

## BOOK REVIEW

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# Connecting Public Diplomacy and Foreign Policy

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Efe Sevin. *Public Diplomacy and the Implementation of Foreign Policy in the US, Sweden and Turkey*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 248 pp., 114.39€ hardcover (ISBN: 978-3-319-49333-6).

The term public diplomacy was coined in the 1960s, but it only achieved widespread use in the 1990s, after Joseph Nye's coining of the term "soft power." As a result of the field's novelty, public diplomacy scholars are still searching for theories from disciplines ranging from communication to public relations, from international relations (IR) to marketing. The interdisciplinary nature of the study of public diplomacy sometimes overshadows the connection between public diplomacy and foreign policy.

Efe Sevin's book reminds the readers that "public diplomacy carries the label of diplomacy" (26); as such, it is not merely a communication process, but an intentional tool of foreign policy to achieve certain objectives. This connection is often overlooked in the literature, which has focused more on the communication aspect of public diplomacy initiatives. Sevin treats public diplomacy as "an extension of traditional diplomacy" (37).

There is widespread agreement in the literature that public diplomacy contributes to achieving foreign policy goals and advancing national interests. However, the question of "how" it does so has not yet been adequately dealt with. Attempting to trace how public diplomacy initiatives can help advance a country's foreign policy objectives and national interest, which are operationalized as self-declared foreign policy goals (9), Efe Sevin builds a theoretical framework called the "six pathways of connection" (Chapter 3). The framework mainly concerns the intermediary phase of causal mechanisms (the conversion) between engagement with foreign publics (the intervention) and the achievement of foreign policy goals (the outcome). Sevin introduces three layers in the causal mechanism phase, namely, *public opinion*, *relationship dynamics*, and *public debates*, as well as six pathways of connection across these layers. The layer of *public opinion* is based on the concept of soft power. The larger impact of this layer relates to the ability of the initiatives of public diplomacy to generate *attraction* (a favorable view of the practicing country), while the "narrower (or focused) impact" is building trust in the practitioner country among the target audience by creating a *benefit of the doubt* concerning the country's motives. The second layer, *relationship dynamics*, aims to "redefine the roles of the practitioner country" (66) by familiarizing the societies of the home and host countries with each other (*socialization pathway*) and achieve *direct influence* through building and maintaining relationships with key individuals (elites and

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policymakers) to affect the foreign policies of the target country. The third layer, *public debates*, concerns *agenda-setting* over the long term and *framing* in the immediate term. Using Yun and Toth's (2009) sociological public diplomacy, Sevin suggests that these three layers mirror IR theories of realism, liberalism, and constructivism, respectively.

The "six pathways of connection" is a useful theoretical framework for public diplomacy, which brings together six decades of work on public diplomacy in a parsimonious model. Nevertheless, the realist view of public diplomacy in the presented first layer is a stretch. It is difficult to imagine that realists expect any significant return from investment in engagement with foreign publics, since realists often argue that nonstate actors cannot make a difference in high political issues, at best only affecting low political issues that realists do not find interesting. While the attitudinal and behavioral changes as a consequence of *attraction* are more in line with constructivism, the trust-building aspect of the *public opinion* layer resembles liberalism more than realism.

There is a consensus in most studies of public diplomacy on the impossibility of measuring public diplomacy's unquantifiable aspects. Sevin's framework is an early attempt to suggest a qualitative tool to trace the links between public diplomacy projects and foreign policy. The author employs process tracing for causal mechanisms in this second phase of public diplomacy. Influenced by the "practice turn in IR" (39), Sevin explores and reflects on the insights of American, Swedish, and Turkish public diplomacy practitioners on their own work, inspired by the *logic of practice* contextualized in the historical process.

Sevin gives as case studies the analyses of representative public diplomacy projects from the United States (US-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission's Education, Culture, Sports and Media Working Group, Chapter 4), Sweden (Facing the Climate, Chapter 5) and Turkey (TÜRKSOY, Chapter 6). The case studies suggest that the theoretical framework, built on a survey of disproportionately US-centric public diplomacy literature, can be used for cases with different historical, cultural, and political backgrounds.

Evaluations are quite rare in the field of public diplomacy. Within this rarity, the most common ones focus on public opinion, country image, and attitude-behavior studies; these are helpful to some extent. However, these quantitative studies fail to grasp the in-depth qualitative aspects of public diplomacy. More importantly, they often fall short of connecting public diplomacy to foreign policy and in turn national interests. Sevin's six pathways of connection provide us with a tool to evaluate public diplomacy projects qualitatively using process tracing. This theoretical framework, by itself, is a middle-range theory that could be utilized in combination with other policy analysis tools such as a logical framework approach.

Overall, Efe Sevin's book is a must read for practitioners, scholars, and students of public diplomacy, particularly those who are interested in the evaluation of public diplomacy projects. Furthermore, the book will appeal to IR scholars, who have generally been pessimistic about public diplomacy, perhaps because of the unintended dissonance with public diplomacy of the IR discipline. The book is more methodologically sound than other qualitative accounts, which often do not go beyond anecdotal. It would be even more meaningful if future studies could take up the promise of six pathways of connection and utilize it in a more comprehensive logical framework approach.

## Reference

- YUN, SEONGHUN, AND ELIZABETH L. TOTH. 2009. "Future Sociological Public Diplomacy and the Role of Public Relations: Evolution of Public Diplomacy." *American Behavioral Scientist* 53 (4): 493–503.