PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN MERCOSUL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Dominique Ribeiro Gentil
Lucas Ribeiro Mesquita

ABSTRACT

One of the most recent conceptual contributions to the study of Foreign Policy, especially those that permeate the strategies of enlargement and participation, is the concept of Public Diplomacy. Considering its conceptual stretching and diversified empirical applications, this article will focus on the actions characterized by the Ministries of Foreign Relations and related organs of the five Mercosur States as an instrument of the national public diplomacy. This way, the present article has the objective to make a comparative study between the five states, observing mainly the existence of channels of communication, participation and publicization of international acts. For such, the means of communication utilized by the Ministries such as sites, blogs and official social network profiles will be analyzed, as well as the mechanisms that give the citizen access to data. We work with the hypothesis that the Public Diplomacy made by mercosur's ministries is much more focused on the unidirectional communication by the publicization of its acts, to the detriment of conceptual understandings of a possible symmetric model of communication between the government and the public.

KEYWORDS: Public Diplomacy; Mercosur; Foreign Policy.

INTRODUCTION

The new foreign policy (HILL, 2003; BADIE 2008) may be characterized by the inclusion of new actors on the decision process, breaking with a monopoly, in the sense of foreign policy being historically delegated to a social portion, including the introduction to the international arena of actors with legitimacy and power resources, which according to Badie (2008) hardly will not be noticed by the State decision

---

1 Dominique Riberio Gentil is an academic of International Relations at Faculdade Anglo-American of Foz do Iguaçu.
2 Lucas Ribeiro Mesquita is a master in Political Science from the State University of Campinas and professor of International Relations at Faculdade Anglo-Americano of Foz do Iguaçu.
makers, for the high political costs of ignoring them. This movement can be identified even on the Latin American States.

    Such considerations make it believable that the pluralization has generated a complexity on the cycle of political production, since the “paths” towards a political decision also became more complex with the enlargement of a constituency, of participative spaces and, mainly, of stakeholders that began a new mark on the decision process in foreign policy. This enlargement is attributed mainly to the impact of the change in political regimes that took place on the region during the 1980’s (NOHLEN; FERNÁNDEZ 1990; VAN KLAVEREN 1992)

    Despite the differences on the transition processes, the impact of democracy on foreign policy allowed, according to Santoro (2012), that many interest groups in society started to mobilize in accordance to their political preferences, bringing an approximation between the internal policy, the public policy and other national foreign policies. (PINHEIRO; MILANI, 2012)

    It is possible to perceive in this sense a new global movement of proliferation of actors involved in international matters, with the consequent fragmentation of the diplomatic monopoly, transforming the method of doing diplomacy and foreign policy. (DEVIN; TOERNQUIST-CHESNER, 2010).

    One of the possibilities of observation of an amplified foreign policy, or at least one that pays attention to a process of expansion of its democratic character, it’s the recent utilization of the mechanism of public diplomacy by a few States. According to Chitty (2009), this form of diplomacy consists on the development of a participative foreign policy that counts with the public sector, in conjunction with the second, third and fourth sectors, plus the national population, aiming to serve the national interest, with domestic support and credibility outside the country.

    Public diplomacy, as it is called, consists in a recent conceptual contribution, which emerged due to the current spread of the values of civil society. It is possible to cite the greater appreciation afforded to the healthy public sphere, enabling thus the policy to be discussed outside the government and without fears relating to retaliation, and the constant use of the results of public opinion polls as commodities by the organization press (CHITTY, 2009).

    The democratic character of the State institutions favors this type of diplomacy. However, one factor to consider is the discrepancy that exists between the political institutions of these democratic countries. As pointed out by Dawinsson
(2012), this issue causes various formulas for processing social stimuli in the production of Foreign Policy. Moreover, we notice the existence of two main lines of contemporary public diplomacy, which were instrumental and dialogical (CHITTY, 2012). While the former can be understood as one that is more geared to government propaganda, the dialogic is the most rational - communicative line.

Within this same line, as described by Chitty (2012), we still observe four possible "ideal types" of public diplomacy in the world today. The first type is called one-way communication, which is through government press consultancy. A second model would be accountability, understood as public, transparent and accessible information. Complement two more ideas types: the public's own research, which aims to improve compliance to government information and, finally, the model of symmetrical communication between the government and the public. In this way, foreign policymakers are used for research and dialogue to promote change (CHITTY, 2012).

Thus, despite the apparent discrepancies between the political institutions of democratic states, as mentioned above, and pointed out by Dawinsson (2012) it also means that when you suppose society, and not the state as the center of the deliberative process in Foreign Policy popular participation in this formulation is favored (Holsti, 2004; SNOW, 2009).

Robert Dahl in his "On Democracy," already wove considerations about democracy and access to information. Dahl argues that a democracy requires the existence of alternative and independent sources of information, so that there is a clear understanding on the part of citizens, and also their effective participation.

In a democracy, it is necessary that citizens have other sources of information. They cannot acquire the information which they need to understand issues relating to their environment whether it is the government who controls all important information sources or if these are dominated by any group, point of view or a single party. According to the author, it is only with the existence of alternative and independent sources that there will be a real participation in political life.

2 THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Starting from the consideration of Professor Nicholas J. Cull (2009) about the concept of Public Diplomacy, which is understood as “the intent of an international
actor to manage the international system through the commitment with a foreign audience" (CULL, 2009, p. 56-57). Thus, it is clear that different from traditional diplomacy, the target of this new kind of diplomacy is the foreign audience, whose interaction is through a compromise between both.

In his book "Public Diplomacy: theoretical considerations," Cull (2009) also shows a theoretical deficiency on the topic. He explains that the definitions employed for Public Diplomacy are succinct and the field lacks a basic understanding of successful cases and also others who are not, but that could be employed in the instruction manuals of Public Diplomacy, created by professionals in this area.

It was not only Cull (2009) that called attention to this deficiency. Iyamu (2004), Professor of the Public University of Navarre, also presented their concerns about the issue and went further. The author conducted a current literature review of Public Diplomacy and wove very relevant considerations, which are extremely necessary for the improvement of contemporary public diplomacy, as well as their studies.

It is extremely important to emphasize that studies of public diplomacy are still largely conducted by scholars from the United States, this is, the country that has the only school of public diplomacy that exists in the world. Also, the term was first used by an American diplomat named Edmond Gullion in 1965, which applied to the international information and cultural relations process. One can even say that the origin of the idea of public diplomacy and its study is more accurately originated on the Wilsonian idea that defied traditional diplomacy.

In other words, major contributions to the area by American authors, who immediately embraced the term, which has scarce use in European literature, which the author Iyamu has highlighted as only two doctoral theses published. To aggravate the issue more, many of these American authors who have studied the topic were concerned with analyzing the strength of public diplomacy of the United States regarding hostile countries like China, Cuba, and the former Soviet Union, among others. Although the term is relatively young, its constituent elements are old, many are as old as the art of government (CULL, 2009).

In his work, Iyamu (2004) sought to present the scientific contributions on a global scale on the topic, all of which result from knowledge or experience of the authors, who work or worked in the area. However, all considerations have implications in their research and understanding of public diplomacy worldwide.
It is then possible to comprehend as pointed out by Iyamu, that there is a shortage of sources, very superficial knowledge of the subject and also the complexity of the phenomenon itself, which make public diplomacy a difficult field to be examined. The difficulties encountered span from the use of the term, which appears confusing, to which field of study refers its conforming elements, such as public and information.

The lack of clear and precise definitions does not allow for a good understanding of what Public Diplomacy should be. Still, Iyamu (2004) defines it as an important part of the efforts made by States to enable them to understand and to promote their respective foreign policies and national image. He then continues by stating that the Public Diplomacy:

Como fenómeno específico, surgió gracias a la generalización de la cultura democrática y a los avances técnicos y sociológicos de los medios de comunicación social, y a las buenas intenciones iniciales Del “Open Covenants” del Presidente WILSON de los Estados Unidos de America. (IYAMU, 2004, p. 215, ORIGINAL)

As briefly mentioned, the idea of public diplomacy had its origins with the North American President Wilson, who presented a new way of thinking about the issues of this field. Performing considerable historical contextualization, Iyamu (2004) points out the major milestones that have changed the Traditional Diplomacy.

In 1815, at the Congress of Vienna, it was established that diplomacy was a profession with its own rules, with the dynamics of a negotiation meeting with government to government communication and secrecy. Then in 198, Woodrow Wilson "Open covenants" were a doctrine that repudiated traditional diplomacy, and was aimed towards the end of secret diplomacy, through the "fourteen points of Wilson." It was an idea, although one which was in line with United States interests. In short, for Wilson, foreign policy should be based on popular control and run by a kind of democracy diplomacy.

Despite the use of the term in the United States having been increasing, it only started being utilized in the international arena during the post-Cold War years. It was only then that the Public Diplomacy, itself, appeared; due to change on the international society, when new factors convinced the States that creating an image and the information would have new relevance in international relations. As pointed out by Iyamu (2004), in this period
La opinión pública empieza a tomar su forma y pide una participación en la diplomacia. La información es fundamental, tanto para la participación del público en la diplomacia como para su control por parte del gobierno. (IYAMU, 2004, p. 219, ORIGINAL)

The "decision makers" and other professionals can no longer act without taking into account the point of view of the active public opinion. The public is not indifferent to the international life of the people and asks for more participation at the same time. It is then possible to realize the evolution of diplomacy, which happened through the technological, economic, technical developments, and also through the democratization and the specialization of the democratic profession. It then became known then as all government and non-government information under the diplomatic efforts that transcend traditional diplomacy.

The diplomats, negotiators, decision makers, in this new context, should be concerned not only that their colleagues in other countries understand their policy, they must also strive that, both national and international, public opinion also assimilate their policy. However, despite this change and consciousness, yet there is a void in the literature and the research area is scarce worldwide. The American author Snow (2009) also presents considerations regarding the issue and suggests a new way of rethinking public diplomacy.

Snow (2009) analyzes the case of the United States, and will focus on how the country highly utilizes its culture as an instrument of soft power and also states that the country's image abroad has changed considerably after the attacks on September 11, 2001. The author argues that this attack ensued due to little knowledge about the United States by the foreign public. As a diagnostic, the North American country sought through campaigns, to show the international society what it really was like, however, the attempt was unsuccessful, further aggravating the situation.

Earlier in the chapter "Rethinking Public Diplomacy," the Djerejian Report been mentioned. A report which has caused a paradox about the use of Soft Power by the State, showing that the State was not giving due time to understand its audience, and also did not bothered to help them understand it better (Snow, 2009).

This statement is confirmed when Cull (2009) talks about how succinct the definitions of Public Diplomacy and Soft Power are, and also when the author introduces the elements that compose the Public Diplomacy, described primarily as
the act of listening first, followed by advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange, international broadcasting and psychological warfare. To Cull (2009), even without an order between these constituent elements of public diplomacy, it is a fact that to succeed it must have as the first main element is 'listening'. This is as the basis of all effective Public Diplomacy, which is your starting point and that deserves much attention.

Among these components of public diplomacy cited, although all are essential and have a reciprocal relationship, the defender is the predominant concept in American diplomacy. All areas of public diplomacy have elements of advocacy, to end up being very useful in the short term. The defender can be understood as when an actor tries to manage the international environment by undertaking an activity of international communication in order to actively promote an idea, specific interest or public policy especially in the mind of a foreign public.

As presented by Snow (2009), despite being a democratic state, the case of the United States shows that, even under these conditions is Public Diplomacy relatively worked, and yet it is still poorly understood or partially understood. This occurs not only by how the foreign public receives the information, but also how the state understands and formulates them.

Nasser Chitty (apud Snow, 2009) stated that one of the reasons for the emergence of Public Diplomacy was due to constant use of the results of public opinion polls as commodities. However, although this characteristic has been observed, it is possible to comprehend that what happens in practice is somewhat different. When citing Canada, through a survey conducted in the country, the author states that, although the population was engaged and interested in issues related to diplomacy, the Canadian people did not have their opinions considered.

On the same issue Cull (2009) states that a very common view is that Public Diplomacy responds to international opinion. However, it is difficult to find cases where "listening" or the supervision of structured belief inspires the highest levels of public policy. And this is a difficulty, since the state will not use this information to write their public policy or a broader approach to public diplomacy in line.

3 PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND MERCOSUR
As noted in the previous section, most of the contributions on Public Diplomacy are American. Yet, the literature review that Iyamu (2004) made, points out that many of the case studies seek to understand the United States and their use of public diplomacy, or the application of American diplomacy in specific cases, such as that discussed in the work "Public Diplomacy and Political Change, Four Case Studies: Okinawa, Peru, Czechoslovakia, Guinea," by Gregory Henderson. The authors sought to write about the events of the respective countries in which they worked.

Thus, there is indeed a shortage of contributions made by the Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries. This work will then be carried out using the considerations on Public Diplomacy and its elements woven by authors like Iyamu (2004) and Cull (2009), that have satisfactory considerations to be made.

The central aim of this paper is to undertake a comparative study of five countries of MERCOSUR, mainly observing the existence of channels of communication, participation and publicity of international acts. To this end, we analyzed the forms of communication carried out by Ministries on websites, blogs, social networks officers, as well as mechanisms for access to information by citizens.

In a survey conducted, it was observed the presence, in all countries, of an official site, responsible for the disclosure of such information, as well as other social networks that may also help. The vast majority of these countries have Twitter as a publisher, with the exception of Uruguay; YouTube, with the exception of Paraguay; and Flickr, present in all countries. Exclusively in Brazil, Facebook is added to the platforms used. Although the presidency of Argentina also has the Facebook platform, we do not consider effectively here because the way it provides the information has an informal character.

On the matters of an access to information law, it is possible to identify its presence in most of the MERCOSUR countries, being absent only in Paraguay and Venezuela. Below there is a table, which simplifies the information found:

Table 1: Ministries and Access to Information Law:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAÍS</th>
<th>SITE</th>
<th>TWITTER</th>
<th>FACEBOOK</th>
<th>YOUTUBE</th>
<th>FLICKR</th>
<th>SOUNDC</th>
<th>LEI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Argentina presents only one section titled "Access to Information" that lies within the Chancellery, where it treats briefly on the subject. However, this information is short, presenting only the number of the decree that regulates and its function. When trying to access the document via the link provided, the page is unavailable.

Brazil, in turn, like Uruguay, presents this section in a very structured manner. On the Brazilian case, the Foreign Ministry official site offers a section which describes all the initiatives of the Ministry to promote access to information. With each originating into eleven subsections, that are available for viewing.

The first subsection is called "Institutional", where it is also disclosed institutional and organizational information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explaining what are its functions, structure, powers, respect for authority, the authorities' agenda, the laws of the body and opening hours. In the second tab, "Actions and Programs" information can be found, which seeks to disseminate information concerning actions, programs, projects and activities implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the third section, "Audits", it is presented the results of inspections, audits, benefits, as well as accounts made at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which were determined by the Union Court of Audits. On the "Covenants" section information on budget execution and financial Ministry of Foreign Affairs is disseminated. In the fifth section, are disclosed bids and contracts made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The "Servers" tab contains information on public servants in office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Is still possible to observe, as in the seventh section, a space entitled "On the Law on Access to Information," where information on it is

---

4 President's official Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/CFKArgentina>.
5 It also has another account on YouTube. Casa rosada: <http://www.youtube.com/user/casarosada>.
presented, as well as the topics covered in the law, the procedures for requesting access and appellate mechanisms, access statistics, and other information available.

The Brazilian site also has the section "CIS - Citizens Information Service", where information on this system is disseminated, its operation, location and contact information. Finally, you have the "Classified Information", which contains lists of information declassified in the last twelve months, as well as those classified in each level of information confidentiality.

Finally the last section is intended to "Frequently Asked Questions" on the Ministry and actions within their jurisdiction. To facilitate access to the citizen, the site divides the list of questions and answers in six major areas of interest, namely: a) consular affairs, b) Duties of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Service Careers, c) Acts and Agreements Cities, d) Commercial, Financial Issues, Intellectual Property and Technology, e) cultural Issues, Education and Promotion f) political Issues and the Environment.

Brazil has a website just to handle the "Access to Information", considering that the constitutional right of access to public information is regulated on the law No. 12.527/2011, entering into force on May 16, 2012. On the Federal Government the law was regulated by Decree No. 7.724/2012.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil also has a space designated for the discussion of "Public Diplomacy". In this section you will find articles of foreign policy, accessory's press office, a journal of Public Diplomacy, support center for foreign media, accreditation, speeches, articles and interviews, pictures and social media events. The blog, official channel of Brazilian public diplomacy and more interesting because observed aggregates content such as articles and texts on foreign policy, as well as containing the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The platform is powered by the staff of press office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As previously mentioned, a country that also has a site with a similar structure to that of Brazil is Uruguay. At the head of the Uruguayan homepage, it is possible to glimpse a section at the top of the site entitled "Transparency", from where three tabs, which are "Ley de Acceso a la Public Información No. 18,381", "Annual Memory" and "Presupuesto Quinquenal 2010-2014". In the section on the Law on Access to Information, is the description of Law No. 18,381. At the Ministry of External Relations page there is also another section entitled "Transparency" with the other three subsections: "Información Pública", "Remuneraciones" and "Escala de
Finally, as in the case of Brazil, Uruguay also has a website intended only for access to information. The UAP – Unidade de Acesso a la Información Pública which is a specialized agency which seeks to ensure respect for the Right of Access to Public Information, defending the right to access public information.

On the official website of the government of Venezuela, one can observe the following statement appearing highlighted on the main page: "Get informed with our Twitter @vencancilleria, visit our Youtube channel mpprevideos, download images on Flikr" (our translation). It also possible to see a concern with content available from the government to civil society, however it is questionable whether in fact the understanding of this information from the public happens, since many details are not presented on the site.

Similarly in the Paraguayan case, the ministry's vision is "To be an efficient, professional and transparent ministry with internal leadership for the management of the country's foreign policy." And its mission is "to plan, coordinate and execute a foreign policy geared to promoting and the interests of the state and its national and international law "(our translation). Despite the description provided, once again it possible to wonder if this is indeed something that happens.

**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

We believe that countries like Brazil and Uruguay have a more concrete and consolidated public diplomacy, in view of the arrangements of their contents and efforts so that the information is clear and well described, especially regarding the Law on Access to Information . This means that in the case of these two countries, it is observed that the government, in theory, has an aim on its acts beyond just their publicization.

Paraguay, Venezuela and Argentina still lack for more formal and significant efforts. A social media widely used by the president of Argentina is Facebook, which the president uses through her official Facebook page, to make public some of her actions. In general, social media considerably assist the dissemination of information, being even closer to the society. The goal is to bring users of these social networks news pertaining to foreign policy; it would also inform them about the activities of the government. Cull (2009) states that the growth of the network society creates more opportunities than closes the Public Diplomacy. The public diplomat should keep in
mind the limitations of their craft and the need to think in terms of building relationships.

The author further states that there is a difference between public diplomacy and propaganda itself, being an answer that depends on what is understood as propaganda. Cull (2009) comprehends that Public Diplomacy can be converted into advertising if used for immoral purposes. It is possible to observe that this does not apply in any of the cases discussed above. The advertisement focuses on mass persuasion and what is observed is the publicity of the acts of diplomacy.

Finally, one notes a relationship with the process of democratization in the countries of MERCOSUR. The foreign ministries concerned, especially in countries such as Brazil and Uruguay, have endeavored to publicize the acts of diplomacy in digital media, these forced primarily by national laws on access to information. This realization of the fundamental right to information is an important and essential tool for us to build an in fact strong democracy, that will effectively, propagate in society.

It is important to clarify that considering the whole approach held that although it was judged that the information in some foreign ministries are more organized and clear, this does not end the unease to be and questioning whether even in these countries, the actual knowledge of the population is widened and if they can process it and organize it this information.

It necessary to seek not only the pure and simple information, but this aforementioned knowledge, which must be configured through the action of processing and organizing information. Thus the values present in their democratic systems will be realized in society, leaving the sphere of constitutional texts. The democratic regime is thus consolidated and democratic institutions improved, generating greater people's participation in public life.

REFERENCES


