



Public diplomacy to promote Global Public Goods (GPG): Conceptual expansion, ethical grounds, and rhetoric

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ABSTRACT

Traditional conceptualizations of public diplomacy stress three dimensions, namely image cultivation, advocacy of national interests, and promotion of mutual understanding. This research expands the scope of public diplomacy by adding an additional dimension, namely promotion of Global Public Goods (GPG). The research argues that creating and preserving GPG should be one of the functions of public diplomacy in an era when global warming and globalization of health become realities that dictate the entire humankind to meet the challenge in collective action. The research also explored the ethical grounds and rhetoric of the new dimension of public diplomacy.

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1. Introduction

Public diplomacy has increasingly drawn interests of scholars, and the literature body has been steadily growing. However, the term of public diplomacy itself is seldom subjected to rigorous analysis (Cull, 2008), and definitions of public diplomacy range from one-way advocacy communication to two-way dialogue. Overall, most definition of public diplomacy are image or identity-centered, and others focus either on promotion of mutual understanding or advocacy of national interests. (1) *Public diplomacy as image cultivation*. Other terms used for this dimension include perception management and nation branding. As Taylor (1997) observed, public diplomacy is often considered one-way communication whereby one nation uses image cultivation to build a favorable image with publics who live in another country. Kunczik (2001) suggests that public diplomacy has become increasingly important because nations attach greater importance to identity, image, and world public opinions. (2) *Public diplomacy to promote mutual understanding*. Some conceptualized public diplomacy as communications to promote better mutual understanding to facilitate execution of foreign policy. For example, Tuch (1990) defined public diplomacy as “official government efforts to shape the communications environment overseas in which American foreign policy is played out, in order to reduce the degree to which misperceptions and misunderstandings complicate relations between the U.S. and other nations.” The Murrow Center described public diplomacy as a function that “deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies.” (3) *Public diplomacy as advocacy of national interests*. Government organizations and policy-making communities tend to define public diplomacy as a tool that serves to promote national interests and create favorable international communication environment. For example, the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) defined the goal of public diplomacy as “to promote the national interest and the national security of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad.” (USIAAA, 2009) The Planning Group for Integration of USIA into the Dept. of State

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stated that public diplomacy “seeks to promote the national interest of the United States through understanding, informing and influencing foreign audiences.”

1.1. Limitations of the conceptualizations

There are attempts to expand the theoretical framework of public diplomacy. For example, Taylor (2008) proposes that public diplomacy may be better understood as ways that governments can support organizations in another nation that share their same values. But overall, the practice and theorizing of public diplomacy is mostly limited to the above mentioned three dimensions. There are some shortcomings with such an approach of conceptualization. First, it is power-based. It treats public diplomacy as just another instrument of power at disposal of the state, in which image cultivation is considered part of state’s “soft power”. Second, it is nation-state centered. It focuses on exploring how public diplomacy can best serve the interest of nation states, and not beyond. Third, it is unilateral, apologetic, and ideological. It aims to boost the power of nation states by promoting their values and ideologies through rhetorically defending their interests. Thus, the underlying political thought of such conceptualization is rooted in the school of realism and neorealism in international relations theory. The realism school of thought argues that state is the most important actor; the international system is of anarchy with no common sovereign; state behavior is based on rational assessment of the costs and benefits of each course to maximize their security and power; ethics and universal moral values are discounted and difficult to define.

Overall, the aforementioned conceptualizations of public diplomacy largely reflect the common practice of public diplomacy and the realities of international relations. However, there are international trends in which public diplomacy is increasingly used but is not represented in the conceptualizations. The international cooperation on global warming, avian influenza, and AIDS/HIV pandemic are some of the examples. In such cooperation, it is not the “national interest” or “national image”, but the importance of “global commons”, or the common heritage of mankind that is invoked (Willets, 1996). Although not without rational cost-and-benefits calculations typical of international power relations in the beginning years when the issues became a global agenda, nations engaged in cooperation to combat global warming and pandemic primarily to preserve the common heritage of mankind, or the “global commons”.

On the other hand, nations that are resistant to the cooperation on issues concerning the commons of the humankind face damaging backfire. Their images are tarnished, their advocacy of national interests is criticized, and justifications of its values and policies are not sold. One example is that since the U.S. rejection of the Kyoto protocol to cut greenhouse gases, its image seriously suffered. A Pew survey showed 26 of 33 countries surveyed held a less favorable view of the United States and one reason cited was the Bush administration’s call for voluntary rather than mandatory emission reductions to combat global warming (Jackson, 2007). In this case, the most powerful country was not able to get its own way, contrary to the assumption of the school of realism. As Paterson (1996) rightly noted, in explaining how global warming has become a political issue from a scientific issue and why nations engaged in negotiation, the account by neorealism school of international relations theory that outcomes are generated as a result of the distribution of power capabilities is simply inadequate; while neoliberal institutionalism produces more satisfactory explanatory accounts, because it has demonstrated that international institutions can become important and facilitate cooperation even when the background condition is of anarchy.

2. Global Public Goods (GPG)

In fact, in recent years, a new term, the Global Public Goods (GPG), was coined to refer to the aforementioned concepts such as “the global commons” or “the common goods of the humankind. The concept of GPG has become increasingly important in international studies, particularly with respect to environmental activities (Cornes, 2008). It is advanced as a way of understanding certain transborder and global problems and the need for a coordinated international response and has been used to describe issues from global environment, international financial stability, and market efficiency, health, knowledge, peace and security, and humanitarian rights (Long & Woolley, 2009). Today, international, and particularly global, public goods are becoming more central to national and individual well-being, and the concept is crucial to effective public policy under conditions of increasing economic openness and interdependence among countries (Kaul, Grunberg, & Stern, 1999). Sandler (1999) proposed taxonomy of public goods with benefits spanning generational or national boundaries. The taxonomy categorizes public goods into intragenerational public goods and international public goods, each of which is further categorized into regional and Global Public Goods. There are pure public goods under each of above categories. The intragenerational pure GPGs include: ocean pollution cleanup, weather forecasts, monitoring stations, and World Court. The Intergenerational pure GPGs include: ozone shield protection, global warming prevention, disease eradication, and knowledge creation.

Introduction of the concept of GPG will expand the dimensions of current conceptualizations of public diplomacy. The global efforts to prevent global warming, to form International Criminal Court and to prevent influenza pandemic are some of the most prominent trends, and image cultivation, advocacy of national interests and promotion of state policy are less relevant. As Smith, Woodward, Acharya, Beaglehole, and Drager (2004) observed, the GPG concept is not without limitations and weaknesses as an organizing principle, but does provide, at least in some areas, guidance in improving collective action at the international level for the improvement of global welfare.

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