



## The Evolution Of Public Diplomacy: A New Strategy For Enhancing State Image

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INFO ARTIKEL	ABSTRAK
<b>Entered</b> January 30, 2025 <b>Revised</b> March 22, 2025 <b>Accepted</b> April 30, 2025 <b>Published</b> May 28, 2025	Public diplomacy has undergone a significant transformation in the digital era, becoming an important instrument in building the country's image on the international stage. This research aims to analyze the evolution of public diplomacy and identify new strategies that can be used by countries to improve their image. By leveraging social media and communication technologies, countries can reach international audiences more directly and build inclusive interactions. Approaches that emphasize positive messages, friendship, and two-way dialogue have proven to be more effective in shaping favorable public opinion. In addition, the challenges arising from the spread of disinformation and narrative competition require adaptation of public diplomacy strategies. The research is expected to provide deeper insights into effective public diplomacy practices, strengthen the role of soft powers, and recommend actions that countries can take to strengthen their international image in an ever-changing global context..
<b>Keywords:</b> Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, Social Media, State Image, Information Technology	

### INTRODUCTION

Public diplomacy is now a crucial element in modern international relations, even more so in the era of globalization and information technology advancement. As a strategic tool, public diplomacy helps countries shape their image on the global scene, leveraging soft power to achieve more sustainable political goals, compared to more traditional military or economic power (Antipin, 2022; Matosian, 2024). In the digital age, the use of information and communication technologies allows countries to reach international audiences in a more effective way, by leveraging cultural elements and public diplomacy initiatives to create a positive image that can strengthen relations between countries and enhance international cooperation (Kelechi, 2024; Matosian, 2024). For example, the use of social media and digital platforms provides opportunities for countries to communicate directly with foreign publics, build open dialogue, and promote their national interests (Sharikov, 2023; Urazayeva, 2020). Public diplomacy is also able to adapt to dynamic changes in global politics. In a fragmented geopolitical situation, public diplomacy plays a role in addressing global challenges and establishing international security norms. Countries such as Poland and Sweden, for example, use public diplomacy to promote peace and stability, demonstrating their contribution to the



creation of an international environment that supports their foreign policies (Kravchuk & Nykolaichuk, 2023; Zajęcki et al., 2020).

Public diplomacy has transformed significantly, moving from a traditional approach that focuses more on intergovernmental relations and one-way communication through conventional media, to more modern and dynamic methods thanks to advances in digital technology and social media. Today, public diplomacy involves civil society and advanced communication technologies, enabling more inclusive and participatory interactions (Cerf, 2020; Karpenko & Rybchenko, 2020; Skočajić & Petrović, 2023). This major shift is seen in the shift from top-down communication to more open two-way dialogue, where social media provides an opportunity for countries to communicate directly with global audiences and build stronger relationships (Dulayoum, 2023; Zaharna & Huang, 2022). Digital technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become essential tools, enabling real-time and personalized communication, as well as providing space for individuals and non-governmental organizations to play a role in public diplomacy, expanding the reach and impact of diplomacy efforts (Lebedeva, 2020; Skočajić & Petrović, 2023; Voicu, 2020).

Public diplomacy is a subfield of political science and international relations that involves interaction between countries and international actors with the global public to serve their interests (Snow, 2020). The term was first used by Edmund Gullion in 1965, who defined it as an attempt to influence public attitudes towards foreign policy (Saga & Izeti, 2024). Public diplomacy includes communication between state and non-state actors with the foreign public, aiming to convey an understanding of the state, attitudes, institutions, culture, national interests, and policies taken by the state (Daimah, 2022). The development of public diplomacy began during the Cold War, with the mass media and public opinion playing an important role in foreign policy (Snow, 2020). After 9/11, public diplomacy was used in one-way communication campaigns, although it was often considered propaganda (Snow, 2020). In the 21st century, public diplomacy involves non-state actors and social media, as well as addressing issues such as the environment, tourism, terrorism, health, and human rights (Daimah, 2022). Governments use public diplomacy to influence international public opinion in the context of political, economic, and social interests, with tools such as education and cultural development as part of foreign policy efforts (Kutovoi, 2022; Lebedeva, 2020).

Global challenges, such as international political tensions, media conflicts, and the role of major states in global conflicts, greatly affect the country's image. Tensions between Russia and the United States are forcing Russia to adjust its public diplomacy in the face of global changes (Simons & Грѣр, 2020), while China-Taiwan tensions and geoeconomic competition in Africa have also affected the country's image (Kravchuk & Nykolaichuk, 2023). The media, as a shaping public perception, plays an important role in this, with China's "mask diplomacy" efforts during the Covid-19 crisis showing how the media can change the global narrative (Müller et al., 2024), while a visit by a country leader can increase public approval in a foreign country (Goldsmith et al., 2020). Major countries such as Russia in the Ukraine conflict also face challenges in maintaining their positive image (Kravchuk & Nykolaichuk, 2023), while global social movements such as climate change add to the challenge for countries to maintain a positive image (Antipin, 2022). Public diplomacy plays an important role in addressing these challenges by building a positive image through initiatives such as cultural exchanges, international broadcasting, and international exchange programs (Matosian, 2024; Mazumdar, 2020), managing public perception in other countries (Goldsmith et al., 2020; Syed et al., 2020),

as well as strengthening international relations, as Turkey has done to expand its influence in the Middle East (Bannikova et al., 2023).

The main objective of this study is to analyze the evolution of public diplomacy and identify how countries can develop new strategies in improving their image in the eyes of the world. This research aims to provide a deeper insight into how public diplomacy has transformed from traditional approaches to more modern methods, involving digital technologies and social media. In addition, this research will explore the importance of public diplomacy strategies in the face of global challenges and dynamic changes in international politics, as well as their relevance for countries looking to strengthen their soft power. Thus, this research is expected to provide a better understanding of effective public diplomacy strategies and their application in creating a positive state image at the global level

## METHODOLOGY

This research method uses a library research approach, where data and information are obtained from various literature sources such as books, journals, scientific articles, and other documents relevant to the research topic (Matvienko & Tsyvin, 2024; Bali Provincial BPKP Waiver, 2023). The process begins with the selection of topics that focus on the phenomenon of public diplomacy and its role in improving the country's image in the international world, especially in the context of globalization and the development of information technology. Once the topic has been determined, the research continues with an in-depth exploration of various sources that discuss the development of public diplomacy, especially the changes that have occurred along with the emergence of digital technology and social media that allow for more interactive communication between countries and the global public. The next stage is to determine the focus of the research, which will examine how public diplomacy is transforming from traditional approaches to more modern and dynamic methods, as well as how countries can develop new strategies to strengthen their image through effective public diplomacy (Togia & Malliari, 2017):

The procedure for re-borrowing a library can be explained based on the following stages:

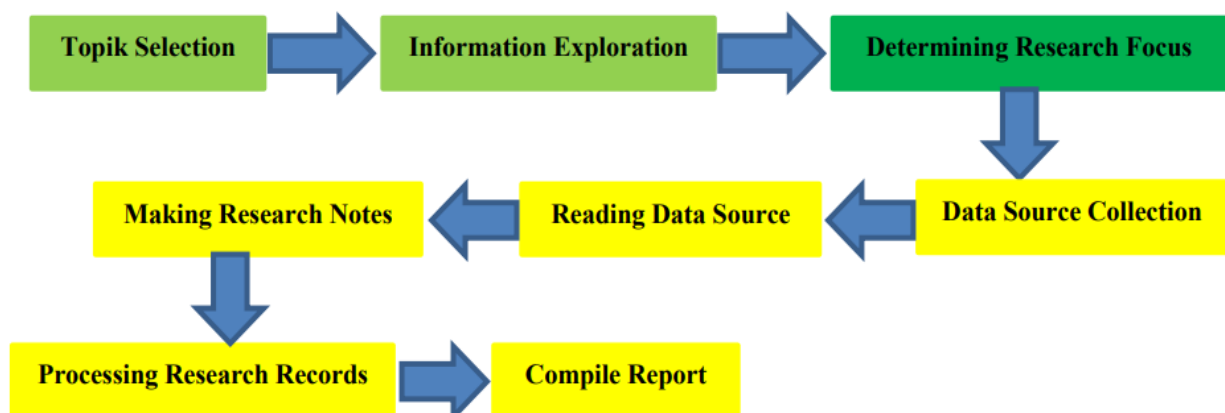


Figure 1. Laur Penelotian Literature Review

In the process of this research, relevant literature sources are used to collect empirical and theoretical data on the evolution of public diplomacy, the global challenges

faced by countries in building their image, as well as the application of technology in public diplomacy. Furthermore, the reading of these sources is carried out in an active and critical way to explore new ideas related to the research theme. During the reading, the researcher notes important findings and information that supports the main argument of the study, which is then analyzed to produce solid conclusions.

After recording the results of the readings, all the information collected is processed and analyzed to draw conclusions about the changes taking place in public diplomacy and how countries can develop new strategies to improve their image in the eyes of the world. This conclusion is compiled in a research report that follows a standard writing system, which includes an introduction, a literature review, research methods, analysis results, and final conclusions. Through this literature research method, it is hoped that this research can provide deeper insight into the importance of public diplomacy and provide effective strategy recommendations for countries in building their international image (Chu, 2015).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Evolution of Public Diplomacy: New Strategies to Improve the Country's Image**

Public diplomacy has evolved to be a very important tool in shaping a country's international image, especially with the increasing role of non-state actors and advances in digital technology. In this context, media and digital diplomacy play a crucial role in influencing geopolitical relations and foreign policy decision-making, where countries compete to influence global public opinion. Social media platforms provide an opportunity for every individual to become a provider and distributor of information, allowing the country to communicate directly with international audiences. This can have a major impact on the country's image in the eyes of the world, as information spread through social media can influence the views of the international community as well as the political decisions taken by these countries (Yemets, 2024). In addition, cultural and economic diplomacy also plays an important role in public diplomacy, where countries use cultural and economic initiatives to promote their values as well as attract foreign investment. For example, Ukraine has leveraged cultural and economic diplomacy to gain international support, especially in the face of geopolitical challenges and countering harmful propaganda (Tsyrya & Bielousova, 2024). High-level visits by state leaders also play a role in building the country's image, enhancing public approval in the host country, and strengthening bilateral relations, which shows how much public diplomacy influences global affairs through soft power (Goldsmith et al., 2020, 2021).

The strategy of public diplomacy faces challenges in conveying an effective message to build the country's image in the international arena. Emphasis on positive messages, such as help and friendship, has been shown to be more effective in increasing the public's positive perception than messages attacking or criticizing rival countries, which can actually turn against each other (Mattingly & Sundquist, 2022). In this case, soft power and national branding are the main components of public diplomacy. Countries leverage public diplomacy and soft power to create an attractive and favorable image in the eyes of the international public, which in turn can strengthen relations between countries and increase international support. This strategy focuses on building a positive narrative that not only improves the country's image but also opens up opportunities for broader international collaboration (Kelechi, 2024; Matosian, 2024).

Public diplomacy is an important tool that countries use to influence foreign public opinion and build stronger relationships with other countries, through direct communication with foreign societies to promote national interests and build a positive image on the international stage. The effectiveness of public diplomacy can be seen from a variety of factors, such as high-level visits, which can increase foreign public approval of the visiting country, especially when public diplomacy activities are reported by the media and do not fade quickly (Goldsmith et al., 2020; Goldsmith et al., 2021). In addition, messages of public diplomacy that emphasize aid and friendship are more effective in increasing positive perceptions, while messages that criticize other countries are less likely to be effective or even detrimental (Mattingly & Sundquist, 2022). Public diplomacy serves to build a positive image of the country in the international arena, which in turn can increase credibility and influence in global debates (Zajęcki et al., 2020), as well as promoting national interests through international dialogue and initiatives, which allow countries to gain loyalty from foreign audiences (Urazayeva, 2020). In addition, public diplomacy plays an important role in influencing a country's foreign policy, by being a tool for influencing foreign public opinion and political decisions (Daimah, 2022; Kutovoi, 2022). The biggest challenge in public diplomacy is narrative competition in the digital age, where non-state actors use social media to influence public opinion (Antipin, 2022). Therefore, effective public diplomacy often involves a multilateral and pluralistic approach, emphasizing soft power and direct interaction with foreign communities (Snow, 2020).

### **The Role of Soft Power and Public Diplomacy**

Soft power and public diplomacy play a very important role in shaping a country's positive image in the international arena. Through soft power, states can influence other countries by attraction and persuasion, without the use of coercion or military force. Public diplomacy, which falls within the scope of soft power, aims to create an attractive image in the minds of the people of other countries, which in turn can strengthen the country's position on the world stage (Baruah, 2024; Matosian, 2024). One way is through the use of cultural elements, where countries take advantage of cultural diplomacy, public opinion, and historical narratives to increase their soft power. For example, cultural exchange and the promotion of national values are tools to introduce culture and enhance understanding between countries (Baruah, 2024; Stević, 2022). In addition, digital diplomacy is also increasingly crucial, as it allows countries to build trust and reputation in the modern era, as well as reach audiences that may not have been previously involved in traditional diplomacy (Gosling, 2021).

Some countries have successfully harnessed soft power to strengthen their international ties. China, for example, uses environmental diplomacy and institutions like the Confucius Institute to project an image as an ancient civilization and a responsible international partner (Baruah, 2024; Stević, 2022). Germany has also made public diplomacy a key tool in building the potential of soft power, especially after World War II (Naumov, 2021). Meanwhile, Turkey is taking advantage of films such as *Ayla* as a soft power tool to strengthen diplomatic relations with South Korea (Kızıltoprak, 2024). High-level visits by state leaders have also been shown to increase public approval in the host country, especially when the activity is covered by international media (Goldsmith et al., 2020). However, international media such as Xinhua in China, while effective in promoting national achievements, can also risk becoming a tool of state propaganda that has the potential to damage international image (Butyrin & Argylov, 2022).

Successful implementation of soft power can produce a positive image that is more effective and sustainable than traditional methods. Soft power, introduced by Joseph Nye, is the ability to achieve goals through attraction and persuasion, not coercion or reward (Balraj & Manan, 2022; Khang, 2024; Matosian, 2024). The advantage of soft power lies in its ability to build a more lasting positive image, which is achieved through public diplomacy and cultural elements that create appeal in the minds of the people of other countries (Balraj & Manan, 2022; Basmanov, 2024; Matosian, 2024). In addition, soft power increases the international competitiveness of a country by promoting industrial, cultural, scientific, and technical products (Basmanov, 2024). Cultural diplomacy is at the heart of soft power, which facilitates global cooperation and reduces reliance on resource-intensive methods of hard power (Xu, 2023). As an example of implementation, South Korea has successfully used soft power through the spread of pop culture and traditional cultural values, known as "Korean Wave" or "Hallyu", which helps to form a positive image and create an attractive Korean brand on the world stage (Balraj & Manan, 2022). In addition, ASEAN has also successfully used soft power to create traction in the international arena, which contributes to peace and sustainable development (Khang, 2024).

Public diplomacy is an important tool in foreign policy that not only shapes the country's image, but also strengthens the country's position on the world stage. Public diplomacy serves as a means of communication between the government and the international community to promote national interests and build a positive image of the country. In the context of foreign policy, public diplomacy plays a role in building a positive image and enhancing the potential of a country's soft power, which is based on external and internal resources, and involves the promotion of the country's culture, values, and policies to a global audience (Bannikova et al., 2023; Daimah, 2022; Simons & Грег, 2020). High-level visits by national leaders, for example, can increase public approval in foreign countries, especially when reported by the media, with positive messages emphasizing more effective assistance and friendship in shaping global public opinion (Goldsmith et al., 2020, 2021; Mattingly & Sundquist, 2022). Public diplomacy has also become a strategic tool in international relations, used to influence political opinion and decisions in other countries, as well as promote foreign policy interests with various communication tools and strategies (Kutovoi, 2022; Snow, 2020). As an example of implementation, Turkey uses public diplomacy to promote the country's history, culture, and values, as well as expand its political and diplomatic influence in various regions (Bannikova et al., 2023), while Qatar uses public diplomacy to address its demographic and geographical weaknesses, as well as influence international relations (Al-Zaidy, 2024).

### **Basic Concepts and Evolution of Public Diplomacy**

Public diplomacy has undergone a significant transformation in the digital age, utilizing information technology to influence international public opinion by using non-military tools and digital technologies to shape global perceptions. The digitization of public diplomacy is bringing about major changes, especially with the increased transparency and openness made possible by social media, allowing the public to monitor diplomatic activities directly and having an impact on the way countries communicate with the world (Manor & Huang, 2022; Stepanov, 2020). However, digitalization also presents challenges, such as geopolitical uncertainty affecting international communication, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

(Manor & Huang, 2022). In addition, the phenomenon of post-truth diplomacy has emerged, where information that is not truth-based can influence public opinion in the target country and create a negative impact on international communication (Wu, 2023). To address these challenges, strategies such as post-truth information detection and prevention as well as improving media and information literacy are needed (Wu, 2023). Social media, especially Twitter, plays a major role in public diplomacy, enabling direct communication with global audiences, although developing countries often face challenges in utilizing these platforms effectively to attract the attention of the international community (Perdani et al., 2024). Public diplomacy also plays a role in enhancing the soft power of the state, by increasing foreign public approval when diplomatic activities are reported by the media (Goldsmith et al., 2020), while semi-democratic countries such as Turkey tend to use digital diplomacy to strengthen their image of status and power (Mercury, 2024).

Public diplomacy in Europe, particularly in the context of the European Union (EU), has undergone significant developments, especially with the European integration process encouraging a more active use of public diplomacy tools. In this regard, think tanks in Europe play an important role by obtaining financial support from EU institutions to gain political legitimacy. The think tank serves as an intellectual "soft power", contributing to the training of policymakers both current and future, and helping to address the "democratic deficits" that sometimes occur in the EU's political process (Bajenova, 2023). In addition, digital diplomacy has become a strategic direction in public diplomacy, utilizing digital technologies and platforms to protect national interests and achieve diplomatic goals in the era of digital foreign policy (Palieieva & Todoroshko, 2023). The transformation of EU public diplomacy was also strongly influenced by the 2008 economic crisis, in which the emphasis on external threats and the securitization of communications became a major focus in consolidating support for integration projects and expanding the authority of EU institutions (Sutyryn, 2021). However, EU public diplomacy faces major challenges in responding to crises, such as the Eurozone crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite efforts to restore trust, the EU needs a more effective public diplomacy strategy to counter disinformation and convey an inspiring European narrative to the world (Khomenska & Ivashchuk, 2022; Manfredi-Sánchez & Smith, 2022).

China has made major investments in public diplomacy to improve its international image, but the results are not always worth the investment. Some of the successes achieved, such as the use of visual media during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrate the effectiveness of public diplomacy in highlighting their success in dealing with the virus, which has had a positive effect on China's international image although the impact varies depending on the level of political knowledge of the audience (Hellmann & Oppermann, 2022). Public diplomacy messages emphasizing aid and friendship have also proven effective in increasing positive perceptions of China, even in conflict situations (Mattingly & Sundquist, 2022). In addition, cultural diplomacy, through cultural exchange and education as well as economic cooperation, especially in the Muslim world, has helped to build a positive image and overcome negative perceptions (Xiaolian & Kakar, 2024). However, major challenges remain. "Wolf Warrior" diplomacy, with its critical message to other countries, is often ineffective and can damage China's image (Mattingly & Sundquist, 2022). In addition, media outlets such as Xinhua, which are often perceived as state propaganda, have the potential to undermine international perceptions of China (Butyrin & Argylov, 2022). Efforts to spread positive narratives through foreign-

language media are also often unsuccessful in target countries, such as Japan, which shows limitations in the spread of Chinese media abroad (Yang, 2020; Zhou, 2022)

### **Strategies and Challenges in Public Diplomacy**

Countries face a variety of challenges in implementing public diplomacy, which often involves managing international narratives and perceptions. One interesting example is Russia's use of strategic humour, which has proven effective in shaping international views on global events. Humor in the context of public diplomacy can be used as a tool to promote certain interpretations of international events, while also challenging narratives developed by other actors. This strategy often serves to weaken or distort the message of countries or organizations that are perceived as political competitors or enemies, by utilizing jokes or innuendos that highlight inconsistencies in the opponent's actions or policies. While humor can reveal a human side and dilute tension, excessive or inappropriate use of humor can lead to misunderstandings or even worsen the country's image in the eyes of the international public (Chernobrov, 2021; Sutyurin, 2021). Thus, while humor can be an effective tool of diplomacy, its application must be done with caution, given the complexity of international relations involved.

Negative public diplomacy messages, such as those carried out by China's "Wolf Warrior" diplomats, often show how an aggressive or confrontational approach can damage the country's image on the international stage. Although this diplomacy is designed to strengthen the country's position by demonstrating firmness and protection of national interests, in many cases, this approach can actually backfire, especially when the country faces a global crisis or challenge. In situations like this, overly sharp criticism or actions that are judged aggressive can stoke tensions and lower diplomatic credibility. In contrast, public diplomacy strategies that emphasize international aid, friendship, and cooperation are more likely to succeed in building better relationships and strengthening a country's positive image. This more positive message can produce a more stable long-term effect, by creating the impression that the country is committed to peace and mutually beneficial international partnerships (Mattingly & Sundquist, 2022).

### **The Impact and Effectiveness of Public Diplomacy**

Public diplomacy, especially conducted through high-level visits by national leaders, has a significant influence in shaping foreign public opinion and strengthening relations between countries. Research shows that these visits can increase public approval in the host country, and this positive effect is greater when the visit is widely reported by the media (Goldsmith et al., 2020; Goldsmith et al., 2021). This kind of visit not only reflects the foreign policy priorities of the visiting country, but can also be used to send an important message to a third party or set a desired political narrative (Balci & Pulat, 2023; Koliev & Lundgren, 2021). The effectiveness of public diplomacy through this visit does not depend on the military capabilities between the visiting country and the host country, but rather on the diplomatic and communication capabilities brought by the country's leaders (Goldsmith et al., 2020). In addition, public diplomacy messages that emphasize aid and friendship are more likely to be successful, as they can reinforce a positive image of the visitor's country, as opposed to more aggressive messages or criticizing international rivals, which can turn against them (Mattingly & Sundquist, 2022). High-level visits can also have domestic impacts, such as increasing government legitimacy, especially when the country faces political challenges or unpopularity at home (Yang, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2024).



Public diplomacy is an important instrument used by countries to influence public opinion in other countries, especially through activities such as high-level visits by state leaders and communication through social media platforms. The effectiveness of public diplomacy often depends on the political context and the way the message is delivered. High-level visits by national leaders, for example, can increase public approval in the host country, and research shows that these positive effects can be long-lasting, especially when the activity is widely covered by the media (Goldsmith et al., 2020; Goldsmith et al., 2021). Nonetheless, its effectiveness is not always influenced by the difference in military power between the visiting and host countries, but rather by the effective diplomatic and communication skills of the visiting leader. Additionally, public diplomacy that emphasizes positive messages, such as aid and friendship, tends to be more successful than messages that are negative in nature or criticize other countries, which can damage the image of the country issuing the message (Mattingly & Sundquist, 2022). Social media also plays an important role in expanding the reach of public diplomacy, with platforms such as Weibo allowing countries to communicate with a wider audience, although challenges remain in aligning media perceptions with actual diplomacy practices (Luqiu & Yang, 2020; Tseng, 2023). However, although public diplomacy has great potential, contextual challenges in recipient countries often affect its effectiveness, so more studies are needed to explore how best to adapt public diplomacy strategies and accurately measure their impact (Song & Fanoulis, 2022; Wei, 2020).

## CONCLUSIONS

Public diplomacy has evolved into a vital instrument in shaping a country's international image, with social media, cultural diplomacy, and digital diplomacy as important components in influencing global public opinion. High-level visits by country leaders and diplomatic messages emphasizing friendship and assistance have proven to be more effective in building a positive image and strengthening bilateral relations. Successful public diplomacy strategies often rely on soft power and an approach that emphasizes positive narratives, rather than aggressive or critical messages that can damage the country's image. The digitalization of diplomacy also brings new challenges, such as the spread of disinformation and narrative competition on social media, which require careful strategies to maintain credibility. Public diplomacy integrated with foreign policy can influence the political decisions of recipient countries, with high-level visits being an important means of conveying diplomatic messages. Countries also need to harness soft power and cultural diplomacy to enhance their international appeal, while the use of visual media and digital diplomacy offers opportunities to expand influence in the modern era. While challenges remain, especially in response to rapidly changing global dynamics, public diplomacy remains key to building a positive image, enhancing international credibility, and strengthening relations between countries in an increasingly complex and connected context.

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