Diplomacy of Media - Information Society: Challenge of Identity and Effectiveness

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Abstract: Media diplomacy is a leverage the has found more complex aspects in the information society, and we can no longer expect it to directly affect "target society" ,i.e. third world, with a "predetermined goal" through "traditional media" as the era of psychological operations or propaganda, but the purpose of media diplomacy has not changed: "changing attitude of audience" and finally the" accompanying audiences" or the target society is still the fixed purpose of media diplomacy or internet diplomacy in today's cyber space. However, the challenges of identity and especially effectiveness of the media diplomacy in the framework of investing on "mainstream media" and the use of "direct and indirect methods," still remains and its scope increasingly continues. The relationship of media diplomacy with the Pavlov's theory of "conditioning" and Chomsky – Herman's theory of "news filters" are other aspects that criticizes the identity of media diplomacy. Besides, "social networking" as the newest media, namely "the most complex media" which have proven themselves in the field of international conflicts, have brought two questions. These two questions show that, social networks as the new leverages in the field of media diplomacy do not have the same effectiveness of traditional media in media diplomacy. Do social networks are "opportunities" or "threats"? (yahya kamalipour & nancy snow, 2004). Developments in Tunisia and Egypt may raise another answer which proves that, media diplomacy is not as effective as it was before Internet era.

Keywords: Media diplomacy, soft power, soft war, public opinion, social networks, cyberspace

1. Introduction

When five questions of Harold Laswel were introduced in a relational model, few could imagine that, there will be a day so that, transferring a message through "Media" will have such importance to take new dimensions outside its professional definition and create new terms such as, public diplomacy and media diplomacy (Dadgar, Mohammed, 2000:23)

Later, Marshall McLuhan emphasized on Message Centric concept -or the originality of message- instead of emphasizing on form in journalism - or the originality of media – under the theory of "the media is the message", a theory that remains until now (Mehdizadeh, Seyyed Mohammad, 2010: 26).

1.2. Media Centric or Message Centric

A comparative look between media centric and message centric concepts is the great theoretical challenge between communication scholars and journalists in the world today: the question is that, to what extent we can defend "Media Centric" concept?

Public diplomacy which first introduced at the U.S.A in 1985, was emphasized on the issue that, "in addition to the official diplomacy, a kind of informal diplomacy is essential to influence public opinion through disseminating messages, moving pictures, newspapers, radio, television and Internet in order to strengthen formal diplomacy" (Elyasi, Mohammad Reza, 2003:6).

This view teaches us that, the main approach to public diplomacy is audiences, but with the originality of media as an important piece of the picture. In this regard, the following points can be analyzed:

- The main purpose of public diplomacy is changing "Audience's Attitude "
- The next goal is "Audience's Companionship"
- In the case of the failure of above goal, "neutralizing" and "Intimidation of Audience" in order to reduce the costs of public diplomacy will be considered.

In this perspective, the proliferation of media activities within a defined policy is presented. The purpose of public diplomacy is making currents and is political rather being cultural and communicational. Therefore, proliferation of media chain activities will be considered as serious purpose thus.

The originality of message - as proposed by Marshall McLuhan and continued by Emmanuel Castells especially since 2003 - shows us a different approach. (Gary, translated by y Ahmad Reza Teqa, 2002: 115).

In this perspective, we recall that, the communication is based on the "message" and the theory itself, reminds another hidden aspect: today is the era of knowledge, the era of the information society and producing the view. In such an era

audiences recognize the "media" by the "message" it carries. The world of Internet as a multi-purpose media, by bringing together text, sound, and pictures, has deprived the media to be prestigious without relying on messages required for audiences (Gary, translated by y Ahmad Reza Teqa, 2002: 115)

Perhaps at times, the propaganda and psychological operations had effects; public diplomacy was effective in the late 20th century, but today, the mentioned perspective tries to remind us that, methods of the period after World War II are not determinative anymore.

2. Material and Methods
2.1 Media Diplomacy: Methods and Approaches

Media diplomacy is a term which introduced following public diplomacy and showed more specific aspects of that. Media diplomacy, also known as Internet diplomacy and journalistic diplomacy, aims to benefit the media in favor of foreign diplomacy. If in public diplomacy, cultural, student and educational literature and research programs exchanges are considered in addition to media in order to influence target societies (Muslim and Third World countries), the media diplomacy - as the modern way- only relies on the role of media.

"Country of origin and investors" in media diplomacy, initially establishes the dependent media and in the second method, considers the media's attention and tries to follow media diplomacy in written and cyber through them. Therefore, media diplomacy, in terms of methodology, progresses in both direct and indirect methods, and in terms of activity, covers written media and cyberspace.

Today, media diplomacy, as public diplomacy, tries to change "audiences' attitudes" based on predetermined objectives of foreign policy of the source or target country (The Media and political process, 2007). In other words, origin and target countries are two sides of the efforts of media diplomacy. Therefore, since the needs of audience are not the main target, media diplomacy is not considered as message centric. This kind of diplomacy follows the policy of State Department regardless of what audiences need.

In such circumstances the media centric concept finds meaning and in this view the policy of media is preferable over other two sides of the triangle of media i.e. the value of events and the needs of the audiences. Undoubtedly, this view neglects message centric concept and is based on the predetermined assignment.

Articles and studies of researchers on this issue remind us that, media diplomacy is more successful in the indirect method. In the indirect method, the influence of those media which are independent, but due to the training and professional maturity, are in line with source or target country in much more (McLuhan, Marshall, translated by Azari, Saeed, 1992: 112).

Establishing a logical relationship within the diplomacy of information era is difficult. In fact, the term of psychological operations belongs to the period of Cold War and the advent of the era of the Internet and information explosion. In those times, psychological operations, through dominance on information and directing it from one hand and producing and dissemination of information from the other hand, was able to develop an independent position for itself in international relationships.

Today, one of the perspectives of scholars of politics and communication considers media diplomacy as a tool in the framework of psychological operations. However, this perspective does not argue that, what is the role of the Internet and information society and audiences' relations? (Eliyasi, Mohammad Reza, 2003:5).

Can we still say that, PSYOP can be realized in such an environment? This approach, of course, can independently consider media diplomacy effective.

2.2. What "Soft power" says?

From another view, Joseph Nye considers soft war as an alternative for psychological operations or psychological warfare. Joseph Nye, in a book entitled Soft Power, has been theorized this view. He believes that, the media unlike other areas such as security, politics and economy is not a subset of hard power. In Joseph Nye's view, media is a subset of soft power and its goal is based on "persuasion" not "coercion" (Webster, Frank, translated by Ghadimi, Ismail, 2001:60).

This view which has been largely introduced after September, 11 (2001) could be considered as a developed form of psychological operations of the decades between 50s and 80s - the years after World War II. Moreover, during 1980 to 1990, the rise of Gorbachev and introducing perestroika doctrine from one hand and glasnost doctrine from the other hand, have proved that, soft power can be more effective and persuasive than hard power.

People such as Joseph Nye believe that, the information and Internet society with all its diversity and development still have not enough capacity and the possibility to eliminate the superiority of exclusiveness. Powerful search engines and popular websites are owned by major capitalist companies (like Google) and their purposes in cyberspace, all indicate that, at least some parts of this view are correct.

However, soft power and consequently soft war, apart from the media, uses other tools which find meaning in the field of "arts and culture". Companionship of art and cultural institutions in the

framework of soft war, from source or target country, in order to influence target country or society, is one of the themes that completes the media strategy in soft war.

2.3. Investigating Commonality of views of Pavlov - Chomsky on Media Diplomacy

Ivan Petrovich Pavlov, the famous Russian scientist and physiologist, in his "conditioning theory", created a great revolution in the world of social communications. He, through the rules of scientific psychology, proved that, if a message will be conditioned in an audience, the audience will show the expected response in appropriate time in the temporary discontinuation of the message.

This theory and big scientific discovery in the sociology of communications is considered after the stages of Decision, Choice and Behavior. When the behavior is repeated and repetition creates association, the nest stage is the Role followed by Institution (Sarookhani, Bagher, 2002:63).

In media diplomacy, due to the "message repetition", one can say that, there is an attempt to condition audiences to certain words in order to show the desired reaction: this is the point that is designed and programmed in media diplomacy in particular and in soft power in general which is in compliance with Pavlov's conditioning theory.

However, this compliance is not complete since in conditioning, everything should be equal and uniform. However, in the world of communications and messaging, everything cannot be considered equal and the same in all conditions. Nonetheless, this relative compliance is considerable since, conditional behaviors and companionship of public opinion due to a processed media-communicative message can be considered as the result of compliance between Pavlov conditioning theory and media diplomacy.

Pavlov's law has an interesting relationship with the view of Herman- Chomsky entitled "news filters": in Pavlov's conditioning we have a clear and predetermined message which will be associated with desired meaning by many repetitions through the media (Nye, Joseph, translated by Asgari, Mahmoud 2004:63).

In the Herman-Chomsky theory of "news filters" we are faced with the media that filters the messages in a specific framework based on professional training and applied policies and then offers it to the audiences.

This issue, exactly, is the common point between the Russian Pavlov's conditioning and the American Noam Chomsky's news filters which reminds us that, audiences of media diplomacy may show desired reaction against repeated or filtered messages. This is the very complicated point which

can be considered from the perspective of sociology and psychology of communications.

2.4. Cyberspace – Soft Reality: Two facing Critiques

Here, the "soft power" which has created a new cyberspace parallel to the real world with the advent of the Internet and acquired worldwide audiences, not only is not considered as virtual anymore but also this virtual world has become a "reality".

The difference between the internet media and traditional media is their "Epidemic" aspect, but its greatest feature is its Interactivity. Inexpensiveness, speed, the lack of possession on the exchanged messages, the possibility obtaining social identity, freedom, and availability from one hand and simultaneous gathering of text, sound and image from the other hand suggest that, the emergence of cyber media is a revolution comparable to Gutenberg's printing revolution and the rise of print industry in the history of communication.

The first question as a serious criticism is that, whether the soft power which is being followed by the United States and European developed countries against target countries especially third world is "People-centered" or "Elite-driven"? The latest researches of scholars of communications, political sciences, and media shows that, the primary target of soft power is public opinion, but in second layer, it tries to focus on Decision-making sections as the elites of governments.

Until now, there is no clear answer to the question that how Internet media, under the policies of soft power, become able to influence public opinion like traditional uniform media in order to force decision making centers to adopt new decision?

Here begins the problem that, cyberspace and cyber media, due to pluralism, freedom, and availability of information, disables the policy makers of soft war to "coordinate and integrate" the target audiences, however, we should not ignore the fact that, there is the possibility of influencing public opinion through cyberspace. However, the availability, low cost, and the possibility of exchanging information in this space, is introducing a new phenomenon called "global citizen" or "citizen network" and this issue is another barrier for soft war to influence target societies in a geographical divisions-such as the traditional and developed worlds- as explained by Fred Halliday in his book "The development of the Cold War".

Therefore, Internet media, when defined as diplomatic media leverage, usually have "general and comprehensive nature", while under the soft power they are trying to be "elite-driven". Perhaps the fine words to say is that: reciprocal nature of internet media in cyberspace while is considered as an

advantage, sometimes is a disadvantage since there is no gate or prevention to enter and every one can access to multiple fields of security, political, economic, cultural, social and management information.

Second question to criticize soft power, contrary to Joseph Nye, is that, soft power aims to change the attitudes of audiences, their cultural patterns, choices, and finally their behavior and role. However, the soft power in which media has special importance and Internet media have been given priority status, is the fact that, there is no certain cultural pattern in cyberspace and under the control of sponsors and supporters of the soft power. "Cultural patterns" are different and Internet users, when entering cyberspace, have the freedom to choose and this means that, cultural paradigms of the circles of the soft war are alongside with the other models, and therefore, "target communities" do not necessarily behave in accordance with the cultural patterns of the West. Even the recent events in Al-Tahrir Square, Cairo, and the awakening of the public opinion in the Middle East and North Africa which emerged in U.S.A in the other form (Wall Street movement) show that, a cultural pattern cannot be the first reason because of the open space of the Internet and Cyber Media, but at the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that, the circles of the soft power may have impact on the target population (Nye, Joseph, translated by Mahmoud Asgari, 2004:42).

Dr. Bagher Sarookhani, a famous professors at Tehran University, in his book "The Sociology of Communications" has designed a cycle that illustrates how we can lead audiences to play a single role in a " of communicational and cultural process" (Sarookhani, Bagher, 2002:61).

He says that, when audiences are subject to a desired pattern and message, he/she evaluates them and then believes them. When this happens, the second and third stages occur i.e. selection and decision, respectively.

Dr. sarookhani added that, after the decisions of the audiences as a logical response to the message, the next phase is "Behavior Phase" according to the adopted followed by playing the role and after the communicative role, the behavior will be institutionalized in this role which he calls it "institution" or "communicational structure" (Rezaiyian, Mohammad Javad, 2010:5).

In an analytical view to this model, two other phases should be added: "repeat" phase and "association" phase between the "action" (behavior) and "role".

With this communicational model and the phases we added, we clearly know that, Internet media do not grant "face to face" social identity to users based on "logic" but, the relationships between people in cyberspace are rather based on the "feelings" than "needs". While in communication, especially in soft power, also known as soft war, there is an emphasis on "message and certain pattern" which is more relational and political (Bankler, Yochai, 2006).

For example, widespread opposition through Internet campaigns against Vladimir Putin in Russia's election or rallies in big cities like Moscow and Saint Petersburg, over a period of time and according to polls shows that, despite their limited impact, they were failed to change Russian society.

3. Results

Therefore, in soft power, media under certain diplomacy does not achieve the desired effect - based on the logic of communication and pre-mentioned communication model.

Although, critical views at the consequences and effects of the soft war, was able to answer some of the ambiguities, but in all aspects of the consequences of soft war there are still unanswered questions. Noam Chomsky was one of the few people that gave it a different look. Chomsky's critique on global capitalism has opened a new dimension of the "efficiency of the software and media diplomacy". Chomsky's critique on Wall Street Movement brought the topic that, "The Role of Media in cyberspace" should be emphasized from this dimension that, now the citizens worldwide, are aware to the goals of global capitalism and the globalization of capitalism can no longer uniquely affect the world as it desires.

This critical view is similar to what Francis Fukuyama has predicted. Fukuyama argues that "global capitalism has reached the final station" and now this prediction of Fukuyama is considerable in cyberspace too (Fukuyama, Francis, translated by Tavassoli, Gholam Abbas, 2000: 123).

Technology not only widespread increasingly, but also it becomes more and more complex so that, today, software war in virtual space has become a scene for "challenges of international relations". Social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and so on have shown such a power that, today, in social relations, Interpersonal and intergroup relations play an independent role so that, they give virtual identity to individuals, give independent identity to the groups of individuals with common goals and also have social and sometimes political influences. Developments in Tunisia and Egypt are clear examples to show that, social networks can be used against or in favor of a "dominant discourse" under the title of power or global capitalism.

Schiller believes that, many ignore the way these new medias (social networks) merge with

global capitalism ignore ... Accordingly, the cyberspace becomes a domain of irresponsible consumption where, the poor never appear as subjects with rights and occasionally are the subject of discussion (Schiller, Herbert, translated by Ahmad Mir Abedini 1998:27).

This view of Schiller is in agreement with what happened in Wall Street movement. Whereas social networks are considered as places for "Citizens Interaction" in cyberspace and is similar to "Face-to-Face" interaction, but we can observe that, the dominant capitalism power is also relatively successful in cyberspace to continue its discourse- which was following it on traditional media- through social networks. However, the truth is that, social networks are two-tailed swords and we can never definitely consider them as "threat" or "opportunity". Social networks are both threat and opportunity. As shown us the developments in Egypt, and even in some events, marches, and rallies in other Middle Eastern countries such as Bahrain and Saudi, social networks often gave the opportunity to lower levels to express themselves the people who their rights were ignored, as Herbert Schiller said.

"The idea of Interaction" and tie citizens together in social networks is a perspective of this phenomenon, but whether the idea of interaction is realized in social networks as it is suggested? Here, a new discussion called "psychological damages of social networks" arises. However, media diplomacy in social networks is force to appear more complicated because, despite social networks act as a media, but no one can determine its content but the "citizens" and "relators" themselves, and this is a major difference.

Investigating the "communicative action of actors" in social networks- also known as newest media and we call them as most complex media- teaches us that, it is very difficult to influence people with a predetermined plan. However, in the other hand, from the communicative actions and behaviors of the citizens of social networks, one can understand that, in the same time, the dominant discourse, such as a blinking light, attracts the communicators (in social networks) and inadvertently is in favor of media diplomacy and dominant global capitalism power, because if it was not like this, there were no critical views of experts such as "Noam Chomsky" and "Herbert Schiller".

4. Discussions

Media diplomacy seeks to change "attitudes of audiences "rather "needs of audience", thus, is in agreement with "media centric" view rather "message centric" view. Based on the teachings of Marshall McLuhan, in message centric view, the emphasis is on the messages and media will be analyzed based on the message: in other words, "the media has its validity because of the message not the media". In this view, media diplomacy is less efficient like the era of psychological operations and propaganda to achieve its goals.

Country of origin and investors in media diplomacy initially establishes favorable media in cyberspace and in the case of failure uses "indirect method" instead of "direct method" i.e. changing the attitudes of audiences and consequently their companionship. This approach, also known as "Internet diplomacy", is in line with Internet diplomacy strategy of the State Department of country of origin. Such an office, called public diplomacy, was developed in the State Department of U.S. since last decades in order to achieve these goals.

Articles and studies of researchers on this issue remind us that, media diplomacy is more successful in the indirect method. In the indirect method, the influence of those media which are independent, but due to the training and professional maturity, are in line with source or target country in much more.

The commonality of "Pavlov conditioning theory" and "news filtering theory of Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman" on media diplomacy shows that, audience "in both theories", through repeated or filtered messages, reach to the point that sometimes is desired for country of origin, however, we cannot argue that those theories are same.

Joseph Nye's "Theory of soft power" shows another aspect of media diplomacy, but we should know that, there is no "specific cultural patterns" in cyberspace and the users of Internet are free to choose. This means that, we cannot expect the country of origin to achieve its desired strategic and communicative goals through media diplomacy. However, we cannot forget that, the circled of soft war, in some cases - not always, were able to lead target audiences to desired reaction. It shows that, the effectiveness of media diplomacy in the framework of soft war was not always desirable.

The social network, as called "New Media" in cyberspace- and we call them the "most complicated media" have such a power so that, they have imposed themselves to the challenges of international relations. Developments in Tunisia and Egypt are examples that show us social networks could be up against a dominant global discourse and also can attract communicators like a blinking light. They also can act as a leverage of media diplomacy, can follow the dominant discourse of world-wide capitalism: the critical views of people such as "Noam Chomsky" and "Herbert Schiller" reminds us to not to ignore the damages of social networks. However, there is still the question that, whether social networks are

"opportunity" or "threat"? Studies show that, social networks, or complicated media, can be threats while being opportunities too.

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