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Publik diplomacy and propaganda: rethinking diplomacy in the age of persuasion

This essay has considered the merits of Public Diplomacy and Propaganda in the digital world. New public diplomacy appears to be a more appropriate and effective approach to tackle today's complex challenges we face in the world. It is more democratic in the sense that it is more transparent, open and inclusive. Its transnational nature reflects more accurately the issues and challenges societies, governments and their diplomats have to grapple with, including conflicts, environmental degradation, migration and development.

Key words: *Public Diplomacy, Digital Diplomacy, Propaganda, Communication.*

В статье рассматриваются положительные свойства публичной дипломатии и пропаганды в цифровом мире. Новая публичная дипломатия, как представляется, является более целесообразным и эффективным подходом к решению сегодняшних сложных проблем, с которыми мы сталкиваемся в мире. Она более демократична в том смысле, что является более прозрачной, открытой и всеобъемлющей. Ее транснациональный характер отражает более точно вопросы и проблемы общества, правительствам и их дипломатам приходится иметь дело с решением таких проблем, как конфликты, ухудшение состояния окружающей среды, миграция и развитие.

Ключевые слова: *публичная дипломатия, цифровая дипломатия, пропаганда, коммуникация.*

У статті розглядаються позитивні властивості публічної дипломатії та пропаганди в цифровому світі. Нова публічна дипломатія, як видається, є більш доцільним і ефективним підходом до вирішення сьогоднішніх складних проблем, із якими ми стикаємося у світі. Вона більш демократична в тому сенсі, що є більш прозорою, відкритою і всеосяжною. Її транснаціональний характер відображає більш точно питання і проблеми суспільства, урядам і їхнім дипломатам доводиться мати справу з вирішенням таких проблем, як конфлікти, погіршення стану навколишнього середовища, міграція та розвиток.

Ключові слова: *публічна дипломатія, цифрова дипломатія, пропаганда, комунікація.*

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Introduction

In democraticWestern societies in which public opinion, civil society actors and social movements increasingly influence and shape political decision-making andforeign policy, public diplomacy has become an important policy-making tool. This compliments traditional bilateral and multilateral diplomacy between states, as it can be found in intergovernmental organizations such as the European Union or the United Nations (Biola and Kornprobst 2013).

Empowered citizens and civil society organizations demand to be heard and included, even in diplomacy which used to be reserved to a certain elite, and this changed environment requires a different response from politicians and policy-makers. This has become particularly acute in the highly interconnected societies we live in. Citizens are better informed, and it is much easier these days to mobilize through social media and other online tools.

Traditional diplomacy which has been characterized by exclusion, closed doors and a hierarchical and top-down approach is more and more replaced by dialogue, inclusion, open doors and a multi-stakeholder approach. This also reflects the demands of complex issues which can only be tackled and solved in concert and in collaboration with all constituents across all border, internally and externally (Waller 2007).

As developed at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, part of Tufts University, in 1965 by the former Dean Edmund Gullion, public diplomacydescribes the influence of public views and attitudes on the making and execution of foreign policy. It includeselements and dimensions in international affairs that go beyond traditional diplomacy. This includesthe development of public opinion in foreign countries, the interaction of civil society groups and interests pursued at home or abroadwith foreign actors, the public reporting on foreign policies and its effect on policy-making, increased communication between different stakeholders, including the media, and the processes of inter-cultural communications. The transnational flow of information, the sharing of values and ideasis an essential element of public diplomacy and one requisite for its effectiveness. Public diplomacy is generally seen as crucial in creating a more secure global environment. It broadened the concept of diplomacy considerably, and has attracted more attention after the 2001 terrorist attacks in the US (Lord 2006).

Changes in communication are also an important element as a more open relationship with actors in the media and with other civil society actors was formed which facilitates the necessary flow of information, nationally and transnationally.

The American Context

Public diplomacy is particularly distinctive in the American context in which government has to deal with a multitude of challenges. There is a more pronounced distrust among certain segments of the US population towards Washington, the federal state and government in general (Dizard2004). In many instances this distrust has to be overcome to gain votes in elections, to mobilize support or to simply create legitimacy and cohesion. Furthermore, the number of lobbyists is very high in the US as compared

to other Western societies. Their views and demands are more easily addressed in a public diplomacy framework which contributes to a more cohesive society with less social and political tensions, although the strong influence of lobbyists can also lead to imbalances. In addition, civil society organizations in the US are often more professionalized and better organized than in other Western countries and demand a more inclusive approach in diplomacy. This is reflected in the high number of civil society representatives in US delegations and shows public diplomacy in action in a very concrete manner (Nakamura 2010).

Many European societies still have a more traditional approach to diplomacy as their policy-making is not as accessible to different stakeholders as it is in the US. The Foreign Service in the US is also more diverse and there are more opportunities to join the diplomatic corps which strengthens the hold and effect of public diplomacy.

Public diplomacy does not only contribute to legitimacy and cohesion in the country, but it is also an indispensable tool externally to maintain good relations with foreign governments, pursue foreign policy interests and trade relations. It is an essential part of the American political and cultural export and contributes significantly to the influence and appeal of the country abroad. It effectively communicates American ideas, values, visions and interests in other countries to their people and governments around the globe.

The End of History 2.0 or the influence of IT on democratization

Everyone has probably heard that a thought is material. Even though there is still no scientific evidence of this fact, it has never hindered mankind from thinking beyond possible or conceivable by his consciousness. The example to that is work of Jules Verne, Herbert Wells, Isaac Asimov and many others whose predictions outstripped time much and outlived their authors.

The thought of the end of the mankind has never left the Earth's race since its inception. Relevant predictions are available not only in various religions and confessions, but also in Marxism where the end of history is appeared to be as the creation of an ideal society. However, the thesis of the victory of Western liberal civilization in the modern world set forth by Francis Fukuyama in the book '' The end of history and the last man'' became its most popular interpretation.

However, the end of history or mankind did not occur in fact. Later, in 2006, Fukuyama in his own book "America at the Crossroads" will add that "Liberal democracy is one of the byproducts of this modernization process, something that becomes a universal aspiration only in the course of historical time". Though, as this history shows modernization does not necessarily imply democracy. Farid Zakaria considers that importing Western lifestyle from McDonald's

hamburgers to Rolex watches or Cadillac is easier than importing the inner stuffing of modern society – a free market, political parties, and the rule of law is difficult and even dangerous for the ruling elites.

Nevertheless, given the accelerating progress, dissemination of the new flow of information on a global scale and communication technologies in the world, resistance of the nations to the changes occurred within the society itself is a matter of time. Revolutionary changes that have taken place in the field of information and communication technologies within the recent years have tremendous effect on the state structures, civil society institutions, social and ideological spheres of life.

It is noteworthy to note that the period between the end of XX and beginning of XXI centuries was clearly characterized by the ongoing information explosion. Over the past 50 years speed of the information transmission has significantly increased. In 2016 it set a new record for the information transmission- 50 thousand times higher than the previous options (it constitutes 1.125 terabits per second). Such speed could enable to download, for instance, the series of "House of Cards" entirely for a split second. It is worth mentioning that it took radio, as a reporting mechanism, 30 years to reach an audience of 50 million people; television 13 years to reach the same result and Internet only 4 years.

If in 1993 there were about 93 thousand users of internet in the world, in 2002-580 million users, in 2015 these figures increased up to 3.2 billion people provided that 2 billion out of them are living in developing countries. Over the past decade and a half the Internet coverage has increased more than seven times - from 6,5% to 43% of the world's population. According to the founder of Facebook social network Mark Zuckerberg, today "Internet is more than just a network of computers. Currently, it is an important engine of social and economic progress".

MichioKaku, a famous American scientist, in his own book ''Physics of the Future "writes": "Today, the Internet, with all its faults and excesses, is emerging as a guardian of democratic freedoms. Issues that were once debated behind closed doors are now being dissected and analyzed on a thousand Web sites". The ability of information to traverse across borders that are unavailable for material objects, leads to the creation of unified information field of the Earth. The Pew Research Center's report on civic values in the Internet environment states that there is a clear correlation between the percentage of Internet users and those who think that free internet is a very important value. It allows them to suggest that as the Network will be growing over the planet in the forthcoming years, request for the freedom in cyberspace will keep growing as well.

Raymond Kurzweil, a famous American futurist, considers that by 2021 Internet access will be

available from 85% of the earth's surface and will mostly be wireless and very cheap. In the article dated 2001, Kurzweil developed his own theory on "The Law of Accelerating Returns", according to which the rate of change in a wide variety of evolutionary systems (including but not limited to the growth of technologies) tends to increase exponentially. He also noted that Moore's Law (Empirical observation initially made by Moore, founder of Intel Corporation. According to this Law, in its modern formulation, the number of transistors on an integrated circuit for minimum component cost doubles every 24 months) can be applied to other technologies as well. According Kurzweil, it is in favour of the technological singularity (hypothetical event in future when the rate of technological progress will be so fast that the curve of technical progress will rise almost vertically). According to VernorVinge, writer and scientist-mathematician, it can occur approximately in 2030. Indeed, according to Intel, the creation of a processor twice as powerful as the previous one will now require two and a half years, not two. However, the recent victory by Google's computer program AlphaGo over the man on the game Go where the number of possible stone combinations on the Go-bang exceeds the number of atoms in the observable Universe, says that there is another small step for a man on the eve of a huge leap in the development of artificial intelligence.

Mankind is on the threshold of a new era, an era of endless possibilities when as the basis of the structural organization of society will serve not the state or a corporation but a person with access to all these features. Mathew Burrows, director of the Atlantic Council's Strategic Foresight Initiative of the USA, in his own book "The Future: Declassified" states: "The world came to a turning point where the balance between the individual and the state is radically altered… As when the Gutenberg Bible, current internet and social networks have launched a process of long revolution".

While analyzing the path to democracy in the modern world, it can be argued that an adequate solution to the current problems lies not in the forcible imposition of democracy or artificial substitution of Western values, but in the enhancement of speed and new techniques of transmissions via the Internet. The evolution of the Internet and mobile telephony and their ubiquity will result in the general evolution, namely, in the convergence of political institutions about which Fukuyama wrote, i. e. to the end of history 2.0. And then we can only hope that Isaac Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics" will work properly by that time.

Propaganda versus Persuasion

With the change in the nature of diplomacy, from the traditional way to the modern, public diplomacy, the way diplomacy is done also changed. Propaganda by governments has transformed into a softer approach of persuasion which is the most important tool in diplomacy, to be able to convince the counterpart with communication, arguments and ideas.

According to Snow (2012), "propaganda is source-based, cause-oriented, emotion-laden content that utilizes mass persuasion media to cultivate the mass mind in service to the source's goals. Its utilization is not good or bad as all social institutions (government, commercial, citizen-based) use propaganda for their own purposes". Propaganda is more likely to be used during periods of crises, conflicts and turmoil.

Persuasion is more related to soft power (Nye 2003). Persuasion means a change in the mind and perspectives of the persuaded which can be achieved through engagement, dialogue, arguments, emotions and charisma. It is more relevant now in the public diplomacy which often involves multi-stakeholder engagement which comes with diverse views. Persuasion if done wisely comes with increased legitimacy and ownership. In addition to traditional media, social media has become an important channel in communication and mobilization and it greatly facilitates the transnational flow of information (Dhia 2005).

Persuasion and public diplomacy build on indirect means that influence behavior, including culture, values and norms and ideology that lead stated toward interdependence rather than confrontation. Public diplomacy, diplomacy directed at the public, focuses on human interaction and is thus less openly manipulative as compared to propaganda. In an ideal world, the target audience of public diplomacy is more like an informed and active consumer who takes in messages and information from a wide range of governmental and private actor, but at the same time also actively responds in a dialogue and mutual exchange of ideas. It is still open to manipulation and misuse, but through the flow of information on social media it is open to examination and more scrutiny. While it can be seen simply as a softer form of propaganda, it seems to be more than that in an environment where stakeholders are more empowered and have more influence (Snow 2012).

The US war on terror was perceived by many as a prime example of propaganda, as it was driven by the government in power and did not take a diplomatic approach at all (Snow and Kamalipour 2004). There was no serious dialogue with partners on how to proceed and the various invasions and NSA spy scandals were ultimately results of old-fashioned propaganda. It damaged the reputation of the US abroad, weakened coalitions of friendly states and angered citizens in a large number of countries. These results run counter to what public diplomacy is expected to achieve (Elliott 2002). Subsequently, the Obama administration was able to restore and rebuild some of these relationships through dialogue and a more inclusive approach to diplomacy.

Conclusion

Only future will tell, but new public diplomacy appears to be a more appropriate and effective approach to tackle today's complex challenges we face in the world (Pammant 2012). It is more democratic in the sense that it is more transparent, open and inclusive. Its transnational nature reflects more accurately the issues and challenges societies, governments and their diplomats have to grapple with, including conflicts, environmental degradation, migration and development. It seems more democratic as there is more communication with citizens and all stakeholders and thus it is more suitable for Western democratic societies, and in particular for the US as a country which stands for and actively promotes democracy and civic engagement around the globe.

The rise of public diplomacy and policy-making is supported by e-governance tools, interactive tools and social media which greatly shape and influence diplomacy today. It also strengthens transparency and the involvement of constituents. Critics argue that public diplomacy is only a clever psychological manoeuvre to market propaganda, a veil for realpolitik. However, the new realities created through social media and empowered citizens did actually change the nature of diplomacy, although governments still remain the main actors and decision-makers. Now there are more actors involved and every citizen can become a diplomat through a blog or as a volunteer for a non-profit organization. The game of diplomacy has now more players and it is played on a larger playing field which extends across different countries and regions.

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