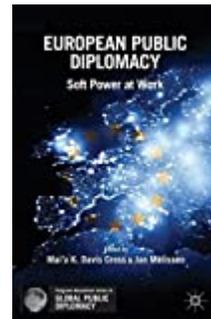




Mai'a K. Davis Cross, Jan Melissen, eds. *European Public Diplomacy: Soft Power at Work*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. xix + 230 pp. \$105.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-137-34329-1; \$30.00 (paper), ISBN 978-1-137-34330-7.



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The book *European Public Diplomacy. Soft Power at Work*, edited by Mai'a Cross and Jan Melissen, constitutes a valuable contribution to the scholarly literature available on European public diplomacy. Developed during the Cold War by scholars in the United States, the term “public diplomacy” long remained restricted to the analysis of American policies and politics. However, as the authors of the book argue and convincingly show, the concept has much to offer for an analysis of European politics and policies, both at home and abroad.

Public diplomacy, in contrast to traditional diplomacy, refers to engagement with foreign publics for the purpose of shaping and changing external perceptions and images of Europe and the European Union (EU) positively. The authors stress that public diplomacy is about engaging in dialogue, two-way communication, and collaboration with ordinary citizens of third countries rather than propaganda.

In the book under review, the authors thus subsume under the term various practices and activities by governments and by society alike, referring both to formal and informal practices, hierarchical and network-based approaches. Hence, the authors keep the definition of the term public diplomacy deliberately broad.

According to the authors, the achievements and the experiences of the EU makes it a potential source of inspiration for the wider world, which could lead to substantial soft power for the EU and the European states. The understanding of soft power shared in this book follows the definition of Joseph Nye: “If I can get you to want what I want, then I do not have to make you do it.”<sup>[1]</sup> Hence, it is argued that a system or entity which is perceived positively and which is regarded as a role model or an arrangement one wishes to be part of, can more easily influence those attracted than the one which has less appeal. Soft power is thus derived from attractiveness, whereas such attractiveness, as claimed by the authors, can be stimulated through measures of public diplomacy. Considering that, according to the authors, the European Union does not exhaust this strength sufficiently, the basic argument of the book is that through public diplomacy, the EU and its member states and regions alike can substantially bolster their soft power.

Assigning public diplomacy the ability to shape and change perceptions, identities, and frames of meaning presupposes a constructivist understanding of the social world. Only a constructivist approach pays sufficient attention to social dynamics that are essential to the logic of public diplomacy as stressed by Cross (chapter 1). She

urges International Relations scholars to pay more attention to such social dynamics, which are also inherent in social interactions across borders. Hence, she demands a more constructivist approach to the study of diplomacy. After discussing conceptual and theoretical issues in chapter 1, the book then provides insightful case studies of European public diplomacy.

James Pamment (chapter 2) compares the public diplomacy strategies of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. His analysis shows that competition has been an indispensable driver for the development of their respective public diplomacy strategies. Although these have become increasingly similar, and collaboration is to some degree part of the strategies, their main objective is primarily to promote their interests against one another.

Beata Ociepka (chapter 3) then analyzes public diplomacy strategies of former communist countries in central and eastern Europe. Considering that public diplomacy itself is a new approach here, the author finds that these countries first engaged in country-branding strategies with governments playing a central role. The process of transition to democracy has made public diplomacy strategies in these countries uneven, often ridden by conflict and change. Here, the relations with the big neighboring countries have a strong influence on the public diplomacy strategies. Ociepka finds that the principle public diplomacy strategy of central and eastern European countries with a communist legacy, having experienced transition to democracy themselves, is to support transition to democracy in neighboring countries, the western Balkans, and North Africa. Hence, having only recently gained experience in transition to democracy at home, these countries see themselves particularly eligible to support those countries who aspire to go through a similar process.

In the succeeding chapter, Ellen Huigh (chapter 4) looks at how public diplomacy's domestic dimension is currently experienced and practiced in the EU on multiple levels. To counter the decline of public confidence in politics, political actors, and in particular the EU, have devised strategies which address the public, inform them about policies and practices, and seek to engage them in their actions. These practices, which show a number of similarities, can be identified on multiple levels. The EU, national governments, and regions each address both domestic and foreign audiences. Considering the parallels in the approaches analyzed, Ellen Huigh calls for *âintermesticâ* public involvement. Also for reasons of efficiency, in times of financial constraints, strate-

gies which address public audiences, whether those at home or abroad, should be integrated, or at least be more aligned with each other.

Teresa La Porte (chapter 5) then analyzes the role of cities as practitioners of public diplomacy. Her main aim is to compare the narratives of European city diplomacy with those dominant at the EU level. She finds that discourses and narratives of cities are generally consistent with the values held high on European level. Further, she argues that cities represent excellent practitioners of public diplomacy considering that they have a clear and inherent disposition to dialogue and collaboration. Cities are prone to establish networks and contacts among ordinary people and allow for two-way communication at the local level. All in all, the proximity to citizens, the democratic legitimacy of cities, the effective representatives of a civilian population, and the commitment and involvement with European policies and values make city diplomacy an essential form of real public diplomacy.

Simon Duke (chapter 6) then looks at the EU level to assess European public diplomacy. In his analysis of the role of the European External Action Service (EEAS) as a channel for European public diplomacy, he finds that it is first of all necessary to establish a clear understanding of what is to be communicated. He proposes centralization, i.e., enhanced coordination between EU institutions and the EEAS and member states and calls for increased complementarity of their measures. Primarily, effective public diplomacy depends on the political will and commitment of EU leaders and member states to invest, and to clearly define the EU's global role.

Ali Fischer (chapter 7) then looks at again a different set of actors. He explores the case of the European Union cultural relation institutes (EUNIC) and engages in an analysis of the role of networks in public diplomacy. He describes the actors within European public diplomacy as forming a multidimensional and complex network which is constantly evolving. Numerous forms of relationships and actors are involved, whereas different priorities, remits, and legal status have to interact and work together. Fischer further identified a clear tension between European and national interests.

Following the case studies depicting examples of actual measures, instruments, and actors of public diplomacy, Peter van Ham (chapter 8) then looks at how far the EU can be a norm entrepreneur, and offer leadership at a global level. More concretely, he scrutinizes the degree of social power of the EU and thus how far in particular the European Commission is able to set standards

and create legitimate and desirable global norms. After analyzing three case studies, Van Ham concludes that the EU's lack of leadership, its unclear image and identity, as well as its internal openness, limit its effectiveness. For him, Europe requires both social and hard power to defend its values and interests and the EU needs to devise a strategy to effectively use its social power.

In the last chapter Ian Manners and Richard Whitman (chapter 9) apply the concept of normative power to public diplomacy. They question which role the different modes of diffusion essential to normative power play in public diplomacy and come to the conclusion that the normative power of public diplomacy can help the EU remain distinctive, not only in economic and security terms but with regards to values and norms.

All in all, Jan Melissen then concludes that in order to fully exhaust the potential of European multilevel and multiactor public diplomacy, it appears first of all necessary to send clear messages. In this regard devising common objectives and complementary strategies among the European actors involved is needed. The different actors that engage in public diplomacy in Europe share many goals and values and thus should work together more closely. He underlines that the building of relations with and between publics is crucial in times of ever growing global interdependence, interconnectedness, and interpenetration. In such a global environment international relations is about mutuality and reciprocity, and therefore dialogue is needed. Two-way communication is thus the key for successful relations with third countries and this requires investing more in sincere forms of public diplomacy based on mutual understanding, collaboration, and the building of shared narratives—and also to cast off the image of the EU as missionary actor.

Dedicated to actual and concrete cases of European public diplomacy, this volume offers the reader novel insights into the study of current strategies and practices in this field. The variety of examples selected for this

volume clearly show that public diplomacy is applied on various levels by a broad range of actors in many different ways in Europe. The examples show that public diplomacy forms a decisive component of relations with third parties here. The case studies give insight into the many variants of public diplomacy measures and expose the reader to the vast variety of actors involved in the field. The book thereby contributes to the understanding of public diplomacy, an essential and growing component of diplomatic practice in Europe and worldwide.

The broad definition of public diplomacy used by the authors risks subsuming practices with few similarities under the same rubric. Editing one book with such different examples, then leaves also less room for detailed analysis or comparison of practices. To then fit these manifold examples of European public diplomacy into one edited volume, to offer plausible transitions between the chapters, and to structure the volume coherently is a particularly difficult task. However, such an approach certainly succeeds to illustrate that public diplomacy is a well-established practice in Europe. It further offers the reader a means to identify the commonalities in objectives of these practices. In shedding light on one part of the European public diplomacy mosaic, the work at hand further provides a potential source for inspiration for further research on the topic.

The editors have compiled an original work with a focus on case studies portraying genuine examples of European multilevel and multiactor public diplomacy. All in all, this book thus represents an apt source for researchers, students, and practitioners alike who seek to gain both stimulating theoretical and more practical insights into a rather understudied but highly relevant field essential to global politics in the twenty-first century.

#### Note

[1]. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York:PublicAffairs, 2004), 37.

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