

Summary

Public diplomacy is a term that allows a state to promote itself in the international arena not only through official channels, but also through people-to-people relations. This type of diplomacy encourages direct communication among individuals and strengthens cultural ties compared to traditional diplomacy. For young independent states like Kyrgyzstan, public diplomacy plays a crucial role in increasing international recognition and ensuring effectiveness in its foreign policy.

Public diplomacy has become a significant element of Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy since gaining independence. The main goal of Kyrgyz public diplomacy studies has been to ensure that Kyrgyzstan is recognized as a peaceful country rich in culture. In this process, the internationally renowned Manas Epic and Chingiz Aitmatov played critical roles.

Kyrgyzstan's Public Diplomacy in the Process of Change and Transformation.

Dr. Bahtgöl KALAMBEKOVA - Ambassador (R)

Public diplomacy is a multidimensional concept influenced by the theories of the international relations system, communications and public relations. While the term was first used in literature in 1965, the practices of public diplomacy have a longer history. The importance of such approaches grew, particularly during the Cold War era in a bipolar world. These ideas gained popularity in the subsequent period, leading to practical applications in various fields.

Public diplomacy has been a crucial part of a state's foreign policy, especially for newly independent countries. Nations transitioning from old systems to new ones had to navigate becoming nation-states amidst the challenges of globalization. While the existence of nation states was questioned under the influence of globalization, the newly independent republics felt the need to establish themselves as nation-states and seized opportunities to do so. Public diplomacy continues to be a valuable and effective tool in foreign policy.

Countries that were previously part of larger systems, especially those that left the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) like Kyrgyzstan, had to establish their public image and explain themselves under new sovereignty. This process highlighted the need to redefine relations with neighboring countries and adapt to new contexts.

Kyrgyzstan declared independence, determined its foreign policy as a sovereign state, and implemented these decisions in the international arena during the coinciding with the collapse of the bipolar system. Throughout this period, Kyrgyzstan made efforts to adapt to the new dynamics of the world and tried to act in accordance with the current course. This period also marked the beginning of the positioning process of the nation-state.

Kyrgyzstan became the first Central Asian Republic to declare its independence on August 31, 1991. The acceptance of Kyrgyz as the state language in 1989 was a first in the USSR. In addition, the constitution, adopted on May 5, 1993, is still in force today with some amendments. In the same year, Kyrgyzstan began using its own national currency independent of the USSR. These firsts strengthened Kyrgyzstan's independence and autonomy. In terms of public diplomacy, Kyrgyzstan has emphasized not only its common aspects but also its unique characteristics, considering its relations with countries like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, with which it shares historical and cultural commonalities.

Public diplomacy has become a strategic tool not only for newly independent countries like Kyrgyzstan, but for all states. However, Kyrgyzstan has had a distinct advantage in this process. Historically, it has not inherited any serious political problems with neighboring countries, allowing it to promote the country, develop its economy, and increase its attractiveness in areas such as tourism, culture, science, and education. Thanks to these trouble-free relations, Kyrgyzstan has had a favorable ground for establishing friendship and cooperation relations that respect common interests and provide mutual benefits. This situation has facilitated Kyrgyzstan's opening up to the world and introducing itself to the international community. At the beginning of the sovereignty process, Kyrgyzstan acted dynamically, determined its priorities, and implemented them.

During this period, Kyrgyzstan set forth four fundamental goals:

- **International Recognition and Acceptance:** After declaring independence, Kyrgyzstan

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placed great emphasis on being recognized and accepted by the outside world.

Taking its place in the international arena and playing a more active role in global relations is one of the fundamental goals of the country's public diplomacy.

- Peaceful Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution: Located in the heart of Asia, Kyrgyzstan has managed to establish a balance between different ethnic groups and cultures, turning to peaceful diplomacy. This has been a critical strategy in developing relations, especially with other countries in Central Asia.

- Economic Independence and Development: Despite its lack of natural resources, Kyrgyzstan has taken steps to develop agriculture and industry. Attracting foreign investment, strengthening trade relations, and integrating into the market economy are elements that reinforce the long-term goal of economic independence.

Kyrgyzstan's historical and cultural heritage, its ties with the Turkic World, its peaceful state and sovereignty approach, and its economic diplomacy and outward opening strategy have all played important roles in achieving these goals. In addition to these factors, the Manas Epic and Chingiz Aytmatov have also played significant roles in Kyrgyzstan's public diplomacy.

Kyrgyzstan is renowned for the Manas Epic, which dates back centuries. This cultural heritage is a source of pride for not only the Kyrgyz people but also for the entire Turkic world and former Soviet republics. It is considered an invaluable contribution to the world's cultural heritage treasury. The Manas Epic is more than just a work of verbal creativity; it is an encyclopedia that encompasses the history, culture, worldview, social life, military affairs, and international relations experiences of the Kyrgyz people. This epic serves as a crucial diplomatic tool for showcasing the cultural identity and historical contributions of Kyrgyz to the world.

Chingiz Aytmatov, known as a diplomat, statesman, journalist, and versatile personality, was also an internationally renowned novelist and a profound thinker who made a lasting impact on the literary world. Through his works, he introduced the cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz people to the world. His works have been translated into hundreds of foreign languages and have garnered a large readership worldwide, particularly among the intellectual class and youth.

Conclusion

Since its independence, Kyrgyzstan has strived to use diplomacy effectively. As a sovereign state, Kyrgyzstan aims to make the best decisions in line with world dynamics in the process of freely determining its foreign policy. At the same time, the process of building it as a modern nation-state is still continuing.

Kyrgyzstan adopts the concept of "soft power" in public diplomacy, aiming to create a culture of peaceful dialogue and position itself as a peace-loving country internationally. Kyrgyzstan's public diplomacy includes the active participation of not only the government but also citizens.

Kyrgyzstan's public diplomacy is institutionalized and developing with its own characteristics. Now, not only politicians but also citizens and many actors are involved in this process. The multi-stakeholder structure of public diplomacy ensures the involvement of multiple actors in the process. Social events such as constitutional crises and revolutions in Kyrgyzstan could negatively affect the effectiveness of public diplomacy. The traumas experienced by the public have made communication more difficult and enlightening the public has become one of the important duties of public diplomacy.

Although Kyrgyzstan's public diplomacy faces **challenges** such as the country's mountainous structure, lack of access to the sea, limited agricultural areas, and lack of rich natural resources, it tries to gain an important position through cultural and historical values. The Epic of Manas and Cengiz Aytmatov play a critical role in this process. Aytmatov's works have an important place in increasing the recognition of Kyrgyzstan in the international arena. His ideas are an important source of inspiration in the establishment of a culture of peace and the transformation of the culture of war, reflecting the intellectual and cultural depth of the Kyrgyz people. Aitmatov's legacy is an important part of Kyrgyzstan's soft power capacity.

Increasing relations with the **Turkic World** is also an important strategy. Kyrgyzstan can strengthen its public diplomacy with the Turkic World by taking examples from developed countries. The **Turkic World**, with its cultural riches and literature, can also be an important source of "soft power" in the field of diplomacy.

Establishing a Public Diplomacy Institute named after Chingiz Aytmatov could be a valuable initiative. This institute can be serving as an important platform to improve the cultural and diplomatic cooperation of the Turkic World. In addition, the "Issyk-Kul Forum" can be used more effectively as an international public

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diplomacy platform. Common history and cultural heritage should form the basis of diplomatic relations between Turkic states.

Effectively promoting our common values and historical heritage for the Turkic World will play an important role in this process. It should be aimed for the Turkic World to reach a much stronger position in the field of international diplomacy through joint projects and regional cooperation. When the soft power elements of the Turkic states are brought together, this unity of power will create a significant impact in the international arena. Our cultural heritage should play a unifying role in diplomatic initiatives. Kyrgyzstan and the Turkic World can achieve a stronger diplomatic position by using their common history and cultural heritage.

Keeping these cultural and social values on the agenda for a stronger unity of the **Turkic World** and effective public diplomacy is a very valuable step to highlight the unique identity and common denominators of each people. Presenting Kyrgyzstan's efforts, especially on these issues, on a broader platform can strengthen understanding and cooperation between peoples. It is of great importance to share the public diplomacy experiences of every country in the **Turkic World**, especially Turkey. Turkey's effective public diplomacy can be an example for other countries in the Turkic World. Likewise, Kyrgyzstan's achievements in this field can be a guide for other countries in the **Turkic World**. Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and other Turkish states coming together and determining a common public diplomacy strategy will contribute to this process being much more effective.

About the Author

Dr. Bahtıgül KALAMBEKOVA - Ambassador (R)

Ambassador Yousaf Junaid was born in Lahore, Pakistan. He holds an MBBS degree from Allama Iqbal Medical College in Lahore. He served as a captain doctor in the Pakistan Army before joining the Commerce and Trade Group of the Central Superior Services of Pakistan. Since 1986, he has held various positions in the Ministry of Commerce and other departments, including: Director General, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, Director, Commercial Trading Corporation of Pakistan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Chairman, Punjab Board of Investment and Trade, Commercial Secretary at Pakistan's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Consul General of Pakistan in Istanbul (2009-2017). Since 2022, he has served as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Pakistan to the Republic of Türkiye. He is proficient in English, Urdu, Punjabi, and elementary Turkish. In addition to his distinguished professional achievements, the ambassador is also a proud father of three sons.

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Throughout history, shaping the perceptions of societies has been one of the most fundamental elements of domestic and foreign policy. As the nation-state structure became widespread and nation-states emerged as the main actors in international relations, public diplomacy along with traditional diplomacy began to play a crucial role in shaping these relations.

Diplomatic relations between states are conducted by diplomats, including ambassadors and consuls. These diplomats also engage in public diplomacy, which serves a vital function in interstate relations. Public diplomacy activities have a significant impact not only on the citizens of a state but also on its leaders. Public diplomacy plays a pivotal role in shaping the relations between states alongside other diplomatic activities.

The aim of the project Public Diplomacy in Foreign Policy conducted in collaboration with Cappadocia University and Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM) is to discuss the principles for implementing public diplomacy, identify key activities and highlight public diplomacy efforts undertaken by foreign diplomats in Türkiye. The ultimate goal is to contribute to shaping Turkish Foreign Policy and influencing decision-making processes.

For detailed information about the project;
<https://commonhorizon.kapadokya.edu.tr/> You can reach us from the address.

Prof. Dr. Şafak OĞUZ

Prof. Dr. Şafak OĞUZ became an Associate Professor in 2019 and a full Professor in 2024. He retired in 2021 after 23 years of service in the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). During his time there, he also worked for the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). His expertise lies in Weapons of Mass Destruction, Terrorism (WMD), International Security, International Organizations and Peace and Conflict Studies. Prof. Dr. Şafak OĞUZ currently serves as the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences at Cappadocia University. He is fluent in English and German.

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL graduated from the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Boğaziçi University (BU) in 1993. After completing his Master's Degree at BU in 1995, he was accepted to the PhD program at BU in the same year. After completing his PhD at Ankara University in 2005, Prof. Erol became an Associate Professor in 2009 in the field of "International Relations" and a full Professor in 2014. His areas of expertise are "Geopolitics", "Crisis Management", "Security", "Turkish Foreign Policy" and "Central Asia".

Prof. Erol has published numerous scientific articles and books on these subjects. He is the author and editor of various journals such as Eurasia File, Black Sea Studies, Gazi Akademik Overview, Journal of Regional Studies, International Crisis and Political Studies and contributor for national radio-television programs such as TRT, A HABER, TV NET, CNN TÜRK and HABERTÜRK.

Prof. Erol, whose opinions have been published in Turkey's leading magazines and newspapers has been deemed worthy of many awards, including Writers and Artists Foundation of the Turkic World (TÜRKSAV) in 2007, "Turkish World Service Award" in 2015 and Writers' Union of Turkey (TYB) "Press-Intellectual Award".

Prof. Erol has lectured at Ufuk, Ankara and Gazi Universities. As a faculty member in the Department of Relations at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, he served as an expert, coordinator and founder president in Türkiye's leading think tanks (ASAM, SDE, GSAM, USGAM). He has been the founding chairman of Ankara Crisis and Politics Research Center (ANKASAM) since 2016.