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## Alternative Approaches to Public Diplomacy

*Abstract:* The aim of this essay is to discuss the possibility of applying knowledge from the field of sociology and other disciplines into the theory of public diplomacy. Due to changes in the international environment, public diplomacy (a complementary tool of foreign policy) is used for various foreign policy goals including spreading state influence. We identify the need for alternative approaches to public diplomacy especially within the domain of value and norm diffusion. Current prevailing concepts, such as state branding (derived from marketing discipline), do not prove to be effective in the political aspect of this field. This calls for the implementation of new approaches in international relations and diplomacy, particularly from sociology, psychology and communication studies. This article should stress the importance of transferring the knowledge from the above mentioned fields into the theory of public diplomacy—which has been neglected (or only now starting to gain importance) in the theory of international relations. It tries to draw attention especially of sociologists who have much potential to contribute to its development and analysis.

*Keywords:* social capital; alternative; public diplomacy, influence; values; norms; branding

### Introduction

In this essay we examine results of interdisciplinary research which should become an indispensable part of the theory of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy is used in various domains, from cultural to political fields, in order to accomplish goals which can no longer be achieved by classical approaches in diplomacy. However, public diplomacy also needs implementation of new approaches. While branding (often used in this field) can be effective for economic goals such as developing a state brand to attract greater numbers of tourists or investments, marketing strategies are not appropriate for spreading influence and can prove to be counterproductive. This requires knowledge from other disciplines particularly from political sociology, social psychology, communication studies or cultural studies which have far been neglected both in the theory and in the practice of public diplomacy. The connection between public diplomacy and social capital was observed in the study of Cowan and

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Arsenault *Moving from Monologue to Dialogue to Collaboration* and our article should be considered an elaboration on this topic.

### **A Brief Overview of the Field of Public Diplomacy**

The lack of a unified definition and methodology in this field limits the full potential for research in public diplomacy; however the growing importance of this domain calls for further attention. The concept of public diplomacy is relatively new, although experts assert that the phenomena had been known for centuries (Melissen 2005: 1). Public diplomacy raises many questions about its own nature, especially the unusual connection between the two words *public* and *diplomacy*. The term *public diplomacy* can be analyzed from different perspectives. We choose the approach that originated in the U.S. and could be described as activities of governments and other actors to wield influence over foreign public to achieve foreign policy goals. There is also a broader definition of public diplomacy. Proponents of the wider definition, such as Schneider (2004: 1), assert that public diplomacy covers “all nations do to explain itself to the world.” Despite some differences both approaches have in common the goal to affect *public opinion, values* and *attitudes* of public of different states to advance the interests of an influencing state. As Rusiňák (2012: 20) notes “public diplomacy is a set of measures focused on surveying, informing and contacting foreign public to spread positive image of a state. It carried out as a part of soft power through permanent dialogue, promotion and planned information campaigns.”

#### **Evolution of the Concept of Public Diplomacy and Contributions to the Theory**

Before proceeding to the main argument, a brief introduction of the term of public diplomacy would be useful. We draw from the literature which attempted to conceptualize the theory of public diplomacy which allows us to understand the use of public diplomacy by states in different historical periods. They view public diplomacy as a tool used by governments to pursue national interests, despite the changes in the global environment such as new actors.

Gilboa (2008) suggested three basic concepts. *The basic Cold War model* was created to explain a bipolar world dominated by the U.S and Soviet Union. Public diplomacy became an alternative tool in this period. Neither of the main actors was interested in deploying these weapons since it would necessarily result in self-destruction, so both states relied increasingly on information as a weapon to advance their interests in the “enemy” state, targeting the general public. The second model, called *the Nonstate Transnational model*, is a revision of the original one to account for the occurrence of new actors in global politics. Its goal is to examine the activities of these actors and how they use public diplomacy to accomplish their goals. The third model, known as *the Domestic PR model* is the most used and most popular. It demonstrates a new approach used by states towards non-actors, using them to make their own public diplomacy strategies more effective (due to their credibility, neutrality, expertise).

As a second useful conceptualization is given by Yun and Toth (2009), who categorize public diplomacy using two basic theories of international relations—liberalism and realism. This provides a more complex model within which we can understand the evolution of public diplomacy. They classify the public diplomacies of Great Britain, Canada, Sweden and Norway as liberalist, whereas the public diplomacy of the U.S. is heavily influenced by realism. According to Yun and Toth liberalist public diplomacy takes into account the influence of non-state actors in international relations, especially the public, which is considered to be the ultimate receiver of the message. The realist public diplomacy focuses on the state, and considers it to be the only relevant actor. It views other actors merely as means to accomplish the goals chosen by the political elite. We allege that these differences arise primarily from the distinct issues which concern each theory. Environmental, economic, social, cultural issues prevail in liberalism while security is the main concern in realism.

### **Branding in Public Diplomacy**

Public diplomacy draws from a variety of disciplines, but until now it has relied mostly on communication theories and marketing. Inspiration from marketing theories allowed development of branding in public diplomacy and as Szondi (2008) argues, there were several factors that caused this penetration. It was the development of the global economy and a highly competitive international market led to the development of a state brand. Szondi mentions that the purpose in the UK or Canada was to find ways to better communicate and communicate and engage with citizens. (Szondi: 15–30).

However, marketing and branding strategies were applied broadly in public diplomacy. “The Western competition state now values efficiency over equity, it merits competitiveness over solidarity. By doing so, it utilizes the universal discourse of commerce which now more than ever dominates the public sphere.” (Van Ham 2008: 131) The discourse of commerce also penetrated the political sphere which may yield to negative results.

### **Potential Problems with Branding in Public Diplomacy**

Wolf and Rosen (2004) point out significant failures of branding in public diplomacy and differences between marketing approaches in commerce and in public diplomacy. An approach that works well in the first case may perform very poorly in the latter. They compare promoting popular American products with spreading norms and values such as democracy, tolerance and rule of law. Wolf and Rosen consider values and norms to be *public* goods, while f. e. products of artists and producers would represent private goods. Public goods are consumed collectively by a *group* rather than individually and thus their acceptance depends on the preferences of the entire group. “Those who dislike a private good can largely insulate themselves from its distastefulness simply by refusing to consume it. Because public goods are collectively

consumed, one cannot be shielded or insulated from them. ... [an] individual cannot consume democratic values unless democratic values have been collectively adopted and sustained.” (Wolf and Rosen: 6–7) We argue that for political goals such as the diffusion of values and norms, a state should adopt alternative approaches to just an image centered strategy in public diplomacy. Branding derived from marketing can be useful for economic goals, but should be avoided as a strategic tool for value and norm diffusion. Small and medium sized states use public diplomacy for goals such as attracting investments, tourists or skillful labor; but a great power will also use public diplomacy to expanding its influence in the global system.

Failures of the branding approach in public diplomacy may be illustrated by the criticism of American public diplomacy, which has become more noticeable since the beginning of the 21st century. “...an image-centered model of public diplomacy circumvents a systemic analysis of the costs and benefits of American foreign policy and is mostly based on one-way mass communication which is ineffective as well as unethical.” (Nelson and Izadi 2009: 343) As a matter of fact, branding is characterized by *image promotion* and *one way communication*. It affirms placing great importance on branding in the U.S. public diplomacy. Moreover, the presentation meets with observation: “The U.S. brand radiates cultural superiority, political power, and military dominance.” (Van Ham: 140) Nelson and Izadi see the American approach to communication in public diplomacy as a hegemonic communication model (US being the dominant communicator), which causes it to focus on image building rather than on mutual dialogue—a negative impact to soft power.

**Spreading the Influence:  
Cold War Period versus Postmodern Time  
or What Worked in One Case does not Have to Work in the Next Case**

During the bipolar struggle between the U.S. and Soviet Union for “winning hearts and minds” in the context of the Cold War, it is apparent that the U.S. one-way communication model was quite successful. It is thus natural to ask why this approach is not working today, especially when targeting the Muslim population in the Middle East, where the primary focus of American policy has now shifted.

According to Ronfeldt and Arquilla (2009), the U.S. developed legitimacy and credibility throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century founded on values such as liberty, equality and equality of opportunities. During this time, the public diplomacy strategy of the U.S. was aimed at societies in Central and Eastern Europe. One of the advantages was that most citizens of these states had never identified themselves with the illiberalities and discrimination imposed by the communist regime. Moreover, some of the countries had already experienced short democratic governance (f.e. Czechoslovakia). Western values had therefore a great deal of attractiveness and the U.S. was an acknowledged and respected hegemony in the Euro-Atlantic territory.

However, since the fall of the iron curtain, the diffusion of democratic models and values is different in many aspects from the cold war period. Since 2001 the U.S. has shifted its focus to the Islamic world, where western values and norms

find more resistance. For instance Čech illustrates a silent critique of westernization: He believes that many Muslim women, although open to innovations, are critical of many negative aspects of current modernization. “It is a way to disagree with western trend of disclosing everything in sexual life. Exposure of ideal figures, fight against aging and tight attachment to earth-life contrast with Islamic body expressing orientation towards transcendence.” (Čech 2008: 21) Compared with the cold war period, western values lose some of their attractiveness not only in the Muslim world but worldwide as well. “Social unrest, lack of youth discipline, drug addiction as well as families break-ups are said to be the logical consequences of western liberal system.” (Gu 2012) Non-western models are starting to earn prestige, especially in the rest of the world. F.e. China’s model is admired for “its stable growth, effective fight against poverty and technological and political independence.” (Perthes and Mair 2011) The West is thus confronted with a challenge to defend its values and the American dream as it was promoted remains to be dreamed, however difficult it may be now to reach.

#### A Call for Alternative Approaches

Value and norm diffusion bears many ethical questions such as the question about universal values. It is difficult to determine the universal cultural model (or whether it exists) especially, if it is transferred from one society into another which exists in a different historical and geographical context.

However, the aim is not to provide an answer whether any of the cultural models is universal or not, but to analyze why these ambitions often fail. Some states and organizations try to implement values and ideologies into societies living in different contexts. To achieve more effective public diplomacy means to take into account the existing cultural differences.

Cowan and Arsenault suggested an alternative approach to public diplomacy that differs from traditional approaches including branding. According to these authors, dialogue as a preferred tool to monologue has become the most desired form of public diplomacy claimed by academics and practitioners. However, Cowan and Arsenault claim that not only monologue (one way communication), but dialogue too (two-way communication) is sometimes insufficient in public diplomacy activities. They advance the theory by introducing a new layer—*collaboration*. Cowan and Arsenault stress that collaboration activities are not typical for public diplomacy; however they should become the *main pillar* of this domain. They support their argument by the concept of social capital, which is frequently a part of humanitarian and development aid of democratic and civil society associations.

We further elaborate this idea by exploring potential of social capital theory and its application to public diplomacy. We also believe that the theory of social capital could play a decisive role in the field of spreading cultural and social influence, but in a different way as we will demonstrate. We see the potential added value of the sociology into the field of public diplomacy which we believe should be further elaborated.

### Theory of Social Capital in Public Diplomacy

Social capital can be defined as “norms and networks that enable people to act collectively.” (Woolcock and Narayan 2000: 3) It was first defined on a micro level as a feature of groups and later by Putman brought on the macrosociological level (Paxton 2000). Since then we are able to talk about social capital not only within smaller units of the society but also in the society as a whole, which can serve as a crucial determinant about understanding how a particular society/nation works. The existing research confirmed that the presence of social capital within society is associated with positive effects on it by aiding its prosperity.

“...high stock of social capital increases individuals’ ability to cooperate, improves monitoring and enforcement of contracts, and reduces free-riding and information asymmetry. Social capital therefore lowers transactional costs, fosters innovation and dissemination of technology and thus leads to better economic outcomes.” (Fidrmuc and Gërkhani 2008: 265)

The fundamental attributes of social capital are *trust* and *reciprocity*.

Social capital is also said to have positive effects on democracy. “...social capital can help *create* democracy in a country that is not democratic. Alternatively, it can help to *maintain or improve* an already existing democracy.” (Paxton: 257) Paxton claims in the first case, which is important for our topic that high levels of social capital can raise critical voices towards nondemocratic government and help spread information, initiate discussions and collective actions against an oppressive regime (Paxton: 257). Plurality is thus a natural characteristic of social capital, or is at least fostered by it.

One could argue, however, that there are plenty of states abundant with social capital, but despite this fact, they are neither democratic nor developed. This concerns mostly developing states, in which family and community play a crucial role. Loyalty is therefore established; however they are incapable of achieving positive development within the *whole* society. (Woolcock and Narayan: 7) As for one of the reasons, we can identify missing preconditions to reach positive effects on the *macro* level defined by Putman. The existence of “bridges“ among groups is one of these crucial preconditions. Bridges foster intergroup cooperation, ability to participate in broader networks transcending a community. Such acquired skills are implemented in mainstream economic life. (Woolcock and Narayan: 9) Despite high levels of social capital, society will not advance if it lacks crucial intergroup bridges.

Another reason can be found in authoritative regimes. There are theories which claim that “dictatorships destroy social capital, group-specific and general alike. Furthermore, they create conditions whereby, when dictatorships collapse, societies may even accumulate, negative’ social capital, which in return impedes economic growth.“ (Fidrmuc and Gërkhani: 265) Fidrmuc a Gërkhani (272) confirm this theory in their research: “communism destroyed social capital by discouraging social interactions outside its immediate network of friends and family.“ This explains the problematic democratic development in the states after the Arab spring where necessary intergroup relations for cooperation among institutions lack.

### Public Diplomacy: Helping Accumulate Social Capital

The Arab spring, followed by democratizing processes in some of those countries, brought many questions about the functionality of democracy in the region. Opinions vary; nevertheless democracy will not work, unless the society meets already mentioned preconditions. Even though these societies may be rich with social capital, missing bridges complicates cooperation between groups, as well as within institutions.

Kunioka and Woller assert that higher trust in state institutions, civil society, lower level of social anomy and greater citizens' patience in politics makes them prefer parliamentary government over authoritarian. It demonstrates a positive correlation between higher levels of social capital and democracy. As a matter of fact, in countries of the Arab spring, we can hardly expect to discover necessary attributes for a democratic system after years of oppressive regimes if we take into account the theory about dictatorships and social capital. Paxton asserts that "negative effects on democracy would be expected when there is high within-group trust and networks but low between-group trust and networks." (Paxton: 259) Missing bridges between communities negatively influence preference for democratic system.

Naturally, not all groups affect democratization positively—this counts for extreme and illegal groups. Due to their illegal practices they seclude themselves from major society and despite their inter-community trust, they will not yield to desirable effects in the whole society as described above. "Isolated associations could intensify inward-focused behavior, reduce exposure to new ideas, and exacerbate existing social cleavages." (Paxton: 259) A state, which happens to be dominated by groups of this kind, will not aid development since it will isolate itself from the benefits of larger international community.

We consider the conclusion about the role of economic factors by Kunioka and Woller as an important finding as well. Positive economic development (even though it's still important) has a relatively small effect on one's preference for a democratic system. Building an economic, prosperous state does not automatically create positive acceptance for democratic values. Rather than focusing on economic aspects alone, a state, which would like to create a favorable environment for its cultural influence and democratic values, should choose to develop the social aspect instead.

#### *Effects of Communication*

As we have demonstrated, much of the research into the domain of public diplomacy was dedicated to analyzing the strategies of public diplomacy of different states and less research has been carried out on the side of the receiver's end—*public* and *individual*. If public diplomacy is to be effective, we believe that it is important to learn about the object of influence. This approach may also help us understand why some policies of public diplomacy fail to yield expected results. The reason is that public opinion formation is never thoroughly *dependent on the intention of a communicator* (Čukan, Šrámek 2013). As Lamser (1969) stresses, the intention is to be kept separated and not changed for *an effect*.



*Importance of Understanding Public Opinion and Attitudes in the Public Diplomacy*

Public diplomacy as a foreign policy tool strives for political influence. Unlike the use of force, “political influence *depends as much* upon strength of the attitudes and opinions *of the audience as it does* upon the skill and resources *of the political leader or the newspaper or other source*” (Lane and Sears 1964: 53).

Public diplomacy as mentioned before is focused on changing attitudes, opinions and ultimately behaviour—which in the field of non-coercive influence much depend on the receiver as well. The theory of public diplomacy should therefore incorporate the knowledge from disciplines such as sociology (and its subdisciplines such as political sociology); and psychology (especially social psychology). For the purpose of identifying effective as well as ineffective public diplomacy, it is crucial in public diplomacy to define and understand the terms such as *attitude* or *public opinion* and analyze how they work. Understanding the role of attitudes, opinions and behaviour in people’s lives and connection between them, brings much progress into this domain.

*Attitudes* are often referred as a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or response to an object. To evaluate is to determine something as good or bad (Chaiken, 2001: 903). Attitudes consist of two components: affective or emotional component (feeling of liking or disliking) and cognitive part (beliefs about the object) (Katz 1966: 55). They also involve direction (being positive or negative) and intensity (expressing extreme, moderate or low feeling). Attitudes are created at first confrontation with an object and can be formed through direct or indirect experience. Knowing how attitudes work is important in public diplomacy since they are an unthinkable part of human beings which provide them with necessary *orientation* in their lives and environment. They are crucial even in unknown situations since people tend to make their decisions and judgments according to the previously acquired attitudes.

It was long held for granted, that attitudes guide thoughts, judgements, and behaviour. However this assumption has been questioned. “...Individuals’ behaviour is influenced by many variables other than their attitudes and the attitude-behaviour relationship is typically weak” (Schwarz 2001: 907). A light into the attitude-behaviour relationship brings differentiation between *strong* and *weak* attitudes which explains that strong and weak attitudes differ in their intensity and ability to be changed. “Inconsistency among beliefs, often termed ambivalence, is associated with attitude instability and heightened susceptibility to social influence. ...high consistency attitudes are better predictors of behaviour and are also more resistant to social influence attempts” (Chaiken 2001: 902–903).

Opinion is a verbal expression of an attitude and public opinion as Neidhardt argues, consists of openly presented opinions (as opposite to silent personal attitudes). According to Čukan and Šrámek (2013) there are two basic views of public opinion: the nominalist and realist. The realist approach believes that public opinion is not to be reduced to the sum of individual opinions. It is more than that—a new phenomenon of a new quality which is above an opinion of an individual. On the other hand the nominalist approach denies its independent existence—the existence of only individual opinions is acknowledged and public opinion is thus just a sum of them.



Vinopal suggests a different approach by introducing the idea into the individual *public opinion*. This approach is sort of a compromise between the two views. According to this view, it is still the individual who carries the public opinion, nevertheless it remains referring to a group—“what the others think“ (Vinopal, 2010: 44). The individual creates his own opinion about an issue, while knowing or having an idea about the prevailing public opinion of his primary and referent groups (such as scientists, politicians, important personalities, foreign public opinion etc.). The opinion of an individual may not coincide with the collective opinion; however his idea of the collective opinion is relevant and often not ignored. The difference between the individual and collective opinion creates a pressure on changing attitudes which consolidates the two levels. According to Vinopal, this pressure comes rather from the individual himself than from the external environment.

### Principles of Public Opinion

As Cowan and Arsenault suggested, all layers (monologue, dialogue and collaboration) are an inevitable part of various diplomacy activities. However, the potential of the first two to lead to changes in inner convictions as well as behaviors compared to the last tool is more limited. As Visser, Holbrook and Krosnicka (2007) point out, increased amount of delivered information is limited in bringing the desired effects. “Knowledge is a powerful enabler. It confers particular cognitive and behavioral abilities, facilitating a great number of tasks. But virtually all deliberate judgments or behaviors require more than ability alone—they also require sufficient levels of motivation.” (2007: 135) Visser, Holbrook and Krosnick conclude that there are outcomes (f.e. formation/change of an opinion) for which provision of an information is sufficient and outcomes which depend on both *information and motivation* or *motivation only*. If the latter is the case, providing mere information will not lead to yielding desired effects. The additional factor of motivation is an important discovery for the theory of public diplomacy as well. In order to achieve changes in *attitudes*, Lamsler (1969) states that it is necessary to affect the sphere of motivation.

Since much of the effect depends on the receiver, it is useful to continue the interdisciplinary exploration in the field of public diplomacy. F.e. experts point out interesting findings from the public opinion research such as the formation of opinions. Lane and Sears identify that exerted influence depends on three components: *respondent's opinion*, *evaluation of the source* of influence and *source's position*. One can observe or predict the development of a relation between the variables. “If a source with some prestige attempts to change opinions which are very different from his own and which are very strongly held, he is likely only to reduce his prestige. Source derogation rather than opinion is most likely to be selected as the mode of dissonance-reduction” (Lane and Sears 1964: 47). The higher the respect for the source and the weaker the opinion, the easier it is to achieve a change. However, in the case of strong opinions, change is less likely to occur. Legitimacy of a source (reputation) belongs to one of the most decisive factors of opinion change. A message diffused

by positively perceived source is more likely to be believed and vice versa (Lane and Sears 1964: 47). Opinion intensity represents another important factor—the stronger the opinion, the lesser chance for public opinion to change opinions and attitudes of individuals.

Even if an individual opinion is changed successfully, this does indicate success of the strategy of public diplomacy yet. According to Noelle-Neumann, individuals build their opinions according to the prevalent opinion (Neidhardt, 1994: 27) or if their opinions differ from the dominating discourse, they either do not express it loudly or if they do, they are not likely to get sufficient amount of support to enforce it. Or as Vinopal suggested, the collective opinion is likely to create an invisible inner pressure for a change of an individual opinion. This indicates that if a dominating discourse in the public opinion (or at least of the influential public opinion makers) is not be changed, changes in individual's opinions will not bring significant alternations and successes for the goals of the public diplomacy.

Group reference belongs to the most influential factors on individual's opinion and it serves as an orientation if important information is missing (Lane and Sears 1964: 81). The reason can be found within the function of a group. Groups serve as an "anchor" against external influences. E.g. Schenk and Rössler (1994: 267) claim that media are unsuccessful in changing the group opinion; however they enjoy success when they support the already existing group opinion.

Lane and Sears (1964: 72) also stress irrational aspects of opinion formation among ordinary citizens. F.e. many people seem to build their opinions before acquiring additional relevant information. This process can be particularly found in the childhood, in which children take opinions and norms automatically over from their families, referent groups and cultures they live in. However, once behaviour patterns are learned, they tend to be applied in the course of the whole adulthood as well. Adopted opinions from the childhood seem to play a crucial role especially in unknown topics and situations—another information which should be carefully surveyed by practitioners of public diplomacy.

Lane and Sears also explore the principle of selective approach. If an individual adopts strong emotions towards an object without having additional information, he/she tends to select and accept the kind of information *supporting* his/her opinion. In praxis a selective approach is implemented: "Contradictory information is often ignored [...]" or "information which bolsters an already firm opinion is accepted very often regardless of the reliability of its source; an argument from a disliked source is often rejected out of hand without adequate consideration of its merits (1964: 74–75).

The strength of learned values and attitudes is demonstrated in the following way "[...] the citizen often thinks that he is accepting information because of its intellectual merits, whereas in actuality the reason frequently has much more to do with its compatibility with the unconsidered premises of childhood"(Lane and Sears 1964: 75). We shall entitle this phenomenon as *paradox of rationality*, under which we understand the misperception of acting rational; however it is the contrary.

This approach and knowledge could be useful when trying to understand and explain the reasons of failures and successes of public diplomacy strategies.

*Inspiration from Successful States in Public Diplomacy*

There are states which are known for positive example in public diplomacy; this means that achieving successful public diplomacy is also possible. They are (except Canada) situated in northern parts of Europe. In particular, Norway cultivates a public diplomacy strategy that contains the necessary mentioned *social* involvement. Due to its relatively small size it had to choose priorities in foreign policy (Henrikson 2005). One of these priorities was a decision to contribute to world peace. “It [Norway] is leading the world as a humanitarian power: outperforming all other countries in terms of its contributions to aid, its role in peace-keeping and peace processes, and its commitment to developing new kinds of global governance.” (Henrikson 2005) Humanitarian and development aid became cornerstone activities of public diplomacy by which they fulfill criteria suggested earlier by Cowan and Arsenaault for social engagement. Henrikson adds that Norway builds its image on ‘good’ and clearly formulated ideas—sustainable development, human security and the responsibility to protect. Norway chose to contribute to world peace, which is a less controversial topic than an explicit reference to exporting democratic model. Nevertheless, by means of its presence and activities in conflict resolution, it has the opportunity to influence local societies and groups in a democratic way. Beside Middle East, Norway was active in Colombia or Sri Lanka too and it also has a generous aid budget. (Leonard et al. 2002: 53)

In comparison with the U.S, Norway possesses another advantage. It uses wide networking, which the U.S lacks. Norway typically has non-state actors who are largely engaged in public diplomacy, considered a smart step as “soft power will never be shaped fundamentally by government, nor can it be tapped for use in a particular situation.” (Blechman 2005: 680) and Van Ham In contrast in the U.S, “NGOs already contribute to America’s public diplomacy but would do even more if their potential as public ambassadors was supported by a recognized public-private framework, which would integrate non-governmental efforts in the nation’s public diplomacy.” (Zatepilina 2009: 165) Studies show that non-state actors are more effective in humanitarian activities, possess better knowledge about, and more experience with local culture, population, and territory. Their activities can be influential: “...the development assistance they provide often affects politics in host countries,” (Zatepilina: 163) which can be also perceived as disadvantage, discrediting their neutrality.

NGOs are masters in creating an informal atmosphere, which strengthens *trust* and *credibility* crucial for accumulation of social capital. A great advantage is the ability of “non-government actor to say certain things that a government official cannot.” (Zatepilina: 163) NGOs should not be omitted in the strategies of public diplomacy. These facts have already been known, however mostly applied only partially and only by some countries.

Values appreciated in Northern America, Europe or Australia must not necessarily be met with success in Iran, Saudi Arabia or China (as it was illustrated in the case of problematic acceptance of Confucian values in Northern America and Europe). Individualism, tolerance or freedom can be viewed as a threat that opposes

conservative traditions for which authority and sacrifice of an individual for collective good is demanded (Dune 2005: 186).

Nevertheless, Woolcock and Narayan summarize from the findings of Knack and Keefer that "...generalized thrust ... rule of law ... civil liberties ... [and] bureaucratic quality were positively associated with growth." (Woolcock and Narayan: 11) Despite the connection with democratic values, these principles do not have to be associated with a democratic model. Certain attributes for a functioning society are necessary, such as trust between groups and reciprocity. Social capital was proved to help positive societal development. On the other hand, studies, although not perfect, clearly demonstrate that "rampant corruption, frustrating bureaucratic delays, suppressed civil liberties, vast inequality, divisive ethnic tensions, and failure to safeguard property rights (to the extent they exist at all) are being increasingly recognized as major impediments to generating greater prosperity." (Woolcock and Narayan: 11) Thus building social capital to support development of functioning societies through the help of NGOs (having a different aim from states like concentrating capabilities in the global system) should at least partly make a compromise in public diplomacy: to spread influence more ethically and effectively.

### Summary

The struggle for power and the spread of influence are characteristic features of international politics. However, due to changes in international environment and the growing importance of new actors, states adjust their strategies as to how to accomplish their goals. Diplomacy is one of the fields undergoing profound changes and public diplomacy is in fact one of its demonstrations. Public diplomacy has become a complementary dimension of classical diplomacy and proves to be crucial since the relevance of public opinion is growing around the world.

The theory of public diplomacy is developing and even the fusion of the two words public and diplomacy has its critique. However, for the purpose of this article we use the narrower definition in which public diplomacy is always understood in connection with a government.

Public diplomacy became a useful foreign policy tool which is focused on changing public opinions, attitudes in order to achieve foreign policy goals. It derives knowledge from a variety of disciplines. Communication theories, as well as branding, became the core pillars. While branding (focused on image projection, one way communication and state brand promotion) take the prime and prove to be effective in economic goals (attracting tourists, investors, trade etc.), the same approach seems counterproductive in changing public opinions for political goals such as democratization and norm diffusion. This article suggested that states should include a strategy based on studies of sociology and strive for other actors speak for the state as a whole.

Recently we have been witnessing negative impacts on the soft power of the United States. The U.S enjoyed high popularity during the Cold War among the population of European society and was an inspiration to the society living behind the Iron Curtain.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the trend is however different. The focus on Middle East countries hasn't proven to be effective and is not winning much support. This is because of an ambition to implement the working models into a different context of relationships, habits and culture of a foreign society.

In this article we argued that a theory of social capital provides a possible explanation as to why democratic principles were implemented in some countries better than in others. Research of social capital proved a positive correlation between democratic governance, society progress, and development of social capital. However, high stocks of social capital are not automatic guarantees for democracy and economic growth. Necessary intergroup relations are needed for a society to prosper. Attempts to implement democratic values while ignoring the social predispositions of a target society (especially from a different cultural context), is one of the crucial mistakes of current public diplomacy strategies. However, this cannot be achieved by government itself: crucial actors in the field of development aid are non-governmental organizations which should be included in the strategy of public diplomacy and their voices taken into account.

Then we explored some principles of opinion formation and influence spreading. We learned that changing attitudes and opinions is more than a difficult task. We explored few obstacles to effective public diplomacy such as paradox of rationality, dominant influence of referent and primary groups and long lasting effects of formative years which are hard to overcome if they stand in the way of the influencing state. However, we also learned that the most effective means to achieve changes is to work with the motivation of an individual, since mere information often proves to be insufficient.

There are also countries which have chosen the way of social engagement that closes the gap between public diplomacy and alternative approaches. Norway is one of them and thanks to its inclusive strategy towards non-state actors and its preference for social topics such humanitarian aid and world peace, it has achieved a respectful status in the international community despite its relative small hard power.

Instead of spreading ideologies and norms, states should focus on developing functioning societies in the world and intergroup connections between social groups which is crucial for a society to prosper. Higher stocks of social capital and intergroup connections proved to have a positive correlation with preferences for democratic system. Building trust and social capital within societies and different cultures may represent a long-term goal, nevertheless more effective is to bring understanding and may even lead ultimately to free choice for democratic values.

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