

SEARCHING FOR A NEW FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY FOR AZERBAIJAN – PUBLIC DIPLOMACY EFFORTS

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Abstract

Nowadays public diplomacy is often investigated and analyzed in sociology in the context of the international public relations. This paper examines Public Diplomacy in general and Public Relations from a diplomatic perspective and its implications to the foreign policy of Azerbaijan.

The article marks general features of the public diplomacy and the international public relations, also referring to sociological sources affirms the fundamental unity between public diplomacy and international public relations, investigates the difference of public diplomacy from traditional diplomacy. At the same time, the public diplomacy elements in Azerbaijan's foreign policy and its chances in Nagorno Karabakh conflict solving are analyzed.

Keywords: The new public diplomacy, instruments and models of public diplomacy, international public relations, national image and nation branding, soft power

Introduction:

This paper intends to show the effectiveness and usage of Public Relations as a smart tool in public diplomacy of states, and will try to analyze Azerbaijan's current foreign policy from a Diplomatic PR perspective, and to present a new view of Azerbaijan's foreign policy where Diplomatic PR plays a tremendous role in developing of new public diplomacy strategy, including its role in conflict resolution in example of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Public Diplomacy attracted attention in the 20th century when diplomacy fell under the scrutiny of the media and public opinion. It became a more substantial area during the cold war, dominated by campaigns to gain support for the delicate balance of nuclear weapons and the ideological battle for the hearts and minds of people around the world.¹⁷²

If dealing with the major security issues requires cooperation at the global level with both governmental and non-governmental agencies, and if stable and effective collaboration can be secured only through engagement with broader foreign societies, public diplomacy becomes an integral and substantive, not just presentational, part of the foreign policy making process. Because of these above mentioned changes in international relations increasingly in the 21st century, diplomacy will be rather public diplomacy than traditional diplomacy. For example, The British Foreign Office has made a great show of taking public diplomacy seriously. It has created a Public Diplomacy Policy Department, which has produced a public diplomacy strategy for the UK.¹⁷³

From my point of view these types of public diplomacy departments could be of great importance in this changing and globalizing world where everything and everyone is interrelated with global tie of communications.

¹⁷² Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), p. 6

¹⁷³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office: *Public Diplomacy Strategy*, www.fco.gov.uk

In Azerbaijan the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has Information Department and Press Service which can be transformed to one department under the name “Public Diplomacy Department” and include a sector responsible for *Diplomatic PR*. Of course, this type of change will require professionals trained by Public Relations experts in order to function properly and effectively. In perspective view we consider the PR departments of embassies should also to be created to meet challenges abroad in host country. These Public Relations departments can play significant role in creating the desired view in public opinion of the people of host country used as a smart tool of public diplomacy policy.

In “Public Relations and Diplomacy in a Globalized world: An Issue of Public Communication,” Jacquie L’Etang of Stirling in Britain explores various definitions and perspectives of public relations, its past, present, and future, with insights into how it can contribute to effective public diplomacy and its relationship to nation building and globalization. From my point of view this work of L’Etang noting prior work that contrasted public relations and diplomacy at theoretical and practical levels, provokes readers to consider further the theoretical and global issues of “Diplomatic PR” for states and organizations in the context of globalization.

Public Relations: Promoting image and reputation

Investigation of the emergence and development of the *Public Relations (PR)* as a science, the problem of using it as a necessary instrument in the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan is of great importance both in the political-practical and theoretical-methodological aspects in the country’s present stage of development.

Nineteen years ago, on September 30, 1994 the national leader of Azerbaijan Republic Heydar Aliyev addressed the world community from the UN General Assembly’s session. In the person of Heydar Aliyev the world organizations heard the voice of Azerbaijan’s diplomacy. Later, the prominent politician’s statements at the 49th and 50th sessions of the UN General Assembly and at the Millennium summit was bright evidence to national public diplomacy which disclosed the country’s foreign policy priorities to the world. Uniting the world Azerbaijanis around the idea of Azerbaijanism, the great leader built a bridge of public diplomacy between Azerbaijan and the world. Statements of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev at the 58th and 59th sessions of UN General Assembly raised the image of republic up in the level of international public relations.

Today Heydar Aliyev’s policy is continued in all spheres in Azerbaijan. The country’s foreign policy is active and successful. Azerbaijan is duly represented at the international organizations and its positions strengthen year-on-year. Now the country has more than 60 embassies abroad and new embassies are planned to be opened to promote international public relations through public diplomacy.

Public Relations is of crucial importance for national governments in their political and diplomatic activity. Being a preventive political mechanism in foreign policy, the public diplomacy requires active participation in the *international public relations* and intensive work with global public. Now, the corporations, transnational NGOs, and even separate citizens appear on the diplomatic arena. Therefore, the today’s national governments cannot do without hearing the voice of transnational public in decision-making. The public diplomacy joined by diasporas, corporations, social groups and communities, organizations, separate public figures, creative people, ordinary citizens work in harmony with the official diplomacy of Azerbaijani state to bring the truth of the conflict Azerbaijan is involved to the notice of world community, to make aware the world of the Azerbaijani realities.

Traditional annual meetings of the Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev with the heads of diplomatic missions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs serve just to this key goal – to develop public diplomacy. These meetings have enormously promoted development of the role of *public relations and public diplomacy in foreign policy*.

In the first meeting (July 27, 2004) with the heads of diplomatic missions of Azerbaijan abroad President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev stated: “Azerbaijan successfully pursues its foreign policy. Perhaps, today the Azerbaijan diplomacy is at new level. Today the world community is fairly informed about Azerbaijan. We all, of course, first of all, the ambassadors representing Azerbaijan abroad and the staff of embassies have to try to make aware the countries’ communities of the Azerbaijani realities”.¹⁷⁴

The challenge the head of Azerbaijani state made to promote long-term strategy of the country’s foreign policy has strongly raised public diplomatic activeness. After the congresses of the world Azerbaijanis the process of organization of the compatriots has gained a wide scope. The level of their participation in socio-political life of the country has raised, the propaganda of cultural heritage of Azerbaijan intensified, in particular, the relations with the Turkic Diasporas revived.

One of the most critical foci of both public diplomacy and international public relations is relationship management. Given that public diplomacy also deals with mutually beneficial relationship building and maintenance in an international context, public diplomacy and foreign policy processes are closely correlated with international public relations endeavors of nation- states. The American sociologist Leonard¹⁷⁵ asserted that “public diplomacy should be about building relationships, starting from understanding other countries’ needs, cultures, and people and then looking for areas to make common cause”. From our point of view it is right approach. The policy and diplomacy backed by people, community and public achieves more reliable and have more useful outcomes. In the international relations the public diplomacy, the diplomacy of masses are mostly believed and relied.

In the abovementioned meeting of the heads of diplomatic missions, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev said: “We should carry out information attack. Sometimes we are accused of being belligerent. It may be, but our belligerence seems only in information field, and we have no other way.”¹⁷⁶ Azerbaijan’s public diplomacy network should be therefore created. The Meetings of the Coordination Council of the World Azerbaijanis, the State Committee for Work with Diaspora does a lot in the field of public diplomacy.

In November 2007, at the initiative of the Azerbaijan President Baku hosted the XI Congress of Friendship, Brotherhood and Cooperation of Turkic States and Communities. The congress was an example of international public diplomacy and discussed cooperation among the Turkic peoples in the field of science, techniques, culture, education, economy, trade, tourism and finance, propaganda of cultural heritage of the Turkic worlds, the mission of the Turkic youth and impact of globalization process on the life of Turkic nations. Similar actions mobilizing international public relations have notably increased effectiveness of country’s public diplomacy in region and world.

When applying the public relations perspective to public diplomacy, it is important to focus on dialogic, two-way, and interactive nature of the Internet. ***By utilizing interactivity through Internet communication, personal touch promoting public relations effectiveness can be enhanced. When personal contacts transform to public contacts they attain huge power, and thus, public diplomacy of national governments become more effective.***

Increasingly, foreign ministries and diplomats will need to go beyond bilateral and multilateral diplomacy and to construct and conduct relations with new global actors.¹⁷⁷ Public diplomacy should remain a government function. The private sector may serve as a

¹⁷⁴ Speech of President Ilham Aliyev at the meeting with the heads of diplomatic missions of the Azerbaijan Republic (July 27, 2004) (in Azerbaijani)

¹⁷⁵ M. Leonard, Diplomacy by other means, 2002, pp. 21-22

¹⁷⁶ Speech of President Ilham Aliyev at the meeting with the heads of diplomatic missions of the Azerbaijan Republic (July 27, 2004) (in Azerbaijani)

¹⁷⁷ USC, “What is PD?”

complement to, but not a substitute for, public diplomacy. One scholar who has examined this question agrees, saying in effect that public diplomacy is a type of diplomacy, but to be successful, it should take advantage of the efforts of private parties working in international communications.¹⁷⁸

Strengthening the Existing Traditional Diplomacy Structure --- Building Public Diplomacy strategy for Azerbaijan

First of all, the Public Diplomacy Department must be created in order to coordinate and control these types of activities. Then public diplomacy department must be provided with adequate authority and resources. Public diplomacy needs a clear chain of command as well as adequate personnel and financial resources. It is essential to re-streamline public diplomacy channels by enhancing public diplomacy career training, increasing the number of experienced foreign service personnel abroad engaged in public affairs, and strengthening interagency coordination.

Second, Public diplomacy requires strategy. Azerbaijan's popularity abroad must be strengthened through various educational, cultural, scientific, sport related, public projects. Competing on the global battlefield of ideas requires not just platforms for disseminating information, but a strategy that defines the objectives and national interests that public diplomacy seeks to advance.

Public diplomacy, however, is closely tied to foreign policy objectives. Therefore public diplomacy strategies and campaigns have to be carefully and deliberately developed with the objective of achieving a particular policy objective. These strategies must be thus goal-oriented and policy-focused, but with both long-term and short-term timeframes.

In order to reach the current generation of social and political leaders short-term exchange programs can be used, although their cost per participant is quite high. The payoff can be strong, however, if the participants are carefully selected and their programs are designed to achieve four primary purposes:

- To build contacts between the advocate and target countries on a people-to-people basis (assuming there are no language issues);
- To allow the participants to get a firsthand look at something they clearly do not understand or about which they have insufficient knowledge (e.g., environmental practices in the advocate country, minority education opportunities, or treatment of religious minorities);
- To build a general impression of the advocate country in a participant who has no firsthand experience of the advocate country's people and society;
- And to strengthen contact between the participant and the Embassy over the longer term.

Third, Public diplomacy strategy requires messaging. In addition to strategic objectives, public diplomacy requires an account of how engagement with foreign publics can help meet those objectives; it requires a message that advances its strategy. The key factor in this channeling process is for the target audience member to realize there are benefits to be gained from knowing more about the advocate country or to recognize that there are shared values on which a positive relationship can be developed. For most people, benefits and self-interest will be the motivating factor, so *the public diplomat should manage the message to produce that effect.*

Once interest has been aroused, the target audience member becomes an active participant in the process and the public diplomat has mainly to make information available for the audience's use and consumption. There are several tools available for this purpose. Traditionally, governments used cultural centers, free "give-away" materials (e.g. brochures,

¹⁷⁸ Fitzpatrick, "Privatized Public Diplomacy," pp. 168–169

booklets, magazines, translated and original books, etc.), film and video programs, and speakers to provide information to interested audiences. In more recent years, these tools have expanded to include websites and e-mail mailing lists, but the information is essentially the same, only the communication tools have changed.

Interviews and Embassy-organized media visits to foreign assistance projects must not be neglected as they can be especially well-targeted for the local audience and will reach the largest number of people on a regular basis.

Public diplomacy is not about changing public opinion unilaterally, but the proactive engagement of global audiences in support of a foreign policy that will stand alone and influence public opinion positively. Public diplomacy must be redefined not as a tool of simply promoting ideas and values but as a critical element of Azerbaijan's national security based on direct and indirect engagement of foreign publics, states and non-state actors.

Public Diplomacy: the strategic planning and execution of informational, cultural and educational programming by an advocate country to create a public opinion environment in a target country or countries that will enable target country political leaders to make decisions that are supportive of advocate country's foreign policy objectives.

As this definition clearly shows, public diplomacy involves the active, planned use of cultural, educational and informational programming to build a desired result that is directly related to a government's foreign policy objectives. It thus goes well beyond the usual concepts of propaganda, in which a particular message is "injected" into the target country over and over, or public relations, in which branding, image, and advertising are the key concepts.

As a result of the Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry's constant activity on the economic criterion that is one of the major directions of the foreign policy, the public diplomacy includes investment and business forums to demonstrate Azerbaijan's economic potential and business environment, favorable conditions set up for development of free business, as well as the visits of governmental and private sector representatives of the foreign countries.

The Azerbaijan State Committee for Work with Diaspora and the Diaspora organizations functioning in the United States and other countries widely use the experience of public relations to promulgate the country's foreign policy in appropriate countries.

Large scale actions are implemented to form public and fair opinion in the countries Azerbaijan has established diplomatic relations with. Traditional conferences conducted on the role of Diaspora in development of partnership relations between Azerbaijan and other countries are the evidence the country attaches how much great importance to the public relations in the foreign policy. In particular, a 2-day conference on the topic "The role of Diaspora in the development of Azerbaijan-US strategic partnership relations" held in October 2008 in Washington, focused on significant themes.

The "First Forum of World Azerbaijani and Turkish Diaspora Organizations held on March 9, 2007 in Baku has been an important event in life of all the Turkish speaking peoples. As a result of the discussions, the participants adopted the "Joint activity strategy of the Azerbaijani and Turkish Diaspora Organizations, the "Baku Declaration" and other significant documents.¹⁷⁹

On March 27, 2008, the annual meeting of Coordinating Council of World Azerbaijani and Turkish Diaspora Organizations was held in Berlin, Germany. The meeting elected co-chairs of the Council, discussed the tasks to develop cooperation among the Azerbaijani and Turkish Diaspora organizations and adopted the World Azerbaijanis' Solidarity Charter.¹⁸⁰

At the mentioned meeting of the Coordination Council, Ali Hasanov, head of the Department on Social Political Issues, Presidential Administration of Azerbaijan Republic,

¹⁷⁹ "Azerbaijan" newspaper, March 9, 2007(In Azeri)

¹⁸⁰ Materials of the annual meeting of Coordinating Council of World Azerbaijani and Turkish Diaspora Organizations, Berlin, Germany, March 27, 2008

touching upon the speedy processes of integration among the peoples in the globalizing world, the rising role of Diaspora and lobby organizations in the international policy, spoke of the ideology of Azerbaijanism developed by national leader Haydar Aliyev as the official state idea, the unification of the world Azerbaijanis around this idea. According to Ali Hasanov, this idea couldn't realize without union of Azerbaijani communities, societies in different countries. Speaking of the works the state of Azerbaijan does to protect the rights of compatriots abroad, Hasanov said the state attaches special attention to protection of the socio-political rights of Azerbaijanis living beyond its borders, using the public relations technology for this purpose.

At the present time, the concept of Diaspora becomes a necessary component of the international relations. The realities of globalizing world puts forward before Azerbaijan new tasks in Diaspora building. Rapid processes of integration among the peoples, the raising role of the Diaspora and lobby organizations in the international policy necessitates wider activity in this field.

The above mentioned facts give reason to confirm that the Azerbaijani Diaspora reached a new phase. Acceleration of the process of organization of the Azerbaijanis living abroad, emergence of new structures to coordinate the activity of communities, strengthening of relations with the Diasporas of other peoples, rising of the level of participation of compatriots in the socio-political life of the country they live, the achievements gained in lobby building are evidence to look ahead with confidence.

Public diplomacy is a field of multispectral activity. Active cooperation with the international structures is a necessary component of public diplomacy. For example, in Azerbaijan-NATO cooperation the public diplomacy plays important role.

In 2006, with the joint efforts of the NATO and the Government of Azerbaijan a Euro-Atlantic Center was founded in Baku to provide the investigators, students and other interested members of public with information on appropriate topics. Taking into account the necessity of implementation of public awareness actions also in regions, in 2007 the Center's branch was opened in Ganja, the second large city of Azerbaijan.

Another direction of public diplomacy activities in country is connected with the NATO's International School of Azerbaijan (NISA) supported by the Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the NATO's Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) registered as NGO in January 2007. NISA regularly conducts "round tables", seminars, simulation games, as well as high level conferences to bring together representatives of the youth of Azerbaijan and other states of Euro-Asia space to promote exchange of views on security issues to contribute public awareness on Euro-Asia security questions and strengthen their knowledge.

In the Russian-Azerbaijani relations the role of public diplomacy rises year-on-year. The interstate humanitarian activity processes of the two countries, that is, the "soft power" mechanisms are not only a simple attachment to the political efforts of the two states, but also have become an independent process connecting the two countries on the level of civil society. To this end, the Haydar Aliyev Foundation headed by the First Lady of Azerbaijan, UNESCO and ISESCO Goodwill Ambassador Mehriban Aliyeva make huge contribution to this cause. Coordinator of the initiatives the Foundation implements in Russia is Leyla Aliyeva, head of the Foundation Moscow branch, head of the Azerbaijan Youth Organization of Russia (AYOR).

All above mentioned are the necessary components of public diplomacy stimulating mutually beneficial socio-cultural activity of the Azerbaijanis and Russians.

Armenian-Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh conflict: public diplomacy efforts

Traditional meetings of the diplomatic service bodies of the Republic of Azerbaijan are of tremendous importance from the point of view of realization of the country's foreign policy and the tasks set for the diplomatic service bodies by the President of Azerbaijan. The

question of settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh conflict in the frame of the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders has always been and is the major field of activity for the diplomatic service bodies. The facts of deliberate eradication of the historical and cultural monuments of Azerbaijanis by Armenia, changing the names and toponyms in the residential areas, illegal economic activity in the occupied lands were brought to the attention of the international community. Many editions and documents prepared and disseminated by the Foreign Ministry was certain contribution to the awareness of world community on the realities.

In the second meeting of heads of the diplomatic service bodies the Head of State said: "...I noted that our policy of integration to the world community is unchangeable, and in the latest period the state of Azerbaijan has made significant steps in this direction. We are open to the world. In this case, our foreign policy, the image of Azerbaijan should certainly strengthen abroad. In Azerbaijan, all processes, both in domestic and foreign policy, enable the country to be recognized more fairly and represented better among the world community. Each of us has to do it. All officials here, public figures, other structures and of course the ambassadors and diplomatic personnel of the embassies representing Azerbaijan abroad.

Underlining the necessity of establishing broader relations with the community of foreign countries, the president said: "...Our cooperation with the international organizations is successful. Our relations with different world organizations strengthen day by day. Last year's Azerbaijan has hosted authoritative international actions. The actions jointly organized with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the European Union and NATO served to establish relations in the political, economic and cultural fields, and also were the events of presentation on Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan successfully and effectively cooperates with the CIS, GUAM, the Council of Europe and other partner organizations. Similar actions are of tremendous force of propaganda. Each international action hosted in Azerbaijan has two goals. On one hand, conducting of these actions in Azerbaijan is evidence to the rising role of country. Such actions allow the foreign delegates to eyewitness the realities of Azerbaijan, on the other hand.¹⁸¹

On May 14, 2008, the UN General Assembly in its 62nd session adopted a resolution "On situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan". Adoption of such important document once again confirms that the international community adhere settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict in the frame of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Establishment of multilateral cooperation with international organizations, including the UN, the OSCE, the Organization of Islamic Conference, the Council of Europe, GUAM, NATO, the European Union, UNESCO and others, is significant component of the county's foreign policy, and just here the mechanism of public diplomacy should be more effective.

The actions based on social grounds, the efforts of public diplomacy become more effective in the foreign policy of Azerbaijan. Among noteworthy events in this direction is of great importance the regional conference of UNESCO on the education problems held in May 2008 at the initiative of the president of Haydar Aliyev Foundation, UNESCO and IESCO Goodwill Ambassador Mehriban Aliyeva, the works carried out for inclusion of Azerbaijan's historical-cultural monuments in the World Heritage List, the Mugham symposiums that have great public influence from the point of view of propaganda of the country's realities.

Azerbaijan locates at the junction of different cultures, and playing the role of inter-civilization bridge attaches great importance to development of the East and West inter-cultural dialogue and religious tolerance. Last years, therefore, the country has made a number of initiatives in this field and was welcomed internationally. Especially were landmark events the International Baku Forum "On expanding the role of women in cross-

¹⁸¹ Materials of the second meeting with heads of the diplomatic service bodies of the Azerbaijan Republic, "Khalg Qazeti", August 14, 2006 (In Azeri)

cultural dialogue”, held in Baku on June 10-11, 2008, at the initiative of Mehriban Aliyeva and the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue held on 7-9 April, 2011.

Speaking on the role of public opinion and the importance of public relations in foreign policy at the annual meeting of the heads of diplomatic service bodies of the Azerbaijan Republic, President Ilham Aliyev said: “...The ambassadors should have close contacts with all the state and governmental bodies of the country they work, should bring the Azerbaijan’s realities to their notice, strengthen their joint activities with public structures, and have closer ties with the Azerbaijani communities abroad. I think, last year’s certain works have been done in this direction. Our Diaspora organizations have been created and they are functioning in almost countries where Azerbaijanis reside. This certainly benefits the compatriots living there and also is great support to Azerbaijan’s policy.”¹⁸²

Dwelling on the role of public opinion and the importance of public diplomacy in foreign policy, the President stated: “... I would like Armenia’s occupant policy to be fully unmasked not only at the official bodies of states, but also in the public opinion, among the people, in mass media. And this is very important. As the public opinion plays significant role in the world, including in Azerbaijan. True information about the conflict, remaining of Azerbaijani lands under long occupation – these topics should persistently be in the center of talks and activity.

Today we already see positive changes not only on the international organizations, but also in international public opinion. Beginning from this year till 2013 Azerbaijan is a non-permanent member of UN Security Council. It was a major event of 2011 in Azerbaijan’s foreign policy. In 2011 Azerbaijan had won the Eurovision Song Contest which will give one more chance to show its realities by means of this cultural program. Now Azerbaijan has good economic opportunities. The budget of the Foreign Ministry increases year-on-year, and we shall increase it as much as it needs to bring the fair cause of Azerbaijan to the notice of international community so that fair approach in the world’s public opinion completely prevailed. We need it, both for continuation of talks and in the case of failure of talks, for taking other measures. These are the major tasks the ambassadors and embassies have to deal with.

Among the successes gained in strategic information field, noteworthy is the work by academician Ramiz Mehdiyev “Gorus-2010: season of the theater of absurd”. The work is a crashing blow to the Armenian propaganda in the information war. The academician once again underlines the necessity of confidence and honesty that are the major components of public diplomacy.

Recently, the use of social networks as “Facebook” and “Twitter”, mainly used by youth, has become an instrument of public diplomacy. The ongoing processes in the world, in particular in the Middle East, have once again demonstrated the power of social networks.

The deputy foreign minister of Azerbaijan Republic, rector of the Ministry’s Diplomatic Academy Hafiz Pashayev, in his interview to the day.az website highly assessed the contribution of the “Azerbaijan International” magazine to development of the bilateral relations between the United States and Azerbaijan, especially underlining the role of public diplomacy in this: “The public diplomacy, in a certain degree is useful and can play its role in solution of the problems the country faces. Public diplomacy is a part of our general diplomacy. At the same time, the public diplomacy cannot replace the process of negotiations at high level”.¹⁸³

The last initiative in the frame of public diplomacy for settlement of Nagorno Karabakh conflict was realized with the participation of the ambassador of Azerbaijan to the Russian Federation Polad Bulbulgu. In this context, the symphonic ensemble conducted by Russian

¹⁸² Speech of President Ilham Aliyev at the third meeting with heads of the diplomatic service bodies of Azerbaijan Republic, July 7, 2008

¹⁸³ www.day.az, July 2, 2009

musician Vladimir Spivakov has given concerts in Baku and Yerevan. Unfortunately, and this initiative was not welcomed unambiguously. Moreover, it aroused debates whether correctly restarting the discussions on application of public diplomacy between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

As a continuing interest on public diplomacy at the last meeting in Sochi, January 23, 2012 the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia had declared their readiness to promote the dialogue between intellectuals, scientific and social circles of conflicting sides.

Conclusion:

Then, how much the public diplomacy, a key instrument of foreign policy, can be favorable and effective in settlement of conflicts as Nagorno Karabakh ? Do we need public diplomacy when Armenia keeps Azerbaijani lands under occupation?

According to local and foreign experts, the public diplomacy's role is important in any conflict. It is because any agreement between political leaders should be agreed with the people. Any peace without agreement of peoples will not be lasting. The negotiations on Nagorno Karabakh conflict have been carried out already for 17 years behind the closed doors and the societies are rarely informed about the talks the political leaders carry out. Very often, the people feed on the rumors to satisfy. With the crucial moment in negotiations the societies become more and more active to regard the would-be-reached peace variant and in many cases the political leaders deviate from final consensus just because of the strong protest of societies.

For example, in 2001, when the sides were about reaching a consensus in Key West negotiations, strong protests erupted in public opinion both in Armenia and Azerbaijan, as a result the sides couldn't dare move ahead without their backing. And thus, significant progress reached in the result of confidential talks went for nothing. At that time, the international mediators have also stressed this point in their statements, underlining that now the main problem is that the sides have to prepare their communities for painful compromises.

So far in international practice, there are some successful examples of the application of public diplomacy in such conflicts. One of them is the Northern Ireland. The long-lasting conflict between London and Belfast is considered to be over with the agreement signed in 1998. Public diplomacy played significant role in reaching this agreement. Michael Martin, the Foreign Minister of the Northern Ireland, who was mediator in the conflict, has recently stated at the international conference in Dublin that his country to chair at the OSCE in 2012 is going to apply the Northern Ireland experience in regulation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. According to M. Martin, the time has arrived to apply the Northern Ireland's public diplomacy experience in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. In our opinion, it is necessary to prepare and calm the society beforehand to avoid indignation and protests.

Another example to the public diplomacy is the reconciliation reached in the South African society after the apartheid regime was abolished. And in Georgia, once the public diplomacy was widely applied between the South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In particular, there were trade and some social connections between Abkhazia and other parts of Georgia. Despite this, it was impossible to persuade the abkhaz and ossetin separatist regimes into the status within Georgia and therefore, the known (August 2008) military operations erupted.

The same is observed in Nagorno Karabakh. A puppet regime under the control of Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora is functioning in region and therefore the public diplomacy has limited chances to be applied in regard with the Armenians of Karabakh.

As to Armenia, the situation is rather complicated. The "Karabakh clan" rules in Armenia and those who are in power have directly participated in occupation of Azerbaijani lands. The Karabakh clan has unbalanced power over the Armenian society. On the other hand, the Armenian society entirely has fallen ill with unrealistic dreams and aggression. In the country's media, you cannot see any realistic proposal for settlement of the Karabakh

conflict. It is impossible to find an Armenian intellectual or public figure who would intend to persuade the nation to return the occupied lands. The whole ideology is based on establishment and legalization of the second Armenian state in the territory of Azerbaijan. Political leadership of Armenia doesn't show any constructivism in negotiations. Application of public diplomacy in such situation will go for nothing.

On the other hand, the conflict caused heavy casualties and bloodshed narrows the chances of public diplomacy. On the background of the Khojaly genocide committed by Armenians in Karabakh and other military crimes, the policy of robbery and plunder in the occupied areas, obliteration of the Azerbaijani historical-cultural monuments any public diplomacy initiative with Armenia arouses irritation in the Azerbaijan society.

Along with that, it is admissible that whenever the peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan will bring any accord, then the role of public diplomacy will certainly rise, as the accord with society is inevitable for realization of the would-be-reached agreement. Thus, the public diplomacy can be effective when the negotiations reach any real advance. Yet Armenia doesn't display any interest in this. On the contrary, the Armenian state makes attempts to persuade public opinion into the possibility of legitimization of the fact of aggression. And this has become also an instrument for the ruling circles in Yerevan to keep power in their hands.

The developments predict that how radical and irritating the application of public diplomacy is for society, in case of reaching a consensus, all ways are acceptable to bring the idea of peaceful co-existence to the people. Otherwise, should the conflict be solved, the local clashes will be inevitable.

In general, taking into account the tempo of development of this sphere the followings can be proposed. Public diplomacy should actively be used both by the state's central foreign relations bodies and the foreign relations organizations abroad, as well as by the NGOs, separate socio-political leaders, numerous representatives of society.

In this case, the public diplomacy activity should include the below listed items:

- every act able to promote mutual interstate understanding both in the country and beyond its borders;
- the recommendations on creation of "public image" of the state;
- steps aiming at finding and elimination of the sources of misunderstanding;
- the activities of foreign relations bodies to expand sphere of influence through appropriate propaganda, meetings, gatherings, video demonstrations;
- any steps aiming at promotion to improvement of relations between the foreign relations bodies and public.

In particular, in parallel with the official foreign policy bodies of Azerbaijan, the creation of "National Public Relations Departments" in the foreign countries and their activity can increase our successes in the field of foreign policy even more.

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