

programmes. As I mentioned above, an action-driven collaborative diplomacy approach helped me make sense of the dynamics and understand some of the experiences.

This action-driven approach forged coherence between stakeholders that had acted in isolation up to till then. And at the same time, the collaboration contributed to the profile of the Netherlands and The Hague as a centre of excellence in peace and justice¹.

Having an action-driven collaborative public diplomacy approach in mind, it helped me shape the *HagueTalks* platform (www.haguetalks.com) by means of an actionable dialogue series that aimed at setting peace and justice in motion. It is such a worthwhile endeavour to work for the Netherlands in building its favourable reputation as a global peace and justice centre of expertise, while at the same time bringing together the many Hague-based justice stakeholders by reaching out to a shared audience of students and young professionals.

In 2016, the research article concluded that challenges in the years to come will arise in terms of balancing interests between the two initiators of the Hague Project, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Municipality of The Hague. It also identified policy areas that benefit from a collaborative public diplomacy approach. We are now further operationalising these suggestions.

In hindsight, what was undervalued is what I would coin as “human chemistry”. The success of collaborative public diplomacy requires a chemistry between initiators and main actors. To go beyond hierarchy and function. From what I have seen, listening respectfully to each other is what makes the chemistry work.

CHAPTER 5

Evaluation in Public Diplomacy

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Public diplomacy is a vibrant field of study and practice. Communicating with foreign publics is a process that welcomes contributions from a diverse group of experts ranging from diplomats to celebrities, and from scholars of media studies to branding. Unexpectedly, such richness paves the way to numerous debates on many aspects of public diplomacy. There is even a debate on what the concept stands for and what it does.

It is challenging to build a case for evaluation against such a background. Adding to this difficulty is the long-term nature of the expected outcomes of public diplomacy programmes. However, as a primarily tax-funded practice, public diplomacy is – and should be – accountable. In this chapter, we balance these two priorities: first, we acknowledge that there is no universal definition of public diplomacy then, accordingly, we propose a variety of methods that can be used to evaluate certain aspects of the practice.

At its core, public diplomacy refers to intentional communication-based activities that international actors employ to shape the cognitive and affective attitudes of foreign publics; to understand as well as build relationships with them; and ultimately

IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Public diplomacy evaluation begins with identifying the objectives it is designed to achieve to lay the foundation for foreign policy goals**
- **Output evaluation is the relatively easier first step to measure how actual products, activities, and messages are created as a result of public diplomacy projects**

IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Outcome evaluation helps measure whether public diplomacy activities contributed to producing the expected outcomes**
- **Changed perceptions and stronger relationships are connected to behavioural outcomes.**
- **Logic models help connect public diplomacy projects' input, output, outcome, and impact**

to support their foreign policy goals¹. This connection between foreign policy goals and public diplomacy is most explicitly pronounced in the reports of the US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD) which lay out the foreign policy goals of the country for each region and the public diplomacy objectives and programmes that will support these goals.

An actor's public diplomacy objectives could be limited to managing a news story or a crisis, or more proactive and strategic such as when attracting more foreign direct investment or branding the nation². The objectives could also be rather long-term and diffused such

as forming the basis for a regional or global major power's attempts to maximise compliance and minimise resistance to its leadership regionally or globally.

Alternatively, the expected outcome could be quite generic such as strengthening ties between two or more societies to laying the foundation for traditional diplomacy to achieve its core goal of managing international relations peacefully. Whether the objectives are limited or grand, public diplomacy programmes are only catalytic processes that contribute to the production of a certain outcome for which public diplomacy alone often would not be sufficient³. As much as these expected outcomes are diverse, their evaluation also requires a different set of tools. Public diplomacy activities are not a panacea to help achieve any foreign policy goal. Therefore, the initial stage in evaluation is to identify the expected outcomes an international actor aims its public diplomacy activities to achieve. This evaluation at the goal-setting stage is referred to as process (or formative) evaluation.

Process evaluation

Process evaluation helps actors to explicitly articulate their implicit assumptions. Through process evaluation, actors lay out a theory of change whereby they frame the

problems to be addressed as well as the interventions needed, the methods of intervention, and then clarify expected outcomes.

Output evaluation

Output evaluation is the first level of measurement in summative evaluation. While in itself incomplete, it answers a fundamental question on programme-level measurement: what actual products, activities, messages are created as a result of public diplomacy projects. Evaluation at this level does not necessarily take contextual information (such as organisational priorities or long-term goals) into consideration. Rather, the focus is on what a specific public diplomacy attempt has produced for audiences.

In mediated public diplomacy, output evaluation is about content production. For instance, the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) reports "broadcast hours per week" for its television and radio operations. In traditional media, public diplomacy projects can measure their exposure by looking at total media circulation for print media and at ratings for impressions in broadcast media.

In social media, content production is again the key output. These platforms present their own metrics, such as impressions and reach, for further evaluation purposes.

An example of process evaluation

European Union (EU) policymakers might think that European youths must identify better with the EU to help sustain the polity in the long-term (i.e. problem framing). They may design programmes that help strengthen the identification of European youths with Europe. They may consider the ERASMUS Programme, the polity's signature student exchange programme, as an intervention to help achieve goals (i.e. intervention framing). The methodical considerations could include which countries to have in the programme, the length of the exchanges, the institutional support for the students and universities participating in the programme, and keeping the trajectory of and maintaining contact with the alumni. The expected outcomes could be better identification with European identity, more trust, empathy, perception-taking vis-à-vis other Europeans, and greater awareness about European or global issues. But are these expected outcomes really achieved? This question is answered in the summative evaluation which we elaborate in the remainder of this chapter.

Facebook's Audience Insights, Instagram's Account Insights, and Twitter's Analytics are such tools that show the content creator how many individuals saw their posts, visited their profiles, and interacted with their content. In non-mediated public diplomacy, project and participant numbers are popular output measures.

Devoid of any other context (such as organisational priorities or long-term goals) this type of evaluation solely shows what is being produced for audiences. It is not possible to infer any additional conclusions apart from production. Output evaluation basically shows how inputs – namely financial and human resources – are translated to projects.

Outcome evaluation

Public diplomacy generates outcomes in two different areas: perception and relationships⁴. Both are often intermediary outcomes that are connected to behavioural changes. For example, a more positive perception of a country can lead to increased support for its foreign policies. Relationships based on positive interactions can contribute to recommendations to travel to that country. Countries invest in public diplomacy projects to reach out to foreigners or the international community. At the end of a successful outreach attempt, it is expected that practitioner countries will be able to influence the way their countries as well as their interests are seen, or to build figurative bridges with new individuals or organisations.

Outcomes are more complex than outputs in terms of evaluations since there is an added burden of proof: the link between input and outcomes. Showing how many news articles were written or how many impressions a social media post got are straightforward processes. Articulating the link between seeing new information and perception change, however, is not.

Perception evaluation

Public opinion polls

The seminal method to understanding the changes in public opinion is done through frequent and repeated polls. This

approach requires the practitioners to survey a sample of the population over time and to ask them suitable questions regarding their perceptions. Although methodologically sound, public opinion polling requires time and human resources. While it can be outsourced to local companies, financial costs might be prohibitive.

Recent studies in the field of public diplomacy have used secondary datasets created by research and analytics companies. Gallup, one such company, conducts Gallup World Poll consistently⁵. Pew Research Center, a think tank that is known for its original datasets, conducts public opinion polls. While some projects are centred around the US, others include numerous countries across the world⁶.

Either self-administered or outsourced public opinion polls gives the practitioner countries the opportunity to ask the questions they deem important. Secondary datasets limit the analyses to the questions asked by the companies but are considerably more affordable.

Experiments

One difficulty in evaluating public diplomacy outcomes is the lack of baseline data when comparing findings. An ideal design would allow evaluators to compare the participants' attitudes towards a public diplomacy programme vis-à-vis their behavioural intentions for their respective countries before and after the programme. Furthermore, comparing the attitudes of participants or behavioural intentions to non-participants could also allow programme designers to evaluate the outcomes of the programme.

However, a word of caution is needed. If programme participants and even non-participants are not randomly selected, it is highly likely that there will be a selection bias. The programme participants may already be biased towards the sponsor of the public diplomacy programme which drives their participation in the first place.

Random assignments help control for all other variability except for participation in the public diplomacy programme ("the treatment"). Alternatively, failed applicants who also self-select themselves to participate in the programme

such as students who applied for a government scholarship but failed to get it can act as a control group for comparison against the recipients of the same scholarship.

Social media monitoring

Social media provide unique insights into public opinion. In more traditional evaluation attempts, researchers still need to prompt the participants with questions to solicit their views. On social media, individual users express their opinions without any such prompts. Therefore, the answers are relatively free from framing and priming concerns.

Depending on the size of the public diplomacy projects, practitioners can use search functions on platforms to collect content. For instance, an embassy can monitor the comments it receives on its posts periodically to assess the changes in public opinion. When projects get larger, it is likely that manual monitoring of social media platforms will not be feasible.

Relationship evaluation

Direct access

Public diplomacy projects are expected to create relationships. While the other evaluation strategies discussed in this section look at aggregate relations, direct access looks at the individual level. Do public diplomacy projects put practitioner countries in contact with decision-makers in target countries? Increasing access will enable practitioner countries to better understand the political system as well as give them opportunities to state their cases when necessary directly. Frequency and volume of contacts can be used as a metric.

Social network analysis

A social network is, in its essence, a structure composed of different actors that engage with each other in any setting.

Researchers have used commercial social media monitoring platforms (such as BrandWatch and Salesforce) as well as application programming interfaces (APIs) to gather larger datasets from social media platforms.

By using automated content analysis and sentiment analysis, researchers are able to track changes in public opinion across time.

Even though more recent studies focus on digital networks that occur on social media platforms, a network can be both online and offline, and it can be on any topic ranging from collaboration networks among local actors to global trade networks. Since public diplomacy projects obtain and build on new relationships, they can change the structure of these networks.

Analyses at individual levels (such as direct access) show a limited view. Social network analysis is used to map out relations among all the actors involved. This structural level analysis is most useful when there is a need to identify actors with specific roles, such as gatekeepers and influencers. Repeated measures of the same network (e.g. before and after a public diplomacy project) can be used to demonstrate outcomes.

Multipliers

An underlying assumption in most public diplomacy activities is that the participants, who are often selected and targeted among potential or current opinion leaders, will multiply the effects of these activities to their networks. Considering that not everybody can participate in public diplomacy activities due to limited resources, an important aspect of evaluation of public diplomacy outcomes is analysing to what extent there are ripple effects. This evaluation can be designed to analyse the ripple effects by surveying the immediate networks of programme participants or through an experiment in which the treatment group is exposed to the experiences of the participants, while the control group is not. In both cases, the same caveats for experiment design discussed above would apply.

Conclusion

Evaluation in public diplomacy is a challenging task. In this chapter, we started with a definition of public diplomacy that positioned the practice as a communication process that changes perceptions and relationships often lead towards behavioural changes. Consequently, we first described ideas for output evaluation by demonstrating different ways public diplomacy projects can report their

own activities. Then, we introduced outcome evaluation. Since there are many different ways public diplomacy can contribute to the achievement of desired impacts, we presented a short survey of metrics and datasets.

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QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

What are some of the outputs and outcomes that can be evaluated when analysing a Twitter account of a country's foreign ministry?

How can we employ the logic model to evaluate whether the ERASMUS Programme contributes to more identification with the European identity?

If a public diplomacy institution finds more people participating in their cultural activities and their foreign policies than non-participants, can they conclude that their public diplomacy activities have been effective?

INTERVIEW

Evaluation in Public Diplomacy

INTERVIEW WITH

Gary MUNDY

Senior Regional Evaluation Advisor, East Asia
British Council

With nearly two decades of experience in programme evaluation in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, Gary MUNDY discussed with the Handbook editors some of his ideas about the critical role evaluation plays in driving change and impact in society.

Q: What makes evaluation important, and how can you make evaluation valuable?

A: There is a very long answer to that question(!) but I will try to keep mine relatively short. First, most of what is delivered in this area involves

public money to some degree. Evaluation provides both transparency of how money has been spent and what it is delivering in terms of the outcomes. It supports wider accountability in how governments use money to create value and the types of value created. This helps hold public servants to account, which is pretty important in my view. Second, it allows us to identify how to spend money better in the future. Very few – if any – initiatives or programmes are a complete success or a complete failure. What is important is understanding which components work, for who, how, and why. When things don't deliver the results that we want, we need to know if there is some fundamental flaw in the thinking behind the design of a programme or initiative, or whether it may be a good idea but the implementation of it was problematic in some way. Having answers to these questions is necessary if we are to design and deliver greater impact in the future.

Finally, evaluation has an ethical role in that programmes and initiatives take up the time of many people. Is it worth it?