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Трансформация публичной дипломатии под влиянием современного кризиса международных отношений: Российско-Африканский вектор

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Аннотация. Введение. В статье представлены результаты авторского исследования, в котором выделены современные тенденции развития публичной дипломатии, концептуализирована публичная дипломатия через призму основных парадигм исследования международных отношений, уточнено понятие «кризис международных отношений». Вместе с тем анализ подвергнуты влияние современного кризиса международных отношений на основные практики публичной дипломатии, публичная дипломатия России в ее африканском направлении, состояние и перспективы публичной дипломатии собственно африканских стран. **Материалы и методы.** Работа основана на концепциях, связанных как с информационной войной в целом, так и с публичной дипломатией в частности. **Результаты и обсуждение.** В данной работе выделены три ключевые тенденции развития публичной дипломатии: объектное расширение, субъектное расширение и цифровизация. **Заключение.** Данное исследование решало ряд задач: выявляло общие современные тенденции развития публичной дипломатии, анализировало изменения в публичной дипломатии России в Африке в условиях текущего кризиса в международных отношениях и др. Однако некоторые вопросы требуют дальнейшего рассмотрения.

Ключевые слова: публичная дипломатия, кризис международных отношений, мировая

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Research article

Transformation of Public Diplomacy under the Influence of the Current Crisis in International Relations: the Russian-African Vector

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Abstract. Introduction. The article presents the results of the author's research, which highlights modern trends in the development of public diplomacy, conceptualizes public diplomacy through the prism of the main paradigms of international relations research, and clarifies the concept of "crisis of international relations". At the same time, the analysis examines the impact of the current crisis of international relations on the main practices of public diplomacy, Russia's public diplomacy in its African direction, the state and prospects of public diplomacy in African countries.

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Materials and methods. The work is based on concepts related to both information warfare in general and public diplomacy in particular. **Results and discussion.** This paper identifies three key trends in the development of public diplomacy: object-based expansion, subject-based expansion, and digitalization. **Conclusion.** This study addressed a number of objectives—it identified general contemporary trends in the development of public diplomacy, analyzed changes in Russia's public diplomacy in Africa during the current crisis in international relations, and so on. However, some issues require further consideration.

Keywords: public diplomacy, crisis of international relations, world politics, theories of international relations, public diplomacy of Russia

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Introduction. The importance of protection from hostile information pressure is widely recognized today. It's no coincidence that many share the opinion that in the modern world, a winner is determined not only by the success of their military, but also by the success of their discursive narratives. In this context, public diplomacy is becoming a type of foreign policy activity designed to address information security challenges. Public diplomacy is not a new subject of academic research; however, under the conditions described above, its importance has significantly increased, along with the need for a new political science understanding of it.

The modern world is experiencing a crisis of international relations, defined as the growth of conflictual interactions within the international system and the expanding opportunities for shifting established alliances and hierarchies. Today, scholars speak of the emergence of a multipolar world, turbulence in global politics, and the bifurcation of the global order. Essentially, these processes reflect a crisis of international relations. Such a crisis, among other things, imposes new restrictions on public diplomacy, generates new problems, and poses new challenges for those responsible for influencing foreign public opinion. Consequently, there is a need for political science research into the impact of the crisis of international relations on the parameters and content of public diplomacy in various national contexts.

Materials and Methods. The empirical basis of the study consists of reports from Russian and foreign think tanks focusing on international relations, official strategic planning documents from Russia and other countries, statements and comments from foreign ministries, embassy publications, and other sources.

The work is based on concepts related to both information warfare in general and public diplomacy in particular. D. Nye's concept of "soft power" and D. Ronfeldt and D. Arquilla's concept of "noopolitics" laid the foundations for the author's understanding of public diplomacy [1; 2]. The concepts of "new public diplomacy" by J. Melissen, "digitalization of public diplomacy" by I. Manor, and "three-part public diplomacy" by D. Pamment helped to identify trends in the development of modern public diplomacy [3; 4; 5]. The author also turned to applied research methods, such as content analysis and case study analysis.

Research Methodology. Three groups of scientific literature can be distinguished, the subject of which is close to the topic of this study. The first group includes works devoted to public diplomacy in general. Russian researchers D.N. Baryshnikov, A.V. Dolinsky, M.M. Lebedeva [6; 7; 8], as well as foreign ones E. Gilboa, N. Call, N. Snow [9; 10; 11] examine the general theoretical aspects of public diplomacy.

In the second group, which includes the works of A.A. Velikaya, T.V. Zonova, N.Yu. Markushina, N.L. Parfenenko [12; 13; 14] and others, the emphasis is on the public diplomacy of individual states and their associations. Among foreign scholars, this area is studied by N. Al-Tamimi, A. Amin, N. Zarrinabadi, Y. Turhan, T. Hong, S. Zhang [15; 16; 17] and others.

The authors of the third group focus on certain geographical directions of public diplomacy of individual states, for example, on the public diplomacy of Russia, China or the

USA in Africa (O.G. Karpovich, E.E. Solonovich, J.-B.N. Tamundele, R.N. Shangaraev [18; 19; 20]; E.T. Ambrosetti, T. Amejav-Brobby, I. Bokstad, K. Mboya [21; 22; 23; 24], etc.)

Results and discussion. Public diplomacy, which is the activity of influencing foreign public opinion to advance foreign policy interests, is subject to various factors, which largely determine its development trends. This paper identifies three key trends in the development of public diplomacy: object-based expansion, subject-based expansion, and digitalization.

The first trend concerns audiences. Separating internal and external audiences contradicts the realities of an interconnected world, since information addressed to one inevitably reaches the other.

The second trend concerns the number of participants in public diplomacy. Today, public diplomatic communications increasingly involve three participants: the initiator of public diplomacy, external and internal audiences, and an actor or actors attempting to undermine or complicate the communication relationship between the first two.

The third trend in the development of public diplomacy is related to its digitalization. The global media landscape forces foreign policy agencies to consider messages disseminated by individuals and groups on social media, to constantly compete with state and non-state actors in the digital space, and, given the digital fragmentation of the public diplomacy audience, to simultaneously utilize a wide range of communication channels.

The main paradigms of international relations research interpret public diplomacy differently. Neorealism views it merely as a complement to "hard power," while neoliberalism sees it as a component of "smart power," whose purpose is to replace "hard power" when and where its application is ineffective. Unlike neorealism and neoliberalism, constructivism accords public diplomacy a relatively independent meaning, making it more useful for analyzing its various aspects and manifestations.

In constructivism, diplomacy is generally associated with intercultural, or more precisely, interstate dialogue, aimed not only at shaping relations between its participants but also at developing their identities through positive and negative interactions. During interstate dialogue, narratives are promoted that facilitate mutual understanding among states and strengthen a sense of shared norms and interests.

Constructivists draw a clear distinction between public diplomacy and traditional diplomacy, believing that the former's importance has grown dramatically and continues to grow in the modern world. Constructivists understand public diplomacy as a form of diplomatic activity by a state aimed at creating and maintaining a positive image on the international stage. They emphasize that subsequent image maintenance is no less important than its initial formation.

The formation and maintenance of a nation's image is achieved through the dissemination of desired ideas and values, which links public diplomacy with soft power. The meaning and practice of public diplomacy, as constructivists argue, are determined by the identity of the state implementing it and the roles that flow from that identity.

In the field of international relations, three types of crisis can be distinguished: 1) foreign policy crisis, 2) international crisis and 3) crisis of international relations.

A foreign policy crisis is a situation affecting the vital foreign policy interests of a particular state or group of states. An international crisis is a situation in which the likelihood of war between two or more conflicting states increases sharply. An international relations crisis is a situation in which an existing conflict transforms the international system and affects all or nearly all states to varying degrees. An international relations crisis differs from an international crisis in three ways: scale, complexity, and consequences.

The study formulates a combined definition of an international relations crisis, incorporating both procedural and structural components. Based on this definition, an international relations crisis should be understood as a situation in which the volume and intensity of conflictual interactions increases, destabilizing the international system and placing it in a state of disequilibrium, leading to a shift in established alliances and hierarchies.

The current global situation can be characterized as a crisis of international relations, which affects various aspects of foreign policy activity, including public diplomacy of many states.

The current crisis in international relations has affected the public diplomacy practices of various states. However, the public diplomacy of countries openly challenging existing hierarchies and blocs on the global stage and declaring the inevitability of multipolarity has been greatly impacted. Although the crisis has impacted all forms of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting have been particularly vulnerable, as evidenced, among other things, by the expansion of networks of cultural centers, educational exchanges, and information influence agents. Many states advocating multipolarity have adjusted their cultural diplomacy modes—popularization, language, education, cooperation, and diaspora—in an effort to adapt to new conditions and improve their global political positions. While recognizing the importance of the practical component of diaspora policy, which involves supporting and assisting compatriots abroad, these states are placing increased emphasis on its political and applied component, as diasporas can serve as a source of information about the situation in their countries of residence and act as intermediaries, facilitating contacts with relevant politicians or other influential figures in the host country.

The current crisis in international relations has impacted not only the cultural but also the educational and communication aspects of interstate interaction. The global information space, which has become one of the sites of confrontation during this crisis, is filled with numerous half-truths and outright false images that hinder an objective understanding of history and current political processes among certain audiences.

When expressing interest in a particular foreign audience, states are forced to establish direct contacts with citizens of other countries to ensure understanding of their foreign policy and historical circumstances. Through exchange diplomacy, states that question existing hierarchies and blocs on the global stage today strive to shape their so-called "three-dimensional image" among the international students they invite to study—an image that guarantees an unbiased and objective assessment of their domestic and foreign policy activities, their strategic goals, and their motives.

The current crisis in international relations, accompanied by an escalation of information warfare, is forcing such states to also improve the quality and territorial reach of their international broadcasting, increasing its funding and expanding their communications networks across various regions of the planet. At the same time, in an era of intense information competition, which involves a wide variety of disinformation campaigns and a multi-layered information system, maintaining the foreign public's confidence in the impartiality and objectivity of their own information channels is particularly important.

Russia is currently one of the countries declaring the usefulness of multipolarity and the need to revise established hierarchies and blocs on the global stage. Consequently, the crisis in international relations has significantly transformed its public diplomacy, which it views as a means of achieving its recently revised geopolitical goals.

The African dimension of its public diplomacy serves as an example in this regard. Russia's uniqueness as a public diplomacy actor in this region lies in its historical alliances with many African countries, but lacks any historical experience of imperialism.

The crisis in international relations is forcing the development of new ideological models for public diplomacy that differ from established ones. For example, Russia, a proponent of a multipolar world, is applying a model in Africa that incorporates three principles: inclusiveness (multilateralism), non-interference (anti-imperialism), and conservatism (traditionalism). This model differs significantly from those previously used by both Russia itself and other states on the continent.

Russia currently advocates for the expansion of African countries' presence in international institutions, emphasizes the "sanctity" of sovereignty to African countries, criticizes

foreign interference in their affairs, especially by former colonial powers, and emphasizes traditional values and political stability.

The crisis in international relations has triggered a revival of African public diplomacy. However, a number of challenges remain that hinder its improvement.

Firstly, there is a very limited number of academic studies devoted to African public diplomacy, both within African countries and outside the continent.

Secondly, the overall goal of African public diplomacy is the economic development of individual countries; it is economically centric in its aims and content. However, this approach hinders the full development of African public diplomacy.

Thirdly, the African continent has now become a unique platform for the implementation of public diplomacy by Western, Asian, and other states, which contributes to the rooting in African countries of the idea that it is impossible to compete with leading global players and to develop their own effective public diplomacy.

Overall, public diplomacy in African states remains at a traditional level: states attempt to "sell" tailored information to foreign audiences. However, more and more African leaders are recognizing the need to embrace new public diplomacy models.

First and foremost, their communication models need to be improved, and a transition to the widespread use of digital public diplomacy tools is needed. Currently, the digital platforms used by African diplomatic structures serve as "bulletin boards" rather than channels for dialogic communication. In many African countries, diplomatic training does not include training in the potential of modern ICTs. With a few exceptions, African foreign ministries, embassies, and heads of state lack the dynamism and flexibility that are crucial for embedding a digital culture in public diplomacy.

However, the redefinition of identities and roles by African countries, triggered by the crisis in international relations, makes it a priority for them to build relationships with foreign publics through both state structures and non-state actors, taking into account the sentiments of domestic audiences and utilizing the full potential of digital technologies.

Conclusion. This study addressed a number of objectives—it identified general contemporary trends in the development of public diplomacy, analyzed changes in Russia's public diplomacy in Africa during the current crisis in international relations, and so on. However, some issues require further consideration.

The Russian-African perspective can be complemented by other regional and spatial units of analysis, particularly the Middle East, East Asia, and Latin America. Each has its own specific characteristics, the identification of which will not only allow for a better understanding of public diplomacy from a Russian-African perspective, but also for comparison and classification of the factors, problems, and trends characteristic of this type of diplomatic activity.

This study traces specific ways in which the current crisis in international relations is influencing public diplomacy practices such as cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting. However, the impact is not limited to these areas. For example, the study concludes that during the information warfare accompanying the crisis in international relations, unfriendly countries are attempting to distort history and misrepresent political processes unfolding in Russia today, calling for different approaches and intensified direct engagement with foreign publics. However, in the context of information warfare and crisis, third-party mediated communications are also being intensified and reformatted, an issue not sufficiently addressed in this dissertation and may become the subject of future research.

Applied public diplomacy research focused on developing and substantiating recommendations based on recent global developments may be considered promising. Global politics is constantly undergoing changes, many of which undermine existing forecasts and invalidate previously practical conclusions. For example, a change of government (such as in January 2025 in the United States) or mass protests (such as in March 2025 in Turkey) in one country introduce certain adjustments to the public diplomacy practices of other countries,

requiring prompt academic analysis and the development of an action plan that takes into account the potential consequences.

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