Public Diplomacy in Regional Integration: Strategizing Policy Goals

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ABSTRACT

Contributing to the growing call on integrated public diplomacy approaches, this study examines the priorities and opportunities of public diplomacy activities in regional integration and it addresses a literature gap on the most favorable public diplomacy approach that would give regional blocs room to take a more strategic role in policy communications. The study briefly conceptualizes public diplomacy and regional integration through an integrative strategic communication framework grounded in relationship building as an end goal of public diplomacy. The study suggests a reconsideration of public diplomacy approaches through a two-way communication to both domestic and foreign audiences. It reveals structural challenges to grounded engagements, dialogue and collaboration strategies of co-existence, understanding mutual interdependence and relationship building. Through a contextual analysis, the study expounds the view of public diplomacy beyond governments and to that which downplays globalization and reintroduces territory into its governance.

Key words: Public diplomacy, regional integration

INTRODUCTION

The goal of public diplomacy is to ensure positive perceptions of foreign policy activities in the international system. It involves persuading audiences that the undertaken activities are relevant and would yield positive development benefits to the state. Implementing successful strategies of public diplomacy requires states to have achieved some level of clarity on goals and messages conveyed. Public diplomacy communications are starting to embrace new technologies and approaches, and are working towards identifying accommodative ways for all international actors. As a cooperative process in which two or more nations agree to work closely together to achieve peace, stability and wealth, regional integration through the blocs, strive to promote objectives and values common to the member states. It provides necessary financial resources, expertise, and information technology thoughts that allow projection of the right messages and images to all members of the regional bloc. Several issues remain as to whether there is a link between public diplomacy and regional integration; if there are any existing policy priorities for states in regional blocs; and the available public diplomacy priorities which come when states embrace unity and solidarity at regional level. This article considers and brings to light the following objectives. The process of explaining and promoting the bloc's mandate to audiences within the member states and whether the principal role of public diplomacy should be with the secretariate or with the government of the member states. The study also identifies the shortcomings within the member states in upholding organizational goals and preservation of credibility in regional diplomatic activities. Discussing whether EAC secretariat can take a more strategic role in public diplomacy communications, the study examines the most favorable public diplomacy approach that would be adopted by the regional bloc.

Background information

Countries are coming together to benefit each other. As a top priority for economic and political stability through regional integration, countries are making attempts to harness their strengths in the rapidly changing

economy. Wide range of regional networks can expand better their support to economic transformation and realization of the potential of the regional population.[1] Significant actions are needed to address the key challenges – the go-beyond border issues such as conflict, insecurity, pandemic responses, natural resources, technology, trade and movement of people. In this age of unprecedented change, developing integrated power markets could have a transformative effect on public diplomacy; countries will need the support of their neighbors and the development partners in order to emerge stronger in their diplomatic ties. This could be facilitated through connectivity, energy access, trade, skill development and integrated management of regional issues. Regional integration has its own dynamics in which states give up a portion of their own sovereignty in an effort to secure greater cooperations. Exploring the historical evolution and structure, decision-making process is a contemporary challenge to the regional blocs.

Statement of the research problem

The international system is constantly changing and has got its own characteristics, a fact that has given diplomacy an opportunity to scale up from the current specific practice of government officials, diplomats and consuls to the general cooperation of millions of stakeholders to address own shares of global challenge. For governments, there is plenty of competing fears floating around that is tempting to the multiple actors to use in their attempts to offer solutions. In compelling attraction to both internal and external audiences, countries require a transformational change geared towards attribution of ideas, interests and policy objectives. Governments are at the center of decision-making process where they guide and direct foreign policy activities. It is not making use of public diplomacy to engage efforts of other actors. The increasing number of actors participating in global diplomatic networks are bringing new dynamics to public diplomacy. These other actors such as international organizations give ideas of creativity and brings diversity, innovation debate and democracy to the policy process. Having not developed remarkable arrays of public diplomacy activities to address challenges, non-state actors are not part of the team in communicating foreign policies of countries. Public diplomacy is no longer just government's direct communication to the foreign publics alone but the combined efforts aimed at establishing long-term relationships in the international system. Public diplomacy of most countries remain closed to the mobilization of people towards regional cooperation, regulation and negotiation. It is not enough for countries to only connect and have their goals achieved but have a centralized public diplomacy initiatives and activities moved to the palms of regional organizational secretariates.

Theoretical framework

Neofunctionalism is an international relations theory that downplays globalization by reintroducing territory into its governance in diplomatic relations, neofunctionalism is an essential theory in understanding why nations decide to put together their economic and political destinies, foreign policy goals and objectives.[2] Grounded on the available common infrastructures, both physical and institutional, neofunctionalism unfolds its analysis of the evolution of regional blocs; devolution of more authorities to an organization; shifting of expectations to the secretariat and spillover of public diplomacy activities and policies to the integration.

Study justification

States and non-state actors have access to multiple communication channels and complex machinery for interdependence. Most public diplomacy campaigns are always led by governments and their diplomacy organs. Public diplomacy should educate its own people, portray regional and globalised cultures, and give room for regional interactions of foreign policy resources. Therefore, the findings of this research will result into recommendations that will form bases of policy improvement and influence within the regional organizations. More so, study recommendations will directly and indirectly influence public attitude,

opinions and policies.

Methodology

Using a content analysis method that is evident in public diplomacy studies, the study analyses both secondary and primary data obtained from the research. The study takes an in-depth investigation in exploratory research aimed at describing the context in usage and co-occurrence of words which enable narrative inquiry to the research area. Data from sources such as the Ministry of East African Affairs, EAC Mission in Nairobi and those from Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs is consolidated and based on the approach, meaning is reflected from the concepts or group of related words. Centering on key words and the frequency of their usage, secondary data from EAC secretariat published reports, journal articles, EAC member states resolutions and information from regional integration expert references are analyzed. Finally, themes which form common or connect to the concepts from a close proximity are also analyzed.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Public diplomacy focusses on attempts by governments to strategically bring about understanding of its goals, ideals, values and interests to the foreign publics through its domestic public.[3] State relations comprise of multiple and overlapping local, regional and international expectations dependent on the interests, capabilities and credibility of the involved states.[4] State interactions took a new perspective after the World War 1 through US President Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship program on leadership development focusing on the relations between great powers. The then international system within which states were bound was thin, slow and limited in scope.[5] New concepts were adopted to help understand relationships between states' diplomatic politics.[6] The growing demand for less dangerous and more effective relations took center stage in the increasingly changing interconnected world. Through trade, commerce, migration, internet and social media, solutions to global problems called for interactions that promoted mutual understanding. At times, consistent, truthful and convincing calls to the diplomatic community were thought to be in position to explain, demonstrate and justify rational policy and their fundamental values.[7]

Public diplomacy involves direct and indirect influence of opinions and public attitudes which in turn impact on foreign policy decisions of other governments.[8] Public opinion set parameters within which policy makers operate. For instance, "no more Vietnam Syndrome" made Regan's administration not to intervene in Nicaragua, the Bush senior administration also deployed a force in Gulf war in order to its public feel secure. Discussions about public diplomacy and successive participation of public opinion in foreign policy making are enhanced by the rise in the use of accommodative Communication Information Technology (CIT). When war broke out in Bosnia, Clinton's administration refused to send forces to fight, however, it was reluctant to intervene for fear that the public would react negatively if the US would get stuck in such an endless mission. In public diplomacy contextual interactions occur giving room to diplomatic decisions made through a process by state officers, individual citizens, diplomats and policy experts.[9] These kinds of interactions are boosted by virtual and people-to-people exchanges which are carried out within intimate venues across national borders in order to speak out and influence choices.

Regional integration as a process by which states agree to cooperate and closely work together with an aim of achieving stability, peace and wealth. States embrace ideas and appreciate interactions that correlate with values of diplomacy. In enhancing diplomatic communication, cooperation and cross border trades, governments focus majorly on agreements, alliances and peaceful resolutions. States are niching and are learning to efficiently and successfully apply diplomatic methods that encourage government and non-governmental actors and their coming together to strategically find solutions to public diplomacy challenges. These are made vibrant through intercontinental diplomacy with other actors in the international

system. The international system is home to institutions and organizations in which diplomacy is much utilized.

Globally, there is a history of shared values which is built on partnerships of influence and visibility through dialogue. It depends on how quickly and quietly a state unconditionally carries out its public diplomacy activities. Because every state has something to offer, notions of well-articulated concepts and power utilization of better arguments extend diplomatic outreaches for positive influence and realization of policy goals.[10] To be able to generate beneficial outcomes, it is important for governments to keep other state actors in close working partnerships and in resource concentration within specific areas of national interests. Public diplomacy programs directed at both foreign and domestic audiences work best with the adoption of parallel moves to opposition on policy and values.[11] Many countries have neglected practicing public diplomacy within their domestic audience. However, with the current developments in technology and information flow, regional blocs are coming up with ways of implementing integrative public diplomacy. Australia took a step in 2007 after realizing lack of awareness among its citizens of its public diplomacy. The government recommended the implementation of a public communication strategy which aimed at not only informing the foreign public, but also the non-state actors' facilitation to participate in Australian public diplomacy and policy processes.

Regional integration has continued to grow with more countries joining blocs.[12] Focusing on themes such as social integration, institutional integration, policy coordination and convergence, regional integration helps overcome division. It allows sharing of common infrastructures both physical and institutional, and eases the constraints from division to state development. The international system is marred with divisions created by inefficient policies and the only way is for states to cooperate among themselves.[13] This cooperation can therefore be in terms of physical infrastructures such as trade, transport, investment, domestic regulations, energy and ICT, economic and financial policy and provision of common public goods. There are also institutional forms of cooperation with different levels of policy commitments and shared sovereignty that has different priorities in different world regions.

It is a goal for countries to embrace regional integration that would be economically and politically beneficial for regional economy. Trying to strengthen regional economic communities, member states of regional blocs are streamlining their mandates, and are considering unions which are political in nature and are engaging in debates over the possibilities of setting up monetary union. There are three general objectives and goals for any regional integration bloc.[14] First, states come together with an aim of promoting exchange of ideas, embracing innovative thinking, and creation of room for practitioners and policy makers development within the region. The second objective is the provision of opportunities to domestic citizens, diaspora population, regional and sub-regional organizations and institutions in sharing information with policy makers. The last general goal of regional integration is the focus on policy dialogue and good policy planning and implementation acquired through knowledge management among the member states.

These goals play very important roles among the member states. Focused of improving efficiency, sharing costs, sharing decision-making on policies and reforms anchored on cooperation, regional integration is a building block for global integration. It carries with it other non-economic benefits of peace and security in a region.

POLICY DETERMINANTS AND PRIORITIES IN REGIONAL BLOCS

The world is politically and economically fragmented and attempts by countries to overcome infrastructural challenges are facing barriers related to variations in policy stance, policy and structural changes and search for foreign exchange. As countries continue to relate, challenges are inevitable. Poor infrastructure,

complicated procedures and trade tariffs, and unpredictable internal regime changes are hitting hard on regional integration pillars such as movement of people, capital, goods and services and on the role and impact of regional institutions. Regional integration is not a level ground for all players. There exist differing preferences in priorities among member states which might also lead to difficulties in assessing impact of the regional bloc. Experiencing inadequate complementary policies and institutions capable of tackling policy barriers especially at the borders, regional integration is a difficult process from economic to political through a single market integration.

Hill defines Foreign Policy is an abstract expression of relations between political entities, its fundamental issues and that which transcend time and regions.[15] However, to Campbell, foreign policy is the producer and the product of modern state and state systems.[16] It is associated with institutions such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies, as well as ideas such as national interests, rational utility-maximization and bureaucratic polities.

Ranke emphasizes on domestic factors as shapers of foreign policy. This follows his earlier argument that a state's foreign policy is influence by both its geographical position and the external threats to the pillars. He believed that state development constitutes a policy process and that through self-preservation, resources are mobilized to fulfil the demands of state security.[17] Policies are aimed at determination and identification of decisions, strategic positioning and interstate relations.

Technological changes and emergence of globalization has deepened interactions among states.[18] According to Andriole et al, foreign policy may take form of a state not having relations with another.[19] He maintained that states are led by foreign policies to fulfil their interests and to position themselves in the diplomatic arena. Modelski defines foreign policy as a community evolved system of activities aimed at changing other states behaviour and the state's own activity adjustment in the international system.[20] He focuses on change aspect of state behaviour which according to Neack is not only about change but the different times behavioural communication.[21] However, according to Herman, foreign policy making is a commitment of resources by government in order to get an ultimate decision unit.[22] Herman defines foreign policy as a resultant, discrete and purposeful action of individual or group political decisions.[23] He maintains that foreign policy is a product of decision and behavior of states.

Frankel is of the idea that foreign policy consists of decisions and actions involving state relations. He maintains that the policies involve set actions within the borders and are intended for external audience attention. Comprising of foreign policy processes, the set of ideas govern behaviour of states in their interaction with other states and also aim at defense and enhancement national interest.[24]

Padelford and Lincoln defines foreign policy as a totality of its dealings within the external state environment. This definition portrays foreign policy as the overall results of state translation process of goals and interests into actions aimed at preservation of objectives and attainment of interests.[25] Supported by Hugh's insights of foreign policy as a comprehensive plan based on knowledge and experience for state's global interactions, FP is aimed at protection, promotion and clear understanding of national interests. States are willing to apply whichever means possible to ensure achievement of those interests.[26]

Garner believes that foreign policy is a collaboration of state and non-state actors' intentions, statements and actions.[27] However, according to Bojang, foreign policy consists of three parts; the end, the ways, and the means. The parts are broken down into visions or interests, strategies, and ideas for the pursuance of the desired visions and resources available at state level.[28] Bojang concludes on foreign policy as the desired outcome and visions in interstate relations, strategically used to achieve goals within the international system.

Foreign policy, a substance of foreign relations and a general course of pursuit in diplomatic affairs, is a

legislative aspect of the problem of inter-state relations.[29] However, according to Hill, foreign policy is a substance of nation's effort in the promotion of interests whose main objective is to uphold national ideologies and self-interests.[30] He notes that the world is a global village where many nations interact with one another on many issues including matters of economy and trade. He argues out that it is through foreign policy that these relationships are determined and guided by the underpinning principles.

Foreign policy is concerned with boundary drawing. However, Campbell views it as a force behind nationalism and state culture.[31] He According to the United State Department of Government and Politics, Foreign Policy is defined as state's international goals and strategies for the achievement of set objectives, and that tools such as Diplomacy, Foreign Aid and Military force are employed during policy implementation.[32]

Hartmann talked of the existence of a system whose focus is on state processes of adjusting its own interests. He noted that foreign policy is a systematic statement of deliberately selected national interests and actions taken by government in relation to other states.[33] An example is when US government under President Obama renewed its ties with the people of Cuba. Related to this is Hartmann's argument that foreign policy is also the tool with which states engage in power game of diplomatic relations. This was manifested on two occasions between USA and Afghanistan. The 2001 Bush-declared war on Al Qaeda and the 2011 Obama's administration led operation on Osama Bin Laden.

THE SHIFT IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY PRIORITIES

Diplomacy takes different forms or approaches based on economic, political, cultural and military power of a state in the diplomatic arena.[34] Diverse methods used to understand the world and its interactions take different strategies of representation, policy coordination, information gathering, and protection of citizens, administration and promotion of friendly relations.[35] Systematic understanding of the world requires understanding of a state's past experiences that give information about mechanisms of diplomatic interactions. Diplomatic activities are officially carried out by government representatives. Citizens are neither empowered nor involved in promotion of understanding of key issues of foreign policy objectives or in productivity and diplomatic competitive processes of its policy agenda.

All over the world, priorities have shifted from secretive state diplomatic activities to governments' ability to listen to messages, their transmission and the need by audience to be heard and understood. In a public diplomacy system, several activities are taken together in such a way that governments engage in policy focus groups and audience research in forming ideas which may change. Besides gaining access to the minds of the audience, public diplomacy is also keen in getting past the communication barriers to get attention and achieve credibility of its messages either through careful considerations or quick filter of received information.[36] Kenya reviewed its ICT policy in 2019 with an aim of facilitating and advancing its technological innovations and place its public diplomacy activities at competition with global-based economies.

Most countries around the globe have matured into democracies; a political system of liberty and economic policy.[37] Advocating for free and fair elections, and the rule of law, freedoms within a theoretical liberalism such as that of speech, assembly, religion and property does not necessarily bring about constitutional liberalism but the international peace.[38] As a foreign policy tool, public diplomacy concerns itself with the implementation and shaping of policy objectives.[39] The increasing interdependence of actors and complexity of issues has changed and is altering agendas in the international system.

Currently, there are issues in diplomatic relations that have profound impact on security, politics, environment and economy.[40] These issues are shaping the development of contemporary diplomatic order and shifting the world policy environment. Actors are retreating to rebalance across the time-tested public

diplomacy strategies.[41] From around the turn of the millennium, new circumstances resulted to a kind of diplomacy which was increasingly making contact with and building relations to foreign non-state actors.[42] It is that which is influencing foreign governments through its citizens.[43] A critical view of Sharp's idea of public diplomacy as a process by which direct relations with people in a country is pursued to advance self-interest and external values of the actor. For example, the 2021 multilateral initiative between Kenya's Ministry of Environment and Forestry and European Union aimed at partnering around issues of biodiversity, climate change and waste management.

Globalization of public health issues has been challenged by a global health crisis of Covid-19.[44] The world has dealt with disease epidemics such as Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Ebola and many more. Currently, the world is debating between balancing the mitigations and maintaining economic activities. A global enemy, Covid-19 has disrupted all levels of human interactions and destroyed diplomatic relations.[45] From global to transnational engagements, major focus is on saving the lives of citizens from the many unknowns about future behavior of foreign publics. States have to remain conscious of their neighbors and any existing relations amidst the ever-changing international system. Countries are starting to frame policies that would help in establish diplomatic relations.

Disagreements are normal among neighbors but at a time like this, states find middle grounds to interrogate the complexities and challenges and define identities in a way that does not complicate unity and togetherness.[46] Policies are being geared towards diplomatic development and with the emerging digital diaspora and CIT, actors are learning to tolerate and communicate their after-action reviews with love, care and work towards turning challenges into diplomatic opportunities of promoting more equitable regional order and relations.[47]

States are trying to embrace historical geographies, political economies and socio-cultural engagements as well as striving to maintain partnerships of goals because each community's contribution is specific to a situation context.[48] Therefore, to counter diplomatic disagreements at regional levels, states are limiting divisive arguments and are avoiding problems that are global in nature.[49] It is true that health differences exist and that economies are dwindling forcing governments to rethink their linkages and start unlocking policies which will educate their publics about own safety compliances.[50] This therefore calls for liberalization of institutions to empower citizens in scaling up connections for more resilient and efficient interactions. How leaders respond to this crisis must also include political engagements, human and socio-cultural capitals of regional identities. Pushing countries towards regional integration, pandemics are opportunity for development of strong, meaningful and restructured partnerships capable of enhancing mutuality of interests. It is a chance for countries to come together in the fight for survival and better implementation of foreign policy objectives that would be of benefit to the international system as a whole.

Effective foreign policies result into progressive values and improved diplomatic relations.[51] States tend to formulate policies that are self-centered and those which are aimed at realizing individual state interests. Whenever disagreement occurs, governments distance themselves from dialogues and negotiations and as a result, attempts to address diplomatic issues are never made. From functional diplomatic relations, long term collaborations of core interests are built.[52] For a better tomorrow, states' point of care has to switch into pointing out flows in interstate relations and through inner strengths and rebuild the engaged communities.

Threats to Peace and Security pose risks to diplomatic cooperation and engagements. The emergence of these policy threats is calling for new and refreshing voices in standing up for collective action by public diplomacy actors in the international system.[53] In sustaining an international security system void of major conflicts and widespread wars, diplomatic economy remains a necessary factor to be considered by decision makers.[54] Resting on arguments that connect public diplomacy structures to the use of dialogue, policy systems discourage the use of force among states and promote states' responsibility to protect.

The pace and predictability of the international system is demonstrated by the changes in leadership and direction of individual state systems which practice public diplomacy.[55] When focusing on diplomatic threats, greater attention is put on social identity because a number of related issues such as terrorism, radicalization, maritime disputes, food security, human rights and immigration involve different actors and stretch across the international system. Consequently, diplomatic disputes arise and the call for strategic leadership, collaborations and partnerships becomes a necessity. The international system is experiencing challenges from new agendas of counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization. Aspects of terrorism such as extremism, cyber warfare and cyber terrorism are taking form of networked organizations such ISIS and Al Shabaab with structures which mirror some of the changes taking place in the diplomatic arena.[56] Terrorism is shaking the international system. However, for diplomatic cooperation, and collaborations to effectively confront security issues, it requires support from grass root movements by domestic publics, empowered citizens and private sectors with knowledge and standings in public diplomacy activities.

The international system is experiencing an increase in the numbers of human rights violations both regionally and globally.[57] Therefore, need arises to eliminate the deficiencies and create a new perspective of the peace and security among states. The international system is seeing a decline in state privacy and is going through an era where political freedom and civil liberties are taking control of information flow.[58] With no progress being made on gender equality, global movements are exposing the scale and severity of girls and women discrimination and violence.[59] The case of Japanese gender issues and the gender gap is categorized not just as economic drain but as a "global embarrassment". Japan government is called upon by its own individual citizens to advance and interact with foreign public on ways of promoting women empowerment and equality.

As conflict and natural disasters continue to affect development, peace and security globally, humanitarian crises are getting severe. Security crisis has put the world in a collective action-defining moment in which states and non-state actors are coming together in choice making processes. Global mechanisms aimed at peace and security reforms are prioritizing on conflict prevention and peace building.[60] Another emerging issue in foreign policy is multilateralism. Public diplomacy actors are increasingly focusing on being heard and finding solution to global problems through collective actions. According to Hockings, states strive to remain significant through networked and inclusive channels.[61] Issues which are global in nature are necessitating collective actions through thought leadership. Based on rational choice processes, the logic of multilateralism is captured on a cluster of five conditions: openness in trade and exchange; commitment to a rule-based set of relations; security cooperation; taming of power politics from stable and mutually gainful relations; and the spread of democracy.[62] States have different interests which are not easily aligned. And when it comes to guarding their sovereignty, states either go inter-national or supranational. The direction taken towards cooperation is driven by the desire to shape the world order and exercise global leadership in an inclusive practice of public diplomacy.[63]

Environmental challenges are many and plans to achieve a fairer, more prosperous and more respectful world environment are underway.[64] Countries have become aware of environment protection benefits and the urge to protect the environment has undoubtedly become a common understanding and development strategy of all countries of the world. As countries attempt to fulfil respective duties and obligations, environmental governance is taking form of joint efforts which are aimed at realization of mutual wins and world sustainable development.[65] States are taking individual steps in addressing environmental issues, however, no nation working alone can solve certain issues of environment which spill over across the national borders.

There are a number of environmental problems and challenges wreaking havoc on global health and livelihood.[66] Without cooperation, issues of global warming, sustainable urban development and mobility, biodiversity protection, climate change, energy transition and water pollution, conservation of marine

resources and other international externalities become a nightmare. In such cases, international environmental law is made applicable to all parties as agreed-upon outcomes with legal force.[67] The laws attempt to control pollution and depletion of natural resources within a framework of sustainable development by governing problems that arise between and among states. Critical moment for enhanced environmental conservation is continuing to rise and the need to double efforts to implement agreements and collectively made choices is crucial. Organizations such as IPCC and the UN are playing their roles in environmental conservation with aims of restating and raising ambitions to already signed agreements and pledges.[68]

RECONSIDERING INTEGRATIVE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY APPROACHES

According to the study, relevance, importance and potential of public diplomacy is often subjected to the forces of globalization. Policy issues confronting states are increasingly becoming global and are calling for public diplomacy that fits the information age. If governments are to identify and implement solutions to the regional challenges, then engagement of publics both at home and abroad is necessary. The international system is complex, full of differences and has networks which require understanding and engagements conducted through public diplomacy. A public diplomacy that is coordinated, more open and inclusive of a wide range of actors beyond governments alone. This is because foreign policy goals are achieved not only through cooperative engagement and ability to have a country's public diplomacy fit the challenges but also with a government which has the capacity to adapt to global changes.

The study holds that connecting with the regional publics has become one of the many priorities that states pursue. The finding resonates with Fisher's idea that states will still need to engage other states, small groups of particular influential individuals and from time to time, bring in military force in regional affairs. [69] The publics have become vital players in issues of international policy. Though viewed as passive recipients of diplomacy, according to the study, the public has greater say in government decisions. Each and every government has foreign policy priorities which are shared with other states and require joint action. However, reaching out to these publics is very important because to some extent, actions of these publics affect government's ability to deliver. Moreso, governments need to work together in the development and implementation of international policy solutions.

There is call to put the public back into public diplomacy. The study suggests that starting with what government officers are familiar with and applying it to engage with more diverse range of actors and with broader publics, Foreign Affairs Ministries should move beyond just messaging and seeing public diplomacy as a public relation activity to genuine diplomatic engagements of different governments at all stages of policy process. It advocates for co-creation and co-implementation of policy solutions whereby governments niche messages to specific groups about a country's foreign policy pillars.

The changing diplomatic environment and the need to bring more people into the practice of public diplomacy is gaining attention among states. Through internet, ambassadors are engaging differently into the World Wide Web by connecting with those who do not get invited to the decision-making processes. The study findings align with Huijgh's argument that the practice of public diplomacy is taking a shift and that the information age has brought civilian surge in that diplomatic engagements are based on knowledge and ideas that solution to common problems lie in the hands of the people across a region.[70] Accordingly, the study finds out that diplomatic engagements are effective with governments but more so with civilians. It argues out that governments understand their biggest diplomatic threat from other states' indifferences, inactions and withdrawals. Therefore, for a more seamless interaction, public diplomacy requires fusion of diplomatic challenges, of domestic and regional agendas and of governments and the foreign publics within a region.

According to the study, modern public diplomats are starting to dominate the diplomatic system. Hockings supports the study finding by stating that core diplomatic skills of negotiation, organization, representation and reporting still remain as valid as ever. However, with the changing international system, delivering real and timely progress on regional problems is the new sense of activism and flexibility that can only be realised when states adapt and find new ways of interacting.[71] Realization of policy goals is pinned to state's ability to know who affects state interests and where to find these people. Modern diplomats are inhabiting every corner of the world – not just the corridors of power and because they know the key partners, where to get information, where the influence is and who can make it happen, they see the world from other actors' perspectives and use the knowledge to inform own country's foreign policy making.

The interconnected world is becoming more complex and unique definition of state values and identity is starting to engage public diplomacy through value-based activities. The study argues out that diplomatic secrets will always be there, however, by bringing more people into the practice of public diplomacy, the study finding is supported by Anholt's argument that opportunities for dialogue are created, non-state actors are engaged and their views taken into consideration.[72] To get to know what other actors think of a country's foreign policy and where state interests lie, governments have to embrace creativity. Additionally, governments must attract interests by listening, explain and compete against the opinions of other voices within the regional bloc.

It is argued that public diplomacy should be everyone's activity – people-people exchanges and governments which allow their citizens the opportunity to play a role in promoting messages and persuading the domestic publics to live up to the reputation held by a state in the eyes of the foreign publics. In trying to achieve foreign policy goals, the study discovered that government policy experts who use public diplomacy as a means, stand a better chance of understanding the changing regional system and its need to overcome limited diplomatic assets as well as address the weaknesses of its country's regional and sub-regional image.

The study found out that as a tool of communication, strategic public diplomacy develops from cross coordination between governments, its consultative efforts in decision making processes and discussions on policy matters. Additionally, well channeled policy efforts give room for establishment of long-lasting peace and comprehensive public diplomacy information system. Integrative approaches in decision making processes aim at minimizing government costs. They focus on maximizing pressure on diplomatic tools with the ability to bring government actors back to the negotiation table.

The study observes that countries within a region can enrich their commitment by taking alliances to greater levels as a team. They can also actively and strongly support policy-oriented activities from all state actors and embrace democratic transparency and accountability that would bring consistency and coherence in policy actions among the member states. The study resonates with Nye's idea that if a state develops regional frameworks and embrace public diplomacy that is more open to the public and networks of power, its policy partnerships would yield beneficial outcomes.[73]

The study notes that there are approaches of public diplomacy that brings transparency in understanding what state governments are doing. This in turn allows room for organizational accountability and encourage foreign policy negotiations on equal terms. Aligning to Melissen's argument that there is competition between different players over the limited policy resources and budgets, and the study found out that governments are striving to move from a revolutionist perspective of privacy to treating others as players and decision makers in the regional system in pursuit of open model of multinationals.[74]

The study found out that a country with proper laid down guidelines and policies will always claim important position in the regional blocs. Such governments use diplomatic tools to build positive perception about themselves in the region, raise people's awareness in understanding cultures, increase participation in regional and international institutions and promote initiative talks.

The finding of the study notes that public diplomacy as a peaceful tool entails conversational dialogue between social political entities and regional governments. Buzan supports the finding by arguing out that public diplomacy is more likely to decrease the risk of regional conflicts and increase cooperation especially in situations where dialogues are embraced.[75] For example, Kenya's engagement with the neighboring countries indicates that its profound diplomacy can help in the resolution of the issues that lead to disagreements. The study acknowledges that relationship between Kenya and the other countries is vital and is of mutual benefit to all the concerned states.

Foreign policies if within a framework of supporting integration, becomes part of comprehensive strategic partnership in a region in which geopolitical issues influence policy objectives. Given a country's position which if very much appealing regionally, the willingness by other countries to invest in and support its policy objectives is high. This advantageous geographical position provides room to upgrade and impact positively. For instance, the coastline which carries the port of Mombasa makes Kenya a regional trade avenue. This therefore gives it the power to negotiate its interests. The downside of this is the fact that there have also been conflicting debates especially on border issues with Somali due to strategic resources housed within Indian Ocean waters.

CONCLUSION

In any given situation, government leaders must clearly communicate what they stand for. Backed up by the will and capacity to have values which are consistent, honest and truthful, public diplomacy is linking governments, people and foreign policies. The current information age has come with new with definition of public diplomacy focused on new players, new engagement methods, new vocabulary and approaches and new strategies. In response to the new environment, the many players are adopting different new methods of connecting people in addition to the new diplomatic concepts such as soft power and regionalism. The direction of public diplomacy is currently much more horizontal. That in which communities around the world are connecting to each other in both regional and international network facilitated by state governments. There is shift in how countries carry out their public diplomacy activities. These changes are brought about by factors such as the proliferation of international actors, the survival of global digital and real time technology and the rise of theoretical models of nation branding. Leading to reorientation of public diplomacy from top-down communication patterns to greater emphasis on people-people interactions and the call for integrative approaches.

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