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Editorial: Special Issue on Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in East Asia

Kadir Jun Ayhan[1]

The concept of public diplomacy was coined by Edmund A. Gullion, the Dean of Fletcher School, in 1965.[2] According to the Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy brochure, published in 1965, public diplomacy "deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies...encompasses dimensions of foreign relations beyond traditional diplomacy, the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with those of another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as between diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications" (The Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy at The Fletcher School, 2002).

Public diplomacy became a more mainstream topic in international relations following Joseph Nye's (1990) coining of the term soft power in 1990 (Sevin, 2017, p. 27).[3] In his 2004 book, entitled "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics," Nye (2004, p. Chapter 4) depicts public diplomacy as a tool of wielding soft power.

The September 11 attacks marked another turning point for public diplomacy and soft power studies, as the United States realized that it needed to focus its public diplomacy strategy on dealing with growing anti-American sentiment in the Middle East and beyond. Following the September 11 attacks, "new public diplomacy" (Melissen, 2005; Seib, 2009; Snow, 2009) was introduced in order to move away from the one-way communication of old public diplomacy and toward two-way symmetrical communication practices. New public diplomacy paved the way for the expansion of the field in general, with 96 percent of the 185 most-cited, SCOPUS-indexed articles on public diplomacy being written after September 11 (Ayhan, 2019).

Both the terms public diplomacy and soft power were coined in the United States and were primarily developed to match the US' foreign policy needs and account for the country's

[1] Kadir Ayhan, Guest Editor of the Special Issue, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, South Korea.
[2] For the "evolution of the phrase" before Gullion, see Cull (2009).
[3] Similar terms have existed long before 1990. For example, see Lukes' (2005) third dimension of power.

behavior. Indeed, public diplomacy studies have predominantly focused on the US as well as other Western countries. To expand the field's scope, Gilboa (2008, p. 57) calls for more "research on public diplomacy programs and activities of countries other than the United States."

Other scholars have suggested modifications to the US-centric concepts of public diplomacy. Lee (2009) argues that the current conceptualization of soft power is designed to explain and further United States hegemony, making the term difficult to apply to non-hegemonic powers such as South Korea. Recently, the National Endowment for Democracy published a report entitled "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence" (Walker & Ludwig, 2017), suggesting that China and Russia's attempts to change public opinion around the world are based on distraction and manipulation tactics. Therefore, the authors contend that, rather than soft power, the concept should be called sharp power. Chinese authorities, however, rightly criticized the report for being arbitrary and revealing double standards, arguing that "when other countries engage in cultural exchanges, they are showing soft or smart power, but when it comes to China, it's sharp power with motives […] It is natural that we want to showcase our own image. Sadly, some Westerners may have physically entered the 21st century, but their mindset remains stuck in the cold war era" (Zheng, 2018).

In the last decade, a few books have been written on understanding East Asian practices of and perspectives on public diplomacy and soft power (see e.g. Ayhan, 2016, 2017; Kurlantzick, 2007; Melissen & Lee, 2011; Melissen & Sohn, 2015; Wang, 2011; Watanabe & McConnell, 2008).

This special issue represents another attempt to understand public diplomacy and soft power dynamics in East Asia. The authors have written on different aspects of public diplomacy and soft power of the region's three most significant countries: China, Japan and South Korea. Eduardo Luciano Tadeo Hernández' paper explores the relevance of the Korean language in the creation of South Korea's soft power.

Ryoko Nakano's paper highlights the role of heritage soft power in East Asia's "memory contests" by examining the promotion of dissonant modern heritage in UNESCO's heritage programs.

Zhun Gu's paper analyzes a documentary, "Maritime Silk Road" (2016), exploring how the Chinese government adopted the ancient Maritime Silk Road as a historical, diasporic, and political form of nostalgia in order to utilize "the Belt and Road Initiative" in the context of the "Chinese dream."

Kyung-Sun Lee's paper analyzes South Korea's international development volunteer program as a citizen diplomacy initiative and explores the ways in which volunteer training incorporates cultural-learning.

Felice Farina's paper analyzes the connection between Japan's gastrodiplomacy, defined as the use of traditional food as an instrument of soft power, and Japan's food security strategy.

İrem Aşkar Karakır's paper analyzes China and India's environmental foreign policies and evaluates their ability to translate these policies into a soft power potential.

Xin Liu's paper explores China's soft power projection to serve the, sometimes incompatible, purposes of transitioning away from China's image as a 'cultural other' and 'ideological other.'

Hwajung Kim's paper compares modes of governance in the public-private partnerships of cultural diplomacy projects in Germany and Korea.

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