



© 2016 Iryna Sukhorolska

This is an open access article distributed under the CC-BY 3.0 License.

Date of acceptance: November 24, 2015

Date of publication: January 3, 2016

Review article

UDC 327.82:659.44]:321.7(100-194)

## PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OF WESTERN WORLD COUNTRIES AS A TOOL OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

**Iryna Sukhorolska, PhD Candidate**

*Political Science and International Relations Department,*

*Lviv Polytechnic National University – Lviv, Ukraine*

*sukhorolska[at]lp.edu.ua*

### **Abstract**

*Public diplomacy is an effective, steadily evolving foreign policy tool used all over the world. In the context of current global trends promoting one's own values and the way of thinking as an objective of public diplomacy is of special interest. Democracy and human rights are among the main values of the Western countries and are promoted by them through a wide range of measures aimed at foreign country's authorities as well as foreign public including different target audiences. This paper addresses the foundations of public diplomacy activity aimed at democracy promotion abroad. It states that the value of democracy is advantageous to public diplomacy of the West and allows it to hold leading positions offering an attractive model of development for the rest of the world. Democratization measures in conditions of gradual development of democratic institutions as well as in crisis situations are considered.*

*Key words: public diplomacy; democratization; democracy promotion; civil society*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Current processes of globalization and informatization are conducive to enhancing the role of individuals in foreign policy making. Relations among states shift from closed intergovernmental negotiations to the open dialogue in which everyone can participate. Under such circumstances, international actors pay more and more attention to communication with foreign audience within activity designated by the term “public diplomacy”. The objectives of one's public diplomacy may be various – from the presentation of the country and its advantages up to spreading of its own view of the problems and the ways of their resolving. Taking into consideration the fact that consolidation and support of democracy has been generally recognized reference point of the West for quite a long time democratic values have direct impact on the foreign policy including public diplomacy of Western countries and organizations. Hence the objectives of this research are as follows: to trace the foundation and sources of democracy promotion within public diplomacy; to define the place and efficiency of foreign public diplomacy measures in the process of country's democratization; to investigate appropriate ways of influence of the Western public diplomacy on the formation of democratic institutions.

## DEMOCRATIZATION AND FOREIGN POLICY

Democracy is one of the most important political values and the criterion of expediency of political activity. Promoting democracy in the world is the basic objective of the foreign policy of Western countries declared in a number of official documents. In particular, EU member-states in provisions concerning external actions of the Treaty on European Union consider democracy as a major principle followed by the EU on the international scene. Among the aims of EU foreign policy, consolidation and support of democracy, the rule of law, human rights are placed immediately after the safeguarding of Union “values, fundamental interests, security, independence and integrity” and precede economic, peacemaking, and other objectives, not less important (TEU 2010, art. 21).

In the USA promotion of democracy in the world is also stated in a series of legislative documents. The law states that promoting freedom and democracy in foreign countries is a fundamental component of US foreign policy. It also defines corresponding units and their tasks within the State Department (22 U.S.C. § 8211). In 2004, the law ensuring promoting democracy and human rights by the President and the Department of State at international organizations was adopted (Waller 2007, 503). Throughout the last century the representatives of two dominant international relation theories – liberalism and realism – considered this problem. Starting with Woodrow Wilson, liberalists entertain an opinion that political regime has direct influence on foreign policy and only democratic states can peacefully coexist for a long time, successfully cooperating in different spheres. Thus, the expansion of democracy is first of all advantageous for the USA and necessary to provide their national security. The position of realists is quite opposite. In their opinion, capacity building and forming alliances with powerful states (including authoritarian ones) is of paramount priority, and they consider democratization of other states to be a threat for the US international domination (Doyle 2000; McFaul 2009, 12). Despite the fact that ideas of realism are influential, the US government policy over the past decades firmly demonstrates adherence to the idea of spreading democracy in the world. Michael McFaul, one of the prominent scholars in the field of democratization and the former US Ambassador to Russia believes that democracy as a constitutive norm of the West today is stronger than ever before and is equally important for foreign policy of the Western states on the both sides of the Atlantic (McFaul 2004, 148; Magen and McFaul 2009, 2). In fact, the necessity of democratization can be inferred from the standpoint of realism since it facilitates achieving many pragmatic aims in various spheres. In particular, the level of democracy closely correlates with economic development, social welfare, stability in the region while problems caused by authoritarianism in the age of globalization gradually spread to other countries and regions.

It should be pointed out that democracy is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon and that many factors influence its development. All this does not allow us to assert that there exist certain universal rules which would guarantee success of the process of democratization and besides failures en route create favorable basis for spreading alternative theories about advantages of stability, traditional ways of ruling, and “strong power”.

## **PUBLIC DIPLOMACY INFLUENCE ON THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIZATION**

Investigations of democracy on the example of various societies and within a wide temporal range made it possible to define a number of factors and conditions (foreign and domestic, objective and subjective) which being caused by activity or inactivity of the people can influence the establishment of country's democratic system. Many of them are directly bound with certain characteristics, values and peculiarities of society present in this or that state. Among such preconditions one should primarily point out well-developed civil society, outnumbering middle-class, high level of political culture, mass education, rationalistic world outlook (Baurmann and Zintl 2006; Колодій 2009, 55). The above-mentioned factors are also closely connected with political and economic preconditions of democracy and as a rule cannot exist without each other.

Besides these preconditions, scholars also distinguish other characteristics important for the consolidation of democratic regime in a long-term perspective. In particular, we mean intellectual capacities of citizens to perform the tasks set by democracy; psychological characteristics such as ability to limit oneself (which is especially urgent when a person comes to power), a desire to come to compromise and reach a consensus; openness to cooperation as well as an ability of society to defend democracy against domestic and international threats (Cohen 1971, 105; Schmitter and Karl 1991).

It is obvious that creation of such society is a complex and long-lasting process for which foreign influence may play an important role (this idea has been firmly maintained in numerous investigations of late (Thiel 2010, 18; Lavenex 2013). The whole spectrum of such broad-scale influence in the period of globalization and the Internet is difficult to estimate in one way. Activity of governmental structures and appropriate non-governmental organizations of Western democracies in this direction designated as public diplomacy is the subject of our interest.

As it has already been mentioned, democracy promotion in the world is one of the main officially defined aims of public diplomacy of the USA and EU Member States. For instance, in the American legislation concerning rendering assistance to other countries it is stated that among the means of establishing democratic and free society there are international exchanges and other forms of public diplomacy. Support of non-governmental organizations, independent mass media, etc. stipulated by the law are directly related to public diplomacy (22 U.S.C. § 2295). Spreading freedom, democracy and human rights is included in the list of tasks of the Department of State in the sphere of public diplomacy (22 U.S.C. § 2732). Similar judicial provisions for support of civil society development for the sake of democratization exist in European countries and the EU.

However, problems of correlation of democratization with other public diplomacy objectives, which reflect more pragmatic interests of these countries, and real content of such an activity, which has direct impact on its effectiveness, remain debatable. In this context, one may state that the idea of democratization is advantageous to public diplomacy of the Western countries and allows them to hold leading positions in this sphere throughout many decades. This is conditioned by the strategic need for the state to have and advance within public diplomacy certain universal ideas and values understandable and appealing to a broad foreign audience (Nye 2004, 11).

Absence of this idea allows us to speak of achieving only fragmentary results and tactical goals. For instance, paying great attention to and exploiting huge resources for foreign informational activity Russia was not able to create such an idea basis (Fominykh 2010, 75). Its concepts of “Russian world”, laudation of imperial and Soviet past appeal only to a very limited foreign audience.

Application of ideas of democracy for the aims of public diplomacy creates not only advantages for the state but imposes on it certain obligations and limitations. To promote democracy the state as such, should comply with high democratic standards. Its behavior on the international arena as well as openness and transparency of the very efforts of spreading democracy are also important. Any deviations from democracy (as an example mass surveillance on the Internet, violation of the rights of prisoners, brutal suppression of peaceful protests) or application of hard power tools shake confidence in public diplomacy and add arguments to ideological opponents of democracy.

On the other hand, presence of high democratic standards in the state creates for it unprecedented possibilities for involving into activity within public diplomacy broad range of non-governmental actors, including civil society organizations, social activists, prominent persons, and young people with the aim of spreading democracy. In modern conditions, this factor is the main thing for increasing efficiency of public diplomacy and its transition to a qualitatively new stage (Scott-Smith and Mos 2009, 227).

## **DEMOCRATIZATION MEASURES WITHIN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

Measures of communication with foreign audiences for the sake of democratization depending on the conditions in which they are carried out can be divided into two groups: measures in conditions of gradual development of democratic institutions and in the period of crisis. In the former special attention within public diplomacy of Western states is paid to the support of non-governmental organizations. Major instruments for this purpose are awarding grants, organization of studies (e.g. concerning defense of their rights including electoral ones, influence on state authorities, organization of activity, achieving definite aims in various spheres, winning over persons with the same views, creating network structures, etc.), meetings, visits abroad to gain experience. Other important non-governmental target groups are independent media, analytical and research structures and of late – individual social media activists and bloggers (Dale 2009).

In particular, in the United States USAID, the Department of State, the National Endowment for Democracy, as well as other structures directly or indirectly connected with the government are engaged in financing such an activity. For instance, the National Endowment for Democracy, an organization established by US Congress in 1983, carries on activity in 90 countries of the world. Only in 2012 it awarded more than 60 grants (rating from 15 to 359 thousand dollars) to Ukrainian non-governmental organizations, mass media, analytical and academic institutions. Other Western countries such as Germany, Poland that act both independently and within the framework of EU institutions and agencies are active in this sphere in Ukraine. For example, in 2013 setting up of the European Endowment for Democracy was initiated by Poland. Its statute stipulates activity in the form of financial support of “pro-democratic movements and other pro-democratic actors in favor of pluralistic multiparty system on democratic ground; social movements and actors; civil society organizations; emerging leaders, independent media and

journalists” (European Endowment for Democracy 2012). Hence, target audience of such assistance is a broad range of civil society institutions. Besides, the Endowment carries on a limited number of their own measures, such as the organization of seminars, studies, publications, training etc. In the previous period for such purposes there was functioning the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights the budget of which in the period from 2007 to 2013 exceeded 1 billion Euros (Гаврилова 2013, 34).

Such activity of the above mentioned and similar structures is not always positively apprehended by the authorities of former non-democratic countries that declared adherence to democracy. Sometimes, such authorities resort to banning or limiting the activity of foreign funds and agencies, as well as internal NGOs seeking their help. In this context it is necessary to mention Russian reaction to “Orange revolution threat”, namely closing of regional centers of British Council across Russia in 2007-2008 or adopting of amendments to legislation of the Russian Federation on regulation of activity of non-commercial organizations functioning as foreign agents (Orlova 2009; Reshetnikov 2007). Similar legislative innovations have become one of the main reasons for escalation of Euromaidan protests in Ukraine (Civic Solidarity Platform 2014). As an argument for such measures the ruling regime adduces struggle with interference in the internal affairs, defense of sovereignty, national security and territorial integrity. It should be mentioned that each separate case is specific and that the stand taken by the country’s authorities is not always groundless. However, such limitations of foreign support for the development of their own civil society are not peculiar to genuine democratic regimes. Western democracies should take into account the possibility of controversial apprehension of foreign support for democracy by the authorities and target audience while implementing public diplomacy.

Another point of criticism of public diplomacy of the West is inadequate efficiency of efforts in this sphere. Investigations do not give a simple answer to efficiency of measures for promoting democracy. The countries taking such measures and deviating frequently from democratic standards in their home and foreign policy still consider their own system to be quite universal to serve as a pattern for others (Carothers 1999, 63). Here we also mean insufficiency of taking into account the results of the measures with the aim of their further improvement. Similarly, public diplomacy with the aim of promoting democracy is often fragmentary focusing only on some aspects such as elections and changing its intensity depending on political situation (Гусева 2011).

Of certain interest is the problem of limited number of people involved in measures promoting democracy. Such measures are primarily aimed at supporting non-governmental organizations. As a result and with the support of Western funds the so-called NGO-crazy is constituted. It means that a narrow layer of activists involved in the activity of NGOs (4-5 percent of population) are closely linked with the West and capable of exerting influence on public policy though they are cut from the society as a whole (Lutsevych 2013, 2). Situation in Ukraine is illustrative of this: quite obvious socio-economic and political advantages of the EU remain unnoticed by the large part of the population while mythical threats from the West (“eurosodomy”, corruption of morals, NATO’s aggressive expansion) are popularized against its background. This is backed by the efforts of Russia’s information activity and certain internal organizations. Although it is public diplomacy of Western countries targeted at the broadest mass audience that can in part improve situation in Ukraine and contribute to eradication of rudiments of post-Soviet

way of thinking, typical of which are passiveness, distrust to power, disappointment in ability to change something, fear of changes. Quite different arsenal of measures promoting democracy is required in the crisis situation during which there is aggravation of contradictions between authorities disposed to authoritarianism, on the one hand, and democratically minded activists or non-indifferent people – on the other hand. Significant election fraud, flagrant violation of human rights and freedoms, rough and non-adequate actions of authorities may serve as a trigger for mass protests (Mitchell 2012; Beacháin and Polese 2010). A wave of “color revolutions” and intensification of protest movements all over the world demonstrate the need for quick and coordinated response of the supporters of democracy (both governmental and non-governmental structures in the country and abroad) without which the process of gradual democratization in a definite country may abruptly stop or return to authoritarianism.

Besides direct pressure on the government from Western countries and international organizations, measures of public diplomacy are also important in such crisis periods. Among them one should point out immediate contacts with protesters and their leaders, promulgation of decisions, issuing declarations making a protest and its requirements legitimate, condemning non-democratic actions or inactivity of the government. For example, visits of US Senator John McCain, Assistant Secretary of State Victoria J. Nuland, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton and their communication with ordinary Ukrainian protesters were of great importance for the Euromaidan (Woehrel 2014).

Of vital importance and as a stimulus for the participants of protests is support of their actions by the states, international organizations, top-ranking officials, parliaments conducted in the form of officially adopted statements and decisions (including targeted sanctions against officials responsible for violations), as well as informal appeals via media, social networks, blogs, etc. Non-governmental actors, celebrities, informal communities and ordinary people from all over the world actively join such public diplomacy aimed at democracy promotion (Tomkiw 2014). These processes in Ukraine in particular demonstrate increasing the number of international political actors and effectiveness of the concept of new public diplomacy.

## **CONCLUSION**

For quite a long time support of democratization has become a declared fundamental principle of foreign policy of Western countries. Promotion of democracy in the world is necessary for the West both for preserving their own leading position and achieving definite pragmatic aims. Democracy as universal idea alongside with freedom and human rights is dominant in public diplomacy of the USA as well as EU countries and is attractive to foreign audience. Application of the idea of democracy in public diplomacy imposes on the state certain limitations and responsibilities to adhere to democratic standards in internal and external policy. Deviation from these standards does not remain unnoticed and has negative impact on the efficiency of public diplomacy, whereas adherence to them allows the state to win over a wide range of non-governmental actors inside the country and abroad and make them one’s followers. Efficient public diplomacy with the aim of democracy promotion cannot be one-sided. It should estimate effectiveness of the activity, take into consideration national peculiarities and comprise a series of

measures covering a wide range of target audiences. Concentration exclusively on the institutions of civil society is important but not sufficient for establishing stable democracy. In this context, public diplomacy could become an effective instrument of influence on mass audience of countries which proceed along the path of democratization. In the crisis periods when there exists a threat to democratization, public diplomacy in the form of direct contacts with protesters and support measures of adherents of democracy is extremely important and can help pursue a required course.

## REFERENCES

1. Baumann, Michael and Reinhard Zintl. 2006. "Social and Cultural Preconditions of Democracy: A Framework for Discussion." In *Preconditions of Democracy*, edited by Geoffrey Brennan, 19-74. Finland: Tampere University Press.
2. Beacháin, Donnacha Ó and Abel Polese. 2010. *The Colour Revolutions in the Former Soviet Republics: Successes and Failures*. New York, NY: Routledge.
3. Carothers, Thomas. 1999. *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
4. Civic Solidarity Platform. 2014. "Ukraine: Brief Legal Analysis of "Dictatorship Law." Accessed November 19, 2015.  
<http://www.civicsolidarity.org/article/880/ukraine-brief-legal-analysis-dictatorship-law>.
5. Cohen, Carl. 1971. *Democracy*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
6. Dale, Helle C. 2009. "Public Diplomacy 2.0: Where the U.S. Government Meets "New Media." *Backgrounder Heritage Foundation* 2346, December 8. Accessed November 11, 2015.  
<http://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/psy%20ops%20bg2346.pdf>.
7. Doyle, Michael. 2000. "Peace, Liberty, and Democracy: Realists and Liberals Contest a Legacy." In *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts*, edited by Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi, 21-40. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
8. European Endowment for Democracy. 2012. "Statutes: European Endowment for Democracy." Accessed November 15, 2015.  
[https://www.democracyendowment.eu/handlers/download.php?id=414&object\\_id=14](https://www.democracyendowment.eu/handlers/download.php?id=414&object_id=14).
9. Fominykh, Alexey. 2010. "Projecting "Soft Power": American and Russian Public Diplomacy in Post-Soviet Central Asia." *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 11(3): 66-77.
10. Kriesi, Hanspeter. 2013. "Democracy as a Moving Target." In *Democracy in the age of globalization and mediatization*, edited by Hanspeter Kriesi, Sandra Lavenex, Frank Esser, Jörg Matthes, Marc Bühlmann, and Daniel Bochsler, 19-43. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
11. Lavenex, Sandra. 2013. "Globalization and the Horizontal Promotion of Democracy." In *Democracy in the age of globalization and mediatization*, edited by Hanspeter Kriesi, Sandra Lavenex, Frank Esser, Jörg Matthes, Marc Bühlmann, and Daniel Bochsler, 135-154. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
12. Lutsevych, Orysia. 2013. "How to Finish a Revolution: Civil Society and Democracy in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine." *Chatham House*, January 2013. Accessed November 21, 2015.  
[https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0113bp\\_lutsevych.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0113bp_lutsevych.pdf).
13. Magen, Amichai and Michael McFaul. 2009. "Introduction: American and European Strategies to Promote Democracy – Shared Values, Common Challenges, Divergent Tools?." In *Promoting Democracy and the Rule of Law: American and European Strategies*, edited by Amichai Magen, Thomas Risse, and Michael McFaul, 1-33. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

14. McFaul, Michael. 2004. "Democracy Promotion as a World Value." *The Washington Quarterly* 28 (1): 147-163. doi:10.1162/0163660042518189
15. McFaul, Michael. 2009. *Advancing Democracy Abroad: Why We Should and How We Can*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
16. Mitchell, Lincoln A. 2012. *The Color Revolutions*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
17. Nye, Joseph S. Jr. 2004. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.
18. Orlova, Victoria. 2009. "The View from Russia." In *Toward a New Public Diplomacy: Redirecting U.S. Foreign Policy*, edited by Philip Seib, 69-93. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
19. Reshetnikov, Yuri. 2007. "Moscow Explains Its Decisions to Close Regional Subsidiaries of the British Council." *The Voice of Russia*, December 14. Accessed November 21, 2015. <http://voiceofrussia.com/2007/12/14/167559/>.
20. Schmitter, Philippe C. and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What Democracy Is ... and Is Not." *Journal of Democracy* 2 (3): 75-88.
21. Scott-Smith, Giles and Martijn Mos. 2009. "Democracy Promotion and the New Public Diplomacy." In *New directions in US foreign policy*, edited by Inderjeet Parmar, Linda B. Miller, and Mark Ledwidge, 225-240. New York, NY: Routledge.
22. TEU. 2010. "Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2010/C 83/01)." *Official Journal of the European Union* 50: 13-45, March 30. Accessed November 19, 2015. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2010:083:FULL&from=EN>.
23. Thiel, Rainer. 2010. *Nested Games of External Democracy Promotion: The United States and the Polish Liberalization 1980-1989*. Wiesbaden, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
24. Tomkiw, Lydia. 2014. "A Digital Movement: Protests in Ukraine Go Global." *World Policy Institute*, February 7. Accessed November 16, 2015. <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2014/02/07/digital-movement-protests-ukraine-global>.
25. Waller, Michael J. 2007. *The Public Diplomacy Reader*. Washington, DC: The Institute for World Politics Press.
26. Woehrel, Steven. 2015. "Ukraine: Current Issues and U.S. Policy." *Federation of American Scientists*, February 12. Accessed November 20, 2015. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33460.pdf>.
27. Гаврилова, Мирослава. 2013. "Європейський фонд підтримки демократії – новий інструмент громадської дипломатії Європейського Союзу." (European Endowment for Democracy as a New Tool of European Union Public Diplomacy) *UA Foreign Affairs* 6: 34-37.
28. Гусева, Е. 2011. "Роль американских НКО в продвижении демократии за рубежом (на примере Национального фонда в поддержку демократии США)." (The role of American NGOs in democracy promotion abroad (on the example of US National Endowment for Democracy), *Sworld* 28 (4): 33-43.

29. Колодій, Антоніна. 2009. *Основи демократії* (Fundamentals of Democracy). Львів: Астролябія.