

The role of public diplomacy in ensuring national interests in information field: example of Ukraine

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Abstract. This article considers the role of public diplomacy in the modern world, when information and communication technologies are spread worldwide and influence international affairs and diplomacy as well. In this regard, Ukraine and its current political threats and challenges are considered, primarily in respect of the Russian aggression against our state (and information war as well).

Keywords: public diplomacy, information, state, international, sphere, ICTs

Introduction. In the modern world – the world of information technology media and communications have become not only the next evolutionary step in the development of mankind but also a powerful tool for the manipulation of consciousness. In fact, the development of information, information and communication technologies should be considered not only as an advantage, but also a tool to influence certain global and regional centers for the development of society in some countries to achieve tangible goals at the regional and global level. Global knowledge solves global problems, whether in economic or technological sphere; independent centers of power use it to serve the interests of a given society and a global dimension.

Individual, group and mass consciousness is becoming increasingly dependent on the activity of the mass media and mass communication from the Internet. Such phrases as ‘information warfare’, ‘information campaign’, ‘soft power’ and so on are included in modern diplomatic vocabulary. **The relevance of the study** is explained by the fact that the modern world is influenced by various global changes, moving towards a multipolar world order with new powerful players, financial, economic and geopolitical centers, as subjects of public diplomacy as one of the most important instruments for achieving strategic foreign policy goals and global actors are facing new challenges on the part of ICTs in this regard. For instance, one could argue that there is shift away from the traditional state-level diplomacy toward public, citizen-level diplomacy; from government to government/diplomat to diplomat to the level of government to people, and people to people respectively. The role of public diplomacy is securing its place under the Sun.

The issue of public diplomacy is becoming an **object for study** not only of different modern researches such as Bill Rugh, Joe Johnson, Yale Richmond, James Pamment, Wilson P. Dizard and many others but it also attracts interest of **various disciplines and fields of science** – international law, international relations, economy, history etc.

Improved information technology and communications (ICTs) interplay is aimed at the general public. High technology, economics, science, culture and information are complementary [1, p. 17].

“The new ICT environment can be compared to “a planetary central nervous system composed of a web of communications devices, telephones, fax machines, televisions, computers, camcorders, portable digital assistants etc., all linked together into a single integrated network of digital-electronic-communications” [2].

The article dwells on particular role of public diplomacy in ensuring interests of states and ICTs as a means to reach such goals.

“In recent time, diplomat now engaged in arrangements dictated by the trends in the global community: democratization, globalization, integration, information and communication technology and transnationalization. Yet, the political environment is still highly tensed with the power politics of nations, negotiations of war and peace, actualization of national interest as well as the concentration on national power and wealth. Non-state actors, with their multitude of trans-border alliances, and pressure groups have added to the traditional domain of economic diplomacy thereby partially undermining the sovereignty of states in conducting international economic relations” [3].

Public diplomacy opens the doors of international relations to proactive global citizens. It has existed for generations but has only been recognized as a valid model for conducting international affairs in the last decades. Though relatively new, it is *de facto* an emerging trend in the diplomatic field [4]. It has always been a part of diplomacy. “To fully realize the potential of the new technologies, diplomats will have to recognize that a different communications environment is emerging and that its emergence will have a profound impact on statecraft. The diplomatic world is becoming much more complex and diversified as it conforms to the new realities prompted by the sheer growth in the number of actors operating in the international sphere” [5].

In the twenty-first century public diplomacy is becoming an important factor of international life of the vast majority of developed countries. The purpose of public diplomacy is to protect and promote the national interests of a state by informing foreign audiences about domestic and foreign policy and establishing long-term relationships to create favorable conditions for public policy, in particular, to impact on public opinion and on those who form it. The success in implementation of the foreign policy priorities depends more and more on the state’s image abroad, a positive perception of which is accompanied by a set of measures aimed at the explanation of decisions in domestic and foreign policy, conduct of systematic work to create a beneficial informational atmosphere for political and economic development of a certain state.

It is essential for the effective implementation of the goals of public diplomacy to set a range of measures aimed at the creation of ‘messages’ aimed at informing different audiences from various foreign states. Creation and development of communication tools, direct contacts

between public institutions, the media, the establishment of appropriate information programs, implementation of image projects, promotion of its culture and values through television, radio, tourism, theater, sports etc.

These principles are taken up by many countries in the modern world. Measures of public diplomacy for many years have been successfully used by the West in order to create and promote favorable image of a state, its ideology, and culture, promotion of democracy and values of civilized nations [6]. Of course, the question of the formation of the international image – is a question of material costs. Foreign countries are investing huge funds in the image programs to ensure a strong position of the state in order to ‘conquer’ trade and investment markets, reach international recognition and influence on foreign policy in general.

As world practice shows, major powers such as Germany, the Great Britain, the USA are paying considerable attention to the formation of their positive international image (and we should note that they continue working on it and perfecting it in spite of the fact that they are already recognized as wealthy, reliable, successful and attractive states to live in and cooperate with in the eyes of international public and many business partners!) and spend considerable resources. Ads of individual countries strike us from pages of various magazines or in the air of the most popular and most high-ranked media. The UK, Germany, China, Singapore, UAE - all these countries are systematically working on their image through advertising themselves, creating favorable conditions for development of business ties.

The U.S. who are pioneers in the field of public diplomacy and its birthplace, actively practicing extensive program of cultural and educational exchange, implementing many projects in the field of civil society, NGOs open, public libraries all over the world, organized by broadcast television and radio programs on different languages.

It is illustrative to have a look at the image of the EU they think they create worldwide: “the European Union has been described by a variety of writers in a variety of ways: as a ‘civilian power’, as a ‘normative power’, as a ‘metro-sexual superpower’, and as a ‘postmodern power’. Europe is seen by some commentators as the ‘champion of multilateralism’, ‘a community of democracy’ and the purveyor of norms and values like human rights, sustainability and the rule of law” [7].

Russia also actively works on its international communications. The public diplomacy efforts of the Russian Foreign Ministry highlight a number of key themes which Moscow considers necessary to promote on the international arena, particularly popularize in the former Soviet Union. These themes are realized through the work of an extensive network of NGOs, actively promoted via mass media and through the network of cultural centers “Russky Mir”.

Given the intensity of modern ICTs, especially the widespread use of public information and telecommunication systems, Ukraine faces a threat of losing control over its information field and the social consciousness of citizens has significantly increased. In this context it is important to ensure parity in its own information space and to increase its presence in the global information space.

The need to involve the public on its side in terms of the instantaneous dissemination of information as well as

disinformation has become particularly important. Of priority importance, in particular, is to ensure clarity and consistency in the implementation of the state policy in the field of maintenance and development of Ukrainian information space, improving the national information infrastructure, organization and ensuring international information exchange and integration of information space of Ukraine into the global information space, the principle of parity in collaboration with foreign countries in the information sector. In particular, greater horizontal coordination between relevant national and regional authorities to ensure the national interests of our country to counter the real and potential challenges and threats in the information sphere is needed.

It is interesting to consider how diplomats, practitioners see the impact of digitalization on their work, or better and find out what they say about it:

“We have seen the view reflected in the comment of John Kerry that employing digital technologies is becoming mainstreamed into diplomatic practice. But that still leaves the question of how digital technologies are being used, with what kinds of policy objectives and how they relate to fundamental precepts of diplomacy identified earlier. A favorite theme is that social media is somehow ‘demystifying’ diplomacy and enhancing access to diplomatic process. Examples regularly cited are social campaigns using Twitter hashtags and viral videos such as the ‘bring back our girls’ campaign calling for the release of 270 Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram” [8].

Especially important to the policy of the state is to form a positive international image. Ensuring that perception of Ukraine by general public abroad and appropriate positioning in the global information flow is one way of increasing the country’s success in competing in international markets and investments. As it has been mentioned, to his aim the policy of a state needs to be clear and understandable for international audiences.

Ukraine is known to face the problem of not only the military conflict with its Northern neighbor but also a full-scale information campaign launched against it by Russia. Therefore, the main instrument for countering such threats is to deliver to broad groups overseas accurate and comprehensive information about Ukraine, its achievements in social and economic spheres, achievements in the international arena, as well as to work systematically on creation of the positive image of our country in the international arena.

This function is largely vested in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and permanent diplomatic missions. Our permanent diplomatic missions ensure information presence of Ukraine in the information space of accredited states. Information policy is done by clarifying to the politicians, the public and the media information about the foreign policy priorities of Ukraine, the position of our country on most important international issues, promotion of Ukrainian culture, highlighting the economic and touristic potential of our country. For instance, at some point the key priority of the Foreign Ministry has been promoting the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU.

In this context, in order to receive support for signing the Association Agreement with the EU diplomatic missions of Ukraine held constant information campaigns to

outreach the public, representatives of political, business, and non-expert groups. The media were used to spread information on the progress of domestic reforms in Ukraine in the context of European integration progress.

The cooperation with think tanks specializing in foreign policy is growing. In the context of economization of foreign policy, the diplomatic missions of Ukraine actively disseminated information on investment opportunities in Ukraine. In particular, they widely used practice of presentations involving different regions of Ukraine, presentations of their tourism opportunities and attractiveness of Ukraine as a touristic destination in general as well, promotion of Ukraine as a business partner.

Reinforcement of the presence of Ukraine in the international media, as well as organization of important image projects became an important additional tool in the efforts aimed at enhancing investment cooperation with foreign partners, increasing tourist flows to Ukraine, proper systematic information support of implemented by the Government of Ukraine reforms. Activities of the Foreign Ministry also aim to expand the presence of 'topic of Ukraine' in the international information space and on the table of the most powerful international players. This is due to the need to counter the destructive campaigns in the international information environment against Ukraine and the need to create favorable 'information environment'.

At the same time, one should note that lack of information about a state in the global information space causes as much damage to national interests as the presence of negative information.

Opposition to aggression and targeted information campaigns in foreign media against Ukraine is one of the primary elements of homeland security of Ukraine. Information War became a common tool in achieving political and economic interests when the influence on public opinion in Ukraine is increased to implement specific foreign policies in our country. Unfortunately, Ukraine has become a target of the planned information aggression of Russia, which has been waged due to many geopolitical interests which can be explained by the geographical location of Ukraine. At this stage, these interests are realized through national and international media in various areas of national security:

- In the sphere of foreign policy – there is a goal to spread biased and incomplete information about Ukraine to form a negative world opinion and advance its own interests of certain countries (especially during the election campaigns in our country);
- In the area of civil security – the campaign is conducted against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine;
- In the military sphere – there is an aim to discredit Ukraine as a reliable and predictable partner in respect of trade in arms to third countries in violation of international;
- In the domestic sphere – distorted and false information is spread with a focus on national minorities in our country, when the question of the second official language is raised etc;

Other respective initiatives inherent in the economic, socio-humanitarian spheres, in the sphere of science and technology, and in the environmental field.

The main thesis of the Russian propaganda is information: from historical, cultural and mental point of view

Crimea has never been Ukrainian, its return to Russia is a natural phenomenon; Russia's only aim is to protect Russian minority from radical Ukrainian nationalists; residents of Luhansk and Donetsk regions show the desire to join the Russian Federation; Ukraine is divided into east and west, it needs federalization; there is a civil war in the state; deaths of civilians in February 2014 is a planned action of new Ukrainian authorities; by means of "punitive operation" Ukrainian authorities killed civilians in the east, so the government should immediately and unconditionally stop it and negotiate with the people; after the coup in Kiev "junta" and "Nazi regime" rule Ukraine; though the current President of Ukraine is legitimate he came to power resorting to illegal methods.

Russia also uses the historical parallels in anti-Ukrainian propaganda. Due to unfavorable conditions for anti-Ukrainian propaganda in Europe and North America, and priority of Ukraine's leadership to work with the leaders of these countries, Russia makes efforts to strengthen relations with post-Soviet countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as to find new allies in the region. Russia engages substantial financial resources to advocate in various areas of vital influence to cope with negative consequences of economic sanctions, slapped as a response to its aggression. Therefore, there should be used a wide range of methods to carry out counter-propaganda based on the specifics of each region. Along with the traditional diplomatic methods used by the Russian Federation, it is also advisable to use asymmetric measures.

Ukraine and competent media should work to create conditions for effective response to complex information challenges and solve problems of constant informational confrontation. It seems it would be an effective mechanism to improve the legal framework on the basis of harmonization of information rights, freedoms and responsibilities of a person, society and state, and this motivated the development of a unified information security policy of the state.

In addition, resources and organizational and technical support should be provided at the national level to broadcasting companies and print media of Ukraine to activate their contribution to the spread of positive information about our country in the European and global information space. Besides, most developed ICTs should be taken into account: the Internet and social media in particular, the phenomenon of the influence of which is already labeled as "twitter-diplomacy".

"Social media have added an important real-time dimension to diplomacy, making communication ultra-fast and, by necessity, often less precise. For the first time, foreign ministries have no other option than allowing diplomats with delegated authority to make mistakes in the social media – and to correct such mishaps immediately and preferably repeatedly. There will be no immediate consensus among diplomats, though, as to how to use the social media, neither is there a generational gap between luddites wary of change and technophiles with sympathies in the opposite direction" [8].

Conclusion. "There is no doubt that, ICTs revolution has changed the international community drastically and has had profound influence on the practice of modern diplomacy" [3]. The state and the media should be directed at expanding the presence of "Ukrainian theme" in the international information space. This is due to the

need to counter the destructive campaigns in the international information environment against Ukraine, and the need to create favorable “information atmosphere”.

“Developed countries-Canada, Australia, USA, Germany, France, Russia Federation and United Kingdom are already exploiting the new arena, creating department in the foreign ministry to effectively utilise ICTs in the conduct of diplomacy and diplomatic services. Developing countries should take a bold step and acknowledge a need to reassess the training programs available for diplomats in ICTs” [3].

Ukraine needs to work on its international image, focusing on its positive aspects and benefits that can be offered to potential investments and investors. There are major

problems Ukraine has to solve in confronting Russia in the international arena and *inter alia* in the information field. There is a number of negative information ‘messages’ that Russia uses to create a negative image of Ukraine.

The lack of information about the state in the global information space does as much damage to the national interests as the presence of negative information. Ukraine’s current goals and tasks require large-scale action to counter information attacks against Ukraine, ensuring proper information support of international initiatives and internal reforms in Ukraine. Ukraine has to work to fill a sector in the media space that would be allotted to Ukraine. Otherwise, other will do it instead of us and they will not do us a favor.

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