

CPD Perspectives

FROM CRAWLING TO WALKING: PROGRESS IN EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: LESSONS FROM NATO

By Barbora Maronkova

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**From Crawling to Walking: Progress in
Evaluating the Effectiveness of Public
Diplomacy: Lessons Learned from NATO**

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LESSONS LEARNED FROM NATO**

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From Crawling to Walking: Progress in Evaluating the Effectiveness of Public Diplomacy: Lessons Learned from NATO

If you can't measure it, you can't manage it.

Peter Drucker

Introduction

Since its creation in 2003, NATO's Public Diplomacy Division has worked to raise awareness and understanding of alliance and alliance-related issues and, ultimately, to foster support for, and trust in, the organization. The result of a merger between the Office of Information and Press and the Science for Peace Program into one, the Public Diplomacy Division emerged as part of a wider reform of the NATO Headquarters structures initiated by then-Secretary General Lord Robertson.

At the outset the first Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, Dr. Stefanie Babst, focused on the need for stronger public diplomacy in the new security environment: "In general, NATO faces the challenge to better explain to new generations and future elites what the transatlantic alliance is all about in the 21st century."¹ At a workshop organized by the newly created Division in Brussels on November 20, 2003, then-NATO Deputy Secretary General Minuto Rizzo also stressed "the need for an effective public diplomacy which is particularly important today, as NATO takes on new missions and reaches out to new audiences, like in Afghanistan."²

At the time NATO faced numerous challenges requiring effective communication and creative public diplomacy, including:

- The need to assist new aspirant countries in their public diplomacy campaigns to promote their accession to NATO;
- The ever-growing network of partner countries from the Western Balkans, Central Asia, Northern Mediterranean and Asia Pacific that required strong public diplomacy elements to explain what NATO is and why the partnership matters;
- NATO's stand-up of its biggest and most distant operation—the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)—in Afghanistan in 2003;
- Other new challenges for NATO such as the fight against terrorism, cyber security and energy security;
- The requirement to address the new digital era, to include the proliferation of social media.

During its first decade, NATO's Public Diplomacy Division focused on creating a strong brand for NATO in a new security environment. In addition, it promoted NATO as a transparent organization that embraces dialogue and an alliance that values strong engagement with civil society from NATO member and partner nations. In 2012, NATO's Public Diplomacy Division underwent further reforms that aimed to create new ways of working in order to improve the overall performance of the division and enhance its products and programs.

One of the key elements of the reform process was the launch of an effective assessment and evaluation process that would help to better plan activities and budget allocation and increase the effectiveness of its outputs towards the then-28 NATO member nations. Previously, there had been limited measurement of program effectiveness and very little experience with the conduct of effective evaluation and measurement activities. The process needed to be developed from scratch, taking into account the specificities

of NATO as a multilateral political-military organization with 28 national stakeholders.

Five years later, the NATO Public Diplomacy Division has made valuable gains in the field of evaluation and measurement. The Division trained a number of its staff in assessing programs, became a member of the AMEC (International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communications) and provided regular effectiveness assessments to NATO leadership. It created a dedicated position of a Planning and Assessment Officer in 2017 to enhance the Division's monitoring and evaluation capabilities and incorporated new elements into its annual planning cycle. Finally, it adopted the British OASIS model of objective setting and introduced a campaign approach to communicate about key topics and policies.

Since its inception, the Division has experimented with a number of models and methods. This paper offers insights into the past five years of NATO's build-up of its evaluation capacities, processes and tools and provides lessons learned for public diplomacy practitioners from other international organizations and national governments.

Chapter 1: First Steps Towards Building an Effective Evaluation and Measurement Program in NATO

The financial crisis of 2008 and its spillover effects forced many NATO member governments to make dramatic budget cuts in their respective ministries. National spending came under increased scrutiny, and officials had to provide evidence proving that limited funds were spent in the most effective manner. NATO was no different. NATO's Public Diplomacy Division has always been financed by NATO's civil budget, and member states participate in various committees governing NATO's decision-making process, to include budget allocations. Consequently, the NATO Public

Diplomacy Division had to become more accountable to its member states in terms of return on investment.

The post-2008 fiscal environment prompted then-Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy Ambassador Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovič to undertake a serious reform of the Division. Faced with significant staff reduction and a zero-nominal growth of its budget, the Division had to sharpen its approach, better prioritize its objectives and focus on high-impact programs and activities.

In light of these requirements, the Division was streamlined into three main pillars organized as sections: Press and Media, Engagements, and Communications Services. One of the most important elements of the reform process was the creation of effective evaluation and measurement processes and tools where none had existed before. A small support team that reported directly to the Assistant Secretary General was established to oversee change management and, most importantly, develop assessment procedures. Initially, these procedures were developed by a three-member assessment team, to include the author. Subsequently, each of the three sections within the division nominated a “measurement champion” who would support and coordinate the work with the team.

Owing to limited expertise in and experience of assessment and evaluation, the support team had to begin with the basics. It became clear that while there is plenty of literature about the theory and practice of evaluation methods for communications and public relations, there is very little on the assessment of public diplomacy programs. Nevertheless, several research documents proved to be of value, including: “Assessing U.S. Public Diplomacy—a Notional Model from 2010”³ prepared by the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy; “What Became of the New Public Diplomacy? Recent Developments in British,

U.S. and Swedish Public Diplomacy Policy and Evaluation Methods” by James Pamment;⁴ and a very useful annotation of bibliographies on evaluating public diplomacy by Robert Banks in *CPD Perspectives*.⁵ These sources provided useful insights into the topic itself and, more importantly, served as basis for further research.

NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division’s structure, which includes press and media and digital media teams, required the team to look beyond traditional ways of understanding and measuring public diplomacy. Measurement models and guidelines used in private sector communications proved to be helpful. These included the Barcelona principles⁶ adopted at the 2nd European Summit on Measurement hosted by the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC), the 2010 UK-based Institute for Public Relations, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) social media measurement guide,⁷ and the Westminster Model of Evaluation.⁸

Nevertheless, the existing literature and range of formats proved difficult to analyze and streamline into a single model suited for use at NATO HQ by an inexperienced team. Therefore, a pilot study project was outsourced to the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre, a member of the NATO family based in Lisbon, Portugal. Launched in April 2012 by a team of four analysts, the study produced a framework to enhance NATO’s public diplomacy activities through evaluation.⁹ This framework provided a model for evaluation and measurement to enhance NATO’s public diplomacy activities. It also helped to define key terminology for outputs and outcomes as well as desired impacts, integrating objective setting and identification into the overall cycle of planning, conduct and evaluation of individual programs within the Division. Ultimately, the pilot created the basis for a more systematic approach to public diplomacy program assessment.

In addition to the ongoing work on the abovementioned framework, the assessment team launched various external evaluation studies to establish the systematic collection of data on public perceptions of NATO, the level of general understanding and knowledge of the organization, and the amount of support for NATO's policies, operations and missions.

The team also opted to carry out public surveys, although these were limited and targeted in scope owing to financial constraints as well as NATO member state sensitivities about the conduct of opinion polls. A number of surveys of public attitudes toward NATO had already been conducted over the years by individual governments and polling institutions.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the strict focus on external opinion polls created a number of shortcomings. For example, these polls were irregular and/or covered only a handful of countries. Moreover, the NATO-related questions were usually part of a wider survey and thus limited to only a few generic queries about the general level of support for and knowledge about NATO.

In launching a new set of more focused surveys, the team hoped to gain more insights into target audiences' attitudes towards NATO, such as NATO's brand recognition and support levels. The target audiences included key opinion shapers, journalists, parliamentarians and the post-Cold War generation.¹¹ In cooperation with PriceWaterhouseCoopers, NATO's Public Diplomacy Division conducted a focus group study with key participants at NATO security conferences, NATO parliamentarians and visitors to the NATO website. In addition, the team led focus group studies with participants at various international model NATO conferences, interviewing over 120 graduate students in international relations, international law and humanitarian studies.

Results revealed the existence of relatively positive attitudes towards NATO and a decent understanding of NATO's role. At the same time, parliamentarians and security and defense experts expressed a desire for more targeted communications to meet their specific needs and information acquisition practices. Meanwhile, the majority of students interviewed admitted that their interest in NATO was usually limited prior to engagement in such events as simulation conferences. But once they learned more about NATO, their interest and curiosity increased, and nearly a third expressed their wish to pursue a NATO internship program following their participation in NATO-sponsored activities.

The December 2012 completion of the commissioned "Framework on Evaluating NATO's Public Diplomacy," a presentation to NATO leadership as well as the Committee on Public Diplomacy, launched the second phase of the effort to integrate systematic evaluation and measurement processes into the daily practice of the NATO Public Diplomacy Division.

Chapter 2: On the Road

In January 2013, the work of implementing key aspects of the evaluation framework as well as the results of focus group surveys began. Several important recommendations emerged:

- Start with an incremental step-by-step approach;
- Provide basic training to all the staff of the Public Diplomacy Division;
- Set out a few experimental case studies;
- Focus first on identifying key objectives and short-term goals;
- Include strong change management in the process.

A change management team met weekly to oversee proposed reforms with the objective of setting realistic implementation milestones. A very complex piece of work, the framework required an incremental approach in order to be successful. The first and most important challenge was to assure buy-in within the Public Diplomacy Division, particularly with respect to the new requirements and procedures.

To illustrate the mechanics of the measurement and evaluation process and clarify staff performance requirements, the assessment team held several briefings with middle management and staff. The team stressed that the evaluation process was aimed at the assessment of program effectiveness rather than staff performance. The team also emphasized that the sole purpose of the new assessment and evaluation process was to improve product impact within NATO's key audiences. To this end the author created a series of brown bag lunches aimed at bringing together the staff of the entire Division and discussing matters of importance in this new phase of the Division's approach to public diplomacy.

The change management team adopted three important principles: incremental approach, buy-in from the staff and strong commitment from leadership. Several dedicated training sessions were organized initially on the basis of assessment and evaluation, followed by more focused training on measurement for social media experts, press officers and public diplomacy programs managers. The assessment team also created in-house assessment and evaluation tools to capture, store and analyze Division effectiveness.

Measurement tools included the design of visitors' surveys to NATO HQ and dedicated polling of journalists during key NATO events such as NATO ministerial meetings,

NATO exercises and NATO summits. The Engagements Section introduced assessment tools for project funding requests, key objectives definition, desired outcomes and measurement tools. Project grantees committed themselves to providing NATO with relevant assessment information, including surveys, social media analytics and sentiment analyses as well as other forms of assessment as appropriate. The editorial team produced pitch forms for stories to be published on the NATO website or via the NATO TV Channel. Further effort was made to establish a dedicated assessment team for digital and social media products.

A specially-commissioned study of the NATO website and its overall digital presence enabled a clearer understanding of digital audiences' desires, needs and objectives. This study resulted in several improvements to the NATO website and the production and distribution of NATO TV Channel stories. The study also led the Division to embrace the need for a new approach to public diplomacy programs, both traditional and contemporary. Finally, the follow-up study led to the development of robust new digital campaigns, to include "Return to Hope," which commemorated the completion of NATO's ten-year ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

Finally, using the U.S. State Department "Mission Activity Tracker" (MAT) as a model, the Division also created its own in-house tracking database that permitted the collection and storage of quantitative and qualitative data from current public diplomacy programs, particularly those run by the Engagements Section. This database also became an important reporting tool.

The first case studies featuring fully integrated communication plans with built-in objectives, target audiences and outputs and outcomes were created in 2012 under the title of "Public Diplomacy Implementation Plans" (PDIPs). These plans identified five of NATO's top political

priorities requiring focused public diplomacy. To redirect the work of the Division, the PDIPs oversaw the creation of dedicated teams of experts from various parts of the Division. These teams brought thematic as well as professional expertise to coordinated use of effective measurement tools.

The PDIPs introduced, for the first time, the full cycle of objective setting and planning, target audience identification and assessment into the work of the Division. These plans were crucial to the integration of measurement and evaluation activities into the work of the NATO Public Diplomacy Division, which ultimately saw an improvement in the change in staff mindset and performance effectiveness within the Division.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Approaches to NATO's Public Diplomacy Evaluation

Before focusing on NATO's public diplomacy program evaluations, it is useful to look at some theoretical definitions and practical approaches both to public diplomacy and its evaluation. In 1965, the Murrow Center described public diplomacy as something that "deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries."¹²

The Center on Public Diplomacy subsequently defined the term as "the public, interactive dimension of diplomacy which is not only global in nature, but also involves a multitude of actors and networks. It is a key mechanism through which nations foster mutual trust and productive relationships and has become crucial to building a secure global environment."¹³ Until its 1999 merger with the Department of State, the United States Information Agency (USIA) described public diplomacy as that which "seeks

to promote the national interest and the national security of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad."¹⁴

The terminology further developed over the decades, reflecting new contexts and players in the foreign policy sphere. Jan Melissen, Nancy Snow, Nicholas Cull and other scholars offered fresh perspectives on the "new" public diplomacy that involved non-state actors and stressed the importance of listening and engagement with the audiences rather than an exclusive dependence on one-way communication. Cull, for example, argued "public diplomacy is about seeking a genuine relationship with audiences and integrating them into your foreign policy process."¹⁵

The absence of strictly defined descriptive terminology allows for varied interpretations of public diplomacy, which leaves flexibility for state, non-state actors and international organizations when pursuing their own public diplomacy. Jan Melissen, for example, provides an interesting outlook on the practice of public diplomacy by multilateral organizations: "Public diplomacy's national variant is more competitive, whereas multilateral public diplomacy can be seen as a more cooperative form of engagement with foreign publics."¹⁶

In NATO's case, however, some important key elements determine its own definition and pursuit of public diplomacy. Information outreach responsibility rests primarily with the 29 member states. NATO headquarters provides guidance and support for these national outreach efforts. In addition, NATO must speak with a unified voice, reflecting the positions of all its allies. And yet NATO doesn't "own" any of its audiences. Its member states' citizens remain a priority even as NATO must engage with the publics of its vast network

of partners stretching from the former Soviet republics to North Africa, the Gulf States and the Asia-Pacific region.

Therefore, the basic premise of the classical definition of a national variant of public diplomacy to communicate national foreign policy to external audiences becomes less applicable in NATO's case. NATO's use of public diplomacy for its purposes has both multilateral and bilateral objectives: to "help raise awareness and understanding of the alliance and alliance-related issues" but also "to foster support for, and trust in the Organization" among member states.¹⁷

Evaluation of Public Diplomacy

The majority of public diplomacy scholars and practitioners agree that finding solutions to the challenge of public diplomacy program evaluation, whether for individual governments or multilateral organizations, remains problematic. In 2007, during the Wilton Park Conference on the Future of Public Diplomacy¹⁸ and later at a NATO Public Diplomacy Workshop in Brussels, River Path Associates proposed a strategic model to address this challenge.¹⁹ This model offered four important phases of action: foresight, strategy that is transformed into campaigns, implementation and review. The model also reinforced the need to set short, medium and longer-term outcome milestones. These outcomes include the following:

- Changing perceptions;
- Setting an agenda;
- Building networks;
- Developing organizational capacity;
- Installing institutional change.²⁰

The question therefore remains for public diplomacy practitioners to establish what is it they want to evaluate.

In his paper, "What Became of the New Public Diplomacy? Recent Developments in British, U.S. and Swedish Public Diplomacy Policy and Evaluation Methods,"²¹ James Pamment argues that evaluation methods depend on prevailing strategic objectives. While the U.S. State Department has invested in setting up evaluation models to measure the impact of its individual public diplomacy programs, Sweden has paid more attention to the positive perception of its brand as a country amongst foreign audiences. Meanwhile, the UK's public diplomacy efforts in the first decade of the 21st century focused on the need to positively influence external attitudes towards the UK, using perception studies as the primary evaluation tool.

Since there is no single definition of public diplomacy, Pamment further emphasized the need to clearly specify evaluation objectives: "If public diplomacy for you is engaging your networks, it is what you want to focus on measurement."²² Carissa Gonzales, a Kathryn W. Davis Public Diplomacy Fellow 2014-2015,²³ also argues for a clear setting of objectives for public diplomacy practitioners that would allow a meaningful measurement of outcomes rather than outputs of individual programs. According to Gonzales, the most important step towards effective evaluation of public diplomacy is the recognition that a shift in attitude may take five to ten years, while behavioral changes can take decades to manifest. On the other hand, according to Gonzales, it takes one to five years for public diplomacy initiatives to increase awareness of and interest in an organization or country or concrete policy.

The "Data-Driven Public Diplomacy" report²⁴ by the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy also discusses key challenges to identifying effective public diplomacy measurement and evaluation techniques. According to the report's authors,

Too often the difference between outputs and outcomes can be conflated. Given the multitude of factors at play that cause foreign audiences to react to U.S. foreign policy... it is likely that a public diplomacy or broadcasting activity or campaign contributes to an outcome rather than directly causing it.

The key to setting up an effective evaluation and measurement model therefore lies in understanding the nature of the ultimate goal of one's public diplomacy: is it increased knowledge, understanding and support or a behavioral change? The measurement of impact is then achieved by the long-term collection of data, comparative studies and historical research.

Chapter 4: Where Do We Go From Here? What We Learned and Next Steps

During the initial phase of setting up the evaluation and measurement in NATO's Public Diplomacy Division, several lessons learned emerged that impacted the implementation of the measurement model. The fragmentation of results obtained from the measurement of a variety of individual sections and programs proved to be a key challenge. The tools set up in the first phase also focused on mainly outputs rather than outcomes. As a result, the measurement model produced a micro-level peek into the evaluation of individual sections or tools used rather than a holistic picture of the overall work of the Public Diplomacy Division.

For example, the Engagements Section conducts public diplomacy and outreach to all member states of the alliance and all of its partner nations. Each program—such as visits to NATO HQ by opinion makers or support for a conference featuring NATO topics—received individual, geographically-bound assessments. While the aggregate results of the

annual visits program offered some useful insights into how visitors perceive NATO, what they learned and whether their perceptions changed during and immediately after their visit, the program assessment failed to measure the long-term impact of visitor participation in the program. The assessment of individual conferences offered insight into how the event was perceived by the participants and the extent of media coverage but could not forecast the impact on future public discussions about the issues covered. These shortcomings are being addressed currently with plans for sustained long-term measurement initiatives such as post-visit surveys.

The Press and Media Section significantly improved its monitoring and analytical capabilities and now provides a more insightful analysis of media reporting, tone and key message placement. This analysis is used to better focus the key messages embedded in the NATO Secretary General's press engagements as well as those of other NATO officials. Daily reviews of online media reporting and Twitter feeds by key political personalities and journalists have also been added to daily monitoring products. They help to shape the Twitter activity of the accounts of key NATO officials such as the Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary General and the Spokesperson.

The Communications Services Section encompasses several elements of work, such as management and content creation for NATO's website, social media accounts and the production of NATO-related content through the NATO TV channel. The Press and Media Division manages the individual social media accounts of the Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General and NATO Spokesperson.

Of the evaluation efforts described above, measurement of social media and digital products such as NATO TV channel content was the easiest to undertake thanks to the existence

of many tracking, monitoring and assessment online tools such as Google Analytics, BrandWatch, Social Bakers and others. The section created a Head of Digital Insights position to focus on measuring and analyzing the social media impact of NATO's accounts as well as providing a useful feedback loop to planning and content management. While many evaluation experts argue that the number of friends, likes and re-tweets doesn't actually indicate an impact, it permits the identification of long-term trends and even audience behaviors. NATO also strengthened its marketing plan by promoting its own digital content via dedicated content distribution providers that offered free content to any broadcaster around the world.

NATO's Public Diplomacy Division also took a serious look at the issue of effective measurement and assessment and invested a great deal into setting up the process. However, aggregating all of these various elements of work into one coherent assessment for the Public Diplomacy Division proved to be difficult. It also revealed the lack of long-term impact assessment capabilities that would allow for a possible future forecast of how the audiences perceive NATO today and in the future. Therefore, the Division continued to explore other effective methods.

External Political Factors that Influence NATO's Public Diplomacy

For a political organization such as NATO, external turbulence in world affairs has a direct impact on audience perceptions at home and abroad. NATO's public diplomacy and communication priorities are directly affected by changes in political and security environments and therefore require constant adaptation. In this respect, the year 2014 brought a new and unexpected set of challenges for NATO. As a consequence of the Russian Federation's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea and its support

for separatists in Eastern Ukraine, NATO had to make some important decisions. At the Wales Summit in 2014 and the Warsaw Summit in 2016, NATO launched the most significant reinforcement of its collective defense since the end of the Cold War.

In addition to traditional security challenges, NATO had to address a new form of hybrid warfare, to include Russian propaganda attacks on NATO's allies and partners such as Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. This hostile information environment created new communication challenges for the organization, requiring active outreach efforts towards its own citizens to assure them of NATO's steadfast commitment as a provider of peace and security. NATO also had to focus on debunking Russian propaganda and disinformation on a near daily basis. Finally, NATO had to find a way to effectively communicate its support for Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and other partners exposed to Russian hybrid actions.

These new challenges required NATO to strengthen its strategic communications capabilities. Strategic communications became an important factor in NATO's decision-making and communications processes. Today, NATO defines strategic communications as "the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims."²⁵ These activities and capabilities include five disciplines: public diplomacy, public affairs, military public affairs, psychological operations and information operations.

Structural Assessment and Evaluation

With these new challenges, NATO's Public Diplomacy Division had to review its measurement and evaluation journey. Taking stock of its achievements and lessons learned, the Division defined a new approach, to include long-term

impact assessment. Inspired by scholars like Nicholas Cull and James Pamment, the Division decided to begin with the evaluation of existing networks, focusing on key opinion makers or, in other words, the movers and shakers with credible voices who are influential in their community. The objective is to create networks of NATO experts and credible voices that can support publicly NATO's decisions in times of need. Regular NATO visitor and exchange programs sustain these networks, relevant information-sharing initiatives and dedicated events to provide platforms for their expertise.

The measurement process also assesses NATO's face-to-face engagement with these individuals as well as their NATO-specific traditional and social media presence. The results of these activities can be then measured by the extent to which they have a direct impact in the field of advocacy for NATO. For example, the voices of key opinion makers helped to shape a positive discussion in their constituencies about the need for increased defense spending among alliance members. Similarly, nurturing relationships with journalists who cover NATO-related topics also provides a good way to measure network impact.

Building and measuring such relationships has taken on increased importance in the face of Russian propaganda and disinformation tactics against NATO and its allies. NATO doesn't fight propaganda with propaganda but with facts. It engages online, on air and in print by actively countering fake news on social media and working with journalists to correct an increasing number of false news stories. Here, journalists have an important role to play. Dozens of key opinion makers and experts continue to work on debunking Russian propaganda through their networks, setting up disinformation platforms and delivering dedicated research.

Twitter has become a particularly important tool both for NATO and journalists, allowing them to follow key events,

disseminate information and provide a forceful tool to push back on Russian propaganda. For example, when the NATO Secretary General gave an interview to the Russian TV outlet *Russia24* in April 2017, the station headlined it as “NATO Prepares for War.” Nowhere in the actual interview did the Secretary General mention such a possibility. However, thanks to immediate and strong pushback by the NATO spokesperson on her Twitter account, many journalists joined forces and helped to disseminate the right message, in the process sharing the interview text. The resultant pressure forced *Russia24* to correct its deliberately misleading headline. Credible voices that speak up on behalf of the alliance need to be nurtured. NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division can reap real benefits through sustained engagement with these opinion makers.

Lesson Learned #1: Build, nurture and assess networks through public diplomacy engagement. While the short-term goal is to increase general public knowledge about NATO, the longer-term goal is to build strong networks of opinion makers for advocacy and response to calls for action.

Identifying New Approaches

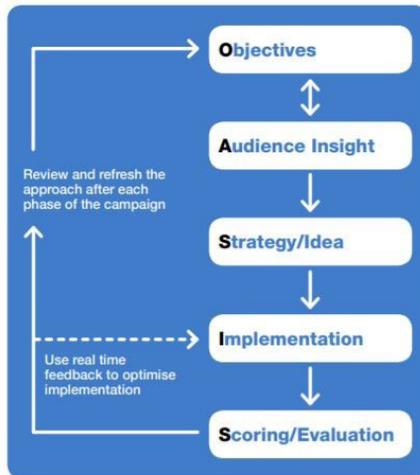
The NATO Public Diplomacy Division started looking for a new approach to its measurement—an approach that could be adapted to meet its specific requirements and to overcome some of the challenges identified in the measurement of its activities as described in previous sections.

The UK Government, which has been at the forefront of impactful communication and assessment initiatives, provided a useful example. As outlined previously, it has pursued a more integrated communications strategy for over a decade. This strategy culminated with the adoption

of the OASIS model and a campaign approach as the most effective way to measure its impact.

OASIS, which stands for “Objective, Audience Insight, Strategy, Implementation and Scorecard/Evaluation,”²⁶ incorporates key elements of effective planning: setting up objectives, analyzing target audiences and identifying strategies that lead to the fulfillment of the outlined objectives (See Figure 1). Following the identification of key government political priorities, the model is then translated into several outreach campaigns that allow for focused impact and impact measurement. This campaign approach can be adapted to any political action, from the local community level to a whole-government approach, with shorter or longer-term duration. The NATO Public Diplomacy Division held several rounds of consultations and training sessions with the members of the UK government’s communications team in order to adopt the OASIS model.

Figure 1: Oasis Model



Source: A Guide to Campaign Planning, UK Government Communications Services

In light of the new communications challenges stemming from the changing geopolitical environment, the Division's initial campaign approach provided a model designed to sharpen the focus of NATO's communications and measurement strategies. By clearly identifying campaign objectives and target audiences, impact measurement can provide necessary insights into overall campaign effectiveness as well as specific feedback for future planning. The Division began with the premise that a campaign is a planned sequence of communications and interactions that leads to a defined, measurable outcome. In support of this premise, the Division brought together a selection of media activities, PR, advertising, digital media content, public diplomacy and strategic engagements so that all communications elements would be integrated and complementary²⁷ (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Example of a Campaign Toolkit

	Suggested activity
Digital	Social media, targeted paid content, infographics, video, user-generated content, animations, website
Events	Exhibit stand, stakeholder events, university road show, large-scale events, for instance 'NATO Run', school visits
Out of home advertising	Signage, outdoor advertising, indoor advertising in government buildings, billboards, bus stop advertising
Print	Advertising, press story, campaign feature, in-house magazine
Radio	Advertising, podcasts
TV	Public Service Announcements, advertising airtime, coverage in news broadcasts, third-party documentaries

Source: A Guide to Campaign Planning, UK Government Communications Office

The first initiative selected for this new approach was the NATO Defense and Security campaign *WEARENATO*, launched at the meeting of NATO's Heads of States and Governments in Brussels on May 25, 2017. Ambassador Tacan Ildem, Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, described the launch of the campaign as follows:

The NATO campaign was born out of this necessity: to remind our publics that NATO is an essential guarantor of security for all member states. Communicating about all that we do on their behalf is critical to maintaining and increasing support for the Alliance.²⁸

Figure 3: Sample of a toolkit of the NATO Campaign *WEARENATO*

Campaign look and feel	Core elements explained
<p>Here is an example of the campaign in the form of a portrait layout in English. This shows all the common elements that need to be included when producing any materials, both for print and digital media. All elements can be downloaded from the asset platform.</p>	
<p>Photo caption Each image used must have a caption. This should always be in the top left as shown. The first line is a description of the subject. The second line is the location (place and country). The text used is <i>Averil Black</i>. Do not alter the font, size and margins set out in the artwork.</p>	<p>Hashtag The hashtag must always be shown in the top right-hand corner of all materials. It must always read #WEARENATO with no spacing between any of the characters. To ensure the readability of the hashtag, you may need to retouch the image in this area or add a linked, opacity box over the top of the image. The colour of the 'WeAre' part of the hashtag must match the colour of the main copyline. The font used should be <i>Museo 700</i>. The # and NATO must be reproduced in white or grey.</p>
<p>Main copyline Each design must use the main copyline that follows the partnership and benefit structure (see page 6). This can be placed horizontally or vertically depending on the image. 'WE ARE' to be set in <i>Museo 700</i>. The following text set in <i>Museo 300</i>. A selection of copylines is available to use or you can develop your own (see page 7). These need to be approved by the NATO campaign team. Choose a colour from the palette provided (see page 8) that works best against the image.</p>	<p>Main image Each piece of content must contain only one image. This must fill the artwork area shown. When selecting imagery, always look to include a 'calm space' somewhere within the image so the copyline is legible (see page 54).</p>
<p>Narrative Each design layout must be accompanied with a narrative. There are two types of text available: 1) Flat NATO text or 2) Country-specific text (see page 10). The maximum word count is approximately 30 words and the font used is <i>Avenir Regular</i>.</p>	<p>NATO logo Always use the correct NATO logo artwork. The logo is positioned correctly on all design templates provided. Please refer to page 12 for guidance on 'logo clearspace'.</p>

Source: WEARENATO: Defence and Security Campaign one toolkit, internal NATO document.

The campaign was aimed at audiences in all NATO member states. It offered a toolkit of pre-defined messages, images and narratives that best described NATO and its key role as a provider of peace and security (See Figure 3). The toolkit could then be adapted by individual nations in local languages and tailored for domestic audiences. The design resulted from a detailed brand study that provided an improved understanding of NATO's brand as well as prevailing audience associations with the alliance. This led to the identification of the campaign's core concepts, highlighting NATO's unity and solidarity and the benefits it brings to member nations through the protection of freedom and security. The campaign now integrates various forms of NATO's public diplomacy and communication activities as well as PR elements, including digital, mass media, advertising and sponsored events.

WEARENATO should not be viewed as a campaign that is executed once but rather as an ongoing series of communications activities that shift perceptions across a target audience over time. When properly developed and consistently implemented, *WEARENATO* should reinforce the NATO brand and improve general understanding of the organization and its underlying values among key audiences in member countries.

The campaign is still ongoing, so it is too early to assess its impact. Nevertheless, this approach allows the Division to better identify the key political issue(s) to be communicated, to more effectively target its audiences and to focus its public diplomacy tools (e.g., face-to-face engagement, press and media work and digital engagement) on a clearly identified set of objectives. Additional smaller public outreach campaigns such as military deployments under NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Poland and Baltic states are also unfolding in parallel.

Lesson Learned #2: Actively search for a mixed model of measurement and evaluation that allows for assessment of all elements in the toolbox and the integration of institutional public diplomacy and communications functions.

Lesson Learned #3: Actively search for the most effective methods of evaluation and assessment of public diplomacy and strategic communication efforts.

Conclusion

Whether it is the adoption of the OASIS model, the conduct of dedicated campaigns of various sizes or the measurement of the effectiveness of a dedicated network of key opinion makers, the perfect model for public diplomacy measurement does not yet exist. Perhaps the ideal model will never exist because public diplomacy is multi-faceted, and the communications environment is constantly changing. Indeed, trying to fit it all into one measurement model is not only unrealistic but also counterproductive.

Nevertheless, this new public diplomacy approach allows for much broader outreach, and its associated new technologies add new dimensions to public engagement. The first important step is to acknowledge the importance of evaluation and measurement and change the organizational mindset accordingly. Second, it is important to understand the organization's goals and needs and to prepare for a process of trial and error until these objectives are matched to realistic measurement activities. Last, but not least, it is important to realize that the practice of public diplomacy and strategic communications is not static. It requires flexibility in searching for new and improved methods of evaluation and measurement. This flexibility is integral to the evolution of the outreach process.

For NATO's Public Diplomacy Division, this journey started five years ago and is still ongoing. But the first crucial steps were made, and the process of change and improvement has become irreversible. For the sake of its citizens, NATO needs to continue to work hard, constantly improving its public diplomacy and communications efforts to demonstrate, seventy years later, that NATO matters more than ever for the peace and security of the transatlantic space.

Case Study

NATO WARSAW SUMMIT 2016: Measuring impact of its public diplomacy

While the NATO Public Diplomacy Division was searching for more appropriate models of measurement of its public diplomacy and communication activities, an important event was in the planning process: the meeting of NATO's Heads of States and/or Governments in Warsaw, Poland on July 8-9, 2016 (See Figure 4). NATO summits, which usually take place every two years, shape the course of political action for the alliance. The summits provide guidance to the alliance based on decisions taken by NATO's Heads of States and/or Governments. At the same time, they offer unique platforms for NATO's more robust communication and public diplomacy initiatives, taking advantage of global interest in summit outcomes.

Figure 4



Heads of States and Government of NATO at Warsaw Summit 2016; Source: NATO Website, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/photos_133039.html

NATO's Public Diplomacy Division assessment team decided to use the NATO Summit in Warsaw as a test case for more focused measurement activities in which the full toolbox of the Division could be evaluated in a specific time frame with clearly defined objectives.²⁹ The key political objective of the Warsaw Summit was "to discuss the course of action for the Alliance's adaptation to the new security environment, so that NATO remains ready to defend all Allies against any threat from any direction."³⁰ Three objectives for NATO's Public Diplomacy Division were set out in connection to this summit:

- To receive factual and worldwide media coverage reflecting NATO's key messages;
- To stipulate a multi-layered echo of credible voices explaining NATO's decisions from the Summit;
- To achieve increased understanding of the worldwide audiences of the political and military decisions taken at the Summit.

Media Coverage

Over 1,500 journalists from over 40 countries arrived in Warsaw to cover the NATO Summit. In addition, the NATO Press and Media Section organized press tours from different countries, including Afghanistan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia and others. On the spot, the NATO Press and Media Section organized several background briefings for journalists on key issues such as cyber, NATO-EU cooperation and defense and deterrence by NATO experts. These briefings provided journalists with factual and technical background information for each of these very specific topics to enable better public understanding of the political decisions being made at the Summit in these areas.

Several press conferences by the NATO Secretary General as well as national leaders took place during the Summit.

Live-streamed and broadcasted immediately around the world through the European Broadcasting Association, these media availabilities reached billions of viewers. The NATO team provided 24/7 media monitoring followed by a detailed in-depth media analysis one week after the Summit. Subsequent media analysis confirmed robust coverage, with mostly factual reporting and key messaging on major political decisions.

Social Media Analysis

At the same time, the NATO social media team conducted research with two independent teams: the University of Toronto Munk School of Global Affairs, the RMIT University's School of Media and Communication, Melbourne, Australia, and industry partner Info Ops HQ.³¹ This was the first time that such a robust and in-depth social media study was commissioned. The partners were tasked with monitoring the social media conversation leading up to, during and following the Summit. The Munk School of Global Affairs team analyzed Twitter, Facebook and news feeds to gauge the topics that social media audiences were engaging with during the summit as well as to compare these conversations to overall NATO messaging during this time period. The team from RMIT University's School of Media and Communication and Info Ops HQ independently assessed the same feeds using a social media tool, *Mention*, and qualitatively examined YouTube and other digital channels in which the Summit received mention.

The research demonstrated good coverage of the Summit. Ultimately there were over 378,000 mentions of NATO during the reporting period of July 4-14, 2016, with 145,000 mentions on Twitter alone. The study also included monitoring of some key actors and influencers who engaged in dialogue and shared content.³² Such analyses allowed the discovery of the identity of the real influencers in social media.

Face-to-Face Engagement

It has become a tradition for the NATO Public Diplomacy Division to organize high-level conferences with partners during NATO Summits. These conferences gather some of the most influential NATO and foreign policy experts in the world. This platform allows for exchanges between leaders and expert communities and provides an opportunity for experts to obtain first-hand information about the Summit. To that end, the NATO Public Diplomacy Division organized the Warsaw Summit Experts' Forum with the Polish Institute of International Affairs and a Slovak-based non-governmental organization, GLOBSEC. The experts' event, which took place July 7-9, 2016, gathered over 400 participants, including more than a dozen world leaders and senior ministers as well as NATO leadership (NATO Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General, Chairman of the Military Committee) to discuss key Summit topics. At the same time, a Young Leaders Conference organized by the U.S. Atlantic Council (ACUS) provided future leaders with access to key policy makers. Both events were evaluated by a report consisting of dedicated online surveys, social media and media monitoring. The objective of both events was to stimulate conversation about the results of the NATO Warsaw Summit, enhance its visibility and broaden dissemination of the key deliverables adopted at the Summit.

Achievements:

The NATO Public Diplomacy Division achieved its first two objectives: to communicate about the Warsaw Summit and to stimulate debate about key decisions adopted during the proceedings among key opinion leaders. Its third objective, to achieve increased global understanding of the political and military decisions made at the Summit, can only be measured anecdotally. However, there appears to have been some successes.

Through their daily engagement with various audiences, whether visitors to NATO HQ, participants in events sponsored by the NATO Public Diplomacy Division, or conversations on social media, the Division's staff received feedback confirming audience awareness of the NATO Warsaw Summit. Moreover, the Division can confirm that audiences sought out information about Summit decisions that resonated with their areas of interest. For example, a Ukrainian student of international relations now knows that the Ukrainian president attended a NATO Summit in Warsaw to discuss NATO's support to Ukraine, while an Afghan commentator is aware that NATO has endorsed continuation of support for the Resolute Training Mission in Afghanistan.

The NATO Public Diplomacy Division gained useful insights from this case study, which it will put to work in its new approach towards a dedicated campaign. The NATO Warsaw Summit can be classified as a small campaign in itself.

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Author Biography

Ms. Maronkova joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Public Diplomacy Division in Brussels, Belgium in 2006 as program coordinator to oversee projects that aim to raise awareness and promote NATO in a number of NATO member states. As of September 2010, she worked as programme manager for the Western Balkans where she designed, planned and implemented public diplomacy campaigns. In this capacity, she advised several candidate countries on their national public awareness campaigns on NATO membership.

From January to December 2016, she worked for NATO's Press and Media office. In March 2017, she became Director of NATO Information and Documentation Centre in Kyiv, Ukraine.

In 2003, she established and headed the Slovak-based NGO Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs to contribute to public and academic debate on Slovakia's membership to the EU and NATO. Her work included public relations and media appearances, public speaking, donor and stakeholder relations, and management of the NGO.

A graduate of the University of Economics of Bratislava, Slovak Republic, Barbora is also holds a Public Affairs diploma from the Chartered Institute for Public Relations in the UK. She currently serves as a non-resident Research Fellow with the USC Center on Public Diplomacy and is a frequent contributor to the CPD Blog.

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