



Communicating with Purpose and Value

**ASEF
Public Diplomacy
Handbook**

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Handbook 2021

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Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions, and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges, and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, governance, sustainable development, economy, and public health.

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Established in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

ASEF annually runs more than 25 projects, which consists of around 100 activities – mainly conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures, publications, and online platforms, in collaboration with about 125 partner organisations. Each year over 3,000 Asians and Europeans participate in ASEF's activities and much wider audiences are reached through its various events, networks, and online platforms.

For more information, please visit www.asef.org.



Asia-Europe Meeting

Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

ASEM is an intergovernmental forum established in 1996 to foster dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe. It is composed of 53 Partners to date: 21 Asian and 30 European countries, including the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat. ASEM addresses political, economic, social, cultural, and educational issues of common interest, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership. Since its inception 25 years ago, the ASEM Process has continuously adjusted itself to ensure the relevance and growth of partnerships among its stakeholders amidst various global and regional changes.

ASEM collaborations have been guided by three areas of common interest: (1) political, (2) economic, and (3) socio-cultural and educational dimensions, referred to as the ASEM Pillars.

More information can be found at www.ASEMinfoboard.org.

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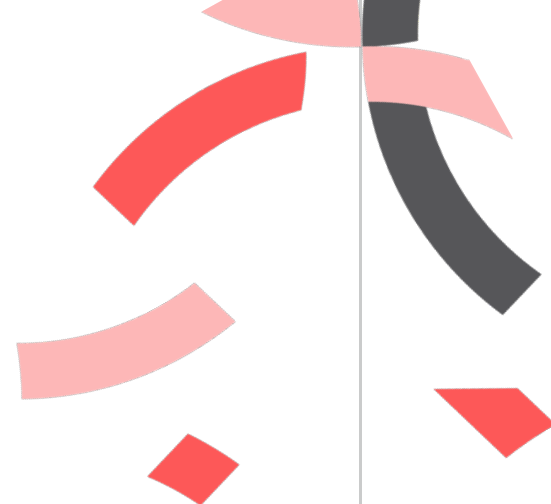
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACPD	Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (US)	GESDA	Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator
ACSG	ASEM Chairman's Support Group	GESS	German European School Singapore
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community	ILO	International Labour Organization
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation	IR	International Relations
APIs	Application Programming Interfaces	JET	Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme
AMM	Aceh Monitoring Mission (EU & Indonesia)	MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
AMRI	ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information	MFAs	Ministries of Foreign Affairs
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (of Japan)
ASEF	Asia-Europe Foundation	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ASEFPDT	ASEF Public Diplomacy Training	NPD	New Public Diplomacy
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting	PD	Public Diplomacy
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative (Finland)	PR	Public Relations
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs (The Philippines)	SIM	Strategic Issues Management
EEAS	European External Action Service	SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
EEC	European Economic Community	UAE	United Arab Emirates
ERASMUS	European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students	UN	United Nations
EU	European Union	US	United States (of America)
EUNIC	EU National Institutes for Culture	USC	University of Southern California (US)
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)	USAGM	United States Agency for Global Media
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (Switzerland)	USIA	US Information Agency
		UK	United Kingdom
		WHO	World Health Organization
		WTO	World Trade Organization



Foreword

Ambassador MORIKAWA Toru
Asia-Europe Foundation

Welcome to the new edition of the Asia-Europe Foundation's Public Diplomacy Handbook: *Communicating with Purpose and Value*.

For nearly a decade, ASEF has been building capacities of young Asian and European diplomats to enhance their public diplomacy skills as part of the intergovernmental organisation's long-term commitment to fostering dialogue and mutual understanding between the two highly diverse regions. Observing how public diplomacy practices have developed since the first edition of the Handbook, we at ASEF gathered new ideas and revisited previous milestones to consolidate an up-to-date guide.

As unprecedented events unfold before us – the Covid-19 pandemic, climate crisis, pervasive inequalities concomitant with the downside of digital communication, among others – it is more important now than ever to strengthen our efforts in building a more communicative and cooperative world. In the midst of uncertainties and even isolation, what would prove useful for our communities is to find collaborative approaches to addressing common problems, especially those that are transnational by nature. This earnest reminder comes at a time when public confusion is often brought about by misinformation and disinformation campaigns which geographic borders and boundaries could neither filter nor mitigate.

Part of our continued effort to support the work of Foreign Ministries, this Handbook contributes to the body of know-

ledge that can guide diplomats who are new to the field or are seeking to update their competencies. Other members of governments and civil society actors can also benefit from the Handbook as they, too, have critical roles to play in the conduct and study of public diplomacy. Of course, this edition does not replace the first; it simply builds upon prior research by offering new findings and prospects.

The Handbook complements ASEF's skills-oriented training in public diplomacy. The thematic focus is based upon the collective feedback we received from a wide range of professionals who participated in our series of virtual webinars and workshops organised in 2020 and early 2021. They offered practical insights into how the public diplomacy landscape saw abrupt changes in the last three years, and recommended varied perspectives on how to deal with these changes.

Writing insightfully and relatably, the specialist contributors in this new edition provide essential lessons and practical advice from their decades of research and practice, not to mention their own personal experiences. They are leading academics and long-standing practitioners whose diversity is reflected in the variety of approaches evident in the chapters – some are more scholarly, some are more collegial. The Handbook also recounts interviews with knowledgeable public diplomacy practitioners – esteemed persons whose opinions are exceptional and respected.

We have very high hopes that through this Handbook, government representatives as well as civil society actors will feel motivated to explore and initiate cross-sector partnerships and international collaborations.

The breadth of knowledge in this latest edition will become valuable only when practitioners learn from each of the lessons: from how we can adapt best practices to how we search for new solutions to ongoing problems. This is now your challenge.

May this Handbook be a helpful companion to your public diplomacy journey. Together, let us work towards creating a more resilient world through international cooperation and effective communication.



Introduction

The ASEF Public Diplomacy Handbook: *Communicating with Purpose and Value* is a representation of ASEF's call for multilateral cooperation and solidarity. Since the publication of the first edition in 2016, we have seen and experienced significant developments in the practice of public diplomacy.

As we prepared this edition, the international community was engaged in a response to a global pandemic – the likes of which has not been witnessed for a century. Global trade and travel were disrupted while global efforts of tackling Covid-19 emerged. At the same time, international cooperative responses to climate change, a long-term crisis that will take decades to resolve, continue at a pace that reflects the issue's complexity if not its urgency.

However, many things have not changed. Diplomacy still matters; it may be becoming even more important. These events, as well as others, have demonstrated that international problems require international solutions. Thus, global cooperation remains vital to finding sustainable and scalable ways of addressing global challenges.

Thus, public diplomacy still matters, even as it undergoes significant and at times troubling changes. The rise and rise of social media is a case in point; our enthusiasm for online platforms as a means of public engagement has been waning and now, with the rise of misinformation and online harassment, we are more circumspect.

Yet engage we must. This is the role of the public diplomat – to communicate *to* and *with* the public. This is the very reason for this Handbook.

The Handbook covers fundamentals of practice for public diplomacy, which includes strategic outlooks, stakeholder management, cultural diplomacy, as well as approaches to evaluation. It also comprises specific sections outlining the role of digitalisation in public diplomacy and international affairs as well as the challenges that emerge from the so-called “information disorder”.

In **Chapter 1 – Public Diplomacy Essentials: Concepts, Dimensions, Forms, and Principles**, Dr Corneliu BJOLA (University of Oxford) recounts how understanding the legacies of public diplomacy, and how it has transformed in different contexts, can equip practitioners with the appropriate tools to engage diverse audiences. Following the chapter is our interview with Mr Heinrich HUBBE, Head of Press and Cultural Affairs at the German Embassy in Singapore, who offers a glimpse into how Germany’s public diplomacy efforts in Asia have fostered creative ways of engaging the youth and different sectors of society in the last decade; he also shares some advice on how public diplomacy practices can shift for the better during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In **Chapter 2 – Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy**, Dr Paweł SUROWIEC (The University of Sheffield) identifies key points on how to use strategic narratives and networks when leveraging a country’s foreign policy through multimodal approaches that will capture the attention of the international public. This is further demonstrated in our interview with Mr Diego MELLADO, Head of Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy at EEAS; he stresses the importance of data-gathering when accounting for public opinion and international perception.

Building upon the previous topics, in **Chapter 3 – Digital Diplomacy**, Dr Ilan MANOR (University of Oxford & University of Tel Aviv) focuses on the critical usage of digital tools. He also touches upon the digital transformations that challenged embassies and diplomats at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and recommends how to implement reliable measures to ensure the usability of social media in many contexts. Following the chapter is our interview with Ambassador Raphael NÄGELI, Head of the Swiss FDFA’s Asia and Pacific Division, whose experience in the region

lends valuable insights in this Handbook. The Ambassador discusses Switzerland’s efforts to integrate digital policy in its long-term goals – especially in relation to sustainable practices and cultural exchange.

Revisiting useful frameworks for discerning the diversity of stakeholders, Dr Sol IGLESIAS (University of the Philippines) explains how they influence policies, whether locally or internationally in **Chapter 4 – Stakeholder Engagement in Public Diplomacy**. This topic is followed by our interview with Ms Ingrid DE BEER, Head of Foreign Audiences/Public Diplomacy at the Dutch MFA, who recommends various collaborative ways of stakeholder engagement. She also shares how adapting participatory research has improved public reception towards The Netherlands’ foreign policies, as exemplified by the Hague Project Peace and Justice.

Co-authoring **Chapter 5 – Evaluation in Public Diplomacy**, Dr Efe SEVIN (Towson University) and Dr Kadir Jun AYHAN (Ewha Womans University), delve into why different methods such as public opinion polls, experiments, and social media monitoring can prove useful in enhancing the targeting function of public diplomacy in different contexts. This is demonstrated further in our interview with Mr Gary MUNDY, Senior Regional Evaluation Advisor for East Asia at British Council; he provides some ideas on how to overcome the challenges often faced by practitioners when evaluating public diplomacy processes and goals.

In **Chapter 6 – Cultural Diplomacy**, Asialink Arts’ Founding Director Dr Alison CARROLL gives a substantial amount of advice for public diplomacy practitioners who are dabbling in or even championing cultural diplomacy; she stresses the importance of understanding cultural complexities and differences and how to integrate these learnings with any foreign policy. Our interview with Ms TSUDA Yoko, Director of the Cultural Affairs and Overseas Public Relations Division at the MoFA Japan, takes a glimpse into the cultural strategies of Japan which are a useful means of enhancing the public image and international relations of the country.

We conclude the Handbook with some crucial reminders in **Chapter 7 – Dangers and Annoyances, and Opportunities: the Contemporary Communications Environment**. In this

chapter, Dr Damien SPRY (University of South Australia) accounts for some of the difficulties that public diplomacy practitioners will continue to face in light of new media technologies and recommends essential solutions. Lastly, our interview with Dr James PAMMENT, Associate Professor in Strategic Communication at Lund University, imparts additional advice to help us foresee issues and risks that our roles as public diplomats in the Information Age entail.

We hope the Handbook will help many public diplomacy practitioners fulfil responsibilities and create more opportunities. Likewise, we trust it will help you better understand public diplomacy and its various uses: how to advocate for it internally as well as how to do it.

CHAPTER 1

Public Diplomacy Essentials: Concepts, Dimensions, Forms and Principles

Corneliu BJOLA
University of Oxford, UK

Conceptual clarifications

First used in 1965, the term “public diplomacy” was coined by Edmund Gullion (Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University), who was also an esteemed foreign service officer. Gullion’s intention was to create a term alternative to “public relations” and “propaganda”, both regarded as unsuitable for capturing the wide range of activities carried out by the then recently established US Information Agency (USIA).

For Gullion, public diplomacy dealt with “the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies”. It was supposed to encompass dimensions that go beyond traditional diplomacy, including the “cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; [...] and the process of intercultural communications”¹. The term proved extremely popular and served well as a policy anchor for the US information activities during the Cold War.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- The legacy and development of public diplomacy
- What do public diplomacy practitioners do?
- Ongoing and emergent forms of public diplomacy

The global dissemination of the term in the post-Cold War period owed much to the rise of another important concept, “soft power”, which Joseph Nye coined and discussed in a series of highly influential books².

Nye defined soft power as “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment”³. To do this, states need to summon their sources of soft power and actively promote them. Public diplomacy, in his view, is supposed to do exactly that: to promote a country’s soft power, which rests on its resources of culture, values, and policies⁴.

Nye’s concept of soft power altered the purpose of public diplomacy in a critical and tangible way. For Gullion, it was meant to serve unidirectionally, as a strategic instrument to enhance support among foreign audiences for a particular foreign policy. For Nye, public diplomacy should go

beyond strategic communication and aim to build lasting relationships with foreign audiences by promoting mutual respect as well as a better understanding of the values, policies, and culture of a country. Echoing Nye, Melissen likewise emphasised the need for a “new public diplomacy” (NPD), which should seek to move away from “[...] peddling information to foreigners and keeping the foreign press at bay, towards engaging with foreign audiences”⁵.

The NPD does not dispute MFA’s determination to reach out to and engage with foreign audiences, but it challenges the method by which MFAs intend to accomplish this objective. According to NPD

scholars, apart from two-way communication, the MFA should seek to form partnerships with non-state actors, pay closer attention to domestic issues, and adjust its communication approach to the requirements of the Digital Age⁶.

Traditional vs new public diplomacy

Traditional public diplomacy seeks to strategically and unidirectionally influence the attitudes of foreign publics to build support for foreign policies.

New public diplomacy emphasises soft power promotion and relationship-building via two-way communication, digital engagement, as well as broader collaboration with non-state actors.

The challenge for both traditional and new public diplomacy is, however, the question of impact: how to ensure that public diplomacy activities are indeed able to produce tangible and enduring changes in the views, attitudes, and behaviours of the target audiences.

Dimensions of public diplomacy

How does public diplomacy work and how do its processes contribute to supporting diplomacy and foreign policy?

According to Leonard⁷ and Nye⁸, public diplomacy activities vary along three dimensions: *daily communication*, *strategic communication*, and *relationship-building*.

■ **Daily communications** involve explaining the context and rationale of domestic and foreign policy decisions to international media.

The objective is twofold: (a) to ensure that all foreign policy initiatives are accompanied by supporting clarifications so that they are better understood by foreign actors who are affected by them; (b) to make sure that stories which may negatively affect the image of the country or its foreign policy are quickly addressed so that their potential impact on foreign audiences is mitigated in a timely fashion.

The time frame for such activities is short (hours or days) as the arising issues need to be expeditiously addressed before they recede from public attention. By the nature of their ramifications, major foreign policy statements require involvement of the MFAs. In addition, international crises are best handled by MFAs alongside the relevant embassies, while issues that are country-specific could be better dealt with locally by the ambassador and embassy staff.

■ **Strategic communication** serves to reinforce or even advance central themes of foreign policy through carefully designed campaigns, symbolic events, and institutional networking. This process entails the careful targeting of multiple audiences, over several weeks or months.

The Swedish MFA campaign on #GenderEqualWorld

In an attempt to push the gender-security nexus to the very centre of global politics, Sweden adopted a feminist foreign policy in 2015⁹. To support the new policy, the MFA subsequently launched a series of high-profile digital advocacy campaigns including #SheTrades, #SheDecides, #GenderEqualWorld, and #MoreWomenMorePeace, which combined monologic, dialogic, and collaborative approaches to promote and increase support for the policy in various countries around the world.

Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs
@SweMFA

Gender equality is a fundamental aim of Swedish foreign policy. In Albania, Sweden is an active advocate of gender equality & the largest bilateral donor in the area. @SwedeninAL is frequently invited to attend consultations and seminars: swemfa.se/2018/06/28/gen... #GenderEqualWorld



Stockholm Gender Forum and Sweden in Albania

Cowan and Arsenault¹⁰ describe three different tools of public diplomacy, which can help improve the effectiveness of **strategic communication** in slightly different ways, such as:

- **monologic** (one-way) communication which can help clarify where the country stands on certain policy issues, but it may also increase perceptions of political aloofness and condescension;
 - **dialogic** (two-way or multidirectional) communication which works well to reduce misperceptions and increase engagement as interlocutors feel that they are heard and are part of the conversation; and
 - **collaborative** initiatives in which people work together on a joint venture or project in order to provide a more effective approach to engaging with foreign publics by increasing mutual respect and appreciation among collaborators or participants.
- **Relationship-building** develops lasting relationships with key individuals (e.g. politicians, business leaders, journalists, cultural entrepreneurs, or academics) over many months and years through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, and conferences. The goal of these relationship-building activities is not to

promote ideological conversion and induce foreign elites to agree with whatever policy the host country may choose to promote. Instead, the objective is to create conditions for them to develop a closer understanding of the political, economic, and cultural matrix of the country they interact with.

Forms of public diplomacy

Public diplomacy has been deployed to advance the policies of MFAs in a variety of contexts, but three areas have enjoyed more attention than others: *nation branding*, *cultural diplomacy*, and *diaspora diplomacy*.

Nation branding owes its popularity to the determination of governments to enhance the international reputation of their countries by using methods and strategies similar to corporate marketing. Their intent is informed by two sets of considerations: (a) to support national industries to better compete in the global marketplace as well as to facilitate foreign investments back home; and (b) to help generate and promote a sense of self-esteem among their citizens, especially following periods of national crises and socio-political or structural transformations.

Simon Anholt, who developed and advanced the study of the concept, put forward how nation branding accounts for public perception across 6 areas of a country's national assets, characteristics, and competences: (1) governance, (2) exports, (3) tourism, (4) investment and immigration, (5) culture and heritage, and (6) people. Hence, advertising campaigns, no matter how well-crafted, are not enough to improve the reputation of a country. Only a consistent, coordinated and unbroken stream of relevant ideas, products, and policies can, for Anholt, enhance the reputation of the country that produces them¹¹. In other words, nation brands cannot grow from precarious foundations. They only reflect the country's policies, values, and assets, which branding campaigns can help promote but not substitute.

At the heart of the role of culture in foreign policy lies an important distinction between *cultural diplomacy* and *cultural relations*.

According to Richard Arndt, a former American diplomat, cultural relations “grow naturally and organically, without government intervention” while **cultural diplomacy** “takes place when formal diplomats, serving national governments, try to shape and channel this natural flow to advance national interests”¹².

In practice, this distinction has become blurred in the recent past. Traditionally, **cultural diplomacy** has been viewed as a component of nation branding, with cultural assets being deployed by governments via art exhibitions, museum exchanges, music festivals, etc., to enhance the nation’s international standing.

The establishment of cultural institutes such as British Council, Alliance Française, Goethe Institute, Dante Alighieri Society, European Union National Institutes for Culture, the Japan Foundation, the Korea Foundation, and others have contributed to reframing cultural engagements as cultural relations with a people-centred agenda. Governments and cultural institutes, in this view, serve mainly as mediators, interpreters, and facilitators of cultural relations at the local, national, regional, and/or international level.

Diaspora diplomacy is a nascent area of public diplomacy that seeks to capitalise on the unique status of diasporas “outside the state but inside the people”¹³ to foster direct engagement between diaspora communities and the MFAs of their countries of origin.

The public diplomacy dimension that stems from the efforts of MFAs to strengthen the relationship with their diasporas is twofold.

Diaspora communities, through the activities and efforts of many of their socially influential members, can serve as a potential cultural,

economic, and political bridge between their adopted country and their countries of origin. At the same time, they can also facilitate better understanding between countries by connecting communities and networks across borders, and encouraging a convergence of values and interests between them.

On the other hand, through a “reverse boomerang” tactic, the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) sought to influence outcomes overseas by messaging through diasporas to audiences abroad. To this end, the FCO had invited British ambassadors and high commissioners, between March 2008 and May 2011, to meet and discuss foreign policy issues with British audiences. The said initiative highlighted the complexity of conducting foreign policy in modern, multicultural societies alongside the need to ensure that domestic constituencies are kept abreast of developments affecting their countries of origin¹⁵.

Five principles of public diplomacy

- **Soft power is about “standing out”, while public diplomacy is about “reaching out”.** Every country actually possesses a combination of cultural, institutional, and human assets which may serve as a source of inspiration for others; the primary task of public diplomacy is to identify these assets and make them visible to foreign audiences as convincingly as possible.
- **It is not propaganda.** Unlike propaganda, the objective of public diplomacy is **not** to infiltrate and corrupt the decision-making process of the target audience with deceptive information, or to alter their behaviour in a pre-determined direction; the goal of public diplomacy is to



Promoted by the Indian MFA, “Know India” aims to foster relationships with the second generation of Indian diasporas. The programme offers the Indian diaspora youth the opportunity to visit India and to become re-acquainted with the country’s culture, values, traditions, and politics. The “Know India” visits thus seek to help participants develop an emotional bond with India, while also encouraging them to share their experiences with their own networks in the adopted countries¹⁴.

Key cultural actors

MFAs and embassies help coordinate and fund cultural projects

Cultural institutes design and deliver cultural projects

NGOs raise public awareness as well as build transnational cultural relations

Diaspora groups contribute to and consume cultural products

Businesses sponsor and/or produce cultural content

Individual artists generate cultural content

create a non-coercive environment in which parties can freely exchange views in order to develop a better understanding of each other's policies, institutions, and values.

- ***It is about communicating with a purpose.*** Diplomats must have a clear understanding of the public diplomacy objectives they seek to accomplish. They must also demonstrate capacity to adapt these objectives to the local context and to tailor them to the relevant audiences. They need to maintain broad support for the agreed communication objectives and must be able to quickly recognise the risks and opportunities generated by their online or offline communication.
- ***Public diplomacy is about “talking with” rather than “talking to”.*** One-way avenues of communication can assist public diplomatic efforts in providing clarifications on policy issues, but their effectiveness is rather limited and short-lived. Dialogical and collaborative initiatives are more likely to lead to “win-win” solutions between MFAs and like-minded foreign organisations together with individuals in the public arena.
- ***It is about influence measured in outcomes.*** Influence usually takes two forms: altering people's opinions and altering people's behaviours. Quantitative metrics can offer insights regarding the appeal of one's messages and the extent to which they resonate with intended audiences. Qualitative analysis can offer insights into the mindset of intended audiences, the reasons why they accept or reject campaign messages, and their willingness to engage in conversations with diplomats.

As we look forward to the next stage of public diplomacy, we must also bear in mind the technological context in which it operates. The advent of 3G mobile technology made possible, for instance, the development and spread of social media networks. Also, the recent arrival of 5G technology has already shown a tendency to usher in an entirely new field of technological disruption, which could potentially lead to the mass adoption of innovations such as mixed reality and the rise of the metaverse. These cannot be ignored if we want our public diplomacy efforts to advance as well.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Dr Corneliu BJOLA is Associate Professor in Diplomatic Studies at the University of Oxford and Head of the Oxford Digital Diplomacy Research Group. He also serves as a Faculty Fellow at the University of Southern California (USC) Center on Public Diplomacy and as a Professorial Lecturer at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. His research practice addresses the impact of digital technology on the conduct of diplomacy with a focus on public diplomacy, international negotiations, as well as methods for countering digital propaganda.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

Why was there a need to distinguish propaganda from public diplomacy?

What are the key differences between *traditional public diplomacy* and *new public diplomacy*?

What types of public diplomacy practices are best suited to your roles and responsibilities, either in your home country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or its equivalent) or where you might be posted overseas?

INTERVIEW

Public Diplomacy

INTERVIEW WITH

Heinrich HUBBE

**Head of Press and Cultural Affairs
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
to Singapore**

Heinrich HUBBE has played an active role as a bridge-builder between Asia and Europe ever since he was sent on his first diplomatic posting to Singapore. He shared his professional experience as a diplomat from Europe working in Asia and his personal views about the evolving Asia-Europe relations with Trishia P. OCTAVIANO in a series of email correspondences in November 2021.

Q: As a diplomat from Europe with extensive experience in media and public outreach on this side of the globe, what creative ways have you identified and implemented that have helped raise the profile of Germany, and of Europe to a larger extent, in the highly diverse Asian region?

A: An initiative we branded “EU Comes to Your School” (or #EUcomestoYourSchool) and implemented with the support of the Ministry of Education of Singapore is particularly close to my heart. A simple “recipe”: ambassadors and diplomats from the EU Delegation and EU Member State missions join forces and visit local junior colleges and schools for “Europe Day” on the 9th of May to talk about the European Union, its relations with both Singapore and the ASEAN as well as their own member states with students. We launched the initiative in 2019 and were very pleased that we could soon return to

schools this year. We reached more than 10,000 students! Singapore’s future generation thus has a chance to interact directly with European diplomats and the project always makes for an excellent opportunity for participating diplomats to share their experiences with local media outlets and, of course, on social media.

The concept was eventually developed and refined during the 7th ASEF Public Diplomacy Training building on previous successful implementations in Japan and South Korea, that can potentially be replicated in other countries as well.

I say “close to my heart” as this project always carries an opportunity to introduce the similarities between the world’s two most successful regional organisations in terms of cooperation – the ASEAN and the EU – based on shared values and principles such as effective and sustainable multilateralism, rules-based international order, and free and fair trade.

This year, we also discussed with the students the issues of climate change as well as access to Covid-19 vaccines. There had also been a great interest in security challenges both in the ASEAN and the EU.

I am deeply convinced that while our regions tackle new geopolitical and geoeconomic challenges, these joint approaches will be key to making a difference.

The EU Delegation in Singapore leads various other joint activities, such as the yearly “EU Film Festival” which celebrated its 30th edition this year and the “Study in Europe” fair promoting higher education in Europe, notwithstanding the work of the Goethe Institut, our cultural institute within the EUNIC network (EU National Institutes for Culture) or long-standing beacons of Germany’s cultural and educational foreign policy such as the German European School Singapore (GESS International School).

Working on our bilateral projects has also made me an ardent supporter of cultural diplomacy. Classical music is very much considered “contemporary” in Singapore. It is no exaggeration that I was overwhelmed upon witnessing how music can build bridges when we created a yearly open-air concert in the Botanic Gardens dubbed “Beethoven im Garten” which drew thousands of listeners (this was before the pandemic).

It has become a wonderful tradition adding a true people-to-people element to already strong German political and economic ties with Singapore.

Q: Having been assigned to German diplomatic missions in several parts of Asia for years, what best practices can you share when it comes to cultivating public opinion through diplomacy to achieve the foreign policy agenda of a country?

A: Before you start to “cultivate”, you have to be very clear about your goals. In September 2020, the German Federal Government published its policy guidelines on the Indo-Pacific with a focus on diversifying our relations with Asia, following similar publications by the governments of France together with the Netherlands. These were followed by an EU strategy for the region in 2021. This clarity about our goals has been

very encouraging, not to mention the boost and considerable increase in visibility. This region has taken note that we want to leave a bigger footprint, and feedback reflects how it is much appreciated.

There has also been a remarkable increase in engagement of governmental contacts up to the highest ministerial levels. These visits – be it virtual or physical – may appear “old school”, but they are still an excellent way to draw attention to both bilateral and multilateral relations, as well as current topics of interest.

This mutual interest and willingness to bring forward exchange is always key to creating projects and activities that form a solid foundation which can then be referred to in our public diplomacy efforts.

The growth in social media consumption has also added an additional layer that allows us to directly engage with both our host country audiences as well as our own citizens abroad. There is hardly any mission that is not active on social media. Given our small team based in Singapore, our mission is quite active with accounts on Facebook, Instagram and the Ambassador’s Twitter account.

Finally, one should not forget about an occasional stroke of luck. When Germany became the first country to establish a “Vaccinated Travel Lane” with Singapore in September 2021, we could raise interest in tourism and many other aspects of German life suddenly very easily due to the particular position Germany was in. It gave an excellent boost to people-to-people exchanges as many more Singaporeans decided for a trip to Germany than in past years.

A: The necessities caused by the pandemic have turned many things upside down: our National Day celebrations suddenly needed to be moved online and our previously mentioned concert series led to the production of the first-ever digital performance of Beethoven’s *9th Symphony* in an artificial 3-D environment that allowed audiences to enter and move within the various concert settings created for this virtual concert. For now, it is still too early to draw long-term conclusions as people long for physical interactions that cannot be fully replaced by online activities, and some of the new formats still need to be better adapted. But we can also see some trends that would ultimately change the way we handled public diplomacy in the past. First, we embraced many new digital formats and these allowed us to think much rather often in regional contexts. In addition, our communication has become even more direct.

Q: How have the public diplomacy efforts of German and other European missions to Asia changed since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic? What public diplomacy techniques proved to be effective in a time of crisis?

To start with the latter, it has certainly helped that high-level contacts and meetings remained possible in virtual formats. These provided a solid foundation to build further outreach efforts that could then be amplified to our audiences through social media. The switch to digital allowed for reaching new audiences, e.g. the participation in the EU Delegation’s “Study in Europe” higher education fair campaign skyrocketed as we have managed to reach out to the region. What will certainly become the future norm is the addition of digital channels for hybrid events to reach additional audiences as we did with a panel discussion on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day with our partners from the Embassy of Israel. When organising dialogues, we now often invite guests from Germany or Europe to directly interact with opinion leaders here in Singapore and join forces with other missions in ASEAN member states, and reach bigger audiences.

With strong social media channels, our German mission in Tokyo has been at the forefront of this development. Turning projects into hybrid events increases the outreach considerably in times when travel remains restricted, allows

for the focus on the social media-savvy future generations, and creates a network among future decision makers. This included a “DJ summit” – a livestream of Techno-DJ sets from the Ambassador’s residence garden venue – as well as panel discussions that allowed audiences to interact online. Altogether, a measurable qualitative gain.

A: It is an essential role of embassies and particularly the Ambassador, as the ears, eyes, and mouthpiece of their home country, to make themselves heard and to give a voice to their values. It goes without saying that this has to happen by sticking to the diplomatic tradition of “not interfering with domestic politics.”

Q: What ways are there for diplomats to join public conversations in their host country?

In Singapore, we continue to communicate through mainstream media outlets, such as print, television, and radio which have increasingly been complemented by our social media channels, the use of which has become the norm.

Given the massive shift of our communication efforts towards social media, strategic communication on social media has become a particularly effective and necessary instrument of our Foreign Policy. In order to achieve foreign policy goals, digital communication has to be a comprehensive part of the effort to speak in Germany’s interest and introduce Germany as a cosmopolitan country to the rest of the world.

Additional actors such as the German Chambers of Commerce network, the German Academic Exchange Service, and the Goethe Institut (as the German cultural centre in Singapore) create additional opportunities for dialogue, with projects that allow meaningful exchange as they are borne by local interests and are rooted in the host countries’ communities.

Moreover, I believe in the power of gestures – even the unconventional – such as Singapore’s “orchid diplomacy”. The country entertains the tradition of naming an orchid in the Botanic Gardens after the incoming state guests.

Another example that has stayed with me after an appalling incident in another host country has been the immediate donation of Anne Frank diaries to local libraries by Dutch diplomats after some of these had been vandalised. These gestures help contribute to meaningful impacts not only in international relations but also in public diplomacy.

Q: What piece of advice made such an impact on you that you remember it to this day, and/or one thing you wish you had learnt a long time ago?

A: “Informing the public both abroad and at home has become increasingly important for our work. Thus, your efforts should equally be devoted into your projects themselves as well as into efforts ‘to talk’ about these projects” is what Walter J. Lindner, former State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office who is now the Ambassador of Germany to India, shared with the graduates of my cohort at the diplomatic academy. It has stayed with me as a guiding principle ever since.

When we go about public diplomacy in this day and age, we often mistakenly take for granted that our approaches today have always been the norm. As diplomacy in general has lost much of its exclusive image, our foreign service has become much more open both at home, in order to share with our citizens how we serve them, and of course in communicating with foreign publics. Spreading the word and amplifying our messages or activities has become an essential element of our core business.

Ambassador Lindner, who is also a trained musician and has often been dubbed “the cool diplomat” of Germany’s foreign service due to his long hair and ponytail, has again drawn a huge following in India by collaborating with local musicians, etc. Other successful examples include the conversion of a 71er VW hippie bus into a *Deutschland-mobile* and turning the Ambassador’s red Hindustan motors car into his official vehicle that became so popular that he even ran a social media contest inviting people to snap a picture with the car when they spot it on the streets.

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CHAPTER 2

Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy

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What is strategic communication(s)?

Strategic communications entail an executive *effort* to synchronise communications of any organisation. In public diplomacy, this process is much more complex than overseeing communications of a single organisation as practitioners operate in a field comprising other organisations or types of actors responsible for the engagement with foreign publics.

By virtue of its commitment to the goals of foreign policy, public diplomacy is deemed strategic if any decisions about the conduct of foreign policy are made with the viability of message delivery and reputational outcomes in sight.

Recent definitions of strategic communications, formerly a domain of warfare, emphasise that this *modus operandi* is a feature of public diplomacy and the conduct of foreign policy in areas other than national security.

With the fragmentation of statecraft by the increasingly specialised foreign policies and co-existence of public

IN THIS CHAPTER

- What are strategic approaches to public diplomacy?
- Developing a strategic mindset
- Listening and monitoring for strategic communication
- Strategic narratives and strategic networks in various contexts

diplomacy alongside additional communicative practices for soft power statecraft, knowledge exchange between the professionals of private sector corporate communications and diplomats have led to the convergences in the thinking about public diplomacy.

Unsurprisingly, then, definitions of strategic communications are informed by solutions and modes of practice derived from corporate public relations. For example, Lee and Lin¹ merge public diplomacy and public relations by employing the notion of strategic communication which they define, by drawing from the corporate public relations discipline, as the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission.

The more recent definition of public diplomacy has explained it as consisting of behaviour “wherein a political actor engages in strategic communication with foreign audiences in an image and reputation management capacity to further its foreign policy and security interests”².

Strategic communications rests on the approach to statecraft which seeks to adapt to the landscapes of international politics and media in which public diplomacy is practised. Some states, however, are better at aligning public diplomacy with foreign policy goals as well as coordinating their public diplomacy alongside other communicative practices pertinent to the engagement with foreign publics.

It is in the interest of public diplomats to devise a cross-departmental architecture aiding the coordination of the engagement with foreign publics. Studies reveal how the statecraft of particular administrations has itself developed

Communications or communication? The effects of foreign policy communication on foreign publics differentiate “strategic communications” from “strategic communication” – the former describing the mindset guiding the engagement with foreign publics as involving separate steps such as analysis of target publics, evaluations of conduits, and measurement of effects, whereas the latter relates to a conceptual practice which, in the case of foreign policy, is public diplomacy.

a reputation for merging political technologies, political communication, political marketing, large-scale social networks, and a steady flow of timely diplomatic messages, transforming between 2009-2016 the essence of traditional public diplomacy.

The Obama administration’s transformation of public diplomacy ended up being so influential that its practice became synonymous with strategic communication, which implied the priority of advocacy campaigns, and offensive and reactive information activities, across traditional public diplomacy programmes, as well as in academic and cultural exchanges, exhibitions, and cooperative projects, to name a few³.

What makes public diplomacy strategic?

The point of departure for thinking about public diplomacy as strategic is its embeddedness within the foreign policy decision-making process.

If the foreign policy is made in a manner that does not feed from the publics of diplomacy or its domestic stakeholders – both state and non-state actors – it is at best likely to lead to a cacophonous presentation of diplomatic messages and, at worst, it may lead to a public diplomacy crisis.

For public diplomacy to be strategic, the engagement of foreign publics with one’s foreign policies demands a wide-ranging approach. Notably, the traditional repertoire of delivering the objectives of public diplomacy – namely advocacy, international broadcasting, cultural exchanges, and listening – expands to meet the pressures on the practice from rapidly changing diplomatic landscapes.

Strategic communication, digitalised

One trend which has been at the core of the transformation of public diplomacy is that of its digitalisation. This multifaceted process involves the adaptation of diplomacy to hybrid media landscapes (e.g. merging “old”, broadcast and “new”, digital media) as well as the adoption of innovative digital solutions (e.g. virtual embassies) to engage with foreign publics.

The strategic use of digital solutions in the practice of public diplomacy entails the production of the content circulated on social media platforms. This amplifies and increases the visibility of diplomatic messages produced for print and broadcast news⁴. The entanglement of digital platforms, especially social media, with traditional news media underlines the strategic importance of monitoring hybrid media landscapes.

The digitalisation yielded the need for strategic issues management (SIM) in public diplomacy. Derived from corporate public relations, it is a “process for being vigilant for threats and opportunities that can affect how the organisation achieved its mission and vision”⁵.

SIM enables public diplomats to differentiate between issues that might directly affect the conduct of foreign policy and issues which have neither a bearing nor a leverage on foreign policy, but indeed have reputational implications.

For example, foreign news containing accusations of corruption of a particular government might not be a primary foreign policy issue but would certainly have reputational implications from the perspective of foreign direct investment.

The open web and social media’s ability to reveal “bottom-up” issues like this places SIM at the centre of public diplomacy. In essence, SIM sensitises public diplomats to the monitoring of issues and considering their significance vis-à-vis foreign policy and reputational outcomes.

Strategies for strategic communication

Strategic narratives

Among the tools used by public diplomats practising their craft in a strategic manner are those devised to integrate various aspects of foreign policy framing into meta-stories about one nation’s past, present, and future.

Capturing political changes in a way that distils their common denominator for the purpose of foreign policy is paramount

for effective cross-departmental collaborations on public diplomacy. Seemingly unrelated foreign policy areas intertwine when triggered by intricate political events in a way that changes the destiny of a nation.

One of the most recognised public diplomacy tools for the articulation of values associated with such events are strategic narratives: “representations of a sequence of events and identities, a communicative tool through which political actors – usually elites – attempt to give determined meaning to the past, present, and future in order to achieve political objectives”⁶.

Strategic narratives are long-term; public diplomacy is central to their formation and circulation. For example, between 1989 (the year marking Poland’s democratisation and its pro-European foreign policy goals) and 2015, Poland’s democratisation became the arch in the story of its transition formed by the liberal political classes, with public diplomacy playing a strategic role in circulating this narrative.

Strategic networks

While strategic narratives are crucial to a long-term representation of the goals of foreign policy, public diplomacy is also responsible for the formation of networks that enable their circulation. The networked approach offers a competitive advantage in matters of public diplomacy collaborations.

Although they overlap, networks in public diplomacy are human and operate across departmental boundaries as well as digital networks, and these operate across hybrid media landscapes. Slaughter⁷ identifies networks in the conduct of foreign policy, the architecture of which is germane to the practice of public diplomacy:

■ *Resilience networks*

Resilience is the capacity of individuals, communities, systems, and populations to survive or thrive in the face of threats and challenges. It is of importance to the conduct of foreign policy and the practice of public diplomacy. Building resilience in public diplomacy starts with pulling together basic network structures.

■ **Task networks**

These perform precise, time-bound tasks; depending on the task, they tend to be shaped by relationships that define their dynamics: cooperation-driven by carrying out a prescribed task; collaboration-driven by the search for solutions to tasks; and innovation-driven by engendering new ideas, processes, and tactics.

■ **Scale networks**

These align a large number of organisations and individuals working on a particular issue. The notions of replication (figuring out how a policy solution can be adapted), gathering-in (connecting multiple actors to form a larger entity), and parcelling-out (outsourcing tasks to many actors) are central to these networks.

Strategic relationships

As relationships are central to “new” public diplomacy, the status of “special diplomatic relationships”, such as that claimed between the UK and the US, carries particular political importance. In addition to strategic relationships, public diplomacy nowadays is responsible for handling relationships daily. These require a strategic communication mindset that keeps the goals of foreign policy in sight and treats multiple relationships as means of achieving goals in a coherent and, where relevant, transparent fashion.

Strategic communications as a mindset is of importance not only to political actors and foreign publics alike, but also to intermediaries that enable these relationships. In this context, relationships with private sector actors are quite revealing of new dynamics in public diplomacy. Michelsen and Colley⁸ argue that private sector actors can act as both intermediaries and proxies for and between governments. At times, they undertake tactical activities for one government to support the strategic goals of another.

Diplomacy is a field in which strategic communicators can be caught in struggles between actors who may have different goals. This may potentially undermine their credibility with the actor they are contracted by or seconded to. Their practices can be also shaped by con-

flicting assumptions about appropriate roles and relationships between public and private strategic communicators, and between states and non-state actors in the conduct of diplomacy, which requires sensitivity in the understanding of norms and goals of their clients.

Issues-monitoring and big data

Listening is one of the defining features of public diplomacy. Strategic communications demand from public diplomacy the need to approach this task in a systematic manner.

Strategic issues monitoring focuses on issues pertaining to public diplomacy; the monitoring of broadcast media coverage of foreign policy issues is a routinised practice. Strategic issues monitoring can also be timely and revealing when performed on social media as it adds instantaneity to the analysis of foreign publics, and it reveals the changing positions of foreign actors on matters of foreign policy. Monitoring of social media content can be undertaken using tools to extract and analyse big data from open-source social media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube, as well as blogs or forums such as Reddit, and news sites.

In one model, Zhang⁹ identifies four stages of SIM of the public diplomacy social media cycle, each of which can be monitored and noted:

- 1 Issues ferment and goes viral;
- 2 Proactive phase – research on the viral trends occurs, action taken focuses on emphasising favourable trends, intensive use of social media and news media strategies to position the agenda and crystallise public opinion;
- 3 Reactive phase – actions taken may cause backlashes and conflicts, and diplomats might need to resort to conflict-resolution strategies beyond social media spaces;
- 4 Issue recedes and new issues ferment.

Elsewhere diplomats from the Swedish Institute¹⁰ name three reasons for monitoring social media:

- 1 To perceive long-term thematic trends in the digital discussions;

- 2 To track real time conversations, in order to stay updated on current discussions;
- 3 To identify communicative opportunities.

Increasingly, public diplomacy practitioners need to also pay attention to trends and actors, the actions of which can be disorderly or threatening to political institutions and social stability. (See Chapter 7, re information disorder.)

Concluding remarks: strategic planning?

Key principles underpinning foreign policy-driven strategic communications include¹¹:

- 1 Strategic engagement, not international salesmanship;
- 2 Adapting messages to different channels instead of reiterating the same message across media landscapes with an expectation of different effects;
- 3 Appreciation of the fact that messages are not going to be met with enthusiasm among publics the culture of which you do not fully understand;
- 4 Awareness that the perception of message clarity and meaning is a function of relationships; and
- 5 Seeking common grounds instead of wrongness uttered as moralising of foreign publics.

While these are key principles underpinning the planning of message delivery, strategic communications as a mindset also requires the planning for contextual, situational, and environmental factors.

Strategic communications demand cross-institutional coordination. Planning to overcome silo effects on public diplomacy is paramount; it relies on the premeditated alignment of the goals of foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives. The planning of messages circulation should entail a nuanced understanding of the patterns of news media consumption and the patterns of social media users' engagement with a particular issue in a targeted media landscape. As timing is of importance to public diplomacy, the planning for short-, medium-, and long-term strategies is critical to consistent messaging.

Finally, given the paradigmatic significance of relationships in new public diplomacy, it is beneficial to engage reputable intermediaries whose credibility might aid one's strategic communications efforts, especially during times of crisis.

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QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

What are the principles of strategic communication for public diplomacy?

What are the examples of strategic goals?

What kinds of networks are beneficial for achieving these goals?

What are examples of strategic narratives and how can they benefit public diplomacy strategic goals?

INTERVIEW

Strategic Communications

INTERVIEW WITH

Diego MELLADO

Head of Division, Strategic Communications
& Public Diplomacy, European External Action Service

The European External Action Service's (EEAS) strategy in communication is about forging partnerships for long-term engagement. Diego MELLADO exchanged with the Deputy Executive Director of ASEF, Ambassador Leon FABER, about modern-day communication approaches and challenges. The interview was held via Zoom on 18 October 2021.

Q: What do you consider a good communication strategy?

In the last few years, there has been a real transformation in the way we address communication from the European Union. For many decades, Europe has been, of course, worried about visibility, about reaching out to publics not only in Europe but also outside of Europe. However, I believe that in the last few years, we have transformed the way we communicate.

I think that what we're trying to do from the EU is to have a clear, simple message that can convey the type of communication that we want to express. We want our counterparts to see us as a partner of choice for the future and also for the challenges that we all have in the 21st Century. The image that we project is that Europe is a global actor, that it has a vision for all the challenges that we have in common in the 21st Century. So, whenever we speak to our friends in Asia, also in other countries, we want them to know that we have a set of proposals, that we want to engage with them on issues like climate change and security, and on the big global issues that affect us all. Our communication strategy is not a one-way street. Europe for many decades was very much in the business of being

A: In the last few years, there has been a real transformation in the way we address communication from the

unilateral. There was very little exchange. Now it's clear that we need a conversation. We need real exchange. We need to listen, to engage in dialogue. And to have mutual understanding between the EU and our partners, this two-way communication is also very, very important.

Public diplomacy is fundamental. Public diplomacy is an essential aspect of our communication, and even of our policies, because we know very well that the success or failure of many policies very often depends on how these policies are perceived.

It is also important to understand the behaviours of foreign publics. It's not enough to design something without knowing. We need to ask: what is the impact that this will have? How will we have an influence? That is why a critical assessment of our communication strategies is important.

A: Covid-19 has played a critical role in re-orienting or re-questioning our communication strategy. Like everyone else, we have moved a lot to digital diplomacy, digital communication, extensive and renewed use of social media, as well as to remote video conferencing. Through digital communication, we can always be ready to connect in different ways. Still, the physical aspect remains important in diplomacy. So, we are trying to find the right balance between them.

Q: Could you briefly elaborate on the challenges that you have encountered or that you are encountering, especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic?

Through Covid-19, we have also seen a battle of narratives. As a matter of fact, there are many different ways, or different approaches, to convey views about the pandemic. This is also valid in how we address other global issues. The European Union is pushing for multilateral narratives based on cooperation, based on democratic values, or based on an open rules-based order. For instance, an approach based on democratic values would mean accommodating the different needs of society and balancing different interests as well. Additionally, combatting misinformation and manipulation has been integrated into our strategic communication in the last several years.

A: When you consider strategic communication, I mean, your starting point, of course, must be the policies, your positions, the vision that you want to project, it's not just communication for the sake of communication. In fact, the strategic approach is to start from the policy level.

Q: What would be your practical advice to those engaged in strategic communications?

Hence, the success of your strategy depends also on the behaviours of your audiences, on the perception of those outside of your borders. This is important to avoid any disconnect. You have to position yourself from the perspective of others. That is why we

are constantly trying to assess, review, and gather data about the perceptions of Europe outside of our borders.

That's why we're conducting studies on a regular basis, very often focused on Asia, because that's a very important area. It is very important to see whether our message can resonate, whether we are convincing, whether we generate trust. Because when you want to have a conversation, you want to have a dialogue. As part of the strategic communications for specific policies, you must do that. From a position of trust, honesty of having an open dialogue with your counterparts.

And from the European Union, we're using a very important capacity that we have, which is a network of the European Union delegations. We are in the region. We are very present in Asia and it is quite crucial that we adapt the message to local audiences, to local realities. Our messaging is calibrated to different types of audiences at the local level.

Engaging with audiences, trying to be local as well, while having this strategic vision based on policies, I think these are quite good.

CHAPTER 3

Digital Diplomacy

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Digital diplomacy may be defined as the growing use of digital technologies by diplomats and their institutions (e.g. embassies). Digital diplomacy also refers to the impact that digital technologies have had on diplomatic processes (e.g. negotiations). This broad term relates to a wide range of digital technologies ranging from email to social media networks, smartphone and messaging applications, big data analysis, and algorithms.

Digital diplomacy – the early years

The first stage of digital diplomacy lasted between 2012 and 2015. It was arguably influenced by the unfolding of the Arab Spring. In the wake of the popular revolts that swept through the Middle East throughout 2011, diplomats and MFAs migrated en masse to social media sites in the hopes of monitoring digital conversations, anticipating future shocks to the international system, and interacting with digital publics.

It was during this stage that MFAs first created “digital diplomacy units”, which offered diplomats training and authored guidebooks for their use of social media. In addition, MFAs created social media empires spanning multiple networks over Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and Instagram, to name a few.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Definition of digital diplomacy
- Evolution of digital diplomacy since 2015
- The main benefits of practising digital diplomacy

Notably, during this first stage of digital diplomacy, diplomats mainly used social media towards public diplomacy ends. MFAs sought to communicate with foreign publics assembled online, market their national policies, and create relationships with foreign publics. For instance, the US State Department launched a virtual embassy to Iran¹ in place of a physical one. This web-based embassy, which later included a Facebook profile, enabled American diplomats to engage in online conversations with Iranians, market America's policies in the region, and reshape America's image in Iran.

Digital diplomacy, which soon became synonymous with social media, was in no way "Western". MFAs in Africa, embassies in Asia, and diplomats in Latin America all increasingly employed digital technologies. For instance, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs launched the "Know India" website which offered a host of online activities for children of Indian expats, or second-generation diasporas. These were meant to acquaint children with Indian history and culture and create an emotional bond between diasporas and the Indian state. MFAs in Eastern Europe also leveraged digital technologies in increasingly sophisticated ways with the hopes of managing the image of their nations. The Polish MFA, for instance, used a dedicated Facebook page to promote the Polska brand. The MFA also launched a cross-platform campaign intended to distance Poland from the atrocities of Nazi Germany and refashion Poland's historic image.

Lastly, Iran's MFA used Twitter during the 2015 nuclear negotiations with the hopes of reshaping the view of the Iranian regime in Western Europe and North America. The use of Twitter by the Iranian Foreign Minister and President was termed by some a "charm offensive". By using social media, the weapon *de jour* of the Arab Spring, Iran may have hoped to associate itself with the optimistic spirit of these revolts.

Digital diplomacy becomes more diverse and more strategic

The second stage of digital diplomacy lasted between 2015 and 2021. During this period, the practice of digital

diplomacy was shaped by the alleged interventions in democratic processes and the use of disinformation in support of military actions.

In response, MFAs hoped to use digital technologies to track and neutralise fake social media accounts. To this end, the British Foreign Office launched a Big Data Unit tasked with monitoring fake accounts that disseminate false information. The Lithuanian MFA created "monitoring units" which were in charge of identifying false narratives and countering these narratives in near real-time.

The Israeli MFA went one step further by creating its own coding unit. This unit created algorithms that automatically identify and delete Facebook posts that spread anti-Semitic conspiracy theories or that call for violence against Jews.

Some diplomats also began leveraging messaging groups. For instance, EU ambassadors to the UN Headquarters in Geneva created dedicated WhatsApp groups through which they could coordinate efforts in various fora (e.g. World Trade Organization, International Labour Organization), jointly draft UN resolutions, and also create coalitions for passing these resolutions.

India's MFA decided to launch the world's most advanced smartphone application that can be used by Indian citizens, diasporas, and foreign publics. The application enables users to track visa applications, read commentaries by Indian diplomats, follow President Modi on his world travels, and review bilateral accords signed between India and other states.

It was thus during the second stage of digital diplomacy that various MFAs also employed different digital technologies towards different ends. While some relied on social media to converse with foreign publics, others turned to WhatsApp or created Big Data units.

An important difference between both stages is a diplomat's selective use of digital technologies. Asian MFAs now use Facebook as an elite-to-public medium, used to engage with foreign publics and diasporas, while Twitter is used as an elite-to-elite medium through which diplomats interact with policy makers, parliamentarians, journalists, opinion-

makers, and other diplomats. The two stages also differ given the transition from digital tactics to digital strategies. A digital tactic asks – “how can a tweet go viral?”, “how can one attract a large following online?”. Digital strategies on the other hand seek to obtain offline diplomatic goals. The goal determines the target audience while the target audience defines the platform to be used. For instance, a digital strategy may aim to influence how a sceptical audience views a diplomatic achievement.

The Obama White House used Twitter to target sceptic audiences at home and abroad while depicting the Iran Nuclear Deal as a diplomatic breakthrough, a part of America’s newfound commitment to engaging with the Muslim world, and an effective measure that would block all roads to an Iranian nuclear bomb. The administration turned to Twitter hoping to interact with journalists and influence how the Iran Deal was covered by media outlets across the world.

How the pandemic changed digital diplomacy

The third stage of digital diplomacy began with the spread of the novel coronavirus. This most recent stage has seen the digitalisation of cultural diplomacy as museums across Europe offered Internet users virtual tours.

Embassies also placed a greater emphasis on cultural affairs with French Embassies offering Twitter followers free access to French lessons, subtitled French films, and virtual art exhibits.

The same was true of the Embassy of Japan to the UK that offered British citizens, quarantined at home, a variety of digital cultural events ranging from museum exhibits to Manga drawing competitions.

The pandemic also saw diplomats’ utilisation of video-conferencing applications such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. As diplomatic institutions shut their doors and ambassadors practised social distancing, diplomats continued to engage with one another through Zoom conferences. It was through Zoom that both bilateral and multilateral ties could be maintained while offline negotiations migrated online.

Some scholars even argue that the next stage of digital diplomacy will see the emergence of “Hybrid Diplomacy” in which Zoom meetings and digital conferences complement traditional “face-to-face” diplomacy.

The benefits of digital diplomacy

Doing more with less

Digital diplomacy, and social media in particular, offer diplomats four main benefits. The first is the ability to overcome the limitations of traditional diplomacy. Through social media diplomats located in a capital can cultivate relationships with publics spread out across a country. Additionally, diplomats may use social media to overcome lack of bilateral ties by creating virtual embassies following the examples of the US Virtual Embassy Iran or the Embassy of Israel on Twitter² that serves in the UAE.

Digital resources such as Zoom can be used for communicating remotely with students, diaspora groups, and civil society organisations. For example, an ambassador can give a virtual lecture at a local university without leaving his office. Also, some embassies now use WhatsApp groups for press conferences. A WhatsApp group is created, journalists covering a region or topic are invited, they list their questions which are then answered by diplomats. Once the conference is over the WhatsApp group is disbanded.

Real-time commentary

Second, social media enables diplomats to comment and narrate events in near real-time. This is of great importance given that publics increasingly turn to digital platforms and social media to learn about events shaping their world. Diplomats can tweet or post comments relating to issues of local or global importance.

Chinese ambassadors in particular are using Twitter to narrate Chinese policies in different regions; to narrate bilateral and multilateral summits; and to comment on crises and tensions between states. In this way, ambassadors of China may help shape public perceptions of important events.

Networks of influence

Third, diplomats can use digital technologies to map, identify, and interact with online influencers. In the digital age, a blogger with 100,000 followers, or Facebook user with 1,000,000 followers may be as important as any traditional media outlet. Some MFAs make good use of network analysis to map online communities or interest groups such as Facebook users who frequently discuss tourist destinations. The analysis helps identify the most influential members in the online community who are then contacted, digitally, by diplomats. Next, diplomats may offer to be interviewed, write a guest post, or even invite some influencers to a physical meeting at the embassy. Influencer cultivation is similar to cultivating ties with important journalists and news editors.

Social listening

Finally, digital diplomacy can be used for analysing how one state is viewed by the population of another. An embassy can analyse swarms of social media posts such as tweets mentioning its country. Content analysis and big data analysis can then be used to identify which issues are discussed in reference to a country (e.g. online conversations in Japan about India). Semantic analysis can be used to analyse whether a nation is mentioned favourably or not. The embassy can then launch a digital campaign addressing specific issues as well as criticism levied against it. Such would be the case with an Indian social media campaign in Argentina highlighting the close trade relations between both states and demonstrating how trade with India contributes to the Argentinian economy.

Digital diplomacy limits

Resources

There are, however, certain limitations to using digital diplomacy. Chief among these is the need for resources. Social media accounts need to be managed. Content needs to be created. Discussions should be monitored to identify audience interests as well as criticism of national policies. Finally, embassy or MFA staff must have the time

required to engage in conversations with online publics, conversations that can help shape public attitudes.

Despite a heavy reliance on digital diplomacy, in most MFAs digital units are understaffed and overstretched. Diplomats might thus settle for using one social network while ensuring that they fully leverage that network towards diplomatic ends, such as engaging in online conversations.

Negative content

Another limitation is audience feedback. Social media in particular are predicated on dialogue between users. Thus, users often comment on embassy or MFA posts and tweets. Some of these comments may be especially negative. At times, a badly written tweet can raise local objections.

Diplomats cannot afford to ignore online critics and, when possible, should respond to constructive criticism. At the same time, diplomats should not engage with trolls which are users that deliberately share hateful or violent content. Additionally, diplomats must keep in mind that online criticism in itself is not negative and can actually be informative as it reveals which issues, policies, or state actions are viewed as contentious foreign populations.

Leadership

Senior officials and ambassadors may not be fully supportive of digital diplomacy if they view the digital sphere as a “fad” or an exercise in marketing. MFAs must thus offer ambassadors digital training. The emphasis here is not on how ambassadors use digital technologies themselves, but on demonstrating to them that the digital offers many benefits that can supplement offline diplomatic activity. Ambassadors who value the digital sphere are more likely to encourage subordinates to be active online and are more likely to support subordinates’ digital initiatives.

Evaluation

Perhaps the greatest challenge is how to evaluate digital diplomacy activities. In many MFAs, diplomats measure success by the numbers of their followers and their

online reach. However, the quality of one's followers is much more important. An embassy may only attract a few thousand users on Twitter. Yet if these users include journalists, news editors, policy makers, other diplomats, and online influencers, then this embassy may be better placed to practice digital diplomacy than an embassy that has 100,000 followers which include dormant accounts, trolls, and inactive users.

The main question that diplomats should ask is not how many re-tweets they have already gained, but how many comments they have elicited from followers. Commenting is the most demanding form of digital engagement. It is easy to "like" a post, yet commenting on a post demands that a user take time to formulate a response. In addition, a comment is more public than a "like" and will be viewed by a larger number of Facebook users. Often, people tend to comment on content that evokes interest, emotions, or that relates to important issues. The number of comments can thus help diplomats ensure that their content on social media is of relevance to their followers.

Conclusion – the past and the future

Technology has always impacted the conduct of diplomacy. Print media, the telegraph, radio, and fax machine all impacted the daily work of diplomats. The telegraph turned the MFA into an important institution as it could manage its diplomatic corps from afar. The fax machine sped up diplomatic processes as information could circle the globe in minutes.

The digital revolution of the 21st Century has also impacted diplomats' profession. Yet at its core, diplomacy has remained constant. Creating ties with foreign publics, influencing journalists, managing negotiations, narrating national policies, and marketing national initiatives were and remain central to diplomacy. The digital revolution merely affords diplomats with a new set of tools through which they can obtain traditional diplomatic goals.

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Dr Ilan MANOR is a digital diplomacy scholar at the University of Tel Aviv and a member of Oxford University's Digital Diplomacy Research Group. Dr MANOR's work focuses on examining how digital technologies impact societies and, in turn, diplomatic institutions. He has investigated the digital diplomacy practices of many states including Iran, Israel, Russia, and the US.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

What are the main differences between the first and second stages of digital diplomacy?

How can network analysis be leveraged by diplomats?

Why are comments posted by social media followers an especially important tool for analysing one's digital activities?

INTERVIEW

Technology and Engagement

INTERVIEW WITH

Raphael NÄGELI

Head of the Asia and Pacific Division
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland

Switzerland is leveraging its strength in innovation to help shape the direction of global digital governance that is inclusive and participatory. Ambassador Raphael NÄGELI talked about the country's digital foreign policy and how it relates to social and economic development. In this email interview with Trishia P. OCTAVIANO in December 2021, the Ambassador also shared an overview of Switzerland's cultural foreign policy.

A: Digitalisation is defined as one of four new thematic priorities in Switzerland's Foreign Policy Strategy 2020-2023. Now, to give this issue further depth and focus,

Switzerland has developed a Digital Foreign Policy Strategy for 2021-2024. Focus areas include the strengthening of digital governance, cybersecurity, digital self-determination for individual users, and the use of digitalisation to improve international cooperation as well as achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). International Geneva has been playing a crucial role in this regard. As a natural extension of the long history of the city of peace, the Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator (GESDA) was founded in 2019 as an independent foundation by the Swiss and Geneva governments. True to GESDA's motto "Use the future to build the present", the foundation bridges different communities together to create technological advancements while fostering inclusive and global solutions to a sustainable future.

Q: Can you tell us about Switzerland's approach to developing its digital diplomacy profile? How will this influence the country's foreign policy in the context of digitalisation for sustainable development?

Q: Can you share examples of international cultural initiatives that Switzerland has been involved in and what they have achieved so far? We are curious to know how Switzerland has been actively supporting cultural diversity both in Asia and Europe as part of the Swiss cultural foreign policy.

A: The Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2023-2026 prominently mentions culture as a central factor in political and social life, and as an instrument for maintaining social integration and social cohesion. Therefore, the cultural foreign policy of Switzerland centres on three priorities, namely: cultural participation, social cooperation, and creation and innovation.

Presence Switzerland organises the presence of Switzerland at several major international events, such as

world expos (e.g. Swiss Pavilion 2021/22 in Dubai) and the Olympic Games (e.g. Houses of Switzerland). These platforms help promote Switzerland's image which is closely related to Swiss brands, personalities, athletes, and products created by Swiss innovators.

Such events provide public and media platforms to reach a broad audience and are also used by Presence Switzerland to present and highlight the diverse Swiss culture in an innovative way, for example in the fields of music or design. Also, the diplomatic missions abroad organise projects, with the support of Presence Switzerland, that serve to promote our national languages or sustainable architecture.

Focusing on Asia, on the one hand, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) actively harnesses the opportunities of digitalisation to further increase the effectiveness and efficiency of administrations, and to reduce red tape or prevent corruption. It also promotes digital solutions while aiming at income generation and employment creation. On the other hand, Switzerland is actively positioning itself as a world-leading innovative location for business. For example, Swisstech is present at various start-up and technology fairs in Asia, such as Tech G in Shanghai in January 2022. The main aim is to maximise synergies between Switzerland as a high-tech country and the innovative ideas of the emerging Asian economies. Altogether, the resulting ideas and outcomes can bring positive change for peoples and their societies.

In addition to this, the autonomous foundation Pro Helvetia – the Swiss Arts Council – is promoting cultural projects in over 100 countries and is running two regional offices in Asia, namely in New Delhi and Shanghai. Pro Helvetia has been promoting Swiss culture in Asia for instance with the tours of the *Orchestre de la Suisse Romande* or the *Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève* in several Chinese cities in 2018 and 2019. Moreover, Pro Helvetia promotes such a variety of artistic exchange projects in the fields of dance, theatre, design, visual arts, and literature.

Q: What piece of advice made such an impact on you that you remember it to this day, and/or one thing you wish you had learnt a long time ago?

A: I wish I had learnt Chinese or any other Asian language. Languages open doors, not only in diplomacy but also for everyday interactions, thus allowing us to better understand cultures, histories, and philosophies of other countries. It is simply impossible to understand the

diversity of Asia, if you are limited to English sources and English-speaking interlocutors.

CHAPTER 4

Stakeholder Engagement in Public Diplomacy

Sol IGLESIAS
University of the Philippines

Stakeholder engagement, a new norm in public diplomacy, is the process of identifying key stakeholders, analysing their interests and influence, as well as engaging with them in a meaningful way.

Maintaining an open channel of communication to individuals and organisations who matter to your public diplomacy objectives is key, especially when it comes to regular activities like building rapport and sharing information.

While stakeholder analysis can include the consideration of actors inside your organisation and in other government departments, in this chapter we focus on external stakeholders – those outside your organisation.

Who are stakeholders and why do they matter?

New public diplomacy includes non-state actors such as the media, academia, the business sector, and civil society. These are among the main stakeholder groups in public diplomacy.

By referring to stakeholders, we typically mean the following¹:

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Who are stakeholders and why do they matter?
- How to do stakeholder analysis
- Stakeholder mapping for general engagement and for crises management
- Stakeholder mapping in practice

- Parties who can/will be affected by or can/will affect the government;
- A person, group of individuals, or organisation that can render any claim on an organisation's/the government's attention, resources, and/or output, or is affected by the output;
- Individuals or groups that have the power to influence the strategic future of your public diplomacy effort;
- Individuals or groups who are dependent on an organisation/the government; and
- The nominally powerless (i.e. those without any influence now but could still be empowered in the future).

Why do stakeholders matter?

Failing to respond to stakeholders' interests (or even to any information they provide) can lead to shortcomings in the decision-making process as evidenced by a prior study of 400 strategic decisions². A major reason why this happens is a half-hearted search for alternatives during the stages of decision-making. Hence, a good part of the strategy to avoid a dismal outcome is to assess the broadest possible perception of your stakeholders³.

Stakeholder engagement is critical to helping your public diplomacy programme perform even better. This includes direct benefits, for example through public support for, and participation in, your public diplomacy activities. In controversies and public debates, effective stakeholder engagement can also help amplify your position as well as address opposition.

Stakeholder support, involvement, and empowerment also generate indirect benefits, by creating an "authorising environment" that offers external legitimacy to your mandate, use of resources, decision-making procedures, and accountability mechanisms⁴.

Keeping a finger on the pulse of stakeholders can also mitigate risk of skewness or even bias. External partners

and collaborators help us to deal with the many biases that we may possess but of which we may not even be aware. For instance, we systematically err at assessing "the other side", those opposite of us in an adversarial situation. Partisan perceptions then shape behaviour, sharply reducing the possibility of any constructive engagement or dialogue⁵.

Finally, as the use of social media deepens, and while engagement strategies become more sophisticated, strategic stakeholder engagement is key to effective public diplomacy. Strategic stakeholder engagement aligns the right type of stakeholders with the right level of engagement, meeting public diplomacy goals⁶.

Stakeholder groups

Media – Mass media (television, radio, and print) still play an important role in public diplomacy due to their access to a vast audience, thus making them useful tools for generating policy awareness, messaging, and shaping perception. Social networks and blogs offer the immediacy of two-way communication.

Academia – Academics are current and future opinion leaders. They often hold important influences within their own communities. Opportunities for engagement include engaging the youth to create a lasting foundation for dialogue and partnership through scholarships and exchange programmes. You can position education and research as part of a strong place branding strategy.

Business – Previously viewed as a peripheral activity best left to commercial secretaries and specialists, the building of trade and economic relationships has returned to the centre of diplomacy. Businesses contribute to the shaping of the image of a country. They can also be loud, opinionated, and powerful voices in the shaping of policies that affect your public diplomacy strategy.

Civil society – Civil society constitutes the fourth and most diverse group with whom a diplomat may engage. Civil society organisations (CSOs) can be incredible shapers of public opinion as they are seen to represent the heart, soul, and values of society. NGOs, special interest groups, activists, artists and celebrities, charities, diasporas, religious or cultural groups, think tanks, philanthropists, and many other groups have deep roots in the community and they enjoy the trust of various segments of society⁷.

Stakeholder mapping and analysis

Stakeholder analysis is a necessary first step to stakeholder engagement.

The basic technique can be adapted to the needs of stakeholder engagement for public diplomacy for general, ongoing relationships as well as for specific controversies and crises.

General and sustained engagement is based on the initial analysis of stakeholder power versus their own interests. You can then develop direct and indirect engagement strategies based on the analysis. Engagement during controversies requires the mapping of stakeholder power against opposition/support over a particular issue. You can then develop appropriate engagement strategies to engage in dialogue, communicate your position, as well as exert influence. An effective approach would be to focus on the undecided, since influencing actors with strong initial positions may unproductively consume time and effort that you cannot afford.

Stakeholder identification is the first key step to conducting your analysis. Who or which groups have a potential stake in a public diplomacy initiative? Public diplomats need to familiarise themselves with the political, social, and economic terrain in order to identify specific members of the public needed for engagement⁸. Consider the broad categories of stakeholders from the media, the academe, the business sector, and the civil society.

General stakeholder mapping, step-by-step

1 For each stakeholder identified, assess the levels of interest in your organisation or public diplomacy initiative. This process may require research, such as focus group discussions and even preliminary dialogue with an initial sample of possible stakeholders.

2 Similarly, you then need to determine each stakeholder's level of power or influence in arenas that will affect your work.

3 The next step is to rank each stakeholder identified in two lists: one, according to their level of interest in your work; and two, according to their level of power and influence.

4 Map each stakeholder's location in the grid, either as a Player, Subject, Context Setter or Crowd member (see *Figure 1*).

5 Develop your engagement strategy for each type of stakeholder, for instance:

- collaborate with *players*, incorporate their advice and recommendations as much as possible;
- empower *subjects* to transform their interest into action and influence;
- involve or consult *context setters* by ensuring that their concerns are considered and offering opportunities to keep them informed; listen to them and provide feedback on how their input made a difference; and
- inform the *crowd* by means of even broader public communication strategies⁹.

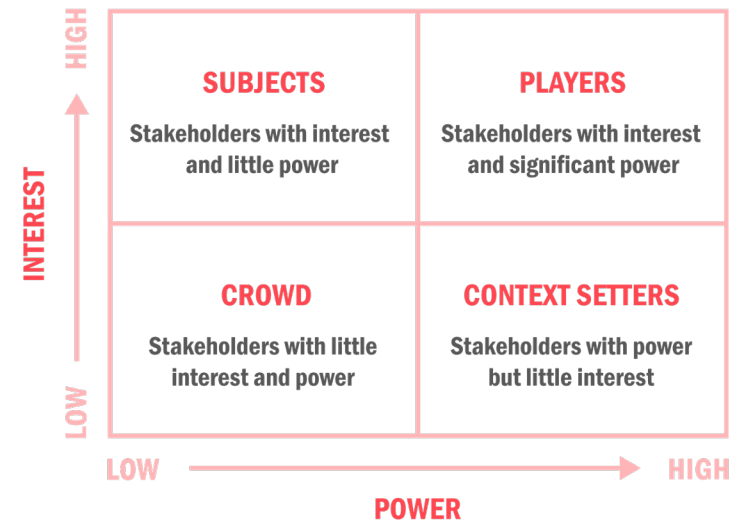


Figure 1. Plotting power vs interest for general and sustained engagement¹⁰

Crises/controversies stakeholder mapping, step-by-step

- 1 For each stakeholder identified, you need to assess (to the best of your knowledge and research) whether they support or oppose your initiative or stand over a policy issue, debate, or controversy.
- 2 You then need to determine their level of power or influence in arenas that will affect your work.
- 3 The next step is to rank each stakeholder identified in two lists: one, according to their level of support or opposition in the controversy; and two, according to their level of power and influence.
- 4 Map each stakeholder's location in the grid (see Figure 2).

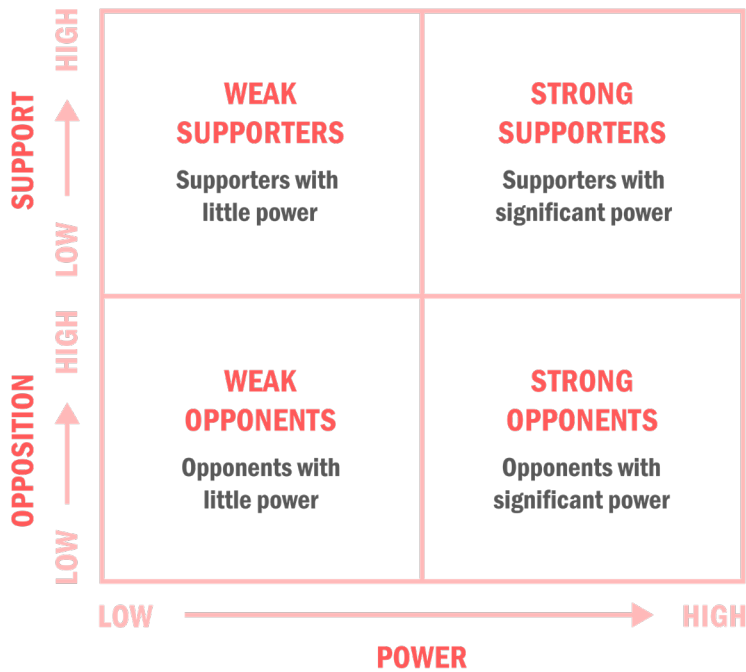


Figure 2. Plotting power vs interest for crises and controversies¹¹

- 5 Develop your engagement strategy for each type of stakeholder, for instance:
 - collaborate with *strong supporters*, incorporate their advice and recommendations as much as possible;
 - empower *weak supporters* to transform their interest into action and influence; and
 - seek dialogue with *strong opponents*, particularly if their opposition is low, and *strong supporters*, if their support is low; it is often more fruitful to target those who are undecided or less committed to their position than those who already have a clear positive or negative attitude; and you need not sway the clear positives and it may take too much time and effort to persuade the decided negatives (if they can be persuaded at all).¹²

Case study: the Asia-Europe Roundtable

Working with civil society entails a new pattern of working with stakeholders. Instead of merely focusing on the identification of policy aims and actors who possess relevant interests, support/opposition, and expertise, civil society stakeholders are increasingly seen as possible partners in creating positive diplomatic outcomes.¹³

The Asia-Europe Roundtable is an example of a public diplomacy initiative that put this insight into practice at two levels. First, CSOs were partners in organising the initiative. Second, the roundtable itself was about the role of civil society in conflict prevention and peace-building.

Figure 3. The Asia-Europe Roundtable on conflict management

Public diplomacy initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Asia-Europe Roundtable was a joint project of the Asia-Europe Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and the Singapore Institute of International Affairs that ran from 2000 to 2011. ■ It developed a focus on the role of civil society in conflict management. Consequently, the roundtable was a unique platform for mutual exchange and learning between the two regions. ■ The roundtable took place every one to two years, alternating the venue between Asia and Europe.
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Identification of stakeholders

- The organisers identified key stakeholders through the conduct of smaller experts' meetings of not more than 10 stakeholders from Asia and Europe from the academe, media, and regional and international organisations.
- They met prior to each roundtable – brainstorming on the topic, and enlarging the pool of stakeholders from their own networks.
- The many eminent persons in this group included the late Surin Pitsuwan, former ASEAN Secretary-General and Foreign Minister of Thailand.
- For years, many of the project participants remained part of the informal networks created as a result of the roundtable.

Stakeholder engagement outcomes

- An example of the project's unique impact was its contribution to the study and dissemination of important lessons learned from the Aceh peace process in Indonesia.
- The peace process in Aceh was remarkable for the role of international CSOs in mediation: the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue brokered negotiations from 2000 to 2003, and the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), with former Finnish president and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Martti Ahtisaari, mediated the final peace talks from 2004 to 2005. President Ahtisaari and CMI as well as former Indonesian Vice President, Jusuf Kalla (who is also a peace negotiator) took part in the roundtable and ASEF activities, imparting behind-the-scenes accounts of the peace negotiations.
- Moreover, the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), composed of European Union and ASEAN observers, monitored the implementation of the peace agreement. As such, Dutch diplomat Peter Feith, who had led the AMM from 2005 to 2006, shared his knowledge and experiences as an active participant in the roundtable.

Conclusions

Stakeholder engagement is the process of identifying key stakeholders of your public diplomacy initiative, analysing their interests and influence, and interacting with them purposefully and meaningfully. An ingredient of successful public diplomacy is effective stakeholder engagement, which is indispensable in new public diplomacy.

This chapter has four important takeaways:

- Stakeholders are those affected by, or will affect, your initiative because of their current or potential influence.

- Stakeholder engagement has direct and indirect benefits. In controversies and public debates, effective stakeholder engagement can also help amplify your position and address opposition. Stakeholders are drawn from the media, the academe, business, and civil society.
- Stakeholder analysis techniques can be used for (1) general, sustained engagement and (2) controversies. Develop your engagement strategy depending on where particular stakeholders can be located in the analysis.
- Civil society stakeholders are potential partners in creating positive public diplomacy outcomes.

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QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

Who are your main stakeholders?

How would you map these stakeholders using the process for general engagement?

What controversies might arise in your role?

Which stakeholders would support or oppose your preferred actions and/or messages?

How should you manage stakeholders that are indifferent or unreliable?

INTERVIEW

Stakeholder Engagement

INTERVIEW WITH

Ingrid DE BEER**Head of Foreign Audiences/Public Diplomacy
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands**

More effective public diplomacy strategies require greater participation of non-state actors. Ingrid DE BEER, with her years of experience, can attest to this. She exchanged with Trishia P. OCTAVIANO some reflections about her research work and several ideas about stakeholder engagement strategies that actually work in the field. The interview was conducted in October 2021 via email.

Q: With the role of non-state actors becoming more relevant in this new age of diplomacy, how can states seize this opportunity to influence public opinion and policy outcomes at a global scale?

A: The first important step in working with non-state actors is to acknowledge their growing roles in influencing public policy in both regional and global fora. This may sound easier than it is seen in practice.

Although diplomats have increasingly been engaging with non-state actors over

the last twenty years, there still is a level of apprehension in integrating interests and strategies too much. Once there is a sense that non-state actors actually enrich diplomacy and support outreach efforts to key audiences, a wealth of opportunities opens up.

What we see is that collaborating with local non-state actors is in itself a value. It provides insights in local, political, and societal dynamics, as well as valuable partnerships. Beyond this value, collaboration with local non-state actors also accelerates and enriches relationships with decision makers where bilateral diplomatic connections stall, for example due to political difficulties.

A good example of collaborating with non-state actors is the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs partnership with the Cartoon Movement, a global network of politically savvy cartoonists.

Promoting human rights, peace, justice, and security is an important objective of Dutch foreign policy. To reach key audiences, we worked with the Cartoon Movement using cartoons to visualise these abstract themes. Working with Dutch embassies all over the world, ambassadors were also paired with cartoonists from the Cartoon Movement network to give guest lectures at schools and universities in many countries. Ambassadors discussed the relevance of international peace and justice, while cartoonists made it relevant for students by visualising local perspectives and, at the same time, showing the added value of their work. Furthermore, to challenge the students, they were asked to formulate new ideas on their own; they proposed new perspectives on sustainable peace and justice.

To bring these peace and justice messages to decision makers, these drawings were put on a website to be used as examples by others and some of these ideas were turned into editorial cartoons. Each year, the project culminated in a cartoon exhibition that was on display in several countries attracting media attention, and they were on display at the United Nations headquarters in New York during the UN General assembly and at the iconic Peace Palace in The Hague.

Q: What is collaborative public diplomacy and how can this approach be best utilised to improve the significant components that impact government policies at home and overseas?

A: In getting to grips with the impact of our increasingly interconnected world of diplomacy, the rationale behind the collaborative public diplomacy approach of the Netherlands is to go beyond "traditional" stakeholder networking and to aim for initiatives generating knowledge, innovation, and synergetic results. To be relevant for our local stakeholders and to get to this next level in diplomacy, we

needed to reach out to new and unlikely partners. This approach has helped me to explain to my colleagues at

the MFA that collaborating with non-state actors is part and parcel of diplomacy.

A compelling example of collaborative diplomacy are the partnerships Netherlands' Embassies have set up in various countries to work together with authorities, the private sector, and civil society in exploring innovations for solving local challenges. It is an actionable approach in which we show the Dutch way of working together.

For example, in Malaysia, a few years ago, there was a problem in the dairy supply chain where local businesses were keen to increase yield but didn't know where to start. The Dutch Embassy forged a partnership between local farmers, innovators, and Dutch agricultural businesses to solve these dairy supply chain challenges and, at the same time, to increase the level of sustainability practices. We aim to emulate and replicate good practices like these.

The challenge for me and my colleagues who work at the Ministry in The Hague is to bring the many exciting local programmes together and to find ways that make an impact on a global scale. What we have learned is the value of timing, such as generating local success ahead of major global fora where we can collate local programmes and make an impact on decision-makers.

A: Over the years I have come to appreciate that one-size-fits-all strategies do not work. Every local situation needs a tailor-made approach and that is why

we cherish our vast embassy network. Having said this, we have identified some recurring elements in successful programming. Let me focus on two.

First is to align the “why” among partners. It seems like stating the obvious, but we often see partners diving into operationalisation without establishing a joint cause and shared values. Second is to start building engagement internally. Based on a shared sense of belonging among colleagues, external engagement is bound to be a success.

Q: What strategies should public diplomacy practitioners adopt to ensure effective engagement with stakeholders?

When designing public diplomacy strategies, an important, overarching consideration is the consistency in positioning. Our approach was to first identify the Dutch way of working. What we found out from many dialogues with partners, focus groups in the Netherlands and abroad, and media research is that the Dutch way of working is two-sided. It encapsulates competition and cooperation. Some say that the Dutch “trade and do good” at the same time.

Having established what distinguishes the Dutch from the rest, the second step is to identify purpose. Why do we want to trade and do good at the same time? And what surfaced is that the Dutch aim to solve global challenges through economically viable solutions.

As the Netherlands is a small sized country, we have learned that partnerships are beneficial. This means that to come up with impactful solutions, the Dutch aim to build partnerships that solve challenges and add value, which at the same time include economic value. So, instead of competing with other countries over partnerships we prefer working together also on a multilateral level.

To work towards consistency in positioning, a third and final step is to find out what sets the Netherlands apart from so many other countries when crafting these partnerships. And we discovered that the way the Dutch work is inclusive, inventive, and open. We seek multidisciplinary collaboration towards out-of-the-box pragmatic solutions in a transparent and bold way. We apply this approach to assess which local programmes fit best in an impactful global programme for the Netherlands. It does work well; although it continues to be quite a fascinating learning journey.

Q: Several years ago, you worked on some research about leveraging stakeholder interests in public diplomacy and you used The Hague as a case study. Can you briefly tell us about this research and your key findings? What recommendations from the study remain insightful and relevant to this day?

A: Having worked with the Hague Project Peace and Justice alongside its many partners, I felt the need to explore the dynamics of the collaboration and identify lessons to improve the Project as well as to apply these lessons to other

programmes. As I mentioned above, an action-driven collaborative diplomacy approach helped me make sense of the dynamics and understand some of the experiences.

This action-driven approach forged coherence between stakeholders that had acted in isolation up to till then. And at the same time, the collaboration contributed to the profile of the Netherlands and The Hague as a centre of excellence in peace and justice¹.

Having an action-driven collaborative public diplomacy approach in mind, it helped me shape the *HagueTalks* platform (www.haguetalks.com) by means of an actionable dialogue series that aimed at setting peace and justice in motion. It is such a worthwhile endeavour to work for the Netherlands in building its favourable reputation as a global peace and justice centre of expertise, while at the same time bringing together the many Hague-based justice stakeholders by reaching out to a shared audience of students and young professionals.

In 2016, the research article concluded that challenges in the years to come will arise in terms of balancing interests between the two initiators of the Hague Project, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Municipality of The Hague. It also identified policy areas that benefit from a collaborative public diplomacy approach. We are now further operationalising these suggestions.

In hindsight, what was undervalued is what I would coin as “human chemistry”. The success of collaborative public diplomacy requires a chemistry between initiators and main actors. To go beyond hierarchy and function. From what I have seen, listening respectfully to each other is what makes the chemistry work.

CHAPTER 5

Evaluation in Public Diplomacy

Efe SEVIN, Towson University, US
Kadir Jun AYHAN, Ewha Womans University, South Korea

Public diplomacy is a vibrant field of study and practice. Communicating with foreign publics is a process that welcomes contributions from a diverse group of experts ranging from diplomats to celebrities, and from scholars of media studies to branding. Unexpectedly, such richness paves the way to numerous debates on many aspects of public diplomacy. There is even a debate on what the concept stands for and what it does.

It is challenging to build a case for evaluation against such a background. Adding to this difficulty is the long-term nature of the expected outcomes of public diplomacy programmes. However, as a primarily tax-funded practice, public diplomacy is – and should be – accountable. In this chapter, we balance these two priorities: first, we acknowledge that there is no universal definition of public diplomacy then, accordingly, we propose a variety of methods that can be used to evaluate certain aspects of the practice.

At its core, public diplomacy refers to intentional communication-based activities that international actors employ to shape the cognitive and affective attitudes of foreign publics; to understand as well as build relationships with them; and ultimately

IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Public diplomacy evaluation begins with identifying the objectives it is designed to achieve to lay the foundation for foreign policy goals**
- **Output evaluation is the relatively easier first step to measure how actual products, activities, and messages are created as a result of public diplomacy projects**

IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Outcome evaluation helps measure whether public diplomacy activities contributed to producing the expected outcomes**
- **Changed perceptions and stronger relationships are connected to behavioural outcomes.**
- **Logic models help connect public diplomacy projects' input, output, outcome, and impact**

to support their foreign policy goals¹. This connection between foreign policy goals and public diplomacy is most explicitly pronounced in the reports of the US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD) which lay out the foreign policy goals of the country for each region and the public diplomacy objectives and programmes that will support these goals.

An actor's public diplomacy objectives could be limited to managing a news story or a crisis, or more proactive and strategic such as when attracting more foreign direct investment or branding the nation². The objectives could also be rather long-term and diffused such

as forming the basis for a regional or global major power's attempts to maximise compliance and minimise resistance to its leadership regionally or globally.

Alternatively, the expected outcome could be quite generic such as strengthening ties between two or more societies to laying the foundation for traditional diplomacy to achieve its core goal of managing international relations peacefully. Whether the objectives are limited or grand, public diplomacy programmes are only catalytic processes that contribute to the production of a certain outcome for which public diplomacy alone often would not be sufficient³. As much as these expected outcomes are diverse, their evaluation also requires a different set of tools. Public diplomacy activities are not a panacea to help achieve any foreign policy goal. Therefore, the initial stage in evaluation is to identify the expected outcomes an international actor aims its public diplomacy activities to achieve. This evaluation at the goal-setting stage is referred to as process (or formative) evaluation.

Process evaluation

Process evaluation helps actors to explicitly articulate their implicit assumptions. Through process evaluation, actors lay out a theory of change whereby they frame the

problems to be addressed as well as the interventions needed, the methods of intervention, and then clarify expected outcomes.

Output evaluation

Output evaluation is the first level of measurement in summative evaluation. While in itself incomplete, it answers a fundamental question on programme-level measurement: what actual products, activities, messages are created as a result of public diplomacy projects. Evaluation at this level does not necessarily take contextual information (such as organisational priorities or long-term goals) into consideration. Rather, the focus is on what a specific public diplomacy attempt has produced for audiences.

In mediated public diplomacy, output evaluation is about content production. For instance, the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) reports "broadcast hours per week" for its television and radio operations. In traditional media, public diplomacy projects can measure their exposure by looking at total media circulation for print media and at ratings for impressions in broadcast media.

In social media, content production is again the key output. These platforms present their own metrics, such as impressions and reach, for further evaluation purposes.

An example of process evaluation

European Union (EU) policymakers might think that European youths must identify better with the EU to help sustain the polity in the long-term (i.e. problem framing). They may design programmes that help strengthen the identification of European youths with Europe. They may consider the ERASMUS Programme, the polity's signature student exchange programme, as an intervention to help achieve goals (i.e. intervention framing). The methodical considerations could include which countries to have in the programme, the length of the exchanges, the institutional support for the students and universities participating in the programme, and keeping the trajectory of and maintaining contact with the alumni. The expected outcomes could be better identification with European identity, more trust, empathy, perception-taking vis-à-vis other Europeans, and greater awareness about European or global issues. But are these expected outcomes really achieved? This question is answered in the summative evaluation which we elaborate in the remainder of this chapter.

Facebook's Audience Insights, Instagram's Account Insights, and Twitter's Analytics are such tools that show the content creator how many individuals saw their posts, visited their profiles, and interacted with their content. In non-mediated public diplomacy, project and participant numbers are popular output measures.

Devoid of any other context (such as organisational priorities or long-term goals) this type of evaluation solely shows what is being produced for audiences. It is not possible to infer any additional conclusions apart from production. Output evaluation basically shows how inputs – namely financial and human resources – are translated to projects.

Outcome evaluation

Public diplomacy generates outcomes in two different areas: perception and relationships⁴. Both are often intermediary outcomes that are connected to behavioural changes. For example, a more positive perception of a country can lead to increased support for its foreign policies. Relationships based on positive interactions can contribute to recommendations to travel to that country. Countries invest in public diplomacy projects to reach out to foreigners or the international community. At the end of a successful outreach attempt, it is expected that practitioner countries will be able to influence the way their countries as well as their interests are seen, or to build figurative bridges with new individuals or organisations.

Outcomes are more complex than outputs in terms of evaluations since there is an added burden of proof: the link between input and outcomes. Showing how many news articles were written or how many impressions a social media post got are straightforward processes. Articulating the link between seeing new information and perception change, however, is not.

Perception evaluation

Public opinion polls

The seminal method to understanding the changes in public opinion is done through frequent and repeated polls. This

approach requires the practitioners to survey a sample of the population over time and to ask them suitable questions regarding their perceptions. Although methodologically sound, public opinion polling requires time and human resources. While it can be outsourced to local companies, financial costs might be prohibitive.

Recent studies in the field of public diplomacy have used secondary datasets created by research and analytics companies. Gallup, one such company, conducts Gallup World Poll consistently⁵. Pew Research Center, a think tank that is known for its original datasets, conducts public opinion polls. While some projects are centred around the US, others include numerous countries across the world⁶.

Either self-administered or outsourced public opinion polls gives the practitioner countries the opportunity to ask the questions they deem important. Secondary datasets limit the analyses to the questions asked by the companies but are considerably more affordable.

Experiments

One difficulty in evaluating public diplomacy outcomes is the lack of baseline data when comparing findings. An ideal design would allow evaluators to compare the participants' attitudes towards a public diplomacy programme vis-à-vis their behavioural intentions for their respective countries before and after the programme. Furthermore, comparing the attitudes of participants or behavioural intentions to non-participants could also allow programme designers to evaluate the outcomes of the programme.

However, a word of caution is needed. If programme participants and even non-participants are not randomly selected, it is highly likely that there will be a selection bias. The programme participants may already be biased towards the sponsor of the public diplomacy programme which drives their participation in the first place.

Random assignments help control for all other variability except for participation in the public diplomacy programme ("the treatment"). Alternatively, failed applicants who also self-select themselves to participate in the programme

such as students who applied for a government scholarship but failed to get it can act as a control group for comparison against the recipients of the same scholarship.

Social media monitoring

Social media provide unique insights into public opinion. In more traditional evaluation attempts, researchers still need to prompt the participants with questions to solicit their views. On social media, individual users express their opinions without any such prompts. Therefore, the answers are relatively free from framing and priming concerns.

Depending on the size of the public diplomacy projects, practitioners can use search functions on platforms to collect content. For instance, an embassy can monitor the comments it receives on its posts periodically to assess the changes in public opinion. When projects get larger, it is likely that manual monitoring of social media platforms will not be feasible.

Relationship evaluation

Direct access

Public diplomacy projects are expected to create relationships. While the other evaluation strategies discussed in this section look at aggregate relations, direct access looks at the individual level. Do public diplomacy projects put practitioner countries in contact with decision-makers in target countries? Increasing access will enable practitioner countries to better understand the political system as well as give them opportunities to state their cases when necessary directly. Frequency and volume of contacts can be used as a metric.

Social network analysis

A social network is, in its essence, a structure composed of different actors that engage with each other in any setting.

Researchers have used commercial social media monitoring platforms (such as BrandWatch and Salesforce) as well as application programming interfaces (APIs) to gather larger datasets from social media platforms.

By using automated content analysis and sentiment analysis, researchers are able to track changes in public opinion across time.

Even though more recent studies focus on digital networks that occur on social media platforms, a network can be both online and offline, and it can be on any topic ranging from collaboration networks among local actors to global trade networks. Since public diplomacy projects obtain and build on new relationships, they can change the structure of these networks.

Analyses at individual levels (such as direct access) show a limited view. Social network analysis is used to map out relations among all the actors involved. This structural level analysis is most useful when there is a need to identify actors with specific roles, such as gatekeepers and influencers. Repeated measures of the same network (e.g. before and after a public diplomacy project) can be used to demonstrate outcomes.

Multipliers

An underlying assumption in most public diplomacy activities is that the participants, who are often selected and targeted among potential or current opinion leaders, will multiply the effects of these activities to their networks. Considering that not everybody can participate in public diplomacy activities due to limited resources, an important aspect of evaluation of public diplomacy outcomes is analysing to what extent there are ripple effects. This evaluation can be designed to analyse the ripple effects by surveying the immediate networks of programme participants or through an experiment in which the treatment group is exposed to the experiences of the participants, while the control group is not. In both cases, the same caveats for experiment design discussed above would apply.

Conclusion

Evaluation in public diplomacy is a challenging task. In this chapter, we started with a definition of public diplomacy that positioned the practice as a communication process that changes perceptions and relationships often lead towards behavioural changes. Consequently, we first described ideas for output evaluation by demonstrating different ways public diplomacy projects can report their

own activities. Then, we introduced outcome evaluation. Since there are many different ways public diplomacy can contribute to the achievement of desired impacts, we presented a short survey of metrics and datasets.

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QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

What are some of the outputs and outcomes that can be evaluated when analysing a Twitter account of a country's foreign ministry?

How can we employ the logic model to evaluate whether the ERASMUS Programme contributes to more identification with the European identity?

If a public diplomacy institution finds more people participating in their cultural activities and their foreign policies than non-participants, can they conclude that their public diplomacy activities have been effective?

INTERVIEW

Evaluation in Public Diplomacy

INTERVIEW WITH

Gary MUNDY

Senior Regional Evaluation Advisor, East Asia
British Council

With nearly two decades of experience in programme evaluation in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, Gary MUNDY discussed with the Handbook editors some of his ideas about the critical role evaluation plays in driving change and impact in society.

Q: What makes evaluation important, and how can you make evaluation valuable?

A: There is a very long answer to that question(!) but I will try to keep mine relatively short. First, most of what is delivered in this area involves

public money to some degree. Evaluation provides both transparency of how money has been spent and what it is delivering in terms of the outcomes. It supports wider accountability in how governments use money to create value and the types of value created. This helps hold public servants to account, which is pretty important in my view. Second, it allows us to identify how to spend money better in the future. Very few – if any – initiatives or programmes are a complete success or a complete failure. What is important is understanding which components work, for who, how, and why. When things don't deliver the results that we want, we need to know if there is some fundamental flaw in the thinking behind the design of a programme or initiative, or whether it may be a good idea but the implementation of it was problematic in some way. Having answers to these questions is necessary if we are to design and deliver greater impact in the future.

Finally, evaluation has an ethical role in that programmes and initiatives take up the time of many people. Is it worth it?

Are we essentially wasting their time and effort? In extreme cases, are we doing harm in some way? Evaluation helps us to answer these questions and to minimise risks.

In terms of what makes an evaluation valuable, for me the main thing is that it contains well-evidenced, practical recommendations as to how to make a programme or initiative more impactful in the future. It has to provide the translation from data and analysis into action. It has to point a clear path to improvement otherwise it is a purely academic exercise.

Q: What makes evaluation difficult and how have you addressed the challenges of evaluation?

A: I think that there are a number of challenges that any evaluator will happily share – or perhaps unhappily – but, in my mind, they are in part cultural and in part technical. On the cultural side, organisations need to have some clarity about what it is

they are seeking to achieve and the underlying thinking as to what will make their approaches work. Without this, evaluators are only working in the dark and no amount of method or rigour or resource will deliver a good result. There needs to be a clear articulation by those designing and delivering programmes of the desired outcomes and how these will be achieved – what is the underlying *theory* that explains the change that we want to bring about?

Organisational cultures where evaluation has taken deep roots do this intuitively. It can, however, be a real challenge in organisations where these roots are actually less well-established. I think that this is a key difference between evaluators working within delivery organisations and those working with evaluation agencies. For the former, building and maintaining a culture of evaluation and evaluative thinking is key to success. You can't just be technically good at doing evaluation, you have to also be good at contributing to changes in organisational culture. On a more practical front, a major challenge is the absence of good quality data. Over the years, I have seen too many evaluation reports that have an opening paragraph that says something like *"data were not available on some key outcomes, which made them difficult to assess, but we did our best!"*. Monitoring and evaluation are bound

together in this way. If we do not have good monitoring data, then it is a huge threat to evaluability and the credibility of results and recommendations. Good monitoring data links back to the cultural challenge I described above. Evaluative thinking and clarity around programme theory will highlight what monitoring data is necessary to answer the fundamental questions about programme success. Without it, one realises the absence too late.

At British Council we are addressing both the cultural and the practical side of things. On the cultural side, we ran a (very well-attended!) series of intense workshops on *Evaluation Literacy* for senior leaders and managers across the organisation. This has made it easier for us to have conversations about evaluation and made some of those cultural issues more intuitive. We have also started to build Theories of Change into all of our major programmes, challenging colleagues to think evaluatively from the outset of programme design and delivery.

Q: How has evaluation developed to take into account new forms of public diplomacy, such as online platforms and social media?

A: I think partially so far, but this is going to be a growing area, no doubt. Social media has greatly increased our access to information on who is engaging with what, their response to content, and so forth, but harnessing all of that to answer clearly defined questions is something I think many organisations

still struggle with. The technical competence as well as resources to do this can be quite thin and I think we often underestimate what it takes to do it well. Evaluation can entail separating out the signal from the noise and social media platforms are incredibly noisy places. They open up lots of potential, but I think there is much to do to make the most of this.

I have seen some very interesting work recently using social network analysis around social media platforms such as Twitter to analyse and understand how influence works around some very specific issues. This is clearly going to be a growth area and all those involved in any form of public diplomacy are going to need to be better at understanding in the future. Strong evaluation will be key to this.

Q: What roles can third parties, such as private research companies or polling firms, play in the practice of evaluation?

A: They play a substantial role. The private sector has technical skills and capabilities that it would rarely make sense for delivery organisations to maintain in-house, purely on grounds of efficiency.

The market is always going to be where one goes to find partners that can fill those gaps in capability. And I don't see that changing any time soon.

Without a doubt, technology has increased the accessibility of data. It is easier, quicker, and cheaper now than five or ten years ago. But doing this with rigour, with the right understanding about sampling, response rates, analytical approaches that are a good fit with the data and the question you are trying to answer – tech solves none of these problems for us. We are always going to rely on a specialist skill set for this. In some ways, “big data” has increased frustration as we feel that analysis and understanding should be as routine as our access to the raw data. It isn't and likely won't be for the foreseeable future, I think, that organisations are going to need specialist support from the private sector for the foreseeable future.

Q: At British Council, what is the general approach towards evaluation?

A: The Evaluation, Evidence and Learning function was established in 2017 at British Council and it is our first unit dedicated to programme evaluation. We

have an evaluation policy that sets out our key principles and a Results and Evidence Framework, of which evaluation is a key part, alongside other forms of performance monitoring. Our focus now is to evaluate and learn more at scale, rather than in piecemeal ways. There is much greater value in looking at and comparing a programme across multiple contexts together using common methods, rather than each of them individually and in different ways. We have struggled in the past to aggregate and learn at scale, but we are getting better at it.

We use a theory-based approach and all of our major programmes are underpinned by a Theory of Change articulating the outcomes and how and why we think

these will be achieved. These form the basis of our evaluation work – basically, do our theories stand up in practice, where, why (or why not), and how can we adapt our programmes to be more impactful in the future?

Q: In your experience, can you share some examples of how you used evaluation to inform and shape your priorities and/or activities?

A: Very generally, across all areas of our work, I can see evaluation raising questions for us about the scale and intensity of programmes, and whether this is sufficient to drive the kinds of impact that we want to achieve. I can see all that already starting to inform

thinking and decisions about the trade-off between scale and intensity, in terms of the numbers of countries we are delivering a programme in. Basically, the more countries (or regions) that a finite resource is stretched across, the lighter our intensity of programming in any one country. Evaluations are very helpful for understanding that trade off and how to maximise impact with the resources that are available to us.

I have also seen it really sharpen our thinking about outcomes and impact – what is it that we are really trying to achieve, for who and why? Evaluations really bring these questions into focus and force us into greater clarity. This will, ultimately, help strengthen the impact that we have.

Q: What piece of advice made such an impact on you that you remember it to this day, and/or one thing you wish you had learnt a long time ago?

A: Not sure if it's advice but wisdom for sure. Nassim Nicholas Taleb's book, *Foiled by Randomness* is quite a sobering read for anybody in the business of trying to understand causality in any social programme.

The key message is that the real world is far more complex than our biases allow us to see. One quote in particular stood out for me:

“We are a bunch of idiots who know nothing and are mistake-prone but happen to be endowed with the rare privilege of knowing it.”

I should probably have that over my desk!

CHAPTER 6

Cultural Diplomacy

Alison CARROLL¹
University of Melbourne, Australia

Why engage in cultural diplomacy?

This chapter asks: *why engage in cultural diplomacy?*, and offers principles and practices for successful outcomes for cultural diplomacy in this third decade of the 21st Century.

Cultural diplomacy is the state-sponsored use of culture to encourage international goodwill and understanding for a country's broader socio-economic-political advantage. When successful, it stockpiles amity and positive branding useful in international negotiations. Most governments today accept this as a worthwhile activity to be supported.

Cultural diplomacy is not new. It has been a fixture in most places around the world for millennia.

- The 18th Century saw the practice as one of offering significant cultural gifts to others you want to impress (as noted here, not always successfully).
- In the 19th Century, countries hosted and/or sent cultural material to huge "international expositions".
- Most governments in the 20th Century took over the role in a

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Cultural diplomacy as a state-sponsored use of culture to encourage international goodwill and understanding
- Cultural diplomacy is not new, but it has not always been done wisely or effectively
- The principles of successful cultural diplomacy include relevance, credibility, leadership, consistency, curiosity, and cultural awareness.

IN THIS CHAPTER

■ **Cultural diplomacy requires consideration of your organisation, your partners, how best to share support, and the successful negotiation of contractual arrangements.**

codified and organised way. And many created government-backed agencies to work with and support creative arts organisations and individuals to engage in other countries. These agencies have been created for various reasons, from countering the influence of a challenger (like the British Council in 1934 in the face of Soviet cultural activity), to a method of creating a better environment for relations with neighbours (like

the Japan Foundation in 1972 re-emerging into a global dialogue) to local circumstance (like the Korea Foundation founded in 1991, signalling their increasingly overt international presence).

- Today, countries use effective and professional agencies adaptable to this fast-changing, interconnected, digitally sophisticated globe.

Cultural diplomatic programmes can include:

- *Different media*: performance including theatre, music, dance, circus, puppetry; visual arts including design and craft practices; books including translations and writers' tours; film media including video and television; popular arts practices like street theatre; arts practice focusing on new technologies.
- *Associated events*: from lectures, seminars, and workshops, to celebrations
- *Special themes*: children's/youth programmes; special festivals around a theme; First Nations cultural events;

Pacific Island chiefs gave English Captain James Cook the best examples of their cultural material (now proudly held by many museums across Europe) to impress him with both their skills and their friendliness. They expected similar gifts back from him – something Cook, not understanding the rules of cultural diplomacy of the Pacific, failed to deliver. At almost the same time, English Ambassador George Macartney gave clocks and other mechanical wonders to the Qianlong Emperor, which the Chinese ruler treated as trifles almost of no interest and, in turn, made the English fret about their relationship with East Asia.

events with a focus on traditional and historic arts; if appropriate, events with a focus on diasporas and shared histories, for example, post-colonial issues.

Principles of successful cultural diplomatic practice

People want to communicate. A key role of culture diplomacy is encouraging this to occur as constructively and rewardingly as possible. Some principles to apply here are outlined in the *ASEF Public Diplomacy Handbook (2016)*².

Relevance

The first important question for you to consider is the relevance of your intended activity to you and your stakeholders *and* to your audience in the recipient country. Will your selected content and presentation convey the message you want to convey, such as dynamism, cleverness, diversity, humanity, ingenuity, or beauty? Will these qualities be as evident to your recipient audience? Will they perceive your message as exciting, challenging, rewarding, different, or revealing? Will they recognise whatever your agenda is?

Avoid the “Dancing Girls in Pretty Costumes” syndrome, considered by some bureaucrats as both “attractive” and “uncontroversial”; although for most audiences (especially the influential ones you want to impress) it is a waste of time and money at best and rather insulting for its vacuity as worst.

A more sophisticated example is the selection of art exhibitions from the US launched overseas in the 1950s, torn between American art advisors being “conservative” (preferring landscape painting) or “progressive”³ (favouring abstract art). Both types of work have credibility, but their relevance varies according to the desired audience.

Will it be *relevant* to them? Do not underestimate your audience. The Internet makes a lot of quality material readily accessible and an audience will know if they are being patronised with lesser offerings.

Difficult subject matter may well be very successful and should not be avoided if you deem it important enough and appropriate. Almost all audiences, and certainly younger ones, want to see from another place what might

challenge them and their own thinking. But also know and respect your audience and their sensitivities, especially around different social norms to do with, for example, sexuality and politics.

Historic Chinese art exhibitions enticed big crowds in Western countries some decades ago. This dwindled as the same sort of material was continuously provided. The National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne recently exhibited terracotta warriors from Xian accompanied by contemporary work (reflecting many of the Xian principles) by artist Cai Guo Qiang. It created a new and dynamic context for both and gained excellent press and audience numbers.

Credibility

You want your professional partners in your home country and internationally to be the “best”, both as colleagues and in content. Good colleagues provide credibility to their own communities in your country and overseas. The best is not always, or even often, your nation’s major arts companies. The “best” can often be provided by smaller, edgier, more provocative, and more engaged and flexible (and curious) organisations and individuals⁴.

You also need to believe in the content of your programme which you can then “sell” to a new audience. That audience will come back for more if their prior engagements with you are rewarding, and, obviously, vice versa if they are not. Good outcomes for an event are good for everyone; it leads to long-term relationships and goodwill all round.

There can be tension between what you, as a representative of a government, want to see and what the creative people of your country think is important to show. It is the “art for art’s sake” argument versus the “art as a tool of government” argument. These do not need to be mutually exclusive, but they can be. Too “safe” and artists will doubt your programme; too “challenging” and some conservative supporters may criticise and even withdraw funds.

Note that the key partners for cultural diplomacy activity – arts practitioners – have different reasons for engagement from you, such as increased dialogue with peers, finding new audiences, finding new stimuli, being challenged in a

different environment, and so on. Most will understand your interests as well. However, it is a sensitive relationship, and no artist wants to be “used” by a diplomatic event of no merit, or to have work treated without respect.

Consistency and constancy

Consistency of standard is critical, though content should be varied, stimulating, and engaging.

Constancy means emphasising “programmes” of multiple or sequential events, which over time add depth to your impact, rather than individual projects or one-off events⁵. Too often good individual projects are left dangling with no follow-up, so the goodwill and knowledge gained seem wasted.

Consistent and adequate funding is critical for programmes which take time to develop and see through, and which can have results over long periods. Promising projects and the goodwill they engender can be undermined by uncertain funding futures.

Professional, sophisticated work is usually supported by “good” funding, but a large budget is not a guarantee of success. A poorly planned and executed programme of work may not deliver the desired outcomes no matter the budget.

Curiosity and awareness

A fourth principle is curiosity, leading to social and cultural awareness. The word used in the first edition of the Handbook is *cordiality*. That refers to social politeness, which is important, but this issue of curiosity and human awareness goes further, to the point of being able, always, to see the other side’s point of view, to understand where it arises, and to give it respect. It does not mean that the other point of view needs to be agreed with, but a major step is being able, as it is said, to step in another’s shoes. Understanding different ways of negotiating and massaging the situation will help get the desired result.

To achieve this, gather as much information as possible about the other’s history and culture. If possible, you and/or your arts partners should preferably visit the other’s place,

to gather first-hand understanding of your new audience and its context. Take time to meet stakeholders, see venues, and sort out problems one to one. Indeed, if something is going wrong, a quick trip to personally sort it out is often very worth the effort.

Visitors do not need to be the same individuals each time, but persons who do carry imprimatur and can report back with credibility. Indeed, spreading this work around the team is excellent for staff development and morale, and it leaves others free to get on with other work. Group tours can be useful, but they are rarely as useful as these more targeted individual visits.

Despite reading much background information, one Australian curator, who visited Malaysia for the first time, said: “you could never have told me what it would be like”. Equally, it can be disheartening to witness a visiting group of arts practitioners with no interest or curiosity in the culture of their host country. This is at best a wasted opportunity for further engagement and at worst insulting to the host country and/or institution.

Leadership

A national leader’s individual support for cultural engagement is probably more important than for many other activities. Leaders’ views are quickly felt in bureaucracies, including in overseas missions. Revolutionary leaders Vladimir Lenin, Chairman Mao Zedong, American President John F. Kennedy, and Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam were all sympathetic to cultural activities and oversaw significant cultural diplomacy programmes. Equally, arts leaders who are supportive of your work will bring their colleagues with them. They are also frequently excellent public representatives of their (and your) project.

Practical considerations and recommendations

Your own (diplomatic) organisation

Do not try to do the project yourself. You are not an arts professional for a start and you do not have the time. You can never do it as efficiently and well as organisations or individuals who provide arts content as their main activity.

However, make it your business to understand how things work and how much they cost so you can negotiate in the most effective way, and then add another well-informed voice to the decisions.

Setting up an advisory working group, even informally, can work as a venue for discussing ideas, to see what content might be available and if it will be effective, who might be a partner, what is possible practically, what sort of funding might be available, what are the timelines, and so on. Also make sure to include an arts professional whose practice is relevant to what you need.

Your partners

The most effective way to engage with another country’s audience is through excellent partnerships with credible organisations in your own country and internationally. Partnership projects take longer to organise than straight, one-sided tours but the outcomes are immeasurably better.

It can be organisational partnerships, for example, between theatre companies over an agreed number of ventures or time, or artistic partnerships, with creative parties agreeing usually in the early stages of a project to work together.

Sharing support

If you have good partnerships, it can extend to practical support in expertise and funding. You do not have to pay for everything and indeed expecting to share funding (as far as your partners can manage) is a good strategy for building a respectful relationship. Of course, sharing this also means sharing decision-making. Better resourced countries must negotiate this carefully, to share ownership, while understanding the practical restraints in place.

Sharing does not only encourage collegiality and trust, but it also enables bigger or better projects to be undertaken – as, obviously, the resources are enlarged. Some cultures are quite uncomfortable speaking about money for these projects, but if you have a good relationship, and if the discussion is included in the planning stage, then this can and should be done.

As Director of Asialink Arts, I travelled to various museums in Japan and offered them a range of Australian art exhibitions that were provided to me by Australian curators responding to an open advertisement. The initial selection was made in Australia by a small committee. The Japanese had to want to have the show (i.e. the work had to be credible and relevant to their own audiences), but my strategy was to say, “you are being offered an international exhibition for the price of a local one”. We Australians covered the costs to get the work and personnel to the Japanese airport, and then the Japanese took over. They had much better networks for freight, installation, conservation, media, and catalogue preparation including translation, than we could ever hope to have, and it was provided either within their own internal budgets, or just much more inexpensively. We did the same for them coming back to Australia⁶.

A note on contracts and agreements

Many countries where legal arrangements are more fluid are less comfortable with Western contracts, understandably as they are written according to often different legal systems and in a foreign (and often more intricate legal) language.

But even when contracts are used, they will never cover everything that can occur or go wrong. For this, trust and a good relationship are needed, so both sides may step in and fix a problem, rather than looking away saying, “it isn’t in the contract”.

Just include the basics – what you are expected to do; what is expected of the partner, especially for things that cost money; when it all will happen – and get both parties to sign it. Short contracts mean that people will read them and refer to them – this is not always the case when the paperwork extends to over fifty pages.

Stick to your word and, if this becomes impossible, make it clear very quickly. If you have a good relationship, the other side will understand. For some cultures negotiations and even contracts are much more flexible than in others. In Japan, it takes a long time to reach an agreement but once made it will remain strong, from their side at least. The other issue is that you will rarely sue the other side! Suing rather undermines the goodwill intent – you are unlikely to win and, in any event, unlikely to result in any payments. Working through the problem is the way to go.

Covid-19 times

Arts organisations have been adaptive to communicating with reduced human contact due to Covid-19 restrictions, and, for the most part, projects where in-person co-presence is not essential have been able to continue (mostly online). But projects which need to meet and/or perform in person have been greatly impacted – as have the connections between organisers where reserves of goodwill and trust cannot be continuously replenished, especially as staff move on or leave. At the time of writing, where the world does not quite know how future options for interaction will evolve, many projects or plans have been put on hold. Funding is uncertain, staff development is uncertain, jobs are uncertain. It is unclear how this will develop.

On the other hand, increased xenophobia in some places has made cultural diplomacy one of the easier ways to break back into another culture’s consciousness.

One example of international cultural success is South Korean popular culture: “K-pop” and especially “K-drama”, seen spectacularly gaining popularity on streaming services and online around the world. The South Korean government has put significant resources into promoting their culture, from the Gwangju Cultural City Hub to the Venice Biennale. They ask key personnel who are aware of international trends to do the work, and they rarely get it wrong. It gives the impression of South Korea, a once little-known culture, as dynamic, creative, visually stimulating, outward-looking, and clever. What more could a cultural diplomat want?

Conclusion

This chapter began with the comment that most governments see the benefits of cultural diplomacy. However, it should be said that some do not, instead preferring to put energy elsewhere.

One of the reasons ideological and financial support can be unreliable is that measuring the success of cultural diplomacy is not easily quantifiable despite the best efforts at compiling newspaper reviews, audience numbers in the short term, or gauging the specific effect of an activity in the

longer term. Fluctuating individual enthusiasm, different views of what “represents” a country, the occasional misstep emphasised at home by a news-hungry media, and other demands for resources can all impact on cultural diplomacy programmes.

It should be noted however that in this time of global uncertainty, well-structured cultural diplomacy that can build trust and much needed mutual understanding between nations and among peoples seems all the more important.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Dr Alison CARROLL is the Founding Director of Asialink Arts, the main organisation for cultural exchanges between Australia and Asia from 1990-2010, She is currently a Senior Research Fellow at the Victorian College of the Arts. She has worked as a curator, writer, arts manager, academic, teacher, and advisor on policy and projects focused on Asian and Australian art and cultural exchange.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

What is my wish-list of cultural events?

KNOWLEDGE

What are my reasons for X project for X audience?

ARGUMENT

How can I consistently achieve at least three of these events yearly?

PLANNING

INTERVIEW

Cultural Diplomacy

INTERVIEW WITH

TSUDA Yoko

Director

**Cultural Affairs and Overseas Public Relations Division
Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan**

In an email interview with TSUDA Yoko in early November 2021, she shared with Trishia P. OCTAVIANO how Japanese cultural diplomacy has evolved to reflect the changing world.

She underscored the importance of pursuing cooperation with respect for diversity in the conduct of cultural diplomacy and exchange.

Q: How does the practice of cultural diplomacy aid, enhance, or integrate with other aspects of diplomacy in today's world?

A: I believe that cultural diplomacy has the potential to cultivate the foundations of mutual understanding and respect between countries, and that is the essential foundation of conducting diplomacy. For instance, cultural diplomacy allows us to effectively convey Japanese culture, people, and our background to a wider range of peoples. We try to introduce various aspects of Japan to other countries through our culture. I hope that our efforts will give people an opportunity to become more interested in Japan, get acquainted with Japanese people, and visit Japan.

Various cultural diplomacy practices in Japan have certainly evolved in recent decades. It might be difficult to show the exact transitions of cultural diplomacy done by Japan but strategies have definitely evolved according to the times. For instance, in the past, Japanese cultural diplomacy was focused on traditional culture, with things like *kabuki* and tea ceremonies being promoted. But since the beginning of the 2000s, our country has also promoted more modern

pop cultures such as *manga* and *anime*. With regard to this new era, the immediate and current challenge is how to continue cultural diplomacy while adjusting our methods throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Japanese diplomatic missions overseas and our cultural institutions, mainly the Japan Foundation, continue to devise ways of implementing cultural projects online or through a mix of online and onsite methods. Although the basic mission of promoting mutual understanding will not change, cultural diplomacy should pursue any form of cooperation that recognises diversity, especially in times of seemingly ever-increasing conflict and division.

Q: Can you share some examples of strategies that have worked well for Japan?

A: As for cultural strategies, we often hold a series of large-scale cultural events commemorating the anniversary of diplomatic relations of the host country with Japan. Such types of large-scale cultural events are often

organised by or held in cooperation with the Japan Foundation. For example, based on the agreements made at the Japan-France Summit Meeting in 2016, an extensive cultural season had been held in France under the title “Japonismes 2018” to commemorate the 160th anniversary of Japan-France diplomatic relations, which gathered over 3.5 million visitors. In addition, I can highlight other successful examples such as “Japan 2019”, which aimed to broaden the understanding of Japanese culture in the US, as well “Asia in Resonance 2019”, which featured interactive cultural exchanges in ASEAN countries.

In the upcoming ASEM Cultural Festival 2021¹, the Japan Foundation has been planning to virtually present the Exchange Performance Collaboration programme, featuring five performance groups from Indonesia, Cambodia, and the Sanriku region of Japan, which was hit hard by the Great East Japan Earthquake.

In the field of people-to-people exchange, which is one element of public or cultural diplomacy, I'd like to highlight the JET Programme (the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme). Established in 1987, this programme has been sending young foreign nationals to schools, boards

of education, and government offices throughout Japan in order to promote foreign language education and international exchange in local communities. As of July 2019, we have had 70,000 JET participants from 75 countries. The JET participants and its global alumni contribute to foreign language education and grassroots cross-cultural understanding exchange even in remote parts of Japan.

Likewise, the Japanese language programme NIHONGO Partners which was established in 2014, can be considered as the Japanese version of the JET Programme, contributes to Japanese language education and people-to-people exchange mainly in ASEAN countries.

Q: What are some aspects of cultural diplomacy that make it distinct from (and, in some cases, more appropriate or successful than) other forms of diplomacy?

A: I think it is important to have a project that is appreciated and truly valued by the other country. And it is also important to ensure that the project is genuine and of high quality. Again, the foundation of diplomacy should be mutual understanding and respect between countries. Actually,

the excitement brought about by the collaboration of artists on one stage may sometimes be more effective in bringing the hearts of two nations much closer, rather than dozens of hours of bilateral meetings and hundreds of pages of agreements and statements.

Q: Do you have a few words of caution regarding the potential pitfalls or downsides of cultural diplomacy and how to avoid them?

A: Cultural diplomacy should not be unilaterally imposed on another country. It should be mutually beneficial. And it is important to find good local partners who can carry out projects efficiently and successfully.

Another potential drawback of cultural diplomacy is that it can be difficult to measure and evaluate its effectiveness, especially in the short term. Thus, ensuring accountability through policy evaluation is a very important step for us to achieve the sustainability of our cultural diplomacy efforts.

Q: What piece of advice made such an impact on you that you remember it to this day, and/or one thing you wish you had learnt a long time ago?

A: “Treasure every encounter, for it will never recur” (“Ichigo ichie” in Japanese).

When I was still young, I had valuable exchanges with teachers and mentors who encouraged me to study foreign languages, or to study abroad, and to build a career that is related to my interests. I now feel that it is my turn to appreciate every encounter and give similar opportunities back to the younger generation. I hope that all our efforts in cultural diplomacy can serve such a purpose as well.

CHAPTER 7

Dangers and Annoyances, and Opportunities: the Contemporary Communications Environment

Damien SPRY
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Introduction: proceed with caution

In the old days before the Internet, travellers relied upon guidebooks for advice on the places they visited. Mostly, these provided very useful tips on food, accommodation, sightseeing and transport, and some background info on the local attractions. They also included a “Dangers and Annoyances” section, designed not to discourage but to advise. Thus, the guidebooks encouraged adventure and exploration, while noting some pitfalls to avoid.

This is a *Dangers and Annoyances* section of the Handbook. Note that its purpose is not to dissuade, but to advise you on how to proceed carefully by identifying some of the complexities and issues that have recently arisen to complicate the practice of public diplomacy.

The situation we face

There are many compelling global crises that require international cooperation – two urgent examples are the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change. At the same time,

IN THIS CHAPTER

- We review the complications facing public diplomacy that have emerged from the popularity of social media
- We elaborate on the so-called “information disorder” and how it can be addressed
- We identify areas of potentially productive cooperation that can be supported through diplomacy

in the last decade we have been witnessing shifts in international relations as powers emerge and decline, regional groupings coalesce and fragment, and tensions between national interests and multilateral teamwork persist. These issues are exacerbated by the changes in the communications environment, specifically the rise to dominance of social networks and smartphones. Together, these two new technologies have transformed communications – and will continue to do so.

The ubiquity of mobile phones means that it is now more possible for communication to occur anywhere, at any time. Social networks have created the opportunity for Internet users to be their own creators and distributors of content. In combination, these two technologies mean that the media and communications environment has undergone its largest shift since the Industrial Revolution, possibly since the rise of the printing press.

The Internet has two related factors that significantly impact on the state of international relations more generally and the tasks of public diplomacy more specifically. One is its structure – it is a much distributed (less concentrated) network of mediated information and communication. The second is the ease of access and participation in this mediated network. It is important to understand both of these, as they have changed the environment in which diplomats communicate and may therefore influence how they operate.

In his chapter on digital diplomacy, Ilan Manor already outlined in some detail many of the ways in which digital technologies have impacted on the practice of diplomacy as well as the challenges that are associated with these. Here, I further elaborate on how the same new media technologies have contributed to significant changes in the media and communications landscape that public diplomacy practitioners operate in, especially the number and range of voices that are a part of that landscape.

Diplomacy and disorder

The proliferation of voices online can be, and has been, a force for increased participation and engagement in social

and political life online. For some, on certain occasions, this is a positive – a liberalisation of public conversations that were previously controlled by elite media communications institutions.

The increase in levels and types of actors involved in public diplomacy discussion is a main factor in the rise of “new public diplomacy” as an idea. Quite recently, this is regarded as being more problematic: one example is the misinformation/disinformation affecting public order including public health messages.

This is also an opportunity for diplomatic cooperation – ASEAN nations and the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI) have for example supported coordinating efforts to address and limit the impact of Covid-19 misinformation.

Efforts like these, as well as many others, are some of the most vital and productive contributions that diplomats can make to address the problems associated with information disorder.

Identity crisis

An associated concern arises out of the potential for misidentification or misattribution of messages posted on social media. This can occur when an account or page, by coincidence or with intention, appears like and is mistaken for the official account of a foreign ministry or embassy, or indeed any relevant other official government source of information.

While it is possible for discerning online readers to check, it is also the case that hasty readers may be deceived. For public diplomacy,

Information disorder

A term used to summarise an information environment which incorporates, and is debased by, disinformation, misinformation, and mal-information¹.

The associated term “infodemic” is commonly used by the World Health Organization (WHO) and others to describe information disorder in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and other similar disease outbreaks where confusion and risk-taking behaviours can harm health. The mistrust in health authorities can also undermine the public health response.

Misinformation

Information that is false but published or shared without malicious intent. Examples include honest inaccuracies, sharing of information that is incorrect but honestly believed, taking satire seriously.

Disinformation

False information, including fabricated or manipulated content, that is deliberately published or shared with malicious intentions or with a disregard for the harmful effects of its distribution. Examples include created rumours, conspiracy theories, and false attributions.

Mal-information

Information that is typically not false but may be private or used out of context with malicious intent, such as to embarrass or denigrate. Examples include revenge porn and leaking of private details or communications.

this is a concern as it can result in confusion in the public and can be difficult to redress.

MFAs can actually limit this risk by publishing a list of their diplomatic missions' social media accounts on their official websites and by ensuring that all their social media pages and profiles are consistently and appropriately branded and/or labelled with correct information and contact details.

A complicating factor in this complex media ecosystem is that numerous government agencies use social media to communicate. Some of these may be designed for domestic audiences, or for purposes that may vary from the priorities of public diplomacy. Therefore, it is important

for government agencies to coordinate and cooperate when it comes to their messaging, branding, and narratives – a task that most large organisations find difficult, and for most nations even more so.

Dark forces

For diplomats, more delicate is the rise of loose networks of actors aligned around ideals and beliefs that are antithetical to the cause of international understanding and cooperation, global integration, and peaceful coexistence. These actors are able to organise and coordinate online and share and spread messages largely outside of regulation especially on social media platforms – where standards are largely self-defined and editorial management capacities are limited.

This is exacerbated by an industry of “Black Ops PR” that has grown to support these types of manipulative communications campaigns. Some of this is manual labour: troll farms of low paid workers posting online to try to influence and harass. Some are professional: traditional marketing

and communication companies diversifying their operations to include the digital dark arts. Some are automated: bots and other programs that create and post unverified content at scale or speed.

Diplomats may find that the information they wish to supply, the positive stories they wish to tell, and the constructive engagements they seek to foster, all struggle to get attention in a shifting communications environment where online movements and networks can foster anger, resentment, and hostility – and do so largely outside of the institutions, either professional or political, that would until recently have limited their capacity to affect public opinion. The problem is aggravated in situations where high-emotion content, designed to invite engagement, is promoted by social media algorithms. It can be further compounded when influence campaigns include the use of bots, sock puppets, meme factories, and other features of this emergent Black Ops public relations industry².

The result is that diplomats find it even more difficult to compete for attention and, thus, influence. Another challenge arises out of the fact that getting attention is only the first stage of effective online communication. The next stage is based on the audience's response. Yet this has always been far from easy to determine; these days, it is possibly even more difficult.

Actions, (mis)communicated

One of the consequences of digital, social networked communication is the possibility for misinterpretation and misrepresentation of actions or intentions by online third parties.

Put another way, it is all the more difficult to control one's image and messages when there are so many

Regional responses to misinformation

In Southeast Asia, the problem of disinformation and misinformation is widely considered as a public health or social cohesion concern, to be addressed through content moderation and media literacy³.

The ASEAN has highlighted this through the joint statements of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI). These statements establish the basis for cooperation and information, and skill-sharing, especially tackling how Covid-19 misinformation has hampered efforts to inform people about the pandemic and to promote health measures like social distancing and vaccinations.

Black Ops PR

The misuse of professional communications strategies and tactics for unethical purposes, typically by acting deceptively and malignly.

Bots

Computer programs that perform automated, repetitive, pre-defined (usually simple) tasks.

Sock puppets

People that operate multiple social media accounts using multiple false identities, usually as part of a coordinated influence campaign.

Troll farms

Organised groups of paid workers conducting coordinated, anonymous, deceptive communications campaigns to influence political opinions and/or attack opponents. Related terms are “buzzers” (Indonesia) and “cyber troops” (Malaysia).

competing voices, some of which may be either ill-intentioned or simply incorrect, and some of which may be more influential than what official sources can offer.

It is a truism in communication that “actions communicate”. Or in other words, what we do matters as much as what we say. Where actions are misinterpreted – or strategically reinterpreted with malign intent – the risks to our relationships and reputations are heightened.

The potential for miscommunication is increased due to the use of social media and other communication platforms as part of information warfare, propaganda, foreign interference, or other similarly malign influence campaigns.

Furthermore, the use of communication for coercive purposes is not new, of course, but it is becoming increasingly problematic for public diplomacy practitioners. This is because (1) at times the lines

between propaganda and public diplomacy might appear a bit blurry, especially as (2) a decline in trust, in itself a product of deceitful and dishonest communication, may lead to scepticism that affects well-intentioned, legitimate, and benign public diplomacy activities⁴.

To address these, public diplomacy practitioners should keep in mind and observe the following:

- 1 Take efforts to support actions with strong, clearly communicated rationales and narratives;
- 2 Identify opportunities for targeted communications campaigns in support of actions that might especially impact on those targeted communities; and

- 3 Engage in social listening (i.e. monitoring of audiences and user-generated content) to ascertain when and/or where damaging messages/narratives are emerging so that mitigating responses (either online or in the mainstream press) can be prepared; this may include direct person-to-person diplomacy if misunderstandings have escalated concerns.

Law and disorder

Some other outcomes of the emergent information disorder are an array of laws and regulations that have been introduced in response to undesirable and/or damaging content.

These laws vary greatly, from the banning of some online platforms entirely, to penalties applied to those who post content on these platforms. The laws are typically aligned with longstanding approaches to the purposes and limits of political expression in public.

Furthermore, ongoing law reform means that new laws may emerge, or existing laws may be changed, with some frequency. Therefore, an associated risk for diplomats using online media is that the laws that apply to posted content can vary and that these laws may apply even when the content is posted from elsewhere.

Solutions

How can public diplomacy practitioners develop responses to these dangers and annoyances?

First, be realistic about what can and can't be done. Be clear about the purposes of online public diplomacy and the limits of what it can achieve.

Be risk aware. Risks are a part of every job and every act of communication. One of your roles is to monitor and respond to risks.

Clearly brand your messages, as well as your channels so audiences can identify information that is official from that which is unofficial or, worse, a deceptive imitation.

Australian defamation laws affect social media account holders

Under Australian law, when an organisation posts any content on social media, they can be held accountable under defamation law for the comments posted underneath. Several media outlets have been sued under these circumstances and, as a result, a number of organisations have chosen to stop posting content on Australian Facebook pages.

Moreover, attempt to coordinate with other government departments that are engaged in reaching international audiences, for example: tourism, immigration, trade, and defence. Be open to international efforts to address the issues and foster dialogue about these where possible. Diplomacy will be vital when coordinating responses to the challenges of the digital age.

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QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

What are the main changes to the media and communications environment?

What are the main risks that emerge from the changes in the media and communications environment?

How can public diplomacy mitigate the risks of being misrepresented online?

How can diplomacy support efforts to address the “information disorder”?

INTERVIEW

Critical Issues

INTERVIEW WITH

James PAMMENT

Associate Professor in Strategic Communication
Lund University, Sweden
& USC Center of Public Diplomacy Faculty Fellow

Dr James PAMMENT shed some light on critical issues and challenges facing public diplomacy practitioners in the rapidly evolving information environment. He discussed these thoughts with Dr Damien SPRY during an interview in November 2021.

Q: What changes to the media and communications environment do you think have had the most significant impact on public diplomacy?

A: I think the most important shock to our understanding of the information environment in the last 6 to 7 years has been the realisation that contemporary transnational media systems are rather skilfully and constantly exploited by

hostile states, criminals, individuals, and what we would call a shadow communications profession.

The porous boundaries between media systems (national, mainstream, alternative, and social) create unlikely international coalitions of groups with similar interests, with unpredictable results.

Many of the manipulation techniques have a precedent; I don't think a propagandist from a century ago would feel lost in today's problems. The problem lies in the ease with which these modern practitioners of the dark arts are able to combine technological advantages, cyber skills, coordination, dedication, focus, and a nose for old-fashioned propaganda. You can play whack-a-mole by correcting false messaging, educating the public about the threats, leaning on social media platforms, and change laws, but

there will always be new gaps appearing in a dynamic and rapidly evolving information environment – and always somebody is ready to exploit them for their own interests.

Q: What are the main challenges to the work of public diplomacy practitioners?

A: Many PD practitioners are communication specialists who are familiar with the contemporary media and communications environment. Many are not. In a contested information environment, it's important to

know what your PD officers are for. Some light, on-message tweeting? Keeping abreast of local news? Updating guest lists and helping to organise events? Maintaining relationships with journalists? Handling the odd reputational crisis? Finding and countering misinformation and disinformation? What level of skills and training do they need to carry out these tasks? And what tools do they have to support them?

Communication professionals outside of diplomacy would expect some level of access to advanced digital monitoring tools for analysing the information environment, but the situation for PD practitioners is inconsistent to say the least.

You wouldn't ask firefighters to run into a burning building without breathing apparatuses, and you couldn't just ask PD officers – even those with a communication specialisation – to do much outside of their traditional tasks without the right training and tools.

Q: What are the major risks involved in the contemporary practice of public diplomacy?

A: PD entails a loose collection of responsibilities that can range from the creation of mutual understanding through to more hard-nosed advocacy and promotion. And at various moments, such as in the years

following 9/11 and in the final decade of the Cold War, security concerns could take over. The changes to the information environment that we discussed earlier have turned it into a space for disruption and contestation – I actually don't like the term "information warfare", but the fact that it is being used at all says something important.

In this new environment, PD must once again fight for its soul. It is crucial that policymakers firewall PD components

that rely on trust, exchange, and distance from government while seizing the opportunity to find solutions to information manipulation so that countries can accurately represent themselves abroad.

It's crucial that advocates of PD continually demonstrate that the unique contributions of cultural relations are worth protecting. They need to find ways to prove the relevance of PD to hard security concerns, without compromising the spirit of its arm's length components.

Q: What are the main opportunities available to public diplomacy practitioners?

A: The current climate of debate in many countries shows that there is a real need for local knowledge of media systems, and local capabilities to monitor and respond to both misinformation and dis-

information. PD officers at post have a role to play. In some cases, it falls on wealthier countries to offer support to friendly governments and nongovernmental actors to help strengthen fragile public spheres. This is increasingly falling within the mandate of PD. In other cases, it is simply about staying on top of information threats to an embassy's mission, such as reputational attacks or other forms of disruption, by tracking early warning signals. The digital tools that we have been talking about for a decade and a half are important to the future of the profession, assuming practitioners have the skills and training to use them.

Q: Do you think these (the media environment, challenges, risks, as well as opportunities) might change over the next decade or so?

A: If there is indeed a widespread shift toward populism and authoritarianism, the number of embassies that need PD staff skilled in countering misinformation and disinformation will only grow. And this work may cause tension with host governments, particularly if they are

the source. Add to this the tendencies toward firewalled internets – the so-called “splinternet” – plus a technological generation-shift in how people access the Internet – or the forthcoming competing metaverses – and we may yet be in the very earliest days of a global struggle over information. PD policymakers, practitioners, and researchers do not only need to be aware of this but must also be in this space.

While there clearly will be a role for diplomacy in setting international rules and norms for the information environment, the current technological generation has shown government policymakers to be far behind the curve. As a matter of fact, tech companies have pretty much charted their own course by making opaque exactly what can be regulated and how. However, there may be wonderful opportunities for diplomats to have secondments in the tech industry and in other parts of government to help negotiate collective rules using a diplomatic approach, even if not officially as diplomats.

A: Governments cannot solve many of the world's problems without engaging the public in some way. I'd say that foreign ministries the world over have barely scratched the surface in terms of utilising the capabilities and energy of public groups to achieve common goals. The kind of digital flag-waving we've seen on Twitter and Facebook the past 10 to 15 years is not it. But it's also hard to advocate for shared interests and even

Q: What advice can you offer to practitioners or aspiring diplomats?

build relationships in a heavily compromised public sphere. The contested information environment demonstrates the need for credible, trustworthy government communications alongside considerable government support of public groups who can help to shape public opinion.

I fear that the contestation over truth in questions such as Covid-19 misinformation, conspiracy theories like QAnon and across many elections is the new normal, and will only intensify. That Maria Ressa and Dmitry Andreyevich Muratov shared this year's Nobel Peace Prize has demonstrated the profile that fighting against these negative trends has truly gained.

My advice to PD practitioners and policymakers is simple: ask yourself how you can use the skills, training, and tools at your disposal to make the information environment a safer, more coherent, and more resilient place.



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Trishia P. OCTAVIANO
Managing Editor

CHAPTER 1

Public Diplomacy Essentials: Concepts, Dimensions, Forms, and Principles (pp.7-15)

- ¹ Cull, 2020, p.13.
- ² Nye, 1990; 2004; 2011.
- ³ Nye, 2008.
- ⁴ Nye, 2008.
- ⁵ Melissen, 2005, p.13.
- ⁶ Gilboa, 2008, p.58.
- ⁷ Leonard, *et al.*, 2002.
- ⁸ Nye, 2008.
- ⁹ Aggestam & Rosamond, 2019.
- ¹⁰ Cowan & Arsenault, 2008.
- ¹¹ Anholt, 2011.
- ¹² Arndt, 2005, xviii.
- ¹³ Shain & Barth, 2003, p.459.
- ¹⁴ Bjola & Manor, 2022 (Forthcoming).
- ¹⁵ Curtis & Jaine, 2012.

CHAPTER 2

Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy (pp.23-31)

- ¹ Lee & Lin, 2017.
- ² Arceneaux & Powers, 2020, pp.50-63.
- ³ Tsvetkova *et al.*, 2020.
- ⁴ Surowiec & Long, 2020.
- ⁵ Heath, 2002, p.33.
- ⁶ Miskimmon *et al.*, 2013, p.5.

- ⁷ Slaughter, 2017.
- ⁸ Michelsen & Colley, 2019.
- ⁹ Zhang, 2013, p.1326.
- ¹⁰ Grundel & Stenberg, 2019.
- ¹¹ Goodall *et al.*, 2008.

CHAPTER 3

Digital Diplomacy (pp.35-43)

- ¹ See: <https://ir.usembassy.gov>
- ² See @IsraelintheGulf on Twitter.

CHAPTER 4

Stakeholder Engagement in Public Diplomacy (pp.47-55)

- ¹ These definitions of stakeholders are attributable to Nutt & Backoff, 1992; Bryson, 1995; and Eden & Ackermann, 1998, as cited in *What To Do When Stakeholders Matter: A Guide to Stakeholder Identification and Analysis Techniques* by Bryson, 2004, p.4.
- ² Nutt, 2002, as cited by Bryson, 2004.
- ³ Johnson, 28 February 2008.
- ⁴ Adapted from Bryson, 2004, p.24.
- ⁵ Adapted from Sebenius, 2001.
- ⁶ Adapted from Sebenius, 2001.
- ⁷ Reproduced from the *ASEF Public Diplomacy Handbook: How to Win Hearts and Minds*, 2016.
- ⁸ Zaharna, 2011, p.225.
- ⁹ Bryson, 2004, pp.30-33.
- ¹⁰ Bryson adapts the “Power versus Interest Grid” by Eden & Ackermann, 1998 (in Bryson, 2004).
- ¹⁰ Bryson adapts the “Problem-Frame Stakeholder Map” by Nutt & Backoff, 1992 (in Bryson, 2004).
- ¹² Jensen, 14 April 2021.
- ¹³ Hocking, 2008.

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with Ingrid de Beer (pp.56-60)

- ¹ More information about the research can be found here: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41254-016-0003-0>

CHAPTER 5

Evaluation in Public Diplomacy (pp.61-68)

- ¹ Ayhan, 2003.
- ² Leonard *et al.*, 2002.
- ³ Contribution analysis is preferred to attribution analysis for this reason. See Mawer, 2014; 2017; and Mayne, 2011.
- ⁴ For the sake of simplicity, in this chapter we use *perception* as an “umbrella term” for all messaging outcomes and relationships – as all partnership outcomes.
- ⁶ More information about the poll and its frequency at: <https://www.gallup.com/178667/gallup-world-poll-work.aspx>
- ⁶ More information about Pew Research Center’s work can be found here: <https://www.pewresearch.org/our-methods>

CHAPTER 6

Cultural Diplomacy (pp.75-84)

- ¹ This chapter owes much to the thoughts of Julia Fraser, inaugural Director of Leadership Programs at Asialink, University of Melbourne.
- ² *ASEF Public Diplomacy Handbook*, Singapore 2016, p.162.
- ³ See for example Krenn, 2005, p.78.
- ⁴ See *45,000 days in Asia; Asialink Arts’ Residency Program*, 2007, end page. This lists organisations in the Asia-Pacific region which collaborated from the early 1990s to 2007. Since then, organisations have only increased in number, capacity, and interest.
- ⁵ See *Every 23 days: 20 Years Touring Asia, Asialink*, 2010.
- ⁶ See *Sun Walking: The Australia-Japan Visual Arts Partnership Program 2005-9*, 2004.

INTERVIEW

with Tsuda Yoko (pp.85-88)

¹ The ASEM Cultural Festival 2021 took place on 15-26 November 2021, more information can be found here: <https://asef.org/projects/asef-cultural-festival-2021>

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**Dangers and Annoyances, and Opportunities:
the Contemporary Communications Environment (pp.89-97)**

¹ See Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017.

² See Spry, 2021.

³ See Sinpeng & Tapsell, 2020.

⁴ See Bjola & Pamment (Eds.), 2019.

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The ASEF Public Diplomacy Training (ASEFPDT)* started in 2013 with the formulation of toolkits and training modules. The training sessions have been implemented since 2014 with 9 tutored online courses and 7 face-to-face trainings held in Geneva (Switzerland), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Bangkok (Thailand), The Hague (Netherlands), Jakarta (Indonesia), Vienna (Austria) and Phnom Penh (Cambodia). More than 300 carefully-selected participants from all the 53 Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Partners have benefitted from the series of online courses and face-to-face trainings provided annually.

ASEF takes the lead in the Training and collaborates with the DiploFoundation of Switzerland, supported by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland. Over the years, ASEF has engaged and partnered with Asian and European diplomatic academies for the delivery of the face-to-face component of the Training.

Since the introduction of the webinar and virtual workshop series as sub-components of the Training in 2020, ASEFPDT has expanded its outreach, making a significant stride in building networks of diplomats, civil servants, and other professionals in Asia and Europe.

More information on upcoming trainings can be viewed at: <https://asef.org/programmes/asef-public-diplomacy-training/>.

* The project used to be called “Asia-Europe Public Diplomacy Training Initiative” until the launching of the 7th edition bearing the new project name in the first half of 2019.



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