

A Study of the Role and Influence of Mass Medias in the Cultural Diplomacy of France

Saemeh Baratali and Akram Ayati

Department of France, Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

Abstract: Present era is the era of media diplomacy. These days collective medias play an important role in international relations and are known as a mirror which reflect countries through showing communities' culture and national identity and prepare the causes of foreign governments policy stability. Therefore, it is possible to consider group medias as efficient tools in order to realize the goals of foreign policy and reaching the national advantages of government which is the most important tool of cultural diplomacy. The main goal of this essay is to determine the important role and considerable effect of collective medias in progressing cultural diplomatic goals of France which was the first Western country that is committed to cultural diplomacy. Since French were the second European nation who accepted the democracy, at the beginning of the third millennium, media is still the fourth column of democracy for France which itself is the cradle of freedom of expression.

Key words: Mass media, cultural diplomacy, culture, France, democracy

INTRODUCTION

Malek (1997) believe that transnational medias have has decisive role in the process of legitimating the international current of news and information in the field of culture and information; in new conditions these are medias which determine and analyze the events instead of cultural and religious factors. The battlefield of international policies has changed its direction from geographical and physical level to the cultural, economic and social level. International political system continues the domination of rival countries (which the foreign policy selfishly calls itself the national advantages). In addition, transnational factors, apart from official governmental and national systems and in the coverage of multinational beneficiary companies are effective factors in worldwide economic and cultural policies. Finally, the influence of medias on foreign policies which medias cover foreign issues through using organizational factors, technical and cultural and penetrate in foreign policy through using these issues. Medias are able to:

- Define conditions and legitimate an event or a character (highlighting function)
- Act as an organizer
- Distorting or clearing the subjects
- Accelerating or slowing governmental policies in the field of foreign policies
- Become an advertising tool in forming and implementing foreign policy desirably or undesirably

- Become channels for official exchanges
- Become advertising foundations for political players
- They are valuable information sources for the governments
- Penetrate on authorities, elites and people moods

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parenti (1986) shows efforts for predominating the French language as an official language of European union is a part of strategy of this country which has become as a kind of identity for this country. Therefore, French elites and politicians have tried to formalize French language in European union. In this regard, establishing "French language committee" in 1957 and also "the high level committee for defending and developing French language" by De Gaulle in 1966 which their duty is to help the inventions and related proceeding in order to prevailing French language were some endeavors in order to make the French language as the language of Europe common market.

Malek (1997) about penetrating the medias on foreign policy, researches have different views which are categorized in three fields of "active views", "passive views" and "neutral views".

Active views: Are the researches who believe that medias have the most active and effective role on decisions in the field of foreign policy. These researches look at media like an observant, a dependent supervisor, an active involved

person or an organizer. This thought is supported by journalists and also researchers who have operational visions and are more concentrated on collective relations (comparing with political sciences). With this kind of vision, journalists and news media supporters are restricted by the power and strength of media.

Passive view: These researchers look at media as a pawn in chess. Supporters of this view believe that media is a part of political system and a tool to help to implement the foreign policy. In addition, media tends to support the existing politicians and their political measures. Even, this opinion present among researchers that media act as a part of political advertising pattern.

Neutral view: These researchers say that both the media and government manipulate public opinions in order to people exploitation.

When, based on necessity and for distinguishing theoretical concepts the literature of social sciences of the 20th century which is concentrated on constraint of “foreign policy and news media” are referred, different visions can be seen in the literature of this realm which are about this complicated relation.

Mccellan (2004) believe that Dr. Rivenburg considers the studying of social identity as a framework for analyzing the role of media in the process of foreign policy and emphasizes on studying social or intergroup behavior at the time of analyzing the foreign policy. He believes that the content of medias mostly form the collective identity and what is presented by the media has an influence in forming the public perception from their country and other countries. Therefore, before analyzing the effects of relations it is better to analyze the manner of collective identity influence on relation procedures and then put the effect of relations on collective identity under analysis.

Rivenburg considers national identity as the basic type of collective identity. In his viewpoint, media productions are under the influence of national identity in a way which is firm, observable and predictable. He believes that, national identity is competitive evaluative and depends to the context and has combined with feelings and self-dignity.

Bonafed (1990) believe that wonderful appearance of advanced medias after the second world war and their emphasis on illustrations and symbol making has made the politicians in the field of French foreign policy to be a skillful communicator and make a coexistence relation with news medias. During the cold war and after that it became clear that unlike simplistic thought about medias as observers and quick explainers of the events-they have a basic role in foreign issues. Also, it became clear that

medias are a part of process because the effects of media understandings directly influence public thoughts and without public acceptance, no agreement in foreign policy is possible. In a way that “Truman”, the president of United States, confessed that the basic decisions in foreign policy of countries after the second world war are based on informed public thoughts and the coverage of public support.

Almond and Verber (1965) medias, inform the government about the current events earlier and coordinate what people want with what the government want, makes authorities to be able to tell their message to people and informs them about the adequacy (or inadequacy) of official activities. Relationships and the free current of information are necessary for free society and is the basic part of French characterization and is the partner in general issues whether good or bad, however uninvited or unwanted.

The change in the mind of today world and France politicians regarding the function of media in foreign policy is clear and absolute. Today, media is not remembered as a producer any more rather it is identified as a mirror for the society. Contemporary medias are widely recalled through phrases such as “podium”, “the field for presenting general issues”, “the tool for penetrating in public thought”, “organizer of social, cultural and political movements”, “channel of diplomatic relations”, “tool for the conversation between governmental brokers and agencies” and “channel for purifying our visions”.

CONCLUSION

Results of this research show that French medias plays an important role in many of international conflict to settle political issues and guiding world public thoughts in a direction of predetermined political goals of this country. In the era of media diplomacy as a kind of diplomatic tool, television can help diplomats in political negotiations and settling the conflicts as the tool for long distance democracy and soft power, France television channels has increased the power of bargaining of France politicians and has makes the politician of this country to be successful in using the power of medias and specially television in inducting their political will on other countries and public thoughts.

Experience has showed that news coverage of France news media regulating the events and put the role of some issue in a greater scale in front of eyes of the people. Sometimes, this issue has made the authorities of France foreign minister to make a kind of position for themselves against a problem which is not important superficially but becomes important because of the media activity.

Sometimes, France medias make an issue becomes simple and clear by publication of news and events and this issue could play a role of catalyst in France foreign policy and make the process of decision making, happening faster.

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