

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: HISTORICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

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Abstract: Public diplomacy is an important public diplomacy tool that serves to strengthen mutual understanding, trust and cooperation between states and peoples. Historically, public diplomacy has its roots in ancient trade routes, cultural relations, religious pilgrimages and scientific exchanges. In modern times, globalization, the development of information technologies and the expansion of international civil society institutions have further expanded its scope. From a psychological perspective, public diplomacy contributes to the elimination of stereotypes, the formation of mutual empathy, the establishment of trust and the development of intercultural communication skills. Direct contacts of people, educational programs, cultural events and social media platforms support the formation of positive public opinion between different societies. In this regard, public diplomacy is not only a mechanism that complements the foreign policy of states, but also a socio-psychological tool that plays an important role in promoting peace, tolerance and sustainable international cooperation. The purpose of the study is to analyze the historical stages of development of public diplomacy and its psychological impact mechanisms and assess its importance in the system of modern international relations.

Keywords: public diplomacy, psychological aspect, ethnic tolerance, self-awareness, social stereotypes

Introduction

The term “public diplomacy” is interpreted in various ways in the scientific literature. Some researchers use this concept as a synonym for “public diplomacy”, while others identify subtle

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differences between them. In a general sense, public diplomacy is understood as an attempt by one state to achieve its political goals through direct appeal to the people and public opinion of another state, and is often managed by government agencies (for example, ministries of foreign affairs, cultural institutions). Public diplomacy, on the other hand, is a somewhat broader concept, encompassing informal relations initiated not only by state institutions, but also by civil society institutions, individual citizens, and diaspora associations. Conceptually, the roots of public diplomacy date back to the 1960s, when the American diplomat Edmund Gullion introduced the term public diplomacy into scientific circulation [Cull, 2009]. In subsequent decades, this concept was organically connected with Joseph Nye's theory of soft power and became an independent field of research in modern international relations science [Nye, 2008].

Several theoretical models of public diplomacy are distinguished in the scientific literature:

1) The one-way information model. According to this model, the main task of public diplomacy is to convey information about one's own country to the public of another country and explain its position. This model is more "top-down" in nature and is often identified with the concept of propaganda.

2) The dialogue model. This model, preferred by modern researchers, is based on mutual communication, the exchange of ideas between the two parties. The goal here is not only to transmit information, but also to listen to the other side, seek common values, and create long-term trust [Melissen, 2005].

3) The network model. In the globalized information environment, public diplomacy is no longer perceived as a linear, but as a network-based activity. In this model, the state, non-governmental organizations, media, academic circles, and individual citizens act as a network of interconnected means [Fisher, 2013].

Within the concept of soft power, public diplomacy is a tool for conveying a state's resources

of attraction – its culture, political values and foreign policy – to other societies. As Nye notes, power can be achieved not only through coercion, but also through attraction. Public diplomacy is precisely the institutional manifestation of this attraction process [Nye, 2008]. However, there are also disagreements among researchers regarding the difficulty of measuring soft power and its long-term and indirect nature of its impact [Nye, 2008]. A number of authors explain the relationship between soft power and public diplomacy as a “resource-instrument” relationship: soft power is the goal or the desired outcome, and public diplomacy is the means used to achieve this outcome. In other words, a country may have a rich cultural heritage, an attractive political system or successful foreign policy achievements, but the perception, recognition and positive assessment of these resources by other societies is carried out as a psychological factor, namely through public diplomacy activities. In this sense, public diplomacy plays the role of a “transmission mechanism”.

Literature review

One of the characteristic features of modern public diplomacy is its multi-level structure. At the first level, state institutions act - ministries of foreign affairs, ministries of culture, specially established agencies (for example, the British Council, the Goethe Institute in Germany). At the second level, quasi-state institutions operate - foundations and institutes funded by the state, but with relative autonomy. At the third level, non-governmental organizations, civil society institutions and academic institutions are located, which are often considered more flexible and effective in gaining trust, since their activities are not directly identified with state interests. At the fourth level, individual citizens, bloggers, students and tourists, whose everyday behavior and interactions also contribute to the external image of the country. This last category is sometimes called “accidental ambassadors” [Fisher, 2013].

An effective public diplomacy strategy should consist of several stages: clearly identifying the target audience, formulating the messages to be transmitted, selecting appropriate channels,

implementing the activity, and finally evaluating the results. Researchers emphasize that a successful strategy requires a differentiated approach for each target audience, moving away from the “one size fits all” principle – for example, digital platforms and visual content may be more effective for a young audience, and in-depth analytical articles and conferences for academic circles [Zaharna, 2010]. Public diplomacy can also play an important role in post-conflict reconciliation processes. Historical experience shows that even when official negotiations cease, the continuation of relations between societies at the academic, cultural and civil levels can create a basis for future understanding. In this regard, the so-called “second track diplomacy” format – informal, academic and expert-level dialogues – is of particular importance as a complement to official diplomacy [Gilboa, 2001].

The institutional and conceptual foundations of public diplomacy in modern Azerbaijan are organically linked to the activities of the national leader Heydar Aliyev. Back in the Soviet era, when he led the republic in the 1970s and 1980s, Heydar Aliyev carried out purposeful activities aimed at promoting Azerbaijani culture, history and science, and paid special attention to the preservation of the national self-awareness and historical memory of the people. This activity, in fact, formed the initial, non-institutional foundation of the practice of public diplomacy, which would be fully formed in later periods.

One of the most important stages of Heydar Aliyev’s activity in the field of public diplomacy took place immediately after the bloody tragedy committed in Baku on January 20, 1990. When the great leader lived in Moscow, he made a sharp statement at the permanent representation of Azerbaijan in Moscow as a sign of protest against the brutal operation carried out by Soviet troops against the civilian population, demanding the punishment of the organizers and executors of the crime committed against the Azerbaijani people. This step was not only an example of political courage, but also became an important consolidation initiative that united Azerbaijanis living in different countries of the world around a common historical destiny. As researchers note, this statement gave impetus to the organization of world Azerbaijanis as a nation and united compatriots around a leader who could bear historical responsibility for the fate of the people [Alieva, 2011] .

After returning to power during the period of independence, great leader Heydar Aliyev made the establishment of a diaspora and strengthening relations with world Azerbaijanis one of the priority directions of state policy. For this purpose, the initiative to celebrate December 31 as the “World Azerbaijanis Solidarity Day” was put forward every year and systematic activities were launched to unite compatriots living abroad around a single goal. Sources about the achievements in this field note that the achievements in uniting millions of compatriots living outside the borders of Azerbaijan around a single goal are connected with the name and purposeful activities of the national leader Heydar Aliyev. [Alieva, 2011] .

Another important dimension of the activities of the great leader Heydar Aliyev in the field of public diplomacy was the communication of the realities of Azerbaijan to the world community at the level of international organizations. Thus, on September 30, 1994, Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev, speaking for the first time at the session of the UN General Assembly, conveyed the true voice of Azerbaijan to the whole world. This speech, as well as his speeches at subsequent sessions of the UN General Assembly and the Millennium Summit in subsequent years, served to convey Azerbaijan’s position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the principle of the country’s territorial integrity, and its peaceful foreign policy course to the international community directly, not only through official diplomatic channels, but also at the public-diplomatic level.

In addition, the regular meetings of the great leader Heydar Aliyev with representatives of Azerbaijani communities living in those countries during his foreign visits at the level of heads of state and government, and the support of direct contacts of cultural and scientific figures with their foreign colleagues also made a significant contribution to the institutional formation of public diplomacy. This experience shows that the meetings of heads of state and government with their compatriot communities in other countries during their visits, as well as the direct contacts of public figures and cultural representatives with their foreign colleagues, make a significant contribution to public diplomacy.

Thus, the activities of the great leader Heydar Aliyev laid the foundation for three important

directions of public diplomacy in Azerbaijan - diaspora consolidation, promotion of the national position on international socio-political platforms, and a network of informal relations that complements official diplomacy. This legacy was subsequently continued at the institutional level by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, and further expanded through the institutionalization of diaspora organizations, holding World Azerbaijani Congresses, and other events.

The Republic of Azerbaijan has tried to actively use the resources of public diplomacy when formulating its foreign policy during its independence. The country's multinational and multi-confessional tolerance model, rich cultural heritage, and the widespread diaspora network around the world constitute significant potential in this area.

Cultural and tourism diplomacy. International events held in Baku - such as Formula 1 races, the Eurovision Song Contest, international humanitarian forums, and the Islamic Solidarity Games - have served as a means of public diplomacy in terms of increasing the country's international visibility and shaping its positive image.

Diaspora activities. Azerbaijani diaspora organizations operating in various countries of the world, especially in Europe and North America, have actively participated in conveying the country's positions to the international community, especially in explaining the truths regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to the world community.

Promotion of the tolerance model. Azerbaijan's centuries-old tradition of religious and ethnic tolerance, the experience of representatives of different religions living in peace are among the topics regularly demonstrated on international platforms. The inter-civilization dialogue forums held in Baku are considered important steps in this direction.

Humanitarian demining and reconstruction activities. Informing the international community about demining and reconstruction work carried out in the territories liberated from occupation has also become one of the relevant directions of public diplomacy in the modern era.

Activity in international organizations. Azerbaijan's chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement and participation in international humanitarian and environmental initiatives (e.g.

international conferences on climate change) have also enabled the country to make its voice heard on multilateral platforms and to engage directly with the international community. Such events can be considered hybrid formats that combine both official diplomatic and public diplomacy dimensions, as they ensure the participation of state representatives, as well as the media, academia, and civil society.

Methodology

It should be borne in mind that the upbringing of a tolerant personality is one of the most urgent problems of modern pedagogy and a favorable educational environment should be created. In the era of global social changes and growing interethnic tension in multinational regions, the problem of educating tolerance requires special attention from parents, teachers, politicians, philosophers, psychologists and everyone involved in the upbringing of young people. The purpose of our study is to examine the historical and psychological aspects of Azerbaijani public diplomacy.

Results

The development of the Internet and social media platforms has fundamentally changed the forms of public diplomacy. While traditionally this field was carried out through cultural institutions, exchange programs and official events, in modern times social media platforms (Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) provide states with direct, fast and wide-reaching communication channels.

This transformation has a number of important consequences. First, the importance of media institutions that played the role of traditional “gatekeepers” (information filters) has decreased, and states and even individual diplomats have gained the opportunity to communicate directly with their audiences. Second, the speed of information has increased dramatically, but at the same time the scale of the problem of disinformation and “fake news” has expanded. Third, “citizen diplomacy”, that is,

ordinary citizens communicating their country's position to an international audience through social media, has emerged as a new phenomenon.

At the same time, the effectiveness of digital public diplomacy depends on a number of factors: the quality and credibility of the content, the correct identification of the target audience, the adaptation of messages to the cultural context and, most importantly, the reliability of the transmitted information. Researchers note that excessive propaganda content in the digital environment can backfire and even reduce the trust of the target audience. Therefore, modern public diplomacy strategies are increasingly based on the principles of “storytelling”, authenticity and building long-term relationships [Zaharna, 2010].

The methodology for measuring the effectiveness of public diplomacy in the digital era has also undergone significant evolution. While traditionally “output” indicators were used in this area, for example, the number of events held, the number of participants, in modern times researchers prefer “result” indicators, changes in public opinion, transformation of behavioral patterns, and the formation of long-term relationships. Social media analytics (like, share, comment indicators, sentiment analysis) have created new opportunities in this regard, but these indicators themselves have limitations in terms of fully reflecting the real impact, since online activity does not always directly correlate with changes in behavior and attitudes in the real world. For this reason, a combination of quantitative (social media metrics) and qualitative (focus group interviews, in-depth interviews) methods is recommended in modern research.

In recent years, the development of artificial intelligence technologies, especially large language models and automated content creation tools, has created new opportunities and at the same time new risks in the field of public diplomacy. On the one hand, these technologies allow for the rapid creation of multilingual content and more precise segmentation of target audiences. On the other hand, “deep fake” technologies and automated disinformation campaigns risk deepening the crisis of trust. In this context, international cooperation of states in the field of artificial intelligence management may also be formed as a new direction of public diplomacy in the future.

In order to fully understand the essence of public diplomacy, it is necessary to take into account its psychological dimension, along with its institutional-political dimension. Consequently, all activities of public diplomacy, cultural events, academic exchanges, media campaigns ultimately serve to create certain changes in individual and collective consciousness, that is, in the human psyche. In this regard, theoretical models in the fields of social psychology, cognitive psychology and communication psychology play the role of an important analytical tool to explain the effectiveness of public diplomacy. Psychology of perception and image formation. The ideas that people form about other peoples and states are explained in cognitive psychology through the concepts of “schema” and “stereotype”. When individuals are faced with a complex flow of information, the brain processes this information through simplified, generalized images. The initial idea formed about a country, a positive or negative stereotype, also affects the way subsequent information is perceived. This phenomenon is called “confirmation bias” in psychology and refers to the tendency of people to give more importance to information that is consistent with their existing beliefs and to ignore information that contradicts them. In this regard, one of the main psychological tasks of public diplomacy is not to eliminate negative or superficial stereotypes, but rather to gradually form a more complex and nuanced image by presenting new, alternative experiences and sources of information. Long-term, repeated and personal experience-based contacts (for example, student exchanges or direct cultural participation) are considered more effective in this respect than one-off media campaigns, because they are more likely to be associated with cognitive schemas. It allows for a deeper level of reconstruction.

Discussion and Conclusion

Contact theory and intergroup relations. The “contact hypothesis” put forward by Gordon Allport in social psychology is one of the theoretical foundations of public diplomacy [Allport, 1954]. According to this theory, when certain conditions are met (equal status, common goals, cooperation and institutional support), direct contact between different groups reduces mutual prejudice and

increases empathy. Academic exchange programs, joint research projects and cultural festivals are based on this principle.

Their purpose is not simply to transfer information, but to reduce intergroup tension at the psychological level by uniting representatives of the two parties in an equal, common-purpose activity. However, researchers note that contact alone is not enough; if contact occurs in conditions of inequality or competition, it can, on the contrary, strengthen prejudice. Therefore, successful public diplomacy programs should pay special attention to ensuring equal relations between participants.

Building trust and persuasive communication. Psychologically, trust is a long-term, cumulative process that consists of several components: the credibility of the source, the perception of its benevolence, and the competence of the source. Within the framework of the theory of persuasive communication, researchers show that the more credible the source of a message is, the higher the likelihood that it will be accepted. In this regard, messages transmitted through official state channels often have a lower level of credibility, since they are often perceived as an “interested party”; in contrast, statements based on the personal experience of independent journalists, academic experts, or ordinary citizens acquire a higher level of credibility. This phenomenon is called the “third-party effect” and explains why modern public diplomacy strategies increasingly focus on unofficial voices (influencers, academic exchange participants, tourists).

The psychology of national identity and self-awareness. The psychological dimension of public diplomacy is directed not only at external audiences, but also at internal audiences, that is, at the country’s own citizens. According to social identity theory, individuals use their group (nation, state) affiliation as a source of self-esteem and pride [Tajfel, 1986; Ramiz and Vakil, 2020; Jabbarov, 2012]. Public diplomacy measures, such as internationally recognized cultural achievements or successful diplomatic steps, indirectly contribute to the internal socio-psychological stability of the country by strengthening the sense of national pride and solidarity of citizens. This is especially important in the context of diaspora communities. For representatives of the diaspora living far away, maintaining ties with the homeland is often associated with the need to maintain a “sense of belonging” and identity

continuity, which play an important role in the psychology of emigration. In this regard, public diplomacy programs related to the diaspora fulfill both a political-strategic and a deep psychological function at the same time.

The role of emotional factors. Many studies show that the effectiveness of public diplomacy depends not only on rational arguments, but also on emotional impact (Jabbarov, 2017; Jabbarov et al., 2020; Jabbarov, 2017). This is the main reason why the storytelling method is increasingly used in modern strategies. Thus, although statistical facts and official statements are accepted at the level of thought, concrete human stories that create emotional resonance are usually more effective in influencing people's behavior and long-term attitudes. Content that creates positive emotions such as empathy, surprise, inspiration remains in memory for a longer time and is more likely to be shared. (Jabbarov, 2017; Jabbarov et al., 2020; Jabbarov, 2017) This phenomenon has also been confirmed in social media studies. At the same time, communication based on negative emotions (fear, hatred, insult), even if it attracts attention, even in the short term, does not create long-term trust and sympathy, but on the contrary, can deepen polarization.

Thus, taking into account the psychological dimension of public diplomacy allows for further improvement of strategies. A multidimensional approach aimed not only at transmitting information, but also at changing cognitive schemes, increasing intergroup empathy, cumulatively forming trust and creating positive emotional resonance is the key to the success of modern public diplomacy.

The analysis shows that public diplomacy is a multifaceted and dynamically developing phenomenon that is gaining increasing importance in the modern system of international relations.

Unlike traditional interstate diplomacy, public diplomacy is aimed at creating direct contact, mutual understanding and long-term trust between societies. Its cultural, academic, diaspora, sports, media and digital forms form a single system that complements each other.

International experience shows that the success of public diplomacy It depends not only on financial resources, but also on the coordinated, long-term and authentic nature of the strategy. The experience of the USA, the European Union, South Korea and other countries demonstrates the

existence of various models, but the general conclusion is that the most effective results are achieved in network approaches based on mutual dialogue, not “top-down”.

For Azerbaijan, public diplomacy is a strategic opportunity based on important resources such as a rich cultural heritage, a tradition of tolerance and a wide diaspora network.

Thus, in a globalizing and digitalizing world, the international reputation of states will increasingly depend on the relationships they can build at the level of societies, the trust they form and the values they transmit. In this regard, public diplomacy should no longer be considered an auxiliary element of foreign policy, but rather an integral and strategic part of it. The more systematic the attention, institutional support and long-term vision that states pay to this resource, the more sustainable and strong their position in the international arena will be.

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