Moving to a new phase in public diplomacy research

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Introduction

Public diplomacy (PD) is a very young and developing field of study and practice and naturally struggles with critical questions of boundaries, theory, models, methodology, and practice. Many studies, primarily the epistemological ones, often begin with questions about the legitimacy of PD as an independent field of science. Several scholars have claimed that it may not be at all an independent field but rather a subfield of international relations or public relations (PR). Others, who believe it may be a field, argue that PD is still a fuzzy concept and lacks theoretical and methodological depth. The “legitimacy question” has been especially challenging to PD researchers because PD is the most multidisciplinary field in the social sciences, cutting across many disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, technology, and exact sciences. It is also playing run and catch with the rapidly developing and constantly changing landscapes of international relations, and the dramatic digital revolutions in communication.

PD became a substantial area during the Cold War, dominated by the delicate balance of nuclear weapons, and the global ideological battle for the hearts and minds of peoples around the world. It became again a critical element of foreign policy and national security, following the 9/11 terror attacks of al-Qaida on New York and Washington, D.C. and the emergence and domination of digital media. A new scholarly field is established when several conditions are met. It must be clearly distinguished from other scholarly fields; delineates several subfields, shares theories, models, and methodologies, has its own periodicals and sections or divisions in international scholarly association, establishes academic teaching programs and research centers and must win both internal and external recognition.

Fifteen years ago, I wrote an article about the state of art in PD research (Gilboa, 2008). I presented and critically evaluated attempts to theorize and
conceptualize PD. I also examined research methods used to investigate PD including models, case studies and comparative analysis. Although, the field has not yet developed a core theory or a major analytical model, much progress has been made in meeting all the other criteria of establishing a new scientific field. The progress can be best seen in several studies that examine patterns of research overtime in PD, in debates about the boundaries of the field, and in new frameworks for analysis and methodologies.

Due to space limitations, this chapter can only focus on selected major topics and issues and provide examples and illustrations that usually do not receive sufficient attention in existing research. If at all, it may only briefly touch upon topics that will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. This chapter will explore definitions of PD, meta-analysis of research output, moving to scholarly independence, boundaries, models, case studies and comparative analysis, evaluation, and PD’s potential contributions to combat global crises.

Definitions

The effort to find some order, direction, and research agenda in PD has been very frustrating because it has been marred by confusing terms, definitions, methodologies, and research questions. This is not unusual for a new multidisciplinary scientific field that must integrate theories, models, and ideas from several disciplines. But in PD this conceptual chaos seems to have been more severe and challenging then in the development of other disciplines or subdisciplines in the social sciences. Still, a definition of the core concept acceptable to most scholars in any scientific field is needed to advance both research and practice.

A few scholars of PD have been suggesting that PD is still a fussy concept that many actors use in very different ways for very different purposes and tasks. Almost every study of PD begins with a different definition of the phenomenon. It seems that 30 years ago, Signitzer and Coombs (1992), PR experts, probably offered the first modern definition of PD: it is “the way in which both government and private individuals and groups influence directly or indirectly those public attitudes and opinions which bear directly on another government’s foreign policy decisions” (p. 138). This definition was innovative and important because it recognized actors other than states and more accurately described what they did. Fitzpatrick, Fullerton, and Kendrick (2013) also explored conceptual connections between PR and PD.
Several definitions have long been trying to encapsulate in one sentence all the main characteristics of PD. Sharp (2005) defined PD as “the process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented” (p. 106). The next definition is often cited: PD “is used by states, associations of states, and nonstate actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relationships; and influence opinions and actions to advance interests and values” (Gregory, 2008, p. 274). Cull (2019, p. 3) proposed a much shorter definition: PD “is one of the ways in which an international actor seeks to manage the international environment.” Gregory’s definition may be too long and Cull’s wording too short. It seems that most PD scholars agree at least on the main characteristics of PD: actors, goals, and process. Gilboa (2016, p. 1297) attempted to propose such a formulation: “PD is a communication process states, nonstate actors, and organizations employ to influence the policies of a foreign government by influencing its citizens.”

This formulation suggests a two-step influence process: first, an actor employs direct or indirect communication to create supportive public opinion in another state; and second, the informed foreign public influences its government to adopt a friendly policy towards that actor. PD is designed to bring about understanding for an actor’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies. In conflicts, PD is used to defend an actor’s policies and attack those of the enemy or the other side (Wiseman, 2019). In other situations, the goal is to conduct a constructive dialogue, to build relationships, to understand the needs of the other side, to correct misperceptions and to jointly work for common causes. PD requires a capability to effectively use credible information to persuade different types of actors and audiences to understand, accept, and support policies and actions.

There is still much confusion in the literature about types of power and the relationship between PD and soft power. Wei (2020) suggested that the most important function of PD is to “transform a country’s general assets into soft power resources.” A different formulation would argue the opposite. Soft power provides resources that PD practitioners could use to achieve goals of foreign policy and national security. Power is the ability to influence others to obtain the outcomes one prefers (Nye, 2008, 2019). Today, there are five types of power in international relations: hard, soft, smart, collaborative, and sharp.

“Hard power” means obtaining outcomes by using or threatening to use force or sanctions or inducing compliance with rewards; “soft power” means obtaining outcomes by attracting and persuading peoples through values, policies, institutions, and culture; “smart power” refers to the combination of
hard and soft power, where each reinforces the other; “collaborative power”
denotes a bottom-up process of obtaining preferred outcomes by mobilizing
and connecting global communities around a cause via digital media; and
“sharp power” means utilization of distraction, “false identity,” “false informa-
tion,” and manipulation. It is the abuse of soft power through initiatives often
pursued by authoritarian regimes such as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran
(Walker, 2018).

Cull (2019a) argued that soft power was useful for the study of powerful states
but less relevant to vulnerable states and contemporary global crises. He sug-
gested to reframe soft power as a new category of “reputational security” (RS).
It refers to the ability of states to achieve legitimacy to their sovereignty over
territory in international public perception. He thought that Ukraine lacked
RS when in 2014 it lost Crimea with little resistance from the international
community. RS demonstrates the difficulty of differentiating among goals,
conditions, resources, and techniques in PD. The goal is to deter aggression
against weak states or receive support when deterrence fails; RS is a strategic
condition; soft power represents resources needed to achieve this condition;
and there are specific soft power techniques states can use to acquire RS.

While soft power is relevant to states and nonstate actors, RS applies exclu-
sively to states. It is also limited to rare threats against the territorial integrity
of states. RS cannot replace soft power, but it has the potential to expand the
applicability of soft power to conflicts and war. To a certain extent, smart
power does this function. In 2022, Ukraine had gained RS. It didn’t deter
Vladimir Putin but was sufficient to trigger massive military and diplomatic
aid. The war in Ukraine and violence in other parts of the world, showed that
contrary to predictions made after the end of the Cold War, hard power and
protracted full-scale wars have not become obsolete. PD scholars may have to
think about ways to expand and better integrate concepts of power and RS.

Much of the PD research during the Cold War focused on the information
battle between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union. The end of this
war and the emergence of the “soft power” concept led scholars to focus on
the role of PD in time of peace. In the world of practice, the US, the remaining
sole superpower, dismantled the United States Information Agency (USIA)
believing it had no role to play in the post-Cold War era (Cull, 2012). Due to
the 9/11 terror attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. scholars returned
to the use of PD in conflict situations. The Covid-19 pandemic and the war
in Ukraine have also increased research on this type of PD. Still, much more
attention to PD in conflict situations and global crises will have to increase in
the next phase of research in PD.
The two main parent disciplines of PD are communication (public) and international relations (diplomacy). Both consider PD as a subfield of their respective disciplines. Sevin, Metzgar, and Hayden (2019, p. 4821) found that 15 of the 30 journals that since 1965 published the most work about PD, 11 percent of the articles they analyzed (n=234), were in international relations. Communication was ranked second with five journals accounting for 5.5 percent of the articles analyzed (n=124). Yet, Gilboa (2008, p. 74) identified no less than 13 disciplines or subdisciplines contributing knowledge to PD.

**Meta-analysis**

One sign of progress, reflection, and evaluation is the emergence of several meta-analysis studies of research and publications in PD over time. For this important contribution, however, scholars defined somewhat different research purposes and employed different time frames, methodologies, and analytical categories. Still these studies have helped to develop better understanding of boundaries, major trends, and core issues.

Vanc and Fitzpatrick (2016) produced one of the first quantitative surveys of research in PD. It was limited, however, to the period between 1990 and 2014 and only to works published by PR scholars. During that period, they identified 120 works: journal articles (n=102, 85 percent), books (n=4, 3 percent), book chapters (n=12, 10 percent), and monographs (n=2, 2 percent). After 2003, they found a marked increase in interest in PD research among PR scholars (n=116, 97 percent), compared with only 4 works published during 1990–97 (n=4, 3 percent), and no works during 1998–2002. They analyzed the data by journals, authorship, topics, methodologies, and contributions to PD theory.

Sevin, Metzgar, and Hayden (2019) expanded the time frame (1965–2017), the relevant disciplines (social sciences), and the outlets (all journals). They assembled peer-reviewed articles published in English from various datasets and identified a total of 2,124 PD-focused articles. They analyzed the data by volume, journals, disciplines, topics, states, regions, and key words in topics. In terms of volume, they found that from 1965 to 2001, the annual overall output was in single digits and accounted for less than 4 percent (75 articles) of the entire dataset. But from 2001 to 2017, the number of articles published each year rose dramatically, and from 2008 to 2017 reached over 100 articles annually. In 2017, the number of published articles was more than seven times higher than the number in 2001. Ayhan (2019) adopted a narrower goal. He wanted to create a taxonomy of PD perspectives and for that purpose identified
and analyzed 160 articles published between 1985 and 2017 with the term PD in their title. He identified five main perspectives divided mainly between state and nonstate actors (they will be discussed below).

To identify methodologies PD researchers have been using, Hasnat and Leshner (2022) reviewed 58 articles published in eight issues (2019–20) of the Place Branding and Public Diplomacy. They reviewed 58 articles and found 12 theoretical and conceptual articles, and 46 other types of articles. As expected, they found a wide range of methodologies from discourse analysis to big data. Again, as expected, the most popular methodology was case studies (18 articles or 39 percent), followed by surveys (8 or 17 percent). Content analysis and interviews were also very common, each sharing 7 or 15 percent of the articles. Other methodologies like discourse analysis, network analysis, and experiments were scarcely used.

Since 2003, Gregory (2003–) publishes several times a year a comprehensive list of Diplomacy’s Public Dimension: Books, Articles, Websites. His lists demonstrate a substantial growth of high-quality publications in PD. The Oxford Bibliographies published two lists of works on PD, one from the perspective of communication (Gilboa, 2019) and the other from the perspective of international relations (Huijgh, Gregory, & Melissen, 2020).

**Scholarly independence**


Textbooks and handbooks also demonstrate the strength of any scientific field. The growing literature in PD includes the second edition of The Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy (Snow & Cull, 2020), International Public Relations and Public Diplomacy (Golan, Yang, & Kinsey, 2014), The Routledge International Handbook of Diaspora Diplomacy (Kennedy, 2022), and City
Diplomacy (Amiri & Sevin, 2020). The USC Center on Public Diplomacy publishes *Perspectives on Public Diplomacy*, an excellent series of extended papers and monographs in PD. Clingendael, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, has a similar series. Surprisingly, perhaps, texts in international relations often ignore PD, but any major text or survey of diplomacy, international communication, or international public relations includes a chapter on PD.

The field has been expanded significantly in international scholarly associations, especially in the areas most relevant to PD: international relations and communication. Two divisions at the International Studies Association (ISA), Diplomatic Studies and International Communication, have been regularly sponsoring panels, roundtables, and posters on PD at their annual conferences. The International Communication Association (ICA) has been doing the same at their divisions of Public Relations and Political Communication. In 2015, ICA established for the first time, an Interest Group exclusively dedicated to PD. The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) have been sponsoring papers and sometimes panels on PD, mostly by its divisions of Public Relations and International Communication.

Several universities in the US and around the world offer various degree programs in PD including the University of Southern California (the first graduate program), Syracuse University, George Washington University, University of Siena in Italy, Reichman University in Israel, The Jagiellonian University in Kraków in Poland, Beijing Foreign Studies University in China, and the Kyoto University of Foreign Studies in Japan. Most schools of international or global studies and foreign service, especially members of the Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs (APSIA), include certificate programs, concentrations, or at least a few courses in PD.

Several states and universities established research centers dedicated exclusively to PD such as the Center on Public Diplomacy (CPD) at the University of Southern California, the Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication at George Washington University, the Biden Center for Diplomacy and Engagement at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Centers for Public Diplomacy at the Ewha Womans University in South Korea and Tsinghua University in China. The University of Shanghai for Science and Technology established the Shanghai Institute of Public Diplomacy (SIPD). Many research centers on international relations, diplomacy, or international communication, such as Clingendael or the Oxford Digital Diplomacy.
Research Group at Oxford University, conduct significant research projects in PD. Several Centers, like CPD and the Center for International Communication at Bar-Ilan University, offer basic and advance training programs for practitioners in PD.

Almost simultaneously with the evolution of the academic field of PD, many international actors: governments, international and supranational organizations, and nonstate actors, have recognized the importance and value of PD and established administrative bodies to plan and manage PD programs and activities with different titles such as departments, units, divisions, or bureaus. Embassies, consulates, and diplomatic legations have also added special units for PD and appoint specialists to manage them. These units have required allocation of resources and manpower as well as training and coordination with both other functions at the embassies and the relevant departments back home at the foreign ministry. Much research has been conducted on the use of PD by ministries of foreign affairs and embassies, especially of digital media, but to date, no comprehensive study has been done on how actors organize and manage PD in terms of organizational units, hierarchies, manpower, and budgets. This should be a major topic in the new agenda for PD research.

Ministries of foreign affairs and various organizations published specific manuals for PD or included chapters on PD in general manuals for foreign policy and diplomacy. With a few exceptions, however, these manuals are kept for internal use only and are not available to scholars. The US Department of State and the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs for example, published manuals for PD available to the public. The NATO Handbook includes a chapter on PD. The Asia–Europe Foundation (2021) published a Handbook for Public Diplomacy practitioners in a unique format of combining academic articles with interviews with practitioners. It might be interesting to note the topics this publication assumed PD officials should know including essentials of PD, strategic communications, digital diplomacy, stakeholder engagement, evaluation, cultural diplomacy, and dangers and annoyances, and opportunities: the contemporary communications environment.

**Boundaries**

Scholars have attempted to map boundaries of PD. Gregory (2016) drew boundaries based on what he thought PD is and is not. He suggested four boundaries: (1) a distinction between diplomacy and foreign policy; (2) a framework for diplomacy’s public dimension; (3) a separation between diplomacy and civil
society; and (4) differences between diplomacy and governance. Boundaries 1, 3, and 4 share several similarities but are also different. Gregory is right to claim that fine tuning of these boundaries is difficult and keeps changing. For example, actors employ civil-society actors to achieve goals and values, but these actors also independently employ PD to advance their own goals and values. Thus, civil-society actors are both actors and instruments. Those who deny the autonomous role of civil-society actors in diplomacy draw the line too narrowly. But those who claim that any civil-society actor or a private multinational firm is a diplomatic actor, draw the line too broadly. The space in between these extreme polars is difficult to pinpoint. Gregory’s attempt has been useful but limited in scope and methodology. He did not sufficiently explain how to do the fine tuning between too narrow or too broad boundaries.

Ayhan (2019) sought to clarify boundaries based on the approach to nonstate actors in PD studies. He analyzed 160 articles published between 1985 and 2017 with the term PD in their title to create a taxonomy of perspectives. He identified five main perspectives:

1. State-centric perspectives that restrict PD to state agencies in a coherent way rejecting diplomatic actorness of nonstate actors completely.
2. Neo-statist perspectives that reserve the term PD for states only, while offering alternative terms such as social diplomacy or grassroots diplomacy for similar nonstate actor activities.
3. Nontraditional perspectives that define diplomacy based not on status, but on capabilities, accepting some nonstate actor activities as PD.
4. Society-centric perspectives that share most traits with nontraditional perspectives, except that they define the public as people in the global public sphere.
5. Accommodative perspectives that accommodate nonstate actor activities within the realm of PD, but only if those activities meet certain criteria.

This analysis is useful and to a certain extent is based on Gregory’s formulations, but it represents perspectives mainly within international relations and is limited to actors and to the interplay between states and nonstate actors.

PD scholars have used very different concepts and terms to understand and advance the field such as layers, components, functions, foundations, pathways, perspectives, and logics. Cowan and Arsenault (2008) suggested 3 layers of PD: monologic, one-way communication; dialogic, two-way or multidirectional communication; and collaborative relationship building. Cull (2008) thought that research and practice in PD should focus on 5 components: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, international exchanges, and international
broadcasting. Ten years later (Cull, 2019b), he incorporated these components into a larger framework which he called foundations for global engagement in the digital age. He added nation branding and partnership to his original five components.

Fitzpatrick (2010) surveyed the PD literature and found six main functions: advocacy, communication, relationship management, promotion, political engagement, and warfare. Sevin (2017) identified six pathways of connection to public opinion: attraction, benefit of doubt, socialization, direct influence, agenda setting, and framing. Ayhan (2019) explored five perspectives. Zaharna (2022) developed and elaborated on three logics in PD: individual, relational, and holistic. Each scholar used a different concept to capture the essence of PD, but the multiple terms do not help to consolidate the field. Attempts to analyze boundaries are done mostly horizontally instead of building blocks and moving in stages towards a more comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach. This deficiency must be corrected in the new agenda for PD research, and researchers have to agree on fewer terms that would be the most succinct, relevant, and useful.

One of the most neglected areas in PD research is ethics. Efforts to influence or change public opinion, particularly in the social media in an era of disinformation, fake news, sharp power, and digital authoritarianism, requires more transparency and strict adherence to ethical norms and principles (Bjola & Pamment, 2018). Several scholars extended and applied to PD ethical standards practiced in specific relevant disciplines. Seib (2009a) explained that ethical principles in journalism were very similar to standards that should guide PD practitioners. Fitzpatrick (2017, p. 88) extended ethics in PR to PD and presented the following research questions: “Who decides whose or what interests are served in public interest communications campaigns and programs? How is public interest defined? Who determines what positive behavioral change looks like?” These questions remain very relevant today. Comor and Bean (2012) concluded that only ethical PD, one that “embraces genuine (rather than contrived) dialogue,” can be effective. Ethical PD certainly expands the boundaries of PD and should receive more attention in the new research agenda for PD.

**Methodologies**

The building of any new scholarly field requires development of adequate methodologies. Very few scholars attempted to develop models and theories
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Most have used case studies and a few conducted comparative analyses. Most researchers used qualitative techniques, only a few collected empirical data and analyzed it via quantitative methods. Popular techniques include content analysis and interviews with policymakers, practitioners, journalists, and scholars. New, more integrated methods would have to be developed and used in the next research phase.

Only states conducted traditional PD towards public opinion in specific states or around the world. In recent decades, PD scholars have emphasized the need to add nonstate actors to research on PD (Lee & Ayhan, 2015). Part I of this volume also includes primarily nonstate actors. A few experts thought that adding nonstate actors combined with digital media has revolutionized PD so much, that it should be called “the new public diplomacy” (Melissen, 2005; Seib, 2009b; Pamment, 2012). Today, most PD scholars have abandoned the term and use only PD, but they still consider the distinction between states and nonstate actors as a major factor in the attempts to chart the boundaries of the field and develop new theories. Yun (2022), however, argued that moving too much and too fast in research on the PD of nonstate actors has distorted the centrality of states in the conduct of PD. The obvious answer is to create a reasonable balance in research of PD between states and nonstate actors.

Scholars have been lamenting the absence of operational models for research on PD. This is still a major deficiency. Most of the existing models have been anchored in specific disciplines. Entman’s (2008) highly popular model of mediated PD emerged from communication, constructed around the American political system, and was mostly relevant to liberal democracies. At the same time, Gilboa (2008, pp. 72–3) suggested an integrative framework for analysis of PD based on time frames and matching instruments of PD, that is, immediate (advocacy), intermediate (diaspora diplomacy), or long (international exchanges). Golan (2013) adopted a similar approach. More recent attempts include Zhu’s (2021) adaptive model, designed to offer a framework for the selection of PD tools; and Zhang’s (2020) PD radar framework consisting of two crossing axes representing ethics (compassion and manipulation) and efficacy (narratives and rational arguments), and five concentric circles that represent goals of PD, power of PD, “worldviews” underlying PD practices, and relevant theories. These two recent models are interesting, but they are very complex, cover too many variables, and would be difficult to apply.

Several studies dealt with methodologies in PD research. But a special issue of Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (Vol. 18, Issue 3, 2022) deserves a special citation. The various articles combine disciplinary methods in history, sociology, and communications with techniques including statistical analysis,
interviews, and experiments, and applications to case studies of global media, digital media, culture, and evaluation. In the new research agenda, methodologies have to cross much more disciplinary boundaries.

Case studies and qualitative techniques are still the main methodologies in PD research. Case studies provide the foundations for an emerging field, but much more comparative analysis and quantitative techniques are needed to develop, construct, and test theories and models of PD (Gilboa, 2008; Ociepka, 2018). Case studies would be still useful in studying exceptional or neglected actors, strategies, or programs in PD. Ociepka (2017) and Lam (2023) produced two of the best books on the PD of a single country (Poland and Vietnam, respectively). Studies of the PD of terrorist organizations have also been very useful. Melki and Jabado (2016) examined the PD conducted by a terrorist organization, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). They applied Entman’s model of mediated PD and found interesting results including the use of sophisticated branding tactics to recruit fighters and deter foes.

Bos and Melissen (2019) argued that PD researchers should pay more attention to nonstate actors using PD in conflict situations outside the Western world. They examined how two rebel groups in Mali used digital media to enhance their communications with global audiences. They found that social media increased the power and influence of the rebel groups on the international stage. Golan, Arceneaux, and Soule (2019, p. 95) investigated the PD of the Catholic Church via qualitative textual analysis of Pope Francis speeches. His speeches, they found, rely mostly “on narratives of universal identity and values, shared responsibility, and calls to action.”

Similarly, in the last decade, there has been more interesting and useful comparative research in PD that has advanced theoretical and empirical dimensions of PD. The comparative research output can be divided into three groups: frameworks for analysis, comparisons between two actors and comparative analysis of several countries. Brown (2012) distinguished among four paradigms of PD that could be used for comparative analysis: extension of diplomacy, national projection, cultural relations, and political warfare. Pamment (2012) applied comparatively a three-category framework: overview, evaluation, and campaigns to the PD of the US, the UK, and Sweden. Sevin (2017) developed his own framework for analysis consisting of six pathways described earlier, and applied them to the PD of the US, Sweden, and Turkey. White and Radic (2014) compared message strategies adopted by ministries of foreign affairs of eight countries in transition – recent members or candidates to join the European Union including Iceland, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Turkey. They conducted content analysis
of the PD messages these ministries posted on their websites and correlated them with economic development, level of democracy, and perceptions of the country.

Lee and Lin (2017) did a comparative analysis of information subsidies for PD, the governments of the US, China, and Singapore used through online newsrooms. In PR, information subsidies refer to controlled access to information and materials that come with little effort or cost to the recipient. This is a comparative analysis of the traditional classic one-way communication via means such as press releases. Arif, Golan, and Moritz (2014) produced an interesting case study of mediated PD via a comparison of the relations the US and the Taliban pursued with the Pakistani media. Bali, Karim, and Rached (2018) also conducted an interesting comparison by looking at how the US Consulate General in Erbil and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) representation in Washington used Facebook as a PD tool to influence their intended foreign audiences.

Another interesting example is the study by Lien and Tang (2022) who compared the Chinese Confucius Centers in the US with the US Cultural Centers in China. They found that the development paths of both institutions were closely related to the development and transformation of Sino–US political relations. Comparative analysis appeared also in specific areas of PD such as cultural diplomacy (Kizlari & Fouseki, 2018), digital diplomacy (Bjola & Jiang, 2015), international exchanges (Mawer, 2017; Ayhan & Snow, 2021), sports diplomacy (Kobierecki, 2020), and diaspora diplomacy (Gilboa, 2022).

**Evaluation**

Evaluation of PD strategies and programs has always been a critical issue because it exposes effective versus ineffective policies. There has not been much good scholarly research on evaluation, but certain progress has been made in the last decade. Scholars identified several obstacles to evaluation: structural, financial, cultural, conceptual, and administrative (Banks, 2011, 2020). Researchers (Buhmann & Sommerfeldt, 2019; Sommerfeldt & Buhmann, 2019) found that officials in the Department of State were under organizational pressure to pursue evaluation, but faced major obstacles such as unclear goals, not knowing how to evaluate, the difficulty of measuring long-term results, lack of training and resources, lack of a standardized set of evaluation practices, the absence of a single authority that directs how
evaluation should be done, and tension between diplomacy practitioners in Washington, D.C. and those in the field.

Directors of PD units, however, are not always interested in evaluation either because they think it would be a waste of scarce resources, believe they know in advance what the results would be, or fear revelations of failures that opponents of PD would use to limit or even eliminate the entire PD program. When they do try to evaluate what they do, they often confuse outputs with outcomes. They count activities and investments but not actual results. Without serious evaluation, however, policymakers are operating in the dark not knowing whether their initiatives and programs are achieving the intended results. Banks (2020) explained that three elements determine successful evaluation: strong and effective leadership that values evaluation, an administrative structure that supports evaluation, and sufficient resources.

An excellent evaluation study with significant theoretical and empirical implications for the next phase of research in PD, is a study of the effects of an important instrument of PD, high-level visits by national leaders to other countries, on public opinion in those countries (Goldsmith, Horiuchi, & Matush, 2021). The authors combined a dataset of the international travels of 15 leaders from nine countries over 11 years, with surveys conducted in 38 host countries. They successfully proved a causation between the visits and positive approval levels of the visiting leaders in the eyes of the local publics. Moreover, they also found that PD activities: increasing awareness of the leaders themselves and their country and conveying positive messages, often on the hosts, were a significant factor in facilitating the positive results. This research was significant because it dealt with a crucial measurement issue in PD and employs quantitative statistical data to test a possible causation relationship.

Evaluation is related to planning and decision-making. Cortés and Jamieson (2020) suggested how to design evaluative research in PD. They focused on listening to foreign publics as the main variable, but with little modification, their model could be broadened to the entire planning and decision-making processes in PD. The authors made three recommendations for any research design in PD:

1. Identify an issue requiring PD programs and investigate why it exists in the first place.
2. Design a PD program that could effectively address the issue including the setting of clear and measurable goals.
3. Determine effectiveness via collection of public opinion data at several points of time.
The authors proposed a sequence that starts with a perceived issue and moves through stages of listening to programs and evaluation. The process, however, could begin with listening to identify an issue, following the design and implementation of PD programs, listening could become a feedback instrument.

**Global crises**

The world has been facing several growing global crises that are threatening humanity: health pandemics like Covid-19, climate change, disinformation, growing gaps between poor and rich states, refugees, populism, warfare, nuclear proliferation, and nuclear war. Coping with all these challenges requires much adaption, cooperation, and coordination among all international actors including public and private, states, international and non-governmental organizations, and multinational corporations. PD can help to promote the understanding and cooperation needed to deal effectively with these global crises, primarily via networking and building relations (Zaharna, Arsenault, & Fisher, 2013; Zaharna, 2022).

Manor and Pamment (2022) devoted a special journal issue to the effects of Covid-19 on PD policies and activities. It took on a unique format of 12 short case studies about the impact of Covid-19 on the present and future of PD. The format was unique but not the fundamental approach to research in PD. The articles were written on states only including Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Romania, Russia, Sweden, the UK, and the US. The method was the classic case study, and the topics were human-centered PD, museum diplomacy, diaspora diplomacy, reputational security, digital diplomacy, the 2020/21 Tokyo Olympic Games, and celebrity diplomacy. The issue only laid down ideas for more fundamental research on global pandemics.

Hellmann and Oppermann (2022) provided an example of innovative research on Covid-19 and PD by investigating the Chinese government use of photographs to cope with worldwide criticism of its handling of the pandemic. They combined PD concepts: strategic narratives, non-verbal communication, and public opinion surveys to explore the impact of photographs – distributed by the regime’s news agency, Xinhua – on international public opinion. The photographs had a positive effect on China’s international image, but this effect was moderated by levels of political knowledge among the target audiences.

Pamment (2021) used the Swedish handling of the Covid-19 pandemic to propose adding a theoretical layer to the classic PD communication process.
between two actors. He suggested a “theory of disruption” that described the activities of a third party, nonstate actors such as a group of motivated trolls, an organized advocacy group, or agents of a hostile country, that challenge and disrupt governmental messages. This approach may be relevant to the coping with other global crises discussed in this section.

Fewer studies with less insights have been conducted on the potential of PD to deal with other global crises. Climate diplomacy refers mostly to normative studies and manuals telling officials how diplomacy could be used to deal with the global climate crisis (Hsu et al., 2015; Hale, 2018; Tänzler, Ivleva, & Hausotter, 2021). Effective strategy in this case requires a substantial effort to convince elites and audiences around the world how serious the climate change crisis is and how urgent is the need to adopt effective measures to limit it. Sukhorolska (2016) wrote on Western utilization of PD to promote democracy, and Cooper (2019) advocated changes in PD needed to fight populism; Pamment, Dolea, and Ingenhoff (2017) edited an interesting special issue on PD and the refugee crisis in Europe, and Kothari and Tsakarestou (2021) wrote about PD and the refugee crisis in Greece. Yet, most proposals for combatting global crises do not include PD programs in their strategies, and this is another new idea for both research and cooperation between scholars and practitioners.

There are many obstacles PD faces in combatting global crises including fundamental disagreements on the nature of the crises; differing or contradictory national or international interests and rivalries; domestic constraints; disagreement on the right ways to solve the crises; lack of cooperation among international actors; the decline of democracy, the rise of political populism and digital authoritarianism; and the combination of social media and fake news. Thus, the first task is to recognize the obstacles and their myriad sources and develop a joint comprehensive PD strategy and programs that would utilize all the available PD instruments, both to overcome the obstacles and promote the policies needed to cope with the crises. The UN would be the natural place for building such an initiative, but this international body has become a corrupt, highly politicized, and ineffective organization. To create an alternative, the powers will have to adjust an existing international body such as the World Trade Organization or set up an entirely new international mechanism. The alternative body will have to build a strong department of PD, and this should also be a topic on the new PD research agenda.

Any new research agenda for PD must include considerable attention to possible effects of the global crises on PD, ways PD can be employed to resolve or limit them, and obstacles to that employment. Preliminary research on
PD and global crises has already begun. More attention has been given to Covid-19 compared to the other crises, but the whole area should be much more expanded and developed. This would be also an opportunity to use and integrate much better multidisciplinary approaches to PD.

Conclusion

There has been much debate on whether PD is an independent field of study or not. Scholars and practitioners have debated definitions, theories, boundaries, disciplines, models, principles, instruments, and methodologies. This analysis of the field reveals that PD is already meeting some of the major criteria for the establishment of a new field of science. There are many more students and faculty interested and specializing in PD, more academic programs and research centers, and many more practitioners who run and conduct PD activities. Despite the gaps between scholars and practitioners, a PD community has already been established.

This chapter and the other chapters in this volume show that much progress has been made in the field during the last two decades, and it seems now that there is less confusion and debate and more agreement on the value of PD to foreign policy and international relations. But there is still a long road to go. Most PD scholars agree that progress must include the construction of broad bridges, between disciplines, between islands of theory, and between theory and practice. Today, there are more islands of theory, big and small, and the next phase requires expansion and construction of new bridges among them.

PD is a very multidisciplinary field. Much of contemporary research is still conducted within disciplinary boundaries. There are gaps between disciplinary approaches to PD, and the next phase of research will have to develop ways to overcome these gaps, create and integrate multidisciplinary research mainly by close cooperation between scholars from different fields.

There could be a way to develop an approach to PD, an “instrumental approach,” which has the potential of promoting a theoretical core, overcoming disciplinary barriers, and encouraging closer linkages among scholars and between scholars and practitioners. Diplomacy is an instrument of foreign policy, and PD is an instrument of diplomacy. There are various PD instruments or tools practitioners employ and scholars study. These include advocacy, media relations, international broadcasting, international exchanges, cultural diplomacy, foreign aid, economic diplomacy, sports diplomacy, international public relations, place branding, corporate/business diplomacy, dias-
pora diplomacy, city diplomacy, citizen diplomacy, NGOs, international law/lawfare, digital diplomacy, and science diplomacy.

The instrumental approach has several advantages. Several instruments are discipline dependent, but a few such as foreign aid, corporate diplomacy, or diaspora diplomacy cut across several disciplines. The instrumental approach may help to clarify the place of actors in PD processes. Certain actors such as international organizations, corporations, or NGOs are used as PD tools by states, but they also act as independent actors using PD tools to advance their own agenda. The instrumental approach could also help to amalgamate concepts, models, and methodologies. Although Zhu (2021) did not use this approach, his normative study of PD tools decision-makers select, demonstrated its potential contribution to new PD research.

PD is also a developing field of practice. Scholars are studying what government agencies and NGOs plan and do, especially in areas of digital channels. Scholars also develop normative and prescriptive approaches that tell policymakers and officials what they should do to achieve PD goals. Yet there is still a considerable gap between scholars and officials and between theory and practice. Close collaboration between the two groups can help scholars to improve their research on issues that are important for practitioners, and the latter can help scholars to do more relevant and useful research.

Theory construction is needed not only to guide research but also to unify and consolidate the various subfields and areas in PD into one core. We do not have yet a theory or even competing theories of PD. We have attempts to theorize issues or limited areas in PD (Gilboa, 2022). Theory development requires much abstract thinking, imagination, and creativity. Not enough scholars are devoting time and energy to theory development. Much of contemporary research is based on case studies and qualitative methodology. Case studies are important for the initial phases of research but insufficient for the next phase. There is a greater need to move into comparative analysis across the main issues of PD. Sophisticated comparative analysis also provides vital foundations for theory development and testing.

The next phase in PD research requires much more creativity and innovation. Boden (2004) distinguished among three main roads to true scientific creativity: exploration – using existing tools to create a new point in existing space; combination – making unfamiliar combinations of familiar ideas, and transformative or revolutionary creativity – the most elusive and rare that completely shuffles the cards. Despite criticism over the distinction between combinational and transformational creativity, all of Boden’s concepts may
be helpful to seek creativity in PD research and practice. This idea may be reinforced by her own application of her theory to history of art (Boden, 2010) and artificial intelligence (Boden, 2014). Given the multidisciplinary nature of PD research, the combination road seems to be the most promising. Creativity is certainly needed to cope with global crises and developing ways to deal with them. The next phase in PD research and practice must be much more creative and innovative.

References


