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PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE WORK OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS: INTERESTING FACTS FROM THE UKRAINIAN EXPERIENCE IN KUWAIT

The practitioners of public diplomacy unanimously consider this direction to be extremely important in respect of the state's foreign policy communications. However, there is still a debate about the definition of 'public diplomacy', given the range of areas it covers. Above all, public diplomacy is an element of strategic communication of the state, which promotes the establishment of a dialogue with the public of other countries in the 'state – person' format. Thanks to the tools of public diplomacy, it is possible to raise the level of awareness of foreign audience on a specific topic, influence its attitude to this topic and moreover, encourage appropriate action.

In the Information Security Doctrine of Ukraine, the development of public diplomacy, in particular cultural and digital, is one of the priorities of state policy in the information sphere to form a positive international image of Ukraine¹. Recently, for the first time in the institution's history, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine has approved a five-year strategy of public diplomacy. The increasing number of references in normative acts testifies to the awareness of the political establishment of Ukraine of the importance of public diplomacy in the state's foreign policy.

Implementation of projects and activities in this area contributes to enhancing Ukraine's image and its international prestige, providing it with information presence abroad (and creating an appropriate positive background), building trust in this country, and directing its positioning in the world in favour of political and economic interests of our country.

The renewed system of public diplomacy of Ukraine depicts foreign diplomatic missions as mediators between the state and the public of the sending

¹ Zakon Ukrainy 'Pro rishennia Rady natsionalnoi bezpeky i oborony Ukrainy vid 29 hrudnia 2016 roku 'Pro Doktrynu informatsiinoi bezpeky Ukrainy' (2017) [online]. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/47/2017#Text> [in Ukrainian].

country. It is mostly through diplomats as agents of understanding that it is possible to establish and maintain contacts with the local community, think tanks, educational institutions, art galleries, sports figures to list a few. Thus, the efforts of diplomats shape the image of the state and lay the foundation for the promotion of national interests.

It is known that 2021 was dubbed 'virtual' due to the coronavirus pandemic, with digitisation becoming an integral part of all human activities. This equally concerns the diplomatic service since the daily work of a diplomat has also undergone transformations due to the development of information and communication technologies. While any image events were postponed *sine die* and mass meetings were far from reality, the Embassy of Ukraine in the State of Kuwait successfully tested the online format of meetings and conferences. Digital tools have come in handy primarily in the field of economic diplomacy. For instance, thanks to numerous B2B talks organised by the embassy via Zoom, it became possible to unite more than a hundred potential business partners among Ukrainian and Kuwaiti entrepreneurs. At the same time, the virtual format proved to be efficient in the field of public diplomacy, particularly in cooperation with Kuwait on sports book publishing projects.

Sports diplomacy is a considerable part of the embassy's activities within public diplomacy. First and foremost, this dimension is relevant in Kuwait with football being one of the favourite sports. Sports cooperation between Ukraine and Kuwait has always been at a high level. In January 2020, the embassy debuted with a number of unprecedented sports initiatives. During the large-scale image event, which is the Week of Ukraine in Kuwait, the international sports conference, fitness classes for children, as well as a friendly football match between the Ukrainian and Kuwaiti teams were held. Prior to the event, the Kuwaiti state sports bodies issued a license to open the Dynamo – Kuwait children's football academy.

In March 2021, the Embassy of Ukraine in Kuwait launched a project implying creation of the Arabic-language book of memoirs of Valerii Lobanovskyi by Kuwaiti colleagues and students, with whom the Ukrainian coach worked in the 1990s. V. Lobanovskyi coached the national football team of Kuwait and it was under his leadership that the team achieved amazing results at international competitions. Considering the fact that the plot running through the book took place in the history of Ukrainian-Kuwaiti relations a quarter of a century ago, the materials were sometimes collected in small pieces. Finding V. Lobanovskyi's colleagues was not an easy task, since some of them went abroad, and some players have already passed away. We were lucky, however, to meet real fans among his Kuwaiti colleagues, for whom football has become an integral part of life. Their own archives preserve unique newspaper publications and interviews of the Ukrainian coach with the Kuwaiti media. The collected materials together with the students' memoirs will form the basis of a commemorative book representing



the professional path and sports heritage of Valerii Lobanovskyi in Kuwait. The potentially great role of this project for the further development of sports (especially football) cooperation between Ukraine and Kuwait became noticeable right at the stage of preparation of the publication. The enthusiastic work and excitement of our Kuwaiti partners in creation of the book of memoirs aim not only to perpetuate the memory of the legendary Ukrainian coach in Kuwait and the Persian Gulf subregion, but also lay the foundation for future football communication, coaching experience and more.

The Embassy of Ukraine in the State of Kuwait seeks to organise work in the direction of public diplomacy on the basis

of medium-term planning and project management. This will facilitate the better analysis of implemented projects, more accurate assessment of their efficiency and more efficient planning of future activities. At the same time, the experiment is an integral part of our work, because it is the pilot projects that allow us to test new approaches and tools in the field of public diplomacy.

In addition to implementing the aforementioned project to create an Arabic-language book on the Kuwaiti period of V. Lobanovskyi's career, the embassy seeks to establish cultural bridges between Ukraine and Kuwait in the realm of literature. Back in 2020, the translation of a number of Kuwaiti novellas into Ukrainian was initiated. The illustrated collection will become a true history of Kuwait through the eyes of artists from the beginning of the XX century to the present. Ukraine and Kuwait are separated by thousands of kilometres, yet this book aims to lift the curtain to reveal the world of Kuwaiti literature, which is still a 'terra incognita' for the Ukrainian reader. The publication will be helpful for the Arabists, as well as anyone, who plans to do an internship at the Language Centre at the Kuwait University.

Apparently, literature is also a way to tell about one's country, its history, culture and traditions. Not only does the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine promote Ukrainian literature in the world, but also the Ukrainian Institute does. Yet, the Ukrainian Book Institute is the priority institution in this area, which jointly with the Embassy of Ukraine in Kuwait in May 2021, held the first in the history of the diplomatic mission English-language online conference titled 'Ukrainian literature entering Kuwait book market'. The purpose of the meeting was to promote

Ukrainian literature translated into Arabic on the Kuwaiti book market. The conference was attended by more than 50 Ukrainian and Kuwaiti writers and translators, representatives of the largest publishing houses of both countries, as well as literary agents. The Ukrainian experts presented modern Ukrainian literature, which is interesting, relevant, and unique. Thus, the embassy sought to convey to Kuwaiti publishers the opinion that the works of Ukrainian writers could become bestsellers there. In addition, the Translate Ukraine grant translation program, which was presented during the online event, may further encourage Kuwaiti publishers to work with Ukrainians on implementing a pilot book publishing project. The main speakers of the conference (among 12 ones) were interested in deepening individual negotiations on the launch of the first commercial literary and translation projects between Ukraine and Kuwait.

The draft of the conference is an unprecedented and ambitious initiative, as it is difficult to predict the effectiveness of the promotion of Ukrainian literature in Kuwait. Unfortunately, the Arabic-language book market is still out of sight of Ukrainian publishers, despite the fact that there are hundreds of millions of Arabic speakers in the world. At the same time, publishers in Kuwait also have no experience of cooperating with Ukrainian literary circles, although the geography of many Kuwaiti publishers goes far beyond the Persian Gulf subregion. Thanks to this online meeting held by the embassy, the direct communication between ten interested publishers from Ukraine and Kuwait was nevertheless established, which allowed to start a dialogue on joint literary and translation projects. Following the results of the online event, the Embassy of Ukraine in the State of Kuwait plans to organise individual online talks for interested Ukrainian and Kuwaiti publishers, taking into account the profile of their activities. During these talks, the parties will be able to discuss in detail the prospects for cooperation.

Therefore, it is worth noting the high potential of public diplomacy in the context of establishing effective bilateral relations between states. The projects of the Embassy of Ukraine in the State of Kuwait prove that non-standard decisions in the field of public diplomacy can open a window of opportunity for cooperation in the most untapped areas. Finally, the key to success in the responsible mission of representing Ukraine abroad is to adhere to the 4C principle – creativity, critical thinking, communication, and common effort – which the Embassy of Ukraine in Kuwait has consistently applied to its activities.