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DIGITAL DIPLOMACY IN THE CONTEXT OF SOFT POWER
(example of France and China)

The emergence in society of such new phenomena as the Internet and social media, having influenced the traditional structure of the diplomatic sphere, which has formed over years, served as the basis for the emergence of a new form of diplomatic service and the use of this form in the diplomatic service. In order to implement its internal and external political activities due to the use of the Internet and social media, the state, in the scientific society, especially in the field of international relations, has formed the "digital diplomacy" concept. The digital diplomacy concept, flowing into the "soft power" concept, contributed to the creation of a country image on the international stage. The article analyzes the activities of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is actively developing its image using digital technologies. The flaws in the use of digital technologies in the field of diplomacy in the Republic of Kazakhstan are considered.

In the course of examining the topic, the authors used methods of analysis, collection and retrieval of facts and information, considered by them within the framework of the topic. The control method was also applied to analyze information in periodicals, assess the opinions of authors and systematize the latest points of view formed in headlines.

Key words: digital diplomacy, soft power, Internet, social media, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China,French State, Republic of Kazakhstan.

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Сандық дипломатия жұмсақ күш мәнмәтінде
(Франция және Қытай мемлекеттерінің мысалында)

Қоғамда ғаламтор мен әлеуметтік желі секілді жаңа құбылыстың пайда болуы, жылдар бойы қалыптасқан дипломатия саласының дәстүрлі қызмет құрылысына әсер етіп, дипломатиялық қызметтің жаңа үлгісінің пайда болуына және осы үлгіні дипломатиялық қызметте қолдануға негіз тудырды. Мемлекет өзінің ішкі және сыртқы саяси қызметін іске асыру мақсатында, ғаламтор мен әлеуметтік желілерді пайдалану салдарының негізінде, ғылыми ортада, әсіресе халықаралық қатынастар саласында «цифрлық дипломатия» (digital diplomacy) ұғымы қалыптасты. Цифрлық дипломатия ұғымы «жұмсақ күш» концепциясына ұласып, мемлекеттің халықаралық аренада имиджін қалыптастыруға мүмкіндік туғызды. Мақалада цифрлық технологияларды қолдану негізінде, өзінің имиджін қарқынды дамытып жатқан Франция мемлекетінің сыртқы істер министрлігінің қызметіне талдау жүргізіледі. Қазақстан Республикасының дипломатия саласында цифрлық технологияны қолдану аясындағы кемшіліктер қарастырылады.

Тақырыпты зерттеу барысында авторлар тақырып аясында қарастырған деректер мен ақпараттарға талдау, жинақтау және сұрыптау әдістерін қолданады. Сонымен қатар, мерзімді басылымдардағы ақпараттарды талдауға, авторлардың көзқарастарын бағалауға, баспасөз беттерінде соңғы қалыптасқан пікірлерді жүйелеуге бақылау әдісі қолданылды.

Түйін сөздер: цифрлық дипломатия, жұмсақ күш, ғаламтор, әлеуметтік желі, сыртқы істер министрлігі, Франция мемлекеті, Қазақстан Республикасы.

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Цифровая дипломатия в контексте мягкой силы
(на примере Франции и Китая)

Появление в обществе таких новых явлений, как Интернет и социальные сети, повлиявших на сложившуюся на протяжении многих лет традиционную структуру дипломатической сферы, послужило основой для появления новой формы дипломатической службы и ее использования в дипломатической службе. Для осуществления своей внутренней и внешней политической деятельности за счет использования Интернета и социальных сетей государств, особенно в области международных отношений, сформировало в научном кругу концепцию «цифровой дипломатии». Концепция «цифровая дипломатия», перетекающая в концепцию «мягкой силы», способствует созданию имиджа страны на международной арене. В статье анализируется деятельность Министерства иностранных дел Франции, которое активно развивает свой имидж с помощью цифровых технологий. Рассмотрены недостатки использования цифровых технологий в сфере дипломатии в Республике Казахстан.

В ходе исследования темы авторы использовали методы анализа, сбора и поиска фактов и информации, рассмотренные ими в рамках темы. Метод контроля применялся также для анализа информации в периодических изданиях, оценки мнений авторов и систематизации последних точек зрения, сформированных в заголовках.

Ключевые слова: цифровая дипломатия, мягкая сила, Интернет, социальные сети, Министерство иностранных дел, Французское государство, Республика Казахстан.

Introduction

Due to the increase in the growth of the Internet and the emergence of social media on mobile phones, the Internet space has become easily accessible to people. The advent of the Internet, the increasing daily use of mobile phones, the installation of mobile applications on mobile devices has opened the way for digitalization of all spheres of society on a global scale. The emergence in society of such new phenomena as the Internet and social media, having influenced the traditional structure of the diplomatic sphere, which has formed over the years, served as the basis for the emergence of a new form of diplomatic service and the use of this form in the diplomatic service. An evidence of this is personalized pages of high-ranking civil servants, diplomats, even heads of states in social and video hosting media, such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Telegram, and YouTube. Moreover, the main evidence is the launch of web-sites on the Internet of embassies of each state directly related to the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of each nation. The state, in order to implement its internal and external political activities on the basis of the use of the Internet and social media, in the scientific environment, and especially in the field of international relations, the state has introduced the "digital diplomacy" concept. Along with this term, conceptual foundations and concepts such as "Internet diplomacy", "eDiplomacy", "Twitter Diplomacy", "Public Diplomacy Web 2.0", and "Network Diplomacy" began to develop.

The term of "digital diplomacy", which is responsible for the development of information and communication technologies in the United States, first appeared during the use of network tools – social media, video hosting sites, blogs and similar media platforms – by the US Department of State in connection with foreign policy. If we rely on the research of the Russian researcher M.P. Teleng, this concept dates back to 2002-2003, from the administrative staff of George W. Bush. The George W. Bush administration began to transfer the source of international mass media, that is, TV programs, radio and newspapers and magazines, to the Internet space. In 2006, Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice formed the Digital Engagement Group, consisting of specialists who monitor information and misinformation about the United States broadcast by social media users. During the presidency of Barack Obama, this project was continued by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (Telen`ga M.P., 2015). The goal of the project is to form a positive image of the United States. Its purpose is to establish relationships with the internal audience, and to influence the external audience in terms of its thinking using social media. Social media and the Internet were the instrument of the project. In accordance with the trend of present-day developments, the United

States recognize social media and the Internet as a new "weapon" of diplomacy and introduced the concept of "digital diplomacy" into the diplomatic sphere.

A group of researchers studying the "digital diplomacy" concept comes to the conclusion that it is a synonym for the "soft power" concept, introduced thirty years ago by the American political scientist and Professor J.S. Nye. J.S. Nye himself can be considered to be one of the supporters of this working – the "soft power" concept mechanism is the formation of a positive image of the country due to its national values, culture, and traditions of the country. Due to the rapid development of the Internet and information and communication technologies, digital technologies, while turning into an instrument of the "soft power" theory acquire an equal importance (Joseph S. Nye., 2004). In support of the above conclusion, the French state will be considered among Western European countries, which uses digital technologies for these purposes, in particular, within the framework of the "soft power", and occupies top ranking spots on the use of digital technologies in diplomacy.

State of Knowledge of the Theme

Regardless of the fact that "digital diplomacy" is a highly topical issue in science and is widely studied, there is no clear definition for it yet. Due to the lack of a clear definition of the concept, researchers have different understanding, investigate and give different formulations of the issue, starting from cybersecurity to social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube video hosting. However, a British researcher, professor at the University of Oxford, author of "Public Diplomacy in the Digital Age", "Digital propaganda, counterpublics and the disruption of the public sphere: the Finnish approach to building digital resilience", "Adapting Diplomacy to the Digital Age: Managing the Organizational Culture of Ministries of Foreign Affair", and other textbooks, monographs and articles, Cornelius Billon considers the "digital diplomacy" theory in the context of the "soft power" concept. In his article "Digital Diplomacy in the time of the coronavirus pandemic" the researcher expresses the opinion that the pandemic has forced the entire world to switch online. All spheres began to use digital technologies in their work. One of them is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of each country. They started using social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp mobile application to help their citizens who were staying in a foreign country. Taking advantage of this opportunity, governments began to build their image from scratch. One of such states was China. Initially, countries that did not believe that the Chinese people will cope quickly with such a challenging situation, saw how they overcame all the difficulties over a comparatively short time, and also that China was in the forefront in bringing relief to other countries, providing medical care, which certainly became instrumental in China's image being perceived in a new light on the global stage. Favourable perception of China by other countries was by merit of digital technologies, as China utilized social media and website platforms as a new form of the concept of "digital diplomacy" and "soft power", with the aim of enhancing its authority (Bjola C, 2020). In addition, the work of O.E. Voronova and A.S. Trushin "Modern information wars" has made a significant contribution to the consideration of the theory of "digital diplomacy" in the context of "soft power" (Voronova O.E., Trushin A.S., 2021). On the official website, implemented jointly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, the works on "French Diplomacy" are being discussed from theoretical and practical standpoints relating to our subject.

Clarification, Goals and Objectives

Currently, in scientific research, modern society is taking on the value of a "communication society". The reason for this is the global development of information and communication technologies and the universal coverage of realms of society. In particular, its presence in the political system has opened the way for changing the principles of service of the political system, and establishing virtual relationship between the state and citizens using social media. A virtual relationship is the establishment of communication with an individual and a group of people over a distance using a computer or telecommunication networks. While at first people interacted through direct communication and telecommunication channels (television, radio, newspapers, magazines and books), today virtual communication is established over a distance through social media. Virtual communication is established not only between citizens, but also between the government and a citizen, and even makes it possible to establish relationships with citizens from other countries. Citizens not only establish relations with the authorities, but also get the opportunity to openly express their opinions, thoughts, and complaints about the events taking place in the world arena. In addition, the use of digital technologies has given rise to an

increase in the authority of the state on the international stage. Ilan Manor, a researcher at the University of Oxford, offers the notion that the use of the Internet and social media contributes to the development of a country's branding and image, and active use of social media by countries that are isolated in the international arena, can form a positive image at the global stage (Manor I, 2015). While the Nigerian researcher Olubukola Adesina advocates that digital diplomacy is one of the parts of public diplomacy and an instrument of soft power politics (Olubukola S. Adesina, 2017), the Russian researcher, Arkady Ryabichenko, clings to the notion that digital diplomacy as an element of public diplomacy is an important part of the "soft power" strategy of world powers (Ryabichenko A, 2018).

The purpose of the article is to analyze the above judgments, to study the measures taken by the French state and China in the development of their national image in the international arena, using information and communication technologies and to present its courses to the Republic of Kazakhstan.

To achieve this, the following tasks have been set:

Analysis of the activities of France and Chine's use of digital technologies in the development of their national brand;

Analysis of the use of the possibilities of some aspects of the French and China experience in the application of digital technologies in foreign policy;

Theoretical and Methodological Background

As noted above, the notion of "digital diplomacy" is being formed as a new concept in the scientific community, especially in the field of international relations. However, despite it being formed as a new concept, non-material research is being carried out within the framework of international relations.

The theoretical background includes the concept of "soft power", information technology theory, the concept of cybersecurity, and digital transformation.

While as a theoretical and methodological background for the study of international relations, the systemic method, the historical and analytical method aimed at studying the external political and economic relations of states were used, then for various facts and information regarding the topic of the research from a critical point of view, it was necessary to use f analysis, collection and retrieval methods. These methods contributed to the systematic application of the accumulated information, increasing the level of reliability through the reciprocal comparison of information. To analyze information in periodicals, assess the opinions of authors, and systematize the latest points of view formed in the press, a control method was used.

Results and discussion

France's use of digital diplomacy in the context of "soft power".

In 1995, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs was one of the first government agencies to launch a website on the Internet (https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/ is a link to the official website of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs). And in the spring of 2009, it was the first ministry to create a Twitter page (https://twitter.com/francediplo – link to the Twitter page of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Based on the use of digital technologies by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs on official websites on the Internet and social media, its main goal is to develop the "national branding" of France. To achieve the goal, with the support of the government, projects were created; digital platforms were established in certain fields, such as language, culture, cinema, education, etc. For the development of the French language abroad, the French authorities, who saw the use of English-language platforms as expedient, together with the French Institute and the Orange Company launched the *Afripedia* project proposed by Wikipedia https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projet:Afrip%C3%A9dia). With the aim of bringing together French-speaking foreign and domestic bloggers, the French authorities have implemented the *Mondoblog* platform (https://mondoblog.org), which is part of the partners of the French Institute (IF) and Radio France International (RFI). In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a focus on expanding online French language teaching, has launched projects and special platforms in this regard. These platforms include the following:

1. "100,000 Teachers for Africa" - a project for French language teachers;

"Parlons français c'est facile" – a project for specialists and students of secondary and higher educational institutions (https://parlons-francais.tv5monde.com/webdocumentaires-pour-apprendre-le-francais/p-1-lg0-Accueil.htm);

Also digital tools for communication and sharing experiences among French language teachers (Intraknow, Vizamonde, Sallesdesprofs);

Digital destination site for Higher Education – a digital platform created jointly with the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MHER)

and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (http://www.sup-numerique.gouv.fr/);

Together with the Agency for French education Abroad, – an ONISEP online student learning system (http://www.aefe.fr/agency-french-education-abroad-0) (France Diplomacy, 2021).

Using the example of France, we became convinced of the usefulness and effectiveness of the "soft power" application in pursuing the country's economic, cultural and political interests, using digital technologies.

China's use of digital diplomacy in the context of soft power.

If the increase in the economic and military power of China on the world arena, on the one hand, pleases the leaders of states, on the other hand, there is concern about China's image on the world stage. Understanding the formation of China's negative image on the world stage, President Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China said at the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2007, "Strengthening the soft power strategy in the cultural sphere is a prerequisite for the development of science and the achievement of social harmony. And this is necessary to meet the requirements of spiritual culture with a national development strategy "(Xinhua, 2007) and thus, by order of Hu Qintao, with state support, he is implementing a development project within the soft power strategy of the People's Republic of China. The implementation of the policy is primarily entrusted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is responsible for China's foreign diplomatic representatives. The Ministry of Information and Communication, which until then functioned as a separate department, became part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The international media, the Xinhua newspaper, magazines, and TV programs, having become part of the ministry, were under the direct control of the state. In addition, it included the Ministry of Culture, which is responsible for promoting Chinese culture abroad, and the Ministry of Education, which controls the Confucius Institute, which teaches Chinese as a foreign language abroad.

In the next turn, the above ministries are planned to be transferred from paper format to a special Internet space. On this basis, the state launched an information center (resource) «www.china.cn» based on the Chinese Internet space, which provides information about China. This resource covers everything from Chinese language learning, sports, investment opportunities and political statements and other topics. The China.org.cn platform was also launched as an online and offline monologue, based on the PRC's information strategy. These websites and platforms were only aimed at foreign citizens inside the country and citizens of the Celestial Empire. In 2009, an independent separate special website CNTV (www.cntv.cn) in an online format was founded from the CCTV television agency in the Internet space. The website is intended for multilingual domains and is aimed at an audience of foreign nationals. However, this platform does not reflect what specific perception foreigners have about China. The reason for this is the lack of feedback from the foreign audience on the site. The solution to this was found in 2015 in the publication on global social media, such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, of the video of the official event on the announcement by representatives of the Chinese Communist Party of an address to the people about the thirteenth five-year plan. The Xinhua Press Agency partnered with a Shanghai-based video company to produce an animation video. The video with a link to English and Chinese was posted on the social media – YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. From that moment, a feedback was established with the foreign audience and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs learned what they think about China abroad. Now representatives of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs have begun to open their official pages on the social media YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and video hostings. These global social media provide information about the politics, economy and other spheres of China, and the reputation of the People's Republic of China is being discussed among foreign diplomats, politicians and citizens. China, evaluating its external image, working on its weaknesses and advantages, and gains its authority in the international arena (Madrid-Morales Dani, 2017). The proof of the above opinion, is the rapid recovery of China from the pandemic, as well as the provision of economic and humanitarian aid to other countries, publication in the social media of the activities being carried out in world has strengthened the power and authority of the Celestial Empire in the international arena.

Use of the digital diplomacy method by the Republic of Kazakhstan in the "soft power" context.

And now let's turn our attention to the method and level of application of digital technologies in the "soft power" strategy by the Republic of Kazakhstan in the information and communication era. According to the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry is registered on social media of Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Telegtam, and Twitter. Evidence of this is the picture below.
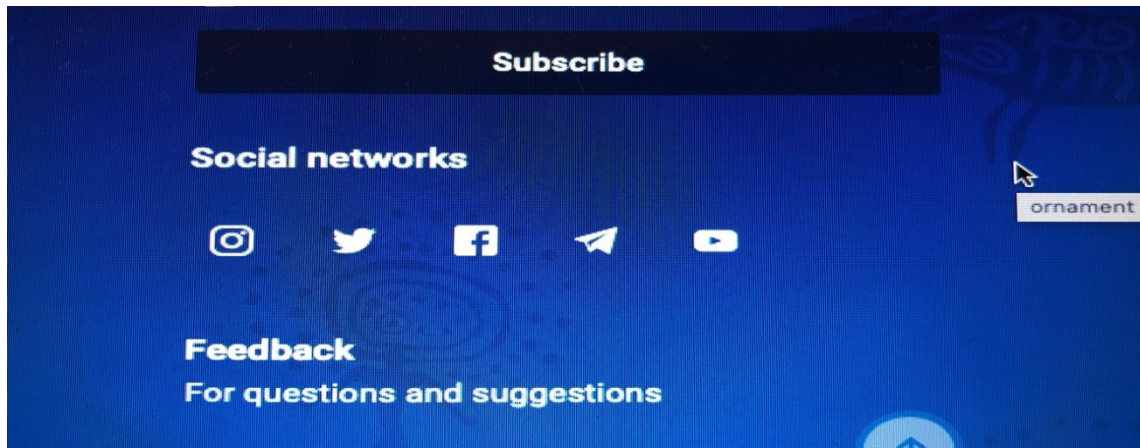
Figure 1 – Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2021)

If we look at the topics of publications in the above social media, we can see that they only provide information about meetings of the Republic of Kazakhstan with other countries, awarding ambassadors of other states, providing services to citizens, such as granting visas, obtaining citizenship, etc. However, there is no information or special websites, representing the national brand on the world stage. This can be seen in the official pages of the ministry's social media:

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/mfa_kz/?hl=ru

Twitter: https://twitter.com/mfa_kz

Telegram: https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=u777000_16076648894081719569

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDM8LiCr7Q0

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/KazakhstanMFA/posts/383563735112868/

And now let us consider in the form of a diagram the percentage of the number of registered domestic and foreign citizens subscribed to the page maintained by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
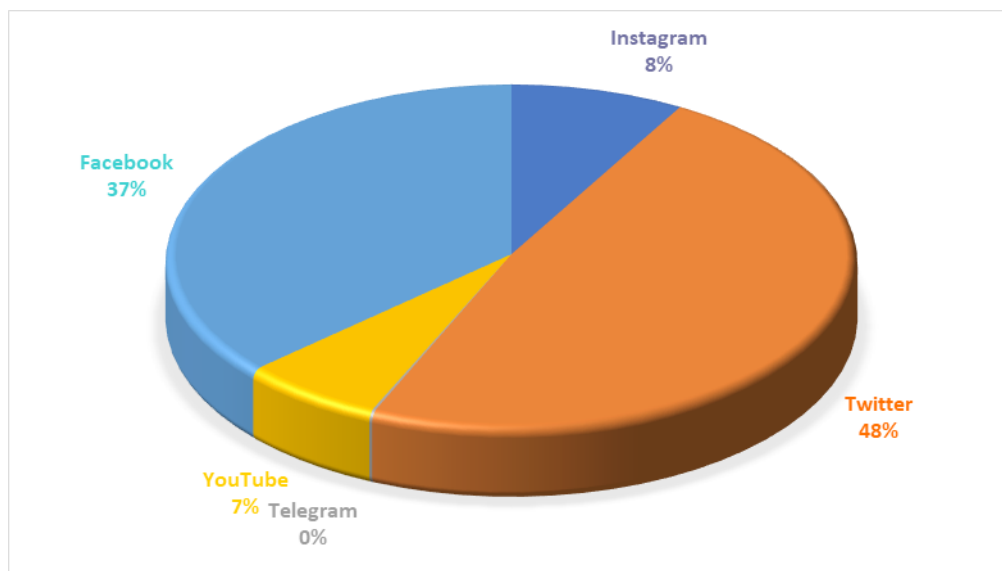

Diagram constructed by the author (2021).

This diagram shows the percentage of registered subscribers in social media where, according to the frequency of use by citizens Facebook ranks first, Twitter and Instagram second, YouTube third, and Telegram, with 86 subscribers, comes fourth.

If we describe the content of the publications of the official social media of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the system and focus areas in social media, only two areas can be distinguished:

1. Mass outreach activities, i.e. dissemination of information about the activities held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

2. Provision of services to citizens. Implementation of activities for granting visas, obtaining citizenship by compatriots and foreigners, investigation of incoming complaints and claims, and other services.

There are no publications and news regarding the events held within the framework of the "national brand", at all. Having studied the work carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan on social media, we have noticed a sufficient field for the work of the Ministry on the topic of the "national brand".

Janibek Bektemisov, a domestic researcher, while examining the place of social media in the diplomatic service, came to the following conclusion: "Foreign diplomats should be active in any social media and they should be creative. Information should not only be published, but it must be interesting, meaningful and attractive to the audience. When publishing information, one could engage domestic masters of sports or performers as an advertising "brand". Applying such methods in the field of diplomacy, we can represent the image of our country and attract foreign investment in our country" (Bektemisov J, 2020).

Conclusion

Having examined the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan in social media within the framework of the "national brand", we have come to the following conclusion: the social media only function within the framework of receiving and distributing information and providing services to citizens. The social media does not meet the requirements of our time, i.e. the time of "virtual" or "information and communication technologies". Our diplomats have not yet fully explored and considered the possibilities offered by social media; the reason being is expertise scarcity.

Using social media in accordance with the trends of present-day realities, taking national existence, national values, traditions, customs and our vast expanses as a basis, we have a great opportunity to represent Kazakhstan in the global arena. To achieve the goal, it is necessary to perform the following work – to train specialists; to launch a website for foreign citizens who speak Kazakh; to start a platform for online free Kazakh classes for foreign citizens; acquaintance through social media live broadcasts with health resorts, and beautiful places within the framework of domestic tourism; acquaintance through live broadcasts with national holidays and holidays held at the embassy during their celebration, and more.

Taking as an example the events held by the French and China governments within the framework of the national brand, the use of social media as a tool allows us to open the way for digitalization of the socio-political sphere of the Republic of Kazakhstan and for the development of the country's image.

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