Soft Power Strategies in US Foreign Policy: Assessing the Impact of Citizen Diplomacy on Foreign States' Behavior

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Abstract
This dissertation empirically demonstrates that the isolated effects of citizen diplomacy correlate positively with foreign policy behavior as a non-military, foreign policy strategic option. The dissertation also finds that soft power, of which citizen diplomacy is a key component, is a viable foreign policy strategy. The findings are important to the academy and to the foreign policy-making process for states in search of effective, non-military strategies that leverage foreign state needs and attributes to achieve their foreign policy goals. Using a mixed methods approach, the dissertation investigates the correlation between Peace Corps Volunteers (citizen diplomat) placement and congruent voting with the US at the UN General Assembly. The question of interest is, do citizen diplomat recipient countries vote more with the US at the UN General Assembly? Is there a difference in countries' voting patterns on key votes than on all votes, and what are the implications of congruent voting behavior for US foreign policy?

I develop several hypotheses and test for the effects of citizen diplomacy through four models: the omnibus, factors of bilateral attraction, host country variables and temporal and regional effects models. Using data from two sources, first, Voeten and Strehnev and second, Dreher, Strum and Vreeland, I find that in twelve of the sixteen models, citizen diplomacy is positively correlated with congruent voting with the US at the UN General Assembly. Countries vote more with the US at the UN on key votes than they do on all UN General Assembly votes (observed in seven of eight models). The level of democracy is positively correlated with congruent voting in four of eight models and also positively signed. The level of globalization, GDP per capita and region are important explanans for voting in congruence with the US at the UN General Assembly. As expected, failed states vote less in congruence with the US at the UN.

These findings are augmented by case studies based on three qualitative models. The issue linkages model finds that the US links citizen diplomacy to its national security interests. The interpersonal model finds that citizen diplomats affect foreign policy through individuals and elites. The foreign policy approach finds that citizen diplomats have contributed to building and changing national infrastructure and development and thereby countries' foreign policy trajectory. The dissertation concludes that citizen diplomacy matters: there is a positive and strong correlation between citizen diplomacy and foreign policy behavior of recipient states towards the US. As a soft-power strategy, citizen diplomacy is a viable foreign policy option.