

DIGITAL DIPLOMACY:

HOW THE EU UTILIZES FACEBOOK IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Manuscript received: 04/11/2024

Revised: 20/12/2024

Accepted: 27/01/2025

DOI:10.52123/1994-2370-2025-1468

UDC 327.7

CICSTI 11.25.67, 06.54.31

Abstract. This article analyzes the diplomatic presence of European Union countries on social media platforms within Central Asian countries. The issue under consideration is the need to evaluate the effectiveness of social media as a diplomatic tool for EU missions in Central Asia. The research methodology includes the analysis of Facebook data and diplomatic profiles from 2009 to 2024. The study employs engagement metrics such as the number of followers, likes, shares, and comments. Through these metrics, the authors sought to assess the effectiveness of the digital diplomatic efforts undertaken by diplomats. In addition, a correlation analysis is conducted to determine the relationship between the frequency of posts and audience engagement. The results show significant differences in the use of social media by various EU countries. This highlights the role of cultural and regional factors in shaping diplomatic strategies. The practical significance of this research lies in providing recommendations for diplomats to optimize their social media strategies. These strategies should align with cultural expectations as well as the preferences of target audiences.

Key words: Digital diplomacy, social media, region, European Union, Central Asia, digital transformation

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақала Еуропалық Одақ елдерінің Орталық Азия елдеріндегі әлеуметтік медиа платформаларындағы дипломатиялық қатысуын талдайды. Қарастырылатын мәселе әлеуметтік желілерді ЕО елдерінің Орталық Азиядағы дипломатиялық өкілдіктері үшін дипломатиялық құрал ретінде тиімділігін бағалау қажеттілігіне негізделген. Зерттеу әдіснамасы 2009-2024 жылдар аралығындағы Facebook деректері мен дипломатиялық профильдерді талдауды қамтиды. Зерттеуде жазылушылар саны, лайктар, репосттар мен пікірлер сияқты қатысу көрсеткіштері пайдаланылады. Осы көрсеткіштер арқылы авторлар дипломатиялық цифрлық күш-жігерлердің тиімділігін бағалауды мақсат тұтты. Сонымен қатар, жарияланымдар жиілігі мен аудиторияның қатысу деңгейі арасындағы байланысты анықтау үшін корреляциялық талдау жүргізіледі. Нәтижелер Еуропалық Одақ елдерінің әлеуметтік желілерді қолдануда айтарлықтай айырмашылықтарын көрсетеді. Бұл мәдени және аймақтық факторлардың дипломатиялық стратегияларды қалыптастырудағы рөлін атап көрсетеді. Осы зерттеудің практикалық маңызы әлеуметтік желілердегі стратегияларды оңтайландыру бойынша дипломатарға арналған ұсыныстарды қамтиды. Бұл стратегиялар мәдени күтілімдер мен мақсатты аудиторияның артықшылықтарына сай болуы тиіс.

Түйінді сөздер: Цифрлық дипломатия, әлеуметтік желілер, аймақ, Еуропалық Одақ, Орталық Азия, цифрлық трансформация

Аннотация. Данная статья анализирует дипломатическое присутствие стран Европейского Союза на платформах социальных сетей в странах Центральной Азии. Рассматриваемая проблема заключается в необходимости оценить эффективность социальных сетей как дипломатического инструмента для миссий ЕС в Центральной Азии. Методология исследования включает анализ данных Facebook и дипломатических профилей за период с 2009 по 2024 годы. В исследовании используются метрики вовлеченности, такие как количество подписчиков, лайков, репостов и комментариев. Через них авторам было важно оценить

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эффективности цифровых дипломатических усилий дипломатами. Кроме того, проводится корреляционный анализ с целью определить связь между частотой публикаций и вовлеченностью аудитории.

Результаты показывают значительные различия в использовании социальных сетей различными странами ЕС. Что подчеркивает роль культурных и региональных факторов в формировании дипломатических стратегий. Практическое значение данного исследования заключается в рекомендациях для дипломатов по оптимизации стратегий в социальных сетях. Чтобы они соответствовали культурным ожиданиям, а также предпочтениям целевых аудиторий.

Ключевые слова: Цифровая дипломатия, социальные медиа, регион, Европейский Союз, Центральная Азия, цифровая трансформация

Introduction

In the context of ongoing conflicts in the Middle East (Palestine and Israel) and Eastern Europe (Ukraine and Russia) reaching their critical phases, social media plays an important role in the dissemination of political discourses alongside other factors. This is directly relevant to both diplomacy and the broader field of international relations [1]. There is considerable literature today that examines the impact of digitalisation on diplomacy. Specifically, the utilisation of digital technologies results in changes in the norms, values, and operational routines of diplomats [2]. Among the research topics that address changes in diplomacy, we consider studies on the development of the Department of External Propaganda within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its role in media engagement to be particularly important [3].

Undoubtedly, digital technologies, especially social media, have become an important tool of diplomacy. They have changed the ways of communication between states and their citizens. It is evident that, under such conditions, it is important for EU countries to optimise their diplomatic efforts for effective engagement with Central Asia. Thus, the relevance of the study lies in the analysis of the use of social media by the EU in the region. This is important, as it is necessary to understand which recommendations are needed to improve engagement with audiences in the digital era.

Literature review

The authors of the article examined several works discussing the importance of implementing ecosystem [4], digital, and human-centered approaches in the modernization of public administration [5],

taking into account the international experience of various countries. Given that the article focused on the Central Asian region, it was also important for the authors to analyze the theoretical foundations of the formation of the digital space of integration associations [6], its impact on the stability of regional integration, and the prospects for the practical implementation of national and supranational initiatives.

It is noteworthy that several authors today [7] propose a new perspective on power and international relations through the lens of subversion and cyber operations. We believe that there are several implications for understanding contemporary diplomatic and informational strategies [8]. This concerns the inclusion of social media as a tool for influence and manipulation. It is important to highlight the role of texts in diplomatic practice, which has only increased in social media. Diplomatic texts, as always, remain instruments for shaping perceptions of subjects and contexts, thus influencing state policy [9] and international relations [10]. The widespread distribution of digital devices and technologies makes it practically impossible to separate analogue and digital diplomatic practices in our time (the concept of «hybrid diplomacy») [11].

It should be noted that within the framework of the study, the authors analysed the diplomatic presence of EU countries on social media in Central Asia, with a focus on strategies and their effectiveness. We believe that the uniqueness of the work, in contrast to other studies [12], lies in the examination of the interaction between the EU and Central Asia through social media. It also lies in identifying the strategies and features of diplomatic communication. The theoretical significance of the study consists in expanding the understanding of digital diplomacy, while the practical significance

lies in developing recommendations for improving strategies. It is worth noting that the study also addresses unresolved issues related to the effectiveness of digital diplomacy and cultural differences in the perception of content. Finally, it was important for the authors to assess the impact of social media on public opinion.

Research methods

In this study, the authors conducted an analysis of Facebook to examine the diplomatic presence of EU countries in Central Asia. The main focus was on the official pages of diplomatic missions, which were verified through Yandex and Google. The data were collected by the authors from 2009 to 2024 and included the number of followers, likes, reposts, and comments to assess the effectiveness of the strategies.

A correlation method was used for the analysis to identify the relationship between the frequency of posts and audience engagement. The significance of audience reactions was also evaluated, and different types of content (such as cultural events, multimedia posts, etc.) were compared. It is important to note that the aim of the study was to determine the EU's strategies on social media and provide recommendations for their improvement in Central Asia.

As a result, the researchers have formulated the following hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 1:** Embassies with a higher frequency of posts on the social network (Facebook) will show a direct correlation with higher levels of audience engagement (in Central Asian countries).

- **Hypothesis 2:** Content types focused on cultural events will demonstrate higher audience engagement levels compared to other types of posts (in Central Asian countries).

- **Hypothesis 3:** Multimedia content (videos, photos) will attract higher levels of engagement compared to posts containing only textual content (in Central Asian countries).

Results and Discussion

The data on social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, indicate that these platforms have become integral to modern diplomatic practice. It is worth noting that government officials in Central Asian Republics actively use these platforms for information exchange. According to the data, there is active engagement with the public, implementing public diplomacy campaigns [13]. Nevertheless, based on the data obtained on the popularity of social media platforms in the region from 2009 to 2024, it can be observed that Facebook holds the highest market share. Overall, the data underscore the importance of Facebook as a key platform for communication in Central Asia.

Table 1 - Popularity Data of Social Media Platforms in Central Asian Countries for the Period 2009-2024

Social Media	Uzbekistan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Kazakhstan
Facebook	45,82	55,25	60,02	33,62	32,37
Vkontakte	-	-	-	11,29	23,94
YouTube	-	10,52	-	-	16,23
Twitter	14,13	9,67	7,88	22,68	9,34
Pinterest	10,65	-	-	-	8,47
Instagram	-	-	7,75	-	3,84

Note: Compiled by the authors according to the source. (StatCounter, 2009-2024)

It is worth noting that social media platforms are highly popular among the populations of Central Asian Republics (CAR). This trend is particularly evident in Kazakhstan. For instance, an analysis of social media popularity in Kazakhstan from 2009 to 2024 revealed that:

Facebook holds the largest market share (32.37%) among social media platforms in Kazakhstan. The popularity of this social network indicates its widespread use among all popular social networks in the region.

VKontakte, often referred to as the «Russian Facebook» also has a significant presence in Kazakhstan (23.94%). Its popularity reflects a large user base interested in social networking and media exchange specifically in the Russian language.

The popularity of YouTube (16.23%) highlights the importance of video content consumption in Kazakhstan. It should be noted that this platform primarily serves for

entertainment, education, and information dissemination in the region.

In terms of global social media platform popularity, data indicate that Facebook dominates the market across all regions with a market share ranging from 62.57% to 83.61%. Other major platforms, such as Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, and Instagram, also maintain significant market shares globally but lag noticeably behind Facebook.

Table 2 - Global Data on Social Media Market Share (2009 - 2024)

Social Media Platform	World (%)	Europe (%)	Asia (%)	North America (%)	South America (%)	Oceania (%)
Facebook	74,37	79,69	83,61	62,57	81,18	71,15
Pinterest	7,95	4,56	1,71	15,28	3,74	8,63
Twitter	6,7	5,89	6,89	7,58	6,91	5,58
StumbleUpon	2,95	1,52	0,31	6,21	0,34	3,69
YouTube	2,91	2,59	4,19	1,89	4,25	2,09
Instagram	1,56	1,51	1,76	1,56	1,93	1,98
Tumblr	1,38	1,73	0,57	1,71	1,14	3,18
Reddit	1,27	1,07	0,21	2,33	0,16	2,82
VKontakte	0,2	0,67	0,15	0,02	0,02	0,02
LinkedIn	0,18	0,23	0,16	0,2	0,07	0,26

Note: Compiled by the authors according to the source. (StatCounter, 2009-2024)

It is worth noting that market shares vary by region, reflecting regional preferences. For instance, North America exhibits a diverse social media landscape where Pinterest holds a significant market share alongside Facebook and Twitter. Europe shows a strong preference for Facebook, followed by Twitter and Pinterest. The social media market in Asia is also led by Facebook, but platforms like Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram maintain substantial shares, highlighting the diverse social media landscape in the region.

As the data indicate, there is a global dominance of Facebook in the social media market. Research on the value of Facebook as a news dissemination platform provides important insights for analysing the presence of diplomat profiles on social networks in host countries [14]. Thus, considering current trends, it is likely that European Union diplomats should also utilise social media to strengthen their positions and expand their influence in Central Asia. However, to clearly understand their activities, current situations, problems, and prospects, it is essential to understand how they operate

on social networks and what results they achieve.

Analysis of European Diplomat Profiles in Central Asian Countries

The analysis of the post-Soviet countries of Central Asia in historical retrospect shows different trajectories in the development of political freedoms. The dynamics revealed that despite governments' attempts to regulate information, the media landscape has become more pluralistic. The internet and social networks, despite restrictions, have become important channels of communication. They have opened access for external actors to the region's audience.

The authors of the study identified the active use of Facebook by EU embassies and diplomatic missions not only for interacting with the audience but also for promoting initiatives. An analysis of the Facebook pages of European diplomatic services in Central Asia was conducted (including embassies, consulates, and cultural centres).

The collected data covered the number of followers, likes, shares,

comments, and the frequency of publications. It is important to understand that the content was classified according to themes of diplomatic activity, cultural events, and bilateral relations.

At the same time, the level of engagement was measured by the average number of reactions per post. It is important to note that the effectiveness of the pages was compared with each other and with other diplomatic representations in the region.

Kazakhstan

There are numerous studies examining the role of social media influencers in shaping public discourse and

raising awareness of socio-political agendas [16]. Overall, this situation is most familiar and understandable for Kazakhstan compared to other Central Asian countries. However, when examining the profiles of EU diplomats in the CAR countries, such a situation was not observed. A more detailed look at the digital presence of EU diplomatic services shows that a significant number of embassies and diplomatic missions of European countries in Kazakhstan maintain active profiles on Facebook.

Below is a table summarising the data for each embassy profile:

Table 3 - Total Number of Followers, Posts, Reactions, Comments on Facebook Profiles of Diplomats in Kazakhstan for the Period from 2021 to 2024

Embassies in Kazakhstan	Reactions	Engagement	Followers	Shares	Posts	Comments
Germany	12,901	14,771	11,326	1,076	649	794
Italy	6,014	6,900	5,077	552	280	334
France	3,640	4,411	4,702	597	286	174
Sweden	4,922	5,742	1,574	376	374	444
Poland	8,465	9,665	2,550	931	632	269
Lithuania	2,879	3,103	645	158	506	66
Finland	1,800	2,063	2,163	166	281	97
Spain	500	603	733	94	118	9
Latvia	2,121	2,437	1,065	258	208	58
Estonia	3,844	4,150	670	246	525	60
Slovakia	1,953	2,043	471	60	330	30

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

The analysis of the activity of diplomatic missions' profiles in Kazakhstan on Facebook revealed differences in the embassies' strategies (reflecting their diplomatic goals). It was established that the embassies of Germany and Italy have the highest number of followers. It was found that Germany leads in the number of posts and reactions, which highlights the importance of regular activity. The Polish Embassy holds second place in terms of followers and reactions. The embassies of Latvia and Finland showed an average level of engagement, while Estonia and Sweden demonstrated high engagement despite having fewer followers. The embassies of Lithuania and Slovakia display low engagement. Overall, the authors were able to identify a connection

between the content of publications and the level of audience reactions. During the study, the authors identified posts with high and low levels of reactions:

Posts with high engagement:

1. Dimash Kudaibergen will soon perform in Germany!
2. Celebration of the 31st Day of German Unity.
3. Introduction of the new ambassador, Monica Iversen.
4. Virtual visit to Sweden's exhibition at an educational online expo.
5. Recommendation of the book «Uzynshylyk Pippi» by Astrid Lindgren.
6. Concert of Spanish guitarist Dani de Moron at the Alem Saz festival in Astana.
7. Exhibition «Moonlight» by Jose Maria Cano in Almaty.



Figure 1 - Examples of posts with the highest user reactions

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

Low reaction posts:

1. COP28 Conference in Dubai.
2. Advent event in North Rhine-Westphalia.

3. Climate actions in Germany.
4. Internship program project «Make Our Planet Great Again – Master».
5. Foreign policy.
6. Polish-Ukrainian relations.
7. Congratulations on Teachers' Professional Day.

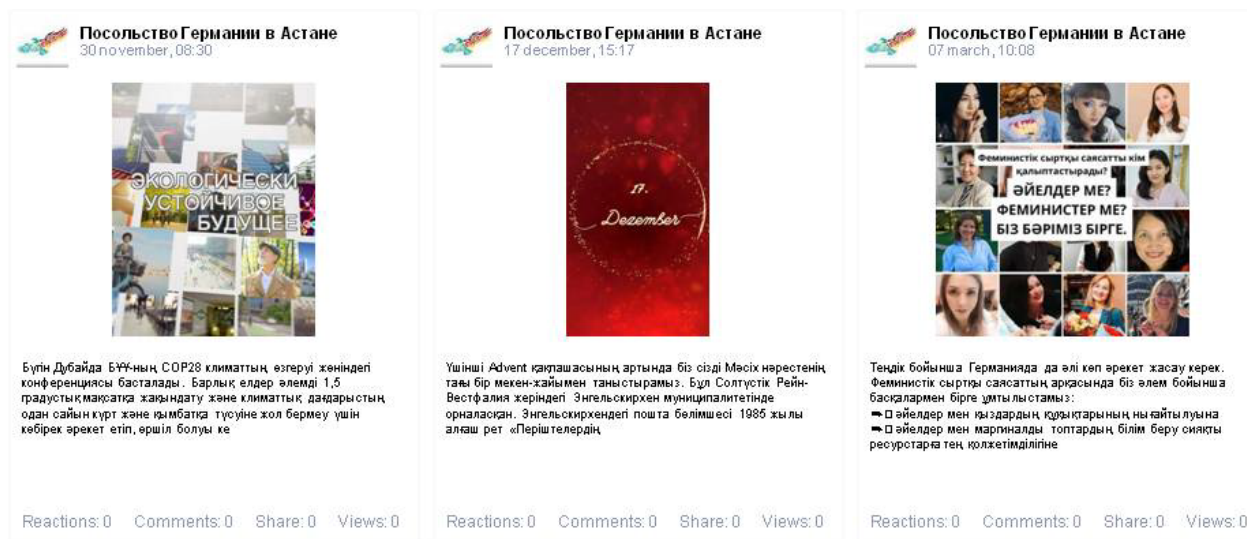


Figure 2 - Examples of posts with the lowest user reactions

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

To calculate the percentage distribution of post themes, the authors determined the number of posts in each theme. Subsequently, the percentage distribution was calculated for each theme.

Themes with high audience engagement:

- Cultural events = 50%
- Opening of new embassies ≈ 7.14%
- Educational events ≈ 21.43%
- Congratulations ≈ 21.43%

Themes with low audience engagement:

- Conferences and climate events ≈ 2.86%
- Political events and relations ≈ 11.43%

Congratulations ≈ 5.71%
Various events ≈ 77.43%

The analysis revealed that the majority of publications with high engagement are related to cultural events. Among them, meetings at embassies and events offering opportunities for participation (concerts, exhibitions) should be highlighted. Meanwhile, publications with low engagement are more often focused on political and informational topics (conferences, training sessions).

The content analysis conducted by the authors showed that more than half of the posts with high engagement contain images (42.86%) or a combination of text and images (45.71%), whereas text-only posts account for 11.43% of cases. We believe that this confirms the audience's interest in visual content.

It was also established that invitations to events, holiday greetings, and publications featuring personal stories or success stories generate the highest engagement. Such posts stimulate

interaction with the audience in Central Asia, particularly if they evoke an emotional response.

In addition, it was found that multimedia content (photos, videos) significantly increases engagement. We believe that this confirms its effectiveness. At the same time, the number of followers is not always directly linked to engagement—content quality (and its local relevance) is more important. Finally, it is essential to understand that the regularity of publications also contributes to increased audience activity.

Based on the obtained results, it is now essential to calculate the frequency of content updates and the levels of audience engagement (for each embassy profile for the period from 2021 to 2024). Content update frequency (posts per year) and audience engagement level (reactions + comments + shares per post).

Below is a table showing the frequency of content updates (posts) and average engagement per post for each embassy profile.

Table 4 - Frequency of Content Updates and Average Engagement per Post on Facebook Pages of Diplomatic Missions in Kazakhstan for the Period from 2021 to 2024

Embassy	Content Update Frequency (Posts)	Average Engagement per Post
Embajada de España en Kazajstán	39.33	5.11
Ambasada Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Astanie	210.67	15.30
Ambasciata d'Italia in Kazakhstan	93.33	24.64
Germany in Kazakhstan	216.33	22.75
Latvian Embassy in Kazakhstan	69.33	11.72
Embassy of Sweden in Kazakhstan	124.67	15.35
Estonian Embassy in Astana	175.00	7.90
Finland in Kazakhstan	93.67	7.34
Consulat général de France à Almaty	34.33	12.01
Ambassade de France au Kazakhstan	95.33	15.41
Embassy of Lithuania in Kazakhstan	168.67	6.13
Slovak Embassy in Kazakhstan	110.00	6.20

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

The table shows that the profile «Ambasciata d'Italia in Kazakhstan» demonstrates one of the highest average engagements per post (24.64). This is despite a lower posting frequency compared to Germany and Poland, which indicates the high quality and relevance of their content.

Note that the Embassy of Sweden in Kazakhstan publishes 124.67 posts with an engagement rate of 15.35, demonstrating a balance between posting frequency and content quality. The Latvian Embassy has a lower frequency (69.33) and engagement (11.72), indicating potential for improving effectiveness. The Estonian Embassy in

Astana posts more frequently (175 posts) but with lower engagement (7.90), which requires improving content quality. The French Embassy in Almaty publishes rarely (34.33) but effectively (12.01 engagement). A similar approach is shown by the "Ambassade de France au Kazakhstan" (95.33 posts, 15.41 engagement).

Therefore, the data confirm that for effective digital diplomacy in Central Asia, it is important to maintain a balance between posting frequency and content quality.

Below are tables with data for each diplomatic service on Facebook in Uzbekistan:

Table 5 - Overall Subscriber Metrics for Diplomatic Profiles in Uzbekistan for 2021-2024

Embassy in Uzbekistan	Reactions	Followers	Comments	Shares	Posts
Germany	42,727	28,281	3,255	2,683	737
Poland	35,029	2,431	4,173	5,314	954
France	22,133	7,076	1,136	2,313	863
Slovakia	808	142	13	113	123

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

As with Kazakhstan, the German Embassy in Uzbekistan has the most significant number of followers (28,281) and a high number of reactions (42,727). This indicates a strong engagement with the audience. The French Embassy also actively publishes content (863 posts) and receives a considerable number of reactions (22,133) and comments (1,136), indicating good user engagement. The Slovak Embassy, despite having a small number of followers (142), shows publication activity (123 posts) but with relatively low reactions and comments. This

suggests a need for improved content strategies.

The authors noted that the posts of the most active EU profiles mainly engage in historical projects (exhibitions, films, or interactive online platforms). In the examples of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, these posts somewhat create an emotional connection with historical characters and events. Other studies have shown that audience interaction with historical event projects can stimulate emotional identification with characters, which enhances long-term soft power [17].

Table 6 - Content Update Frequency and Engagement Rate on Facebook Pages of Diplomatic Missions in Uzbekistan for 2021-2024

Embassy	Content Update Frequency (posts/year)	Engagement Rate (reactions + comments + shares per post)
Ambassade de France en Ouzbékistan	287.67	29.44
Deutsche Botschaft Taschkent	245.67	63.64
Ambasada RP w Taszkencie	318.00	45.86
Slovenské veľvyslanectvo v Uzbekistane	41.00	7.23

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

The table analysis showed that the French Embassy demonstrates regular activity, posting more than 287 times a year. This results in a solid engagement rate of 29.44, indicating that the posting frequency and content quality attract audience attention. The German Embassy, although posting slightly less frequently, achieves the highest engagement rate of 63.64. The Polish Embassy is the leader in

posting frequency (318 posts per year) and also demonstrates a high engagement rate of 45.86. Overall, the table highlights the importance of both posting frequency and content quality for effective digital diplomacy.

Below are tables with data for each diplomatic service on Facebook in Kyrgyzstan:

Table 7 - Activity and Engagement on Facebook Pages of Diplomatic Missions in Kyrgyzstan for 2021-2024

Embassy in Kyrgyzstan	Reactions	Followers	Comments	Shares	Posts
European Union	18,007	17,992	951	2,733	769
Germany	16,802	4,911	639	2,520	705
France	4,973	2,681	102	313	393
Hungary	1,593	870	38	181	200

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

The analysis of the tables for Kyrgyzstan reveals that the European Union, with the highest number of followers and posting frequency, also shows significant engagement. It is worth noting that this is comparable to the indicators for Germany and Poland in other countries. Meanwhile,

embassies with fewer followers and posts (such as the Hungarian embassy in Kyrgyzstan) show significantly lower engagement rates.

Now it is important to calculate the content update frequency and engagement rate for each embassy profile:

Table 8 - Content Update Frequency and Engagement Rate on Facebook Pages of Diplomatic Missions in Kyrgyzstan for 2021-2024

Embassy	Content Update Frequency (posts/year)	Engagement Rate (reactions + comments + shares per post)
Ambassade de France au Kirghizstan	131.00	13.94
Deutsche Botschaft Bishkek	235.00	26.27
European Union in Kyrgyzstan	256.33	28.61
Magyarország Nagykövetsége Biskek	66.67	9.56

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

Based on the data, the French embassy in Kyrgyzstan updates its content an average of 131 times a year. This indicates active, though moderately effective, audience engagement. The European Union Delegation in Kyrgyzstan publishes content even more frequently (256.33 posts per year), achieving the highest engagement rate of 28.61. This suggests a strategy that not only attracts but also retains a large number of followers.

The Hungarian embassy in Bishkek updates content the least frequently (66.67 posts per year) and has the lowest engagement rate of 9.56, indicating a need to increase frequency and improve interaction.

Below are tables with data for each diplomatic service on Facebook in Tajikistan:

Table 9 - Activity and Engagement on Facebook Pages of Diplomatic Missions in Tajikistan from 2021 to 2024

Embassy in Tajikistan	Reactions	Followers	Comments	Shares	Posts
European Union	14,415	10,493	630	1,721	392
Germany	4,626	3,738	254	470	247
France	4,209	2,803	196	551	375

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

In Tajikistan, the European Union Delegation has the highest number of followers (10,493) and the most reactions (14,415). This indicates a successful strategy for attracting and retaining an

audience. The French embassy shows consistent posting frequency and moderate engagement (4,209 reactions and 196 comments), indicating steady work on content. The German embassy in

Dushanbe publishes content less frequently (247 posts) compared to other embassies but still shows a significant number of reactions (4,626), confirming their effective use of social media.

Now, let us calculate the content update frequency and audience engagement rate for each embassy profile:

Table 10 - Content Update Frequency and Engagement Rate on Facebook Pages of Diplomatic Missions in Tajikistan from 2021 to 2024

Embassy	Content Update Frequency (posts/year)	Engagement Rate (reactions + comments + shares per post)
European Union in Tajikistan	130.67	43.17
Ambassade de France au Tadjikistan	125	16.15
German Embassy Dushanbe	82.33	24.16

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

The European Union Delegation in Tajikistan demonstrates the highest content update frequency (130.67 posts per year) and the highest engagement rate (43.17). The French embassy similarly updates content actively (125 posts per year), but their engagement rate is much lower (16.15). An interesting observation by the authors is that the German embassy in Dushanbe publishes content less frequently (82.33 posts per year) but has a relatively high engagement rate (24.16).

This indicates that even less frequently published high-quality content can significantly attract the audience. Therefore, overall data confirm that successful digital diplomacy requires a balance between the frequency of posts and their quality.

Below are tables with data for each diplomatic service on Facebook in Turkmenistan:

Table 11 - Activity and Engagement on Facebook Pages of Diplomatic Missions in Turkmenistan from 2021 to 2024

Embassy in Turkmenistan	Reactions	Followers	Comments	Shares	Posts
EU	651	157	17	58	567
France	0	1,583	0	0	0

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

The French embassy in Turkmenistan has a significant number of followers (1,583). However, the lack of posts shows that even with an audience, inactivity leads to zero engagement. The European Union Delegation in Turkmenistan demonstrates high activity with 567 posts, confirmed by

reactions (651), comments (17), and shares (58), highlighting the importance of regular content interaction. Comparison with other Central Asian countries confirms that diplomatic missions with high-quality frequent posts achieve better engagement indicators, regardless of the country.

Table 12 - Content Update Frequency and Engagement Rate on Facebook Pages of Diplomatic Missions in Turkmenistan from 2021 to 2024

Embassy	Content Update Frequency (posts/year)	Engagement Rate (reactions + comments + shares per post)
Ambassadeur de France au Turkménistan	0	N/A (No posts)
EU Delegation to Turkmenistan	189	1.43

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

It has been established that regular publications are important for audience engagement. Thus, the French Embassy in Turkmenistan did not publish any content, which resulted in zero engagement. Notably, the EU Delegation in Turkmenistan published 189 posts per year but with low engagement (1.43). In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, a high frequency of publications ensures better indicators.

We consider it important to note the role of internet platforms in shaping public opinion on EU policies (including gender equality) in the case of Turkmenistan. It has been observed that over the past decade, media profiles have been actively used to disseminate such information, and the number of these publications is growing.

It has been established that Facebook has not only become a significant platform for mobile media and communications in Central Asia but has also strengthened its role in digital diplomacy and influence strategies.

At the same time, the analysis shows that not all EU countries actively update their profiles, and low user engagement may be related to the geographical and cultural distance between the regions.

It has been revealed that economic ties between the EU and Central Asia may influence content moderation policies on social media [18].

The research highlights the dual role of social networks. On the one hand, they promote values and culture [19]; on the other, they are used to influence public

opinion, which affects the ontological security of states [20].

It is believed that the perception of EU countries as a positive or negative phenomenon for Central Asia influences the political, geostrategic, and cultural situation in the region. The impact on the pace of interregional cooperation is also significant. Research shows that, in addition to public and media diplomacy, there are other forms of interaction with various ethical implications for governments, the media, and public opinion.

The analysis of materials indicates that economic ties between the EU and Central Asia significantly affect the strategy of diplomatic presence on social networks. This is indeed an important aspect of digital diplomacy.

The data in the tables allow for the calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient between the frequency of publications and engagement for embassy profiles. This is necessary to determine the presence of a significant correlation.

Correlation Analysis

Based on the obtained data, the authors conducted a correlation analysis using Kazakhstan (as the leader among Central Asian countries) as an example. As a result of mathematical calculations, a linear correlation coefficient between variable Y (audience engagement) and factor X (posting frequency) was determined. The calculated correlation coefficient value is 0.268. This indicates the following characteristic of the relationship:

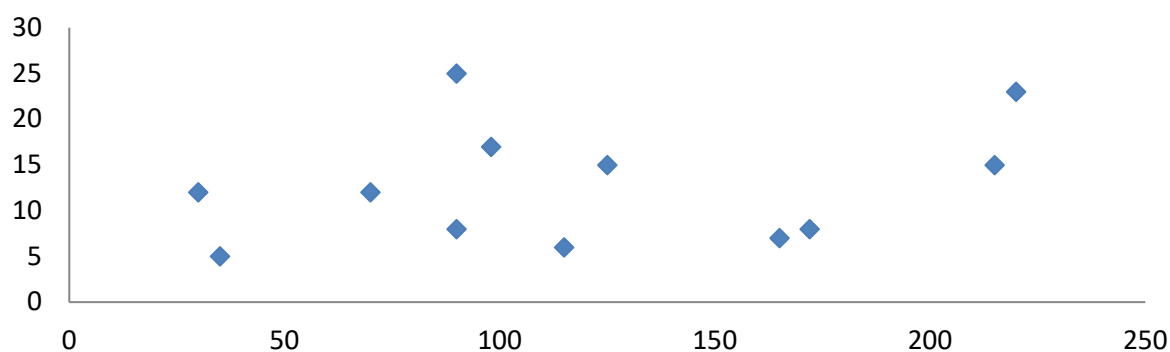


Figure 3 - Scatter Plot for Indicators in Kazakhstan

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

Firstly, the correlation coefficient of 0.268 indicates a weak relationship. This suggests that the relationship between the posting frequency of diplomatic missions and audience engagement is weak. Secondly, the positive value of the coefficient (0.268) indicates a direct relationship. This means that as the posting frequency increases, audience engagement also tends to increase slightly. Thirdly, despite some correlation, the tests conducted showed that it is statistically insignificant. This implies that the observed weak relationship could have occurred by chance and is not strong enough to be considered statistically reliable.

Overall, the analysis results indicate that:

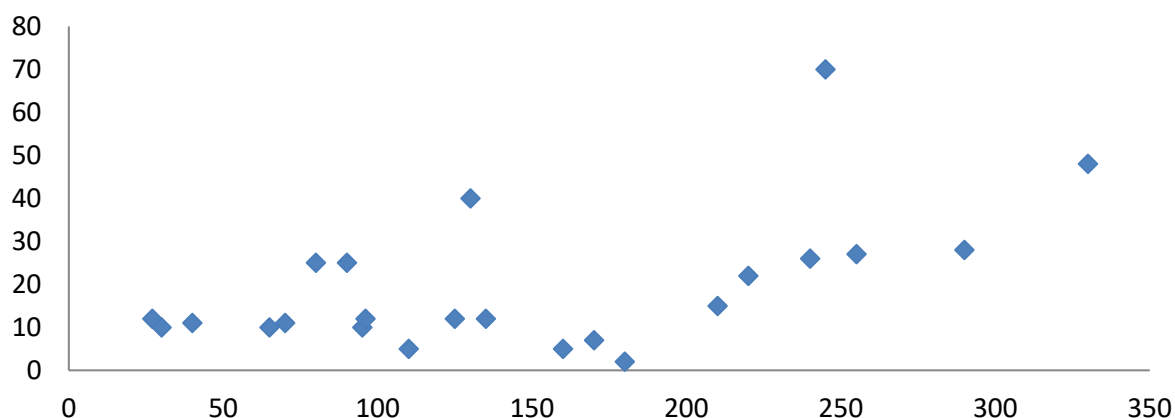


Figure 4 - Scatter Plot for Indicators in Central Asian Countries

Note - Compiled by the authors according to the source (Facebook, 2024)

The correlation coefficient $r=0.577$ indicates a noticeable and direct relationship between the variables Y (average post engagement) and X (content update frequency). A positive value of $r=0.577$ signifies a moderate positive correlation, where an increase in one variable (X) is associated with an increase in the other variable (Y). This is visually confirmed by the clear linear relationship in the scatter plot between X and Y.

To describe the relationship between content update frequency (X) and average post engagement (Y), the authors proposed a linear regression model. The model equation is: $Y = 0.0283 * X + 9.115$. This equation shows that for each additional increase in content update frequency (X) by one unit, the average post engagement (Y) increases by approximately 0.0283.

There is a weak direct relationship between the posting frequency of diplomatic missions and audience engagement. However, this relationship is not significant at a statistical level. This does not allow for definitive conclusions about the dependence between these factors.

The authors then conducted additional studies with a larger dataset on Central Asian countries. They also considered other possible variables that might influence audience engagement to obtain alternative results.

The analysis leads to the following conclusions:

For another dataset, the linear correlation coefficient was $r=0.268$. A value of $r=0.268$ indicates a weak positive relationship between content update frequency and average post engagement. A value close to 0 shows that the relationship between these two variables is weak.

As a result, the analysis shows that the relationship between content update frequency and audience engagement on Facebook for the studied embassies is not statistically significant. However, it is important to note that a weak positive correlation is observed. Of course, this may be random, and other factors are likely to influence engagement. Nevertheless, mathematical analysis revealed that the impact of update frequency varies (and is not always significant). As a result, the authors were once again convinced that

successful digital diplomacy depends on multiple factors.

Results

Thus, we believe that this study has revealed the issue of achieving public diplomacy goals. It has highlighted the insufficient effectiveness of social media use by European diplomatic missions in Central Asia. Data analysis showed that the frequency of content updates and the level of audience engagement vary between different diplomatic profiles. The authors also identified a weak positive correlation between the frequency of publications and engagement. This indicates the need for culturally informed approaches. Consequently, more active content updates may increase user participation.

It was found that publications considering cultural characteristics, language, and audience preferences contribute to better engagement. In addition, multimedia formats (videos, photographs) prove to be more effective than text-based formats, providing a more memorable presentation of information. It has been established that the key factors for the success of digital diplomacy are not only the frequency of publications but also their content, corresponding to the cultural specifics of the target audience. As a result, the study confirms the necessity of regular updates and cultural adaptation of content.

The weak positive correlation between the frequency of publications and engagement underlines the importance of a strategic approach. This should include creating content that resonates with the target audience. Publications covering cultural events demonstrated a higher level of engagement.

In conclusion, the research data confirm that the EU's diplomatic profiles in Central Asia can play a significant role in diplomatic relations. However, it is essential

to understand that this is possible only through the use of adapted content, establishing dialogue, and promoting values that are understandable to the local audience.

Conclusion

Since gaining independence, Central Asia as a region has become increasingly attractive. Russia and China compete for influence in Central Asia, while regional states use this rivalry to their advantage.

At first glance, this helps the EU promote its policies and strengthen its influence in the region. From another perspective, it provides Central Asian countries with the opportunity to maintain connections with European countries, which are necessary for the region. This, in turn, contributes to their political stability in the complex geopolitical game of world powers.

Given the above, we believe that in the context of sanctions against Russia and China, EU countries need to reconsider their diplomatic strategies in the region. Specifically, it is important to strengthen existing cooperation platforms with the region, including social media channels. As practice shows, trends today shape the agenda for conflict response. It is evident that, overall, European diplomats should use social media to support favourable «viral» trends.

In modern international relations, the exchange of information about financial opportunities and investment rules, as well as the formation of public opinion and lobbying for support within the framework of international relations, is highly suitable for interested parties. In this regard, for the successful implementation of digital diplomacy by EU countries in Central Asia, social networks should become a platform for European diplomats to coordinate with regional diplomats.

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ЦИФРЛЫҚ ДИПЛОМАТИЯ: ЕО ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯДА FACEBOOK-ТІ ҚАЛАЙ ПАЙДАЛАНАДЫ

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