

***International Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Communication and Engagement.*** Guy Golan, Sung-Un Yang, and Dennis Kinsey, eds. New York, NY: Peter Lang. 2015. 458 pages. \$179.95 hbk. \$43.95 pbk.

**Reviewed by:** Jim Macnamara, University of Technology Sydney.

This edited volume contains a number of chapters that argue in support of the concept of *integrated public diplomacy* as proposed by Guy Golan, a model that combines two-way communication and negotiation – what Joseph Nye describes as “soft power” – and media campaigns focussed on information distribution and persuasion. Furthermore, it proposes that public relations (PR) provides a model for public diplomacy to follow, and outlines the characteristics of a PR-led approach to public diplomacy.

As a multi-perspective overview of public diplomacy, particularly what is referred to as the *new public diplomacy*, it is a useful reference text. Chapters explore changes in public diplomacy since 9/11; public diplomacy in dealing with conflict such as between the US and Middle East countries; soft power; mediated diplomacy; ethical issues in public diplomacy; public diplomacy in NGOs and political parties; the role of diaspora; and the use of social media for public diplomacy; as well as several chapters discussing PR.

The book presents some original research, but this is quite dated in some cases, such as Chapter 15 by Bruce Dayton and Dennis Kinsey that cites a Q methodology study conducted in “the spring of 2007”, along with Chapter 12 and Chapter 18 that cites studies conducted in 2010. Overall, a relatively small amount of empirical data is presented in support of the central argument in this text. Most chapters present a polemical rather than an empirical account of public diplomacy.

Also, there are some flaws in the central argument presented in the book. For example, in Chapter 10, Hua Jiang states: “Based on the above trends existing in the extant research, it is safe to argue that public diplomacy can be seen as a form or a function of international public relations”. The “above trends” and “extant research” amount to a brief summary of normative public relations theory drawn from the Excellence study of PR, which is increasingly challenged by critical scholars. This chapter cites Jacquie L’Etang’s identification of three common functions of PR and public diplomacy, but fails to note that L’Etang is highly critical of Excellence theory and two-

way symmetrical notions of PR. Along with others such as Lee Edwards and Caroline Hodges in their text *Public Relations, Society and Culture*, Joanna Fawkes in her 2015 critical work on *Public Relations Ethics and Professionalism*, Priscilla Murphy in her numerous publications, and Magda Pieczka's pioneering critique of PR, she argues that two-way communication and dialogue are rare in PR practice and represent normative, not positive theories. Critics argue that PR is predominantly one-way information distribution, persuasion and, at times, propaganda.

Similarly, in Chapter 6 Eyun-Jung Ki cites "six commonalities" between public diplomacy and public relations identified by this author in a 2012 journal article. However, Ki fails to mention that the same article goes on to identify six key differences between PR and public diplomacy and advocates that public relations could realize its normative theorization and be more ethical if it adopted some of the key principles of public diplomacy – the opposite argument to that presented by Ki in Chapter 6 and by Golan et al. overall. Such alternative views and critiques are not discussed.

Some chapters also contain arguable generalizations such as "the advancement of communication technologies has helped the world become more united than ever before". As well as this opening sentence of Chapter 6, Eyun-Jung Ki continues: "This global village fostered by communication technologies has inspired the need to build and cultivate relationships between organizations or governments and their respective publics". In a number of chapters, a more critical and analytical approach would have made this text more useful to scholars and students.

In this respect, thank goodness for Nancy Snow. She provides one of the few chapters that contain a critical perspective. Snow insightfully shows that both public relations and public diplomacy need to improve their practices, such as increased listening rather than information dissemination, more attention to truth rather than propaganda, and better evaluation. In Chapter 21, James Pamment usefully points out that public relations is poorly evaluated with "little consensus on how to best measure influence". With the impact and influence of PR largely unsubstantiated, along with unrealized promises of dialogue and relationship-building, the argument that public diplomacy should adopt the practices of PR, or even be subsumed as part of international public relations, seems doubly questionable.

While finding some stimulating discussion in this book, this reviewer also finds it hard to agree with the lead editor who concludes in the final chapter (Chapter 24) that “America’s foreign engagement effort can only succeed if it is approached from the political campaign war room perspective”. Such top-down ‘command and control’ approaches are widely criticized in sociocultural theories of communication such as those espoused by Robert Craig and in contemporary research on public communication, citizen engagement, and political communication such as the work of Susan Bickford, Nico Carpentier, Stephen Coleman, and PR scholars such as Jim Grunig, Larissa Grunig, Bob Heath, and Kirk Hallahan.

Despite these limitations and weaknesses, this book does provide useful insights into contemporary practices of public diplomacy that have evolved far from diplomacy’s original focus on government-to-government communication through official diplomatic channels, as well as potential future directions and influences that invite (even demand) further critical analysis.