Digital Diplomacy In Uzbekistan: Current Problems And Prospects

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ABSTRACT

Today, it is important to study the current state, problems and prospects of "digital diplomacy" in Uzbekistan. The use of digital and information technologies in Uzbek diplomacy is considered a new phenomenon. We should emphasize the unique benefits of digital diplomacy in most developed countries. In this thesis, the author analyzes the role and prospects of digital diplomacy in Uzbekistan for 2016-2020, the existing problems and proposals for their solution.

KEYWORDS

Digital diplomacy, Uzbekistan, public diplomacy, Twiplomacy, Foreign policy, world rankings, social networks, network blocking.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization processes today require the effective use of information and communication technologies, Internet services and the "concept of communication" approach in the future development of the country. The Action Strategy for the five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021 identifies the need to ensure transparency in the activities of public authorities, the introduction of modern forms of providing information on the rights and freedoms and legitimate interests of individuals and legal entities. Today, the official pages of various heads of state, ministries and organizations, politicians around the world keep public opinion on social networks under the influence of their own interests and political views. Twitter is often referred to as "digital diplomacy" and the debate between the parties is defined by the term "Twiplomacy". Today, the United States, Canada, Turkey, India, Russia, Japan, the United Kingdom, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, France, and currently Venezuela are leading the way in terms of uniform approval and activism in

posts on Twitter and other social networks. Currently, 114 government agencies in Uzbekistan have their own electronic portal. The fact that 79% of them also have a mobile version creates additional convenience for the population. In addition, an electronic subscription system has been introduced on the official websites of ministries and agencies to keep up to date with their activities. Virtual receptions of government agencies have become a trend in online communication with the public. The Virtual Reception of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev (pm.gov.uz), launched in September 2016, has opened the way for new forms of dialogue between government agencies and the public. In his book Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice, C. Bjola describes digital diplomacy as a strategy for managing changes in society through digital means and virtual collaboration.[1] Digital diplomacy can and should be used as a tool of "soft power". The first stages of digital diplomacy in Uzbekistan began in 2016. According to twiplomacy.com, the most active and important Twitter pages in Uzbekistan are the press service of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov, the gov.uz portal and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [2]. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's press service among the world's leading leaders and organizations shows that the President's press service is followed by more than 39,000 followers on Twitter and more than 3 million followers on Instagram, and more than 242,000 users on the official Facebook page. In the list of 50 most active leaders on Instagram, the pages maintained by the press service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan are in the following categories [3]:

1. THE 50 MOST FOLLOWED WORLD LEADERS - 3 million users, 16th place.

2. THE 50 WORLD LEADERS WITH THE MOST INTERACTIONS - 22nd place with 9 million users.

3. THE 50 MOST EFFECTIVE WORLD LEADERS - 39th place

THE MAIN FINDINGS AND RESULTS

At first glance, the fact that the pages of the press service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan entered the TOP-50 may indicate that there is progress in the field of "digital diplomacy", but learning the experience of countries such as the United States, Canada and Turkey is also beneficial. However, the online publication Digital Diplomacy showed that Uzbekistan still has a long way to go. The publication conducted a survey of 210 countries to improve the efficiency of foreign policy and created a world ranking. The study covered the foreign ministries of 210 countries from January 2015 to March 2016. Most foreign ministries have their own Twitter and Facebook pages. This takes into account the activity of foreign policy agencies, primarily in the Internet and social networks. The top ten includes the United Kingdom, France, the United States, the European Union, the Vatican, India, Israel, Mexico and Switzerland. Uzbekistan took the 124th place [4]. Of course, this result is not good for Uzbekistan. It should be noted that during the study period, the activity of government agencies in the country in social networks was not high. Three years ago, on the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, 2017 was declared "The Year of Dialogue with the People and Human Interests". For three years various innovations in both foreign and domestic policy were addressed, effective methods previously unknown to government agencies and our society. Some ministers and deputies have started opening their pages on Facebook, Twitter and even Instagram. Hoping for this using the social network began to actively post their questions and opinions, joining the discussion and debate. Unfortunately, the interaction on social networks lasted only a year and a half. For more than a year, there has been no clear

explanation of the problems with access to Facebook and YouTube in Uzbekistan. Unless there is a clear explanation, of course there will be suspicion among the population that uses social networks. In particular, on the issue of freedom of speech and social networks, the British Ambassador diplomat Christopher Allan said in the interview: "In any case, Uzbekistan is developing in this area. Over time bold steps are being taken to ensure freedom of speech. Not all steps are positive, and you mentioned them. I am also aware of the difficulties in connecting to social networks, which have great resources [5]." The country's brand and the real image of politicians are formed by addressing these simple issues. Interaction increases its effectiveness. Different ratings are based on the degree to which laws, ministries and political parties are able to protect the interests of the people in practice. The reality of the reforms being carried out in Uzbekistan and how effective they are is reflected in the political attitude of the world community towards it. For example, the Telegram incident in the Russian Federation has further tarnished the country's international image and public confidence in its government [6].

Examples like this are common, especially in authoritarian regimes, whether it's network blocking or messenger blocking or indifference to citizens. This has led to misunderstandings among professionals, even Uzbek ministers and politicians, who want real reforms to take place, work and are called in from abroad. For example, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in his first address to the Parliament emphasized the issue of social networks and called on government officials and politicians to be active in social networks and communicate closely with the people. Deputy Rasul Kusherbayev told to Kun.uz: "As a result, we have opened our pages in the networks and tried to work openly. That's the way it is. It's up to the individual to decide how much they use it" he said. Indeed,

despite the fact that the year of dialogue with the people and the interests of the people has passed, we still have politicians who are fully aware of their mission.

What should be done to develop digital diplomacy in Uzbekistan and overcome the problems in this area?

First, Uzbekistan needs to increase the speed of the Internet and have access to social networks, because today Uzbekistan's position in the rankings of Internet speed and Internet freedom is not good;

Second, to organize courses on digital diplomacy for all diplomats and officials of Uzbekistan, to establish centers for improving knowledge and skills in this area, and thus to establish the use of information technology in public diplomacy;

Third, for the press service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the press services of ministries and government agencies, it is necessary to organize master classes on ethics, psychology and post design in the social network by global experts in branding and image making;

Fourth, the ministries and government agencies of the Republic of Uzbekistan should organize foreign policy dialogue in English and other international languages on social networks with the political circles of foreign countries.

Fifth, to prevent trolling, misinformation and the spread of fake messages on social networks, to establish effective means and mechanisms to protect the population from the penetration of harmful and destructive ideas through the Internet

CONCLUSION

Based on the above, it should be noted that the implementation of digital diplomacy will allow to fully implement the urgent tasks

of promoting the national interests of the country, increasing the openness and transparency of foreign policy. Digital diplomacy is important in informing millions of foreigners about the active foreign policy of our country, large-scale reforms at no extra cost, to know the mood and attitude of the public. There are reasons and grounds for creating sufficient conditions for the development of digital diplomacy in Uzbekistan. I hope that effective work will be done in this regard in the near future.

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