

An English School of International Relations Approach to Public Diplomacy: A Public Diplomacy Framework for Global Governance Issues

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Abstract

Throughout the six decades evolution of the public diplomacy concept, international relations approaches have remained at the margins of the field. An important international relations theory that has been virtually non-existent in the public diplomacy literature is the English School of international relations. This theory has been the centerpiece of literature in diplomatic studies, but curiously, has not been applied to public diplomacy. In this editorial, I outline a public diplomacy framework for global governance issues that builds on the English School and Pamment's framework on the intersection of international development and public diplomacy.

Keywords: public diplomacy, English School, international relations, global governance, international development, COVID-19

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A vast majority of public diplomacy literature is written by communication scholars who built this nascent academic field. An important result of this is that much work in this area overlooks the political side of public diplomacy, specifically, the foreign policy connection. In turn, international relations approaches have remained at the margins of the field. An important international relations theory that has been virtually non-existent in the literature on public diplomacy, is the English School of international relations. This theory has been the centerpiece of literature in diplomatic studies, but curiously, has not been applied to public diplomacy. In this editorial, I outline a public diplomacy framework for global governance issues that builds on the English School and James Pamment's framework on the intersection of international development and public diplomacy.

English School theorists interpret world politics as taking place on three planes, namely, the international system, international society, and world society. The international system is a self-help world in which each state prioritizes its national interests. However, world politics is not total anarchy because states come together and cooperate based on shared values and aspirations, establishing primary institutions such as diplomacy, trade, and balance of power, to manage their relations (Bull, 2012). On this international society plane, states prioritize international responsibilities, chiefly the responsibility to maintain order. While these two planes are state-centric, in world society plane, individuals and non-state actors also claim a stake in world politics in parallel with states, prioritizing humanitarian responsibilities or responsibilities for the environment (Jackson, 2000). These three planes of world politics are "in continuous coexistence and interplay" (Buzan, 2014, p. 14).

Public diplomacy refers to communication-based activities that ultimately seek to form the basis to achieve foreign policy-related goals (Ayhan, 2019; Sevin, 2017). In its relatively short history as a concept and a foreign policy tool, public diplomacy has gone through two major evolutions. Public diplomacy in its first decades (including its propaganda and psychological warfare components when its boundaries were not clear) focused almost exclusively on influencing others in a one-way informational communication model (Zaharna, 2009). This remains the major thrust of public diplomacy in most parts of the world. Following 9/11, public diplomacy scholars began to normatively advocate for a new perspective that placed more emphasis on building and managing relationships through two-way symmetrical communication (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Melissen, 2005; Pamment, 2013; Snow, 2009; Zaharna, 2009). For these initiatives, the sponsoring state has been at the center of public diplomacy initiatives, and other initiatives have focused on global governance goals (or provision of global public goods) that are beyond the self-interests of sponsoring actors (though not exclusively beyond as they may be called "enlightened self-interests" (Cooper, 2011, p. 321)). These three kinds of public diplomacy coexist (to varying degrees) in the repertoire of international or transnational actors (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008).

When focusing on a global governance issue-area such as global health governance, including the specific task of managing a global pandemic such as COVID-19, we can identify all three kinds of public diplomacy at play. We can also classify public diplomacy related to international and transnational actors' global governance-related activities regarding

different priorities among the responsibilities.

States aim to acquire or maintain authority (voice) in important decisions of global governance. This requires having a reputation as a competent actor in global governance issues (getting the job done) or as a legitimate regional or global leader with “special rights and duties” (Bull, 2012, p. 196). To that end, states also promote their aid to others, communication *of* contributions to global governance (Pamment, 2019), and project the image of a responsible international citizen that helps others. These communication-based activities prioritize national responsibilities. In the case of COVID-19, this amounts to states’ promotion of how well they managed the pandemic or delivered humanitarian aid to others (Ayhan, 2022).

States also seek to strengthen their primary institutions (diplomacy, trade etc.) and well-functioning secondary institutions (international organizations) to address global governance issues. In cases such as this, the focus is not on individual states but on getting the job done through communication and collaboration, as no one can provide solutions to such issues on their own (Castells, 2008; Hocking, 2005). In other words, the emphasis is on establishing or maintaining order on a global governance issue-area. To achieve that, states engage in networked communication (with each other and with the international community) to find support for their initiatives. These activities constitute communication and collaboration *for* global governance (Pamment, 2019) and prioritizing international responsibilities. In the case of COVID-19, an example of this is the states’ promotion of COVAX (Australian Government, n.d.).

Finally, international and transnational actors can bring a human or environment-centric angle to bear on global governance issue-areas by de-emphasizing or disrupting state-centrality. Here the focus shifts from individual states or their management of order in a society of states to discourses on specific global governance issues and how they must be addressed in relation to human-centric or environment-centric needs. These human-centric or environment-centric communication-based activities can be understood as communication *about* global governance (Pamment, 2019) that prioritize humanitarian responsibilities or responsibilities for the environment. In the case of COVID-19, an example of this is World Health Organization’s (WHO) #VaccinEquity campaign, where WHO acts as a social change agent itself for the sake of humanity beyond being a bureaucracy working to fulfill its mandate to the state members (World Health Organization, 2021).

In this editorial, I offer a framework for analyzing international or transnational actors’ public diplomacy activities in relation to specific global governance issue-areas. See Table 1 for a summary of this framework. Its main dimension is the prioritization of responsibilities that are the center of communication-based activities. As the three planes of world politics in the English School’s interpretation coexist and interplay with each other, most international actors engage in all three kinds of public diplomacy activities related to global governance issues but to varying degrees, according to the relative importance of different responsibilities. While the framework is not linear and certainly not mutually exclusive, the move from public

diplomacy for national to international to human or environment-centric responsibilities has an implicit normative connotation, such as in earlier literature that emphasized the move from one-way to two-way to beyond self-interested public diplomacy. I hope that this short editorial can trigger a conversation on how the English School of international relations can be brought to bear on the study of public diplomacy.

Table 1. Framework for Public Diplomacy and Global Governance

Priorities	English School	Public Diplomacy and Global Governance
National Responsibilities: seeking authority or status	International system	Promotion <i>of</i> competence or of contributions to global governance.
International responsibilities: strengthening primary or secondary institutions of global governance	International society	Networked communication and collaboration <i>for</i> global governance.
Humanitarian responsibilities or responsibilities for the environment	World society	Human or environment-centric communication <i>about</i> global governance

Acknowledgments

I presented an earlier version of this framework at the Korean Association for Public Diplomacy’s 2020 Annual International Conference in Seoul. I thank the participants of the conference for their valuable feedback. I also thank all of our editorial team, especially our outgoing Managing Editor Hyelim Lee for her service, new Managing Editor Rachel Naddeo, and Editorial Assistant Kula Kukonu for their hard work on this issue.

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