

American Public Diplomacy: From Propaganda to Facebook

1953: President Dwight D. Eisenhower establishes the United States Information Agency (USIA). Overseas, USIA is known as USIS, the United States Information Service

1999: USIA is integrated into the Department of State, and is now known as the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP)

What is Public Diplomacy?

In international relations, public diplomacy is the communication with foreign publics to establish a dialogue designed to inform and influence. There is no one definition of Public Diplomacy, and it may be easier described than easily defined as definitions have changed and continue to change over time. It is practiced through a variety of instruments and methods ranging from personal contact and media interviews to the internet and educational exchanges. There is still debate on whether Public Diplomacy is propaganda or not.

The United States Information Agency (USIA) was established to streamline the U.S. government's overseas information programs, and make them more effective. The United States Information Agency was the largest full-service public relations organization in the world, spending over \$2 billion per year to highlight America's view, while diminishing the Soviet's side through about 150 different countries. In 1948, the Smith-Mundt Act banned domestic distribution of propaganda intended for foreign audiences, but before 1972, the US government was allowed to distribute expressly domestic propaganda through Congress, independent media (such as Radio Free Europe (in Eastern Europe) and Radio Liberty (in the former Soviet Union)) and schools.

The USIA's mission was *"to understand, inform and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad."* (<http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/usiahome/oldoview.htm#overview>)

Today, it is the Department of State that gives *"information about current U.S. foreign policy and about American life and culture"* (www.america.gov (does not exist anymore)) through Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP). IIP still uses some of USIA's methods, but is also widely using social media to convey "the American way" to the rest of the world.

Examples of Public Diplomacy:

- The Fulbright Program (educational exchanges)
- English Language Programs
- International Visitors Program (inviting both established and promising figures to the U.S.)
- Speakers Program (bringing American speakers and specialists to explain the United States, its policies, and its culture to overseas audiences)

Web sites:

USIA: <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/usiahome/oldoview.htm#overview>

IIP: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/iipdigital-en/index.html#axzz1YUZea2L4>

White House Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/WhiteHouse>

EMU: <http://emu.dk.usvpp.gov/index.html> (in Danish - a Virtual Presence Post made for school kids)