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## **The Role of International Broadcasting Media in Building Public Diplomacy Bridges**

**Muhammad Faisal Aziz<sup>1</sup>, Rizki Septin Amalia<sup>2</sup>**

*<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Mulawarman, Indonesia*

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### **ABSTRACT**

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International broadcasting media play an important role in public diplomacy as a tool to build national image, strengthen international relations, and influence global public opinion. With the ability to disseminate information to foreign audiences, this type of broadcasting has become a key element in diplomatic strategy in the era of globalization and digitalization. Joseph Nye's concept of soft power emphasizes the appeal of culture in shaping perceptions and foreign policy. This study uses a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach to understand the role of international broadcasting in public diplomacy. Countries that invest in global broadcasting services, such as Deutsche Welle, have succeeded in showcasing democratic values and culture, thereby enhancing their reputation and international relations.

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*International Broadcasting, Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, Deutsche Welle.*

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[mfaisalaziz@fisip.unmul.ac.id](mailto:mfaisalaziz@fisip.unmul.ac.id)

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Interrelated changes in politics, international relations, and mass communication have significantly increased the role of the media in diplomacy. Increased public involvement in the political process has transformed many societies from autocratic to democratic regimes. Transformations in communication and information technology, the ability to transmit almost every major event in global affairs almost instantly to almost every location around the world, and the formation and growth of the Internet have resulted in the globalization of electronic communication and journalism and a substantial increase in communication networks, stations, and consumers worldwide (Gilboa1998, n.d.).

International broadcasting serves as an important instrument of international diplomacy for countries that consider public diplomacy a fundamental aspect of their diplomatic efforts, and successfully enhances their reputation, status, and international perception among foreign audiences. However, independence is crucial to the credibility of broadcasters and their

capacity to attract and retain audiences; resilience, consistency, reliable funding, and effective collaboration with foreign ministries are important elements that contribute to success (Vincent, 2016).

The global broadcasting sector has undergone a phase of significant growth and change. Leading broadcasting countries have made major investments in international broadcasting over the past 15 years, particularly in satellite television and 24-hour news services. This transformation has been further influenced by the emergence of digital platforms, which have fostered synergies between international broadcasting, media, and second-track diplomacy, thereby expanding the participation of non-state actors in contemporary diplomatic interactions (Belikova, 2025). Furthermore, the use of digital media strengthens the position of international broadcasting as a tool for foreign policy communication, enabling countries to promote national interests, enhance their image, and counter disinformation in the global arena more effectively.

The role of digital media also enables two-way interaction between countries and global audiences, strengthening dialogue while expanding the reach of public diplomacy by involving academics, activists, and civil society as new actors in the arena of international communication (Belikova, 2025). In addition to reporting on all activities carried out by government officials of a country in the context of diplomatic activities, the media has other main tasks, such as news dissemination, analysis, investigation, and research, particularly in bilateral relations as well as topics, activities, etc. Whether it be regional issues, international issues, or even domestic political issues within a country that have the potential to develop into regional issues (*Public Diplomacy and Media*, n.d.). This aims to improve relations and cooperation between countries and enhance a country's positive image and global publicity. The media is also known as a subject of public diplomacy.

A number of previous studies have shown that international broadcasting media is a strategic instrument in public diplomacy, especially through the use of soft power. The concept of soft power introduced by Joseph Nye emphasizes the ability of a country to influence the preferences of other actors through cultural appeal, values, and moral legitimacy, rather than coercive force. In this context, international broadcasting—such as the BBC World Service, Voice of America, and Deutsche Welle—is seen as a key means of building a country's image, spreading democratic values, and shaping global public opinion (Nye, 2021; Vincent, 2016). Classical and contemporary studies also emphasize that the success of international broadcasting in public diplomacy is highly dependent on editorial credibility, media independence, funding continuity,

and institutional relationships with foreign ministries without sacrificing journalistic autonomy (O'Keefee, 2010; Zöllner, 2006).

On the other hand, the development of digital technology and online media has shifted the character of public diplomacy from one-way communication to an interactive pattern that directly involves non-state actors, civil society, and global audiences. Recent research shows that the integration of international broadcasting with digital platforms and social media expands the reach of public diplomacy, strengthens cross-cultural dialogue, and opens up space for second-track diplomacy (Rawnsley, 2016; Belikova, 2025). However, most of the literature still focuses on normative or institutional analysis in the country of origin of the broadcast, or on specific geopolitical contexts such as Europe, the Middle East, and North America. Research that specifically examines how international broadcasting media operates, is received, and is interpreted in recipient countries—particularly in Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia—is still relatively limited. In addition, studies that simultaneously link the role of international broadcasting with public diplomacy, soft power, and the dynamics of digitalization in the context of local audiences have not been developed in depth.

Based on these gaps, this study attempts to fill the research gap by analyzing the role of international broadcasting media, particularly Deutsche Welle, in building public diplomacy bridges in the era of globalization and digitalization, using Indonesia as the locus of analysis. This study not only highlights the function of international broadcasting as a foreign policy tool, but also explores how credibility, digital adaptation, and cross-cultural interaction influence the effectiveness of public diplomacy and the formation of a country's image at the global level.

This research is important because it seeks to understand the role of international broadcasting media in public diplomacy in the era of globalization and digitalization. With major changes in politics, international relations, and communication technology, international broadcasting media not only convey information, but also help build a country's image, strengthen relations between countries, and influence world public opinion. This study examines how broadcast media can enhance public diplomacy through a soft power approach, as well as looking at factors such as media freedom, funding, and cooperation with foreign ministries that influence the success of international broadcasting. In addition, this study also provides insights into how broadcast media is adapting to the challenges of digitalization and its role in intercultural communication, which is important in modern diplomacy and sustainable international relations.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design as described by John W. Creswell. This approach focuses on a deep understanding of social phenomena through the interpretation of meaning, context, and processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to analyze the role of international broadcasting media as a tool of public diplomacy, particularly in building a country's image and influencing global public opinion. Research data was obtained through literature studies by examining secondary sources such as books, scientific journal articles, policy reports, and official documents relevant to the topics of international broadcasting, public diplomacy, and the concept of soft power. Data analysis was conducted thematically by identifying patterns, concepts, and main narratives related to international broadcasting practices, particularly the case study of Deutsche Welle.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### History of the Development of International Broadcasting

International broadcasting serves as an instrument of cultural diplomacy and international communication that can strengthen a country's image on the global stage. In addition, it also functions to convey information objectively and build cross-cultural understanding. Therefore, international broadcasting is a crucial means of connecting various global communities through the media. International broadcasting can be defined as broadcasting that crosses national borders and is intended for foreign audiences, not domestic audiences. It is the transmission of broadcast messages intended for audiences outside the territory of the broadcasting organization (Konye Cynthia IKEMS, 2023).

Limited international broadcasting began during World War I, with German and British broadcasting agencies transmitting news broadcasts in Morse code. After the German submarine cable was cut, the Nauen radio station became the country's only alternative for long-distance communication. The US Navy Radio Station in New Brunswick, Canada, broadcast the "*Fourteen Points*" via radio to Nauen in 1917. In response, Nauen Station broadcast the news of Emperor Wilhelm II's abdication in November 1918 (Konye Cynthia IKEMS, 2023). After the end of World War I, international broadcasting experienced rapid development, especially through radio as the primary means of communication. Countries began to utilize radio broadcasts to disseminate information and propaganda to international audiences. This phenomenon marked the beginning of a new era in international relations and public diplomacy.

This category is not regulated by transmission technology. Although international "broadcasters" traditionally use shortwave radio as their primary method of transmitting signals, many technologies are currently in use, including FM, the Internet, and satellite delivery to homes. Generally, there is a clear distinction between "international broadcasting" and what are called "secret" or "black" radio stations, which are information outlets secretly funded by governments, intelligence agencies, or political movements associated with the countries acting among them. There are various types of international broadcasts, including broadcasts in English, broadcasts in French, and one or more broadcasts from the US (Price, n.d.).

The perceived link between international broadcasting activities and foreign policy and diplomacy leads to very different ways of thinking about the current international broadcasting situation. In general, international broadcasting stations (radio and television) around the world are operated or funded by (Zöllner, 2006):

1. State/Government
2. Non-governmental public organizations
3. Commercial companies
4. Religious/political groups.

This programming is intended for audiences in foreign countries where the channel operates. Often, though not always, these programs are available in multiple languages. The service is delivered via shortwave and medium wave and via local frequency modulation (FM) rebroadcasts via international partner stations, cable networks, satellites, and the internet. Programs from international broadcasting organizations may have the following functions (Zöllner, 2006):

1. Press Information
2. Promoting the image of the country or other objectives
3. Financial gain
4. Propaganda or political or religious campaigns
5. Religious missionary activities

According to Craig and George, international broadcasting refers to news, information, and entertainment funded by the state and intended for audiences outside the country's borders. It involves the use of electronic media by a society to influence public opinion and other leaders. In the past, this was proudly known as propaganda. The most famous examples are The Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, and BBC World Service, although there are many other providers. Although satellite services are often associated with government or local policies, these services are not actually "government-

funded" in the true sense of the word. Some argue that CNN, consciously or unconsciously, functions as a tool of US hegemony, but CNN is not an international broadcaster in the broad sense, as claimed by some media experts. Similarly, Al Jazeera is considered highly biased by the local political environment, but it does not receive state support or appear to be state-funded (Vincent, 2016).

### **The Role of International Broadcasting Media in Public Diplomacy**

The speed of distribution of news, information, and other communication media around the world has changed the way diplomacy is practiced. Although television and radio are still the main channels of communication in many parts of the world, social media and the internet have created a space where conversations take place. These digital platforms enable public diplomacy to become more interactive and responsive to global public opinion. With unprecedented speed and reach of information, governments and diplomatic actors can convey their messages directly to a wider audience.

However, challenges related to the validity of information and narrative management are also becoming more complex in this era of digital communication. To implement public diplomacy programs, the government utilizes various tools. The scope is broad, but generally includes activities such as cultural diplomacy, events, tours, or activities of cultural institutions such as the *British Council*, *Japan Foundation*, and *the Goethe Institute*. Other instruments include educational diplomacy, scholarships, exchange programs, and media communication programs. However, this study focuses on international broadcasting media.

According to Richter, media scientists conducted comparative analyses of foreign broadcasts in the United States, Britain, Germany, and France, and explained the scope of application of the fundamentals of foreign broadcasting as follows (Richter, 2009):

#### **1. International broadcasting as a resolution to conflict and challenges.**

International broadcasting is a representation of the many conflicts and challenges that are central to a community's need to create a space for information in other societies. It also contributes to the maintenance of peace and can be used as a tool for negotiation when conflicts arise (Price, n.d.).

Recent research confirms that international broadcast media not only serve as a means of information exchange, but can also play an important role in building narratives of peace and promoting conflict resolution through the application of peace journalism techniques and balanced, unbiased reporting (Gul, 2025). This approach is important for

strengthening multilateral diplomatic capacity , enhancing institutional resilience, and expanding civil society participation in the peace process (Bernardianto, 2025) .

In addition, optimizing the function of international media in this context can strengthen cross-cultural communication and support public diplomacy initiatives based on accurate and transparent information. Thus, international broadcasting media has the strategic potential to bridge differences in perception between countries and support the creation of a common understanding at the global level.

## **2. International broadcasting media as a means of improving relations between countries.**

From Hali's perspective, international broadcasting serves as a means to enhance international relations between countries. He emphasizes the importance of information in international relations, which functions both as a method of communication between individuals and as a tool for fostering understanding and knowledge between countries. The meaning of this statement is that international broadcasting is considered important for the effectiveness of diplomatic efforts (Hali, 2000).

In line with these developments, the integration between international media and second-track diplomacy has further expanded the participation of non-state actors and deepened cross-cultural dialogue in contemporary diplomacy (Belikova, 2025) . In addition, innovations in bilingual broadcasting play an important role in expanding the reach of cross-cultural communication and deepening international cooperation. This is mainly achieved by tailoring content to multicultural audiences and improving the professionalism and cultural understanding of broadcasters.

## **3. International broadcasting media as partners of local media.**

International broadcasting can also perform a similar function for local and global communities. Broadcasting institutions can collaborate with local media to provide and share media content and promote intercultural dialogue (Vincent, 2016). As stated by Deutsche Welle, it aspires to be a platform for sharing German and other European and continental perspectives, particularly on important issues in the areas of politics, culture, and economics. It aims to promote understanding and exchange of ideas between societies with different cultures (O'Keefee, 2010).

This collaboration enables the mutual exchange of information, whereby local stories can be shared on the international stage, while global values can be adapted to the local context. This cooperation not only enriches local perspectives with insights from around the world, but also increases the relevance and variety of broadcast content received by local communities, thereby strengthening the position of international broadcast media as strategic partners for local media.

#### **4. International broadcast media as a tool for enhancing a country's image.**

In today's era of globalization, diplomacy is not limited to interactions, conversations, and activities between countries. It also includes how well a country can promote its image through the media. The main and comprehensive goal of European broadcasting institutions is to represent their countries on the global stage. This is in line with the goal of public diplomacy, which stems from the ambition to promote the foreign policy agenda (Vincent, 2016). Based on regulations, Deutsche Welle has an obligation to convey the image of Germany as a culturally rich country with European traditions and as a liberal democratic constitutional state (Deutsche Welle Act, n.d.).

Research reveals that international broadcasters such as Deutsche Welle contribute to the creation and dissemination of democratic narratives, despite being hampered by ideological interactions and pressure from audiences in their home and target countries (Workneh, 2021). In addition, Deutsche Welle's media diplomacy practices have been proven to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue and strengthen international understanding, especially through content that is relevant to target audiences such as in the Arab world (Richter, International broadcasting and intercultural dialogue: Deutsche Welle in the Arab World, 2008).

By presenting information objectively and organizing programs that introduce national cultural diversity, international broadcasting institutions such as DW can improve the world's positive perception of their country at the global level. Therefore, international broadcasting media has a strategic role not only in building the country's image, but also in bridging intercultural understanding and strengthening soft power in the international arena.

#### **5. International broadcasting media as a tool for cultural projection.**

International broadcasting can help address the challenges that arise from the need to fill the knowledge gap regarding other

civilizations, cultures, and societies that we often encounter as a result of globalization. According to Richter, international broadcasting aims to present issues and perspectives from individuals' countries of origin in order to broaden the agenda for foreign audiences and open up new perspectives. However, to achieve this goal, it is necessary to add topics related to local interests and cultural concepts to the existing agenda (Richter, 2009).

Recent studies indicate that success in spreading culture through international broadcasting media is greatly influenced by the balance between political control, commercial initiatives, and the involvement and acceptance of global audiences (Zhu, 2022). Therefore, the media not only plays a role in disseminating information, but it is also important to design inclusive content that can facilitate dialogue between different cultures and perspectives. Audience participation, both at the local and global levels, is key to overcoming gaps in understanding and creating more constructive solutions to the various challenges that exist.

### **Challenges and Strategies for International Broadcasting Media in the Era of Globalization**

In this context, ideology can play an important role in establishing the framework adopted by journalists and conveyed to the public. Communication media, whether the internet or newspapers, play a secondary role in this process. In other words, when an ideological narrative already exists, the presence of communication technology may have little impact other than serving as a vehicle for that ideology. Regarding the concept of media effects, ideological narratives show that the far more significant role of communication media is to communicate those narratives and thus reinforce the official position, rather than supporting the policy itself (Robinson, 2013).

In addition to the power of ideological narratives, governments also allocate more time and resources to shaping and influencing public perceptions in order to achieve their desired policy objectives. These activities are referred to as perception management, strategic communication, public diplomacy, and, most recently, global engagement. This involves the considerable resources available to governments to achieve their political goals through carefully designed public relations campaigns, to strengthen their relationships with journalists and news organizations, and more generally to dominate the information environment. Some scholars argue that these activities are nothing more than propaganda (Robinson, 2013).

What is very important here is that even though new media has the potential to empower non-elite groups, the general public, and interest groups

to challenge the political status quo, the government itself is not passive and powerless. Even in the Internet era, the government has a significant influence in determining how issues are packaged and what topics are included in the agenda.

Europe	Eastern Europe	Africa	Middle East	Central Asia	Asia	Pacific	North America	Latin Amer/ C'bean
BBCWS DW AJ (E) Fr24, RFI, TV5 RNW CCTV/CRI Arirang NHK World RCI	DW BBCWS AJ (E) CCTV/ CRI BBG	BBCWS RFI DW CCTV/ CRI Arirang NHK World BBG RCI	BBCWS AJ (A) RFI DW AJ (E) RNW CCTV/CRI Arirang NHK World BBG RCI	BBCWS DW AJ (E) CCTV/CRI NHK World BBG	BBCWS DW AJ (E) RFI RNW RFI, Fr24, TV5 CCTV/CRI Arirang NHK World BBG	BBCWS DW AJ (E) TV5 CCTV/ CRI Arirang NHK World RNW (Oceania only)	BBCWS DW CCTV/CRI Arirang NHK World	BBCWS RFI, CCTV/CRI Arirang NHK World BBG RCI

Image 1.

### Geographical Coverage of Media

Source: A. O'Keeffe and Alex Oliver

Decisions regarding geographical coverage and language services by international broadcasting organizations are influenced by various factors such as history, geopolitics, and the objectives of the organization itself. Broadcasting institutions in Europe form a group that sets goals based on the challenges and opportunities arising from history and geopolitics. The BBCWS, CCTV, and Al Jazeera are all international broadcasting institutions, although each has very different goals (O'Keeffe, 2010).

Considering the complexity of the objectives and strategies of international broadcasting institutions, we can see that each entity makes a unique contribution in its respective geopolitical context, including in Indonesia. In this regard, international broadcasting media serve not only as channels of information, but also as tools of diplomacy that convey certain narratives, with all their advantages and challenges. This raises questions about how institutions such as Deutsche Welle (DW) position themselves amid the ongoing social and political dynamics in their recipient countries.

In the Indonesian context, DW serves as an extension of German foreign policy and an effort to strengthen cultural and bilateral relations in the Southeast Asian region. The soft power approach through international broadcasting has become a key instrument for many countries in addressing challenges in the region, and DW boldly highlights relevant issues while providing space for diverse perspectives. With DW's presence, we can explore more deeply how this broadcasting institution strives to respond to the needs of local audiences while maintaining its integrity and established goals.

## The Presence of Deutsche Welle International Broadcasting Media in Indonesia

The soft power approach through international broadcasting has become a key tool for many countries in addressing current diplomatic challenges. For example, Germany's experience with Deutsche Welle shows how state-run broadcasting can promote intercultural dialogue and strengthen global understanding of national values (Richter, *International Broadcasting and Intercultural Dialogue: Deutsche Welle in the Arab World*, 2008) . Asian countries such as South Korea and China also use international broadcasting to build their image and expand their global influence, although they face certain challenges and limitations in international public perception (Butyrin & Argylov, 2022) .

Public diplomacy activities in Germany include regular lectures, student exchange programs, knowledge and sports, art and cultural exhibitions, and language courses typical of Western democracies. International broadcasting media are also part of these activities. Deutsche Welle (DW) was founded in 1953 as a radio service to inform the international public about Germany after the new National Socialist era. Today, DW offers radio, television, and online media services in 30 languages and claims to have around 65 million listeners and 28 million viewers worldwide each week (Zöllner, 2006).

The goals and approach of DW need to be redesigned and adapted to take into account the rise of Internet-based media. DW has welcomed this new media very positively. Currently, its YouTube channel has 260,000 subscribers and millions of viewers. The BBC's YouTube channel has around 3.64 million subscribers. Efforts to catch up with the BBC and CNN are a bold move, but as explained by the current head of DW, Peter Limberg, these efforts require significant investment and a different business model (Reuter, 2019).

In addition, DW also provides extensive resources for German language learners on the Internet, complementing the efforts of other intermediary organizations involved in language development. In general, DW often serves as an advertising platform for events and program announcements from other German intermediaries.

Overall, DW ranks highest in the assessment of intermediary organizations. In today's information age, DW supports German culture, education, science, and democratic values in Indonesia and around the world. Therefore, DW ranks first. DW is able to reach millions of people, the reach of other intermediaries. Given the high cost of providing more extensive services, the possibility of collaboration with broadcasting institutions from other EU member states needs to be considered (Reuter, 2019).

Changes in the institutional structure of German public diplomacy demonstrate the importance of public diplomacy in the context of that country. The Foreign Communications Department, which was previously part of the Federal Press Office, has now been transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and merged with the Department of Public Diplomacy. This move further strengthens the role of public diplomacy in German foreign policy and highlights the importance of enhancing cultural relations in German public diplomacy.

The smooth transition between structural reforms in German public diplomacy and the role of international broadcast media highlights the importance of efforts to strengthen the country's image on the world stage. In this restructuring, public diplomats are not only responsible for managing foreign relations, but also for utilizing media platforms as a means of building a positive narrative about Germany. Therefore, international broadcasting media serves as a strategic tool that enables public diplomacy to reach a wider audience and engage in relevant global issues. As a primary channel of communication, this media supports public diplomacy initiatives by providing a space for dialogue between Germany and the international community. In this context, it is important to evaluate the impact of international broadcasting media, which not only strengthens the national image but also contributes positively to the development of stronger bilateral and multilateral relations. The link between the institutional reform of German public diplomacy and this media strategy reflects the synergy needed to address evolving political and social challenges.

## **CONCLUSION**

International broadcast media play an important role in public diplomacy by serving as a tool to build national image, strengthen international relations, and influence public opinion around the world. With their ability to disseminate information to international audiences, these media outlets have become a vital component of diplomatic strategy in the era of globalization and digitalization. The concept of soft power introduced by Joseph Nye highlights the importance of cultural appeal, prestige, and national values in shaping perceptions and foreign policy.

Countries that invest in global broadcasting services, such as Deutsche Welle and the BBC, have successfully used these media to showcase their democratic values, culture, and foreign policy, thereby enhancing their reputation and strengthening international relations. International broadcasting

media also serve as a bridge of information in conflict situations and as a platform for intercultural dialogue.

However, international broadcasting faces major challenges related to media independence, sustainable funding, and political influence in the narratives conveyed. Developments in communication technology and digitalization require broadcasting institutions to adapt to online platforms and social media in order to remain relevant and effective. The success of international broadcasting media in public diplomacy is highly dependent on credibility, consistency in information delivery, and collaboration with various stakeholders to strengthen dialogue and understanding between nations.

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