

Searching for Influence and Persuasion in Network-Oriented Public Diplomacy: What Role for “Small States”?

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Abstract

The discipline of public diplomacy has recently given rise to the concept of network-oriented public diplomacy. The purpose of this essay is twofold: first, to explore the idea and the underlying assumptions of this “new” public diplomacy; second, to ask whether public diplomacy could be an effective tool for “small states” since most of the scholarship is written from the viewpoint of a great power. To this end, this work is proceeding in three main parts: First, the notion of network-oriented public diplomacy is examined by contrasting it to traditional diplomacy and traditional public diplomacy. Second, the essay demonstrates how the “new” public diplomacy manages to achieve its objectives: persuasion and influence. Third, it proceeds to examine its implications for “small states” and concludes that network-oriented public diplomacy, if executed correctly, can help them play a more active role on the international stage.

Keywords

new public diplomacy, networks, relational model, small states, soft power

Introduction

Diplomacy is an activity in which people, consciously or not, have engaged since communication appeared. Since contacts between the earliest social groupings occurred, diplomatic thinking has emphasized the maintenance of relations in a plural and possibly conflicted world.¹ Diplomats, as institutionalized “professional strangers,”² used to be gatekeepers who carefully separated the process of talking from the substance of the arguments. They also made differences between the domestic sphere from the international realm. Therefore, traditionally they deal with their counterparts through communication, negotiation, and representation. This conception, however, has been increasingly challenged by changes in world politics, which have led to the proliferation of other actors and issues on the international scene. In response to that, the idea that interacting directly with foreign publics should be added to the core tasks of practitioners gained significant influence. Thus, Edmund Gullion came up with the concept of “public diplomacy” in 1965; although similar practices can be found at least since at least

¹ Paul Sharop, *Diplomatic Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 10.

² *Ibid.*, 100.

Napoleonic France and Showa Japan,³ while the phrase has also been used earlier.⁴

This essay seeks to investigate whether public diplomacy could be an effective tool for “small states,” considering that scholarship is predominantly written, implicitly or explicitly, from the point of view of a great power, most notably the United States. To this end, this work is proceeding in three main parts. First, the notion of network-oriented public diplomacy is elaborated in terms of its functions by contrasting it to traditional diplomacy and traditional public diplomacy. Then, the essay proceeds to investigate how the “new” public diplomacy manages to achieve its objectives: persuasion and influence. Finally, after having established the processes involved and the essence of network-oriented public diplomacy, this work proceeds to investigate its implications for “small states.” It concludes that network-oriented public diplomacy, if executed correctly, can help them play a more active role on the international stage.

Network-Oriented Public Diplomacy: Functions and Characteristics

Although the idea of public diplomacy, essentially oriented toward influencing foreign publics in addition to maintaining traditional interaction with government counterparts, has gained considerable influence among academics and practitioners, the notion of network-oriented, or “new,” public diplomacy is relatively recent. This section will try to position the latter in relation to traditional diplomacy, related concepts, and traditional public diplomacy before investigating the idea of “networks.”

Public Diplomacy, Traditional Diplomacy, and Related Concepts

There are a wide variety of definitions of public diplomacy, but they all focus on the core idea of interacting with and influencing foreign publics as opposed to traditional intergovernmental communication, negotiation, and representation.⁵ Public diplomacy reflects a certain preoccupation with “image” in international politics and is related to concerns about democratic accountability the consequences of intensified social connections across borders, technological advances in communication technologies, and the impact of 24-hour global media.⁶ Therefore, exchange programs would be a classic example of public diplomacy as they seek to engage directly with a (select) foreign audience, to give it firsthand experience of the source country, to establish mutual understanding, and in this way form opinion leaders that can then transmit information within the host country.⁷ Other often-evoked examples include international broadcasts, press statements, organizing seminars, public lectures, cultural tours, internet discussions, etc.

Depending on the strategies, there is “a range of public diplomacies in circulation.”⁸ It can be divided according to processes, elements, and timeframes. Thus, public diplomacy involves three main processes—monologue, an attempt to clearly articulate a government position on a certain issue with no possibility for feedback; dialogue, a way to involve people across borders and engage them in discussion and debates to give them a chance to express themselves; and collaboration, bridging divides by common projects which create lasting relationships.⁹ In terms of elements, it contains listening to the international environment by getting information on foreign public opinion, advocacy in favor of policies or interests, dissemination of cultural achievements, exchanges, and international news broadcasts to engage with foreign publics, especially through the use of new media.¹⁰ Crucially, public diplomacy operates along three time frames—in the short term it seeks to explain the context of domestic and foreign policy decisions; in the medium term it can campaign for certain high-value policies; and in the long term it seeks to build sustainable relationships.¹¹ Therefore, it can be easily seen that public diplomacy is multifaceted and varied in practice and is hardly a monolithic notion.

It is also necessary to make some crucial distinctions between public diplomacy and other concepts that may seem similar. The literature itself is divided about the exact nature of the relationship of propaganda, public relations (PR), and nation branding with public diplomacy. Some wide definitions of public diplomacy might coincide with wide definitions

³ Michael Vlahos, “Public Diplomacy as the Loss of World Authority,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, edited by Nancy Snow and Phillip Taylor, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 24-38.

⁴ Nicholas J. Cull, “Public Diplomacy Before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase,” *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵ Jan Melissen, “The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice,” in *The New Public Diplomacy*, edited by Jan Melissen, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 5.

⁶ Brian Hocking, “Rethinking the ‘New’ Public Diplomacy,” *Ibid.*, 29-31.

⁷ Giles Scott-Smith, “Exchange Programs and Public Diplomacy,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, edited by Nancy Snow and Phillip Taylor, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 50-56.

⁸ Hocking, *Ibid.*, 35.

⁹ Amelia Arsenault and Geoffrey Cowan, “Moving from Monologue to Dialogue and Collaboration: The Three Layers of Public Diplomacy,” in *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 10-30.

¹⁰ Nicholas Cull, “Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 31-54.

¹¹ Joseph Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 94-109.

of propaganda. However, there is a core difference: while propaganda tries to tell people what to think and to close their minds, public diplomacy seeks two-way communication, or persuasion in dialogue, where it listens to what the audience has to say.¹² The difference with PR is more blurred, since direction, purpose, and channels of messages often coincide,¹³ while PR also plays a part in the functions of modern diplomacy such as communication and media relations.¹⁴ Nevertheless, this essay will demonstrate that a fundamental difference: PR is ultimately about influencing publics to “sell” a product or policy; while network-oriented public diplomacy is taking the cultivation of relationships as a value in and of itself. Finally, even though branding and public diplomacy are both long-term approaches with a domestic dimension, the former represents a much more holistic approach with wider objectives, while the latter is only one strategy of shaping foreign perceptions.¹⁵ These distinctions point to the characteristics of the “new” public diplomacy.

The “New” Public Diplomacy

Even though public diplomacy has become standard practice for diplomats, the idea of the “new” public diplomacy is more recent. Although the two are complimentary and some of the “new” qualities are essentially just the result of reinforced emphasis on old activities, the core difference is that the former represents a shift from “peddling information to foreigners... towards engaging with foreign audiences.”¹⁶ This is a consequence of the changing conditions of the international environment. First, we can observe the rise of the postmodern state, which is only a part of a multi-layered network of relations with many other actors, albeit retaining accountability and responsibility for outcomes.¹⁷ This is accompanied with the emergence of a global public sphere, in which a global public society is striving to address common problems such as the environment, human rights, and social justice at the international level, empowered by advances in communication and transportation technologies.¹⁸ Finally, as Nye points out, “in an information age, power is also about whose story wins,”¹⁹ which means that government-controlled, one-way message dissemination is becoming a losing strategy in a world of networks. All these conditions exert pressures on traditional diplomatic structures to reform themselves on less hierarchical grounds and to emphasize collaboration and multi-stakeholder strategies, treating foreign publics as actors and not as targets.²⁰

The most pronounced difference between the traditional public diplomacy and the “new” public diplomacy is in their communication approach—the former is hierarchical and mass-oriented, while the second is network-oriented. The hierarchical model, developed mostly in the United States during the Cold War and conceptually closer to propaganda, uses “strategic public diplomacy” to transmit top-down information flows to target audiences.²¹ Therefore, it is premised on the idea of a two-step process—it seeks to influence foreign public opinion, which in turn should influence the foreign policy of other countries, thus achieving policy objectives. Therefore, it uses a hawkish advocacy model of communication of either pushing carefully targeted information or influencing by aggressive persuasion.²² Nevertheless, this model retains clear accountability and responsibility for outcomes with the respective government.²³ The network model, on the other hand, is a response to the changing environment, characterized by cultural diversity, the emergence of new actors, and the rise of interactive media.²⁴ This model is decentralized and thus has less control, emphasizing the need to shape values and standards rather than maintaining absolute authority.²⁵ In light of common transnational problems, it seeks to build relationships around common interests in order to promote action in fields where governments seem unable to deliver, a sort of “catalytic”

¹² Melissen, *Ibid.*, 18-19.

¹³ Eytan Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy,” in *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 78-93, 55-77.

¹⁴ Jackie L’Etang, “Public Relations and Diplomacy in a Globalized World: An Issue of Public Communication,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 53 (2009): 607-627.

¹⁵ Melissen, *Ibid.*, 19-21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹⁷ Shaun Riordan, *The New Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

¹⁸ Manuel Castells, “The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, Global Governance,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 78-93.

¹⁹ Joseph Nye, “The Pros and Cons of Citizen Diplomacy,” *International Herald Tribune*, accessed October 19, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/05/opinion/05iht-ednye.html>.

²⁰ Brian Hocking, “Reconfiguring Public Diplomacy: from Competition to Collaboration,” in *Engagement: Public Diplomacy in a Globalised World*, edited by Daniel Fearn and Joyon Welsh (London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office), 62-75.

²¹ Brian Hocking, “Rethinking the ‘New’ Public Diplomacy” (2005), 36-37.

²² John Robert Kelley, “Between ‘Take-offs’ and ‘Crash Landings’: Situational Aspects of Public Diplomacy,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, edited by Nancy Snow and Phillip Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2009), 72-85.

²³ Jamie Metzl, “Network Diplomacy,” in *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (Winter/Spring 2001), 2.

²⁴ R.S. Zaharna, “The Soft Power Differential: Network Communication and Mass Communication in Public Diplomacy,” in *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 2 (2007): 213-228, 215-216.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

diplomacy.²⁶ Necessarily, it requires more diverse membership and less hierarchical organization to incorporate new actors and their specialized knowledge more efficiently. Consequently, network-oriented public diplomacy requires a change in communication strategy, abandoning the mass communication approach of using international broadcasts for transmitting carefully crafted messages to a large but static audience in order to achieve policy objectives. Instead, it emphasizes the network communication approach which is focused on building quality and sustainable relationships with foreign publics as an end in itself, and, consequently, on message exchange, dialogue, and interaction while relinquishing a certain amount of control over the final message.²⁷

To summarize, the preceding discussion demonstrates the functional characteristics of network-oriented public diplomacy as opposed to other similar notions. It is, however, also necessary to consider how and why it achieves influence and persuasion.

Influence and Persuasion in Network-Oriented Public Diplomacy

Network-oriented public diplomacy derives its influence from the nature of networks coupled with the new communication technologies. It is also closely related to the concept of soft power and the search for credibility in modern politics. Nevertheless, it is necessary to keep in mind certain issues facing this form of diplomacy.

Networks and Influence

The network structure has some particular characteristics, which by themselves enhance its persuasive qualities. Its key characteristic is that instead of source communicator and a target audience, it consists of more or less equal partners who all contribute to the production of a message. Thus, all the actors, new and old, have a role to play; more importantly, their ideas are actually “listened to” and incorporated in policy making. This has two obvious advantages. First, we are more likely to accept something that we helped create as legitimate and credible. Additionally, working within a network structure also implies that “meaning” is co-created—therefore less prone to cultural distortions, which, if they arise, are also easier to correct. Thus, the network can be viewed as the structure for effective communication, in which “narratives are co-created between cultures.”²⁸ The second advantage is that by incorporating diversity and allowing for low transaction costs in the flow of knowledge, networks stimulate the exchange of information and foster innovation; consequently, the network by virtue of its structure is a source of synergy.²⁹ Thus, governments should work more with non-state actors on an *ad hoc* issue-by-issue basis in a network environment to gain quick access to their specialized knowledge.

These advantages, however, depend on the quality of the network, which is directly related to the quality of dialogue, participation and trust. This requires two crucial shifts from the mindset of traditional public diplomacy: first, instead of developing messaging strategies, the “new” public diplomacy should only enable an effective communication environment and let the participants elaborate the message themselves; second, it has to view the public as active participants.³⁰ Therefore, it emphasizes process and participation rather than presentation and final product. As the strength of a network resides in strong and sustainable relationships, diplomacy should thus aim to identify, reinforce, and create new links and act as a facilitator in the dialogue.³¹ This can be done at different levels of complexity by exchanges or visits, cultural institutions or non-political networking schemes, and by coalition building with other countries and actors in order to achieve policy goals.³²

The New Communication and Transportation Technologies

Networks and dialogue have been made possible thanks to advances in the new communication and transportation, which however have certain implications. They relate in particular to the fact that “technologies of communication are not mere transparent vessels,” and while they do not generate new ideas or social behavior, they do facilitate some already present, while placing obstacles to others.³³ Thus, the dramatic decrease in the cost of communication technologies, sometimes labeled “third

²⁶ Brian Hocking, “Rethinking the ‘New’ Public Diplomacy” (2005), 37-40.

²⁷ Zaharna, “The Soft Power Differential” (2007), 217-219.

²⁸ Joseph Nye, “The Pros and Cons of Citizen Diplomacy” (2010).

²⁹ R.S. Zaharna, “The Soft Power Differential” (2007) 219-220.

³⁰ R.S. Zaharna, “Mapping Out a Spectrum of Public Diplomacy Initiatives: Information and Relational Communication Frameworks,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, edited by Nancy Snow and Phillip Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2009). 86-100, 91-93.

³¹ R.S. Zaharna, “The Network Paradigm of Strategic Public Diplomacy,” in *Foreign Policy in Focus, Policy Brief 10* (2005).

³² R.S. Zaharna, “Mapping Out a Spectrum of Public Diplomacy Initiatives” (2009) 93-96.

³³ Ronald J. Deibert, “Hyper-Realities of World Politics: Theorizing the Communications Revolution,” in *Cyber-Diplomacy: Managing Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Evan H. Potter (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 27-48, 37-40.

industrial revolution,” is leading to a diffusion of governance, emergence of non-state actors, and to a “paradox of plenty” due to the overwhelming flood of information.³⁴ Furthermore, it is enabling the transnationalization of production, the globalization of finance, the emergence of transnational civil society networks, the rise of postmodern mentalities, and the transition to the concept of intra-planetary security.³⁵ Finally, the advent of global real-time media has not only eroded diplomats’ ability to set the agenda and pace of events (the so-called “CNN effect”), but has also drastically increased the transparency of international politics, thus giving public opinion a more important role.³⁶ Besides communication advances, the reduced cost of transportation is fostering a mobile migrant population with firsthand experience of the cultural, political and social life in the host country and who share their impressions directly with their own networks “back home.”³⁷ In this way, “a country’s soft power resources are nakedly exposed to migrant’s living experiences,”³⁸ which means that content and reality become more important for public diplomacy than reputation and image.

These technological developments have certain implications for diplomacy and might even be producing a “revolution in diplomatic affairs.”³⁹ Indeed, it is easy to see how these advances in the distribution of information are having a direct impact on diplomacy by enabling the rise of other non-state actors, with whom diplomats now have to negotiate and coordinate to address transnational issues.⁴⁰ Moreover, some have gone as far as seeing the emergence of a “noosphere,” or a sphere of the mind, which encompasses the cybersphere and the infosphere; in relation to the new concept, they argue that the strengthening network civil society hails the advent of the “noopolitik” of ideas, values, and norms.⁴¹ Consequently, this raises the issue of the relationship of the “new” public diplomacy with the notion of power, and notably the so-called “soft power.”

Network-Oriented Public Diplomacy and Soft Power

Often in the academic literature, public diplomacy is taken simply as a mechanism for applying soft power. As defined by Nye, soft power is “getting others to want what you want,” or co-opting them through attraction rather than coercing them by force.⁴² Most notably, it arises from upholding values and having an attractive culture, as well as legitimate foreign policies, but is also linked to hard power and to the ability to set the agenda.⁴³ However, even though “public diplomacy is inevitably linked to power,”⁴⁴ traditional public diplomacy is not necessarily about soft power – policy objectives can be anything from dialogue and trade to alliance management and military intervention.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the resources it mobilizes through its activity, culture, ideals, values, are mostly the same as those of soft power, so much so that some regard public diplomacy as “official policy translating soft power resources into action.”⁴⁶ Although the two concepts are closely connected, there is an essential difference: while traditional public diplomacy is indeed a way to “wield soft power,” network-oriented public diplomacy seeks to establish a creative and participatory dialogue, which in itself is a way to potentially “create soft power” where there was little before.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it can be seen that all the preceding discussion revolves around the idea that credibility and trust are crucial for the persuasive power of the “new” public diplomacy.

³⁴ Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s Only Superpower Can’t Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 41-56.

³⁵ Deibert, “Hyper-Realities of World Politics” (2002), 40-43.

³⁶ Steven Livingston, “The New Media and Transparency: What Are the Consequences for Diplomacy?” in *Cyber-Diplomacy: Managing Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Evan H. Potter (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 110-127.

³⁷ Elizabeth L. Toth and Seong-Hun Yun, “Future Sociological Public Diplomacy and the Role of Public relations: Evolution of Public Diplomacy,” in *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 4 (2009): 493-503.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 500.

³⁹ Daryl Copeland, “Guerrilla Diplomacy: The Revolution in Diplomatic Affairs,” *World Politics Review*, accessed November 21, 2010, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/4867/guerrilla-diplomacy-the-revolution-in-diplomatic-affairs>.

⁴⁰ Gordon Smith, “Reinventing Diplomacy: A Virtual Necessity,” Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, accessed November 21, 2010, <http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/3850058>.

⁴¹ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, “Noopolitik: A New Paradigm for Public Diplomacy in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, edited by Nancy Snow and Phillip Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2009), 352-366.

⁴² Nye, “The Paradox of American Power” (2002), 8.

⁴³ Joseph Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 94-109.

⁴⁴ Nancy Snow, “Rethinking Public Diplomacy,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, edited by Nancy Snow and Phillip Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2009), 3-12.

⁴⁵ Melissen, “The New Public Diplomacy” (2005), 14.; Hocking, “Rethinking...” (2005), 34.

⁴⁶ Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy”(2008), 61.

⁴⁷ Zaharna, “The Soft Power Differential” (2007), 221-222.

Credibility and Trust as the Key to Success

The essential elements of every relationship, and thus of successful network public diplomacy, are credibility and trust. Partly, credibility and trust are achieved by virtue of network communication, which gives various actors a chance to co-create messages in exchange for accepting their legitimacy due to their input.⁴⁸ Additionally, network communication fosters meaningful dialogue and person-to-person interaction, which can build trust over the long-term. In order to be meaningful, any public diplomacy initiative should not only put people in contact, but also demonstrate reciprocity and mutuality as well as long-term commitment.⁴⁹ Therefore, any attempts to impose meaning and values are likely to result only in the reaffirmation of the values of the other side and a downturn in perceptions. Moreover, credibility can be divided as a construct in three main parts: expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill; and numerous culture-specific secondary elements.⁵⁰ Furthermore, even though credibility is “largely in the eye of the beholder,”⁵¹ one should not forget that it changes from one setting to another and that it is dynamic. Thus “maintaining credibility is an ongoing effort.”⁵² In short, we can observe that “global politics has become a contest of competitive credibility.”⁵³

Nevertheless, if “those who can be trusted lead,”⁵⁴ we can make the paradoxical observation that to lead governments actually have to relinquish control over the process and act as a facilitator between similarly minded groups of non-state actors, mostly NGOs, which enjoy public trust.⁵⁵ This, of course, might be difficult because it implies that the government should open itself to criticism, but smart public diplomacy should indeed see the importance of self-criticism, credibility, and civil society in the accumulation of soft power.⁵⁶ Furthermore, diplomats, traditionally interacting mostly with their professional peers, have to learn to deal with ordinary individuals, who have become active participants in international affairs thanks to new communication technologies.⁵⁷ However, there are also several other important issues for influence and persuasion in the practice of public diplomacy.

Particular Issues for the “New” Public Diplomacy

There are three main issues facing public diplomacy: the possible confusion between domestic and foreign publics; the precise nature of its relationship with foreign policy; and the risks of relinquishing control over the process. Traditionally, it has been relatively easy to convey separate messages to domestic constituencies and foreign publics. Nowadays, however, with the advent of communication technologies, global media, and the related transparency, it is harder to separate the two dimensions. This leads to a certain “domestication” of foreign policy and a blurring between public diplomacy and public affairs, which might encourage political actors to use public diplomacy as a political tactic.⁵⁸ Related to this is the problem about the place of public diplomacy with its long-term nature and milieu-shaping goals in foreign policy, which emphasizes precise short-term policy objectives.⁵⁹ Indeed, too close an alignment, leading to the appearance of government control, might undercut credibility.⁶⁰ Finally, while the success of a state in the “networked century” depends on its ability to make the most of its connections without imposing itself,⁶¹ it is also true that the hierarchical model offers accountability for decision-making. Therefore, a government has to decide which parts of its foreign policy can be “networked.”⁶² In addition to these issues, one should also be aware of the natural limits of public diplomacy. There are certain essential preconditions for its success—it

⁴⁸ Ibid., 220.

⁴⁹ Zaharna, “Mapping Out a Spectrum of Public Diplomacy Initiatives” (2009), 91-92.

⁵⁰ Robert Gass and John Seiter, “Credibility and Public Diplomacy,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, edited by Nancy Snow and Phillip Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2009), 154-165.

⁵¹ Ibid., 155.

⁵² Ibid., 156-157.

⁵³ Nye, “The Pros and Cons of Citizen Diplomacy” (2010).

⁵⁴ Livingston, “The New Media and Transparency” (2002).

⁵⁵ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power” (2008), 105-106.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 108.

⁵⁷ Melissen, “The New Public Diplomacy” (2005), 24.

⁵⁸ Melissen, “The New Public Diplomacy” (2005), 13.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁰ Nye, “The Pros and Cons of Citizen Diplomacy” (2010).

⁶¹ Anne-Marie Slaughter, “America’s Edge: Power in the Networked Century,” in *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2009): 94-113.

⁶² Metzl, “Network Diplomacy” (2001), 2.

⁶³ Nicholas J. Cull, “Public Diplomacy: Seven Lessons for its Future from its Past,” in *Engagement: Public Diplomacy in a Globalised World*, edited by Daniel Fearn and Joyon Welsh (London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office), 16-29.

requires diplomats to begin by listening; to connect feedback to policy; to avoid making public diplomacy for domestic consumption; it requires credibility and the recognition that the government is not always the most credible interlocutor; and it emphasizes global concerns and wide participation of various actors. However, even if these lessons are observed, one has to bear in mind that more communication does not necessarily lead to better understanding⁶⁴ and that public diplomacy is inherently limited in its scope and possible achievements as it is only one way of influencing others and often has to face significant cultural barriers.⁶⁵ Last, but not least, we must not forget that public diplomacy is not necessarily a force for good and can be mobilized successfully to promote violence, as is the case with terrorists.⁶⁶

“Small States” and Public Diplomacy

Although public diplomacy is a response to deeper changes in world politics, its origins and the predominant voices in current debates come from the United States. Indeed, the term was first introduced and operationalized in the United States during the Cold War.⁶⁷ It can be argued that it is exactly the United States’ superpower status, and thus global influence, which revealed the need for image management in reaction to a downturn in perceptions. As the discussion above suggests, however, there is nothing that implies that public diplomacy is solely a preserve of “great powers.” Therefore, the main differences are in the scale of resources (financial investment, media outreach, civil society development). Consequently, this essay will now explore the particular characteristics and strategies employed by “small states” in public diplomacy, before making a case for the need of a restructuring of their diplomatic services.

Specific Characteristics of “Small State” Public Diplomacy

“Small states” are defined here as states with limited resources and, therefore, with a limited reach of diplomatic efforts. Thus, they have two interrelated central characteristics: their public diplomacy efforts are concentrated in several key areas and in several key countries, and knowledge about them and their image becomes significantly more blurred as one moves further away from their immediate region. For example, nations in transition focus on integrating multilateral institutions, underdeveloped states in the South often focus on development and correcting bad images, and countries placed suddenly in the spotlight because of geopolitical concerns try to influence perceptions about them.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, it is important to underline that public diplomacy thrives mostly in highly interdependent regions and in between postmodern states.⁶⁹

The key challenge for “small states” is the competition for attention in the global public sphere. Their main handicaps are small size and limited financial resources, coupled with little interest in their foreign policy.⁷⁰ As one practitioner found out firsthand, they face particularly large difficulties in conducting public diplomacy in the big powers that “matter” because their publics know less about the “small state” and are less inclined to learn more, but also because they have to navigate a more complex media scene (although expatriates can turn out to be an “untapped resource”).⁷¹ Furthermore, media attention, when present, is likely to be linked to one-off events (such as elections), political crises, or catastrophes. In light of this, it is hardly surprising that these states focus their efforts on their immediate environment. They seek to develop relationships with their communities in neighboring countries and with expatriates in the “West,” while attempting to pool resources and cooperate on regional level; there are also limited attempts to promote their language and culture. Furthermore, it is important to note that public diplomacy is just one of a wide range of techniques employed by “small states” to manage their reputations, including PR practices, country branding, cultural diplomacy, international broadcasts, and perception management, which seek to make best use of limited funding by careful targeting, creative approaches, “niche diplomacy,” and a holistic approach.⁷² Finally, the way “small states” are viewed by “big powers” plays much larger role in domestic affairs both because of their direct political influence and because “small states” attempt to emulate them, which has significant implications for the understanding of their own identity.

⁶⁴ Snow, “Rethinking Public Diplomacy,” 9.

⁶⁵ Melissen, “The New Public Diplomacy” (2005), 15.

⁶⁶ Philip Taylor, “Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, edited by Nancy Snow and Phillip Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2009), 12-17.

⁶⁷ Snow, “Rethinking Public Diplomacy,” 6.

⁶⁸ Snow, “Rethinking Public Diplomacy,” 9-10.

⁶⁹ Riordan, *The New Diplomacy*, (2003).

⁷⁰ Gyorgy Szondi, “Central and Eastern European Public Diplomacy: A Transitional Perspective on National Reputation Management,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, edited by Nancy Snow and Phillip Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2009), 292-313, 293, 299.

⁷¹ M.H. Kabir, “Public Diplomacy at Bangladesh’s Missions Abroad: A Practitioner’s View,” in *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 2 (2007): 299-302, 301.

⁷² Szondi, “Central and Eastern European Public Diplomacy” (2009), 293-294, 295-309.

Adapting “Small States” Public Diplomacy to the 21st Century

The overview of special characteristics indicates that there are no fundamental obstacles to the conduct of successful public diplomacy by “small states.” What’s more, practitioners from these countries acknowledge the added value of the network model of common dialogue even on a reduced scale.⁷³ They, however, seem prone to a number of mistakes, notably related to coordination between pillars and, at the strategic level, high politicization with related short-term thinking, lack of strategic continuity, lack of transparency, lack of evaluation, and human resources, in addition to chronic underfunding. In particular, “small states” are generally so focused on disseminating a positive image that they begin to sit uneasily with the reality on the ground and actually undermine their countries’ already low reputation due to the loss of credibility, which is crucial in the “new” public diplomacy.⁷⁴

All this strongly suggests the need to restructure diplomatic services of “small states” along a network model. Inside the foreign policy apparatus this would create a more efficient exchange of knowledge and would foster creativity. Outside government, provided it can shed the culture of secrecy and insularity where possible, diplomats should work with non-state actors and notably NGOs on *ad hoc* basis to gain quick access to their specialized knowledge about certain issues. They should also engage with ordinary people and give them an effective say in problems that concern them directly.⁷⁵ Diplomats have to develop a reputation for credibility as “cue-givers” and act as facilitators in these new networks instead of gatekeepers.⁷⁶ They should also develop adequate evaluation criteria, which will allow for easier management and will demonstrate the effects of soft power.⁷⁷ It can be said that “small states,” with their less numerous bureaucracies, limited number of agencies involved in diplomacy efforts, and more modest programs, have a comparative advantage in this area in relation to “big powers” with complex foreign policy apparatus such as the United States or France. Indeed, they should use the diffusion of power created by the information revolution to conduct a revolution in their diplomatic affairs, which will place them as indispensable players in the network century.

Conclusion

We can easily see network-oriented public diplomacy as a way to adapt the old process of diplomacy to the new changes in the international environment, most notably the proliferation of new actors and the democratization of the access to information. In turn, this requires new approaches to maintain credibility and trust, another long-term concern for diplomats. What is radically new, however, is that the “new” public diplomacy can be an “equalizer” and a precious opportunity for “small states” to play a more active role in the twenty-first century despite their limitations. Nevertheless, for now public diplomacy remains only one of many ways of managing relations between states. What remains to be seen is whether it has the necessary potential to be the next step in the evolution of diplomacy, which, if true, might have radical implications for the nature of world politics.

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⁷³ Kabir, “Public Diplomacy at Bangladesh’s Missions Abroad” (2008), 301-302.

⁷⁴ Szondi, “Central and Eastern European Public Diplomacy,” 310-311.

⁷⁵ Metzl, “Network Diplomacy” (2002), 4-7.

⁷⁶ Hocking, “Rethinking the ‘New’ Public Diplomacy” (2005), 40-41.

⁷⁷ Pierre Pahlavi, “Evaluating Public Diplomacy Programmes,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 2 (2007): 255-281.

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