

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: A JUSTIFICATION

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Abstract: Public diplomacy refers to sovereign countries' activities and programs by which they communicate with the public in other countries. Usually this means public diplomacy interests and foreign policy goals. One of the most effective and common tools of public diplomacy is radio broadcasting, especially shortwave broadcasting. Although it is often assumed that ethically responsible public diplomacy via international broadcasting requires impartiality and objectivity, I will argue that partiality is not a problem for broadcasters who are engaged in public diplomacy. Partiality does not conflict with high journalistic standards. The widespread assumption that international broadcasters should strive for objectivity and impartiality in order to comply with journalistic ethics is based on a misunderstanding. Accurate, balanced and fair-minded newswriting is possible even when a journalist has a clear political message and a specific understanding of social justice. At least in principle, broadcasts of very different public diplomacy radio stations can be equally justified.

I. Introduction

Public diplomacy refers to sovereign countries' activities and programs by which they communicate with people in other countries. According to traditional understanding, public diplomacy aims to inform and influence audiences overseas for the purpose of promoting national interests, foreign policy goals, and values characteristic to a country.¹ Understood in this way, public diplomacy is a “soft” version of usual state-to-state diplomacy although it can certainly bring to mind outright propaganda that is often based on loaded or manipulative ways of expression and half-truths (cf. Gilboa 2008; Nye 2008). Despite the rise of social media and popularity of activities such as educational exchange programs, one of

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¹“Defining Public Diplomacy”. USC Center on Public Diplomacy. 20.10.2015
<http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/page/what-pd>

the most effective tools of public diplomacy is still radio broadcasting, especially shortwave broadcasting. China Radio International (CRI) broadcasts in about 50 languages on more than 200 different shortwave frequencies and uses dozens of transmitters located around the world (WRTH 2014). The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), which is the federal government agency responsible for international broadcasting of the U.S., oversees many powerful broadcasters that can be and are listened to globally. They include the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Farda, Radio Free Asia (RFA), Radio Martí, and many others. It is not uncommon or implausible to say that governments' "most important and direct way to communicate with foreign publics" is, still, international broadcasting (Dale 2014).

It is often assumed that public diplomacy via shortwave broadcasting is morally valuable and justified only if its mission does not conflict with the aims of free and independent global news media. Seen in this way, public diplomacy via international broadcasting is ethically justified if the long-range interests of a country happen to be served by aiming at objective global news coverage; and if the promotion of national interests requires partiality and persuasion of audiences, then the broadcasters act on morally suspicious grounds. This view has been particularly common in the debate which concerns the role and mission of the BBG; and there are many who have argued that uncompromising objectivity is not only the most effective way to promote the long-term foreign policy goals of the United States but also the ethically superior way to promote them. An implication of this view is, of course, the U.S. government's opinions should not influence the journalistic decisions of VOA and other broadcasters funded by taxpayer dollars. Another implication, one which has general importance, is that shortwave broadcasters which quite clearly have some governmental guidance, such as say CRI, are seen as morally corrupt.

In what follows I will briefly evaluate the claim that ethically responsible public diplomacy via international broadcasting requires impartiality and objectivity – that international broadcasters act ethically only if they do not care about the opinions of the governments which make possible their work in the first place. I will reject the claim and provide a justification for public diplomacy that allows explicit partiality, understood as a political commitment to certain

opinions and a specific understanding of social justice.² Many countries have newspapers which serve as organs of parties, political movements or religious groups, or are otherwise explicitly partial or biased, and these newspapers can and often do comply with appropriate journalistic standards – despite their dependence and partiality. Similarly, a shortwave broadcaster *can* follow them, even if it is evident that it selects issues that serve the government for which it works and, to a certain extent, avoids topics that can be harmful for the country or its government. At the end of the paper I will reply to three objections that the justification I provide may evoke. First, it can be argued newspapers that are politically partial are not ethically justified. Second, it can be claimed that the partiality of newspapers differs completely from the partiality of some shortwave stations. Third, it can be said that the political partiality of newspapers serves civil society by enriching public discussion and is therefore valuable while international broadcasters are not, as there simply is no global civil society that could be served. I will argue that all three objections fail to show that the relevant analogy does not hold.

But let us start by looking briefly at what kinds of stations serve public diplomacy. There is a lot of action on the shortwaves every day and, especially, every night.

II. Shortwave Stations

Shortwave broadcasts differ both from AM and FM broadcasts by virtue of being audible globally, at least in principle. Whether the programs of a particular radio station that uses shortwaves can in fact be widely heard depends, among other things, on the power, location and number of their transmitters and on the receivers and antennas used at the receiving end. Those broadcasters engaged in public diplomacy use powerful transmitters and target their broadcasts so the programs can easily be listened to in a certain geographical area with an ordinary radio receiver that has a shortwave band – given that the broadcast is not blocked by a *jammer* of a country who wants to prevent people from listening to those

²In this paper I assume that “impartiality” is more or less equivalent with “neutrality” which requires independence of particular values and ideologies. Of course, they can be separated from each other. (Cf. Setälä and Herne 2015, 26.)

broadcasts.³

It is useful to make a couple of distinctions between various shortwave broadcasters.⁴ In particular, it is useful to distinguish between (a) state-funded and private broadcasters; (b) military and non-military broadcasters; (c) legal and illegal broadcasters; (d) national and international broadcasters; and (e) religious and secular broadcasters. Radio stations involved in public diplomacy are state-funded, non-military, legal and international broadcasters which are usually but not always secular. Some relatively small countries broadcast overseas primarily to serve their emigrants. These broadcasters do not function as public diplomacy stations, although they are state-funded, non-military, legal, international and secular.

(a) There are many private or community-funded stations using shortwaves. A conventional example is a Brazilian commercial radio that uses FM, AM and shortwave frequencies and is audible on the internet (e.g. Rádio Bandeirantes from São Paulo), or a North-American religious broadcaster that is funded at least partly by individual donations or by selling “air time” (e.g. Worldwide Christian Radio, WWCR, Nashville). Although new definitions⁵ of “public diplomacy” allow that private organizations can serve public diplomacy, these kinds of private stations should not count as public diplomacy stations. Their aims are clearly different from those of the broadcasters which are real public diplomacy stations.

(b) There are various stations that serve military forces. They can be organizations that produce programs which aim to inform and entertain soldiers abroad (e.g. the American Forces Radio and Television Service, AFRTS), a

³RFA’s broadcasts are often jammed. For instance, on April 5, 2015, both the transmission from Saipan, Pacific Ocean (9355 kHz, 20.35 UTC), and Kuwait, Arabian Peninsula (9745 kHz, 20.50 UTC), were blocked by jammers.

⁴I skip broadcasts by radio amateurs, airport VOLMET broadcasts, and so on. For more information on broadcasters, see e.g. Berg 2008.

⁵“Definition of Public Diplomacy”. Tufts University, Center of Public Diplomacy. “Public diplomacy that traditionally represents actions of governments to influence overseas publics within the foreign policy process has expanded today – by accident and design – beyond the realm of governments to include the media, multinational corporations, NGO’s and faith-based organizations as active participants in the field.” 20.10.2015 <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Murrow/Diplomacy/Definitions>

number of stations used by intelligence services, temporary war time stations or broadcasts, and so on. In March 2011, as a part of the military operation against Muammar Gaddafi's regime, *U.S. Commando Solo* aircraft used shortwave frequencies when it transmitted warnings to the Libyan army. Military broadcasters are not public diplomacy stations. Although the American Forces Network (AFN), for instance, often plays roots music that may very well further the popularity of American culture abroad, its main tasks do not include public diplomacy.⁶

(c) Many shortwave broadcasters are illegal, or their legal status is messy. Pirate radios are illegal and, by definition, break national laws by transmitting on shortwave frequencies. Usual pirate stations play non-stop music and transmit on the weekends (e.g. Radio Sunflower from The Netherlands). Normally they use frequencies not used by other stations, and therefore they do not really disturb legal broadcasters' transmissions. In some countries authorities give notice to pirate broadcasters but in others their broadcasts are so regular that no one seems to care. Clandestine radios are often legal broadcasters but listening to them is usually prohibited in the target country. Clandestine broadcasters are political and they may and often do encourage separatism or revolutionary actions against standing governments (e.g. the Voice of Oromo Liberation whose target is the regime in Ethiopia). Clandestine stations have various funding sources, for instance exile groups (that in some cases have become disconnected from the contemporary culture of the target country) (cf. Khalaji 2007, 16). In general, pirate and clandestine radios are not public diplomacy radios, as they are not tools of any specific country or government.⁷ However, there are exceptions such as the Voice of the People which is operated by the South Korean National Intelligence Service (WRTH 2014, 511). It is a tool of South Korea's government.

(d) Shortwave broadcasters can be national rather than international. National

⁶In Europe, in recent years, the American Forces Network has been most easily audible via medium waves rather than shortwaves. As opposed to AFN, VOA does not always play American music. For instance, on August 29, 2015, the transmissions from Sao Tome (4940 kHz, 20.30 UTC) and from Botswana (4930 kHz, 20.31 UTC) consisted of African music and news.

⁷Usually, a clandestine station is not owned by any state. This is why they are not public diplomacy broadcasters.

broadcasters – those who target their programs to the country from where they transmit – are either commercial or state-funded. Governmental radio stations use shortwaves for instance in Africa (e.g. Radiodiffusion Télévision de Djibouti) and Asia (Kyrzyg Radio from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan). Some governmental shortwave broadcasters are regional (e.g. the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Northern Territory service, from Alice Springs). Radio broadcasters involved in public diplomacy are of course international.

(e) A considerable part of international broadcasters consists of religious radio networks or broadcasting corporations. They represent various religions, and many of them are truly global organizations that are easily audible everywhere (e.g. Trans World Radio, TWR). Most stations which send religious programs are non-governmental, but some of them are state-funded and can be counted as public diplomacy radios. An obvious example is Vatican Radio. Another example is the Broadcasting Service of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (BSKSA), for the Quran program (which is also transmitted on AM and FM frequencies) serves, *inter alia*, the country's foreign policy interests. In general, however, public diplomacy radios are secular.

Broadcasters who are clearly engaged in public diplomacy need not be overly political, let alone propagandistic. Some of them introduce their country by playing a lot of music (e.g. Radio Australia); others promote their language (e.g. Radio France Internationale) or culture (e.g. Radio Romania International).⁸ It is not uncommon for public diplomacy broadcasters to transmit the programs of their domestic broadcasts (e.g. Radio Exterior de España). The ethical evaluation of public diplomacy via international broadcasting should take into account that only some broadcasters concentrate on news, political reports, and documentary programs which provide a forum for true political debate. The activities of most public diplomacy broadcasters are *obviously* morally unproblematic.

III. Public Diplomacy and the Ethics of Journalism

It is often argued that ethically responsible public diplomacy via international broadcasting requires impartiality and objectivity, and morally acceptable public

⁸The notion of public diplomacy can be distinguished from the concept of cultural diplomacy. 20.10.2015

http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en_culturaldiplomacy.

diplomacy stations cannot be merely puppets of the governments. This view has been particularly common in the U.S. where the idea that news should and can be objective is a prevalent view strongly intertwined with America's perception of ethical journalism (Smith 2008, 48). Although the claim that public diplomacy broadcasters should be impartial is traditional, it is still frequently presented in the debate, as there are always those who understand VOA's and other BBG broadcasters' mission in political rather than in journalistic terms (cf. Uttaro 1982, 121). The defenders of the thesis that the leadership and the news coverage decisions belong to the stations rather than governments, are usually broadcasters – not only in the U.S. but also in many other countries.⁹ This is understandable, as journalists want to be professionals who follow their established standards. Those standards require them not to be involved in morally suspect manipulation and indoctrination and, of course, the standards also give them independence and a lot of power.

The view that partiality must imply corruption is, however, problematic. Although there may be *de facto* connections between partial international news broadcasting and bad journalism, and although history knows many abysmal propaganda stations (such as Radio Berlin International), partiality *per se* does not entail withdrawal of high professional standards. (Cf. Sterling 2004.)

Consider newspapers in the UK. Most of the major (former) broadsheet papers are biased and their ideological orientation is commonly known. *The Times*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Daily Telegraph* are openly conservative while *The Guardian* and *The Observer* support social-liberal ideas. The only newspaper not centered on one political approach is *The Independent*. The tabloid newspapers are similarly partial. *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* are conservative while the *Daily Mirror*, for instance, supports the Labour Party. Even regional and local newspapers may have a public political orientation (beyond the fact that they are “partial” in any case by concentrating on issues that are important in their area or town). If there is something morally wrong with the British news media, however, it is not the partiality of the newspapers. Partial newspapers are

⁹See BBG Watch: “Senator Ted Cruz wants BBG to counteract ISIS propaganda, some Voice of America English news staffers don't.” 20.10.2015

<http://bbgwatch.com/bbgwatch/senator-ted-cruz-wants-bbg-to-counteract-isis-propaganda-some-voice-of-america-english-news-staffers-dont/>

common and, for instance, in Scandinavian countries some newspapers which serve as the chief voices of political parties have quite a wide circulation.

Partiality allows journalists to meet high standards of their profession. As Ron Smith (2008, 47) argues in *Ethics of Journalism* (2008), newspapers publish articles that are considered relevant, interesting, and important, and those editorial decisions concerning what is relevant, interesting, and important “are shaped by editors’ training, their understanding of their audiences, and their own life experiences”. This is far from clinical objectivity. Making news decisions, maintaining the publicity on certain issues, choosing themes for deeper analyses, and arguing for certain political interpretations is ethically unproblematic, especially when the readers are informed about the political orientation of the paper. Indeed, newspapers that pretend to be (but are not) completely impartial may be *less* ethical than those who state explicitly whom they represent and what kinds of ideologies they tend to support (cf. Smith 2008, 51). An editorial expresses a paper’s opinion as regards current news, but the paper’s views – even when they are not explicitly stated – easily color the other contents as well. Open partiality is unproblematic, and in order to defend one’s opinion one need not tell half-truths, use unproven “facts”, lie by omission, rely on unbalanced reporting, use manipulative language, or do anything that journalists should not do. When individual persons communicate with each other, they can make their points and argue for their position ethically or unethically but defending one’s position is *in itself* ethically unproblematic. Similarly, a newspaper can be partial in an acceptable or in a blameworthy manner, but partiality *per se* is not a problem. The issue in an uncivilized argumentation is not that it is argumentation but that it is uncivilized. (Cf. Edgar 1992; Ward 2005; Wahl-Jorgensen and Pantti 2013.)

What is true of newspapers is true of public diplomacy broadcasters. CRI is explicitly a partial broadcaster, as it is committed “to enhancing mutual understanding between China and the rest of the world” and has “opened 12 Confucius Classrooms worldwide, benefiting Chinese-language learners and promoting Chinese culture.”¹⁰ One may want to add that CRI is partial also in the sense that it concentrates on issues which promote the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s policies, for instance, by introducing the Chinese Premier’s comments and visions at length. CRI’s partiality, however, does not make it morally corrupt. If someone wants to blame CRI for unethical journalism, perhaps a case can be

¹⁰CRI website. 20.10.2015 <http://english.cri.cn/11114/2012/09/20/1261s723239.htm>.

made (or not), but it cannot be made simply by complaining that CRI is partial. Its partiality is morally justified.

The BBG broadcasters' possible partiality is a complicated matter. On the one hand, their self-understanding is that they broadcast accurate and "objective" news and information "to an international audience".¹¹ RFA's *Code of Journalistic Ethics* states this is also how it should be. According to the Code, RFA journalists "must not advocate any political viewpoint potentially compromising or being perceived as compromising RFA's objectivity or impartiality". On the other hand, the same Code refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 saying that RFA journalists "should uphold democratic values". This is not a particularly impartial standpoint, for the implementation of human rights and democracy are political goals. It is evident that these goals are not accepted everywhere and, even when they are, the U.S. motivation for global human rights and democracy activism is unclear. It is not uncommon to think that "the US government is using human rights as a tool to try to advance its own international political agenda".¹² So-called humanitarian interventions, for instance, have seldom benefited the implementation of human rights and democracy. If anything, they have profited the political and economic interests of the U.S. (cf. Moseley and Norman 2002).

One may want to add that some BBG broadcasters, in particular the VOA, seem partial in another ways too, for instance, by repeating verbatim what the Secretary of State or the President says and by giving much less space to the political leaders of other countries. If this is partiality, it is exactly what the U.S. Department of State wants—for the official view is that the "mission of American public diplomacy is to support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security by informing and influencing foreign publics".¹³ From an ethical point of view, the official interpretation of the mission of American public diplomacy is unproblematic, for there is nothing wrong with partiality *as such*.

¹¹Broadcasting Board of Governors website. 20.10.2015

<http://www.bbg.gov/about-the-agency/history/faqs/>.

¹²Chang Jian's interview on the CRI website. 20.10.2015

<http://english.cri.cn/12394/2015/06/26/3746s884779.htm>.

¹³Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs website. 20.10.2015

<http://www.state.gov/r/>.

There are two main reasons why partiality is consistent with ethically relevant “objectivity”, that is, with willingness and aim to presents facts correctly and fairly in newswriting. First, when a journalist expresses their opinion of a certain fact they need not first distort the fact. In that respect, a journalist is like a professional historian who may very well say in their text they are not particularly happy with what Eichmann did but still present the facts, describing what he did, as correctly as they can (Cesarani 2005). Second, when a journalist draws conclusions from certain facts they need not first mislead the audience by describing those facts falsely. Without further premises, facts have no policy implications or other action-guiding suggestions. Normative conclusions require normative premises, and facts, whatever they happen to be, can be used in various ways (cf. Cohen 2003). Suppose that the fact is that “the unemployment rate is rising”. A leftist journalist may now write that “government action is needed, as the unemployment rate is rising”. A right-wing journalist, in turn, may write that “there is an urgent need for far more flexible labor markets, as the unemployment rate is rising”. Although they clearly disagree on policy issues, they both *accept the relevant fact* and they also agree that unemployment is undesirable. Their conclusions differ, as they disagree on who should pay the fight against unemployment, rich taxpayers or ordinary workers.¹⁴

International broadcasters can certainly be honest regarding the facts despite their partiality. Suppose that a journalist who works for a public diplomacy radio decides to correct some misunderstandings concerning the “official” intentions of the government of their country, or that they have put right harmful news that has intentionally been presented a misleading way by some foreign group or country. In both cases the broadcaster is clearly partial, as they have made their decision in order to serve their country (cf. Jackson 2014). But it is hard to blame them by referring to plausible journalistic ethics. They are faithful to the facts and doing the job that outsiders are not interested in doing.

¹⁴Of course, it may be difficult to distinguish between factual and normative judgments in practice. Journalists can select the information and events they report in a way that they know will tend to encourage certain normative judgments in their readership. If pressed, they can say (and be correct in saying) that they are only catering to their readership, reporting stories that would interest their readers the most. In this sense, it could be argued that they are no more lying by omission than is a American sports magazine that publishes far more articles about American football than about Chinese ice hockey.

Are international broadcasters partial when they make reports and documents primarily of their own country and give relatively little air time for cultures of other countries? Yes, they are. Is such partiality morally problematic? Does such partiality conflict with the journalistic ethics that has any plausibility? Of course it does not. Perhaps international broadcasters differ in respect of their journalistic standards, and perhaps they can be even ranked in terms of how ethical their production is, but the criterion used in ethical evaluation cannot be partiality. Taking a stand on an issue is often a virtue rather than a vice.

IV. Objections and Replies

I will now turn to the possible objections and respond to them. There are three main objections that come most easily to mind. They all are related to large and complicated issues such as what “objectivity” really means, whether it is possible to be objective in the first place, and what the tasks of free press and media in general are. Here I will refer to these massive topics only briefly and mostly skip them.

1. I have argued that newspapers which are politically partial can easily comply with good journalistic standards and that, if there is something wrong with the political newspapers, it is not their partiality. But perhaps this is not so. Perhaps partiality spoils the credibility of a journalist and thus prevents them from doing what they should. This claim is made by Gene Foreman in his book *The Ethical Journalist* (2010). Foreman advises journalists by telling that they should not only be impartial but also unbiased:

Your journalism must be free of bias. Although you may hold opinions about the people and events you cover, it is a test of your professionalism that you filter these biases from your news accounts. Do not take public positions on political candidates and controversial issues. To tell others of your opinion is to invite them to find those opinions in your reporting. Remember that people see you as a journalist 24/7; in their eyes, you are never “off duty.” Be independent of those you cover. A journalist is an observer, not a participant. (Foreman 2010, 379.)

Foreman’s view may sound plausible for many, especially in the U.S., where only a few newspapers are openly partial. BBG broadcasters tend to conceive their

work as consistent with Foreman's advice. According to their chairman, they aim to present "objective news and information for audiences in many countries where it is difficult or impossible to receive locally-produced, uncensored or unbiased programs" (Shell 2014).¹⁵ However, the argument from credibility – as Foreman's view can be called – is problematic. A journalist's credibility is unlikely to depend on whether they are openly partial or not. For the most part, credibility depends on how well they do their job and, as argued below, partiality does not mean that the journalist invents facts, uses manipulative language, or does anything like that. In many cases, journalists who have told their political orientation are *more* rather than less credible than those who have not revealed their political stand. Consider the news that "the unemployment rate is rising, and probably the most effective way to stop it is to make labor markets much more flexible". If this sentence is said or written by a journalist who pretends to be impartial (as Foreman advises) but holds opinions (as we all do), a critical audience may start to wonder whether this claim might be politically motivated and whether the journalist is a conservative. But if the same sentence is said or written by a journalist who is known to have leftist sympathies, the audience will probably believe them, as they are making a factual claim supporting the conservative idea that ordinary workers should pay for the fight against unemployment – not rich taxpayers via government action. Honesty is an easy way to earn credibility (cf. Overholser 2004).

2. I have assumed that newspapers and international broadcasters are relevantly similar – in that the partiality of public diplomacy broadcasters is ethically unproblematic if the newspapers' partiality is ethically unproblematic. But maybe the analogy between them does not hold. Perhaps the partiality of newspapers differs completely from the partiality of some shortwave stations. It can be argued that partial newspapers support policy options that are realizable within democratic society and should be taken seriously in democratic public debates, while some public diplomacy radios support views that come from the Stone Age. Not all broadcasters engaged in public diplomacy strive for freedom, democracy, and human rights. There are stations whose aims are dark and

¹⁵Similarly, Tony Hall, the Director General of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), argued in September 2015 that BBC should add shortwave radio broadcasts to areas "where there is a democratic deficit in impartial news".

20.10.2015 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34179663>

frightening, and they should not be treated in parallel with partial but civil newspapers. Although it may indeed be true that, openly partial public diplomacy broadcasters *can be* ethically unproblematic, many or most public diplomacy radio stations *cannot*, as they are bound to questionable missions (cf. Graber 1993, 564). The problem lies not in the way in which their programs are produced; the problem is what they pursue with those programs.¹⁶

This argument has some plausibility, as there have always been radio stations whose goals have been hateful and intolerant. Some of their actions are documented by Keith Somerville in his book *Radio Propaganda and the Broadcasting of Hatred* (2012). It is unlikely that broadcasters who try to dehumanize “others” and encourage hatred belong only to history. A more likely reality is that some radio stations continue this despicable tradition today. However, it is important to distinguish between radio broadcasters that belong to the “hate speech” category and those that do not but strive for goals that may look questionable for people who think that democracy and human rights are the only acceptable goals of international broadcasting. Suppose that a public diplomacy broadcaster supports the idea that all countries should have a strong right to national self-determination, and it is not the business of foreigners to solve other countries’ domestic problems. Someone may think, correctly perhaps, that the idea of national self-determination is behind the times, but surely broadcasters who defend that and similar ideas are justified in doing so. That follows simply from the freedom of speech. Therefore I conclude that many different public diplomacy broadcasters can be ethically unproblematic, not only those whose main agenda is democracy and human rights. It is a self-deception to think that all foreign broadcasts that do not please one are merely “propaganda”. (Unfortunately this variety of self-deception is rather common nowadays.)

3. However, my assumption that newspapers and international broadcasts are

¹⁶Arguably, the analogy between radio and text is problematic, as radio might be much better at promoting intellectual vice over virtue than text. Possessing intellectual literacy is not merely the ability to read, but to understand would-be information, and not be controlled by it. It slows the effect of lies and manipulation, invites complex and subtle thoughts. In the case of radio, we are simply, vividly, *told*. While radio can certainly promote and broaden intellectual depth, in many cases it seems better suited at limiting it, simplifying, creating shallow sense of the world, and inventing monsters where none exist.

relevantly similar can also be challenged in another way. It can be argued the political partiality of newspapers serve civil society by enriching public discussion while international broadcasts do not, as there simply is no global civil society that could be served. As argued by Jackie Smith in her book, *Social Movements for Global Democracy* (2008, 4), “global policy arenas are largely insulated from public input and scrutiny”. State-funded international shortwave broadcasters are unlikely to fill the gap, and it is implausible to claim their role in promoting rich political debate is similar to that of the newspapers in usual democratic countries. Political newspapers are supported by the state in many countries, and it is easy to find justifications (such as the value of diversity and the rights of minority groups) for that practice. But it is hard to see who would be interested in supporting foreign public diplomacy radios. It seems clear that political newspapers and public diplomacy radios stations are not analogous.

This objection is important. The moral value of political newspapers and international broadcasters seems different. Well-functioning news media are the bedrock of a democratic society, but the present global system (or its better alternative) is not dependent on the existence of stations such as VOA, RFA, or CRI. Notice, however, that I am arguing for the thesis that ethically responsible public diplomacy via international broadcasting does not necessarily require impartiality and objectivity. The point here is *not* to say newspapers and international broadcasters have similar tasks and equal moral worth – although I have referred to their similarities in order to communicate my point. The claim that newspapers are in many respects more important than public diplomacy radio stations is consistent with my thesis that they are similar. In this sense that both can function ethically even when they are explicitly partial (and thus not “objective”). It is worthwhile adding that in many countries almost all newspapers are relatively similar to one another. Although their political orientation may be different, they tend to share the same nationalistic biases and make their editorial decisions in a way which is characteristic of their media culture.¹⁷ The papers may also reserve only little space for topics that are unlikely to sell very well and may drive away readers. By contrast, international broadcasters provide a colorful arena for discussion, and by listening to shortwave broadcasts you can easily hear news that you do not find in your

¹⁷ Cf. Jack Goldsmith’s interview in *Salon* (February 28, 2011). 20.10.2015 <http://www.salon.com/2011/02/28/biases/>.

newspaper. For instance, you may hear official views that are labeled as “conspiracy theories” in your home country and skipped by the journalists who are afraid of distancing themselves from the mainstream. Afterwards, the news may turn out to be true.¹⁸ In this respect, international broadcasters can be *more* valuable than newspapers.¹⁹

V. Concluding Remarks

I have argued that partiality need not be a problem for broadcasters who are engaged in public diplomacy. Partiality does not conflict with high journalistic standards. A common idea that international stations should strive for objectivity and impartiality in order to comply with journalistic ethics, is based on misunderstanding. Accurate, balanced and rational newswriting is possible even when a journalist has a clear political message, possibly created by a political party or a relevant governmental office of their country. No doubt, many partial broadcasters might in fact be unprofessional but partiality, as such, is not a problem. Those BBG journalists who try to convince themselves and others that they are objective, unbiased, and impartial should relax. There is nothing wrong with partiality – given that the programs are otherwise ethically produced.

Broadcasts of very different public diplomacy stations can be equally justified. The condition of responsible broadcasting is not that one claims to fight for freedom, democracy, and human rights. We should not deceive ourselves by mistakenly calling all broadcasts that run counter to our own opinions as “propaganda”. Different radio stations have a right to choose their topics and defend their opinions – not only those who defend the “right” opinions. If you listen carefully and open-mindedly to various stations of the world, you may learn that most countries have their own security needs and economic interests, put forward pretty good arguments in defense of them, and have an understandable sense of pride of their own culture. So tune in, it’s a whole new ball game.

¹⁸The so-called Iran Contra conspiracy was revealed by Lebanese journalists (cf. Burnett et al 2005, 229).

¹⁹Of course, a public diplomacy station can be important not because it addresses itself to a global audience, but because it addresses itself to a particular public in a particular country. For instance, during the World War Two, BBC was an important broadcaster for audiences in Germany and Finland. Cf. footnote 12.

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