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Publications by Diplomats: Public Diplomacy Par Excellence ^[1]

Public diplomacy is often differentiated from "traditional diplomacy" whereby the former is primarily an activity to engage with the public, while the latter is mainly focused on government-to-government channels. Going deeper, the main strands of defining public diplomacy would differentiate between a restrictive view, seeing it as an activity undertaken by government institutions engaging with the (foreign) public often for the purpose of pursuing national interest goals. A wider definition would encompass all forms of public engagement between actors on different sides of the borders. That would include governmental and non-governmental actors engaging particularly with their counterparts or more generally with other actors across national borders. In today's world marked by plurality of actors in international relations, this wider perspective of public diplomacy seems more plausible.

Publications by diplomats are a form of public diplomacy since they are geared, by definition, towards an open audience, thus also helping shape public opinion. A closer examination of the different definitions of public diplomacy will reveal different forms of contributions, depending on the angle taken for analyzing that concept, while acknowledging that it was rather ill defined at its outset to the extent of equating it with "propaganda" ([Berridge, G. R., 2022](#)). In order to determine which roles "diplomatic publications" play in public diplomacy, we adopt Lasswell's communication scheme: "Who ? Says What ? Through Which Channel ? To Whom ? With What Effect."

According to [Saliu, H., 2020](#) (Pp 372-373), while two dimensions of public diplomacy (information management and strategic communication) can be managed only partially by state institutions, recent developments related to new media render that centralized management much more difficult since "even non-state actors in the Internet Age increasingly communicate with external audiences."

Diplomats' Publications as Governmental or Official Public Diplomacy

Taking Lasswell's communication scheme's first question of "who says," or in other words, as [Saliu, H., 2020](#) puts it, "who conveys the message to external audience," we find that diplomats' publications can fall both in the realm of what we can term "governmental" and "citizen" public diplomacy, depending on whether at the time of publication they were acting as agents of the state or simply assuming their inherent quality of citizens of that state, which is often referred to with the qualification, or rather disclaimer of, "in personal capacity." This is particularly the case for publications by "active" diplomats rather than those retired or those who somehow left the official function related to the subject matter of their publication. However, even in the case of 'active' diplomats, for these publications to be categorized as "governmental public diplomacy," the reference must be clear that their publication is in the name of the state institution they are representing.

It is rather rare that official diplomatic governmental publications, of a long piece such as reports or manuals, be coupled with the name of their author. But if, and when, that happens, then the publication can be immediately categorized as an act of governmental public

diplomacy engagement with wider audiences, especially when these audiences are abroad. In the case of publishing in a language other than the national one, that may be considered as an additional indicator of intent in that direction. What is more occurrent in that category of public diplomacy activity are rather shorter pieces in what we may call "journalistic publications" such as op-ed articles or letters to the editors whereby diplomats clearly sign the publication with their official title, and by that they reflect that it is the official position of their sending state. In this case, these publications, whether long or short, are a clear example of governmental or official public diplomacy.

Diplomats' Publications as Citizen or New Public Diplomacy

The picture becomes blurrier when the "active diplomats" publish in their "personal capacity," and without necessarily citing their official title, or even adding a clear cut disclaimer that the opinions contained therein do not reflect in any way their professional affiliation. In such a case, it would surely not fall within the narrower definition of public diplomacy, which restricts it to public (diplomatic) actors representing their government. However, if we adopt a wider definition which encompasses almost all interactions between foreign publics, then these publications would adequately pass the test, and would be, par excellence, acts of "new public diplomacy."

Still even within this wider definition, the question would arise if these publications were in the native or national language, and thus primarily geared to the domestic public. Here there would be two possibilities for categorizing these publications as activities of public diplomacy. The first would be if influencing the *national* public and shaping *domestic* public opinion would be classified as public diplomacy. Increasingly, foreign ministries recognize the necessity of informing their own public and explaining the functions that they undertake abroad defending the national interest. This is particularly true when raising such awareness also serves the purpose of defending their budget being discussed within the legislative branch at the parliament. If that wider and more encompassing definition is adopted, then such publications would qualify as activities of public diplomacy, even if the original intent, and the language of publication, were geared to the domestic public. However, even if we do not adopt that flexible approach in definitions, but taking into consideration how porous international borders are, especially in terms of flow and accessibility of ideas when available in the public domain, then such publications would once again fall within acts of "new public diplomacy," especially that their content is most often addressing issues of interaction with other societies. Add to this that automatic translation is now more readily available, hence making the criterion of original language of publication less relevant in determining the receiving readership.

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Lasswell's second question focuses on the issues being communicated. Namely, the parties communicate with each other--i.e. non-state actors speak of universal values, preferences, and common interests aspired by inter-communicative parties. In the era of the internet and global networking, where multiple diverse individuals are in constant contact and interrelation with one another, it is difficult for any democratic government to control the information.

However, in spite of this, at this level of the second question, "says what," even nowadays, propaganda survives through the communication or the messages of certain state actors.

The Medium and Audience: Intention and Impact

The third question posed by Lasswell: "In which channel?" Media is considered to be the communication channel here. However, we should also bear in mind direct, interpersonal, and group communication, including public communication – with no media involved, or alternatively, mass communication with the intermediation of communication channels alongside. If the focus is on longer publications, meaning books and articles published in refereed journals or those of similar status, then the audience would be expected to be one of more specialized nature thus restricting the circle of readership. Of course, the larger the circulation, then the wider scope of that "public diplomacy" activity.

The medium here is hence linked not only to the nature of the diplomatic activity being public but to the "quality" of that public engagement, including its intended audience, its impact, and hence the objective of undertaking it in the first place. The last three questions posed by Lasswell--Through Which Channel ? To Whom ?With What Effect--are hence closely interlinked. As mentioned earlier, diplomats' publications often tend to be in the more specialized form of writings in the form of books, especially after retirement, or technical articles contributing to the academic literature. In both of these cases, the effect it may have is on a narrow societal stratum. That does not mean it would necessarily limit the effect. If the readership is linked to policy making, then these writings may still a substantial impact on the diplomatic relations between the two, or more, sides.

Once again, the impact is also linked to the original objective of the publication, whether government sanctioned writings or self-motivated. The former would be designed in way to create that impact by declaring that the diplomatic agent is publishing in their official capacity, hence establishing the direct linkage. If the disclaimer of "personal capacity" is included, then "true" intent may still not be immediately clear. The simple prima facie assumption is that the actor, in this case writer, is indeed only action on their own behalf. Even in this case, it would have unintended consequences on the relations between the diplomatic actors. Still, that would be in the scope of new public diplomacy, away from the spheres of official governmental actors. However, the possibility that the diplomat writer, especially when still in active service, is cleared to publish yet on a condition of non-attribution to their government still exists. In fact, that could be a form of policy of track 1.5 diplomacy, whereby officials may indeed participate in their personal capacity in informal settings allowing for non-attribution, and hence more space in testing new ideas and positions or exerting negotiating flexibility still with the possibility of retreating to original fixed positions (Staats, J., Walsh, J., & Tucci, R., 2019).

By engaging the Laswell model to diplomats' publications, we effectively explore their dimensions related to official Public Diplomacy Citizen or New Public Diplomacy, as well as the relationship between the medium and audience, the intention and the impact. While the immediate area of focus is publications by diplomats, the findings can illuminate a wider set of issues relating to the public engagement of diplomats, especially in today's world where there is an overlapping set of layers resulting from the nature of the "digital age." The growing use of social media, including by diplomats, makes it difficult to attribute all its content to the diplomat's official standing. In fact, many such pages and accounts would include disclaimers that they are posted in their personal capacity. They are a growing testimony that there is a

growing public sphere for diplomats yet primarily in their private capacity. The lines that separate both will become even blurrier as the engagement of diplomats increase and as the number of platforms multiply.

The same is applicable to their publications as was explored in this paper. The irony here is that diplomats are increasingly becoming more public actors yet more of their actions may be now discerned as those in private, rather than, official capacity.
