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DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AND INFORMATIONAL STRATEGY OF THE MFA OF JAPAN

© Mishchishina E.V., Panina N.V.

Samara National Research University, Samara, Russian Federation

e-mail: lizavetta.mish@gmail.com

The paper reveals the features of conducting digital diplomacy by Japan. The work is devoted to the current problem of promoting digital diplomacy methods in the process of attracting a multi-million audience, using the Internet as a tool that contributes to the active development of the level of soft power in Japan. The methods of the research are case-studies and a content-analysis.

Within the frames of the research, we distinguish two approaches to digital diplomacy. According to the first approach, digital diplomacy is seen as the increasing use of information and communication technologies and social media platforms to implement public diplomacy. Nowadays digital diplomacy is becoming the main instrument of soft power in promoting the national interests of the state, improving and simplifying the communication of citizens with the political elite. Channels have been changed, but the content remains the same – radio and television have been replaced by global social media.

The second approach views digital diplomacy as a more comprehensive tool in an already existing toolbox. Digital diplomacy is a relatively simple and cheap tool for such purposes as information gathering and disaster response. This approach demonstrates that modern diplomacy is not only the relationship between the official representatives of states. Social media are recognized as a new actor which influence can be decisive in public decision-making.

American researcher Sean Riordan proposes the following definition of digital diplomacy, which we use in our research: «We should use the term «digital diplomacy» to denote the use of digital tools and methods to carry out diplomacy (including consular diplomacy)» [1].

Japan, as a technology leader, is also aware of the importance of this phenomenon. In Japan virtually any website has two versions, one in English and one in Japanese. The country is really interested in the development of digital diplomacy, using modern innovative technologies. Public diplomacy is being transformed into digital: all statesmen and diplomats are required to have pages on social networks, which greatly simplifies contact with foreign audiences.

Nowadays, the path to regional leadership for Japan lies, among other things, through the development of «soft power» in general and digital diplomacy in particular. Tokyo was the first on the Asian continent, though with a noticeable delay compared to Western countries, to come to an understanding and active use of «soft power» as a powerful tool of international influence. Here it is interpreted as an impact on the world through civilizational and humanitarian-cultural activities, and is considered in close cooperation with cultural diplomacy.

According to the research, the most important resource of Japanese «digital diplomacy» is its cultural policy which is supposed to be an integral part of state policy. The goals of the Japanese cultural policy are proclaimed:

- making a significant contribution to the development of world culture and civilization;
- creating conditions for the country's adaptation to changes caused by globalization processes;
- the preservation and promotion of one's own national identity.

The new strategy of the XXI century, the formation of the idea of «cool Japan»: fashionable, innovative, modern Japan, plays a significant role in the image of Japanese digital diplomacy [2]. Tracing the main trends in the development of Japan's «soft power», J. Nai talks about the existing limits in the development. These restrictions remain the same for digital diplomacy. The first factor and the main constraint is considered to be the internal orientation of its culture to preserve: preserve the features of its business ethics and lifestyle. The second factor is Japan's military past, which still retains a «residual suspicion» in countries such as China and Korea. The third factor is the serious demographic problems in the country. The fourth factor is the language barrier, since the Japanese language, despite the efforts of public and private structures, risks not being widely distributed in the world in the foreseeable future [3].

In order to analyze specific traits of Japanese digital diplomacy we used the research conducted by John Carroll University. Public comments on the Facebook fan pages of the Japan National Tourism Organization's from January 2016 to June 2017 were collected and analyzed. JNTO is an independent administrative institution of the government founded in 1964 to internationally disseminate and promote information about the Japanese culture and travel to Japan. As expected, the most frequently used keyword in the JNTO network was «Japan» (871), followed by «beautiful» (491), «visit» (439), «go» (388), «love» (344), «place» (278), «like» (251), «good» (188), «see» (185), and «year» (184) [4].

Although the Japanese «digital power» is inferior to the American one in some areas, there is a rather attractive image of Japan and the Japanese abroad.

Thus, while traditional diplomacy focuses on formalities, negotiations, communiques, and treaties, digital diplomacy provides the scope for informal actions, that is, it gives diplomacy more direct and less formal appearance. Now the Internet has every chance to become a platform for communication between the government of the country and the population and to draw attention to the current problems of the population. With the use of digital diplomacy tools, the level of Japan's public diplomacy will continue to grow. Cultural and digital diplomacy occupies an essential place in the foreign policy of both the former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the current one, Yoshihide Suga. Today, digital diplomacy in Japan is characterized by government-driven aspects and is categorized into international press releases and international cultural interchanges.

The research leads us to the following outcomes. Among the main features of Japanese digital diplomacy there is a focus on branding and «Cool Japan» image; the image of openness and closeness with the audience, which gives diplomacy a more direct and less formal look; obstacles, which are an integral part of Japanese history and mentality. In the end, we conclude that the goal of Japanese digital diplomacy is to communicate information about Japanese foreign policy and introduce Japanese culture to increase the understanding of Japan throughout the world.

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