
“SOFT POWER 2.0.”: TECHNOLOGY OF 21ST CENTURY DIPLOMACY

Abstract

The intensive development of information technologies has contributed to the transformation of strategies, technologies, and methods for the implementation of foreign policy courses of states and the achievement of their diplomatic goals. The diplomatic technologies have expanded to include both classical diplomacy and digital technologies. This article analyzes the features of “soft power 2.0” as an instrument of modern diplomacy. “Soft power 2.0.” is considered by the author as a modification of the traditional “soft power” strategy, integrating “persuasion technologies” with information and communication resources. As practice shows, digital services, programs, algorithms can use the actions of users of social networks and imperceptibly, gently control them, forming their preferences.

Key words: Diplomacy, Digital Diplomacy, Soft Power, Soft Power 2.0.

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Author

Morozova Natalia M.

PhD of Political Science, Associate Professor of the Chair of International Relations and World Political Processes, Dobroljubov State Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod; deputy director of Volga branch of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology, RAS (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia)



Information technologies have a huge impact on the specifics of the development of the political process at all levels: from global to municipal. Moreover, on the one hand, new technologies for managing the socio-political system are being developed and used, and on the other hand, existing technologies are being adapted and transformed into the realities of modern life. Thus, the classic concepts of «diplomacy» and «soft power» are transformed into «digital diplomacy» and «soft power 2.0.». It should be noted that at the same time, it does not mean a complete rejection of the methods of traditional diplomacy or of the technology of soft power in the sense, in which it was understood and developed by Joseph S. Nye [6, 7]. A special feature of modern international relations is the integration and simultaneous use of so-called real and digital technologies.

A significant number of works by both Russian and foreign researchers have been devoted to the specifics and problems of implementing the concept of soft power. We would like to pay special attention to the works of Doctor of Historical Sciences, prof. M.A. Neymarka, revealing both theoretical and methodological aspects and applied issues of implementation of «soft power» [21, 22, 23, 24]. Doctor of Political Sciences, Prof. M.M. Lebedeva has devoted several studies to various problems of implementing «soft power»: in her works, this concept is considered as an integration resource in the regional context [12, 14], higher education is analyzed as one of the tools of «soft power» [15, 16], conceptual issues are studied, among which the ratio of «soft power» technologies and propaganda is important [13]. The works of Doctor of Historical Sciences, associate Professor O.V. Lebedeva are devoted to

transformational processes in the field of diplomacy and new trends in diplomatic practice, including «digital diplomacy» [17, 18, 19]. Problems related to the use of information technologies in international relations are analyzed in the works of Doctor of Historical Sciences, Prof. A.I. Smirnova [26, 27, 28, 29].

Among Western researchers, it is necessary to highlight the works of J. Nye [6, 7], who owns the authorship of the concept of «soft power»; K. Hayden's research [4], devoted to the specifics of the implementation of «soft power» technology in the context of global politics. The problems of «digital diplomacy» and of the implementation of the «soft power 2.0» strategy are also in the focus of attention of several other Western scientists [1, 2, 3, 8].

The theoretical-conceptual and applied issues of implementing the concepts of «digital diplomacy» and «soft power 2.0» are very fruitfully developed by scientists and researchers. However, it is worth noting that, first, the abundance of existing approaches and attempts to determine the essence of these phenomena and to identify their specifics complicates the so-called coordinate system. The lack of unity of approaches to the categories «digital diplomacy», «soft power 2.0», «web-diplomacy», «diplomacy 2.0.» creates a misunderstanding: are these different concepts, or should they be considered synonymous? How do these concepts relate to each other? If the semantic content of categories intersects, what is their specificity? Secondly, in the context of the combination of classical and digital diplomacy technologies, it is necessary, in our opinion, to analyze the place and role of «soft power 2.0.» technology in the tools of modern diplomacy. We propose to consider this issue in the present paper.

Diplomacy usually refers to the activities of government bodies (Foreign Ministry, Head of Government, Head of State), as well as their representatives abroad to implement the tasks of the state's foreign policy. Accordingly, the current tools of

diplomacy are determined by the foreign policy course implemented by the state at a specific time, at a specific stage of society's development.

The current stage of social development is described in the categories of information and, for some time, digital society. An information society is usually understood as a social system in which information plays a decisive role. In the «Strategy for the development of the information society in the Russian Federation for 2017–2030», this concept is defined as «a society in which information and the level of its application and availability dramatically affect the economic and socio-cultural conditions of citizens» [31]. Some researchers are developing the concept of a post-information society, which is associated with the transformation of the nature and quality of information and its impact on social reality [20]; with the creation of universal humanoid intelligence and artificial superintelligence [25]. As for the category «digital society», we share the definition proposed by S.V. Tikhonova and S.M. Frolova. They understand it as «a form of social order in which all key social connections are built using digital Internet communication services» [30]. Thus, the key characteristic of a digital society is the electronic-digital mediation of any social interaction. This characteristic is also expressed in international relations. Due to qualitative changes in the social order, we are moving from classical diplomacy to digital diplomacy.

Under the term «digital diplomacy» we understand the broad involvement and use of a complex of information and communication technologies for the implementation of foreign policy by the state. Thanks to digital diplomacy, not only States but also other actors are involved in the global agenda and in solving global problems (as well as in creating several «problems»), which contributes to the transformation of classical diplomacy based on the classical state-centrist model.

One of the effective technologies that digital diplomacy «borrowed» from

classical diplomacy is «soft power». In the traditional sense, the implementation of the «soft power» strategy involves actions to achieve the goal, based on the dissemination of the state's culture, ideology and thus the voluntary introduction of representatives of other cultures to the values of this state, increasing the image and attractiveness of the state in the eyes of foreign citizens, etc. «Soft power» is implemented at a deep value and ideological level, addresses historical archetypes and activates them, affects the collective perception, and forms the mood of social groups through the use of psychologically attractive forms of information presentation. In the context of digital diplomacy, this strategy is «transformed» into «soft power 2.0», which is understood as a strategy for promoting the interests and achieving a set of goals of the state in the international arena, including geopolitical ones, using information that circulates in electronic digital systems, Internet communication services and is focused on the needs of foreign audiences.

Among the interactive technologies tools of «Soft power 2.0», there are official websites of government authorities (especially worth noting are electronic resources of foreign ministries, services, special Internet portals for communicating with citizens of the state located outside its borders), social networks (Facebook, VK, Twitter, etc.), messengers (WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, etc.), blogs (Livejournal, Youtube). It should be noted that this tool has shown its effectiveness. For example, during the protest actions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Turkey, Russia, Spain, and the United States (2009–2013), social networks were actively used, where protest moods of public groups were created and strengthened purposefully by placing specially prepared and selected materials (analytical articles, interviews, etc.). Thus, in the countries listed above, Twitter was used to consolidate and activate the protest masses, which is why the name «Twitter revolution» was assigned to the events that took place.

This is one of the illustrations of technologies that influence the Internet audience. The importance of such technologies is growing, as the range of Internet users is expanding.

According to the estimates of J. Nye in 2019, there were about 4 billion people online, and in 2020 this figure was expected to increase to 5–6 billion. Facebook has more users than the population of China and the United States combined. In this connection, he concludes that «the power of attraction and persuasion becomes particularly important» [5]. Digital resources must show their effectiveness in influencing and managing mass consciousness.

The «pioneer» and leader in using digital resources to achieve foreign policy goals are the United States. Describing the modern strategy of «soft power 2.0» implemented by the government of D. Trump, it should be noted that the share of «cultural» and «educational» components in it is significantly reduced. Between 2016 and 2019, the United States budget used for non-military influence abroad decreased from 50.3 billion to \$ 39.3 billion (more than 20%) [9, P. 126]. Joseph Nye criticized this policy of the American government, citing research conducted by the Gallup Institute, which showed that the share of foreign citizens who have a positive attitude to the United States under the leadership of D. Trump decreased by almost 20% [9, P. 126]. The reasons for the reduction of the American budget for such projects can be explained by the fact that in the period of information warfare, according to the American expert community, «it makes no sense to deal with long-term issues of involvement» [32]. Thus, in the context of the American approach, there is a transformation of the «soft power 2.0» strategy and its distancing from the classical concept, which will entail a change in the technologies of its implementation.

Foreign policy doctrinal documents of the Russian Federation recognize the relevance of the use of information and

communication technologies. Thus, the current Concept of Russian Foreign Policy notes that information and communication methods and technologies used by foreign countries to implement their foreign policy objectives are an integral part of modern world politics [11]. The threat of foreign countries implementing the Soft power strategy 2.0 is reflected in the Russian Military doctrine of 2014, which distinguishes between external and internal military threats. The main external military dangers include «the use of information and communication technologies for military and political purposes to carry out actions... directed against the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity of States...», and internal military dangers include «activities aimed at influencing the population, primarily young citizens of the country, to undermine historical, spiritual and Patriotic traditions in the field of protecting the Fatherland» [10].

So, soft power 2.0 technologies are considered by us as a modern tool of diplomacy. Practice shows that digital services, programs, and algorithms can use the actions of users of social networks and imperceptibly, gently manage them, forming, among other things, their preferences. As O.V. Lebedeva notes, «digital intelligence can transform and adapt likes and dislikes, comments and reposts to the tasks needed by politicians, exporting democratic ideas to the far corners of the globe» [19]. Thus, soft power 2.0 combines persuasion technologies with communication and information resources. Given the dynamics of technological and digital tools and the emergence of new technologies, it can be argued that the phenomenon of «Soft Power2.0» in the near future, on the one hand, will become increasingly important as part of the implementation of a very tangible foreign policy course of various countries, and on the other hand, will necessitate refinement and expansion of its methods.

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