

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY 2.0: THE UNITED STATES VIRTUAL EMBASSY IN IRAN

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Rezumat: Acest articol analizează activitatea ambasadei virtuale a Statelor Unite în Iran, atât din perspectiva contextului strategic, cât și a mesajelor cheie transmise. Metodele de cercetare utilizate au îmbinat analiza istorică și pe cea retorică. Întrucât diplomația digitală reprezintă un domeniu mai nou chiar și față de diplomația publică, majoritatea surselor folosite în cercetare sunt recente și pot fi accesate pe internet, principalul canal al diplomației digitale (sau diplomației publice 2.0). Am încercat totodată să evaluez eficiența ambasadei virtuale, prin conectarea mesajelor transmise de Departamentul de Stat, de contextul strategic și prioritățile de politică externă în regiune, dar și de sondajele de opinie.

Abstract: This article analyzes the activity of the virtual embassy of the United States in Iran, from the standpoint of the strategic context and also based on the key messages. The research methods employed both historical analysis, as well as rhetoric analysis. Since digital diplomacy is a newer field than public diplomacy, most of the sources used in this research are very recent and are available on the Internet, as this is the main *locus* for digital diplomacy, or public diplomacy 2.0. I have also tried to assess the efficiency of the American virtual embassy in Iran, by connecting the messages conveyed by the Department of State with the strategic context and foreign policy priorities in the region, as well as with public opinion polls.

Keywords: digital diplomacy, public diplomacy, virtual embassy, United States, Iran

1. Public diplomacy and digital diplomacy

Diplomacy has long been the privilege of well established elites. Even in the twentieth century, despite Woodrow Wilson's open diplomacy plea, diplomatic activity was conducted by a closed in-group of specialists. It was the Cold War and the communication revolution that have determined a paradigm shift in bilateral affairs: firstly, what was designed exclusively for the foreign policy field has extended to other fields as well (most importantly the war of ideas); secondly, the inter-governmental model of communication grew old-dated, due to open and free access to information. Academia put forward the term of public diplomacy to reflect this change; in practice, though, diplomatic staff implemented the change languidly.

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