



THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND MASS MEDIA IN STRENGTHENING THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

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Abstract

This article explores the role of mass media as a strategic tool in cultural diplomacy within the context of globalization. It examines how influential countries such as Germany, Turkey, and the United States utilize international media platforms like Deutsche Welle, TRT, and CNN to promote their cultural values, shape public perception, and extend their soft power globally. The study highlights the transformative effect of modern communication technologies in enhancing the reach and impact of media diplomacy through multilingual and digital content. It also draws attention to Uzbekistan's evolving media landscape and emphasizes the need for developing globally competitive media institutions to project the nation's image and voice in the international arena. The article ultimately argues that effective media diplomacy requires both content localization and alignment with international media standards to succeed in the global information ecosystem.

Keywords: Mass media, cultural diplomacy, soft power, globalization, international broadcasting, media reforms, Deutsche Welle, TRT, CNN, Uzbekistan, multilingual media, public diplomacy, digital communication, nation branding, media internationalization.

Introduction

In today's global world, mass media has become a crucial element that influences, directs, and shapes public opinion in societies. It is undeniable that media and



mass communication wield significant influence over the general public. This is because people tend to form opinions and make decisions based on information received from sources they trust, respect, and consider credible.

Mass media plays a vital role in disseminating government policies, communicating them to other societies, and delivering information. This power also serves as an important tool in achieving the objectives and reaching the target audiences of cultural diplomacy. From this perspective, mass media should not be regarded solely as traditional one-way communication or merely as international broadcasting. Instead, it encompasses a broad range of strategic communication elements—from social networks to films and TV series, from training international media personnel to collaborating with interstate media organizations.

Literature Review

The linkage between mass media and the development of culture and cultural diplomacy began to appear in many studies conducted during the late 20th century. Rokeach and Kantor define mass media as “a system composed of institutions and organizations that, in certain societies, theoretically produce and distribute cultural products accessible to the entire population almost simultaneously” [1, p.65].

Globalization is a condition in which every aspect of any social, cultural, or economic phenomenon acquires a global dimension, and local problems can spread worldwide [2, 1996]. In fact, within globalization processes, mass media can be considered both a social and a cultural phenomenon. Mass media is part of the structure of society, while its technological infrastructure constitutes part of its economic and energy resources. It is clear that the ideas, images, and information disseminated by mass media form a significant aspect of our culture.

Research Methodology

The reforms implemented in Uzbekistan since 2016 have also led to noticeable positive developments in the field of mass media. Specifically, according to data from 2022, the number of mass media outlets increased by nearly 30% compared to 2016, reaching 1,962, and the number of online publications doubled to 677



[3, 2022]. In 2023, the number of mass media outlets rose by 626 compared to 2016, reaching 2,140, while the number of internet publications reached 745 [4, 2023]. This demonstrates the practical outcomes of the reforms being undertaken in the sector, and it also reflects the fact that, as Uzbekistan steps into an important stage of its development, the advancement of press and mass media is being carried out in parallel.

The influence of mass media on all aspects of society has now become an undeniable reality, especially in today's world. The current power of mass media undeniably recalls the concept of the "global village" proposed by Marshall McLuhan in the early 1960s. McLuhan introduced the idea of a new world in which people who were previously disconnected could now easily communicate and interact through technology-based communication. He argued that "the world will become a global village" and thus demonstrated that mass media is a powerful means of influence [5, p.71].

According to Finnish sociologist Ari Antikainen, "The main driving forces of globalization are transnational corporations, transnational mass media/media organizations, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and alternative government structures" [6.21]. Antikainen emphasizes that in the era of globalization, it is essential for countries to have international media in order to "survive."

When discussing international media, organizations such as BBC World Service, Deutsche Welle, CNN, Voice of America, and Radio France International can be considered early examples of effectiveness in this field. Other television organizations with significant influence in their regions, such as Al-Jazeera in the Middle East as a non-traditional media outlet, RT from Russia, TV5 Monde, France 24 and TV5 Europe from France, and Germany's Deutsche Welle, can also be evaluated within this framework.

Take CNN, for example—not only was it one of the first international television channels, but it became so influential that the name itself turned into a theoretical term in the field of international media. The "CNN Effect" [7.2021] emerged during the First Gulf War when CNN continuously broadcast dramatic visuals in real-time, influencing public opinion in favor of military intervention. This



demonstrated in practice how international media coverage of events could shape domestic and foreign policy agendas.

Germany's experience is also noteworthy. German media and broadcasting have long served as a successful example of cultural diplomacy. Germany's most important player in the media and mass communication sector is undoubtedly Deutsche Welle (DW), which broadcasts in 29 languages besides German. Television programs are aired 24 hours a day in English, German, Spanish, and Arabic. In addition to around 1,500 permanent staff at DW's headquarters in Bonn and its Berlin branch, many independent journalists from 60 countries also contribute [8.22]. Deutsche Welle has even created language learning programs that make learning German easy and fast for foreigners.

According to financial documents published by Deutsche Welle in 2016, its annual budget expenses were approximately 667 million euros [9.2016]; by 2023, these expenses had increased to 837 million euros [10.2023]. It must be acknowledged that establishing international media outlets undoubtedly requires significant financial investment. Although no exact method for calculating returns has yet been developed by experts, there is no doubt that the benefits far outweigh the costs.

Turkey's experience is also comparable to that of developed European nations. Today, Turkey's Anadolu Agency operates in 41 countries with its offices, publishes in 13 languages, and serves approximately 6,000 media organizations in over 100 countries [11.2022]. In addition to this, the agency collaborates with global news agencies such as Reuters, Getty Images, and AFP to disseminate news and reports about Turkey's social, political, and cultural life on an international scale, thus contributing to Turkey's cultural diplomacy.

Analysis and Results

In addition to Anadolu Agency, Turkey also effectively uses TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) for its international television and radio broadcasts in implementing cultural diplomacy abroad. TRT, which began its first radio broadcast in 1927 and its first television program in 1968, currently operates 17 radio channels, 18 television channels, and digital platforms, broadcasting in 41 languages and dialects [12.2025]. Reaching a potential audience of around 250



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million across the Balkans, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Caucasus—in countries and autonomous republics such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan—TRT has become a “common channel, common voice” in the vast Turkic-speaking geographic area, thereby significantly enhancing Turkey’s image on the international stage.

In an era where cultural diplomacy as a form of soft power has become widespread, the development of communication technologies has also paved the way for the media to be used as a tool of cultural diplomacy. Media actors who broadcast entertainment, news, and cultural content are naturally inclined to become—or collaborate with—actors of cultural diplomacy.

Today, multilingual international broadcasting is widely employed by many powerful states—especially those with extensive historical and cultural ties across large regions—as a tool of cultural diplomacy. The advantage of such communication channels is often realized through mass media such as television, although they can also influence on a more local scale through radio and newspapers.

Studying international media practices and strengthening cooperative ties with them through local media opens up pathways to mutual understanding and future strategic cooperation. From this perspective, modernizing national mass media to reflect the spirit of the times is a key component of a far-sighted strategy to ensure the country’s voice reaches the international community. This strategy aims to enhance the position of cultural diplomacy first within the country, then regionally, and eventually on a global scale through the help of mass media.

In conclusion, in a globalized world, mass media has become a vital tool for influencing, directing, and shaping public opinion. For this reason, Uzbekistan has undertaken broad reforms in the field of mass media since 2016. By 2022, the number of media outlets had increased by nearly 30% compared to 2016, reaching 1,962, and the number of internet publications had doubled to 677. In 2023, the number of mass media outlets increased by 626 compared to 2016, reaching 2,140, while the number of online publications rose to 745. These figures reflect the practical implementation of reforms in this field and show that, during a crucial stage in its development, Uzbekistan is working in parallel to advance its press and media sectors. However, since cultural diplomacy is closely linked to



foreign policy and international relations, relying solely on local mass media is insufficient. There is now a growing need to establish international media outlets similar to BBC World, Deutsche Welle, and CNN.

Conclusion

In today's globalized world, mass media has become a powerful instrument that shapes, directs, and influences public opinion. This dynamic has elevated the role of media as a central actor in cultural diplomacy. The examples of countries such as Germany, Turkey, and the United States demonstrate that transnational media organizations like Deutsche Welle, TRT, and CNN are not merely news distributors—they are also strategic tools of soft power and instruments of state branding on the international stage.

Furthermore, the development of communication technologies has expanded the reach of cultural diplomacy through multilingual broadcasting and digital platforms, enabling states to influence broader regions with shared cultural and historical ties. Local media must therefore not only modernize but also align with international standards to become part of this global media diplomacy network.

In the context of Uzbekistan, recent media reforms, including the increase in the number of media outlets and internet publications, reflect growing attention to the media's role in national development. However, for Uzbekistan to strengthen its cultural diplomacy and effectively participate in global discourse, it is essential to invest in the creation and internationalization of media institutions akin to global broadcasters like BBC, Deutsche Welle, or CNN. Only by doing so can the nation amplify its voice globally and strategically advance its image and interests on the world stage.

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