Public Diplomacy’s Domestic Dimension?

Exploring Public Diplomacy’s Domestic Dimensions: Purviews, Publics, and Policies
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What is Public Diplomacy?

The means by which a sovereign country communicates with publics in other countries aimed at informing and influencing audiences overseas for the purpose of promoting the national interest and advancing its foreign policy goals.

Information and Influence Taxonomy

1. **Listening**: Data Collection & Opinion Polling
2. **Advocacy**: Promotion of policy objectives via Public Affairs
3. **Cultural Diplomacy**: Export of national cultural and/or artistic identifiers
4. **Exchange Diplomacy**: Promotion of international understanding
5. **International Broadcasting**: “Objective” news and information via electronic media

See also Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age (2019)
What is driving (Public) Diplomacy’s Domestic Dimension?

THE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

There’s no longer a bright line between foreign and domestic policy. Every action we take in our conduct abroad, we must take with American working families in mind. [Washington must advance] a foreign policy for the middle class. Biden Speech Feb. 2021

We have broken down the dividing line between foreign policy and domestic policy. We understand that if the United States is to succeed abroad, we must invest in our innovation and industrial strength, and build our resilience, at home. Likewise, to advance shared prosperity domestically and to uphold the rights of all Americans, we must proactively shape the international order in line with our interests and values.

National Security Strategy 2022

THE TECHNO-MEDIA IMPERATIVE

The time has come to rethink the rigid division of the foreign and domestic operation of U.S. public diplomacy. The old firewall is out of step with the transnational nature of today’s media and the transnational lives lived by so many people. We know that a word spoken in Kansas can be heard in Kandahar and vice versa.

Nicholas Cull, ACPD Special Report, 2022
What are the historical antecedents for Public Diplomacy’s Domestic Dimension?

19th-20th centuries: No division between foreign and domestic spheres—focus on crisis messaging as needed

- WWI: Committee on Public Information – systematic domestic outreach function with growing foreign component (film)

- WWII: Office of War Information—Domestic information and foreign influence campaigns (shortwave radio—VOA)

Nicholas Cull, *Public Diplomacy’s Domestic Dimension: Some Historical Notes*  
ACPD Special Report, 2022
What are the legislative antecedents for Public Diplomacy’s Domestic Dimension?

- **The Smith-Mundt Act of 1948** established congressional authorization for State Department to engage foreign audiences through public diplomacy while also prohibiting domestic dissemination of prepared products and materials.
  - To prevent the spread of internal propaganda
  - To address concerns about competition with domestic media platforms

- **The Smith Mundt Modernization Act of 2012** amended the original to authorize State and USAGM to make the preparation and dissemination of information intended for foreign audiences abroad about the U.S. in the form of press, publications, radio, films, video, audio, the Internet, and social media—largely, but not exclusively, the purview of USAGM-- available to the media, public, and Congress.
  - Acknowledges that in the Internet age there are no barriers to access.
  - Improves transparency and accountability but also raises concerns about the potential for “domestic” propaganda.
What is “Deliberative” Public Diplomacy?

FOCUS ON PROCESS—ACTIVIST AND INCLUSIVE

- A form of “people’s” or participatory diplomacy that implies increased domestic engagement in the foreign policy development process through the consolidation of individual opinions and outlooks on national security and economic priorities.

- A “representative, consultative and inclusive” process that specifically seeks out and represents domestic interests.

- A prioritization of national public interests that involves the erasure of borders between domestic and international engagement, a nod to the fluid nature of the global information space.

Richard Wike, American Public Opinion and International Engagement
ACPD Special Report 2022
What is “Subnational” Diplomacy?

FOCUS ON STRUCTURE: INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES

Diplomacy conducted by officials at various levels of government below national levels.

City Diplomacy—municipal platforms to address transnational challenges.

- Interest Driven: International trade and investment, tourism, migration, knowledge transfers (academic and industrial)
- Values Driven: respect for democracy, human rights and individual liberties, diversity
What are the challenges to Public Diplomacy’s Domestic Dimension?

LEGAL, FISCAL, IDEOLOGICAL

- **Legal Authorities**: State Departments legal authorities are largely externally focused (except for public affairs). Relaxation of Smith-Mundt provides no domestic legal cover.

- **Resources and Capacities**: State PD programs are consistently underfunded, demand for personnel exceeds supply, and training is inadequate to shifting needs. A domestic focus will likely divert resources and attention away from external information/outreach.

- **Hyper Partisan Atmosphere**: Traditionally non-partisan State PD programs risk politicization in the domestic context. Possibility of internally focused “propaganda.”
What are the key questions?

How might domestic public diplomacy initiatives increase support among domestic publics for U.S. global engagement?

- Domestic PD initiatives should focus on issues that link domestic and foreign public interests such as climate change, public health, migration mobility, and the promotion of inclusiveness and diversity, with a view to building meaningful coalitions around shared interests and objectives.

How can greater collaboration between and among the foreign policy community and state/local leaders on global initiatives be promoted?

- Localized impacts of foreign policy interventions should be consistently highlighted by federal, state and local leadership so that domestic audiences understand how their individual and community interests are linked to national strategic priorities.

How can “geopolitical literacy” be increased among domestic audiences?

- In order to cultivate a more globally minded citizenry, the relevance and impact of international affairs and relationships on domestic audiences must be made explicit through media, academic, corporate, professional association and other platforms.
What are possible steps to take?

• Establish an Office of City and State Diplomacy/Sub-National Diplomacy within the Department of State

• Expand State Department Hometown Diplomat and Diplomat in Residence programs

• Place State Department personnel in city/state governments

• Develop toolkits and training packages for cities/states to grow their own diplomacy

• Share best practices and identify benchmarks for city/state international engagement

• Leverage the resources of academic and research institutions

• Partner with non-profit community-based organizations with international connections and missions

• Connect philanthropic and corporate social responsibility programs with cities and states
Who are the key partners and stakeholders?

- Legislators
- Educators
- City and state officials
- Issue based advocacy groups
- Corporations
- Youth audiences
- Current social influencers: media, sports, popular culture (music, film, art, dance, literature)
- Diasporas
- Historically marginalized groups
THOUGHT EXERCISE

Your organization has been invited by HFAC and SFRC staffers to comment on the draft United States Domestic Information and Educational Exchange Act of 2024.

The staffers have assigned you to four thematic working groups to provide your input on the following topics.

1. Identification of Lead Institution/Office, Scope and Authorities
2. Identification of Personnel and Leadership Structure
3. Identification of Materials and Platforms
4. Liaison with Interagency and Subnational Components
5. Other issues?

What are your initial recommendations?
Walking the “Bright Line”

- What are the risks inherent in adapting foreign policy messaging and outreach platforms and materials for domestic consumption?
- To what degree can/should domestic interests drive foreign policy actions?
- How do you see your role or the role of your organization in the promotion of public diplomacy’s domestic dimension?