

MEDIA DIPLOMACY OF CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT: Global integration process influenced the development of technologies and the extension of the information industry around the world. Due to technological innovations borders of delivering information between sectors of traditional systems of mass communication are changing. This process will lead to the creation of new mass media systems. In the space of extending mass communication sphere the press and broadcasting are considered as the “old”, traditional mass media, the appearance of new channels of delivering information and the information, based on a digitalization, are defined as the "new media". Global distribution of information and communication creates opportunities for free communication at different levels: vertical, horizontal, network, mass and individual.

KEYWORDS: the information, based on a digitalization, are defined as the "new media".

INTRODUCTION

Media diplomacy has become a major instrument of foreign policy, and journalists are more frequently and more intensively engaged in diplomatic events and processes. Sometimes they even initiate diplomatic processes. There are several ways in which the media can help or hinder diplomacy. The media functions both as an independent actor and as a tool in the hands of policymakers and journalists.

Knowledge about media diplomacy is still very limited, and scholars from the fields of communication, international relations, and diplomatic studies should be encouraged to conduct multidisciplinary research on this topic.

Media coverage of negotiations and summit meetings among leaders transformed traditional, mostly secret, formal, professional diplomacy. The new diplomacy became a dominating ingredient in contemporary international relations due to three interrelated revolutionary changes in mass communication, politics, and international relations. First, the revolution in communication technologies created all-news global networks such as International, BBC World, Sky News, and Al Jazeera, capable of broadcasting, often live, almost every significant development in world events to almost every place on the globe. The Internet has also revolutionized communication among peoples, communities, and organizations around the world.

Second, the revolution in politics has generated growing mass participation in political processes and has transformed many societies from autocracy to democracy. Third, the revolution in international relations has transformed the goals and means of foreign policy. Favorable image and reputation around the world achieved through attraction and persuasion (soft power)

became more important than territory, access, and raw materials obtained through military and economic measures (hard power). Today, image and reputation determine the status and influence of states, leaders, and nonstate actors more than military and economic strength.

The first scholarly attempts to define and explain media diplomacy were vague and confusing. Karl (1982) equated media diplomacy with open diplomacy – the mere exposure of diplomacy to the media and public opinion – or with public diplomacy – the use of mass media like the Voice of America to influence public opinion in a foreign society.

For Ramaprasad (1983, 70) and Ebo (1996, 44) media diplomacy is just the role the media plays in diplomacy and foreign policy. Van Dinh (1987, 51–52) equated —television diplomacy with propaganda, but most of his examples – the televised ultimatum John F. Kennedy sent to the USSR during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, Richard Nixon’s visit to China in 1972, and the 1977 visit of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem – were designed to resolve crises and promote conflict resolution, and were not propaganda.

Today, the media diplomacy plays a key role in society. In particular, the role of the media in the socio-political life of Central Asia is rapidly strengthening.

For over the past years both the scientific community and the political elites have actively been scrutinizing the issues of image of the newly independent states. If we take into account that the public relations interact with public mind at the level of subconsciousness, then it shall be revealed to what extent urgent this problem is.

The world public is well aware of how, for example, England was described to be “the land of conservatism”, Italy – “home to mafia”, Thailand – “tourist heaven”, or the then U.S. President Ronald Reagan was portraying the former Soviet Union to be “the empire of evil” and Iranian President Homenei was calling the United States as the “elder devil”.

Such labeling was practiced yet in the past centuries, i.e. long before the science of PR was established. For instance, it was customary to name Iran to be “the Persian Gulf gendarme” or the Khiva Khanate – “the Algeria of Middle Asia”. Having said that, one could think of the fact that prior to emergence of public relations, as a part of shaping one’s positive image, the partners used to widely engage in the “white” technologies in the international relations in contrast with the image of their opponents.

Certainly, such practices weren’t called as “PR technologies”, however regardless of that how they were named the substance doesn’t change.

In this context, at the moment the task of shaping “the media image” of the newly independent states, i.e. their “image in the mass media” requires to accomplish the comprehensively schemed work. In this it is necessary to expand liaising with public and coordinating the activities of state governance bodies, various public organizations and businesses.

In his book titled “The New Image of Uzbekistan”, well known American political scientist Frederick Starr writes, that Uzbekistan, long considered the center of Central Asia, has the region’s largest population and borders every other regional state including Afghanistan. For the first 25 years of its independence, it adopted a cautious, defensive policy that emphasized sovereignty and treated regional efforts at cooperation with skepticism .

But after taking over as President in autumn 2016, Shavkat Mirziyoyev launched a breathtaking series of reform initiatives. His slogan – “It is high time the government serves the people, not vice versa” – led to large-scale reforms in virtually every sector.

If we look at the history of the media in our country, in 1991 there were only 395 media outlets in the country. By 2016, their number had risen to 1,437, but today their number is closer to 2,000, and most of them are private. The University of Journalism and Mass Communications was established to improve the system of training modern specialists for the media in Uzbekistan. Organizations such as the Creative Union of Journalists of Uzbekistan, the National Press Center, the National Association of Electronic Mass Media, the Public Fund for Support and Development of Independent Print Media and News Agencies and the International Press Club are successfully operating. The faculty of Journalism of the National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek has a special place among them.

In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the media's main constraint is a lack of financial resources. In the West, television, radio, and newspapers for the most part survive on advertising revenue. The economic base for advertising is not yet developed enough in Central Asia to support the costs of media. Moreover, the potential audience does not want to pay for independent news. As a result, independent media exist only because they cater to the entertainment requirements of their audience (for which people are willing to pay), while the subsidized government media remain the main source of news .

In Uzbekistan, the government explicitly hinders the appearance of indigenous independent media, justified by the need to promote stability in the country but aimed at preserving the present political and social leaders. Even if this political barrier were removed, the economic problems would still be formidable. In Uzbekistan, the cultural hindrances to widespread acceptance of independent media are more prevalent than in Kazakhstan, since the population is less urban and more socially traditional.

In Kazakhstan new media are actively developing that increase possibilities of new information technologies. The new information markets are forming, there are new independent mass media, Internet sites, portals, the international and domestic media organizations, the blog sphere, and social networks are roughly developing.

AC Kazakhtelekom is the leader in the market of telecommunications of Kazakhstan. Owning 73% of the Internet market and information communications, the company provides services of the broadband Internet under the Megaline trademark in all large cities and areas of the country (2012). "Megaline" is the main provider in the country and uses a national basic network, providing Internet access as to users directly, and to resellers. According to the company, in 2011 total number of subscribers of "Megaline" reached 2 697 032, from them 2 449 779 (91%) were users of the broadband Internet (2013).

a) The market of a mobile telephony is actively developing in the country. If in 2008 the total of the registered subscribers of cellular communication in Kazakhstan was 15, 9 million people, now 32 million subscribers of a mobile telephony.

b) According to experts, Kazakhstan cable network is actively developing. The first networks of a cable television in the territory of Kazakhstan began being created in the late eighties. Now in the

territory of the republic of cable service television offer 40 operators of networks of a cable television, generally in the regional centers and in the large cities of the country. In the country there is a rapid development of system of a cable television where over 100 channels are provided to subscribers of this broadcasting type. In March, 2003 in Kazakhstan the Association of operators of cable TV was created.

c) As experts note, the market of paid television annually grows in Kazakhstan for 15-20% and in the next five years will increase to 1, 5 million subscribers. The cable broadcasting makes 4/5 markets of paid television. And the vast majority of them work at the local regional markets. Only two operators have branches in other cities: "Alma TV" relays in 17 cities of the country, "Alem Communications" in 9 cities of the republic.

d) Except a monthly fee operators have opportunity to gain income from advertizing activity where there is a steady tendency of growth. The market of TV advertizing in a year increases by 50%. In the large cities of Kazakhstan advertisers willingly resort to services of cable TV, whose audience intensively replenishes. The technology of a cable television allows accepting a set of programs from different satellites.

f) Modern achievements in the field of digital TV and radio broadcasting change process of world telecommunications. New opportunities of digital television and radio are supplemented with new opportunities: interactivity and multi-functionality. Now the broadcasting industry is presented by three main standards which are used for the organization digital broadcast.

In conclusion the media plays a special role in further deepening democratic reforms and developing civil society in our country. Because in the context of globalization, the media serves as a bridge between the state and society through the coverage of the most important events in our country, the ongoing updates, the adopted regulations.

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