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Defining Relevant Public Diplomacy Obligations & Parameters with the DREIG Framework ^[1]

Anyone can contribute to a strategic soft power campaign of a public diplomacy program. An agent of public diplomacy (PD) could be a volunteer in a foreign country, a social media influencer, a sports celebrity, a hairdresser, or a person with no designation in society. What should a person be mindful of when tasked with an international public diplomacy role? How can a PD agent chart and observe all their obligations at any point?

This blog post outlines a series of basic tools that a public diplomacy agent can invoke in the field to define what is relevant and what is not. The post applies an abductive approach to identify a structured framework of defining relevant goals/obligations and comprehensiveness in public diplomacy tasks. (This is a pragmatic approach that provides the best prediction in a study where absolute observation of all variables or the entire population is not possible. It is not absolute, and lays the foundations for further research to clarify core findings.)

Since the nation-state is the primary actor in international relations, classic diplomacy (CD), involves heads of state and senior foreign policy officials (Davidson, 2014). In attaining targeted goals in the real world though, classic diplomacy functions side-by-side with public diplomacy (PD), which draws on the fundamental elements of listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, and state-sponsored news (Cull, 2015).

The space for maneuver in diplomacy is so broad that players involved, including the most experienced career diplomats, often struggle to figure out what is relevant and what is not (Degan, 2024). Track changes and affordances always shift the goalposts in diplomacy and influence diplomatic negotiations and goal attainments (Adler-Nissen & Drieschova, 2019).

So, how will an average person filter through all the complications to figure out their obligations in completing a public diplomacy task? How can they rank these obligations in terms of importance?

A prominent Anglo-American legal theorist, HLA Hart, asserted that in a modern jurisdiction, the best way of deducing applicable guidelines in any uncertain situation is to trace it to the applicable primary rules (rules of conduct) and secondary rules (rules on how to make and apply primary rules) (Hart, 2012).

Primary rules define specific legal constructs that set out the legal obligations and consequences for failing to meet these obligations. This includes laws, statutes, and direct regulations on specific areas of law, for example, property crime regulations and their maximum penalties or rules for marriage annulment and dissolution.

Secondary rules are the standards laid out by the sovereign authority on how to make and apply primary rules. This includes rules for recognizing primary laws, rules for changing

existing laws, and rules for adjudicating disputes regarding conflicting laws. These secondary rules are constitutional and set the tone for creating and applying primary laws.

International law is no law because it is based on the consent of nations and states and has no direct enforcer (Acharya, 2023; Lomia, 2020). As such, diplomacy is driven by the endgame of the nation-state as a primary actor (Clackson, 2011; McCourt, 2022).

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On the other hand, diplomacy is also a continuous exchange of ideas that ultimately shape the international arena for different actors (Lomia, 2020). Thus, a person involved in public diplomacy can define what is relevant by identifying:

1. The primary expectations and
2. The secondary standards that shape the primary rules.

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From a critique of international relations theories and elements of international law, five key elements shape the two layers of responsibilities and obligations of a public diplomacy agent. These are straightforward and can be recalled at any time to help tune the mind of a public diplomacy actor, including nontechnical persons. They are:

1. **D**irect international political goals (Primary rules)
2. **R**elevant international governance standards (Primary rules)
3. **E**ndgames, economic goals, and interests (Secondary rules)
4. **I**nternational trade and international institutional standards (Secondary rules) and
5. **G**lobal meliorism (Higher order rules).

First of all, anyone involved in public diplomacy will be representing some international actor with a specific interest. This is typically stated in a contract or personal statement with direct application to the public diplomacy agent in question. Such an express disclosure becomes the primary rule that guides a public diplomacy actor and is often part of a broader diplomatic strategy.

Secondly, a person involved in public diplomacy must understand the international law requirements that define the most relevant rules. This will mean understanding and

appreciating applicable international regulations and the extent to which they are established and enforceable.

The third component involves endgames, economic goals, and interests. These are secondary rules because they shape the sphere in which public diplomacy and maneuvering occur. While the nation-state will define these secondary rules based on its national survival goals, the international political scene is a battle of forms where many endgames and political goals clash. Thus, a PD must understand these interests and goals.

A fourth component relates to relevant contributions to a sustainable global trade system and international governance. This must be viewed in the context of how it shapes the demands, expectations, and regulations of all relevant actors.

Finally, global meliorism, a higher-order thinking approach, involves a public diplomacy agent's contribution to a better world. This includes using objective standards to operationalize and present something unique and relevant to shape the global order healthily and efficiently.

Anyone involved in public diplomacy will need to be mindful of their (1) direct international political goals/obligations, and (2) applicable international governance standards (primary rules). This should be blended with secondary rules, viz (3) endgames, economic goals, relevant interests, and (4) preservation of international trade and regulatory systems. Finally, when all four standards are observed, a PD agent can pursue (5) their notion of changing the world through global meliorism based on their notions of higher-order thinking.
