



**International Relations
Doctoral School**

THESIS COLLECTION

Lilla Simon-Nagy

Public diplomacy

Ph.D. dissertation

Supervisor:

**Bradean-Ebinger Nelu, Ph.D.
professor**

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**School of Social Sciences
Institute of International Studies**

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1. Premise of the research and relevance of the topic

Besides military and economic power the international competitiveness and latitude of nation states relies on their image as well. Several countries have realized the importance of country image and focus on foreign audiences – general public, opinion leaders and elites – beyond the circle of diplomats.

Public diplomacy supports traditional diplomacy by creating a positive, receptive attitude in foreign countries. The goal of public diplomacy is to win the hearts and minds of foreign audiences via communication – by informing and building relationships.

My research covers the history and methodology of public diplomacy, strategies of other states, as well as the media analysis of the impact of Hungary's EU presidency and a public opinion survey on the Hungarian image in order to discover the communications niche that should be in focus of our long term communications efforts.

I started research on public diplomacy in 2005 at the Corvinus University of Budapest related to my thesis and continued studying the subject at the International Relations Doctoral School at the same institute. Between September 2008 and March 2009 I have done research at the Public Diplomacy and Global Communications Institute of George Washington University in Washington D.C. as a Fulbright Visiting Researcher.

In Hungary I have researched the potentials of Hungarian public diplomacy and the effects of Hungary's EU presidency via interviews with experts and media analysis.

I have worked on the country image study published in my dissertation as an employee of Avantgarde Business Communications, Budapest, strategic partner of Financial Dynamics.

2. Research methods

My research is based on the disciplines of international relations and communication studies.

Besides studying the literature of public diplomacy I conducted several interviews with public diplomacy professionals and studied public diplomacy strategies.

My analysis is largely qualitative but I have also made quantitative analysis where possible based on public opinion surveys and media coverage.

3. Conclusions of the dissertation

3.1 Country image has an effect on international competitiveness and latitude

Image building is a long term effort and it is hard to measure its results. Nevertheless, the impact of country image may be witnessed everyday – for example through the „country of origin effect“.

The importance of country image is the most visible at times of crisis communication: a stable image may support the interests of the state while the lack of a well composed image may result in a serious crisis. For example in the case of Denmark the Mohamed caricatures scandal was the first information the majority of the muslim world received about Denmark which resulted in a serious image crisis, even exports of Denmark fell back by half in those regions.

The recent image history of the United States is an interesting case as well: country image of the U.S. has significantly improved after the election of Obama, but it is still a question weather he can realize his foreign policy goals and have a long term positive impact one America’s image.

3.2 Public opinion has an impact on foreign policy

Public opinion forms foreign policy decisions via formal decision making processes and also in a less formal way, via expression of public opinion that has an impact on politicians, thirdly via tourism and investment decisions. The impact of public opinion on foreign policy decision making may be proved by studying the American movements against the Vietnam war or the communication of those countries willing to enter the EU. Media has a primary effect on public opinion and new communications techniques such as global television or internet make the expression of those opinions more easy through such phenomena as the „Vietnam syndrome” or the „internet syndrome”.

3.3 Countries make efforts to shape their image due to the above mentioned reasons

Several countries make efforts to shape their image: public diplomacy strategies of such countries as the U.S., Switzerland or Romania express the will to conduct public diplomacy in order to form international image. Although the EU is not a country in a traditional sense and the EU does rarely use the

expression „public diplomacy” the Community is working on the evolution of a common public diplomacy strategy as expressed in a communications material prepared on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the EU. Key element of this effort is the Press and Public Diplomacy Section of the Commission in Washington D.C. – as detailed in a case study in the dissertation.

3.4 Messages targeting foreign and domestic audiences may not be separated since they form country image together

Due to modern information and communication technologies messages targeting domestic and foreign audiences may not be separated anymore. This could be witnessed in the case of the Hungarian EU presidency as well according to the media coverage analysis detailed in the dissertation. Based on my research 49 % of foreign coverage exclusively reported on internal affairs when mentioning the presidency, 35 % mentioned professional work carried out by the presidency and 14 % covered both.¹

¹ The rest of the coverage mentioned other topics.

3.5 Communications niche of a Hungarian public diplomacy strategy may be innovation

Based on the above mentioned reasons it is clear that Hungary needs to develop its own public diplomacy strategy in order to be competitive on the long run. Based on the comparison of the results of two public opinion surveys it is highly likely, that the communications segment of Hungary may be. The most comprehensive study on Hungarian's opinion on country image was conducted by Gallup Institute. I have compared the results of this survey with the results of my research carried out among foreign communications professionals about Hungary's image and a SWOT analysis based on this later survey. I was eager to know whether there is a theme or subject that both Hungarians and foreigners regard as the strength of the Hungarian image, since this could be a successful communications segment.

Both studies underline that culture and tourism are important elements of a complete Hungarian country image, these characteristics make it possible to recognize the country. Nevertheless, there is a need for an exclusive communications

segment that distinguishes Hungary from other countries in the region.

This may be innovation as proven by both surveys. According to the study of Gallup 80 % of Hungarians agree that Hungary is a land of talented people and great scientific results. Based on the survey of foreign communications professionals innovation, research and development are an important characteristic of Hungary and the Hungarians, and are regarded as opportunities. Although such characteristics as the EU and NATO membership proved to be more important than science and innovation, those are not relevant when distinguishing Hungary from other countries in the region.

4. References

Most of the literature on public diplomacy is of Anglo-Saxon origin, the expression “nyilvános diplomácia” is hardly known in Hungary. Gergely Pröhle does write about public diplomacy in his work titled „The role of Hungarian culture when developing the international political and economic relations of Hungary”, a preparatory study for the international relations strategy of the government. Nevertheless Pröhle interprets public diplomacy from a civil movement angle. The way Péter Nagy uses the term public diplomacy is more in line with the subject of this dissertation, he states that public diplomacy is the means to win the hearts and minds of foreign audiences in order to support the policies of a given country. Péter Nagy analyses public diplomacy from the aspect of virtual diplomacy in his study „Virtual diplomacy – myth or reality?”

There is a wide range of foreign language public diplomacy literature from the cold war times to present. Historic works of Nicolas Cull are relevant when analyzing the evolution of public diplomacy, while John Brown reveals the difference between propaganda and public diplomacy for example.

Literature on international communication is crucial to understand how public diplomacy functions. Several authors have published studies in this field: the Routledge Public Diplomacy Handbook and the New Public Diplomacy of Palgrave MacMillan include many of these, and such authors as Gilboa, Melissen and Nye of the 2008 edition of *Annals* serve as relevant sources of information as well.

Although theoretical works are important to understand public diplomacy, the study of concrete public diplomacy projects are just as relevant. Regarding Hungary it is important to study how other small countries have interpreted and conducted public diplomacy in order to draw the conclusions that may serve the good of Hungary. The work of Henrikson about the public diplomacy of Canada and Norway is relevant in this field. It is equally important to study the way the European Union interprets public diplomacy: the work of Gouveia and Plumridge must be mentioned in this regard among others.

Several think tanks and academic institutions serve with relevant information on public diplomacy: the Clingendael

Institute, the George Washington University and the University of Leeds have sections that focus on public diplomacy, not to mention the USC Center on Public Diplomacy in Los Angeles.

Besides studying the above mentioned authors and the work of the above mentioned institutions I have also focused on concrete public diplomacy strategies of such countries as China, Norway, Switzerland or Romania.

My goal was to start establishing the Hungarian literature of public diplomacy as well, which is one of the greatest challenges of my research and dissertation. I was eager to reach this goal not only by making foreign literature accessible in Hungarian, but also via first hand information based on interviews. Most relevant publications include my paper on the Press and Public Diplomacy Section in Washington D.C. that was published in “Európai Tükör” with the title „EU communication under development”, as well as an article published in “Külügyi Szemle” with the title „EU presidency and Hungarian image” and the first publication of the Hungarian image study based on

foreign communications professionals' feedback as well as the media analysis of the Hungarian EU presidency.

5. Publications in line with the subject

- NAGY, Lilla (2009): *EU communication under development*, Európai Tükör, 2009 / 7-8., pages 91-101. and 184.
- NAGY, Lilla (2011): *Central-Eastern Europe and Public Diplomacy*, Közép-Európai Közlemények, 2011/1.
- NAGY, Lilla (2007): *The role of public opinion in foreign politics*, Adsumus, spring 2007.
- NAGY, Lilla (2007): *Public diplomacy*, Társadalom és Politika, 2009/3.
- NAGY, Lilla (2010): *EU presidency and Hungarian image*, Külügyi Szemle, 2010/4.
- NAGY, Lilla (2008): *Public diplomacy definitions*
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public diplomacy (2006)
<http://grotius.hu/publ/displ.asp?id=MJWHVT>
new diplomacy (2009)

<http://grotius.hu/publ/displ.asp?id=WIMBXM>

segment diplomacy (2009)

<http://grotius.hu/publ/displ.asp?id=NZIPQX>

Vietnam-syndrome (2009)

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CNN-effect (2009)

<http://grotius.hu/publ/displ.asp?id=ORTVPF>

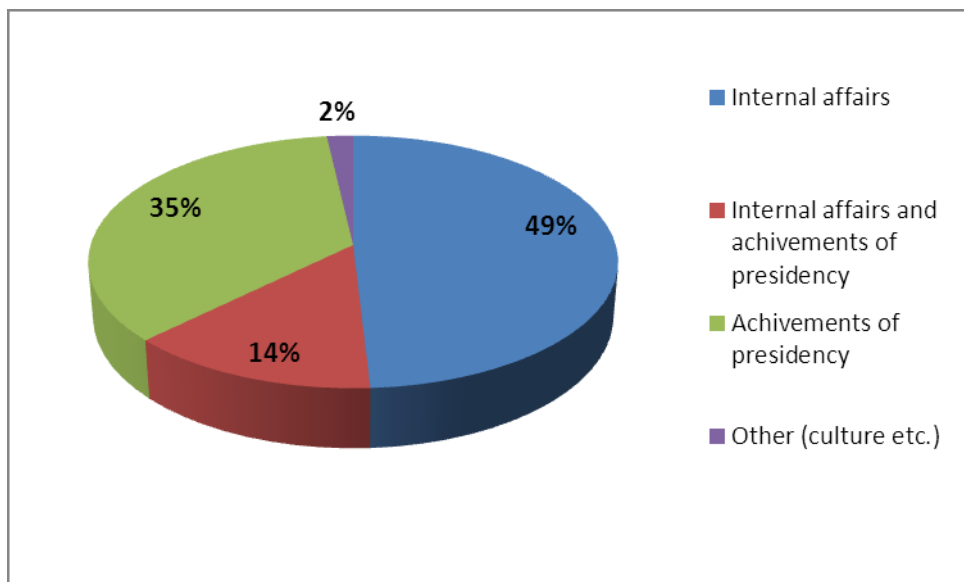
internet-syndrome (2009)

<http://grotius.hu/publ/displ.asp?id=VFQESN>

6. Annex

Coverage on the Hungarian EU presidency
December 2010 – July 2011

Coverage of internal affairs vs. achievements of presidency



Hungarian image survey November 2010

Values and policies (Y axis: number of respondents)

