *Film-Radyo ve Televizyonla Eğitim Merkezi*), which in 1956 published a catalog featuring hundreds of films about the American way of life and only a handful of films about Turkish people. By analyzing declassified documents and previously unexamined primary materials gathered from archives in the United States and Turkey, this study builds upon existing scholarship on nonfiction and nontheatrical films, USIS, propaganda, and smart power to identify how and why a Turkish institution distributed films about the US government, economy, and people under the label of education. This article demonstrates that EFRTC was a unique smart power campaign developed by USIS funding and infrastructure to spread American-modeled democracy, education and economy and mobilize US foreign policy in Turkey.

Introduction

The educational and career trajectory of Suha Arın, a pioneer of documentary film in Turkey, connects the development of a communication infrastructure between Turkish and American institutions during the Cold War era. Arın began his media career at Ankara Radio and continued working at the Educational Film, Radio, and Television Center (EFRTC, *Film-Radyo ve Televizyonla Eğitim Merkezi*) in Turkey.[1] In the early 1960s, his successful script writing and directing of educational media programming gained the attention of American agents of the United States Information Services (USIS). The agents invited Arın to work in the United States for Voice of America (VOA), the radio broadcasting service funded by the US government. After accepting this invitation, Arm dropped out of law school in Turkey, attended first Howard University and then American University to receive degrees in film directing and mass communications with a focus on government and public information, respectively. During his time in the United States, Arın worked in film, television, and radio production covering a wide range of subjects from advocating for Black rights to reporting on the 1969 moon landing.

Arm's story is one way of tracing the development of a communication infrastructure between Turkish and American institutions. He first worked at EFRTC and then USIS, and he contributed to the production of media programs and dissemination of news articles in both Turkey and the United States. His career trajectory suggests a deeper connection between EFRTC and USIS. In this article, I identify and analyze the relationship between the two agencies. Given the primary function of EFRTC as a Turkish educational media hub and USIS as an American propaganda/information dissemination agency, I examine how institutional agents develop, manage,

fund, and sustain media infrastructure. This analysis focuses on how film functions as a tool to spread propaganda, information, and education in the identified communication network.

During this analysis, I focus on three sets of archival materials. I rely on a USIS-sponsored booklet in Turkish featuring films about various aspects of the American way of life, such as government, economy, and education. I also analyze an EFRTC film catalog prepared in collaboration with USIS featuring mainly films about the American way of life, labeled as educational. This brings up questions: Why would the people of Turkey need to receive education about the people of the United States? What would be educational about the lives of Americans? A portion of my answers and analysis derives from a third set of archival materials collected from the US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), which document the process of how American government agents planned, managed, and financed the construction of an educational media infrastructure in Turkey.

USIS in Turkey

Turkey's geopolitical location contributed to USIS's interest in the country; it shared a border with the Soviet Union and was also in a strategic position that connected Europe to the Middle East. Consequently, starting with the establishment of the Truman Doctrine (1947) and the Marshall Plan (1948), the United States assigned Turkey the role of sustaining political stability in the Middle East.[2] The political, military, and economic alliances between the United States and Turkey were further strengthened by the establishment of the Incirlik Air Base, an American military base in Adana, in 1951. In 1952, after participating in the Korean War as a support to the American military, Turkey was accepted into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).[3] These events helped Turkey secure ties to America and become a participant in the Western effort for international peace, justice, and economic development.[4]

USIS was an instrument for enacting the United States' national strategy overseas.[5] The USIS network functioned in hundreds of cities across the world. Its activities included a radio network (VOA), printed media (magazines, books, news bulletins, etc.), libraries, English-teaching programs, exhibits on American life, exchange programs, agency-produced documentary films, newsreels, and television programs. This network extended to commercial media companies that supported the US government propaganda program overseas in exchange for market share in foreign countries.[6] Indeed, USIS designed the Information Media Guaranty program to promote media exports and generated "over $80 million" via the "overseas markets for US newspaper, magazine, and film companies in the 1950s and 1960s."[7]

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USIS worked in Turkey during the Cold War to collect, process, and spread information and propaganda that would keep the country away from communism. It imported media into Turkey through the Informational Media Guaranty Program and functioned as the public relations channel for the American mission. This program made it possible to import American books, textbooks, magazines, and films to Turkey. American books and other written texts were often translated into Turkish. USIS also imported commercial films to show the American way of life and entertain audiences in Turkey. Moreover, USIS controlled the distribution and exhibition of Hollywood films in Turkey by censoring films that portrayed American culture negatively.[8] Through these media, USIS aimed to increase public understanding of the United States in Turkey. Yet while USIS aimed to promote democratic principles, it also limited freedom of media in Turkey. Thus, this practice suggests that USIS did not confirm its own claim of a dedication to democracy and freedom.

The Cold War was psychological warfare, and it was necessary to reinforce Turkey's association with the "Free World" and bring the Turkish people closer to the American way of life.[9] The objective of USIS in Turkey was to advocate for Turkish confidence in the United States and keep Turkey as an ally in the war against communism. Media became a tool for USIS to communicate messages about American democracy and productivity in order to advocate for its anti-communist strategy. USIS used radio, music (e.g., jazz), film, television, books, libraries, and art exhibits in Turkey to win people's hearts and minds.

Literature Review

The study of educational and USIS films offers a new history to examine the dissemination of propaganda and information in United States–Turkey relations for at least three reasons. First, this new history provides insight into how power asymmetries between institutional agents shape political and economic dynamics and produce representations of nations and citizens. Second, the study of educational films provides a new historical perspective for exploring why and how the US government invested in media infrastructure in Turkey during the Cold War era. Third, investigating the history of nonfiction films in Turkey demonstrates how they generated prestige for American institutions (e.g., schools).

This study combines the scholarship developed in the subfields of film studies and international relations. Specifically, I rely on (1) a film studies approach to build upon the scholarship on nonfiction and nontheatrical film and discuss how educational films function as institutional tools in the understudied case of Turkey, (2) USIS scholarship to examine how American institutional agents used film to develop a media infrastructure in Turkey, (3) propaganda studies to analyze how education (or educational film) functions as a prerequisite for propaganda, and (4) the concept of

smart power to explain how USIS used both soft and hard power to reinforce its influence in a long-term structural condition.

Scholarship on Nonfiction and Nontheatrical Films

In recent years, film scholars have increasingly studied nonfiction and nontheatrical films to offer new cultural histories. They formed groups at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) and the Orphan Film Symposium to study nontheatrical films and documentary media.[10] Anthologies including *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media* (2009), *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies* (2011), *Useful Cinema* (2011), *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States* (2012), *Films That Sell: Moving Pictures and Advertising* (2016), and *The Institutionalization of Educational Cinema: North America and Europe in the 1910s and 1920s* (2020) argue for expanding the field of film studies and going beyond traditional, auteur-focused analysis of Hollywood and European art cinema. They also offer alternative approaches for conducting film historiography by excavating new social, cultural, and institutional histories. While they have expanded our understanding of film history in multiple ways, their case studies have prioritized American and European contexts. In this article, I aim to contribute to this subfield and expand its range by considering nonfiction, nontheatrical films in a geopolitically critical part of the Middle East.

In the introduction to *Useful Cinema* (2011), Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson refer to film as a modern way to understand how culture is used as an institutional tool. Acland and Wasson develop this understanding based on the studies of sociologist Tony Bennett. For Bennett, culture connects individual actors and acts on the organization of social relationships. Taking this into account, Acland and Wasson describe cinema as "a tool that is useful, a tool that makes, persuades, instructs, demonstrates, and does something."[11] Furthermore, Acland and Wasson propose the concept of useful cinema to refer to "a disposition, an outlook, and an approach toward a medium on the part of institutions and institutional agents." [12] For these scholars, useful cinema is not for claiming a genre but for offering an approach to investigate fiction versus nonfiction films and narrative versus nonnarrative films as institutional tools to explore their value. In this study, I follow a similar line of thinking by focusing on how film was used as an institutional tool to shape transnational power relations in the context of Turkey.

Educational films were often nonfiction, nontheatrical works that emerged in the early twentieth century to disseminate ideas, practices, and cultures. Educational films encompassed many subjects, such as health, the military, and agriculture. The case studies in *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States* (2012) also speak to the multiple uses of educational films. For instance, educational films in America were used for spreading knowledge to avoid diseases, anti-Americanism, and violent or unethical behaviors inside the country. Those same films were also used during the Cold War as international goodwill propaganda to spread positive stories of America all over the world.[13] This formed the basis for the United States Information Agency (USIA, 1953–1999), also known as the United States Information Service (USIS), whose Motion Picture Service division produced and distributed many nonfiction films to educate nations around the world during the Cold War.[14] Yet *Learning with the Lights Off* does not feature any studies related to USIS's use of educational films.

USIS Scholarship

The last two decades have witnessed an increase in USIS scholarship. Several historians,

public diplomacy scholars, and political scientists examined the work of USIS in the context of propaganda and the Cold War. For example, historian Laura Belmonte illustrates how USIS worked to sell the American way of life during the Cold War era. Belmonte briefly gives examples about films and explores how international audiences received US propaganda.[15] Her main goals are to offer a general idea of selling US foreign policy and analyze how the US government used propaganda to explain American national identity at home and abroad. There are other studies that mention USIS's uses of films in the Middle East in the context of soft power, propaganda, and diplomacy.[16] The most comprehensive studies that bring together USIS and film are by public diplomacy scholar and historian Nicholas Cull. While Cull offers an extensive history of USIA across the globe in his book, he examines the work of the agency as a creator and distributor of documentary films in his articles.[17] Yet Cull's focus is not on USIS's film-related work in the Middle East.

In the context of the Middle East, film and cultural studies scholar Hamid Naficy explores the relationship between USIS and educational films. He explains how infrastructures of cinema and television industries in the United Kingdom, United States, and the USSR during and after the Second World War aimed to control Iranian audiences.[18] For instance, Naficy emphasizes that "through its arm in Iran, [. . .] the USIA trained personnel and produced and distributed films, which invigorated the industrial formations necessary to transform documentary cinema from its artisanal beginnings into hybrid, industrial maturity."[19] Furthermore, he describes how USIS educational, public health, and agricultural documentaries led to the formation of Syracuse University's Audiovisual Center in Iran to develop visual education and modernity in collaboration with the Iranian Ministry of Education.[20] While Naficy contributes to our knowledge of Iranian cinema, the case of Turkey is different and still needs to be studied.

Scholarship about the USIS films of the Cold War era has increased in the last two decades. Recently scholars examined auteurs of USIS documentary film propaganda such as Bruce Herschensohn, James Blue, and Tibor Hirsch, USIS films as public diplomacy, Korean filmmakers' work in USIS films, the Chinese educational film movement in relation to USIS materials, the USIS film mission in Iran, and aesthetics of USIA propaganda films.[21] In the case of Turkey, there are studies about USIS's control over Hollywood films, English teaching activities, general function, magazine productions, and propaganda programs.[22]

Building upon this knowledge of USIS, I focus on how institutional agents used nonfiction films to build an educational media infrastructure between the United States and Turkey. This focus allows me to demonstrate how the case of Turkey is similar to and different from other national cases. Similar to other national cases, USIS used films to win the hearts and minds of people in Turkey. What differentiates the Turkish case from the rest is that USIS contributed to a unique project (the Educational Film Center) and established a media infrastructure in Turkey. In this article, I connect the film studies approach with the scholarship on international relations to examine USIS films in Turkey. Focusing on USIS's operations in a specific national context provides a nuanced picture of how the United States consolidated its Cold War influence through media and how Turkish modernizers operated within this framework.

Propaganda Studies

Propaganda and education have been linked dating back to the seventeenth-century Roman Catholic Church. The Church developed "a College of Propaganda to educate its priests in the techniques of missionary work."[23] In other words, priests had to learn propaganda techniques to put missionary work into action. Moving on to the twentieth century, propaganda became associated with pejorative terms such as "lies, deceit, and brainwashing."[24] Whether or not this was a concern for

some scholars, they differentiated between propaganda and education. For example, for American political scientist Harold Lasswell, while propaganda spreads controversial attitudes, education spreads "accepted attitudes and skills."[25] Furthermore, for Lasswell, "propaganda is concerned with attitudes of love and hate, whereas education is concerned with the transmission of skills and is therefore not propaganda."[26] Similarly, American educator Everett Dean Martin noted, "propaganda is not education, it strives for the closed mind rather than the open mind."[27]

In contrast, according to French sociologist Jacques Ellul, education is pre-propaganda, and "we can hardly expect great results from a simple dissemination of words unless we prepare for it by education (pre-propaganda) and sustain it by organization and action."[28] Furthermore, Ellul noted that propaganda "must be associated with all economic, administrative, political and educational development."[29] Indeed, Ellul considered education as "one of the elements of propaganda aimed at obtaining adherence to a society, its principles, its ideology, and its myths."[30] Therefore, for Ellul, development of education [w]as a fundamental condition for the organization of propaganda."[31] My analysis relies on this definition of propaganda.

Soft Power, Hard Power, and Smart Power

Political scientists have tried to explain global politics through international power dynamics, categorizing strategies into soft power, hard power, and smart power. Joseph Nye described power as "one's ability to affect the behavior of others to get what one wants."[32] Nye adds that "coercion, payment, and attraction" are the three simple methods to exercise power.[33] Then he distinguishes between hard power as "the use of coercion and payment" and soft power "as the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through attraction." [34] To some extent, hard power is about the physicality of materials like weapons, money (e.g., economic power), and buildings or facilities (e.g., military institutions and their interventions). On the other hand, soft power is conceptual, like "culture," "political values," and "foreign policies."[35] Later, Nye defined smart power as a combination of soft power and hard power.[36]

Political scientist Ernest J. Wilson III builds upon this scholarship and adds that smart power is "the capacity of an actor to combine elements of hard power and soft power in ways that are mutually reinforcing such that the actor's purposes are advanced effectively and efficiently."[37] For Wilson, smart power is also "the wisdom to know how to *combine* the elements of coercive power with the power to persuade and to inspire emulation." [38] He notes that hard and soft power create "separate and distinct institutions and institutional cultures that exert their own normative influences over their members, each with its own attitudes, incentives, and anticipated career paths."[39] Thus, in order to attain smart power, it is necessary to bring together "conceptual, institutional, and political elements to support foreign policy."[40] As this article attempts to show, the unique circumstances of EFRTC—developed by USIS funding and infrastructure to spread USIS films about America—demonstrate its important role in a USIS smart power campaign to influence the Turkish people and institutions.

How did USIS plan the establishment of an educational media infrastructure in Turkey?

In a 1949 report, Monteagle Stearns, the American film officer in Turkey, indicated that USIS agents were "more than propagandists" and USIS films were "more than propaganda vehicles."[41] Following this statement, Stearns and his team developed a new strategy to abandon the "mechanical" and "impersonal" operations of foreign information services.[42] They strategized making "USIS films integral parts of the Turkish curriculum" to "inject" American influence "by working on a

close personal basis with educators and officers of the Turkish Ministries."[43] This suggests that USIS used film for both propaganda and education in Turkey.

I adopt Ellul's understanding of education "as a fundamental condition for the organization of propaganda" and argue that USIS agents developed cooperation among Turkish ministries and American agencies to use education as a groundwork for propagandistic purposes. The cooperation involved the ministries of Education, Health, Public Works, Agriculture, Defense, and Communications, and the Prime Ministry (Turkish Press Bureau, or TPB).[44] USIS agents considered this cooperation as a milestone in the process of building a relationship between Americans and Turks to develop propaganda and information programming.[45] According to Thomas E. Flanagan, a public affairs officer, USIS's construction of the interministerial committee exemplified democracy in action in Turkey.[46] Flanagan also viewed the coordination as an initial step toward the development of organized channels for the dissemination of media of all kinds in Turkey under one central authority, the "National Teaching Films Center" or the Educational Film Center.[47]

The cooperation between USIS and Turkish ministries shaped the USIS Films Section's approach to programming in Turkey. William E. Kugeman, the deputy public affairs officer at the embassy in Ankara, described the nature of the USIS Films Section's approach in Turkey as "avant-garde" in the sense that the program was experimental.[48] According to this experimental program planned in 1952, "American and Turkish Information Officers theoretically participate[d] in the formulation of a media program designed to support the information objectives."[49] This theoretical participation required American officers to build the groundwork of "indigenous facilities for selection, adaptation, production, correlation, distribution, and utilization of informational media programs."[50] Second, it assumed that Turkish officers would later "do more and more" to design, adapt, and produce media "to ensure the effective perpetuation of information activities."[51] The program planned to bring Americans and Turks together to develop an interministerial Turkish media production, distribution, and training center."[52] They had meetings to develop a joint plan for growing their mutual and individual information activities in Turkey.

The USIS agents were in charge of developing projects related to film operations in Turkey. One was the experimental program that projected a communication infrastructure among various Turkish ministries and connected them directly to USIS to have a central system that was easy to control. This latter project was the Educational Film Center, designed by USIS and developed by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey with the

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support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).[53] The committee members from Turkish ministries and USIS discussed distribution channels and locations for equipment, personnel, and film libraries. This led the Ministry of Education and the USIS Films Section to activate the thirteen regional Films Centers in 1952.[54] USIS designated nine mobile units to circulate and exhibit films in rural areas. It also cooperated in assigning five centers to help in the activation of these facilities. For Information Officer Hugh A. Crumpler, this program in Turkey was "unique among USIS films programs throughout the world."[55]

A substantial budget was necessary to support USIS's establishment of the film production facilities in Turkey. In 1953 USIS requested approximately $125,000 from the US State Department to extend the film program to feature Turkish-language prints and magnetic recorder-projectors.[56] Crumpler recommended that $90,000 of that budget be saved for purchasing raw stock and recording, printing, and other necessary equipment.[57] Moreover, USIS agents wanted the equipment to be either developed by the US State Department or identified in a list by the director of the National Teaching Films Center (or the Educational Film Center of Turkey) in collaboration with the film officer and consultants delegated by the department.[58] This means that USIS agents wanted to use 72 percent of the requested budget to purchase American products to furnish the film production center in Turkey.

USIS agents aimed to use the funds to achieve the agency's goal of generating content about Turks and winning their hearts and minds. For instance, Crumpler noted, "the Turks are most interested in Turks."[59] He exemplified that *Turkish Troops in Korea* was one of the best-received films in the USIS library in Turkey. This film not only depicted the United States–Turkey alliance during the Korean War but portrayed the heroism of the Turkish soldiers, which satisfied the pride of the nationalists. Crumpler emphasized that "USIS objectives [could] best be achieved by the production of films in Turkey about Turks which deal[t] with USIS themes."[60]

In the long run, building the production infrastructure was cheaper than having Americans produce films in and about Turkey. USIS agents estimated that the cost of USIS films would be much less for the government of Turkey as Turkish employees (rather than Americans) would provide the labor and services. Indeed, the agents estimated that USIS films produced by Turkish commercial firms would cost approximately $3,000 per reel, while the cost would be between $10,000 to $15,000 per reel for the State Department.[61] Furthermore, during the establishment of the production facilities in Turkey, USIS agents anticipated that Turks would contribute to the cost of films and slowly take over the financial responsibility in following years.[62] Accordingly, USIS agents wanted Turkish ministry personnel in Istanbul to learn and handle installation, operation, and maintenance of equipment within six months after the completion of the facilities. They also expected "the standards of quality" for film production in Turkey to be different than those established by the American motion picture industry because of different social and cultural settings.[63] It is not exactly clear whether "quality" refers to low-brow films and generates cultural hierarchy or means making culturally appropriate films and acknowledging the different social settings.

USIS agents planned to financially and technically support the development of the production facilities in Turkey. They also anticipated that while local funds or special allocations from the State Department could finance the Turkish personnel, Turkish sound and laboratory engineers could work on a contractual basis for the US government.[64] Thus, American agents had a managerial and financial power over the development of a media infrastructure in Turkey. Furthermore, USIS agents relied on an American writer-director-editor for approximately a year and a camera operator for roughly six months. This was to ensure the technical training of the Turkish personnel in various production stages.[65] To facilitate this transition, an unnamed film officer had to coordinate the

installation of production equipment and the training of writers, camera operators, directors, and editors, as well as the process of determining film subjects. These films had to promote subjects of mutual interest to USIS and the Turkish ministry program.

On the Turkish side, the Inter-ministerial Coordinating Committee on Visual Aids, which drew its powers from a directive issued by the prime minister, had control over the film production facilities.[66] This committee distributed the authority between the Ministry of National Education of Turkey (MNET) and the TPB. While MNET was the production agency for 16mm films for all governmental groups, TPB functioned as the 35mm production agency. The Turkish authorities assured the US government that the ministries of Turkey would assign qualified personnel and contribute to the cost of film operations through the use of the national budget.

Some USIS agents were concerned about "the risks and pitfalls" of this program.[67] For instance, Kugeman described the situation in the following words: "A cardinal consideration in cooperation with the Turks is that they cannot be given bigger chances to bite off than they have the teeth to chew thoroughly and to easily digest."[68] This orientalist description continued with Kugeman's emphasis on management of the risks and the need to have patience and prudence in every step of the way during the cooperation with Turkish ministries.

American agents assumed that Turks would have an issue with the use of American propaganda in a central communication network that connected Turkish ministries—in particular, the Education Ministry. Indeed, in a 1953 letter, Crumpler noted "the day is approaching when there will be a reaction among the hundreds of Turks working the films program to working on a program that is so dominated by American films."[69] In other words, American agents were concerned about Turkish officials' reactions to a film program dominated by themes such as American education, agriculture, history, geography, economy, society, and military. In fact, the earliest accessible film catalog of the Educational Film Center in Turkey featured hundreds of American films. This is the core problem that I aim to address in this article: the link between managing American propaganda in a central communication network connected to MNET and developing educational media infrastructure in Turkey.

As opposed to the concerns of American agents, a reporter for the magazine *Film ve Öğretim* [Film and Education] who was invited to oversee the USIS operation of mobile cinema services in Turkey considered cinema a "magical remedy" that was useful for fighting against illnesses, correcting agricultural problems, and bringing progress to Turkish villagers.[70] While the reporter indicated the positive influence of USIS's cinema on the villagers, he also recognized the educational activities of USIS as propaganda.[71] Similar to the reporter's understanding, the USIS agents also considered the approach of combining education with propaganda as "the most practical method of achieving USIS objectives for Turkey."[72]

In a program report about Turkey, USIS objectives were broadly described based on President Eisenhower's talking points. For instance, American agents quoted Eisenhower: "Through communication techniques persuade people of other nations that the objectives and policies of the United States are in harmony with and will advance their legitimate aspirations for freedom, progress and peace."[73] The idea was to facilitate an understanding of the government of the United States, its policies, and the American people "to maintain Turkey a strong active member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], the Baghdad Pact, the Balkan Alliance and the United Nations."[74] Thus, the goal of USIS was to institutionalize the use of media to persuade Turkish people of the benefits of the American way of being.

According to a USIS–Turkey country plan, it was crucial to promote "an appreciation of United States" among Turkish people to maintain mutual security and develop economic and military

strength.[75] The plan also aimed to stimulate an understanding of the dangers of the Soviets as opposed to the benefits of the American development programs promoting the general welfare of Turkey. Thus, USIS agents promoted the belief that Free World unity was necessary to fight against the communist threat and keep world peace. The goal was “to create confidence in the role played by the United States in world affairs through an appreciation of America’s political, economic, social and cultural maturity.”[76] To achieve these plans, communication became the key to tell the story of American people and US aid to Turkish people.

In 1956 USIS also identified and tried to address unfavorable public attitudes to reach mutual security objectives. Criticism among the Turkish public included statements such as “The United States has encouraged us to develop our economic and military strength. We are now in desperate financial straits and the U.S. turns a deaf ear to our appeals.”[77] These types of statements led the USIS agents to foster “an understanding and appreciation of [American] cultural, social and economic qualities [to] provide the sound basis for our leadership in world affairs.”[78] Indeed, USIS aimed to continue publicizing the role of US aid in Turkey and create a confidence development program.[79]

How and why did the EFRTC circulate films about the United States in Turkey?

The EFRTC circulated nontheatrical films about Americans for two main reasons. First, in 1952, when the institution was established, Turkey did not have an infrastructure to produce its own educational media, so it needed to import foreign resources. Second, USIS contributed much of the equipment, such as film projectors and mobile film units, to exhibit and distribute films. USIS also offered films about American culture and society, which were treated as “educational.” EFRTC’s collection had many American films compared to the number of films from other nations.

EFRTC’s main location was built in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, where most of the films were preserved. By 1954 EFRTC had established thirteen regional centers and fifty branches located all over Turkey. The following map shows where EFRTC operated by indicating the regional centers with a triangle symbol and numbering them from 1 to 13 [Figure 1]. The regional centers included the cities of Ankara, Bursa, Diyarbakir, and Istanbul.[80] Each of these regional centers redistributed educational media to the local branches in neighboring cities. The branches are indicated with a circle symbol on the map and included Antalya and Kayseri.[81] The truck symbol on the map indicates the mobile film units used for providing portable educational film services to remote villages and spaces without electricity. According to the map, there were only four mobile film units located in central Turkey, in the cities of Ankara, Konya, Sivas, and Seymen. This shows that by 1954, EFRTC was active across Turkey through its thirteen regional centers, fifty branches, and four USIS mobile film units. The EFRTC network thus made it possible for films about American culture to travel all around Turkey.

Figure 1: The Map of the Educational Film, Radio and Television Center of Turkey (EFRTC).[82]
[Şinasi Barutçu, En Modern Ders Vasıtası Film (Ankara: Öğretici Filmler Merkezi, Doğuş Matbaası, 1954)]

Also in 1954, MNET and USIS collaborated to sponsor a booklet to convince educators of the benefits of educational films. The booklet was written by a teacher, painter, and photographer named Sinasi Barutçu, who also worked as the film unit director of EFRTC in Ankara. Barutçu's booklet promoted educational films as an effective form of learning. To convince educators to use films in classrooms, Barutçu constructed an argument similar to those discussed in *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Films in the United States*.[83] Barutçu noted that education was much more effective when it appealed to multiple senses and added that a good teacher could transform material through verbal communication, pictures, and models. This process could be greatly enhanced by educational films. To support his view, he referred to a psychology study that indicated that 85 percent of the subjects remembered what they saw, 10 percent recalled what they heard, and only 3 percent retained memory based on moving image.[84] Thus, to maximize the retention of information, Barutçu recommended using educational film technologies, which he also noted was a trend in developed Western nations.

For Barutçu, the illustrative power of film was far superior to drawing examples on a blackboard or conducting experiments in the classrooms. Teachers used blackboards as a teaching vehicle; however, not all teachers could draw images well. According to Barutçu, students who saw perfect pictures in their books, magazines, and newspapers were often not satisfied with their teachers' drawing skills. Using chalk to draw maps or images on the blackboard created chalk dust. Furthermore, the time the teacher spent drawing examples on the board was a waste of class time. While teachers drew materials at the board, less attentive students used the time to look out the window or whisper to their friends, making them lose interest in the lesson. On the other hand, educational films were easy tools that could be used multiple times. The use of films also avoided student distractions by providing semidark spaces that helped audiences watch the films with attention. According to Barutçu, in a dark or semidark room, even the least attentive student would have no choice but to pay attention to the subject projected on the wall. In places without electricity and cinemas, projecting a film on a dark wall was in itself an event and a source for generating interest. Since projectors were so well designed, students could take notes during a film showing, and question-and-answer sessions could simultaneously occur. Film took the role of expanding the world of knowledge for children. Barutçu declared that there was no more powerful or necessary tool

that could serve as a substitute for film.

American Films in Educational Film Catalogs in Turkey

In Turkey USIS used films to spread practices and cultures about American educational institutions. The 1956 educational film catalog sponsored by USIS and MNET had films about a variety of American schools offering different levels of education in agriculture, commerce, and the arts. These films included *Okul* [School], *Öğrenme, Hürriyet* [Education, Freedom], *Bryn Mavr Koleji* [Bryn Mawr College], *Girard Koleji* [Girard College], *Teknik Ticaret Okulu* [Technical Commerce School], *Ziraat Koleji* [Agriculture College], and *Halk Okulu* [Public School].[85] The catalog descriptions demonstrate that these films were about American schools in places such as Ohio, New York, and Los Angeles. For instance, *Okul* was about an elementary school in Ohio, and *Girard Koleji* showed a technical school in Pennsylvania for white male orphans. *Teknik Ticaret Okulu* was about a mechanical and commercial school for both women and men in Los Angeles. *Halk Okulu* was about a public night school in New York for learning the arts. In contrast to other films, both *Öğrenme, Hürriyet* and *Ziraat Koleji* emphasized the contribution and services of their students to the US economy. These films not only informed Turkish audiences about schools in the United States but generated interest in Turkey about the American educational system.

USIS was a propaganda agency that used education to show the benefits of American schools. The catalog produced by USIS from 1960 to 1965 in Turkey included films about American schools to promote educational practices and cultures in the United States. These film catalogs had a section about education that also covered practices at American universities, including *Howard Üniversitesi* [Howard University], *Antioch Koleji* [Antioch College], *Bennington Koleji* [Bennington College], *Dartmouth Koleji* [Dartmouth College], *Ozarklar Okulu* [College of the Ozarks], *St. John Koleji* [St. John College], *Yale Üniversitesi Hazirlik Devresi* [Yale University Preparatory Period], and *New York Üniversitesi* [New York University]. The original goal of these films was to promote each school and recruit students—these films functioned as advertisements for the schools in the United States. However, their purpose in Turkey was to transmit the idea that activities and practices developed at American schools enriched a student's life and experiences. For instance, the film *Antioch Koleji* particularly emphasized that the education offered at this school went far beyond learning information from textbooks. This idea was also supported by other films in the collection such as *Görme ve Isitme Yoluyla Egitim* [Audiovisual Method for Education] and *Göze Hitap Eden Egitim Vasitalari* [Visually Appealing Educational Tools]. These films promoted the benefits of audiovisual culture to highlight the transferability of American educational practices through film technologies. In this way, USIS used educational practices and cultures as a part of its propaganda program in Turkey.

USIS also provided films for EFRTC in Turkey that focused on the politics and military of the United States. The 1956 catalog included films such as *Amerika'da Cumhurbaşkanı Seçimi* [Presidential Elections in the United States], *Barış Yolu* [Atoms for Peace],[86] *Tarihi Bir Ziyaret* [A Historical Visit], and *Amerikan Askeri Akademisi* [American Military Academy]. *Amerika'da Cumhurbaşkanı Seçimi* aimed to transmit the culture of democracy from the United States to Turkey. *Tarihi Bir Ziyaret* showed the trip that the third president of Turkey, Celal Bayar, made to the United States in 1954. *Barış Yolu* communicated President Dwight D. Eisenhower's speech about peaceful uses of atomic energy. This speech emphasized the United States' "peaceful intentions and Soviet intransigence."[87] The film of the speech was also US media propaganda designed to address fears overseas about nuclear resources and the use of nuclear power for medical research, agriculture, and electricity production.[88] After the exhibition of Barış Yolu, USIS officials asked questions of the

local Turkish population to determine what they thought of the film and invited audiences to go to USIS stations to learn about their home countries' nuclear programs.

Other topics covered in films that USIS provided for EFRTC included water, electricity, and engineering in the United States. For instance, the 1956 EFRTC catalog included films such as *Elektrik ve Toprak* [Electricity and Soil], *Grand Gülee Baraji* [Glen Canyon Dam], *Tenessi Vadisi* [Tennessee Valley], and *Hudson Nehrinde Bir Gezinti* [A Trip to Hudson River]. *Elektrik ve Toprak* was about the arrival of electricity in an American village and the benefits this provided for the public. Both *Grand Gülee Baraji* and *Tenessi Vadisi* were about development of different regions in the United States after the construction of dams. The goal behind showing these types of films in Turkey was to offer the American dream to audiences. By showing American examples, the films suggested that the United States–Turkey alliance would bring American engineers to Turkey to construct dams, build infrastructure for electricity, and develop Turkish villages. These films ultimately aimed to strengthen the alliance by creating a positive image of the United States through its industries, government, and education. An underlying factor behind this pro-Americanism was spreading capitalist ideology and preventing communism in Turkey.

USIS also gave Marshall Plan (MP) films to EFRTC for exhibitions. MP was an economic aid program that granted Turkey $225 million to develop its agricultural economy.[89] To communicate the MP policy to the general public, and particularly villagers, strategists sponsored films about Turkey. Some of these films were *Marshall Plan at Work in Turkey* (1950, James Hill), *Control of Water* (*Suyun Kontrolü*, 1951), *Care of Tractors* (*Traktör Bakımı*, 1951), *Village Tractor* (*Köy Traktörü*, Clifford Hornby, 1951 and 1953), *Yusef and His Plough* (*Yusuf ve Sabanı*, Clifford Hornby, 1951), and *Turkish Harvest* (Clifford Hornby, 1952). For instance, *Control of Water* was about constructing dams to store water, *Yusef and His Plough* promoted the use of iron plows to increase cultivation, and *Village Tractor* encouraged the use of tractors for agricultural productivity.[90] These films provided audiovisual instruction for modernization in Turkey to increase agricultural productivity following the MP policies.[91] These films were circulated by the agents of both USIS and EFRTC to promote the United States–Turkey alliance and encourage Turks to appreciate their "friendship" with America. Even if the Soviets were geographically closer to Turkey, Americans aimed to win the minds and hearts of Turks through their media, culture, and practices.

Career Trajectory of the Arın Brothers

After working part-time at Ankara Radio and preparing a program called *Ansiklopedi'den Sayfalar* [Pages from Encyclopedia], Suha Arın was invited to work at EFRTC and then Voice of America (VOA), an agency of USIS. At the radio station, Suha alternated weekly hosting duties with his older brother, Süreyya Arın, during an hour dedicated to children's programming. The Arın brothers were in charge of writing the script for the program, their first encounter with mass media. Their successful programming caught the attention of members of the Educational Film Center, who invited the brothers to write scripts for their programs targeting primary and secondary schools. This was an exciting opportunity, and they accepted the offer.

In preparation for working at EFRTC, the brothers read reference materials and watched examples—most likely prepared by USIS—before writing the scripts. Suha worked at EFRTC between 1962 and 1964; his first script was about traffic safety. EFRTC members were pleased with the script and asked him if he would direct it. Although he had no previous experience as a film director, EFRTC staff told him that directing was easy and he would receive assistance from Ayhan Iyikan, a camera operator who had recently returned from a six-month film course in Canada. Consequently, Suha directed his first educational film in 1964.

In the opening scenes of *Yayalar için Trafik Emniyeti* ([Traffic Safety for Pedestrians], 1964), the voiceover defines traffic as the movement of pedestrians and vehicles on the streets and then highlights the importance of following rules to avoid personal injuries and material damage.[92] The voiceover explains that cars are a useful part of modern life but they can be dangerous if traffic rules are not followed. In 1962, according to the voiceover, more than two thousand people died and over twelve thousand were injured as a result of traffic accidents. This information is accompanied by a soundtrack that conveys fear and danger, while the still images show traffic accidents, hospitalized people, and destroyed cars and buses. After warning the audience about the dangerous consequences of disobeying traffic rules, the voiceover notes that traffic accidents also destroy national wealth. Then the film combines moving images and voiceover to offer an overview of what to do and what not to do around traffic. Finally, the film ends with the voiceover stating, “If we love ourselves and our nation, let’s follow traffic rules!” Suha Arın’s first film aimed to manage public behavior around traffic in an era of modernization and teach pedestrians how to prevent car accidents. This film also demonstrates EFRTC’s efforts in offering instruction about public health and national economy.

While Suha Arın was in charge of writing and directing this film about traffic safety, Süreyya Arın directed *Süt I* ([Milk 1], 1964), for which he also wrote the script. Ayhan Iyikan was again the camera operator.[93] In the film the voiceover explains the importance of milk for nutrition, the process of milking cows, pasteurizing milk at the Ankara Atatürk Forest Farm Pasteurized Milk Factory, the distribution of milk, and other uses of milk such as making yogurt, butter, and cheese. The film describes the chemical properties of milk using graphics with textual information. Besides its benefits, milk can also cause diseases such as tuberculosis and typhoid, and the voiceover warns the audience to drink pasteurized milk to avoid such problems.

After writing and directing *Süt I* for EFRTC, Süreyya Arın received an invitation from USIA to work in Washington, DC, for VOA, the radio broadcasting service funded by the US government. He accepted the invitation, and while he was in the United States, he had a phone conversation with Suha, who was at the time a law student in Turkey. During the phone conversation, Süreyya told Suha, “Television will soon be introduced in Turkey; come and study television here [in the United States].”[94] The conversation was followed by an invitation for Suha to work for VOA. With his older brother’s advice and a job invitation from an agency of the US government, Suha Arın left law school in Turkey and attended Howard University, a historically black university in Washington, DC, earning a degree in film directing in 1965.

Suha continued with a master’s degree in mass communications focusing on government and public information at American University. During his studies, he also worked as a projectionist and sound recorder at the Capital Film Laboratory in Washington, DC. In 1968 he directed *Pride* (*Gurur*), a television film which aimed to promote a black organization called Pride.[95] From 1967 to 1973, Suha was a translator speaker and interviewer at VOA. Shortly after television broadcasting started in Turkey, Suha became the Washington, DC, reporter for Turkish Radio and Television (TRT). He served as a communication bridge between USIA and TRT.

Besides preparing radio programs, from 1969 to 1973, Suha Arın sent USIA news films for Turkish audiences. He described a remarkable memory about the 1969 moon landing in an interview. He was in charge of reporting the story as the TRT Washington correspondent, along with Safa Doğruyol. They both received a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) booklet to learn about the radio communications between NASA officials and astronauts. The booklet included explanations of the thousands of abbreviations and acronyms. During the interview, Arın noted:

> *Almost all planned movements, events, everything was shortened. There was a new terminology of initials of every event. To give an example, when astronauts say, "We are ready for EVA," we knew that the EVA is extravehicular activity, which means that they are going to walk outside the vehicle. Instead of wasting time and consuming oxygen, they used these three letters, EVA, to save both time and oxygen. Foreign journalists had to know these abbreviations to report the journey to the moon. We had less than two months to memorize these terms. All Turkey listened to me to learn about the man's first time on the moon. I counted backwards as Suha Arın. Nine . . . eight . . . seven . . . six . . . five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . one . . . zero. "We're on the moon, listeners!" I shouted. Because I was also listening to headphones. They were counting the same things in the space center, counting down. Neil Armstrong said the same thing. They said his heartbeat was over 100, 125 to 130. And in the same way, my heart was beating 125 to 130. I reflected the excitement of my listeners in Turkey. Later, I read in the newspapers some people had a heart attack. A few people died. Of course I'm very sorry about that.*[96]

Before Armstrong's landing on the Moon, USIS had been using the theme of outer space to project a technologically advanced image of the United States in Turkey.

As the space race was heating up, some Turkish newspapers suggested the early USSR advances reflected a decline in American power. For instance, in a 1962 article in *Tercuman*, Reşit Aşçıoğlu suggested that Russian spaceman Gherman Stepanovich Titov was more advanced than the American astronauts like Col. John Glenn.[97] Indeed, the USIS Turkey film catalog from 1965 included several films to show Americans' advancement in space technology as a response to the Soviets' achievements in space. Some space films that circulated in Turkey were *Mercury Projesi* [Project Mercury], *Saturn—feza Aracı* [Saturn—Space Tool], *Syncom* [Syncom], *Telstar Projesi [*Telstar Project], and *Uzayda ve Ay'a Doğru* [From Space to the Moon]. Other films focused on Glenn, such as *John Glenn Arz Etrafında* [John Glenn is around the orbit], *John Glenn Yörünge Uçusuna Hazır* [John Glenn is ready for flight], and *John Glenn'in Hayatı* [(*The John Glenn Story*), 1963]. *The John Glenn Story* was sponsored by NASA; the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; the Department of Justice; and the Department of the Navy. The goal of space films was to maintain American prestige abroad.[98]

USIS developed media activities about space technology in Turkey to promote public confidence in American achievements. For instance, USIS agents in Ankara sent monthly reports about the Turkish public's perception of space, including the coverage of the Apollo 15 mission, to USIA Washington.[99] In this report, USIS agents noted that the moon rock was exhibited in four cities. USIS also reported that "American space achievements have an appeal in Turkey which cuts across national and audience category lines, transcends political differences, and defies leftist attempts at derogation. The significant aspect of the phenomenon, however is that the Turkish audience shows no signs of having become bored with, or tired of, space exploration developments." [100] Furthermore, the report indicated that USIS agents translated passages from the special Apollo 15 package and sent press releases to various newspapers to reach Turks with different political tendencies, such as populists, leftists, liberal reformists, and conservatives. The newspapers reached the following audiences: *Hürriyet* reached 643,945 populists, *Cumhuriyet* reached 111,211 leftists, *Milliyet* had a readership of 211,367 liberal reformists, *Havadis* reached 27,644 conservatives, *Tercuman* had a readership of 290,522 conservatives, *Yeni Istanbul* had 19,461 "sensational" moderate leftists, and Aksam reached 27,638 leftists.[101] In total, these newspapers published a total of eight USIS features

and thirty-three photos of the moon landing.

Conclusion: EFRTC as American Smart Power

EFRTC exemplifies how USIS's activities in Turkey combined soft power and hard power. As international relations scholars noted, soft power features nonmaterial forms of power.[102] USIS's use of films contributed to US soft power by communicating aspects of American culture and political values like democracy. For instance, international relations scholar Burcu Sari Karademir described Turkey as a "willing receiver" of US soft power in her analysis of the circulation of Hollywood films in the Cold War era.[103] Furthermore, film historians Nezih Erdoğan and Dilek Mutlu noted that USIS controlled the circulation of Hollywood films in Turkey.[104] Yet the case of EFRTC demonstrates that the United States established not only soft power through the use of nonfiction media and nontheatrical films about American culture and society but also hard power through the construction of film facilities and media infrastructure.

International relations scholars also discussed how hard power focuses on the material forms of power.[105] The materiality of films, the physicality of facilities such as EFRTC, and the funding used to support these infrastructures are examples of hard power. In particular, financial capital played a central role in establishing US hard power in Turkey since USIS's circulation, production, and distribution of film materials (film reels, projectors, mobile film units, etc.) were initially funded by the US to advance its interests in the region. These investments built the physical infrastructure necessary to produce and distribute films and other media to promote the USIS soft-power agenda. Therefore, the USIS's Cold War strategy in Turkey revolved around a smart combination of hard and soft power. In other words, EFRTC was a result of a smart-power campaign developed by USIS to communicate and mobilize US foreign policy in Turkey.

About the Author

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[1] This institution was initially named the Educational Film Center (EFC; *Öğretici Filmler Merkezi* or ÖFM). In this article, I use these names interchangeably.

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[3] For more on US–Turkey relations, see George McGhee, *The US-Turkish-NATO Middle East Connection: How the Truman Doctrine and Turkey's NATO Entry Contained the Soviets* (New York: Springer, 2016).

[4] For more on Turkey's relationship to the West, see Bruce R. Kuniholm, "Turkey and the West," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 2 (1991), 34–48.

[5] For more on USIS, see Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004).

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[7] Ibid., 7.
[8] Nezih Erdoğan and Dilek Kaya, "Institutional Intervention in the Distribution and Exhibition of Hollywood Films in Turkey," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 22, no. 1 (2002), 52–3.

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[18] Hamid Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 2: The Industrializing Years, 1941–1978* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), xxiii.

[19] Naficy, *A Social History*, 34.

[20] Ibid., 39–40.

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[29] Ellul, *Propaganda*, 42.

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[31] Ibid., 110.

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[33] Nye, “Get Smart,” 160.

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 120.

[41] Monteagle Stearns, November 1949 Report of USIE Activities in Turkey, Section IV: Motion Pictures, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, Office of International Information/Division of International Motion Pictures, Country Reports, 1949–1950, Box 23, ARC ID 4751078, Entry 239.

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[44] William E. Kugeman, “From Embassy, Ankara—To the Department of State, Washington, October 1, 1952, Subject: Motion Pictures—Cooperation with Turkish Ministries,” RG 0306 US Information Agency, Office of the Assistant Director for Europe, Entry# P 403: COU, Country Files for Turkey 1953–1972, Telegrams and Pouch Messages,

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[53] Aysehan Jülide Etem, “A Transnational Communication Network Promoting Film Diplomacy: The Case of Turkey and the USA, 1950–86,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* (2020): 1–22.

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[56] Crumpler, memo dated February 4, 1953.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

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[62] Ibid.

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[79] USIA, secret document, June 27, 1956, RG 0306 US Information Agency Office of the Assistant Director for Europe, Entry# P 403: Country Files for Turkey 1953–1972, Telegrams and Pouch Messages, Incoming and Outgoing, 1962 THRU INF 2-2 Program Reports [1971] Container #2.

[80] Şinasi Barutçu, *En Modern Ders Vasıtası Film* (Ankara: Öğretici Filmler Merkezi, Doğuş Matbaası, 1954), 12. The other cities were Afyon, Elazig, Erzurum, Izmir, Konya, Samsun, Seyhan, Sivas, and Trabzon.

[81] The complete list of cities includes Ağrı, Amasya, Aydin, Balıkesir, Bilecik, Bingöl, Bitlis, Bolu, Burdur, Çanakkale, Çankırı, Çorum, Denizli, Edirne, Erzincan, Eskişehir, Gaziantep, Giresun, Gümüşhane, Hakkâri, Hatay, İçel, Isparta, Kars, Kastamonu, Kırşehir, Kırklareli, Kocaeli, Kütahya, Malatya, Manisa, Maraş, Mardin, Muğla, Muş, Niğde, Ordu, Rize, Siirt, Sinop, Tekirdağ, Tunceli, Urfa, Uşak, Van, Yozgat, and Zonguldak.

[82] The institution was initially known as the Educational Film Center (Ögretici Filmler Merkezi, or ÖFM).

[83] For a discussion of the uses of films in educational spaces, see Orgeron, Orgeron, and Streible, “Introduction.”

[84] Orgeron, Orgeron, and Streible, “Introduction,” 3. Barutçu did not offer specific citations for this research.

[85] Information about the years and producers of the films were not included in the catalog.

[86] *Baris Yolu* translates as “Path to Peace,” but it probably refers to the “Chance for Peace” speech, as the description indicates that the film is about an Eisenhower speech about peace.

[87] Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy,* 70.

[88] Ibid., 70–118.

[89] Maria Fritsche, *The American Marshall Plan Film Campaign and the Europeans: A Captivated Audience?* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 51.

[90] Etem, “A Transnational Communication Network Promoting Film Diplomacy,” 1–22.

[91] Aysehan Jülide Etem, “‘The American Marshall Plan Film Campaign and the Europeans: A Captivated Audience?’ by Maria Fritsche,” *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* 17 (2019): 229–33.

[92] Jülide Etem, “Yayalar İçin Trafik Emniyeti 1964,” October 9, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zj47Nd3G3fg&t=2s. Also see my ongoing digital archive project featuring some of the educational films of EFRTC, https://julidetem.wixsite.com/filmdiplomacy

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