Strategic Dimensions of Public Diplomacy

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Public Diplomacy as Strategic Communication

The question “How strategic is public diplomacy?” is seldom posed in public diplomacy literature. Instead, academic studies take the strategic alignment of public diplomacy activities to be a natural condition for the success of a nation’s public diplomacy. Only a few researchers dare to identify concrete strategic dimensions of public diplomacy. This leads to four characteristic interpretations of the correlation between public diplomacy and strategic communication. Some authors see public diplomacy and strategic communication as analogous concepts; others see them as distinct concepts; still others see either strategic communication or public diplomacy as the overarching concept (e.g., Gregory, 2005; Wimbush, n.d.; Deutsch, 2010; Hayden, 2010; Leonard, Stead, and Snewing, 2002; Nye, 2004; Tatham, 2008; Department of Defense, 2004; Taylor, 2009; van Dyke & Verčič, 2009; Pamment, 2009). The conflicting opinions demonstrate that a theoretical grounding of public diplomacy, strategy, and strategic communication needs to be accomplished.

The goal of this chapter is therefore to provide a new theoretical perspective on the relations between strategic communication and public diplomacy. In order to create such a theoretical basis, we will first review the state of research on public diplomacy. That section will conclude with a definition of the concept that reflects the broad areas of agreement. Then, we will consider the research on strategy and strategic communication. Based on that, we will identify the strategic dimension of public diplomacy. In the next step, this dimension will be used to review case studies of public diplomacy in different countries and regions (selected according to their respective relationships to the research) to evaluate to what extent public diplomacy is conducted strategically in practice.

Definition of Public Diplomacy

Edmund A. Gullion, the then Dean of the School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, coined the term “public diplomacy” in 1965 in an attempt to free it from any propagandist tendencies (Cull, 2009b, p. 19). Since then, the concept has been continually adapted to developments in the international arena. Definitions in modern, post-Gullion times have shifted in communication mode and target structure on an axis from persuasion to mutual understanding, as well as in terms of the actors. Writing during the Cold War, Gullion defined public diplomacy
as “the means by which governments, private groups and individuals influence the attitudes and opinions of other peoples and governments in such a way as to exercise influence on their foreign policy decisions” (Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy, n.d.). After the Cold War ended, with its dichotomous perceptions of international politics, definitions of public diplomacy focused on generating understanding for the communicator. At that time, Tuch (1990), for instance, described public diplomacy as “a government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and cultures, as well as its national goals and current policies” (Tuch, 1990, pp. 3–4). After the 9/11 attacks in the USA, academic orientations shifted toward mutual understanding, reflecting terms like “engagement” or “relationship-building.” Leonard et al. (2002, p. 8), for example, state that “public diplomacy is about building relationships: understanding the needs of other countries, cultures and peoples; communicating our points of view; correcting misperceptions; [and] looking for areas where we can find common cause.” Until today however, a comprehensive, consensus definition has been lacking. However, broad areas of agreement can be identified, to the effect that public diplomacy

- describes the direct or mass-mediated communication activities by individuals, governmental and non-governmental organizations to a foreign government and/or foreign publics and/or the domestic public;
- aims at directly or indirectly reducing negative clichés and prejudices, generating sympathy and understanding for a nation’s ideals, goals, (foreign) policies, its institutions, culture and model of society;
- aims furthermore at building positive images and relationships, facilitating closer political ties or alliances, and encouraging tourism and foreign direct investments.

The theoretical and empirical knowledge on public diplomacy is internationally gained, but geographically disproportionately distributed. The majority of the institutions and authors dealing with public diplomacy is situated in the USA (USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2009) and studies the USA as the main object of analysis (e.g., Adelman, 1981; Blinken, 2002; Critchlow, 2003; Cull, 2009a; Duffey, 2009; Hoffman, 2002; Laqueur, 1994; C. Lord, 1998; K. M. Lord, 2009; Mueller, 2009; von Eschen 2005), but the concept has either not been applied at all, or has only been applied for a few years, in most nation-states in Eastern Europe. Similarly most Asian, African and South American countries are at an early stage in exploring the relevance of addressing foreign citizenship through public diplomacy (e.g., Chitty, 2009; Ehteshami, 2009; Heine, 2009; Ndhllovu, 2009; Ogawa, 2009; Starr, 2009; Szondi, 2009). In Western Europe researchers started no earlier than the beginning of the 1990s to analyze the concept (e.g., Gramberger, 1994; Leonard et al., 2002; Melissen, 2005, 2006; Signitzer, 1993, 1995; van Ham, 2001, 2002). Therefore, research is still quite biased—most analyses are conducted from U.S. perspectives neglecting Asian, African, European or Latin American interests.

Although researchers have already related public diplomacy to propaganda (e.g., Plaisance, 2005; Snow, 2004; Snow & Taylor, 2006; Taylor, 2002; Zaharna, 2004), diplomacy (e.g., Boleswki, 2008; Gregory, 2008; Melissen, 2005), public relations (e.g., Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005; Lee, 2007; Petersone, 2008; Signitzer, 1993, 1995, 2008; Yun, 2006, 2008), marketing (e.g., Benoit & Zhang, 2003; Kendrick & Fullerton, 2004; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Sun, 2008) and nation branding (e.g., Anholt, 2006; Copeland, 2006; Olins, 2002; Szondi, 2008), its relationship to strategic communication has been widely neglected so far.

Nonetheless, few publications on public diplomacy go without using the attribute “strategic” or the concept “strategic communication” (c.f. Dutta-Bergman, 2006; Manheim 1994a, 1994b; Wang
& Chang, 2004; Zaharna, 2005): Especially those studies containing recommendations for a more effective public diplomacy put out a call to advance strategic goals, a strategic framework or a strategic planning of public diplomacy-related activities (Epstein & Mages, 2005). As Gregory (2005) correctly stated: “Strategy is a theme in most public diplomacy studies issued since 9/11” (p. 3). However, the widespread use of the term “strategic” does not imply a consensus over its meaning (Gregory, 2005, p. 4). Only a few authors deal with the difficulty of defining public diplomacy and strategic communication in order to keep them apart. Instead, the meaning of the concepts seems to be taken for granted resulting in contradicting attributions, as follows.

- Some authors use public diplomacy and strategic communication as analogous concepts “to describe a blend of activities by which governments, groups, and individuals comprehend attitudes, cultures, and mediated environments; engage in dialogue between people and institutions, advise political leaders on the public opinion implications of policy choices, and influence attitudes and behavior through strategies and means intended to persuade” (Gregory, 2005, p. 39). They understand strategic communication in a broader sense.

- Some authors present public diplomacy and strategic communication as distinct concepts, however without clearly defining and differentiating them (e.g., Deutsch, 2010; Hayden, 2010; Wimbush, n.d.).

- Others subordinate strategic communication to public diplomacy (e.g., Leonard et al., 2002; Nye, 2004). Leonard et al. (2002) for example classified it as one of three dimensions of public diplomacy, beside news management and relationship building. Strategic communication is defined by them in a more narrow sense as “[p]roactively creating a news agenda through activities and events which are designed to reinforce core messages and influence perceptions” (Leonard et al., 2002, p. 11).

- Still others consider strategic communication as the overarching concept (e.g., Department of Defense, 2004; Pamment, 2009; Tatham, 2008; Taylor, 2009; van Dyke & Verčič, 2009). These are mostly political–military approaches. They are based on the concept of strategic communication that was fostered by the Department of Defense, which came up with the concept to better co-ordinate public diplomacy, public affairs and military psychological operations (C. Lord, 2006, p. 32).

It can be assumed that there are several reasons for these contradicting statements regarding strategic communication and public diplomacy. First, both public diplomacy and strategic communication signify a practice and an academic concept with respectively varying meanings. Second, the contradiction might be rooted in the fact that there is no agreement yet on the meaning of the disparate concepts. Public diplomacy definitions in the modern post-Edmund Gullion sense differ with regard to the communication mode, target structure, and actor (see above). Strategic communication, analogously, lacks consensus over its analytical boundaries. Synonymously used for it are for example public relations, strategic communication management, and information work (Kristensen, 2010, p. 137). Kristensen (2010) traces it back to the fact that strategic communication draws on several traditions. Instead of being restricted to specific professional, organizational or communicative contexts or dimensions of work, the adjective “strategic” rather underlines that the conducted communication uses “strategically intended, planned, and purposeful mechanisms” (Kristensen, 2010, p. 137).

In sum, research on public diplomacy and on its relationship to strategic communication is deficient and highly fragmented in its attributions. Most publications relate public diplomacy and strategic communication without clear definitions. Thus, research still needs to theoretically analyze the relationship between public diplomacy and strategic communication—which is the endeavor of this article.
Defining Strategic Communication

The terms “strategy” and “communication” can be combined in different ways with different meanings: “Strategy communication” describes the communication of the organizational leadership’s strategic vision to internal and external stakeholders (Moss & Warnaby, 1998, p. 135). “Communication strategy” refers to the development of a strategy of the organizational communication function. Finally, “strategic communication” indicates that communication is organized and carried out strategically (Moss & Warnaby, 1998). Such a diverse interlocking suggests first, that “communication” plays a significant role in the strategic process and second, that “strategy” is of relevance in organizational communication functions. Interestingly however, strategic communication literature—with only a few exceptions (e.g., Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič & Sriramesh, 1997)—pays little attention to the underlying term “strategy.” Likewise, reference to communication as an element of the strategy process is just as rare in strategy literature. As a consequence thereof, communication is allocated two different roles: Whereas strategy literature mostly assigns a rather tactical, promotional function to communication (Moss & Warnaby, 1998, p. 131), public relations literature demands a more strategic role for communication in organizations (c.f. Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994; J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992). Central to this chapter are therefore the questions: What does “strategic” mean and what does it mean to communicate strategically?

Research on strategy provides the first indications, although in itself it is diverse and has yielded a number of varying definitions and typologies (for a good overview see Hax & Majluf, 1996; Raupp & Hoffmann, 2012). According to Hax and Majluf (1996, p. 2) “one of the oldest and most classical views of the concept of strategy” is an understanding of strategy “as a means of establishing the organizational purpose in terms of its long-term objectives, action programs, and resource allocation priorities.” Chaffee (1985, p. 90) describes this type of strategy as linear because it focuses the linear sequence of strategy planning on how to deal with competitors when striving to achieve one’s organizational goals. With the adaptive strategy that concerns the adjustment of the organization to align it with internal and external conditions (management of opportunities and risks), and the interpretive strategy that is related to the conveyance of meaning to conceptualize and guide individual attitudes to motivate stakeholders in ways that favor the organization (management of cooperation), he labels two other types of strategy (Chaffee, 1985, pp. 91–94; Hax & Majluf, 1996, pp. 4–14). With its focus on desired relationships, the aforementioned interpretive strategy, in particular, gains relevance for the analysis of public diplomacy strategies. It has to be acknowledged however that the three models of strategy are not independent of each other, but may be interrelated in practice. These definitions of strategy list essential dimensions: the goals, programs, analysis of external and internal conditions, stakeholders, and allocated resources.

With regard to public diplomacy, another approach is especially helpful. Steyn (2003) hints at the fact that different organizational levels have different strategies. Accordingly, this author (2003, pp. 172–174) differentiates strategies by organizational level, goals, and stakeholders and makes a distinction between the

- enterprise strategy that determines the role of the organization in society (or in a public diplomacy network) and focuses on the achievement of non-financial goals (e.g., reputation, social responsibilities),
- corporate strategy that determines the organization’s profile (the portfolio of business) (also in relation to public diplomacy),
- business-unit strategy that determines the organization’s approach in a specific segment, often related to a specific product or group of related products (or to a specific public diplomacy activity),
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- functional strategy that determines the co-operation of the functional areas of an organization (e.g., marketing, finance) to support the enterprise, corporate and business level strategy, and
- operational strategy that relates to implementation strategies.

This classification indicates that different strategies might exist in one organization and it also hints at the relevance of the external environment (society), the organizational mission, and the organizational internal dimension of strategy (functional strategy).

Academically, strategic communication can be regarded as an interdisciplinary field with no underlying distinct epistemology or core body of knowledge (Kristensen, 2010, p. 138). Marketing, management, corporate communication, political communication, public relations, and disciplines like political science or cultural studies have all contributed to shaping and contextualizing the term strategic communication (Hallahan et al., 2007; Langer, 2005) and highlight different aspects of the concept. Whereas strategic communication promotes understanding of an organization’s mission and vision as well as its values from a management point of view (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 5), scholars focusing on political communication, for example, emphasize strategic communication as an attempt to influence the political agenda and the public opinion through mediated communication (Tils, 2005, p. 125). From this perspective, political actors apply strategic communication in order to establish relevant topics in the public sphere and the media (Brettschneider, 1998, p. 635). Schwan (2011) relates strategic communication to a country’s external communication and defines it as a management function in the foreign policy of a country. Thus, so far, a consensus on a definition of strategic communication is missing: “In professional communication involving organizations, there is no single overarching or unifying conceptual framework to inform the work of the many disciplines relating to the field of strategic communication” (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 5).

In accordance with the classical, linear view of strategy, Hallahan et al. (2007) perceive strategic communication as the “purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission” (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 3). They thereby target the word organization in its broadest sense, “referring to corporations, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, activist groups, nongovernmental organizations, organizations promoting various forms of social change, political parties or movements, and governmental organizations” (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 4). The concept of strategic communication thus embodies how entities intentionally attempt to communicate or create meaning as well as comprehend factors that impede sharing meaning between an organization and its constituents (Hallahan et al., 2007, pp. 22–24). Kristensen (2010) accentuates that the concept is not merely equal to a set of supporting communication tactics, but to “strategically intended, planned and purposeful mechanisms aimed at changing the attitudes or actions of specific target groups with a potential value and mandate in relation to the communicating organization as such in relation to its surroundings” (Kristensen, 2010, p. 137). Strategic communication can therefore be distinguished from spontaneous and routine actions because the latter do not take alternatives into account (Raupp & Hoffjann, 2012). Raupp and Hoffjann (2012, p. 157) therefore define strategic communication management as “communication management which deliberately creates such decision-making situations in which several alternatives of action are evaluated.”

According to Kristensen (2010), strategic communication can be studied from two points of view. The communication-internal perspective, that this article has focused on so far, is related to the interdisciplinary and practice-based nature of the concept. To adopt a communication-external perspective, on the contrary, is to scrutinize the integration and the priority given to strategic communication within an organization (Kristensen, 2010, p. 135). Findings of institutional theory prove to be particularly helpful in understanding and substantiating this communication-external view on strategic communication: Institutional theory stresses the influence of institutional frameworks on organizations (Sandhu, 2009, p. 73). “Institutions are comprised of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide
stability and meaning to social life” (Scott, 2008, p. 48). They enable and constrain organizations and, hence, strategic communication. Organizations do not operate independently, but they “are embedded in a social web of rules, norms and cognitive assumptions, which form expectations for the organizations that enable, shape or constrain strategic communication” (Sandhu, 2009, p. 75). These expectations are transmitted by agencies like the state, the media or professional institutions, and they influence the process and the outcome of strategic communication to a great deal. Therefore, one can assume that “[o]rganizations in similar fields are experiencing the same kind of societal expectations. Therefore organizations tend to adopt similar strategies to cope with external demands” (Sandhu, 2009, p. 76). The success of strategic communication is also determined by its institutionalization within an organization. Its institutionalization is based on three main criteria: The access to the top decision-making platform of an organization (power), its autonomy as an organizational function in comparison with other functions (independence) and its level of specialization (Sandhu, 2009, p. 85).

Strategic Dimensions of Public Diplomacy: Theoretical Analysis

As laid out in the previous section, strategic communication is often regarded as an overarching concept combining public diplomacy, public affairs, international broadcasting and information operations as done by the political–military sector (C. Lord, 2006, p. 32). However, van Dyke & Verčič point out that this practical convergence might “mov[e] beyond a theoretical explanation” (van Dyke & Verčič, 2009, p. 822). They give voice to the concern that, “without a theoretical framework to guide these programs, the boundaries between communication functions could erode” (van Dyke & Verčič, 2009, p. 822) and threaten the integrity of the single concepts. This article contributes to developing such a framework by theoretically exploring the strategic dimensions of public diplomacy.

The different definitions of strategy and strategic communication have helped to identify areas of agreement as to what strategic dimensions of public diplomacy might be. With short explanations, these areas of agreement are listed in bullet points below (Raupp & Hoffjann, 2012; Steyn, 2003; Samansky, 2003; Moss & Warnaby, 1998; Hallahan et al., 2007; Hax & Majluf, 1996; J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992; Chaffee, 1985):

- orientation in the course of the current mission;
- the strategy process, which comprises
  - situational and environmental analysis (the analysis of organizational stakeholders, publics, and issues), a dimension that corresponds to “listening”, one of the five core components that Cull (2008, p. 32) identifies to characterize public diplomacy, involving
    - analysis of the internal environment (e.g., analysis of profile, mission, values, policies; and of internal stakeholder perspectives) and
    - analysis of the external environment (e.g., analysis of societal norms, values, expectations; and of stakeholders and issues) (e.g., by issues management, segmentation of publics, or in terms of J. E. Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) two-way asymmetrical or symmetrical communication);
  - selection of key issues and their stakeholders;
  - identification and selection of goals and objectives;
  - evaluation and deliberate selection of alternatives of action;
  - implementation;
  - evaluation of strategy: the measurement of progress and achievement; and
  - adaption of strategy;
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- content of strategy, which encompasses
  - clearly stated goals and objectives;
  - issues;
  - specific communication programs, with
    - tactics, and
    - key messages;
  - means, implying
    - instruments or types of media (Löffelholz, Auer, Krichbaum & Srugies, 2011, pp. 8–10) and
    - resources: staffing needs, non-staff costs; and
  - timeframe;
- strategic communications plan; and
- alignment of strategies.

These dimensions serve as an analytical instrument to evaluate whether public diplomacy is in practice conducted strategically. Based on this list, we can conclude that there are strategic and non-strategic forms of public diplomacy, meaning that some communication could be public diplomacy, but not strategic communication, or, at least, not well executed strategic communication. Reactive efforts are not automatically an indication for non-strategic public diplomacy, but they can be part of the strategy that might set proactive and reactive efforts in line with the strategy. Strategic public diplomacy demands conscious decision-making against the background of recognized alternatives (Raupp & Hoffjann, 2012, p. 157).

The list of strategic dimensions is rather descriptive and does not make any normative statements about the structural embedding of the strategic communicator in his or her organization, or about his or her preferred styles of strategy formulation. However, we can assume from public relations literature that—while thus attaching a strategic role to communication—the strategic communicator should have access to top-level management to participate in strategy formulation (L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Above all, scholars have learned from strategy literature that strategy may be related to different organizational levels, whose respective strategies have different aims, which has to be acknowledged in any analysis. Strategy literature has also stated that the strategies of the different functional units should be co-ordinated. Transferred to the context of the public diplomacy of a nation, this might also mean that the different actors should align their strategies. These criteria are in keeping with the criteria proffered in works on excellence in public relations (L. A. Grunig et al., 2002) and public diplomacy (e.g., Yun, 2006).

**Strategic Dimensions of Public Diplomacy in Selected Countries**

Based on the theoretical deduction of strategic dimensions of public diplomacy, this section will examine the reality of strategic public diplomacy in the international practice. This analysis is by no means exhaustive: it focuses on selected countries.

The selection of countries reflects the state of research on public diplomacy: The USA is not only the dominant object of analysis (see for example Höse, 2008; Schatz & Levine, 2010)—it is also home to the majority of public diplomacy scholars and research institutions. At the start of the 1990s, European researchers started engaging in public diplomacy, and they shed light on the public diplomacy practice in Great Britain (see for example Leonard, Small, & Rose, 2005) and Germany (Löffelholz et al. 2011; Zöllner, 2006, 2009). Löffelholz et al. (2011) have conducted a comprehensive, empirical study on the understanding and practice of public diplomacy in 31 organizations.
Furthermore, a number of scholars have also addressed the public diplomacy of small and medium-sized states within Europe. This section will discuss strategic dimensions of public diplomacy in the North European countries. In recent years, public diplomacy in Asia has received particular scholarly attention (see for example Lee & Melissen, 2011; Rawnslie, 2009; Wang, 2008). A few scholars have also assessed public diplomacy in East European countries (see for example Ociepka & Riniejska, 2005) or in Australia (see for example Byrne, 2009, 2011). Public diplomacy scholars have also started to examine South America and Africa. Due to a lack of space, studies on public diplomacy in South America and Africa are not discussed in detail in this chapter. Follow-up studies need to consider the degree of strategy in South American and African public diplomacy initiatives.

Public diplomacy research has predominantly drawn on nation states as a frame of reference. However, it has not been limited to countries, but has also been applied on a supranational (see for example studies on the public diplomacy of the European Union by Cross, 2010, 2012; Rasmussen, 2010) and a sub-national level (see for example Huijgh, 2009). This recent development will be illustrated by a short discussion on the European Union as well as discussions of Quebec and Catalonia.

**United States of America**

The United States of America have a long tradition in research and practice of public diplomacy. One might trace “this type of cross-national communication to the advent of the country” (Wang, 2007, p. 22). In his analysis of historical U.S. public diplomacy, Wang (2007, p. 21) concludes that “U.S. public diplomacy has been principally an ad hoc instrument of American foreign policy to meet wartime exigencies and has been underscored by the promotion of American values or democracy and freedom.” Although interest in public diplomacy strongly decreased at the end of the Cold War resulting in budget restrictions, cuts in public diplomacy programs, and the closing of the United States Information Agency (Sun, 2008; Snow, 1997), among other effects, 9/11 re-set public diplomacy on the agenda of political actors. As Hughes (2007), former under-secretary for public diplomacy and public affairs, stated: “PD is back and is now a high priority at the highest levels of government.”

Academic and practitioners’ analyses agree that since then the US has been in a difficult situation: Foreign publics do like the American people, but not what their government does (Snow, 2009, p. 4). Accordingly, today’s mission of American public diplomacy as stated by the under-secretary of public diplomacy and public affairs, is “to support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security by informing and influencing foreign publics and by expanding and strengthening the relationship between the people and government of the United States and citizens of the rest of the world” (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). The focus is on education and exchange programs, teaching English, promoting U.S. higher education, and humanitarian and development initiatives.

The strategic plan for public diplomacy issued in 2010 by the under-secretary of public diplomacy and public affairs explicitly demanded a strategic character for public diplomacy: among other points, it stressed the alignment with foreign policy objectives and a strategic focus to how public diplomacy programs, resources and structures should support those objectives. Furthermore, it defined five issues of twenty-first century public diplomacy along with concrete tactics, which included tactics for shaping a narrative, tactics to combat violent extremism, and tactics to better inform foreign policy about attitudes of foreign publics (Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, 2010). Snow (2009, p. 7), however, came to the conclusion that the communication strategies were “crisis-driven and self-preservation oriented.”

Wang (2007, p. 28), too, concluded “there has been constant tension concerning the ultimate role of public diplomacy as a strategic, policy function versus merely as a ‘mouthpiece’ within the foreign affairs apparatus” that still reverberates in today’s practice (Wang, 2007, p. 21). This might
also be rooted in the fact that between 1999 and 2010 the position of the under-secretary of public diplomacy and public affairs was vacant 30% of the time: the position was unoccupied for 13751,375 days, according to a 2011 report of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (which was itself not reauthorized by Congress for 2012) (U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 2011, p. 2). Furthermore, the commission critically reviewed the evaluation efforts of U.S. public diplomacy in its 2010 report. They deduce, among other conclusions, that public diplomacy and public affairs departments do not co-operate and that there is an inadequate relationship between program planning and evaluation (U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 2010). Dale, Cohen and Smith (2012, p. 2) also criticize that U.S. public diplomacy neglects the internal stakeholders: “[T]oo often, operational decisions are constrained by bureaucratic misinterpretations of the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act (known as the Smith–Mundt Act), a post–World War II measure aimed at preventing the party that holds the White House from using the State Department to ‘propagandize’ Americans,” whereas Americans do have access to other nations’ public diplomacy activities. More access to U.S. positions would “help Americans better understand and evaluate their government’s foreign policies, allow better oversight, and make public diplomacy spending more accountable” (Dale et al., 2012, p. 2).

In sum, U.S. public diplomacy actors put a lot of effort into strategically conducting public diplomacy. The multitude of actors however makes a strategic alignment of the different strategies difficult. Also the evaluation of programs and adjustment is not matured. Although the U.S. has a long tradition in the practice of public diplomacy, its activities are not strategic in every case. Dale et al. (2012, p. 1) conclude: “[W]hat is needed in Washington is more focused commitment to public diplomacy, prioritization of programs, better organization of instruments, better trained and experienced personnel, and stricter oversight of resources.”

Europe

Public diplomacy in the United Kingdom is dominated by three key actors: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the British Council and the BBC World Service. All three organizations are part of the Public Diplomacy Strategy and Performance Measurement Board that is “responsible for agreeing the strategy, advising on resource allocation, and for performance measurement and monitoring” (Lord Carter of Coles, 2005, pp. 14–15).

The resources allocated to public diplomacy are divided into the Public Diplomacy Campaign Fund, that covers major initiatives in the most important target countries, and the Public Diplomacy Challenge Fund. The Public Diplomacy Challenge Fund addresses “innovative” public diplomacy activities of overseas posts of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2005) in support of local public diplomacy goals and strategies. With regard to the evaluation of public diplomacy strategies and activities, the British Council serves as a model for international public diplomacy actors. The British Council combines quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods: “The British Council operates a performance scorecard. Through it we assess our performance in a range of dimensions including customer and stakeholder satisfaction, our reputation, the perceptions of our staff and the impact of our projects” (British Council, 2008, pp. 6–7). This scorecard is based on quantitative data analysis. Additionally, the British Council uses “storyboards” as a qualitative evaluation tool in order to document the experiences of individual participants of British Council programs (Pamment, 2011, pp. 189–190). All in all, British public diplomacy is coined by a strong emphasis on developing a coherent, consistent strategy that goes beyond the individual goals of single public diplomacy actors and builds on a close network of public diplomacy actors.

Based on guided expert interviews and a document analysis, Löffelholz et al. (2011) conducted a comprehensive, empirically grounded analysis of the functions, strategies, structures and instruments of public diplomacy in Germany. The analysis revealed that public diplomacy actors in
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Germany pursue individual strategies to reach their organizational aim. The organizations set their goal priorities regarding the subsystems they are acting in. Sandhu (2009) explained this observation by stating that “[o]rganizations in similar fields are experiencing the same kind of societal expectations. Therefore they tend to adopt similar strategies to cope with external demands. This in turn leads to isomorphism of practices and structures in the field” (Sandhu, 2009, p. 76). Leonard et al. (2002) defined three dimensions or subsystems that public diplomacy actors operate in: the political and military dimension, the social and cultural dimension, and the economic dimension. Löffelholz et al. (2011, p. 14) extended this typology by introducing a fourth public diplomacy dimension: education and research.

The organizations analyzed operate worldwide, but they usually focus on specific target regions that are constituted by the organizations’ mission statements, policy priorities, regional expertise and structural conditions. They apply both mid- and short-term activities that serve as the basis for long-term strategies and activities. Depending on situational factors, the organizations implement both asymmetric and symmetric public diplomacy tools. However, the interviewees accentuated a general preference for dialogue-oriented instruments that could be described as a central characteristic of German public diplomacy. The interviewees admitted shortcomings regarding the extent, institutionalization and professionalization of evaluations. So far, the majority of the organizations have only measured single public diplomacy activities such as events and workshops and have neglected the evaluation of entire public diplomacy strategies. A lack of human and financial resources causes obstacles to conducting public diplomacy strategically. Unlike public relations, public diplomacy has not been institutionalized as an organizational function (yet): the analysis of organizational charts confirms that, in most cases, departments below the executive level that are already concerned with communication activities take the responsibility (Löffelholz et al., 2011). This observation on public diplomacy is also reflected in research on strategic communication by Bakka and Fivelsdal (2003) that noted that strategic communication had long been a staff function on classic organizational terms designed to support the other organization’s (line) functions (Bakka & Fivelsdal, 2003, p. 46). “In the strategic management literature communication is regarded as an enabling function facilitating the successful implementation of strategic decisions” (Steyn, 2007, p. 143). Thus, both public diplomacy and strategic communication refer directly to the top management as analysts and advisors, but mostly they do not possess any final decision-making power. The majority of public diplomacy organizations rely financially on the Federal Foreign Office as well as the other German federal ministries, as they command and distribute the lion’s share of public diplomacy resources. The organizations give voice to the concern that the resources allocated to public diplomacy are too limited, constraining a proactive approach to public diplomacy as well as a more flexible application of the concept (Leonard et al. 2002, p. 97). In addition to the budget restrictions, the annual allocation of financial resources causes obstacles to conducting public diplomacy strategically. Public diplomacy practitioners can be characterized by a very heterogeneous educational and professional background. It is striking, however, that only a very small number of practitioners have specialized in communications in their education. Competencies that are crucial to conducting public diplomacy as well as communication competencies in general are primarily acquired “on the job.” Thus, (further) training in public diplomacy as a means of professionalization and strategic conduct of the concept is not yet fully recognized by the organizations.

The analysis of German public diplomacy on a macro level indicates that the organizations do not opt for a general German public diplomacy strategy. This is based on two notions: first, especially the non-governmental organizations want to keep their independence and do not want to be perceived as an instrument of the government. Based on the experiences with national socialist monopoly structures, any semblance of an instrumentalization of organizations by the state as well as state-run centralization ought to be avoided. Second, the organizations would rather present a pluralistic image of Germany. In effect, the public diplomacy actors follow a strategy that comprises partial and even contradictory
strategies in order to depict Germany as a diverse, multifaceted state. The analysis shows that public diplomacy on a macro level is primarily characterized by co-operations within the single public diplomacy subsystems. However, an overall German public diplomacy strategy cannot be detected.

The public diplomacy of Scandinavian countries focuses on few core areas that guide the definition of target groups and target countries as well as the development of public diplomacy strategies, activities and messages. Norway, for example, tries to distinguish itself from other countries as a mediator and carrier of peace and focuses on a small number of target regions (Leonard & Small, 2003). Swedish and Danish public diplomacy actors emphasize the economic dimension of public diplomacy. Their understanding and practice of public diplomacy is strongly influenced by the concept of nation branding (Pamment, 2011; Meiner-Jensen, 2012). Therefore, Meiner-Jensen (2012) points to the fact that public diplomacy is only a small part of a much bigger nation branding budget in Denmark. The Swedish focus on nation branding is also exemplified by “Brand Sweden,” a brand platform depicting Sweden as a progressive country that is based on four core values: openness, authenticity, care and innovation (Swedish Institute, 2008, p. 7). Brand Sweden focuses on enhancing the coherence of public diplomacy activities and messages. However, the notion of Brand Sweden and, for that matter, of a centralized public diplomacy strategy and a uniform image of Sweden abroad, has also met with skepticism and rejection. Pamment (2011, p. 216) argued that this strategy undermines the plurality of public diplomacy actors and their individual goals and activities. The relevance attributed to public diplomacy in Scandinavian countries is reflected by the institutionalization of the concept within organizations: In the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “[t]he Unit for Public Diplomacy is responsible for the planning, development, coordination and country-specific support of strategic public diplomacy in foreign affairs” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, n.d.). The Norwegian foreign ministry has established a Department for Culture, Public Diplomacy and Protocol. In addition, the Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre created the Norwegian Public Diplomacy Forum in 2007 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, 2007). The forum was designed to “encourage debate and dialogue between the authorities, business sector, academia and other actors on how and in which areas we can develop cohesive public diplomacy strategies” (Norway Communicates, n.d.). In sum, public diplomacy in Scandinavian countries can be characterized by a focus on a few core areas and core values as well as the development of a consistent, overarching public diplomacy strategy.

Asia

Asian public diplomacy is a special case of public diplomacy considering “its political systems and bilateral relationships that cannot be found within the Western world, its distinct cultural setting, and its own ideational preferences and normative frameworks” (Melissen, 2011a, p. 248). The countries can build their public diplomacy efforts on many different assets, and also the “region’s increasing economic power provides fertile ground for its states to look forward and build up their soft power” (Lee & Melissen, 2011, p. 4). Besides public diplomacy, the concept of soft power has gained special popularity in Asian countries (Melissen, 2011a; Wang, 2011; Wang, 2008) and is seen as having “strategic value” (Melissen, 2011a, p. 250). Melissen (2011b, p. 23) described the Asian approach to public diplomacy as having “a more strategic perspective on public diplomacy than has been observable in the West.” It attaches more importance to the long haul than to correct short-term damage to national reputations, and focuses on regional dimensions with the capacity to assist in regional community-building and co-operation (Melissen, 2011a, p. 250; 2011b, p. 24).

Mutual understanding and lasting relationships within and across its borders is also one of the major goals of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Besides, it aims at promoting its increasing role in regional and international stages (Bui, 2011, p. 47). It does so by means of dialogue communication and collaboration. Bui (2011, p. 47) however criticizes that ASEAN lacks
a forum for daily communication to disseminate information. It deploys several public diplomacy activities, which are mostly run by elites and not by non-state actors, while its member states follow their own ways of achieving their goals (Bui, 2011, p. 3). Besides the regionally focused public diplomacy strategies going beyond individual national images (Melissen, 2011b, p. 24), Melissen (2011a, p. 250) concludes with regard to East Asia that “soft power issues [. . .] are closely linked to nations’ domestically contested self-perceptions of government-initiated constructs of national identity.” In the individual countries, the identity issues can facilitate (Indonesia) or constrain (Japan) the countries’ endeavor to develop public diplomacy strategies (Melissen, 2011a, p. 250).

In China, public diplomacy aims to serve domestic politics and national cohesion (d’Hooghe, 2011, p. 165; Wang, 2008, p. 260) which leads to a mixture of public diplomacy and public affairs. “The public diplomacy department of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, mainly organizes activities to inform domestic, not international, audiences about China’s foreign policy and diplomacy” (d’Hooghe, 2011, p. 165). There is no single organ of public diplomacy; instead it is shared by several political institutions, e.g., the Division for Public Diplomacy in the Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, among others (Wang, 2008, p. 260). An alignment of the different organizations and their strategies is missing. Therefore, it “is difficult to make long-term strategic arrangements to practice public diplomacy” (Wang, 2008, p. 264). The fundamental goal of Chinese diplomacy is to build “an objective and friendly publicity environment” (cf. Wang, 2008, pp. 165, 184). With a specific focus on Europe, China wants to build itself an image of a trustworthy and responsible member of the international political community (d’Hooghe, 2011, p. 167). Wang (2008, p. 264) views this as the foundation for Chinese diplomats to understand public diplomacy strategically. In its image management, China pays a lot of attention to the role of Chinese media, while censoring them and thus undermining the growth of Chinese soft power (d’Hooghe, 2011, pp. 165, 184). The State Council Information Office also puts a lot of effort in situational analysis by monitoring and evaluating media coverage on China (d’Hooghe, 2011, p. 165). China’s greatest threat to soft power is its own negative image abroad (for more details on European perceptions see d’Hooghe, 2011, p. 174; Wang, 2008, p. 257) and the fact that China misconceives its international image (for more details see Wang, 2008, p. 261). D’Hooghe (2011, p. 169) identifies the enormous gap between European and Chinese ideas and values as a major problem in the relation between the two actors, “a factor that Chinese policymakers often fail to grasp.” China’s policies with regard to the absence of human rights, democratic institutions, and processes, collide with public diplomacy efforts to a great extent. Therefore, “it is difficult to persuade the democratic international community to look beyond economics and to perceive China as a credible diplomatic and political power” (Rawnsley, 2007). China needs to better manage the external risks of its negative image abroad and adapt the strategy accordingly, for example the foreign perception of China.

South Korea and Indonesia are seen as good examples of how “countries in transition can be effective in developing a public diplomacy that supports strategic policy objectives overseas, while underlining the appositeness of public diplomacy in one’s own civil society for purposes of national cohesion” (Melissen, 2011b, p. 24). Indonesia especially stands out “by making the twin theme of Islam and democracy the centerpiece of its public diplomacy strategy” (Melissen, 2011a, p. 254). However, the return of Islam into politics has raised much anxiety in the international community (Sukma, 2011, p. 112). Also Taiwan has to pay attention to matching messages sent out with what is done at home: it must re-build on its democratic development so as not to weaken its soft power (Chu, 2011, p. 135).

In sum, Asian countries show similarities and differences in their approaches to public diplomacy. Most of them struggle with a negative image abroad that either results from their huge economic growth or their discrepancy between politics and communication messages. All the Asian countries mentioned here are in need of better situational analysis of the international environment and respective adaption of their strategies.
Australia

There is little empirically grounded knowledge on public diplomacy in Australia. Byrne (2009) was the first to provide a detailed analysis of the role of public diplomacy in Australian foreign policy in her doctoral thesis. This author characterized Australian public diplomacy as “fragmented, ad hoc and disconnected from Australia’s strategic foreign policy interests” (Byrne, 2009, p. 309). According to Byrne (2009), public diplomacy can only be effective if it is co-ordinated with foreign policy outcomes and based on close co-operation among actors. Byrne identified many individual public diplomacy messages and activities that had received but little co-ordination from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Byrne, 2009, pp. 309–313).

The European Union

The public diplomacy of the European Union (EU) represents both one supranational organization and the 27 member states that constitute this supranational power. Cross (2012, p. 1) pointed to the fact that the EU is a major normative power in areas like humanitarian aid or environmental sustainability; its actions, however, are not reflected by the external visibility of the EU. Scholars have traced this lack of visibility back to the complex structure of the organizations, its constant transformation and the public diplomacy of the EU (Szondi, 2010, p. 340).

Szondi stated that a common public diplomacy understanding was missing which impeded the identification and selection of public diplomacy goals and strategies. Moreover, Szondi called for a “more strategic and holistic approach” (Szondi, 2010, p. 341) to public diplomacy. According to Cross (2011, p. 22), this approach needs to include the development and implementation of an overarching core message that is communicated not only by the EU itself, but also by the EU member states.

Lynch (2005) remarked that the EU was passing up the chance of integrating public diplomacy into EU foreign policy thinking and the policy-making process (Lynch, 2005, p. 12). He alleged that the public diplomacy of the EU could not tap its full potential due to insufficient staffing and a very limited budget (Lynch, 2005, p. 12). A number of these deficiencies were addressed by the Lisbon Treaty in 2007: Prior to the Lisbon Treaty, the Council Presidency and security policy were taken over by a different member state every six months making a continuous public diplomacy strategy next to impossible (Szondi, 2010, p. 340). Duke and Courtier (2011) pointed to the “establishment of a ‘new’ leadership architecture in the EU”: [T]he appointment of Herman van Rompuy as President of the European Council and Catherine Ashton as a High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP), as well as the return of José Manuel Barroso as President of the Commission” (Duke & Courtier, 2011, p. 2) serve as a basis for a more coherent and strategic public diplomacy practice. Moreover, the European External Action Service (EEAS), launched in December 2010, incorporates a “strategic planning” division, a “strategic communication” division, and a “public diplomacy” division. The EEAS was designed to unify the external representation of the EU and it has the potential to improve the horizontal coherence of EU public diplomacy by communicating the different foreign policy issues of the EU via one administrative structure (Duke, 2012; Duke & Courtier, 2011).

Federal entities: Quebec and Catalonia

Increasingly, federal entities recognize the potential of public diplomacy and develop their own, individual public diplomacy strategies. This section focuses on Quebec in Canada as well as Catalonia in Spain, as both federated entities consider public diplomacy an important part of their foreign affairs strategy. According to Huijgh (2009), Quebec goes beyond the public diplomacy of most federal entities that is often coined by a number of single, unconnected public diplomacy initiatives that
lack co-ordination. The Ministry of International Relations developed a strategic plan for the years 2011 to 2014 that defined five objectives. Each objective was divided into several priorities that were accompanied by key initiatives (Gouvernement du Québec, 2006; Le ministère des Relations internationales, n.d.) carried out by the ministry in cooperation with other organizations like Les Offices jeunesse internationaux du Québec.

The government of Catalonia recognizes public diplomacy as “a flexible, innovative instrument for promoting international projection activities that supplement the conventional channels of international law” (Government of Catalonia, 2010, p. 71). Its “Foreign Affairs Strategy 2010—2015” defines the goals and the building blocks of a Catalonian public diplomacy strategy (Government of Catalonia, 2010, pp. 108–109). In a first step, the government seeks to identify the most important values that have the capacity to successfully project Catalonia to target audiences. The already established image of Barcelona serves as a starting point. In this way, other federal entities have also built on prior experiences using city diplomacy (La Porte, 2012). City diplomacy comprises communication strategies and activities of local governments and other local actors to communicate their citizens’ interests in an international arena. The Catalonian government does not view itself as sole public diplomacy actor, but seeks to co-ordinate its public diplomacy initiatives closely with the different governmental agents and civil society (Government of Catalonia, 2010, pp. 72–73).

Comparison: Strategic Dimensions of Public Diplomacy in Selected Countries

This brief overview over public diplomacy in selected regions and countries has shown that the cultural setting, the ideational preferences, and the size and population of a country have a direct impact on the practice of public diplomacy. Bigger states like the USA, Germany, or the UK apply broader public diplomacy strategies that cover a wide range of issues, as they command a comparatively large amount of resources allocated to public diplomacy. Small and medium-sized countries like Norway or Sweden operate on a smaller budget. Hence, they concentrate on specific public diplomacy goals, strategies, messages, instruments and target groups and aim at carving their own public diplomacy niche (Bátora, 2005). According to Melissen (2011b, p. 23), public diplomacy can be regarded as strategic if it is conducted in the long run. He emphasizes the strategic dimension of public diplomacy in Asian countries: Public diplomacy in Asia attaches more importance to influencing long-haul perceptions rather than short-term national reputations. Moreover, Asian public diplomacy often focuses on the regional dimensions with the capacity to assist in regional community-building and co-operation (Melissen, 2011a, p. 250; 2011b, p. 24).

Conclusion and outlook

Is an overarching public diplomacy strategy, focusing on a number of core messages and values as well as on a centralized public diplomacy structure (e.g., UK, Sweden), automatically more strategic than a more pluralistic, decentralized approach (e.g., Germany)? Not necessarily. In the case of Germany, the coexistence of several individual public diplomacy strategies and a multitude of voices and actors contributes to a unique strategy that seeks to present a pluralistic image of Germany abroad, and dissociate German public diplomacy from the centralized propaganda efforts in the Third Reich.

The analysis in this chapter has identified a number of factors impeding a more strategic conduct of public diplomacy. Asian countries are in need of better situational analysis of the international environment and the key publics that public diplomacy strategies are targeted at. This situational and environmental analysis serves as a basis for defining public diplomacy goals, strategies and instruments. Moreover, the analysis discloses shortcomings regarding public diplomacy evaluation. The majority of public diplomacy actors tend to evaluate single public diplomacy activities rather than entire public diplomacy strategies and their impact. Because of this, public diplomacy actors miss the opportunity
to determine the effectiveness and impact of their own strategies that could serve as a starting point for developing new public diplomacy strategies. Shortcomings regarding the extent, the institutionalization and the professionalization of strategies can also be traced back to the notion that resources allocated to public diplomacy are insufficient—a view that is voiced by scholars and practitioners alike. The institutionalization of public diplomacy differs between the countries analyzed: Whereas public diplomacy has not yet been institutionalized as an organizational function in Germany, smaller countries like Norway and Finland have already set up a public diplomacy division in their foreign ministries.

The case of the EU has shown the considerable challenge of defining public diplomacy goals and strategies, as well as co-ordinating public diplomacy on a supranational level. This is particularly striking when national and supranational actors pursue individual, conflicting public diplomacy goals, or member states use the EU as a scapegoat (Cross, 2012).

Federal entities are emerging actors that have started to develop their own public diplomacy strategies. The example of Catalonia illustrates that federal entities can build on previous experiences with city diplomacy as well as public diplomacy tools such as cultural exchanges. Just as supranational and national public diplomacy affect each other, the public diplomacy of federal entities can either add to already existing public diplomacy strategies on a national level or undermine the public diplomacy of nation states by communicating unique, distinct features and achievements of particular regions, especially when federal entities strive for a higher degree of autonomy.

The state of research has disclosed four contradictory correlations between public diplomacy and strategic communication. This chapter has contributed to the clarification of this relationship. The analysis of definitions and theoretical conceptions of strategic communication has helped to identify a number of criteria for determining the degree to which public diplomacy is strategic. These criteria have been applied to the public diplomacy practice in selected countries. This chapter advances the hypothesis that public diplomacy can be regarded as strategic communication, but is not strategic per se. There is no single most effective public diplomacy strategy. The strategies pursued by public diplomacy actors range along a continuum from centralized approaches to public diplomacy to decentralized, pluralistic strategies. The analysis of the public diplomacy practice in selected countries points to a number of factors that impede the strategic conduct of public diplomacy: insufficient budgeting and staffing, and shortcomings regarding the extent and professionalization of public diplomacy evaluations, as well as an inadequate institutionalization of public diplomacy within organizations.

This chapter’s contribution can be regarded as a starting point for further discussion of the relationship between public diplomacy and strategic communication. The reference criteria that were defined within this chapter may serve as a basis of further empirical studies that discuss the question: To what extent can public diplomacy be regarded as strategic communication from an internationally comparative view?

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