

COMMUNICATING IN TRYING TIMES

Nancy Snow, Nicholas J. Cull (eds.): *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*. Routledge 2020, 528 pp.

Joseph S. Nye famously defined soft power as the ability of a country to “obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it”¹. In the information era of today, this power is no doubt more than ever dependent on whether a given country is able to efficiently communicate with foreign publics and deliver its message. This challenging endeavor, known as public diplomacy, is the subject matter of an in-depth volume edited by Nancy Snow and Nicholas J. Cull and published by Routledge under the name *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, in 2020.

Both editors of the book are distinguished scholars in the field of international communication research. Nancy Snow works at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies and the Temple University Japan. Her earlier publications include *Propaganda, Inc.: Selling America’s Culture to the World* (2011) and *Japan’s Information War* (2016). Nicholas J. Cull is a historian at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California. He is the author of several works on the topic of international communication, including *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign Against American “Neutrality” in World War II* (1995) and *The Decline and Fall of the United States Information Agency: American Public Diplomacy, 1989–2001* (2012). The reviewed tome is actually a second edition of a 2008 publication, with its contents vastly expanded and revised.

Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy might be best described as a reader on the subject. It includes 45 chapters written by scholars and practitioners of public diplomacy (and sometimes both at the same time) and is divided into six main sections, preceded by an introductory part with contributions provided by the editors themselves (they cover such issues as the new challenges of public diplomacy in the 2020s and the evolving meaning of the term).

Part 1, entitled *The Scope of Public Diplomacy: Key Practices*, serves as a sort of introduction to the topic. It includes discussion on issues such as the crucial

1 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Succeed in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs 2004, p. 5.

practice of listening in public diplomacy (in a chapter penned by Luigi Di Martino of Western Sydney University) as well as contributions concerning the basic facets of the field, including cultural diplomacy (Patricia M. Goff), exchange programs (Giles Scott-Smith), and international broadcasting (Phillip Arceneaux and Shawn Powers).

The second segment, *Public Diplomacy Applications*, deals with the real-life implementation of public diplomacy objectives. It features chapters dealing with some of the more nuanced methods of creating positive publicity and goodwill, such as arts diplomacy (John Brown), the use of narratives in public diplomacy initiatives (Vivian S. Walker), and country branding (Florian Kaefer; Keith Dinnie and Efe Sevin).

The third part of the tome, *Public Diplomacy and Persuasion*, concentrates on the ever-significant problem of convincing the public to one's positions. *Inter alia*, it includes papers on social influence (Anthony Pratkanis) and credibility – the rhetorical *ethos* – in the practices of public diplomacy (Robert Gass and John Seiter).

The focus of the subsequent section, *Case Studies in Public Diplomacy*, is on the individual examples of how things are done in the field. Among several interesting submissions a reader may find in this chapter, perhaps the most eye-catching are the ones concerning gastrodiploamacy (Paul Rockower) as well as the employment of diaspora (Liam Kennedy) and international expositions (Jian Wang) in public diplomacy efforts.

Part 5 of the volume, *Global Approaches to Public Diplomacy*, is an extensive attempt to look at the field through the prism of individual nations' policies. By far the longest of the volume's sections, it includes chapters on countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Japan, China, Russia, Australia, India, Korea, Israel, Brazil, and Turkey as well as some more general contributions describing the public diplomacy practices in Africa, Latin America, and the Arab World.

Perhaps the most interesting of all is the sixth section of the book, entitled *Fresh Perspectives in Public Diplomacy*, in which recent advances to the field, both theoretical and practical, are discussed. The segment includes chapters on the ethics of public diplomacy (Foaz Izadi and Richard Nelson), the digital diplomacy (Corneliu Bjola, Jennifer Cassidy, and Ilan Manor), the place of corporations in the modern scope of the practice, (Candace White), LGBTI issues in the US foreign communication (Laura Belmonte), and the concept of *noopolitik*² in the current international environment (David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla).

The main advantages of Snow and Cull's collection are perhaps the diversity of perspectives from which the subject matter of public diplomacy is analyzed in the volume and the currentness of its scholarship. The publication could serve both as an introduction to the many aspects of the topic for a casual interested reader and

2 *Noopolitik* was first described by Ronfeldt and Arquilla in 1999 as "foreign policy behavior and strategy for the information age that emphasized the shaping and sharing of ideas, values, norms, laws, and ethics through soft power". John Arquilla, David Ronfeldt, *The Emergence of Noopolitik: Toward An American Information Strategy*. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation 1999, p. 46.

as a useful addition to a reading list of any university course that concerns international communication. The overall quality of its chapters, provided by some of the world's most prominent specialists in the field, might only be described as very high.

It is my opinion that the *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* ought to be recommended as a valuable contribution to the scholarly discourse on international communication and an interesting read on an important subject. Public diplomacy, argue the editors, is today of paramount significance, as “in so many countries leaders are pledging to restore past glories and build walls against the very neighbors whose cooperation is necessary for success or even survival” (p. xiii). Although written with other walls in mind, in 2021 these words might resonate with renewed relevance for Polish readers as well.

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