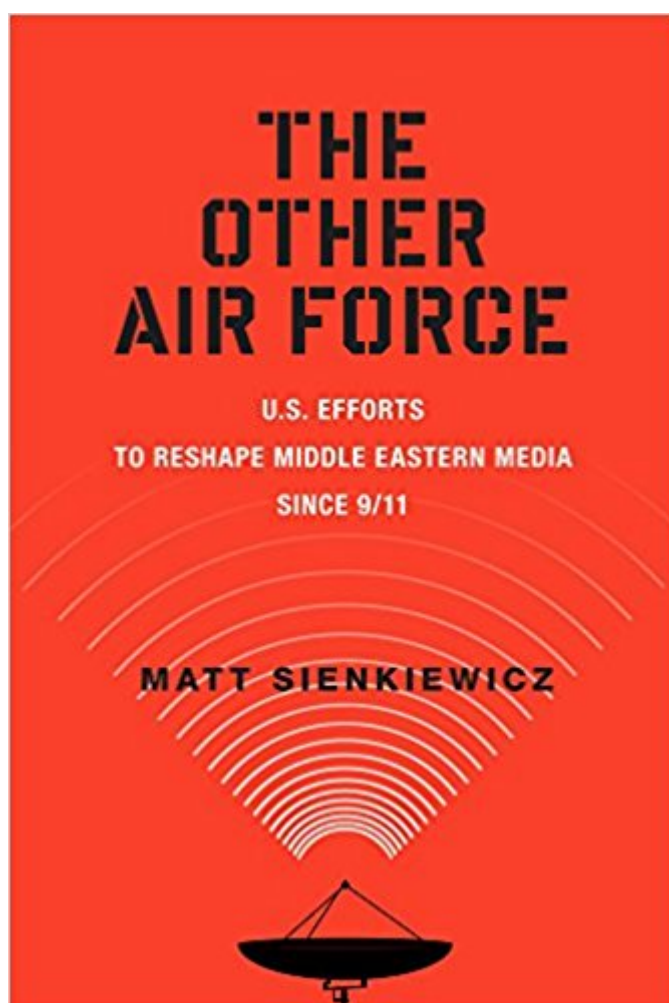


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# The Other Air Force: U.S. Efforts To Reshape Middle Eastern Media Since 9/11 (War Culture)



## Synopsis

As it seeks to win the hearts and minds of citizens in the Muslim world, the United States has poured millions of dollars into local television and radio programming, hoping to generate pro-American currents on Middle Eastern airwaves. However, as this fascinating new book shows, the Middle Eastern media producers who rely on these funds are hardly puppets on an American string, but instead contribute their own political and creative agendas while working within U.S. restrictions. *The Other Air Force* gives readers a unique inside look at television and radio production in Afghanistan and the Palestinian territories, from the isolated villages of the Afghan Panjshir Valley to the congested streets of Ramallah. Communications scholar Matt Sienkiewicz explores how the U.S. takes a “soft-psy” approach to its media efforts combining “soft” methods of encouraging entertainment programming, such as adaptations of *The Voice* and *The Apprentice* with more militaristic “psy-ops” approaches to information control. Drawing from years of field research and interviews with everyone from millionaire executives to underpaid but ever resourceful cameramen, Sienkiewicz considers the perspectives of the Afghan and Palestinian media workers trying to forge viable broadcasting businesses without straying outside American-set boundaries for acceptable content. As it carefully examines the interplay of U.S. military and economic might with the capacity for local ingenuity and resistance, the book also analyzes the intriguingly complex programming that emerges from this tension. Combining eyewitness reportage with cutting-edge scholarship, *The Other Air Force* reveals the remarkable creative output that can emerge even from the world’s tensest conflict zones.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Powerful and illuminating." (Prospect Magazine)"The Other Air Force stands as a helpful study on the subtle ways U.S. government agencies try to advance their own agendas under the pretext of development and community support. By shedding light on the resourcefulness and creativity of those who work within the circumscribed boundaries of such projects, it also precludes simplistic classifications of such people as native informants working on behalf of their oppressors, highlighting instead the everyday resistance that soft-psy media inevitably provokes." (The New Inquiry)"Sienkiewicz's ability to pack both granular history and broad theory into a concise package makes his book a rare treat among academic titles." (The Bridge)"The Other Air Force is one of the best books I've read in years. Matt Sienkiewicz's close look at the hard-core sell of 'soft-psy media' details how the U.S. persuades invaded, occupied, and colonized peoples to make media that advances America's interests and yet still appears to be under local control. Sienkiewicz examines carefully who is really behind the curtain, pulling strings and pressing buttons in the US theatre of soft-psy media. All is not as it seems when creating the American dream." (Mohammed Omer award winning journalist and author of Shell-Shocked: On the Ground Under Israel's Gaza Assault)"Interesting and deeply relevant | Its purview is quite remarkable - taking in media of all kinds across the Middle East." (The New Arab)"The Other Air Force is a timely and extremely valuable contribution to the fields of Media Studies and International Relations. It should be read by students, scholars, journalists, policy makers, and anyone else interested in understanding how media and politics are intertwined in the conflict zones of the Middle East." (Dina Matar author of What It Means to Be a Palestinian)"By way of fine-grained, field-based case studies of US-assisted Afghan and Palestinian media, The Other Air Force recasts development communication through the prism of media assistance, and in doing so, demonstrates how global US hegemony goes hand in hand with local creativity. Made concrete by an appealing cast of mediators, enforcers, and cultural commentaries, Sienkiewicz's notion of 'Soft-Psy Media' is a welcome addition to the theoretical and pedagogical toolkits of global communication studies." (Marwan Kraidy author of The Naked Blogger of Cairo: Creative Insurgency in the Arab World)"The Other Air Force is innovatively conceptualized and meticulously researched. Anyone interested in media, culture, and politics in the Middle East after 9/11 will be turning to this book for years to come." (Aswin Punathambekar

University of Michigan-Ann Arbor)"With striking case studies and scient attention to the complex interplay of top-down strategy and policies, bottom-up resistance and negotiations along with labor, gender, and geopolitics, Sienkiewicz's book offers an indispensable guide for researchers in communication and Middle Eastern studies." (Ipek A. Celik Rappas Film International)

MATT SIENKIEWICZ is an assistant professor of communication and international studies at Boston College in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. He is the coeditor of Saturday Night Live and American TV and has produced a number of documentaries, including Live from Bethlehem..

This discussion is both expert and accessible. The subject of the book is both engaging and important, and I'll confess that, aside from Cold War stories about various sorts of "soft influence," I didn't know much of anything about soft-psy (or psyops, etc.). If you are interested in Middle Eastern politics, the future of American values in the age of Trump, or any number of other subjects, this will be a worthwhile read. (The author is a friend of mine, but these are my sincere opinions.)

A fantastic exploration of a topic which rarely makes the Western news -- soft power. In this case, by fostering democratic institutions and media organizations in the Middle East, the US has helped empower the local populace -- with all of the benefits and consequences that come as a result.

Will be adding this book to my curriculum next semester. Great resource .

5/5. Would read again.

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