

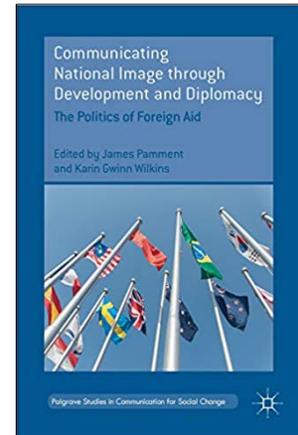
James Pamment and Karin Gwinn Wilkins (Eds.), **Communicating National Image through Development and Diplomacy: The Politics of Foreign Aid**, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 272 pp., \$66.41 (hardcover).

Reviewed by

Kadir Jun Ayhan

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea

Public diplomacy research and practice have become more prominent in the last two decades. Recent studies tried to identify the intersections between this emerging field of inquiry with other more consolidated disciplines, particularly public relations. In that respect, **Communicating National Image through Development and Diplomacy: The Politics of Foreign Aid** is a significant contribution for cross-fertilization of an emerging field of public diplomacy and a more studied field of international development. The two editors of the book are important representatives of this intersection of two fields. Prior to publication of this book, James Pamment had been a pioneer in bringing together development and public diplomacy with his numerous articles and books (Pamment, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2018). Karin Gwinn Wilkins is one of the most authoritative names in the field of development communication. The book brings together scholars from various disciplines and from different parts of the world inquiring the intersection between foreign aid and communication of national image.



The introductory chapter begins with a review of the intersections between cultural imperialism and soft power. While the cultural imperialism theory, which was central to early development communication studies, faded away recently, soft power, as a means to transpose power across different aspects of international relations, has become fundamental to the study of public diplomacy, which is conceptualized as “the *actualization* of soft power resources” (p. 8). Based on Pamment’s previous work (Pamment, 2016b), the editors divide development communication into three layers: communicating *for* development for purposes of social change; communicating *about* development problematizing underlying assumptions of social change articulation; and communication *of* development, which is the central theme of the book, that is concerned with how aid activities are promoted for image and reputation purposes.

Pamment further builds the conceptual framework of the book in chapter 2, where he elaborates on the common grounds between public diplomacy and development communication: aiming to achieve change in communities as an outcome by influencing beliefs and behaviors, negotiating the meaning of common good, collaborating with influential mediating actors, and intertwining of diplomatic issues and techniques with quotidian issues. Pamment argues that these principles are enough to establish a theory (p. 27). While this endeavor contributes to theory building, the theory itself does not seem to be established yet in this book.

Missing from the two introductory chapters is what attraction or co-option, the defining feature of soft power, entails in foreign aid and how this is different than structural or productive types of power (cf. Barnett & Duvall, 2005), which are potentially relevant to communication *about* development.

In chapter 3, Wilkins analyzes OECD DAC countries' development agencies' logos as a manifestation of their branding strategies and "how they might reference national patriotism toward home countries, cross-cultural collaboration or interest in host countries" (p. 60). The chapter serves as an introduction to a broader study on the connection between development branding and business approaches and its consequences for development programs, without going into detail on the topic, which probably will be dealt with in a future study. She finds that development agencies' justifications of branding are visibility, transparency, taking credit, and accountability (or taking public responsibility; p. 66). Both Wilkins and Kaneva (chapter 4) end their chapters with a critical approach to communication *about* development, suggesting finding ways to advocate for poverty reduction and global social justice instead of legitimizing the extreme wealth of those who determine development agendas (pp. 67–68, 92).

In chapter 4, Kaneva analyzes the development communication from a recipient's perspective, unlike the original emphasis on the donor's perspective in the introductory chapter of the book. She analyzes the simultaneous unfolding of development, nation building, and nation branding in the remaking of postwar Kosovo as a neoliberal nation state. Kosovo takes responsibility for its social change in its own hands through its nation branding (communicating *for* development). In order to meet the social expectations in a neoliberal international order, the discourse of this nation branding is based on a capital-friendly, market-oriented paradigm that represents the communication *about* development. A significant contribution of the chapter is bringing institutional and structural power paradigms that are prominent in nation building and critical international relations literature to nation branding and public diplomacy studies, which are often dominated by a soft power framework. Furthermore, this chapter is also relevant to reputation/status/prestige studies in international relations, which focus almost exclusively on great powers. Kaneva showcases how critical nation branding is to recognition, hence survival, of a (newly independent) small state (cf. Wohlforth, de Carvalho, Leira, & Neumann, 2018). Kaneva's chapter is the most articulate case study of the intersection between development communication and public diplomacy in the book.

In chapter 5, Sorzano and Miller explore the role of Colombia's nation branding in sex tourism in Cartagena. The authors find that Colombia attempted to feminize the country's image, which was dominated by the "male image of drug trafficking and violence" (p. 109), but ended up sexualizing the country's image for American male tourists and encouraging sexual tourism and exploitation of Colombian children. While the chapter deals with the important topic of negative consequences of nation branding, it falls short of backing its arguments with data.

In chapter 6, Lee reflects the insights of Korean voluntary corps volunteers to make sense of Korea's donor experiences in the field. She finds how Korean experience benchmarks Western, particularly American, development work, which emphasizes modernization and power hierarchy. However, what is different in the Korean case is the race and gendered dynamics that Korean volunteers self-characterized as inferior compared to traditional donors.

In chapter 7, Akerlund explores the historical relationship between development communication and public diplomacy in Swedish development experience. Education, which Swedish ODA began to emphasize since the end of Cold War, has been the main intersection as Sweden embedded social change and a democratization mission in its educational programs vis-à-vis especially Eastern European countries.

In chapter 8, Çevik, Sevin, and Baybars-Hawks analyze Turkey's humanitarian aid in Somalia where communication *of* development has been ideologically intertwined with communication *about* development, which, in this case study, perpetuates a "post-colonial" (p. 186) approach to humanitarian aid. The authors do well to present parallel but uncoordinated humanitarian discourse and collaboration with host institutions by Turkish state agencies and civil society actors, which had a spillover effect on the two countries' trade and military relations.

In chapter 9, Villanueva Ulfgrad explores Mexico's communication *of* development to consolidate itself as a responsible emergent economy within G20. The author touches upon the important question of whether Mexico's development aid can bridge Global North and Global South or if it only helps consolidating Global North discourses *about* development. However, Villanueva Ulfgrad does not go further to answer this question.

In chapter 10, Di Wu compares power dynamics between the United States and China in their aid to Afghanistan. She finds that the former empowers the Afghan government and local communities while the latter empowers Chinese state-owned enterprises, which are an extension of the Chinese government. The author promises a social network analysis (SNA) to unveil the network of power in the two country's development practices, but the application of SNA is not clear in the chapter.

In chapter 11, Smirnova explores media discourse in Russia about the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. This offers a different approach than the other chapters in the book as the author analyzes development communication from not a donor's or recipient's perspective but rather from a competitor's perspective. As such, it does not follow Pamment's conceptual framework and does not sit well with the overall flow of the book.

Overall, *Communicating National Image through Development and Diplomacy: The Politics of Foreign Aid* is a long-needed book that brings together concepts at the intersection of international development and public diplomacy. This book serves as an introduction to this intersection without developing a theory or a theoretical framework. However, the "call for theoretical convergence" (p. 45) between these two fields stands for future research. Informed by the conceptual frameworks of this book, future research can design structured, focused comparison across case studies with the agenda of theory building.

References

- Barnett, M., & Duvall, R. (2005). Power in international politics. *International Organization*, 59(1), 39–75.
- Pamment, J. (2015). Media influence, ontological transformation, and social change: Conceptual overlaps between development communication and public diplomacy. *Communication Theory*, 25(2), 188–207. doi:10.1111/comt.12064
- Pamment, J. (2016a). *British Public diplomacy and soft power: Diplomatic influence and the digital revolution*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Pamment, J. (2016b). Introduction. In J. Pamment (Ed.), *Intersections between public diplomacy & international development* (pp. 7–17). Los Angeles, CA: Figueora Press.
- Pamment, J. (2018). Towards a new conditionality? The convergence of international development, nation brands and soft power in the British national security strategy. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 21(2), 396–414. doi:10.1057/s41268-016-0074-9
- Wohlforth, W. C., de Carvalho, B., Leira, H., & Neumann, I. B. (2018). Moral authority and status in international relations: Good states and the social dimension of status seeking. *International Studies*, 44(3), 526–546. doi:10.1017/S0260210517000560