

Beyond the New Public Diplomacy

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Introduction*)

The debate on public diplomacy now dominates research agendas in diplomatic studies. Most of the world's foreign ministries started to identify 'PD' as a significant challenge during the last decade, and the subject features on most training curricula for junior diplomats. With many newcomers from a variety of disciplines joining this niche sub-field, public diplomacy has become diplomatic studies' best export, as shown by a flurry of public and private advisory reports, books and articles. The launch of a number of specialized journals makes one wonder how far this market of ideas on public diplomacy can be stretched.¹ With e-bulletins, blogs and other internet-based resources, public diplomacy is also an activity that seems more at home in the global communications' realm than other modes of diplomacy. A growing number of foreign ministers have their personal blogs or write daily tweets for their 'followers'. Policy dialogues with members of the public are becoming

*) In a somewhat different form this paper will be published in Andrew Cooper, Jorge Heine and Ramesh Thakur (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (forthcoming). The author also contributed on public diplomacy to the forthcoming textbook edited by Pauline Kerr and Geoffrey Wiseman, *Diplomacy in a Globalizing World: Theories and Practices*, New York: Oxford University Press.

1) Three journals focusing on public diplomacy are *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, *Public Diplomacy Magazine*, and *Exchange: The Journal of Public Diplomacy*, while an academic journal like *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, which is dedicated to the study of diplomacy in general, has experienced a surge in articles on public diplomacy.

more common as a result of the spread of social media. Diplomacy today is evolving at a much faster rate than in the second half of the twentieth century. It is no longer a stiff waltz among states alone, but a jazzy dance of colourful coalitions, and public diplomacy is at the heart of its current rebooting (Khanna 2011: 22). While traditional diplomatic practice is associated with actors involved in largely invisible processes of international relations, public diplomacy is about diplomatic engagement with people (Welsh and Fearn 2008). It has been instrumental in opening up the traditionally closed domain of accredited practitioners and made diplomats more visible than they have ever been.

Public diplomacy is, then, ‘an instrument used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behaviour; build and manage relationships; and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values’ (Gregory 2011: 353). It is therefore in a sense a metaphor for the democratization of diplomacy, with multiple actors playing a role in what was once an area restricted to a few. Importantly, collaborating with those outside government and operating in the field is fast becoming a necessary condition of success in diplomacy. Governments realize that developing their country’s overseas attractiveness requires reaching out to transnational civil society, and academics quickly understood that they could have a say in this. It is important to stress, however, that the comprehensive knowledge network in which modern diplomacy and public diplomacy are debated extends well beyond academia (Melissen 2011b). Scholar-diplomats, and others familiar with diplomatic practice as well as the world of organized learning, have made a particularly distinctive contribution by articulating the importance of ‘soft power’ and its implications for contemporary statecraft (Nye 2011).

‘Theory’ followed practice in public diplomacy studies. Just as the end of the Cold War took international relations students by surprise, the perceived need for public outreach that preoccupied foreign policy practitioners preceded most scholarly interest in the subject. As long as foreign ministries did not pay much attention to public diplomacy, neither did most of those who studied them. Think tanks such as the Center for Security and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington DC and the Foreign Policy Centre in London were among the first to stake a claim, questioning the changing nature of diplomatic practice in the communication age. Some of their early insights have stood the test of time (see Burt and Robinson 1998; Leonard and Alakeson 2000; Leonard et al. 2002). Permeating this work was the consensus that public diplomacy offered opportunities for expanding and updating the repertoire of diplomatic tools. The challenge was – and remains – how to move forward in this field. Some countries started seeing public diplomacy as a first (and cheap) line of defence, associating it with short-term political agendas that tended to undermine public diplomacy’s external legitimacy. For many observers the best example of how not to proceed was

US public diplomacy under George W. Bush's administration, infused with corporate advertising and marketing approaches that were applied rather simplistically to the complex world of transnational relations. Other governments – particularly nations in transition such as the Central European powers, which desired association with organizations like the EU and NATO – were quick to incorporate public diplomacy in their foreign policy planning, viewing it as instrumental in achieving their strategic purposes and interests.

This paper aims to help both students and practitioners think about public diplomacy's characteristics and modernization more clearly. It first outlines criticisms levelled against public diplomacy, as well as some implications of such criticisms. It then reviews some of the different states' practices, and points out that the juxtaposition of traditional approaches and the 'new public diplomacy' stifles thinking on its evolution. The paper examines the public diplomacy of different types of actors, and how their perspective has a bearing on their working relationship with states, so as to point in directions where governments may be able to enhance their public diplomacy potential. The challenge of cooperation between states and official actors is contrasted with the potential of state collaboration with non-governmental organizations, international business and civil society.

Box 1

Polylaterality: Diplomacy's Third Dimension

Geoffrey Wiseman (2010) argues that the twentieth-century evolution of diplomatic practice has resulted in a third dimension in the conduct of international relations, next to the familiar bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. Polyilateral diplomacy, or state–non-state diplomacy, is equivalent to governments' diplomatic cooperation with transnational civil-society actors. Wiseman defines polylaterality as the 'conduct of relations between official entities (such as a state, several states acting together, or a state-based international organization) and at least one unofficial, non-state entity in which there is a reasonable expectation of systematic relationships, involving some form of reporting, communication, negotiation and representation, but not involving mutual recognition as sovereign, equivalent entities' (Wiseman 2010: 24). This development should not, however, be read as part of a supposed decline of the state in international relations. The state is more resilient than is sometimes suggested and one should not underestimate the innovative capacity of state-based diplomacy. A number of factors contribute to state–non-state diplomacy. For example, strong democracies are more likely than (semi-)authoritarian states to accommodate transnational civil society. Transnationalism on low politics is more probable than on high political issues such as security, and long-term transnational relations are more likely to produce success in diplomacy than short-term campaigns.

The paper takes the view that public diplomacy flourishes in a 'polylateral' world of multiple actors (Wiseman 2010) in which the state remains highly relevant in increasingly diverse international networks. Meanwhile, it recognizes that in day-to-day practice, the role of government may be both

crucial and problematic, and that even public diplomacy itself may be less of an option in certain international relationships. Finally, this paper's advice to practitioners and trainers is that much can be learnt outside their comfort zone from how public diplomacy is practised in distinct organizational and cultural settings. (See Box 1)

Critique versus acceptance

Most governments today embrace public diplomacy, at least publicly. Few, if any, see it as a threat to more traditional diplomatic methods. Diplomats after 1945 became more accustomed to diplomacy opening up to society and, in the words of Harold Nicolson referring to political leaders, ‘the fascination it exercises upon the amateur’ (Craig 1952: 146). In their reminiscences, diplomats heavily criticized the proliferation of summit meetings between political leaders in the second half of the twentieth century (Melissen 2005), but public diplomacy’s recent rise did not encounter similar resistance from practitioners. Overt opposition might indeed have a boomerang effect as public diplomacy empowers the public, at least in the democratic world. At a time of growing civil discontent with government, official opinion seemingly designed to curb the voice of the people would not go down well. Lip-service to public diplomacy is thus *de rigueur*. Non-democratic countries, however, are a special category. One might assume that they have more centralized control over the image they want to project, yet the difficulty for authoritarian governments lies in persuading foreign publics of something that their own domestic public may not believe. Where unleashed public opinion is seen as a threat to governmental control, the more enlightened variant of public diplomacy is bound to meet scepticism.

Political correctness and professional survival instincts are silencing most professional critics, who even tend to stay silent after retirement, as seen from the absence of critiques in diplomatic memoirs. It is mostly in conversation, sometimes in conference settings and only rarely in writing that one finds practitioners who refuse to distinguish between propaganda and public diplomacy. The dismissal of public diplomacy can rather be observed by it

being ignored in places and in policy areas where it should, arguably, be debated. 'Old School' diplomats see it as a form of political advertising. They do have a case, although only partly, when they mention that a host of bilateral relationships leaves relatively little room for engagement with civil society, as in authoritarian states.

The challenge of Western outreach to the Muslim world is squarely confronted with the difficulty of making public diplomacy work in a public environment that is not congenial to exchange and engagement of the wider public (Van Doeveren 2011). The recent uprisings in Northern Africa and the Middle East are presenting other governments with new, and equally daunting, public diplomacy challenges. Theory and practice are sometimes worlds apart in the world of public diplomacy. It is not always clear, even in the closest bilateral relationships, when ambassadors' actions become an infringement upon the host country's domestic affairs, thus violating the Westphalian principle underpinning the society of states. Outside the democratic world it is easier to find common appreciation of such limits than, for instance, in Europe. The European Union has become a true laboratory for public diplomacy experimentation, constantly pressing the boundaries of what is acceptable diplomatic behaviour. Among EU member states, walking the fine, invisible and undefined line between the acceptable and the unacceptable may nevertheless be problematic, as governments encourage ambassadors to engage in public debates in their host society. Examples abound of ambassadors who have run into trouble with their own foreign ministry, although many such incidents remain hidden from the public. Plus ça change in diplomacy.

Criticism of public diplomacy is a healthy antidote in a field in which it is seen to act as a force for good. First, the critique serves as a reminder that its acceptance is not universal, although most academic writers sign up to a broad 'public diplomacy consensus'. Enough governments and individual practitioners remain, however, that see public diplomacy as intrusive, threatening and undermining their country's stability. Second, the critique invites broader reflection on how diplomacy is changing and how public diplomacy is an expression of the changing relationship between the diplomatic establishment and wider society, both at home and abroad.

Box 2***The 'Old School' Critique of Public Diplomacy***

Sceptics among diplomatic practitioners see public diplomacy as interfering with 'the real job'. They coincide with a small cohort of traditionalists in diplomatic studies who prefer to stick to the tried and tested methods of diplomacy. Traditionalists see public diplomacy as a modern name for white propaganda – that is, propaganda admitting its source, and directed mainly at foreign publics, but also at the domestic constituency. Because this 'fashionable practice' is not really diplomacy in their view, traditionalists consider public diplomacy a misnomer and a largely overrated or misunderstood activity (Berridge 2010: 179, 183). In their assessment, diplomats and their political masters know best how to conduct international affairs and therefore 'the public ought to occupy a position peripheral to diplomacy' (Sharp 2009: 271). Such authors show no interest in public diplomacy's historical pedigree, or in forecasting the salience of this activity in future international relations. This is also consistent with the traditionalist critique that public diplomacy remains largely beyond its analytical horizon. Yet one annoying reality for traditionalists is that the same foreign ministries that are at the centre of their conception of diplomacy do regard public diplomacy as part of their toolbox.

'New' versus 'old' practice – and beyond

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 were the main trigger for the global debate on public diplomacy. Students of public diplomacy were ready for a fresh start, but had too little patience to learn from history, and a sense that contemporary challenges in the global communication sphere had little in common with the Cold War experience (Cull 2009). Without doing justice to post-war experience, as reflected in some of the literature (Malone 1988; Tuch 1990; Manheim 1994), public diplomacy revisionists were quick to incorporate existing best practices in a 'new public diplomacy' model. Neither public diplomacy nor propaganda were strangers to the post-1945 ideological stand-off between East and West, the basic difference between the two being that – unlike public diplomacy – propaganda is generally uninterested in dialogue or any meaningful form of relationship-building. In the West, the US government developed a great deal of public diplomacy expertise between the 1950s and late 1990s through the work of the United States Information Agency (USIA), while European countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom channelled part of their public diplomacy work through cultural institutions like the Goethe Institut and the British Council. In the context of a new Europe, Germany saw an immediate need to develop its public diplomacy after the Federal Republic's foundation, despite it being practised under another name; its relations with neighbouring countries like France and the Netherlands foreshadowed the later importance of public diplomacy in the European Union. Late-twentieth-century Europe showed much variety in public diplomacy practices, serving a range of economic, social and political

purposes. As distinct from lobbying, which is focused on policy-making circles, public diplomacy aimed to influence broader opinion in foreign societies. Some public diplomacy was defensive in nature, but countries also took advantage of this tool to support their rise. The Netherlands, for instance, started focusing on ethical issues such as euthanasia, or liberal policies on soft drugs and homosexuality that, in the eyes of many foreigners, were hallmarks of its overly permissive society, while Spain, after its transition to democracy, started engaging foreign publics with its supposed modernity. Post-September 2011, the normative call for a 'new public diplomacy' (Melissen 2005) was mostly based on a forward-looking analysis of evolving practices in avant-garde countries in the transatlantic world. It was also, however, a response to the political climate in which US diplomacy and public diplomacy became traumatized by the 'war on terror' and dominated by considerations of national security. The perceived need for updated public diplomacy practices was generally based on a more liberal view of international relations and a reaction to the United States' approach, which was dominated by security concerns and corporate practices. Outside North America, it was much less common to view public diplomacy mainly in the context of the threat of terrorism. Many practitioners saw public diplomacy's rise as a window to modernizing their profession. Inside government, advocates of the 'new public diplomacy' saw the whole debate, and new approach, as a way to help change a largely risk-averse and inward-looking diplomatic culture when it came to dealings with the public. They criticized existing government practices that conceived of 'PD' as mere information work characterized by one-way communication to foreign publics and relatively little leeway for embassies in their contacts with the foreign press.

In academia, meanwhile, a new generation of public diplomacy scholars, with credentials in disciplines like history, politics, communication studies and public relations, anticipated and proposed new forms of diplomatic engagement in which contacts with foreign societies were no longer at the periphery of diplomatic affairs. Outside government, the same think tank researchers, academics and consultants who had initially been surprised by public diplomacy's emergence started acting as advisers to practitioners who, in their view, needed to be enlightened about what was happening to their profession. In North America and Europe, foreign ministries produced public diplomacy manuals guiding their staff at overseas embassies through the practicalities of public diplomacy work. Including references to public diplomacy strategy, issues such as the question of prioritization, 'lessons learned' and evaluation of policy, such documents have proven useful tools for public diplomacy training as well as a reality check for advocates of the 'new public diplomacy' (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011). Parallel to such in-house initiatives, practitioners' seminars on public diplomacy hosted by foreign ministries or other institutions became opportunities for policy-sharing among countries. With their gradually

widening focus, they also contributed to broader reflection on the modernization of diplomacy *per se* (Wilton Park 2010).

In the literature, interest in innovation or ‘newness’ in public diplomacy did not bring much conceptual clarity to the debate. It did, however, remind practitioners and policy-makers that public diplomacy today is increasingly based on listening to ‘the other’, that it is about dialogue rather than monologue, and is not just aimed at short-term policy objectives but also at long-term relationship-building. A flood of books and articles conveyed a growing consensus that governments’ legitimacy and credibility in an increasingly transnational environment required a greater role for social actors, and that public diplomacy was not just in the national interest but also in the common interest (Melissen 2005; *Annals of the American Academy of Social and Political Science* 2008; Snow and Taylor 2009). In Europe, which was much less affected by the anti-terrorist leitmotiv than the United States, public diplomacy focused on a variety of social concerns, including immigration and integration, ethical issues, and cross-border environmental and public health matters. Most initiatives were government-driven, but public diplomacy in Western Europe did wake up to the importance of contributions from civil society to strengthen such initiatives’ legitimacy. Increasingly turning around transnational issues and debates, public diplomacy thus started moving beyond the notion of being an inter-state beauty contest. The somewhat old-fashioned idea of public diplomacy as a form of country promotion and brand projection nevertheless survives today, mainly in countries with limited experience and capacity in this field, as well as the trade promotion and tourism sectors of most governments, but, perhaps surprisingly, also in some advanced countries (Anholt 2007; Van Ham 2008). The Swedish government, for instance, conceives of public diplomacy as a sustained effort to develop Sweden’s brand identity, ‘Brand Sweden’, which featured some remarkable innovations – notably the creation of virtual meeting places – but is also based on a competitive conception of the national interest that is still largely defined in economic terms (Pamment 2011: 175–218; Pamment 2011a).

The civil society dimension that is conspicuously present in state-of-the-art public diplomacy in Europe and North America is traditionally less visible outside the West, where public diplomacy is largely conceived in terms of governmental national strategy. East Asia is particularly fascinated with soft power and the question of how public diplomacy can help the national image keep up with economic growth, counterbalance existing historical rivalries and contribute to international regional community-building (Lee and Melissen 2011). China finds it hard to parade a storyline that is as powerful with Western publics as the democracy/rule of law/human rights triad that is a major soft-power resource for democratic states (d’Hooghe 2011; 2011a). China’s public diplomacy style appears to sit rather uneasily with the evolving concept of public diplomacy in Europe and North America, although it is less

constrained by such considerations in international relationships in the developing world, where foreign aid and public diplomacy go hand in hand.

Lessons from public diplomacy as it unfolds in East Asia and other cultural settings can only enrich an academic debate that has been largely centred on Western traditions and practices. Academics and diplomats are well advised to take a look at China's experiences and those of other Asian countries – just as Asians have learned, and are still learning, a great deal from the West. **(See Appendix 1 A Case Study with Learning Points from East Asian Public Diplomacy).**

States and international regions

It is hard to generalize about the public diplomacy of states, even in the seemingly homogenizing European Union. In public diplomacy terms, the United Kingdom and France, for instance, have professional cultures that show as many differences as similarities. Also in Europe are (at the end of the queue) Kosovo, and modern but fractured states like Belgium and Spain, with powerful sub-state regions practising their own assertive public diplomacy. Practices vary a great deal among countries, and can often be labelled as fairly traditional communication and information. Old-style messaging, promotion activities, nation-branding efforts based on corporate sector techniques and highly centralized public diplomacy practices, however, do not exclude governments from learning from the more enlightened principles of the 'new public diplomacy'. The challenges facing many young states, or those that have gone through radical political and economic change, have taught governments of such states that dealing with foreign publics is not as easy as it seems and requires a degree of agreement of opinion at home. The experiences of Central European states like Poland or the Slovak Republic, for example, show how important a precondition of public diplomacy it is to have a broad domestic consensus about national identity (Ociepka and Ryniesjka, 2007; Szondi 2009). When different political factions have their own reading of a country's social and political history, the past can be an obstacle to framing a future-oriented public diplomacy.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, governments have made noticeable progress by constructing a 'self-learning' national public diplomacy system, in which best practices are shared, for instance among embassies in

the same region, and the level of expertise is upgraded by trial and error. The effects of public diplomacy projects in some 'PD' avant-garde countries, such as Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, are also constantly measured. Nonetheless, evaluation issues remain public diplomacy's Achilles' heel (Pamment 2011; Pahlavi 2007), and it is important to bear in mind that meagre results have made the past decade a sobering experience for many. The case of the United States' popularity ratings going from bad to worse in Pew Research Center polls is well known. Europeans have also learned the lesson that the requirements of success go beyond the last word in public outreach, modern management techniques and recalibrated administrative procedures. Countries that have gone through image crises (the Netherlands and Denmark), that have been severely affected by severe financial and economic downturns (Ireland, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain), or that have suffered serious reputational damage to their body politic (Italy and some of the Balkan EU members) understand that progress in public diplomacy is only made in small steps. In recent years most governments have nevertheless increased their public diplomacy budget, yet often lacking clear-cut proof that it has been working and in competition with other areas of policy that usually have a stronger constituency. Expenses for public diplomacy are modest in comparison with anything else in the foreign affairs budget, not to speak of defence and intelligence budgets. The US State Department's expenditure on public diplomacy of one per cent of its total budget perfectly illustrates how governments find it hard to put their money where their mouth is – and the US percentage compares favourably with other countries.

Where does all this leave public diplomacy within wider diplomatic practice? Contributions to the study of public diplomacy from a number of disciplines outside diplomatic studies do not assess public diplomacy in the context of the conduct of international relations, of which it is an inalienable part. One could take the view that public diplomacy and diplomacy are merging into something new, as opposed to the conventional view that each is driven by a different logic (Melissen 2012). In such an inclusive type of diplomatic praxis, in which diplomacy and public diplomacy blend, public diplomacy becomes epiphenomenal – that is, accompanying broader developments in a morphed diplomacy. Traditionalist authors do not accept that the increasing linkages between diplomatic institutions and domestic and foreign societies contribute to diplomacy's transmutation into a more 'societized' form of diplomacy. Ironically, however, such a change is a palpable development in the day-to-day experience of people working inside foreign ministries. Advocates of the 'new public diplomacy' have contributed to our understanding of the practice by emphasizing and dissecting the novel techniques of diplomatic relations with 'others'. In the final analysis, the revisionist juxtaposition of traditional and 'new' public diplomacy remains unsatisfactory, however, as far as it fails to analyse its subject in the context of

overall change in diplomacy or conceptualizes public diplomacy as the exclusive practice of states, linked to the 'club' model of diplomacy.

In a networked diplomacy model, the public variant of diplomacy is not the prerogative of states, although states arguably remain the principal actors in international society. It is hard to generalize about the public outreach of states. On the European subcontinent alone, the likes of Liechtenstein, Norway and Belarus share the same social space, as do Germany, France, Montenegro and the Holy See. The public diplomacy of states can serve many specific purposes. It may stem from their desire to be noticed by other countries (or remain unnoticed for the darker side of their social reality) to spreading universal values to others; from pressing economic concerns in a climate of enhanced global competition to the ambition to deliver global public goods; from building a line of defence against foreign criticism to considerations of national strategy. Rising economic powers outside the West see public diplomacy as a tool to help them move upwards on the global league tables (Gilboa 2009; Cooper 2009). In an international environment of tectonic power shifts, the intense interest in public diplomacy by the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China), the MIKTs (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea and Turkey) and other emerging economies in Latin America, Asia and Africa can indeed be seen as an expression of the aspirations of the 'rising Rest'.

Public diplomacy's rise outside the Western world throws up intriguing questions, including how, apart from states, the international regions of which states are members have entered the sphere of soft power. The public diplomacy dynamics of regions in Latin America, East Asia or the Middle East are sometimes strikingly different from those in North America and Europe. Little comparative public diplomacy research has been undertaken on such regions outside the Western world. One matter of dispute in many of the world's regions is that they have not yet sorted out their common historical legacy in the way that Western Europe did after the Second World War. The extent to which, for instance, France and Germany have locked themselves into a common destiny and even educated their youth with the same history books is a distant prospect for most other countries in the world. Elsewhere, past differences tend to cast long shadows over bilateral relations, reinforcing the tendency for political controversies to be played out by 'megaphone diplomacy'. East Asia retains the issue of public hypersensitivity of historical enemies Japan, South Korea and China, even though significant improvements have been made. In the Western hemisphere, economic risers such as Brazil and Mexico are frustrated that overseas publics sometimes stress the divisions in their societies rather than their economic successes. One stark difference between East Asia and Latin America is that public diplomacy in the Americas is more overtly competitive and political. An encouraging development in East Asia, meanwhile, is a growing sense that, in the absence of well-established multilateral structures, the potential for public diplomacy

to contribute to regional community-building is recognized. Such developments in different parts of the world reveal how national public diplomacy strategies can be tied up with regional power relations in ways that contribute to international stability and transparency, a perspective that deserves further scrutiny by practitioners and academics.

Apart from looking at public diplomacy in terms of its potential for cooperation between states, public diplomacy coordination within states has the potential to become a bone of contention between different departmental interests. Governments like to speak with one voice, but national coordination in public diplomacy is easier on governmental drawing boards than in the reality of day-to-day bureaucratic infighting. Administrative arrangements designed for coordination purposes rarely produce the desired results. Public diplomacy strategy boards come and go, advisory councils tend to lead a relatively marginal existence in the hands-on world of diplomacy, and government departments' rival interests make it hard to deliver the paper reality of a 'joined-up' approach, as experienced even by countries with a sophisticated public diplomacy. For starters, the public diplomacy perspective of foreign ministries, defence departments (that generally speak of 'strategic communication') and the ministry of economics (embracing the practice of economic branding), respectively, tends to vary significantly.

Domestic coordination problems also complicate the informal synchronization of countries' public diplomacy. One example of such international collaboration can be found in the streamlining of Western policies towards the Islamic world in the interests of stimulating counter-narratives that are meant to replace radical Islamist discourses. Yet structural harmonization of public diplomacy policies is hard for individuals and governments with mental maps that tend to contrast national interests.

Finally, an interesting public diplomacy variant is that democratic governments sometimes undertake public diplomacy on behalf of autocrats craving international support. Western European leaders like Tony Blair, Gerhard Schröder and Jacques Chirac, who all paid tribute to Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, must have realized they did just that when they visited Tripoli's eccentric dictator. In a similar vein, US President Obama's historic 2009 speech in Cairo on relations between the West and the Islamic world was read as a tacit tribute to Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's 'last Pharaoh'. Today's massive political changes in Libya and Egypt do not, of course, bring an end to Western public diplomacy in Northern Africa and the Middle East. Rather, Western public diplomacy will have to address the greater challenge of working with a turbulent civil society instead of the countries' former leaders and their cronies.

Collaboration beyond the state

The processes and purposes of international organizations' public diplomacy are different from those undertaken by the states that comprise them. National public diplomacy depends largely on the work of embassies, but most international organizations see public diplomacy more as a centrally directed communication effort. Some have ambitious communication units, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Public Diplomacy Division at NATO's Brussels headquarters. Other international organizations have woken up to their public diplomacy mission more recently, sometimes as a result of reorientation of their mission, or have just started looking beyond the circle of their traditional institutional stakeholders, such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague.

Some of the larger organizations with regional membership, such as NATO or the EU, now see public diplomacy as an existential necessity. They focus a great deal of their public outreach, however – indeed the lion's share of their communication work – on internal audiences. NATO's outreach to its treaty area electorates aims to muster support for its revamped organization and missions, while an important EU focus is promoting an EU identity and inculcating EU citizens in the rather distant objective of Union citizenship. Beyond their membership, NATO's and the EU's public diplomacy efforts are aimed at demonstrating their coherence as an international actor, as well as their contribution as global norm entrepreneurs. In addition, the EU has developed some collaborative public diplomacy initiatives that are breaking new ground: one is the so-called EUNIC scheme, which aims to overcome the diminishing returns of parallel national programmes and aims at cooperation among several European countries' cultural institutes, such as the

Alliance Française, the Instituto Cervantes and the British Council; the other is the highly ambitious European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU's own diplomatic service to spread the Union's influence through a wide network of 'embassies' called external delegations. These are early examples of a kind of supranational collaborative public diplomacy that is likely to develop gradually during the twenty-first century, as long as it serves greater efficiency without eroding the national profile of member states.

The question of cooperation between states and different types of sub-state actors, especially cities and regions, is of an entirely different nature. Cities increasingly stress their own representative interests and concerns about image and reputation. They are open to coordinating their public relations activities with states when there is a mutually perceived need. Typically, such coordination is an extension of joint lobbying in favour of common objectives, as is the case with joint bidding for milestone events such as the Olympic Games or World Expo, or when trying to attract the headquarters of international organizations or major non-governmental organizations (NGOs). By contrast, the independent foreign projects and activities of cities in fields such as overseas development, post-conflict reconstruction or collaboration with their immigrant populations' countries of origin are perhaps more likely to interfere with the national government's foreign policy. What also stands in the way of such state-sub-state collaboration is the clash of professional cultures. Local civil servants may be worldly-wise, but usually operate in circles that are markedly different from the specific habitat of diplomats hovering around national, foreign and diplomatic spheres. Still, overlapping interests between national and local governments, in particular big cities, suggest that there is sufficient scope for cooperation. Foreign ministries would be wise to see the advantages of informal international networks that are cultivated by local governments (Wang 2006). Moreover, individual contacts – the proverbial 'last three feet' – in local communities will reinforce outreach to a level of society that is less familiar ground for those operating in national circles.

Public diplomacy collaboration between states and regions is an entirely different story. In federal states, regions with special competences in economic, cultural and educational fields are investing heavily in public diplomacy. Some, such as Quebec in Canada or Catalonia in Spain, have been active in cultural and public diplomacy for decades. In the absence of the trappings of statehood, regions striving for international recognition attach exceptional importance to public diplomacy. Regional public diplomacy is often about identity and 'nation-building', and the domestic dimension of such regions' public diplomacy is well developed. Manifestations of sub-state regional public diplomacy can also be found in authoritarian countries like Russia and China, which, interestingly, give carefully controlled leeway in foreign affairs to regional authorities to help strengthen the reputation and legitimacy of the central government (Albina 2010; Chen et al. 2010).

In the tug-of-war between regional and national governments in parts of the Western world, public diplomacy has become a complex affair. Some federal states find it hard to harmonize regional and national public diplomacy narratives into one seamless whole. Public diplomacy collaboration between sub-state regional and national governments is not necessarily politically sensitive, as can be seen in federal states like Mexico or Australia, but examples also point in a contrary direction. One would, for instance, expect the priority capital cities to be targeted by Scotland's and Catalonia's public diplomacy to be London and Madrid, but this does not wash with these two regions' political elites. In many other places, emotions do not tend to run so high, but the public diplomacy of regions seems overall to be more supplementary than complementary to that of the state. In the knowledge that they are usually better known at home than abroad, regions have to navigate between public diplomacy cooperation with the national government and presenting an alternative to it. The fact that the countries of which they are a component part are more visible on the international stage, and that some of the more powerful regions feel purposefully neglected by 'club' diplomacy, has no doubt prompted their often zealous commitment to an independent regional public diplomacy.

Comparisons of best practices and policy transfers on public diplomacy are nowadays widespread and traverse different levels of governance, but actual cooperation among international organizations, national governments, and regional and local authorities encounters various kinds of resistance. Coordination difficulties and differences in organizational culture are evident, and progress in this field is therefore likely to be slow. This can be contrasted with public-private cooperation between national governments and NGOs, or government and international business. State-NGO collaboration in the field of public diplomacy has been well researched. A variety of cases, including those leading to the Ottawa Treaty (Williams, Wareham and Goose 2008) and the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC), are well documented. Mobilizing international support in such coalitions generally takes place in a short-term campaign that bears little resemblance to conventional multilateral diplomacy. Contacts between some governments and a number of reputable NGOs have even turned into structural exchange relationships. With the rising number of NGOs and fast-growing transnational links, a dynamic form of collaborative diplomacy is emerging that stands in contrast with the rather more stale MFA aim of official policy coordination. In the small but growing number of countries where such practices are becoming common, the initiative is by no means reserved to governments. Non-state actors' public diplomacy in multiple transnational networks is taking this further, with civil-society organizations and citizens as participants at the centre of events. This type of public diplomacy has surfaced in European relations with the Middle East, where the absence of

success with more conventional approaches has led governments to risk experimenting by keeping government officials in the background.

Finally, three forms of public diplomacy that require a brief mention are: public-private partnerships between government and business; citizen diplomacy; and the domestic dimension of public diplomacy. All three push the boundaries of public diplomacy's traditional conception. Governments can learn a great deal from corporate-sector practices in areas such as marketing, public relations and branding. International business relations now deserve more attention from practitioners in the context of public diplomacy. Large companies, employers' organizations and international chambers of commerce have become more conscious of the importance of national image and the cultivation of nations' economic brands. A series of Western countries that suffered from image crises has seen business willingly step up to the plate in this matter. Second, voluntary public diplomacy in the guise of (more or less) independent citizens' contributions to international understanding (Sharp 2001; Mueller 2006) seems far removed from the contributions made by business. Both cases, however, reflect a belief that private initiatives can assist in developing a kind of public diplomacy that is not only less government-driven, but ultimately also more effective. A more conceptual question for continuing debate is whether it is appropriate to refer to such private forms of international engagement as 'diplomacy'. Third, the same applies to the assumption that governmental engagement with the domestic public is part of a nation's overall public diplomacy effort, as it employs similar communication techniques and its public outreach activities have much in common with those of classical public diplomacy aimed at foreign publics. Building on the asset of an active civil society, the domestic dimension of public diplomacy is not just an attractive proposition, but in the eyes of governments in, for example, neighbouring Australia and Indonesia already a fact of modern diplomatic life.

Box 3***Domestic Publics and the Case for a Holistic Public Diplomacy***

The difference between public diplomacy aimed at overseas public opinion and at domestic outreach is defined by the public, but their separation can be questioned in an interconnected, online and highly mobile world of global citizens, diasporas and expatriates. The domestic body of citizens becomes increasingly heterogeneous, with more connections to key segments of other countries' populations. Citizen diplomacy and 'domestic' public diplomacy have a people-to-people approach in common, but the state's role and the link to foreign policy content are more prominent in domestic public diplomacy. Domestic groups and citizens are seen as the government's potential partners. In such a conception, the support of 'at home' citizens for international policy choices is a precondition for effective public diplomacy abroad. International messages must resonate at home, and a society's projected image must be embedded in its identity to be credible to foreign publics.

Not everyone agrees that public diplomacy can be for domestic consumption. Partly because of bureaucratic considerations, governments do not always acknowledge domestic outreach as part of their public diplomacy strategy, but they often approach their 'corporate communication' as such. Opponents also advise that public diplomacy should be protected from interference by political actors looking for votes, and that domestic outreach cannot be a cure-all for dissension and discord within a society.

Conclusion

From the perspective of diplomatic studies, one premise of this analysis is that public diplomacy can only be understood if analysed in the context of change in the wider process of diplomatic practice. One interesting observation here in the recent evolution of public diplomacy is that public diplomacy is becoming less national, not only in terms of the actors involved but even when considering the themes that states pick to tell ‘their story’. National governments always have their own interests in mind but, when practising public diplomacy, they increasingly emphasize common interests as well as global public goods. Meanwhile, non-state and particularly non-official actors play an increasingly large role in public diplomacy. In practice as it is unfolding now, non-state actors can acquire the capacity to act as initiators of public diplomacy, but even ‘new public diplomacy’, or a morphed variant of diplomacy that includes public diplomacy, does not do away with the role of government. Interestingly, public diplomacy at the beginning of the twenty-first century is moving away from a straightforward promotional perspective. Governments perceive public diplomacy more as a form of diplomatic engagement as well as part of a broader collaboration with other actors, although working with some is easier than synchronizing aims and activities with others.

Perhaps the greatest chasm between the perspective on public diplomacy of practitioners and early twenty-first century scholars is that scholars implicitly play down the connection between public diplomacy and power in international relations. Scholars who are intrigued by the ‘new public

diplomacy' tend to concentrate more on public diplomacy techniques and they seem to have a tacit consensus that public diplomacy is 'a good thing'.

The discussion in this paper suggests that among a variety of actors, across cultures and regardless of the extant political structures, public diplomacy has been accepted to such a degree that one could speak of a global 'public diplomacy consensus'. Head-on critiques of public diplomacy are rare in public diplomacy studies, and are seldom voiced openly by practitioners. Yet critiques should be welcomed, by academics and also by trainers who want to simulate real-life situations. Similarly, one should keep in mind that the 'old' and the 'new' co-exist. Patterns of post-modern evolution in certain parts of the world cannot be extrapolated mechanically to places and actors that are trying to familiarize themselves with the basics. Many states are indeed still struggling to get their public diplomacy act together, in spite of the fact that exceptional individual talents can be found anywhere. It would also be rash to overlook the fact that there are still numerous governments and individuals around that regard the public diplomacy activities of others as an intrusion in their domestic affairs. These diplomats or politicians would do well to accept and embrace public diplomacy as inevitable in international relations, before learning about it the hard way.

More systematic comparative analysis between actors and across cultures would highlight the different objectives that public diplomacy serves and provide an opportunity to look more carefully at the nexus between power and public diplomacy. Research on its practice in different regions around the world might yield interesting results for governments that would benefit from thinking harder about public diplomacy in collaborative instead of strictly competitive terms. Moreover, comparing different types of actors in public diplomacy would be instructive for forward-looking diplomats. Recent practice shows more evidence than previously of not-state-initiated public diplomacy.

This paper proposes the idea that public diplomacy collaboration between states and non-official actors is probably more flexible and results-oriented than states and official non-state entities working independently. This could be seen as a symptom of a rising collaborative public diplomacy, boiling down to more official cooperation with non-state actors and greater involvement by civil society. Such a development presupposes the acceptance of less governmental control in public diplomacy. Recent trends in this field do in fact bid farewell to the 'club' model of diplomacy, on the assumption that meaningful 'connections to others' in a network of international relationships will ultimately bear more fruit.

Appendix 1

A Case Study with Learning Points from East Asian Public Diplomacy*)

Some features of East Asian public diplomacy deserve attention in the West.

Taking the risk of generalization, the logic of soft power and public diplomacy in East Asia shows a fascinating picture. First, there appears to be a more strategic perspective on public diplomacy than has been observable in the West. This is probably part of an intrinsically Asian approach that attaches more importance to the long haul than to correcting short-term damage to national reputations. Second, the public diplomacies of the East Asian powers look as if they are increasingly based on a concept of soft power that is relational, that is less initiated by one actor and working in a single direction. East Asians are coming to terms with the fact that soft power is not composed of a mere set of properties that can be projected unilaterally by means of public diplomacy, and in this respect they are also benefiting from largely Western debates on public diplomacy. A number of East Asian countries also recognize the merits of a public diplomacy with a regional dimension. The importance of more diffuse communication and socialization processes in East Asia should not be underestimated, and public diplomacy

*) Extract from Jan Melissen (2011), 'Concluding Reflections on Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in East Asia', in Lee and Melissen (eds), *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in East Asia*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

may have the capacity to assist in regional community-building and cooperation. Democratic countries such as Japan, South Korea and Indonesia have public diplomacy strategies based on shared values and a preference for multilateralism. Public diplomacy may therefore have potential beyond national image and reputation. Normative power based on legitimacy receives more attention than the affective soft-power dimension that is based on attraction. Finally, public diplomacy's domestic dimension is no oxymoron for East Asians. Countries like China and Indonesia, for instance, acknowledge that public diplomacy has a distinctly introspective dimension, and that a nation's soft power is related to its self-perceptions and confidence in its own institutions.

The experiences of individual East Asian countries are noteworthy for practitioners elsewhere:

China is going through a difficult stage of diplomatic adaptation to its rapidly rising great-power status. In a world of ever-growing transnational relations, China's centralized public diplomacy style sits rather uneasily with the evolving concept of public diplomacy.

The Achilles' tendon of Tokyo's soft power in East Asia remains its wartime history. At the same time, it has become clear that Japan's dedication to a distinctly liberal, values-based public diplomacy helped Tokyo to tackle Japan's soft-power predicament.

Emerging powers like South Korea and Indonesia need public diplomacy to help tackle their lack of self-confidence in relatively young democratic institutions. The Indonesian example shows how countries in transition can be effective in developing a public diplomacy that supports strategic policy objectives overseas, while underlining the appositeness of public diplomacy in one's own civil society for purposes of national cohesion.

The case of Taiwan shows the demonstrative potential of its democratic political system. State-based public diplomacy can be ruled out in cross-Strait relations, but a range of social actors that engage with China do enhance Taiwan's soft power on the Chinese mainland.

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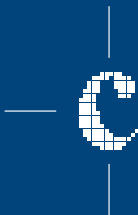
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