Introduction

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[p.2] *Middle Eastern and African Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations: Other Voices* is the third volume in this series of six books on national histories of public relations (PR). The nations that comprise the ten chapters range from Turkey, at the northernmost, to South Africa at the southernmost. There is little group commonality in their economies and political, religious and social make-up, as they have been drawn from the geo-political and continental labels of 'Middle East' and Africa. For example, they do not have the common post-war impact of the Soviet Union and communism that so distinguished the nations of Eastern Europe in the second book of the series. However, there are themes that emerged and are shared by some nations.

The book has two chapters that comprise groups of nations – the Arab Gulf and Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Arab Gulf comprises Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman which have a common religious background in Islam and have shown major economic growth since the 1970s. As the chapter shows, there are experiences in the development of PR which are similar, including the development of education, institutionalization, and restricted media and political environment. They, along with Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, also have analogous approaches to PR practice with regional religious and social influences that operate in parallel to the more international model offered by multinational agency groups that operate in the Gulf.

In southern Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe all show the influences of British models of PR practice which arose from colonial governmental public administration, as it did in Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. These three nations are either neighbours of South Africa (Botswana and Zimbabwe) or close by (Zambia). They had different paths to independence but the British influence appears to have been greater than from South Africa, which did not emerge from its international isolation until the early 1990s. Ironically, South Africa has the

most westernized public relations sector with well-established education, professional bodies, government communication and agencies. The latter sector, agencies, has been spreading widely into central and eastern Africa as is evidenced in the chapter on Uganda, where the local PR sector has been under threat from South African agency groups and the ubiquitous international agencies for a decade or more.

The history of PR in Kenya can be broadly divided into two periods: pre- and post-independence. Before 1963 and independence, there is [p.3] evidence that the British colonial governmental system encouraged the use of PR in sophisticated modes (i.e., more than public information dissemination) that included the building of relations between government and communities in order to facilitate dialogue and generate greater understanding of governmental policies. This appears to have commenced in the United Kingdom's Colonial Office soon after World War II and may have been widely applied in other colonies as well. The unearthing of papers in Kenya's national archives opens the door to further research.

Israel, because of its unique formation as a nation, has an historical development of PR that is different from that of other nations in this chapter and from most others worldwide. Collectivism, which characterized national politics and society for the first 30-40 years of its existence, inhibited PR's development. It was only with the development of a more individualist, liberal society from the 1980s onwards that PR began to flourish, but it still has a difficult existence in a nation whose expressions of nationhood allow less leeway than in Western nations. However, PR in Israel may have more in common with the nations that surround it because of continuing political tensions.

Turkey, as befits an ambitious nation, has long used PR techniques to promote national interests but the discipline and practice of PR has had a see-saw of understanding and respect in governmental communications, although the field has other characteristics such as professionalization, introduction of education and growth of an agency sector. The variable and varied understanding of PR and its roles is a factor that surfaces in several chapters, with none of the progressivism that is proposed in North American approaches to the history of PR.

Historiographic interpretations of the national histories show little consistency although three chapters – Egypt, Israel and Turkey – use periodization models. There is thematic analysis in another three chapters - Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Uganda - of the effects of British colonial public administrations, which is not surprisingly evident in the

early histories of PR in those five countries, although it later became both more locally fashioned and more internationally influenced. Only the Israel chapter, which refers to Raaz and Wehmeier's (2011) 'fact-event oriented, periodizing and theorizing' approach, adopts a specific historiographic model. Perhaps this book will assist greater discussion and debate of historiographical approaches.

[p.4] As set out in the opening paragraph of this Introduction, there is no evidence of a single or common approach to PR's development. That is not surprising because of the vast distances and the range of cultures, languages and political systems that the book covers, but there are clusters of themes to explore further – Arab culture, British public administration, independence movements and the influence of international agency groups.

Reference

Raaz, O., and Wehmeier, S. (2011) 'Histories of Public Relations: Comparing the Historiography of British, German and US Public Relations', *Journal of Communication Management*, 15(3), 256-275.