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# Questions

1. How are different actors sharing false, malign or harmful forms of information in Libya and West Africa? What is the impact of such efforts?
   1. China in particular – not a lot of Chinese propaganda out and about. Not a lot of anti-Western propaganda being fueled by them. That’s more of Russia’s gig than China’s gig. China’s presense is small and very economic focused and one Confuscius center. In the cultural center (Babdoa?). They do Mandarin classes, mostly looking at business – training people to interact with them in business. Nothing surprising about how the Chinese are interacting with folks there. Position China as trade partner of choise, whether for construction or military equipment China looking to have the greatest business influence.
   2. The Russians – pan-African MO is having Russia be a new partner, they are a supporter of African sovereignty, anti-imperialism, anti-french – The strain of militant sovereignty that runs through the governing messages here makes it hard for other countries to do business because sovereignty is the brand – the current government’s brand. Anyone that wants to big of a slice will bump up against that narrative and have a problem. Push back against anti-colonialism against the French but not beholden to one country (the locals) – you will see pro-Russian stuff, but it isnt’ to the extent of where there is more pro-Russian stuff – because of the sovereign stuff.
   3. Other countries not that active. Malign disinformation propaganda no.
2. In what ways are governments, military and civil society organizations in Libya and West Africa working to counter this? What more can be done in this respect?
   1. From the sovereignty perspective, Burkina has passed a law that says there can be no foreign sponsored content on the radio. VOA was shut down (by Burkina before US shutdown). I tis hard to track down who is paying for stuff on some of the media – guess on whether some of it is foreign or not. The business model has been turned on its head now that the government has changed policies – had to turn to paid content. Would put a crimp in the style of the foreign media outlets. They want to control the content of what is in Burkina news. They have expelled journalists – French, Le Monde, NYT – no international media is resident there anymore. This limits the ability of international outlets to use their power to
   2. Civil society – been increased pressure put on anyone who is running counter to any government message. Whether it is you are importing foreign messaging, will get you intimidated. Not getting much done.
   3. Not a lot of things are blocked – some are blocked. But they can still access VOA online, and Burkinabe could just go online – but Burkina is generally in the bottom 10 in internet penetration, and the bottom 10 in the world with electricity. There is short-wave radio, it is unclear how many use short-wave radio to get their news. Radio is still king, but it is all government controlled – VOA is music only.
   4. Will see pro Russian and anti Ukrainian grafitti and flags. No Chinese.
3. In what ways are the U.S. or allied governments working to counter this in Libya/West Africa? How are they working to build institutional capacity in Libya/West Africa?
   1. We are doing what we’ve always done. The Russians and the Chinese are new – they have nowhere to go but up. They are coming from a baseline of 0. We’ve been there doing the stick the whole time. Three American corners out there doing English language training, journalist training, countering online information threats training (Online training). We are here to publicly do this, we used to be the largest humanitarian done. Highlighting the good things America is doing. The government is requesting English language training – they made English one of the working languages of the government as the turnaway from the French. There is a demand there. More capacity in English language training would certainly be a boon. Working with an unsure budget situation right now – so where to put money – English language is ok.
   2. Journalist training is helping them diversify income streams so they don’t have to rely on paid content. It also has training that helps train them with integrity in journalism.
   3. Others aren’t doing much in this space. They might be doing journalist or anti-info stuff but not aware of. US only shop with dedicated person for media and for social media and for culture. He has his own shop, all the other embassies have the person doing all pol, cultural, and PAO.
4. What more can the U.S. or allied governments do in this respect?
   1. More English language training. There is a fine line to walk between what is helpful and what won’t make the government mad. What does the government want and what can we provide and where is the venn diagram of what overlaps. Building English language builds consumers of American cultural properties and goods which fuels exchange programs and student mobility – it is the fertile soil where we grow a lot of the influence that we have. Where we pull from the YALI, Fulbright, etc. Have to start teaching at the bottom. And they aren’t going to. Be as receptive to our messaging if we are doing it in a second language. Where we need to be focusing our efforts.
   2. Decades ago we did nothing but teach English language there – used to have 30 teachers. Have to engage early – the average age of Burkinabes is 17.5 years old. Very young. Lot of hunger for it.
   3. DOD – what could they do? Last job was in Bulgaria – they did some stuff with the military where they sent an English Language Fellow specifically to teach at the military academy. So that their young military academies would have better interoperability. This is a place where PAO and DOD could have this nexus. They would have to hire someone locally to do that. Can’t have an American come. Because of travel restrictions. Making inroads within their officer training to create space within the military and relations. Was so successful in Sofia – would use this model in any place where we thought interoperability was something we could achieve.
5. How does the U.S. conduct interagency coordination or inter-government coordination with respect to its policies and operations in Libya/West Africa?
   1. Small embassy – run an interagency strategic communications group – what is coming up, how do we deal with it, what is our strategic messaging. More internal than DC – all in cable. They do see the programming. Will see DOD content on their facebook. Some countries don’t have that kind of relationship. Works super well for interagency coordination on the local side. That stuff plays really well there
6. Who else should we speak to?

* EU, Germans, Canadians – Maybe Dutch – Pol section can give us that info. French don’t have many and Brits do it regionally. Japanese, probably not useful in this space.

Other notes

* Working more closing between DOD and DOS at a highlevel. This is more of a DOD and DOS institutional issue. There needs to be better coordination at the undersecretary level. This is what DOD messaging is, this is what DOS messaging.
* Top level intercommunication at undersecretary level.