Wielding Soft Power:

The New Public Diplomacy

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Introduction*

It is tempting to see public diplomacy as old wine in new bottles. Official communication aimed at foreign publics is after all no new phenomenon in international relations. Image cultivation, propaganda and activities that we would now label as public diplomacy are nearly as old as diplomacy itself. Even in ancient times, prestige-conscious princes and their representatives never completely ignored the potential and pitfalls of public opinion in foreign lands. References to the nation and its image go as far back as the Bible, and international relations in ancient Greece and Rome, Byzantium and the Italian Renaissance were familiar with diplomatic activity aimed at foreign publics.

It was not until the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century that the scale of official communication with foreign publics potentially altered. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the Venetians had already introduced the systematic dissemination of newsletters inside their own diplomatic service, but it was Gutenberg's invention that cleared the way for true pioneers in international public relations, such as Cardinal Richelieu in early seventeenth-century France. Under the *ancien régime*, the French went

*) This paper is only marginally different from my own chapter in Jan Melissen ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005). I am grateful to Macmillan-Palgrave for permission to reproduce material from the book.

to much greater lengths in remoulding their country's image abroad than other European powers, and they put enormous effort into managing their country's reputation, seeing it as one of the principal sources of a nation's power.[1] Identity creation and image projection–nation-branding in today's parlance–reached a peak under Louis XIV.[2] Other countries followed suit, such as Turkey in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire. Kemal Atatürk was in charge of nothing less than a complete makeover of the face of his country and its identity, without which Turkey's present prospects of integration into Europe would not have been on the EU's political agenda. Less benign twentieth–century versions of identity development and nation-building – such as Fascism and Communism – directly challenged and gave an impetus towards communication with foreign publics by democratic powers. Political leaders' battles for overseas 'hearts and minds' are therefore all but a recent invention.

The First World War saw the birth of professional image cultivation across national borders, and it was inevitable after the war that the emerging academic study of international politics would wake up to the importance of what is now commonly dubbed as 'soft power'.[3] In the era of growing inter–state conflict between the two world wars, E.H. Carr already wrote that 'power over opinion' was 'not less essential for political purposes than military and economic power, and has always been closely associated with them'. In other words, to put it in the terminology recently introduced by Joseph S. Nye, 'hard power' and 'soft power' are inextricably linked.[4] It is now a cliché to state that soft power is increasingly important in the global information age, and that in an environment with multiple transnational linkages the loss of soft power can be costly for hard power. Many practical questions about the power of attraction in international affairs are, however, still unanswered. Political commentators and diplomats in many countries have become gripped by the notion of soft power and ministries of foreign affairs wonder how to wield it most effectively. As Nye argued, countries that are likely to be more attractive in postmodern international relations are those that help to frame issues, whose culture and ideas are closer to prevailing international

1) Michael Kunczik, 'Transnational Public Relations by Foreign Governments', Sriramesh, Krishnamurthy and Dejan Vercic (eds), *The Global Public Relations Handbook: Theory, Research and Practice* (Mahwah NJ and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), pp. 399-405.

2) On nation-branding, see Wally Olins, *Wally Olins On Brand* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003).

3) See, for instance, Joseph S. Nye, 'Soft Power', *Foreign Policy*, no. 80, autumn 1990; Joseph S. Nye and William A. Owens, 'America's Information Edge', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 2, March/April 1996; and for a recent elaboration of this concept, see Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

4) E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983 (first edition 1939)), pp. 132 and 141.

norms, and whose credibility abroad is reinforced by their values and policies.[5]

Public diplomacy is one of soft power's key instruments, and this was recognized in diplomatic practice long before the contemporary debate on public diplomacy. The United States, the former Soviet Union and Europe's three major powers invested particularly heavily in their 'communications with the world' during the Cold War. Although conventional diplomatic activity and public diplomacy were mostly pursued on parallel tracks, it became increasingly hard to see how the former could be effective without giving sufficient attention to the latter.[6] In fact, as early as 1917–1918, Wilson and Lenin had already challenged one another at the soft power level, long before their countries turned into global superpowers and started colliding in the military and economic fields.[7] The battle of values and ideas that dominated international relations in the second half of the twentieth century evolved into competition in the sphere of hard power, and not vice versa.

It is not the purpose of this introduction to map the origins of public diplomacy in detail, but merely to point to a limited number of post–1945 developments.[8] First of all, the communications revolution that began after the Second World War and that experienced massive advances towards the end of the twentieth century, has enabled citizens to obtain information on what is going on in other countries equally fast, or even faster, than governments. The world's media have become more and more intrusive and it comes as no surprise that the information now available to large publics has turned public opinion into an increasingly important factor in international relations. Second, both East-West rivalry and the expansion of international society made the contest of ideas between states much more intense and gave it a distinctly global dimension. Newly emerging nations became both targets and practitioners of public diplomacy. As the Cold War climate affected many countries' populations, as much as their governments, it became more apparent than before that perceptions are as important as reality. Third, it is not new that people matter to diplomats, but towards the end of the twentieth century this point has now taken on a new meaning. The democratization of

5) Nye, *Soft Power*, pp. 31 and 32.

6) Hans N. Tuch, *Communicating With the World: US Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York: St Martin's Press 1990); and Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder CO and London: Lynne Rienner, 2004).

7) Arno J. Mayer, *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy 1917-1918* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970).

8) These points draw on Hans Tuch, *Communicating With the World: U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 4-6; Evan H. Potter, *Canada and the New Public Diplomacy*, Clingendael Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, no. 81 (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2002), pp. 5-7; Brian Hocking, 'Rethinking the "New" Public Diplomacy', in: Jan Melissen ed., *The New Public Diplomacy* (forthcoming).

access to information has turned citizens into independent observers as well as active participants in international politics, and the new agenda of diplomacy has only added to the leverage of loosely organized groups of individuals. One of the combined effects of globalization and the late twentieth century communication revolution is the intensification of global networks that transcend national boundaries and the rise of a more activist civil society. As Potter argues: 'With publics more distrustful of government, demanding greater transparency and input into policy making, governments can no longer count on "spin" to overcome communication challenges'.[9] Finally, after the Cold War the age–old preoccupation of states with their image has moved on. In an international environment where the gap between foreign and domestic policy is gradually closing, reputation management has shifted from elites to a broader mass market.

Public diplomacy is therefore bound to become a central element of diplomatic practice. The world diplomatic community nevertheless woke up late to the fundamental challenges of communication with foreign publics rather than then habitual international dialogue with foreign officials. Diplomatic culture, steeped in centuries of tradition, is after all fundamentally peer–orientated, and the dominant realist paradigm in diplomatic circles was a by–product of a long history of viewing international relations in terms of economic and military power. Against this backdrop it may not be surprising to see that most students of diplomacy have given little systematic attention to public diplomacy. The basic distinction between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy is clear: the former is about relationships between the representatives of states, or other international actors; whereas the latter targets the general public in foreign societies and more specific non–official groups, organizations and individuals.

Existing definitions of diplomacy have either stressed its main purpose ('the art of resolving international difficulties peacefully'), its principal agents ('the conduct of relations between sovereign states through the medium of accredited representatives') or its chief function ('the management of international relations by negotiation'). In a sense, such definitions do not take into account the transformation of the environment in which diplomacy is at work. Traditional students of diplomacy saw diplomatic communication in principle as an activity between symmetrical actors. A more inclusive view of diplomacy as 'the mechanism of representation, communication and negotiation through which states and other international actors conduct their business' still suggests a neat international environment consisting of a range of clearly identifiable players.[10]

9) Potter, *Canada and the New Public Diplomacy*, p. 5.

10) Jan Melissen (ed.), *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. xvi-xvii.

Diplomacy in a traditionalist view is depicted as a game where the roles and responsibilities of actors in international relations are clearly delineated. This picture no longer resembles the much more fuzzy world of postmodern transnational relations – a world, for that matter, in which most actors are not nearly as much in control as they would like to be. Moreover, the interlocutors of today's foreign service officers are not necessarily their counterparts, but a wide variety of people that are either involved in diplomatic activity or are at the receiving end of international politics. As a result, the requirements of diplomacy have been transformed. As Robert Cooper put it, success in diplomacy 'means openness and transnational cooperation'.[11] Such openness and multi-level cooperation call for the active pursuit of more collaborative diplomatic relations with various types of actors. Public diplomacy is an indispensable ingredient in such a collaborative model of diplomacy.[12]

First of all this paper introduces and defines public diplomacy as a concept and it assesses current developments in this field. Second, it evaluates the importance of public diplomacy in the changing international environment, and it identifies characteristics of good practice. Third, this paper distinguishes between on the one hand propaganda, nation–building and cultural relations, and on the other hand public diplomacy. It concludes that the new public diplomacy is here to stay, but that its requirements sit rather uneasily with traditional diplomatic culture. Public diplomacy is a challenge for diplomatic services that should not be underestimated. Finally, this analysis does not see public diplomacy as a mere technique. It should be considered as part of the fabric of world politics and its rise suggests that the evolution of diplomatic representation has reached a new stage.

11) Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), p. 76.

12) Shaun Riordan, *The New Diplomacy* (London: Polity, 2003), especially ch. 9.

Defining the New Public Diplomacy

The world in which public diplomacy was considered as one of the leftovers of diplomatic dialogue is rapidly disappearing. So is the world in which public diplomacy can easily be dismissed as an attempt at manipulation of foreign publics. In order to understand the new public diplomacy properly, it is neither helpful to hang on to past images of diplomacy (still prevailing in much diplomatic studies' literature), nor is it advisable to make a forward projection of historical practices into the present international environment (in the case of equalling public diplomacy to traditional propaganda). The new public diplomacy will be an increasingly standard component of overall diplomatic practice and is more than a form of propaganda conducted by diplomats. True, many foreign ministries are still struggling to put the concept into practice in a multi–actor international environment, and some diplomatic services do in fact construct their public diplomacy on a formidable tradition of propaganda– making. But public diplomacy's imperfections should not obscure the fact that public diplomacy gradually becomes woven into the fabric of mainstream diplomatic activity. In a range of bilateral relationships it has already become the bread and butter of many diplomats' work, as for instance in the US–Canadian relationship, in relations between West European countries, or between some South–East Asian neighbours. As a Canadian ambassador to Washington observed: 'the new diplomacy, as I call it, is, to a large extent, public diplomacy and requires

different skills, techniques, and attitudes than those found in traditional diplomacy'.[13] In Europe, public diplomacy has also become a staple commodity in international affairs. A much–quoted 2000 report by the German *Auswärtiges Amt* (foreign ministry) came to a conclusion of historical proportions about the role of EU embassies in other member states: 'in Europe public diplomacy is viewed as the number one priority over the whole spectrum of issues'.[14] Both examples underline a broader point: in regions characterized by a great deal of economic and/or political interdependence as well as a high level of interconnection at the level of civil society, public diplomacy has become essential in diplomatic relations.

Perhaps the most succinct definition of public diplomacy is given by Paul Sharp, who describes it as 'the process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented'.[15] Writing fifteen years earlier, Hans Tuch defined public diplomacy as 'a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies'.[16] Tuch neither claimed that public diplomacy was something like a new diplomatic paradigm, nor that it in any sense replaced the discreet and confidential relationships between state representatives, which it does not.

Tuch's definition is persuasive, but where this analysis differs is first of all that it does not see public diplomacy, or indeed diplomacy in general, as a uniquely stately activity, even though it stresses the practice of states. Large and small non–state actors, and supranational and subnational players develop public diplomacy policies of their own. Under media–minded Kofi Annan, the UN shows supranational public diplomacy in action, and Barroso's European Commission has given top priority to the EU's public communication strategy. Interestingly, however, neither of these two organizations is actually giving much attention to public diplomacy training of its internationally operating staff, which seems to be evidence that they are public diplomacy novices.

Non–governmental organizations (NGOs) have also demonstrated that they are particularly adept at influencing foreign publics. Definitely not all campaigns by globally operating NGOs such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International have turned out to be equally successful, but their effectiveness has generally drawn the admiration of foreign ministries that are trying to

13) Allan Gottlieb, *'I'll be with You in a Minute, Mr Ambassador': The Education of a Canadian Diplomat in Washington* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1991) p. vii.

14) Ambassador K.T. Paschke, *Report on the Special Inspection of 14 German Embassies in the Countries of the European Union* (Berlin: *Auswärtiges Amt*, 2000).

15) Paul Sharp, 'Revolutionary States, Outlaw Regimes and the Techniques of Public Diplomacy', Jan Melissen ed., *The New Public Diplomacy* (forthcoming).

16) Hans Tuch, *Communicating With the World*, p. 3.

operate in increasingly fluid international networks. What is more, one can observe converging interests among states and NGOs – actors that previously looked at one another with suspicion and as competitors. The 1997 Ottawa Convention (the treaty banning landmines) and establishment of the International Criminal Court are only two prominent examples of a number of global governance initiatives where states, NGOs and the UN have joined forces in mobilizing international public opinion. International companies operating in a global marketplace are now also facing up to their social and ethical responsibilities, and their public diplomacy policies are slowly but surely becoming more sophisticated.[17] Some do better than others: many countries envy the professionalism and public diplomacy muscle of some major multinational corporations. In other words, diplomacy is operative in a network environment rather than the hierarchical state–centric model of international relations. What is of interest here is that in the field of public diplomacy different types of actors can learn vital lessons from each other.

Second, public diplomacy is aimed at foreign publics, and strategies for dealing with such publics should be distinguished from the domestic socialization of diplomacy. Nevertheless, separating public affairs (aimed at domestic audiences) from public diplomacy (dealing with overseas target groups) is increasingly at odds with the 'interconnected' realities of global relationships. It is commonly known that information directed at a domestic audience often reaches foreign publics, or the other way round, but the relationship between public affairs and public diplomacy has become more intricate than that. Engaging with one's own domestic constituency with a view to foreign policy development and external identity–building has become part of the public diplomacy strategy of countries as diverse as Canada, Chile and Indonesia.[18] In a domestic context the socialization of diplomacy is a familiar theme for foreign ministries, but it is one that deserves renewed attention as the domestic and foreign dimensions of engagement with 'the public' are more connected than ever before. This is, for instance, the case in the debate on the supposed intercultural divide between the West and the Islamic world, and is illustrated by the fact that the British Foreign Office now talks through Middle Eastern policy with moderate domestic Muslim organizations. Both public diplomacy and public affairs are directly affected by the forces of globalization and the recent revolution in communication technology. In an era in which it has become increasingly important to influence world opinion, domestic and international communication with the public has become an increasingly complex challenge for foreign ministries.

17) On countries and companies 'swapping places', see Wally Olins, *Trading Identities: Why Countries and Companies are Taking on Each Others' Roles* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 1999).

18) Evan H. Potter, *Canada and the New Public Diplomacy*; and interviews with foreign diplomats.

Third, public diplomacy is often portrayed as a one–way information flow, and at best one in two directions, but essentially aimed at relaying positive aspects of a country to foreign publics. In reality, and as is presently emerging in a number of countries, some of the more effective initiatives remind us less of the traditional activities of information departments. The main task of press and information departments was, and in many cases unfortunately still is, dissemination of information and coordination of relations with the press. The new public diplomacy moves away from – to put it crudely – peddling information to foreigners and keeping the foreign press at bay, to engaging with foreign audiences. The innovative 'niche diplomacy' of Norway and Canada is a case in point. A learning process is therefore taking place, although not in as many places as one would hope, but it is quite clear that the new public diplomacy is here to stay. International actors accept more and more that they have to engage in dialogue with foreign audiences as a condition of success in foreign policy. To be sure, public diplomacy is no altruistic affair and it is not a 'soft' instrument. It can pursue a wide variety of objectives, such as in the field of political dialogue, trade and foreign investment, the establishment of links with civil society groups beyond the opinion gatekeepers, but also has 'hard power' goals such as alliance management, conflict prevention or military intervention.

As a diplomatic method, public diplomacy is far from uniform and some public campaigns have little to do with international advocacy. As mentioned above, public diplomacy is increasingly prominent in bilateral relations but can also be actively pursued by international organizations.[19] Public diplomacy's national variant is more competitive, whereas multilateral public diplomacy can be seen as a more cooperative form of engagement with foreign publics. Referring to the latter, Mark Leonard rightly suggests that there is little advantage in making, for instance, civil society–building or the promotion of good governance an activity explicitly coming from one single country.[20]

Yet there are other unconventional forms of public diplomacy. A political leader may even engage in public diplomacy in defence of a foreign counterpart's international reputation. This was the case in 2004 when Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder visited Libyan leader Qaddafi in an ostentatious show of support of this former rogue state leader, who was

19) For an interesting case study, see Michael Merlingen and Zenet Mujic, 'Public Diplomacy and the OSCE in the Age of Post-International Politics: The Case of the Field Mission in Croatia', *Security Dialogue*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 269-283.

20) On competitive and collaborative diplomacy, see Mark Leonard with Catherine Stead and Conrad Smewing, *Public Diplomacy* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2002), pp. 22-30. The latest Foreign Policy Centre publication on public diplomacy is: Mark Leonard and Andrew Small with Martin Rose, *British Public Diplomacy in the 'Age of Schisms'* (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2005).

until recently branded as an international outlaw and exponent of state terrorism. It is not the purpose here to list unusual displays of public diplomacy, but an interesting one deserves mention: the intentional divulging of bad news, such as the deliberate spreading of news about one's own country that is bound to be received abroad as an adverse development. A recent example of 'negative branding' was the Dutch Ministry of Justice's communication in 2004 that 26,000 illegal asylum seekers would eventually be expelled from the Netherlands. This bombshell about the 'expulsion' or 'potential mass deportation' of foreigners by a country with a reputation for liberal immigration policies quickly spread via the worldwide web and did indeed have the intended effect of a subsequent decrease of refugee flows to the Netherlands. Such initiatives have a direct effect on foreign policy and bilateral relations with other countries, which leads our discussion to the more general point of the relationship between public diplomacy and foreign policy.

It is tempting to see public diplomacy as just another instrument of foreign policy, as was mentioned above in relation to the recent debate in the United States. One should caution for too close a nexus between foreign policy and public diplomacy, however, as this distinctly runs the risk of damaging a country's credibility in its communications with foreign audiences. The view that public diplomacy activities are essentially aimed at creating a public opinion in a country 'that will enable target–country political leaders to make decisions that are supportive of advocate–country's foreign policy objectives', runs the risk of confusing the objectives of public diplomacy with those of lobbying.[21] What is problematic with the approach of public diplomacy as an immediate foreign policy tool is that it exposes public diplomacy to the contradictions, discontinuities, fads and fancies of foreign policy. If it is too closely tied to foreign policy objectives, it runs the risk of becoming counterproductive and indeed a failure when foreign policy itself is perceived to be a failure. In such circumstances, a foreign ministry's public diplomacy becomes a liability and no longer serves as a diplomatic tool that has the special quality of being able to go where traditional diplomacy cannot.

In any case, it should be borne in mind that the influence that government actions can bring about in other societies tends to be limited. US experiences after September 2001 are a case in point. In the first Bush administration's conception of public diplomacy as an instrument in the service of short–term objectives, it appeared hard to steer policy in a direction that dissociated public diplomacy from the 'war on terror'. In these circumstances, and against the background of US policy in the Middle East,

21) Michael McClellan, 'Public Diplomacy in the Context of Traditional Diplomacy', in Gerhard Reiweger (ed.), *Public Diplomacy*, Favorita Papers, 01/2004 (Vienna: *Diplomatische Akademie*, 2004), pp. 23 and 24.

target populations in the Islamic world and elsewhere could not be blamed for seeing US public diplomacy under Bush as 'a velvet fist in an iron glove'.[22]

Public diplomacy should of course not be developed regardless of a country's foreign policy, and ideally it should be in tune with medium–term objectives and long-term aims. Public diplomacy builds on trust and credibility, and it often works best with a long horizon. It is, however, realistic to aspire to influencing the milieu factors that constitute the psychological and political environment in which attitudes and policies towards other countries are debated. The milieu aims of public diplomacy should not, however, be confused with those of international lobbying. The latter aims at directly influencing specific policies, and the individuals targeted in lobbying are without exception those who are in the loop of the policy process. In contrast, there is only so much that public diplomacy can achieve, and the case for modest objectives is even stronger where public diplomacy aims at spanning bridges between different cultures.

When bilateral relationships are complicated by a cultural divide between the civil societies involved, it will be harder for diplomats to find the right interlocutors and to strike the right tone. It is, for instance, one thing to confess to the necessity of speaking with the 'Arab street', but quite another to get through to youngsters in their formative years in the highly politicized societies of Middle Eastern countries. The next hurdle is to make sure that information is received in the way that it was intended, which is far from easy as people tend to be suspicious of foreign officials' motives. In too many societies, members of the public are unfortunately justified in making fun of anyone who places trust in their own government's representatives. When it comes to dealing with the public, diplomats therefore have to work harder to achieve the credibility that is essential to facilitate foreign relationships. This is true in countries where government is not trusted, but also in stable democracies diplomats know that they may not be the best messengers when it comes to communicating with the public. Public diplomacy is made more effective with the help of non–governmental agents of the sending country's own civil society and by employing local networks in target countries.

22) Mark Leonard, 'Diplomacy by Other Means', *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2002, p. 56.

Beyond American Public Diplomacy?

Is it possible to discuss public diplomacy without giving central importance to US public diplomacy and the debates on public diplomacy in the anglophone world? The origins of contemporary public diplomacy, and the current debate on the need for more public diplomacy, are dominated by the US experience. In the mid–1960s the term public diplomacy was allegedly coined by a former American diplomat and Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Edmund Gullion, and in the following decades its practice became most closely associated with the United States. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, US campaigns directed at foreign publics were above all about communicating the American way of life to foreign publics. Public diplomacy and promotion of culture were in fact closely connected and served similar purposes.

Criticism of public diplomacy as the soft side of foreign relations was silenced by the demands of the Cold War but gained strength after its demise. Budget cuts were one of the main driving forces behind the integration of the United States Information Agency (USIA) into the State Department in the mid–1990s, when the Cato Institute argued that 'public diplomacy is largely irrelevant to the kinds of challenges now facing the United States'.[23] The post–Cold War case against public diplomacy did in fact reinforce ever–present bureaucratic pressures: it has always been difficult to give public

23) *The Cato Handbook for Congress* (Washington DC: The Cato Institute, 1994), p. 308.

diplomacy priority on the State Department's agenda (and few flashy careers were therefore built on diplomatic jobs in the field of information and cultural work). As is well known, the tragedy of 11 September 2001 changed the fortunes of public diplomacy against the backdrop of a troubled relationship between the Islamic world and the West, as well as the 'war on terror' declared by the Bush presidency. Interestingly, when it comes to exercising soft power, the United States possesses unparalleled assets that are accompanied, as it has turned out, by an unrivalled capacity to make a free fall into the abyss of foreign perceptions.

Other countries can learn a great deal from the strengths and weaknesses of present US public diplomacy. This paper will only point out a limited number of lessons from US public diplomacy, yet the clearest of all is that the aims of public diplomacy usually cannot be achieved if they are believed to be inconsistent with a country's foreign policy or military actions. US policies towards the Middle East or its military presence in Iraq, for instance, undermine the credibility of public diplomacy. The starting point of this variant of diplomacy is at the perceiving end, with the foreign consumers of diplomacy. This may be conventional wisdom among public diplomacy practitioners, but its salience can hardly be overestimated and the age of visual politics is adding a new dimension to this truism. Pictures speak louder than words, and they do so instantaneously and with lasting effect. There is, for instance, little doubt that press coverage of human rights' violations in the Abu Ghraib prison will damage perceptions of the US in the Islamic world for many years. Another lesson from the US experience is that money and muscle are no guarantee for success. The availability of unparalleled financial and media resources does not prevent small non–state actors, even terrorists, from being more successful in their dealings with critical international audiences. To be sure, throwing money at self–advertising campaigns in countries with a sceptical public opinion is based on a gross underestimation of assertive postmodern publics, as was demonstrated by ineffective US television commercials in Indonesia, showing the life of happy Muslims in the US. The rather simplistic practice of selling images and peddling messages to foreign audiences has little chance of paying off.

On the other side, foreign nations can benefit enormously from the stimulating US debate on public diplomacy and the valuable and free advice produced by foreign policy think tanks and other bodies outside and inside government. There is considerable overlap between the reports and recommendations that were published after September 2001, and not all of the ideas are equally stimulating, but no other country benefits to the same degree from good offices provided by the non–governmental sector.

The US experience also shows the importance of developing a long–term public diplomacy strategy with central coordination of policies. There are evident problems in this area within the US executive branch of government, but it does not take much to see that many other countries have only begun to think about such issues. Moreover, US experiences with public diplomacy

demonstrate that *limited* use of skills and practices from the corporate sector, in particular from the disciplines of public relations and marketing, can be useful in public diplomacy campaigns. Marketing–oriented thinking was anathema and even a vulgarization to traditional diplomacy, but is slowly but surely entering today's diplomatic services. Finally, US efforts aimed at links with domestic civil society organizations operating overseas and so–called 'citizen diplomacy' confirm the relevance of the hinterland. 'Domestic public diplomacy' can in a way be seen as the successor to public affairs during the Cold War, and its objectives go beyond traditional constituency–building.[24]

After 11 September 2001, which triggered a global debate on public diplomacy, 'PD' has become an issue in foreign ministries from all countries, ranging from Canada to New Zealand and from Argentina to Mongolia. Many foreign ministries now develop a public diplomacy policy of their own, and few would like to be caught out without at least paying lip–service to the latest fashion in the conduct of international relations. Their association with public diplomacy can be seen as a symptom of the rise of soft power in international relations or, at another level, as the effect of broader processes of change in diplomatic practice, calling for transparency and transnational collaboration. The new public diplomacy is thus much more than a technical instrument of foreign policy. It has in fact become part of the changing fabric of international relations. Both small and large countries, ranging in size from the United States to Belgium or even Liechtenstein, and with either democratic or authoritarian regimes, such as China and Singapore, and including the most affluent, such as Norway, and those that can be counted among the world's poorest nations, for example Ethiopia, have in recent years displayed a great interest in public diplomacy.

It should, however, be stressed that it was not '9/11' that triggered most countries' interest in public diplomacy. Many foreign ministries' motives for prioritizing public diplomacy had relatively little to do with US policy preoccupations such as the 'war on terror' or the relationship with the Islamic world. What is true in a more general sense, however, is that – as in the case of the United States – the rising popularity of public diplomacy was most of the time a direct response to a downturn in foreign perceptions. Most successful public diplomacy initiatives were born out of necessity. They were reactive and not the product of forward–looking foreign services caring about relationships with foreign audiences as a new challenge in diplomatic practice. In Europe, the German variant of public diplomacy – *politische Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* – accompanied the foreign relations of the Federal

24) See, for instance, reports on public diplomacy by the Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institution, the United States Institute of Peace, the Center for Security and International Studies, the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, and also various US Congressional reports. On US citizen diplomacy, see Sherry Mueller, 'The Power of Citizen Diplomacy', *Foreign Service Journal*, March 2002, pp. 23-29.

Republic from the very beginning in 1949, and it was a critical instrument in raising acceptance and approval of Germany in other Western democracies. The external image of post–war France, deeply hurt by the country's humiliation in the Second World War, also relied heavily on its *politique d'influence* and the cultivation of national *grandeur*. Smaller European countries have experiences of their own. Austria's public diplomacy wake–up call, for instance, was the Waldheim affair, discrediting the then UN Secretary–General because of his Nazi past. The Netherlands started seriously professionalizing its *publieksdiplomatie* in the face of foreign opinion that was horrified by ethical issues such as euthanasia legislation and liberal policies on abortion and drugs, and the need for this defensive public diplomacy has by no means abated.

Outside Western Europe, public diplomacy can often be seen to support the most vital interests of nations. Some European countries that were in a sense already part of the West and that have gone through a period of transition, including aspirations of integration into larger multilateral structures, have embraced public diplomacy with particular enthusiasm. This perspective may help us to understand in part the recent success stories of European transition countries such as Spain in the post–Franco era, Finland after the Cold War, or Ireland in the aftermath of a long period of relative isolation from mainland Europe. More recently, Polish public diplomacy was successfully developed in the framework of Poland's strategy and policies aimed at NATO and EU membership (but now leaves that country with a post–accession challenge). Such sharply focused public diplomacy serving strategic foreign policy goals can now be witnessed among EU candidate members such as Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Turkey – countries that have invested heavily in persuading supposedly sceptical audiences in Western Europe. These countries' motives in engaging in public diplomacy have everything to do with their desire to integrate into the European and transatlantic world, with all the expected benefits of social stability, security and economic prosperity.

More than nations in transition, Global South countries engaging in public diplomacy have strong economic motives. During the Cold War, public diplomacy was not a major concern in the poverty–stricken part of the world, but more interest could gradually be discerned in how public diplomacy or nation–branding can contribute to development.[25] Apart from the slowly growing interest in the Global South, there are a number of exceptional cases where public diplomacy was triggered by specific events or came into the picture almost naturally. After the 2002 Bali bombing in Indonesia, for instance, public diplomacy was given top priority and received attention at cabinet level. Terrorism caused the Indonesian foreign ministry to

25) Simon Anholt, *Brand New Justice: How Branding Places and Products Can Help the Developing World* (Amsterdam: Butterworth Heinemann, 2005).

prioritize public diplomacy, as it was thought to be instrumental in dealing with the crisis in the tourist sector.

Alternatively, countries that would have gone largely unnoticed outside their own region if geopolitics and security issues had not placed them in the spotlight of world attention have become sharply aware of the power of perceptions in international relations. Pakistan is a case in point. Few diplomats are probably more aware of the effects of foreign views on their country, which is loosely associated with military tensions and skirmishes along the border with India, nuclear proliferation, assistance to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and Islamic extremism. So–called 'rogue states' in the Global South, deprived as they are of regular diplomatic networks and structurally handicapped in their diplomatic relations with other states, also see communication with foreign publics as an essential instrument in their diplomatic toolbox. A country like North Korea does not have many alternatives to resorting to the public gallery. Rogue or pariah states, it could be argued, like other small actors in international relations, have even benefited to a disproportional degree from the decentralization of information power.[26]

But these and other cases of public diplomacy bridging major divides in international relations, such as the well–known practice of communication with foreign publics by socialist powers, are in fact exceptional. As a structural development, public diplomacy above all thrives in highly interdependent regions and between countries that are linked by multiple transnational relationships and therefore a substantial degree of 'interconnectedness' between their civil societies. The emphasis in the present debate on public diplomacy is on the United States and its relationship with the Islamic world, but public diplomacy is widely practised outside North America and much of it in fact antedates the current US preoccupation with 'winning foreign hearts and minds'.

26) Jamie Frederic Metzl, 'Popular Diplomacy', *Daedalus*, vol. 128, no. 2, spring 1999, pp. 177-179.

Public Diplomacy and Related Concepts

Three concepts that deserve brief attention in a discussion on public diplomacy are propaganda, nation–branding and foreign cultural relations. Similar to public diplomacy, propaganda and nation–branding are about the communication of information and ideas to foreign publics with a view to changing their attitudes towards the originating country or reinforcing existing beliefs. Propaganda and nation–branding, however, neither point to the concept of diplomacy, nor do they generally view communication with foreign publics in the context of changes in contemporary diplomacy. The practice of cultural relations has traditionally been close to diplomacy, although is clearly distinct from it, but recent developments in both fields now reveal considerable overlap between the two concepts.

The New Public Diplomacy and Propaganda: Dichotomy or Continuum?

Propaganda has a much longer intellectual pedigree than public diplomacy and in the context of this introductory discussion it is impossible to do justice to the literature on propaganda. Students of propaganda see public diplomacy as an outgrowth of propaganda, a phenomenon with common historical roots and roughly similar characteristics, and there is therefore general agreement that it can be submerged into the pre–existing concept of propaganda. Such an approach is facilitated by a broad and inclusive definition of propaganda.

According to Welch, for instance, propaganda is 'the deliberate attempt to influence the opinions of an audience through the transmission of ideas and values for the specific purpose, consciously designed to serve the interest of the propagandists and their political masters, either directly or indirectly'.[27] Definitions such as this are hard to distinguish from some of the definitions of public diplomacy that are given above and are therefore virtually interchangeable.

It is then easy to see how public diplomacy can be pictured as a subset of propaganda. In the best case, the former suggests a newly emerging form of interconnection between governments and foreign publics. Traditionalist students of diplomacy's interpretations of public diplomacy approximate this view, albeit from a completely different vantage point.[28] They see public diplomacy as a corrupted form of diplomatic communication that is occasionally useful and therefore not necessarily anti–diplomatic. Berridge argues that 'propaganda directed towards a foreign state's external policy is generally considered acceptable, and the resident ambassador is now heavily involved in it. This is known as "public diplomacy".' Interestingly, this view is shared by some practitioners. As Richard Holbrooke wrote: 'Call it public diplomacy, call it public affairs, psychological warfare, if you really want to be blunt, propaganda'.[29]

Two key features of propaganda are its historical baggage and the popular understanding of it as manipulation and deceit of foreign publics. Propaganda is commonly understood to be a concept with highly negative connotations, reinforced by memories of Nazi and Communist propaganda, Cold War tactics and, more recently, so–called psychological operations in post–Cold War conflicts. But in contemporary diplomatic practice, there are also fundamentally different and less objectionable ways of dealing with foreign publics. Few, for example, would consider public campaigns by West European countries aimed at civil society building, rule of law and the improvement of democracy in Eastern Europe as propaganda. When unwinding the threads of propaganda and public diplomacy, it does not make things easier that in the public campaigns of some countries one can discern a mix of modern public diplomacy and old–style propaganda, although sold as public diplomacy. In fact, many foreign policy actions contain elements of both public diplomacy and propaganda and it may therefore be preferable to look at the two concepts on a continuum. That should, however, not obscure the emergence of the new public diplomacy as a significant development in

27) David Welch, 'Powers of Persuasion', *History Today*, 49, August 1999, pp. 24-26.

28) As Berridge and James suggest, public diplomacy is essentially 'a late-twentieth-century form of propaganda conducted by diplomats'; G.R. Berridge and Alan James, *A Dictionary of Diplomacy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 197.

29) G.R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 125. Richard Holbrooke, 'Get The Message Out', *Washington Post*, 28 October 2001.

contemporary diplomatic practice. A category such as propaganda simply cannot capture the contemporary diversity in relations between diplomatic practitioners and increasingly assertive foreign publics. For instance, it is hard to equal Dutch diplomats – discussing the Netherlands' integration policy in the context of Germany's debate on the risks of radicalization among Islamic minorities – to propagandists. Neither is a Canadian diplomat discussing environmental issues with US civil society groups necessarily practising propaganda.

For academics there seems to be an easier way out of this conundrum than for practitioners just doing their job. If propaganda is to be a useful concept, as Nick Cull argues, 'it first has to be divested of its pejorative connotations'. In this view, propaganda should be seen a wide–ranging and ethically neutral political activity that is to be distinguished from categories such as information and education. What separates propaganda from education or information (assuming that these two are uncontroversial and straightforward) is that it 'tries to tell people what to think. Information and education are concerned with broadening the audience's perspectives and opening their minds, but propaganda strives to narrow and preferably close them. The distinction lies in the purpose'.[30] With public diplomacy presented as a variety of propaganda, it would hence also be an activity that has as its conscious or unconscious purpose the narrowing or closing of the minds of targeted publics abroad. At first glance, the record may indeed seem to point in this direction. Governments have tried to fool foreign publics rather too often. Even many of today's official information campaigns aimed at other countries' societies are basically a form of one–way messaging, and a number of countries that pay lip–service to public diplomacy actually have a better track record in the field of manipulating public opinion. It is true that our collective memory of official communication with publics in other countries is contaminated by past examples – more than just occasionally confirmed by present practice – of states practising propaganda in the sense of narrowing people's minds.

Some contemporary authors on public diplomacy hardly seem bothered by such questions and merely assert that today's public diplomacy is different.[31] An early definition of propaganda nevertheless points to a useful indirect differentiation between public diplomacy and propaganda, describing the latter as 'a process that deliberately attempts through persuasion techniques to secure from the propagandee, *before he can deliberate freely*, the

30) Nicholas J. Cull, David Culbert and David Welch, *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present* (Oxford and Santa Barbara CA: ABC-Clio, 2003), pp. xv-xxi.

31) Leonard, Stead and Smewing, *Public Diplomacy*, pp. 46-53; Nye, *Soft Power*, p. 107.

responses desired by the propagandist'.[32] The distinction between propaganda and public diplomacy lies in the pattern of communication. Modern public diplomacy is a 'two–way street', even though the diplomat practising it will of course always have his own country's interests and foreign policy goals in mind (which most likely inspired his or her association with the public in the first place). It is persuasion by means of dialogue that is based on a liberal notion of communication with foreign publics. In other words, public diplomacy is similar to propaganda in that it tries to persuade people what to think, but it is fundamentally different from it in the sense that public diplomacy also listens to what people have to say.

The new public diplomacy that is gradually developing – and if it is to have any future in modern diplomatic practice – is not one–way messaging. As one senior diplomat said at a British Council conference: 'The world is fed up with hearing us talk: what it actually wants is for us to shut up and listen'.[33] The crux becomes clear in Jay Black's description of propaganda: 'Whereas creative communication accepts pluralism and displays expectations that its receivers should conduct further investigations of its observations, allegations and conclusions, propaganda does not appear to do so'. Black is perfectly right that it is possible to conduct public relations and persuasion campaigns without being unduly propagandistic.[34] Meaningful communication between official agents and foreign publics may have been extremely difficult or even impossible in the past; but it is certainly not too far–fetched in the increasingly complex web of transnational relations that is presently in the making.

Public Diplomacy and the Challenge of Nation–Branding

The second concept in relation to this discussion is nation-branding or nation *re*–branding – one of the last frontiers in the marketing discipline. The practice of branding a nation involves a much greater and coordinated effort than public diplomacy. For one, public diplomacy is limited to those who practise diplomacy, whereas branding is about the mobilization of all of a nation's forces that can contribute to the promotion of its image abroad. Paradoxically, for the very same reason, nation–branding and public diplomacy are sisters under the skin, and this explains why foreign ministries in a great variety of countries have expressed an interest in branding. In light of the overlap between the two fields, it is in fact surprising that the debates

32) E.H. Henderson, 'Toward a Definition of Propaganda', *Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 18, 1943 p. 83, emphasis added.

33) I owe this quotation to Martin Rose from Counterpoint, the cultural relations think tank of the British Council.

34) Jay Black, 'Semantics and Ethics of Propaganda', *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, vol. 16, nos. 2 and 3, 1986, pp. 133 and 135.

on nation–branding and public diplomacy pass one another like ships in the night. This can partly be accounted for by the fact that students of branding stick to the field of international marketing and have little affinity with the field of diplomacy.[35] Simon Anholt put it perhaps most bluntly, writing that there is 'a lot of confusion about this term "public diplomacy" and what it really means. I myself do not use the term until I really have to'.[36] In this view, marketing is seen as the master of all disciplines, and communication with foreign publics is more than anything else a matter of applying its principles to international relations.

The contrary view taken here is that it does not serve either nation–branding or public diplomacy if the two discourses are completely separated. They are distinct but not entirely dissimilar responses to the increased salience of countries' identities and also to globalization's effect of international homogenization (next to, of course, a trend towards cultural fragmentation). Modern nations look more and more like one another, and there are few things that officials detest more than their country being confused with others that are seen to be ranking further down the league table of nations. Well known is Slovenia's fear of being taken for Slovakia.

Two conceptual differences between nation–branding and public diplomacy immediately meet the eye. First, branding's level of ambition easily outflanks that of the limited aims and modesty of most public diplomacy campaigns. Put simply, for public diplomats the world is no market and practitioners are constantly reminded of the fact that diplomatic communication is only a flimsy part of the dense and multilayered transnational communication processes. In other words, the strength of public diplomacy lies in the recognition and acceptance of its limitations. Many public diplomacy campaigns are based on the common–sense assumption that they are by no means the decisive factor in determining foreign perceptions. In contrast, the main feature of branding projects is their holistic approach. The language of nation–branders resembles the 'can–do' approach from the practice of marketing and the clarity of strategic vision from the corporate world. It is hard to deny that the idiom of branding is 'cool' and promising, and branding has particularly attracted countries with a weak international image or a reputation that leaves much to be desired. It is looked upon favourably in a number of transition countries and also among the very small and 'invisible' nations. It is perhaps no wonder that the likes of Liechtenstein and Estonia were attracted by the lure of branding, even though to the present day no outside expert has succeeded in re–branding a single country.

35) Jan Melissen, 'Where is Place Branding Heading', *Place Branding*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2004, pp. 26-27.

36) Simon Anholt, 'Theory and Practice of Place Branding', *Public Diplomacy and the Media: Diplomatic Academy Proceedings*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Zagreb: Diplomatic Academy of the Republic of Croatia, 2004), p. 15.

Experienced consultants know from first–hand experience the immense difficulties of influencing foreign perceptions. As Anholt writes: 'Brand management is often, as we know, something quite humble: the cautious and slow–moving husbandry of existing perceptions. It is a process as unglamorous as it is unscandalous and, not coincidentally, hard stuff to get journalists excited'.[37]

Second, nation–branding accentuates a country's identity and reflects its aspirations, but it cannot move much beyond existing social realities. The art of branding is then essentially about reshaping a country's self–image and moulding its identity in a way that makes the re–branded nation stand out from the pack. Crucially, it is about the articulation and projection of identity. The new public diplomacy does not at all contradict nation–branding, and there are various reasons to suggest that it prospers particularly well in a country that is also putting an effort into branding. Branding and public diplomacy are in fact largely complementary. Both are principally aimed at foreign publics but have a vitally important domestic dimension, and in contrast to much conventional diplomacy both have foreign rather than one's own perceptions as their starting point. Branding and public diplomacy are also likely to be more successful if they are seen as long–term approaches rather than seen as being dominated by the issues of the day.[38] But instead of aiming at the projection of identity, public diplomacy is fundamentally different from branding in that it is first of all about promoting and maintaining smooth international relationships. In an international environment that is characterized by multiple links between civil societies and the growing influence of non–governmental actors, public diplomacy reinforces the overall diplomatic effort. It strengthens relationships with non–official target groups abroad.

Interestingly, the modus operandi of the new public diplomacy is not entirely different from the public relations approach. As Benno Signitzer and Timothy Coombs observe in a comparative study, the objectives of both reveal evident similarities: 'Virtually any introductory public relations text will note public relations is used to achieve information exchange, the reduction of misconceptions, the creation of goodwill, and the construction of an image'.[39] To be sure, a lesson that public diplomacy can take on board from the sometimes misunderstood field of PR is that the strength of firm relationships

37) Simon Anholt, 'Introduction', *Journal of Brand Management*, special issue on 'Country as a Brand', vol. 9, nos. 4-5, 2002.

38) Jan Melissen, 'Publieksdiplomatie: een goede tandem met branding', in H.H. Duijvestijn *et al.*, *Branding NL: Nederland als merk* (Den Haag: Stichting Maatschappij en Onderneming, 2004), pp. 48-49.

39) Benno H. Signitzer and Timothy Coombs, 'Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Conceptual Divergences', *Public Relations Review*, vol. 18, no. 2, summer 1992, pp. 139-140.

largely determines the receipt and success of individual messages and overall attitudes. Laurie Wilson's conclusion on the creation of strategic cooperative communities also applies to public diplomacy: 'It is important for practitioners to devote some time to identifying and building relationships, or they will forever be caught in the reactive mode of addressing immediate problems with no long–term vision or coordination of strategic efforts. It is like being trapped in a leaky boat: If you spend all your time bailing and none of it rowing, you will never get to shore'.[40]

The Overlap of Cultural Relations with the New Public Diplomacy

Cultural relations are in a way closer to recent trends in the new public diplomacy than propaganda and nation–branding. In cultural relations as much as in the new public diplomacy, the accent is increasingly on engaging with foreign audiences rather than selling messages, on mutuality and the establishment of stable relationships instead of mere policy–driven campaigns, on the 'long haul' rather than short–term needs, and on winning 'hearts and minds' and building trust. Whereas traditional cultural relations are often thought of as a pretty straightforward (and undervalued) adjunct to inter–state relations, they now also include entirely new areas and social responsibilities.

There are still plenty of reasons for traditional foreign cultural activities, but in the view of many practitioners cultural relations as a wider concept now also include new priorities, such as the promotion of human rights and the spread of democratic values, notions such as good governance, and the role of the media in civil society. As Mette Lending argues, the new emphasis on public diplomacy confirms the fact that the familiar divide between cultural and information activities is being eradicated: 'cultural exchange is not only "art" and "culture" but also communicating a country's thinking, research, journalism and national debate. In this perspective, the traditional areas of cultural exchange become part of a new type of international communication and the growth of "public diplomacy" becomes a reaction to the close connection between cultural, press and information activities, as a result of new social, economic and political realities'.[41]

Modern cultural relations as a wider concept result in a measure of overlap with the work of diplomats, particularly those practising public diplomacy.

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40) Laurie J. Wilson, 'Strategic Cooperative Communities: A Synthesis of Strategic, Issue-Management, and Relationship-Building Approaches in Public Relations', in Hugh M. Culbertson and Ni Chen (eds), *International Public Relations: A Comparative Analysis* (Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996), p. 78.

41) Mette Lending, *Change and Renewal: Norwegian Foreign Cultural Policy 2001-2005* (Oslo: Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000), pp. 13-14.

This gradual convergence between public diplomacy and cultural relations blurs traditional distinctions and meets opposition. Cultural relations' enthusiasts may fear that public diplomacy is encroaching upon their field, whereas some public diplomacy practitioners may feel that the practice of influencing foreign publics is being diluted by new practices. Both will have to come to terms with current transformations in diplomatic practice and transnational relations. The new public diplomacy is no longer confined to messaging, promotion campaigns, or even direct governmental contacts with foreign publics serving foreign policy purposes. It is also about building networks with civil society actors in other countries and about facilitating relations between non–governmental parties at home and abroad. Today's diplomats will become increasingly familiar with this kind of work, and in order to do it much better they have learnt to piggyback on non–governmental initiatives, collaborate with non–official agents and benefit from local expertise inside and outside the embassy.

Cultural institutes prefer to keep the term 'cultural relations' for their own activities, serving the national interest indirectly by means of trust–building abroad. Cultural relations are in this view distinct from (public) diplomacy, in the sense that they represent the non–governmental voice in transnational relations. As Martin Rose and Nick Wadham–Smith write, diplomacy is 'not primarily about building trust, but about achieving specific, policy–driven transactional objectives. Trust is often a by–product of diplomacy, but tends to be in the shorter rather than the longer term. Nations don't have permanent friends, as Palmerston put it: they only have permanent interests'. Rose and Wadham–Smith's concern is that if their work becomes indistinguishable from public diplomacy, cultural relations' practitioners will not be trusted because 'they risk being seen as a "front" for political interests. This damages not only our ability to do cultural relations, but also our ability to do public diplomacy'.[42] Arguably, however, diplomacy takes place in an international environment that can no longer be described as exclusively state–centric, and diplomats have a stake in different forms of transnational relations. Tomorrow's public diplomacy practitioners will be operators in complex transnational networks, and trust–building and the facilitation of cross–border civil society links is therefore part of their core business. In his own day Palmerston may have been right in saying that nations did not have permanent friends, but the art of diplomacy now also involves getting other people on one's side. In order to safeguard their interests in a globalized world, countries need 'permanent friends' in other nations. Foreign ministries are therefore unlikely to restrict their public diplomacy to traditional and increasingly ineffective one–way communication with foreign publics. Whatever the consequences, the overlap between public diplomacy and

42) Martin Rose and Nick Wadham-Smith, *Mutuality, Trust and Cultural Relations* (London: The British Council, 2004), pp. 34-35.

postmodern cultural relations is bound to grow, unless cultural relations' practitioners return to a more limited conception of their work.

Conclusion: Diplomacy and the Ordinary Individual

Diplomacy is the management of change, and for many centuries the institution of diplomacy has indeed succeeded in adapting to multiple changes in an expanding international society. Diplomatic practice today not only deals with transformations in the relations between states, but progressively it also needs to take into account the changing fabric of transnational relations. For diplomats the host countries' civil society matters in a way that was inconceivable only a generation ago. The ordinary individual is increasingly visible in the practice of diplomacy, particularly in the areas of public diplomacy and consular relations. As to the latter, looking after one's own citizen–consumers abroad has become a major growth sector for foreign ministries, and there is probably no area of diplomatic work that has more potential to affect the foreign ministry's reputation at home. Public diplomacy is another such growth sector and anything but an ephemeral phenomenon. There are, of course, vast areas of diplomatic work and plenty of bilateral relationships where contacts with the public abroad have no priority, but the number of countries exploring public diplomacy's potential will continue to grow. It is probably no exaggeration to suggest that this development is a symptom of the fact that the evolution of diplomacy has reached a new stage. Those who see public diplomacy as postmodern propaganda or as lip–service to the latest fashion in the conduct of international relations therefore miss a fundamental point.

As stated in the introduction of this paper, the fact that people matter to diplomats has taken on a new meaning. The democratization of access to

information has turned citizens into assertive participants in international politics, and the new agenda of diplomacy has only added to their leverage. Issues at the grass roots of civil society have become the bread and butter of diplomacy at the highest levels. Foreign ministries increasingly take into account the concerns of ordinary people – and they have good reasons for doing so. The explosive growth of non–state actors in the past decade, the growing influence of transnational protest movements and the meteoric rise of the new media have restricted official diplomacy's freedom of manoeuvre. Non–official players have turned out to be extremely agile and capable of mobilizing support at a speed that is daunting for rather more unwieldy foreign policy bureaucracies. The wider public turns out to be an even harder target for diplomats. Foreign publics do not tend to follow agreed rules, nor do they usually have clearly articulated aims. Many diplomats are baffled by the elusiveness and apparent unpredictability of public groups in foreign civil societies, which makes the challenge of public diplomacy a real one.

Working with 'ordinary people' is a formidable challenge for diplomatic practitioners who feel more comfortable operating within their own professional circle. Traditional diplomatic culture is slowly eroding and sits rather uneasily with the demands of public diplomacy. Although there are many success stories that can be told, broadly speaking diplomatic attitudes and habits – steeped in many centuries of tradition – are more peer–oriented than is desirable for foreign ministries with ambitions in the field of public diplomacy. The dominant paradigm in diplomatic services is a by-product of a long history of viewing international relations in terms of economic and military power, and that perspective is hardly capable of conceiving of the individual in any other than a passive role. For these and other reasons, the rise of soft power in international relations is testing diplomats' flexibility to the full.

Public diplomacy cannot be practised successfully without accepting that the game that nations play has fundamentally changed. In recent decades diplomatic services have gone through other difficult transitions, with states adapting to the growing complexity of multilateral decision–making and learning to live with the rise of multiple actors in international affairs, but dealing with foreign publics may prove a harder nut to crack. Engaging with foreign societies is different from one–directional communication that is aimed at publics abroad and it requires a totally different mindset. Among other things it supposes the taking of calculated risks, abandoning the illusion of near–complete control over one's own initiatives, and it is based on outreach techniques that were unknown to previous generations of practitioners. Newcomers to the world's diplomatic services therefore deserve good preparation for the changed realities of their profession and students of diplomacy would benefit from new thinking about the conduct of international relations.

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