

The Impact of New Technologies on International Communication: The Case of Public Diplomacy

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The events in North Africa in the spring of 2011 again attracted the attention of the world public opinion to social media because of their use by opposition for initiating a social change. The paper raises the question whether social media might play any role in international communication. To answer the question, the case of public diplomacy as a form of political international communication of Central and Eastern European newcomers to the European Union is analyzed. Social media are seen as tools supporting the old networks built thanks to classical tools of diplomacy and contributing to the development of new digital networks. However, the analysis of using of social media by ministries and ministers of foreign affairs as hubs or knots of networks in public diplomacy does not convince as to their any contribution to the development of the relational model of public diplomacy in the region. More optimism might be derived from the online presence of the Belsat television, a channel broadcasting in Belarusian from Poland to Belarus in order to achieve social changes through international broadcasting and social media.

Key words: social media, public diplomacy, international communication, new media

The revolutions in North Africa again attracted the attention of western public to this region and displayed a huge gap in the knowledge about it. The reasons for this gap are easily visible. Due to the process of commercialization of the media and crisis of printed press, many editors and publishers dismissed foreign correspondents. The decision to reduce the body of correspondents was easy for them since they expected to rely on Internet sources. As a result, during the revolts in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, viewers received messages from consulates, expats leaving in Africa or acquaintances who were available there. Eventually, they relied on such sources as Marks & Spencer. Reporting about the

situation in Tripoli (Libya) on the 24 May 2011, the Sky News television reassured the viewers that the situation was tranquil as “M&S in the city still operates”.

At the same moment Al Jazeera (broadcasting in English since 2006) made a profit from its net of offices and correspondents in Africa. Launched in 1996 as a result of co-operation with BBC, with journalists trained by a British public broadcaster’s team, it won new viewers and much credibility when covering the revolutions in North Africa. The North Africa revolutions will have the impact on Al Jazeera, similarly to the importance of Iraq in 1991 for the CNN. The same might be said about Al Arabiya, as both are mentioned as most

important, although quite different, sources of information from North Africa.

The proliferation of Al Jazeera and the impact social media had in North Africa in the beginning of 2011 were possible due to the revolutions taking place regularly in human history in relation to the implementation of media. It was satellite television and telecommunication, computers, Internet Web 2.0 and live streaming, mobile phones and text messaging, which eventually enforced enormous changes in the conduct, understanding and patterns of international communication. International communication (as international broadcasting and public diplomacy) is still important, but the group of actors includes more entities now than thirty years ago. International communication nowadays is targeted at both mass and, more narrowly, at niche audiences thanks to the new media. New technologies create an opportunity to develop more symmetry in the patterns of international communication.

It should be noted that the initial phase of revolutions in North Africa caught the attention of international audiences due to the role the social media, especially text messaging, played in the preparation of and during demonstrations. Whereas the old system of international broadcasting still seems to work, text messaging and other social media contribute more and more to the logics of social change. Nevertheless, it would be too optimistic to claim that social media enhance democracy. The cases of countries in which digital tools helped in achieving social or political change, as Spain in 2004 and Moldova in 2009, were followed by failures in Belarus 2006 and Iran 2009. The success depends very much

on the public sphere in the country: on the position of the opposition, its impact on public discourse, and the presence of oppositional scenarios for the development of society. The impact social media may have on social change gives them simultaneously more significance in international relations.

Social media (symmetrical media) will be understood here as new communication technologies allowing individuals to intensify social contacts while sharing content, engaging in discussion, but also controlling content via networks they participate in. By self-presentation they contribute to the construction of identity¹. For political actors it means that social media might be used purposefully for image building and cannot be neglected as they serve as sites for deconstructing images and identities.

Can we say that the role social media start playing in the political upheaval will spread to international relations and especially to public diplomacy?

Public diplomacy is understood here as a form of political international communication aimed at the public abroad. The task of public diplomacy is to create or reinforce a positive image of a country and its society and, by influencing public opinion, to shape positive attitudes toward the country and thus to make easier the achievement of international policy goals. It should be understood as a long-term, symmetric, dialogical communication of governments and non-state organizations with broad audiences abroad. The analysis will relate to the model of public diplo-

¹ Rettberg, J., "Freshly generated for you, and Barack Obama": How Social Media Represent Your Life. "European Journal of Communication", 24, 2009, p. 451-466.

macy which has been elaborated by new members of the European Union, Central and Eastern European countries which joined the European Community in 2004 and 2007. I find this region suitable for research because these countries have simultaneously redefined their foreign policy (it resulted in the implementation of public diplomacy) and opened the media systems (with the effect of re-joining the system of international communication).

Public diplomacy was implemented in Central and Eastern European countries in the late nineties during the EU accession process. The process was a two-step one: firstly, branding was implemented to make the country brands respond to the new statehood, new regime and reflect changes of the national identity. It occurred at the moment when the new tools of communication changed the conduct of foreign policy by affecting especially public diplomacy and turning it into a new public diplomacy.

Social media (blogs, Twitter as a micro blog, Facebook, Flickr and You Tube) force one to rethink the concept of international communication and public diplomacy as its form. The patterns we know as implementable for international flow of messages before the end of the twentieth century need revision. I would claim that public diplomacy as one of the tools of foreign policy, at the same moment understood as a form of political international communication, makes a suitable case to follow the need and to understand the character of changes. Social media display the changes that affect the conduct of international broadcasting. In the classical understanding, international broadcasting was used for propaganda and early public

diplomacy campaigns to inform the public abroad about the country and to proliferate other messages. Thus, public diplomacy requires more engagement than propaganda as it operates in the situation of many sources of information available for the target audience and includes the dialogue with the audience and eventually – due to symmetry – the interchange of roles. International broadcasting, despite the interactivity of many means of communication, proliferates messages in line with the asymmetrical “push” model. Public diplomacy nowadays has to respond to the development of network society with the use of social media which serve as source of information about the audience and at the same time allow to share information, to reach niche audiences, to engage in relations with niche target groups and eventually to build relations. Dialogue and symmetry suggest that the relation built thanks to social media should be mutually beneficial. The notion comes from the definition of public relations implemented for both commercial and nonprofit organizations.

Using social media, users construct their identities through autopresentation and a dialogue with other users.² Twitter allows also monitoring the public opinion at home and abroad to discover early signs of the coming crisis. The profile on Facebook expresses the identity, and at the same time its interactivity reveals the perception of the profile by other users. It has been used to mobilize supporters while constructing issue alliances, to create networks and turn them into real power. Facebook has now more entrances than Google (2011), which

² Smith, B.G., *Socially Distributing Public Relations: Twitter, Haiti and Interactivity in Social Media*. “Public Relations Review”, 36 (2010), p. 330.

contributes to its growing popularity as a means of foreign policy.

Text messaging anticipates real time meeting: it prepares to meeting with the country and society. After the real time encounter, it follows the results – to preserve experiences, acquaintances, memories. It means that the new public diplomacy, while involving social media, might respond well to the relationship model as developed by R. Zaharna³. It stresses mutual benefits by the participants of the public diplomacy process. In this regard, public diplomacy as a network agency is better understood in the frame given by the global but not the international communication. The global dimension in respect to communication means equal patterns of communication of states / governments and non-state actors. All participants of the process learn to adjust to network society and to the logic of governance. On the one hand, as a result, governments learn the logic of public relations and economize foreign policy by conducting the foreign-image policy⁴. On the other hand, commercial entities learn to adjust to the network society and implement the Corporate Social Responsibility efforts. New actors of international relations as non-state organizations (like Multi National Corporations, MNC) have an impact which results from the shift of power from the governments. Old and new non-state actors of international communication participate in the networks that incorporate

the ability of modern communication to interchange the roles of communicators and receivers. All participants of networks are potential communicators. This change of roles is hardly acceptable for officials, especially MFA officers perceiving international relations hierarchically. Thus, social media give many opportunities for listening and engaging, which did not belong to the traditional, classical skills of diplomats. Foreign audiences/consumers turn into stakeholders. These changes illustrate the specifics of global communication as a continuation of the era of international communication. It should be borne in mind that the idea of M. Kraidy, constitutive for his critical transculturalism, that “intercultural relations are unequal”⁵ is still valid for global communication.

The frame given to the analysis of public diplomacy by international communication gives a lot of significance to the role of the government in public diplomacy. Changes in the international environment – described as the emergence of a noosphere⁶ – signalize still an important but changing role of the state both in international communication and in public diplomacy as its form. The growing participation and significance of non-state actors in international relations (international communication) weaken the position of the state. The development of the sphere of media defines the limits of the controlling function of the state in public diplomacy. However, the same tools used

³ Zaharna, R.S., *The Soft Power Differential: Network Communication and Mass Communication in Public Diplomacy*. “The Hague Journal of Diplomacy” Vol. 2(3), 2007, p. 213–222.

⁴ The notion of foreign image policy comes from: Hülse, R., *The Catwalk Power: Germany’s new foreign image policy*. “Journal of International Relations and Development”, 12, 2009, p. 293–316.

⁵ Kraidy, M., *Hybridity or the Cultural Logic of Globalization*. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 2005 p. 153.

⁶ Arquilla, J., Ronfeldt, D., *The Emergence of Noopolitik. Toward an American Information Strategy*. RAND, Santa Monica 1999, p. 13, www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1033/, Retrieved 31.07. 2009.

Table 1. Public diplomacy in the frames defined by international and global communication

International communication	Global communication
Old (push) media	+ social (pull) media
Communicator – receiver	+ roles interchange
International broadcasting	global communication
Informational public diplomacy	+ relational public diplomacy
Informing and persuading	+ listening, engaging, persuading

by civil society organizations, resistance movements, terrorists, when implemented by the authoritarian governments, enable them to keep the citizens under strict surveillance.

Global communication as a frame for public diplomacy adds a new dimensions and new activities: it adds value which governments can build on. The use of the added value depends very much on governments as actors of public diplomacy, but also on the features characterizing other participants of public diplomacy and the environment in which it takes place.

The hypothesis says that public diplomacy of newcomers to the EU reflects the need of governments and non-state actors to adjust to the logic of network society and globalization understood, after A. Giddens, as an intensification of social relations worldwide⁷. Social media illustrate an important step in the development of network society. They provide NGOs, but also governmental agencies, with tools which enable them to initiate networks, coordinate them and to create issue alliances. Following the idea of globalization by A. Giddens, social media give an insight into developments in remote areas and

give them relevance, potentially affecting the life of distant communities. Last but not least, they create worldwide communities, contributing to the development of the global public opinion. Ministries of foreign affairs, while adopting public diplomacy, learn to accept the new position of a “knot” in the network of global communication.⁸ The idea of knots and networks, as developed by M. Castells, responds well to the current situation of ministries of foreign affairs conducting public diplomacy. Their officials and officers do not operate any more in a hierarchical environment, but they can preserve the co-coordinating function in public diplomacy, serving as “knots” and protecting this position. This change might be explained by the “relational” turn in the approach to public diplomacy, both in theory and practice, derived from the writings of R. Zaharna. The new, symmetric, dialogical public diplomacy tries to adopt the engagement and listening and accepts non-state organizations as actors of public diplomacy, but it hardly suggests the patterns of partnership. In this regard, studying the role of social media within the body of public diplomacy seems to make sense as it possibly brings with it-

⁷ Giddens, A., *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1991, p. 63.

⁸ Castells, M., *Spółczesność Sieci (The Rise of the Network Society)*. PWN SA, Warszawa 2007.

self more stress on relations than power. While adopting social media, the MFAs try to join the digital network and at the same time to play the role of the “knot”.

International relations and international communication as disciplines try to deal with the consequences of the development of the global network society. International broadcasting, according to the approach represented in this study, is an important part of public diplomacy, even if typical of the cold-war understanding of the agency (asymmetrical). Since the creation of Web 2.0, diplomats have been making attempts to use the new tools and adjust to the logic of network society by joining it. Building networks has been implemented in diplomatic agency for many years now. It was achieved by targeting the potential multipliers and engaging with niche publics. Early programs on cultural diplomacy and academic and student exchange had the aim to build networks. Nevertheless, they defined the ministries of foreign affairs as the power deciding on the participants of networks and their agency. Nowadays, ministries try to join the existing networks and to have an impact on them. Therefore, social media might be viewed also as new tools of old networks or “knots” which, as a result, produce new networks.

The hypothesis that what we can observe as the implementation of the new public diplomacy is the adjustment to network society and global communication as the way network societies communicate needs verification. The CEE countries implemented first efforts to build networks other than achieved thanks to the classic methods of cultural diplomacy very soon after 1989. In fact, the initiatives to win credibility internationally while establish-

ing or joining organizations of regional cooperation achieved more than this one aim. Some projects, such as the Vysehrad, Baltic or West Balkans cooperation, comprise initiatives aimed at multipliers as regional elites or students and academics. Thanks to sponsoring, grants and scholarships, new groups of stakeholders were included into the networks. Now, the ministries try to join Web 2.0 in order to use the possibilities given by global communication. Thus, the process of verification includes the research on the implementation of social media as the tools of communication by governments in their foreign policy, especially by foreign ministries conducting public diplomacy. These new tools enable the ministries to reach the publics, while giving them possibilities to derive and exchange information about politics and culture from the Internet and to engage them into relations.

The implementation of the term “public diplomacy” itself, the use of it by foreign ministries worldwide, developing the tools of what we call public diplomacy depend very much on the cultural background as far as foreign policy reflects the basic values and attitudes of society and its political culture. The implementation of public diplomacy in Central and Eastern European countries had been preceded by international public relations or promotion of international trade and attracting foreign investments. Thus, the national versions at the early stage would reflect the needs of transition. The stress put on economic diplomacy by the governments is visible nowadays in the structure of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Among the ten new member states, three have departments of public diplomacy (Estonia, Poland, and

Table 2. Use of social media by ministries of foreign affairs: new members of the EU (CEE countries)

Country (people with access to Internet)	blog	Twitter	Facebook	Youtube	Flickr	Virtual Embassy: Second Life	Other
Bulgaria (47,5%)		+	+				
Czech Republic (65.5%)							
www.czech.cz		+	+	+	+		
Estonia (75.1%)	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Hungary (61.8%)							
www.hungary.com				+			
Latvia (67.8%)		+		+	+		
Lithuania (59.3 %)			+	+			
Poland (58.4%)		+		+	+		blip
www.poland.gov.pl		+	+		+		
Romania (35.5 %)		+	+	+	+		
Slovakia (74.3%)							
Slovenia (64.4%)		++	+				
www.slovenia.si		+	+				

The black colour stands for the Ministries of foreign affairs present on social media, the white colour means that there are no signs of the presence of the MFA, and the grey colour relies to the promotional website of the country (profile of the country online). The latter were introduced to compare whether there are other websites than MFA with links to social media.

Romania), whereas four have departments of economic diplomacy (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia); the others have departments on information and communication or public relations (Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania).⁹ In the countries with a longer tradition of democratic rule based on market economy, economic diplomacy existed simultaneously with cultural diplomacy, and their convergence is the phenomenon of the last twenty years. It is reflected in the practice

⁹ Organisation of MFA: Bulgaria: www.mfa.bg/en/; Czech Republic: www.mzv.cz; Estonia: www.vm.ee; Hungary: www.mfa.gov.hu; Lithuania: www.urm.lt; Latvia: www.mfa.gov.lv; Poland: www.msz.gov.pl; Romania: www.mae.ro; Slovakia: www.mzv.sk; Slovenia: www.mzz.gov.si

of the new public diplomacy which integrates cultural diplomacy and promotion.

All the MFA from the region in question use their websites to proliferate information in line with the classic “push” model. The countries are also present online with their profiles. Some of them implement social media (Table 2) but have not been able yet to adjust to their network building potential. The first glimpse into the use of social media by ministries gives a picture typical rather of international than global communication.

The information presented in the table needs some explanation. The development of the infrastructure (numbers of households with the Internet, people with access to the Internet) is an independent variable.

It is obvious that the commitment of Estonia to develop all the forms of e-government, e-administration and e-democracy contributes to the implementation of social media in public diplomacy. The country is present in Second Life with its Virtual Embassy created in 2007 as the third in the world¹⁰. Estonia makes also an exception as a country which has included the blog into its social media bouquet. The blog is only in Russian, but this does not seem to be of any significance as it offers interviews, very few materials from the launch (in 2009) and no comments. Its inception must have been a reaction to awkward relations with Russia and with the Russian minority in the country after the Bronze Soldier crisis and cyber attacks on Estonia, which followed the crisis. Blog diplomacy still seems to pose many difficulties for foreign ministries. The expectations were high as was mentioned in 2007 in “Washington Post”, when the State Department of the USA implemented blogs “*departing from traditional public diplomacy techniques*”, it had (...) a “*digital outreach team*” *posting entries in Arabic or “influential” Arabic blogs to challenge misrepresentations of the United States and promote moderate views among Islamic youths in the hopes of steering them from terrorists*”¹¹. Blogs won notoriety as in some cases they turned to be false diaries of persons who have never existed but were created for persuasion purposes by governments or private persons striving for attracting large audiences¹².

¹⁰ www.vm.ee

¹¹ Pincus, W., State Department Tries Blog Diplomacy. “Washington Post”, Nov. 19, 2007, p. A15.

¹² The story of Amina as described in her “A Gay Girl in Damascus” blog turned to be a fiction written

Slovenia made the only example with a twitting foreign minister, whereas Poland’s foreign minister (R. Sikorski) twitted and bliped (since February 2010, BLIP: **Bardzo Lubię Informować Przyjaciół**: I like to inform my friends very much; BLIP is a Polish version of Twitter)¹³. R. Sikorski’s BLIP became popular as the minister has been using the informal language to comment on international relations. The Polish Foreign Minister was followed by Foreign Ministers of Sweden and Finland. In the beginning of Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2011, the BLIP won more attention at home and abroad due to some controversial – informal – published statements of the Minister, followed by Polish and foreign journalists. Foreign Ministers’ tweets contribute to the public debate on public diplomacy, illustrating how its domestic dimension works. They can also present early online networks of politicians involved in foreign relations and serve as indicators of the achieved level of co-operation between them. The analysis of followers gives an insight into the group of stakeholders who can be reached via social media as a target group.

Nevertheless, the social media implemented by the ministries of the countries taken into account do not seem to win popularity. Flickr and blog are not commented at all. The highest numbers of views on Flickr are a bit more than 3000 (Poland).

skillfully by a student from Edingborough. The girl was supposed to take part in the uprising in Syria and arrested in June 2011. Her supporters set up several Facebook pages for her release when the author admitted to blog fiction. See: <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2011>, derived on 13th of June, 2011. Some news media admitted to follow and support Amina.

¹³ www.blip.pl BLIP was launched in 2007, in 2011 it had 80 thousand registered users.

Table 3. Facebook pages of the ministries of foreign affairs, June 2011

Facebook page of	I like it
Bulgaria	1 716
Estonia	3 152
Lithuania	No data
Romania	2 060
Slovenia	229

Table 4. Youtube: ministries of foreign affairs, viewcounts, June 2011

	Channel viewcount	Viewcount of all video
Estonia	9 209	64 659
Latvia	3 959	4 031
Lithuania	1 945	64 659
Poland	15 249	80 270
Romania	15 877	106 219

Table 5. Twitter: ministries of foreign affairs, number of tweets, following, followers and listed, June 2011

	Tweets	Following	Followers	Listed
Bulgaria	248	17	706	42
Estonia	144	57	569	35
Poland	720	83	1445	114
Slovenia	530	128	205	15
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia	167	75	625	30

YouTube seems to be more popular as it relies on sharing audiovisual materials it attracts more users. Nevertheless, there are rather few signs of networking via social media as implemented by ministries of foreign affairs at the moment of research. It confirms the expectations of A. L. Shapiro (1999) that the Internet was only – “perhaps” – “redefining international diplomacy”¹⁴. The impact the Internet and social media have on public diplomacy is at the moment overestimated as the governments use new tools as a “push”

medium, targeted at niche audiences. There are hardly any signs of “participatory or collaborative methods to influence behavior” via social media as stressed by A. Fisher and S. Lucas with regard to the sense of using social media in the region.¹⁵ On the other hand, social media give more significance to citizens who would like to launch any cross-border form of cooperation. Text messaging accelerates the flow of politically relevant information

¹⁴ Shapiro, A.L., The Internet. “Foreign Policy” 1999, p. 24.

¹⁵ Fisher, A., Lucas, S., Introduction. [in:] A. Fisher, S. Lucas (eds.) *Trials of Engagement. The Future of US Public Diplomacy*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Leiden 2011, p. 8.

and does not restrict receivers to MFA officials. The MFA learn the logic of virtual public sphere and prepare for collaborative methods.

Also, in this case (Tables 3 and 4) the numbers are not significant. The case of the Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs proves that personalization results in a higher number of followers. The presence of ministers and ministries on Twitter and Facebook his potentially significant. The followers may turn to an *issue alliance* as was observed in the case of the Haiti earthquake by B.G. Smith¹⁶. As many journalists and media workers follow MFA tweets, such an alliance may contribute to defining the agenda of the media. As the Polish Section of Internet Portals within the Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy informed, in 2010 Polish websites and official social media accounts were visited 10 million times.¹⁷ It should be expected that, due to Polish Presidency, in the fall of 2011 the numbers will grew, as was in the case of Slovenia¹⁸. Such events attract the users to national portals. They impinge on the knowledge about internationally invisible small and medium-size countries.

As the cases of social media use of MFA do not provide much evidence of their impact on the development of global communication, the case of the Belsat television and its online presence will be included

into the analysis. The case is relevant as an example of international broadcasting, sponsored by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which became an important tool of the Polish public diplomacy eastwards. Launched in 2007, the television station operated by Polish public service broadcaster TVP SA was supposed to contribute to social change in Belarus while providing Belarusians with information on politics not available for them at home via censored Belarusian media. The station supports the oppositional movement “Revolution via social media” which organized demonstrations in the form of flashmobs in Minsk in 2011. Due to restrictions for terrestrial broadcasting from Poland to Belarus, the channel is broadcast via satellite and available online. At the same time the web site presents more materials as news and articles which had not been broadcast. The online version gives the Belsat opportunities to become an interactive medium. In this case, online presence is a must as for many Belarusians it is the only way to receive un censored information about politics. The Belsat reached 11% of Belarusian society in 2009, versus almost 23% in December 2010 and 16% in May 2011.¹⁹ The number of viewers increased in 2010 before and during the presidential elections. The station was the first in the country to broadcast the whole program in Belarusian²⁰. The language is associated with opposition to Lukashenka’s regime.

The Belsat and its online version reflect efforts of the Polish public diplomacy to

¹⁶ Smith, B.G., Socially distributing public relations: Twitter, Haiti and interactivity in social media. “Public Relations Review”, 36 (2010), p. 333.

¹⁷ Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, Dyplomacja publiczna 2010. 2011 (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Public Diplomacy 2010), p. 28.

¹⁸ Slovenian Presidency website www.eu2008.si was visited in six months by 765 000 users and had 3 765 000 pageviews. The numbers are significant if compared with the population of Slovenia (about 2 000 000 people).

¹⁹ Watching regularly. Zierkalo-Info. Sociologiczskie i marketingowe badania. Monitoring TV Belsat na Białorusi. Minsk 2011. Document received from Belsat Office in Warsaw.

²⁰ www.belsat.eu

reach and attract the Belarusian society, not Belarusian political elites. In 2010, 54% of Belarusians declared having access to the Internet, and 99% had access to television. As the Belsat is broadcasting via satellite television, it potentially reaches 20% of households, 64% of its audience via a satellite, 19% via the Internet and 16% via a satellite and the Internet²¹. Its viewers declare the need for watching information and political programs. The first source of information on the Belsat is made by acquaintances (53%), whereas the second largest group of viewers was informed about the station via the Internet (28%)²².

Since its launch, the Belsat has made a significant progress. As 87% of viewers trust the station and 60% explain watching it because of the opinions different from official media, it makes an outstanding oppositional source of information.²³ It can serve as a platform for public debate online, replacing the closed, official channels of information in Belarus. The Belsat, thanks to its growing audience online and high trust, illustrates the possibilities of the online media to build the promotion of democracy. It potentially creates an issue alliance for Belarusians searching for information on politics online and for people and NGOs interested in supporting social changes in Belarus.

The live streaming of the Belsat TV is followed by accounts on social media such as Twitter, Facebook and You Tube. The presence of the Belsat on Twitter is

more significant than the MFA accounts (see above). The Belsat has placed more than 6000 tweets (usually informing about new videos), it follows 572 tweets and has 1303 followers. You Tube makes a natural place for the Belsat presence. Also, in this case the Belsat is more popular than the MFA. There are almost Belsat 6000 films available on You Tube; the channel's view count exceeds 3000, and the view count of all videos approaches 3 000 000. The numbers presented here indicate that Belarus as a subject attracts more attention online and might be more effective than the universal websites of the MFA. The silent demonstrations, organized by Belarusian opposition via social media, such as flashmobs in the summer of 2011, and the numbers of followers of the Belsat social media prove the ability of social media to create an issue alliance. As the Belsat was launched by Polish institutions and is still financed by the Polish MFA and public broadcaster, the involvement of social media in the democratization of Belarus are an example of Polish public diplomacy for social changes abroad. As the station and its online presence have a short history, it is not possible to state at the moment of writing this text whether it contributes to social change or results in any "social media effect" other than mobilizing people in Belarus to take part in political flashmobs. As mentioned in the introduction, till 2011 Belarus was regarded as a negative example of the impact social media can have on politics.

Conclusion

The today's approach to international broadcasting and social media as tools of public diplomacy in CEE countries is to some extent still influenced by old pat-

²¹ Zierkalo-Info. Sociologiczeskije i markietin-gowyje issliedowanija, Białoruscy widzowie telewizji Belsat o pracy telewizji Belsat. Minsk 2011. P. 5–6, document received from Belsat Office in Warsaw.

²² Ibidem, p. 4.

²³ Ibidem, p. 7.

terns. It is visible in their concentration on the “push” model of including the media into public diplomacy and on branding. However, the opening of the economies and media systems resulted in working out new approaches to international communication and eventually in including social media into it. The institutions conducting public diplomacy in the region seem to understand the relationship-building potential of social media with foreign publics. Social media as used by MFA in the region have the potential to shape the identity and image of the country. Small nations, such as Slovenia during its presidency of the EU Council, or Estonia due to its Weblog efforts, achieve niche publics with a network building potential and provide networks of journalists, editors and media workers with access to first-hand sources of information in the form of social media. Social media become relevant tools in their efforts to fight against invisibility. The “knot” role is being tested by MFAs in case the participation in digital networks might empower in the future. Issue alliances seem to be very promising tools for mobilizing support for foreign policy purposes. The ministers take the opportunity to send personalized messages about foreign policy and in this way to set the agenda of the media. But the active use of Twitter is

not any rule. It depends very much on the personality and willingness of politicians to use the new media as the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have not yet elaborated coherent strategies of public diplomacy or did not include social media into the strategies.

Social media in the region under study are hardly used for relation-building with the domestic public in order to discuss the basics of foreign policy; even in Hungary, where the PR Department is supposed to explain the concepts of foreign policy to Hungarians, it has been done without using social media. In this regard, Estonia makes again an exception as the Estonian MFA seems to be more active in the implementation of these new tools.

The Belsat case illustrates the opportunities created by supplementation of the old media with their online versions and at the same time by social media. In this case, the issue alliance consists first of all of TV viewers but becomes active and visible as a social media community. The “Revolution via social media” movement proves that social media might support civil society and empower NGOs.

Eventually, it should be stressed that the observations noted in the analysis fit the very early stage of employing social media for the purposes of public diplomacy.

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