



## THE EVOLUTION OF THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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**Abstract:** Public diplomacy today is an interdisciplinary area in which diplomats, journalists, specialists in the field of international relations theory, and marketers work, which leads to a wide variety of views and approaches. In addition, there are related areas: civil diplomacy, cultural diplomacy. The development of public diplomacy, which combines such a vibrant diversity of participants, also implies a diversity of theoretical approaches. The article attempts to identify the common logic of theoretical approaches from various disciplines in order to understand the unified theoretical dynamics of public diplomacy.

**Key words:** public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, soft power, attraction, smart power

### Introduction

Today, public diplomacy in professional circles is almost universally understood as a system of communication with foreign societies, although the narrower aspects of the definition may vary and even become the object of serious academic and practical debate. Historically, the meaning of this well-established phrase did not always coincide with its modern understanding. Nicholas Cull, director of the master's program in public diplomacy at the University of Southern California, found the first mention of the term in the British press of the mid-19th century, where it actually simply meant good diplomacy. A little later, already in the American press, it is found as denoting open diplomacy, in the sense of public as not secret.

The authorship of the term in its modern meaning belongs to the dean of the oldest professional school of international relations in the United States - the School of Law and Diplomacy. Fletcher to Edmund Gullion. In 1965, Gullion defined public diplomacy as "the means by which governments and private groups influence the attitudes or opinions of other peoples and governments so as to influence their foreign policy decisions." In a broad sense, this definition fits any actions of any actors aimed at changing the foreign policies of foreign countries, and in other interpretations of the same author there are even more general formulations. This is partly due to the very reasons that prompted Gullion to look for such a term: in fact, it was about choosing a replacement for the word "propaganda" that caused negative associations. On the one hand, it was necessary that the term chosen to replace it describe the already existing practice of communication with societies of other countries, on the other hand, it had to clearly indicate the distance between what the United States and its allies are doing and similar work carried out by the states of the communist camp.

The further evolution of the definitions of the term shows a movement towards narrowing the scope of meaning, and this at the same time creates a field for discussion, as it focuses attention on the question of what is and what is not public diplomacy. In general, we can distinguish several groups of specialists who determine the development of scientific

discourse and practice of modern public diplomacy. The largest group consists of “traditional” specialists in the field of public diplomacy. In fact, we are talking about diplomats and journalists, many of whom began their careers in this field during the Cold War. Public diplomacy in that period was characterized by a high level of state-centricity. On the one hand, the main direction of international communication in relation to foreign societies was states - ideological opponents. On the other hand, the actual volume of independent interaction between the societies of the two camps under the Iron Curtain remained extremely low.

In conditions of low permeability of borders, the only actor capable of systematically carrying out high-quality international communication was the state. The result has been several generations of international journalists and diplomats for whom public diplomacy is exclusively a public policy, carried out mainly by government agencies or the private contractors they hire. These included those who organized cultural exchanges and events in embassies, journalists working for state-owned newspapers, magazines and radio stations targeting foreign audiences, and organizers of the relatively few educational exchanges.

The end of the Cold War led to a decrease in the attention of states to public diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument. This was reflected both in the downgrading of the status (or even disbandment) of the relevant departments and in a significant reduction in funding. The US Information Agency during its heyday in the 1960s. numbered over 12 thousand employees, in 1994 - already about 9 thousand, and shortly before the dissolution of the department and the inclusion of its divisions in the State Department - only a little more than 6,700 employees.

The emergence in 1990 of the concept of “soft power” formulated by Joseph Nye was, on the one hand, a summing up of the Cold War, in which it was difficult to overestimate the importance of confrontation in the information and humanitarian sphere, on the other hand, it turned out to be somewhat contrary to the general trend towards decline. activity in this direction. The term proposed by Nye, of course, described not a fundamentally new, but a long-existing phenomenon, which, however, had not previously had a generally accepted academic definition. As a result, the understanding of soft power as the ability to achieve what one wants not through coercion or bribery, but through attraction, has become a key theoretical foundation of public diplomacy within the framework of political science. If soft power is the ability to achieve the desired political result with the help of authority and attractiveness, then public diplomacy becomes in this scheme a tool for increasing attractiveness and strengthening authority.

Nye himself emphasizes that the relationship between public diplomacy and soft power is not necessarily a simple linear one:

- firstly, public diplomacy can potentially not only contribute to the strengthening of soft power, but also hinder it, because in itself it is only a communication mechanism, and hypothetically can broadcast the wrong message that will not improve attitudes towards the country;

- secondly, public diplomacy is only one of the factors influencing the formation of attitudes towards the country. At any given time, other factors may have a more significant impact on soft power because foreign audiences form their perceptions of countries not only on the basis of government-organized communication channels;

— thirdly, critics of the concept of soft power argue that changes in international public opinion do not have a significant impact on specific political decisions made by the leadership of countries.

Accordingly, if we return to Nye's definition of soft power as the ability to extract action from others, it turns out that public diplomacy, which improves attitudes towards a country, does not necessarily contribute to the achievement of specific political results.

By the way, a significant part of the criticism of the concept of soft power is based on this thesis, since it is quite difficult, focusing on soft power, to assess the real ability of actors to influence others. Nye invariably responds to this criticism that it is important to distinguish between the resources on which any kind of power is based, and the power itself, i.e. the ability to influence the behavior of other actors. In his opinion, the difference between the attitude towards the state in any foreign society and the direct ability of the state to motivate this society to support the policies it needs is the same as between, for example, the amount of military equipment the warring parties have and victory in the war. When assessing the potential of the parties, observers will, of course, rely on available data on the quantity and quality of military equipment and military personnel, but the actual result of the conflict may differ from forecasts. As an example, he cites Great Britain and France, which in 1940 had more tanks than Germany, but lost the confrontation with the Germans.

Nye identifies the sources of state soft power, or the resources on which it is based, mainly as values, culture, and politics, and public diplomacy is thus a tool for disseminating information about these sources. Attitudes to the deep values, culture and political actions of any state may be different, as well as their variability. For example, government policy can change relatively quickly due to a change in political leadership or simply as a result of a change in course, and the perception of the country in the eyes of the foreign public can change just as quickly.

An example that, thanks to Nye, has become almost classic is the dynamics of changes in attitudes towards the United States in Indonesia in 2003-2005. The US invasion of Iraq has plunged America's popularity in the largest Muslim country from about 62% to 15% favorable. However, the United States then took an active part in eliminating the consequences of the tsunami in Southeast Asia, and positive attitudes towards the United States in Indonesia increased again, but only to 38%.

Accordingly, on the one hand, a positive attitude towards the country's politics, despite the importance of this source of soft power, cannot be overestimated, because this indicator can change very quickly. On the other hand, based on Nye's theoretical reasoning, it would be a mistake to believe that a good attitude towards the country today necessarily means the same attitude towards it tomorrow. On the contrary, it is the attitude towards the country's politics that changes first and foremost, and one cannot "relax", as Nye shows in his article on the change in attitude towards the United States in Europe as a result of the outbreak of the Iraq War in 2003.

Attitudes toward a country's culture are also an important source of soft power, and this source changes much more slowly than government policy. Culture in this context refers to both high art and mass culture, which includes clothing style, cuisine and much more. The attractiveness of culture is undoubtedly a source of soft power, but the connection is less clear. Critics of the concept note that a good attitude towards American films does not prevent, for example, Kim Jong Il from developing the DPRK's nuclear program. This and

many other similar observations are intended to demonstrate the inherent failure of public diplomacy (and other soft power resources) to solve problems caused by or associated with hard power.

The validity of this observation does not in any way contradict, of course, the general logic of the cultural component in soft power. In one of his later publications, Nye directly writes that those who criticize soft power for its inability to solve all foreign policy problems are greatly mistaken. It is only important not to forget that some problems in foreign policy can be more effectively solved with the help of soft rather than hard power.<sup>9</sup> In the report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy of the US State Department, the important results of demonstrating a country's culture include, in particular, the creation of grounds for trust and neutrality, platforms for people-to-people contacts, as well as ensuring a positive agenda even in the face of political contradictions between countries.

The third source of soft power—values—is the least volatile because it generally persists for at least a generation. It is interesting that Nye specifically notes that we are talking about actual, not declared values. At the same time, nations will naturally be brought together by the values that they share or that they find attractive, because hypothetically the values of another society may turn out to be repulsive. For example, the deep respect for traditions in Saudi Arabia, including the position of women in society, is unlikely to be a significant factor in increasing the popularity of Riyadh in the United States.

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