Chapter 13
Twitter as a Digital Channel of Public Diplomacy in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Governments want to create foreign public opinion by spreading credible information to achieve their national goals, objectives, and interests. In the global balance of political power, it is important for a country to use the tools of public diplomacy. In the 21st century, Turkey intensively uses cultural values as a tool of public diplomacy. In this context, Turkey actively uses social media as a digital medium while promoting its cultural heritage as a soft power. Turkey, which has analyzed the impact of digital diplomacy well in the historical process, is using this field more and more widely. In this study, examples of the Republic of Turkey's public diplomacy practices on social media are presented and how it uses public diplomacy as soft power is investigated. In this context, four Twitter pages where public diplomacy is most widely used (The Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, Turkish Maarif Foundation, TIKA, and Yunus Emre Institute) were analyzed through content analysis technique.

INTRODUCTION

Public diplomacy, also termed as soft power, reveals the changes that countries make by using their cultural values to achieve their foreign policy goals. In public diplomacy, countries conveying their own messages to the target audience is one of the most important stages of this soft power. Indeed, with the attraction created by soft power, countries can both influence target countries and ensure the voluntary participation of people in the target country to the messages and values of the source country. Recently, it has been observed that Turkey has frequently resorted to the tool of public diplomacy as a soft power. In this process, it is understood that Turkey has intensively used its heritage of cultural and historical values as a public diplomacy tool.

The concept of public diplomacy was first recognized with the concept of soft power. The concept was first used by Edmund Gullion in 1965 in the sense of "international flow of information and ideas" (Sancar, 2012: 79). Joseph Nye, on the other hand, made the concept more comprehensive by stating that in order for a country to achieve the results it wants in world politics, there must be countries that admire the values of that country, take it as an example, envy its prosperity and opportunities, and follow it (Nye, 2005:14). As the phenomenon of communication has become widespread and more sophisticated in the globalizing world, this concept has also transformed into a new form. Since the second half of the twentieth century, communication and communication channels have become widespread due to the development of mass communication technologies, and accordingly, public diplomacy activities have increased and diversified.

The difference between diplomacy and public diplomacy is that diplomacy involves relations between representatives of countries and other international actors, while public diplomacy targets the entire public or informal groups, organizations and civil society organizations in a foreign society (Melissen, 2007: 12-13). Public perception is becoming increasingly important in international relations. Countries have to take into account both domestic and foreign public opinion while developing policies. In this context, in order for the policies developed to be accepted, it is necessary to win the hearts and minds of the target audience. In addition, states resort to the tools of public diplomacy to develop a positive image (Kocabıyık, 165). In general terms, public diplomacy refers to interacting with foreign public opinion. The main reason for the process of interaction with foreign public opinion is to change the behavior of that country in favor of national interests. In this process, other countries need to be educated, informed and included in the processes. At this point, public diplomacy has become a strategic communication tool (Efegil, 2018).

In addition to the classical diplomacy methods of delegation negotiations, official statements and diplomatic declarations, public diplomacy plays a supporting role in protecting national interests. Today, countries have started to use public diplomacy, which is defined as "winning hearts and minds", in addition to classical diplomacy. This new public diplomacy is a new component of general diplomatic practices and is more than a form of propaganda conducted by diplomats. In this respect, public diplomacy is a new type of diplomatic relationship network that requires different skills, techniques and attitudes. For example, this situation was revealed in a report published in 2002 by Auswärtiges Amt, the ministry responsible for Germany's foreign policy and relations with the European Union. According to this report, public diplomacy in Europe was ranked as the number one priority among all fields (Melissen, 2005:11). As can be seen from this example, in addition to economic and political relations, interconnections at the civil society level are becoming increasingly important in inter-state relations. In this context, the international system has transformed into a structure in which the need for increasing international integration has emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century (Keohane, 2002: 27-29). Thus, public diplomacy has become an important practice of international relations.

Understanding the cultures, people and needs of other countries is among the main objectives of public diplomacy. In addition, public diplomacy also aims to share the perspectives of other societies, correct misperceptions and find common grounds. In this context, public diplomacy is based on the assumption that it positively changes the image and recognition of states (Mark, 2002:8-9). Public diplomacy refers to a communication process. Countries are obliged to use the media effectively while developing public diplomacy activities in foreign public opinion.

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