The Return of Media Diplomacy: Examples from Kosovo

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Abstract

After the Cold War, states focused their campaigns on self-promotion on the global stage, so media diplomacy has been pushed to the periphery, hence not being a central research theme. However, the geopolitical clashes over Kosovo and the war in Ukraine have repositioned the role of media diplomacy in international politics. This paper aims to analyze Kosovo's media diplomacy in the following key moments: at the time of the declaration of independence (2008), and during the Russian aggression in Ukraine (2022). Data were collected from global media such as CNN, Al Jazeera, Reuters, and The New York Times, which have given space to Kosovo's political actors and influential global politicians. The US president Bush was the example of the enormous media coverage in 2008. Messages of these communications were analyzed using the framing method. The results show that media diplomacy revived in three cases: before and after Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, and again in 2022, with the fear that the Russian scenario for Ukraine would be followed by Serbia against Kosovo. Also, media diplomacy today establishes communications between countries with no diplomatic relations and even between countries with strained relationships.

Keywords:
communication; diplomacy; media diplomacy; public diplomacy; international communication

Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have changed many aspects of human life, including political practices. For example, people can now access global information; political leaders can communicate with the public directly about electoral interests; countries can directly promote their national interests and their takes on global issues (Peres et al., 2020). Digital communications can be utilized to support a state's interests and implement its foreign policy. The stakeholders involved in this case are the foreign policy actors, foreign chancelleries, and foreign audiences. Public communication and mass media play a bigger role as it creates global connectivity and opportunities for more effective and innovative practices (Gilboa, 2016).

According to Gilboa (2001), a prominent international communication scholar, three conceptual models that promote systematic studies on the importance of the media in international communications are *public diplomacy, media diplomacy, and media-broker-diplomacy.* Public diplomacy is an instrument state and non-state actors use to understand foreign audiences' cultures, attitudes, and behaviors and influence and mobilize them for profit purposes (Gregory, 2011). Media diplomacy is when state actors use the media to gain international political and strategic benefits (Cohen, 1986; Shinar, 2000). Meanwhile, media-broker diplomacy is the domain "where journalists temporarily assume the role of diplomats and serve as mediators in international negotiations" (Gilboa, 2001, p. 1) and "where journalists perform mediation

roles within a journalistic context, for example during interviews" (Gilboa, 2005, p. 100).

In the last four decades, research studies on media diplomacy have not been extensive. Among the few are those by Ramaprasad (1983), Cohen (1986), Rawnsley (1995), Shinar (2000), and Gilboa (1998). As shown in the years of publication, the latest study was in 2000. For the past 20 years, research on media diplomacy has not been progressing. In this period, public diplomacy was a more widely used concept by scholars. Studies on media diplomacy were rigorous before 2000, but after that, the number of research papers in the Sage database, as shown by the keyword *media diplomacy* in the title, is only three. By contrast, the number of keyword *public diplomacy* in the title is 95. The same is true in Taylor & Francis database. The keyword *media diplomacy* in the title is only two, and *public diplomacy* is 180. Media diplomacy and public diplomacy are two different concepts, although they are often considered interchangeable (Gilboa, 1998, 2008b). The common use of media for diplomacy is sending political messages to foreign audiences.

Media diplomacy has been on the periphery for a while in Europe, at least as reflected in the body of literature. However, its relevancy rose when scholars attempted to explain two significant events: the Russian aggression on Ukraine (in 2014 and 2022) and Kosovo's independence (in 2008). In this context, it is more relevant than public diplomacy. This is because Ukraine and Kosovo seek international agreements through media diplomacy than public diplomacy, i.e., promoting the country and its international image. With this in the backdrop, this paper aims to analyze the use of media diplomacy by Kosovo and for Kosovo. Therefore, the research question is: Has media diplomacy been reinstated in Kosovo after 20 years of absence?

Literature Review
The Media as a Channel of International Communication

Global communication has created new ways of interaction between media and diplomacy (Gilboa, 2001), all the more so today in the era of networked society (Castells, 2008), infosphere, and hyper history (Floridi, 2014). "This connectivity has facilitated two-way communication between governments and foreign publics, between peoples and governments, and between and among peoples" (Gilboa, 2016, p. 540).

The emergence and development of media diplomacy are parallel with the development of communication technologies and the changes and maturity of foreign policies. "Concepts and visualization of media diplomacy have been scantily studied from an international communication perspective" (Lim, 2017, p. 11). During the era of the nuclear race, media diplomacy was used for the armament of the global race. The United States (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) competed in a black campaign to generate a negative image of the opponent on the global stage. In 1957, the USSR leader, Khrushchev, was interviewed for the US TV Station CBS, where he pledged a peaceful co-existence (Laurano, 2006). His decision to come on TV marked a new era of international political communication in the USSR. Subsequently, the Soviet Secretary sought to clean up the negative image of the USSR as much as possible, which had worsened due to the military intervention in Hungary in 1956. In the US, President Kennedy was aware of the importance of media influence and used the traditional methods of the White House by addressing the Americans directly and inviting them to 'participate in the presidency'. The first live broadcast was on 25 January 1961, with a room of 418 journalists who could ask questions to the President. Sixty million viewers watch the broadcast (Laurano, 2006).

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However, similar to internal political communication, a media outlet often promotes a media event more than the substance of the news itself. This happens when the media is involved in *information management*, a term used for the first time by James Reston before a Congress committee in 1955 (Laurano, 2006). This technique circumvents traditional censorship. In the case of foreign policy with sensitive matters, the news is not hidden nor elaborated. Instead, the importance is placed on the *pseudo-events*. "Media diplomacy is pursued through various routine and special media activities, including press conferences, interviews, and spectacular media events organized to usher in a new era, Media Events and Pseudo Events." (Gilboa, 2008a, p. 2854). These *pseudo-events* contain facts construed to respect the criteria of news-making but not the news. Often, such meetings or events do not produce any information other than the event per se, which may be irrelevant. Boorstin (1992) has studied this sociological phenomenon, calling it a 'simulation' or 'publicity'. According to him, producing an echo of such an event in American culture is often more important than the event itself.

"The hotel owners asked the public relations consultants how to increase the prestige of the hotel in order to improve their business. The expected response was that perhaps, their water installations had to be improved, or to paint the rooms, to install crystal chandeliers etc. But the public relations consultants were even less direct. They asked to organize a party to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the hotel. The list of invitees was drawn, including bankers, lawyers, and preachers of influence. The party was organized, the photographers showed up… I call these pseudo-events." (Boorstin, 1992, p. 9-10).

The excerpt above explains the so-called *pseudo-events*, creating an image that either attracts attention or incites certain emotions (Kunczik, 1997). Through this type of management, the pseudo-events fill the information gaps in the absence of developments or information. In cases of propaganda, a specialist invents an unimportant event and manages the information, making the news about the event more popular than the actual issue. The narrative method of live events that are different from the mundane creates extraordinariness for the audience. Such *media events*' outcome is not more important than the created and exaggerated vibes. They become the best practice in media diplomacy, attracting broad audiences across the world, and becoming a more prioritized program than the planned ones in TV stations (Gilboa, 2001). The broadcasts are organized, often outside TV studios, prepared in advance, and ceremonially presented as talks, diplomatic invitations, or creating a negotiation climate (Gilboa, 2001).

Media events became widespread and frequent in the development of peace talks, such as the meetings between Gorbachev and Reagan in 1985 and 1986; in the meetings between Gorbachev and Bush in the transition period from the cold war to the post-Cold-War era; in the peace talks between the Arab and Israeli; in Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977 and peace conference in Madrid in 1991; in the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles held in the White House in September 1993; and in the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty in 1994 (Gilboa, 1998).

According to Masmoudi (1981), information is essential in international relations as a common ground between individuals and nations for understanding, familiarization, and communication. Social media play an important role in disseminating information. Nowadays, even when political actors have no particular campaign agenda, they can attract attention on social media and produce a media event. These politicians' statuses are followed by the media so they can propagate the politicians' positions. They help produce pseudo-events built upon the politicians' meetings, turning a mundane event

into a media event. In addition, the use of social media like Facebook and Twitter in both democratic and former-authoritarian countries can provide freedom to express positions in a virtual public sphere (Castells, 2015).

Mass media can also report events in real time. For example, in Operation Desert Storm, also known as the Gulf War, an effort to liberate Kuwait from the invasion of Iraq, President Bush ordered the attack on January 17, 1991. He did not address the American people because the Iraqi leaders would be able to see him. However, CNN, a leading media at that time, covered the bombings from Tehran in real time (Seib, 2012). Real-time reporting spreads information much faster than diplomatic or intelligence channels on the ground. Media events represent the best practices of media diplomacy, attracting a wide global and interrupting television programming schedules (Dayan & Katz, 1992).

Defining Media Diplomacy

Media diplomacy implies the role of the media in international communications and relations (Cohen, 1986; Lim, 2017; Shinar, 2000), "where officials use the media to communicate with actors and to promote conflict resolution" (Gilboa, 2001, p. 1). The media is used as a channel to convey diplomatic messages from state actors to foreign state actors and audiences to achieve specific results. "Media diplomacy concerns how the media link policymakers to foreign governments and the public" (Cohen, 1986, p. 8). Among the most accepted definitions is that of Gilboa (2001), the most cited scholar in the field of media and public diplomacy, with 4230 in the first half of 2022. According to him, "media diplomacy refers to officials' uses of the media to communicate with state and non-state actors, to build confidence and advance negotiations, and to mobilize public support for agreements" (Gilboa, 2001, p. 10).

Media diplomacy is also used in various visits of statesmen to other countries. Significant visits abroad are usually covered by both global and local television and media. American presidents use media diplomacy extensively. Important visits, especially to important places or when they aim to send a strong message to other countries or cultures, the American president is accompanied by hundreds of correspondents who follow every step and statement (Gilboa, 2001). Gilboa (1998, 2001, 2008a) believes that the media plays a crucial role in international communications and diplomacy, with three main functions:

Public diplomacy, where state and non-state actors use the media and other channels of communication to influence global public opinions; *media diplomacy*, where officials use the media to communicate with actors and to promote conflict resolution; and *media-broker diplomacy*, where journalists temporarily assume the role of diplomats and serve as mediators in international negotiations. (Gilboa, 2001, p. 4).

In cases of international conflicts or the absence of diplomatic relations and good bilateral relations, media diplomacy is an alternative channel of communication (Semetko, 2009) to achieve effects, to mobilize support. For example, during the 1990-1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War, the American presidents and the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, hurled messages back and forth via the global news networks. In 1990, the US Secretary of State, James Baker, did not go through the US ambassador to Iraq to deliver the last ultimatum to Hussein and went through CNN instead. "Baker chose CNN not only to save time but also to persuade the entire international community that the US was exhausting peaceful means to resolve the crisis and was determined to use force only if Hussein ignored the ultimatum" (Gilboa, 2008a, p. 2855).

In such cases, the media helps the so-called demonization of the enemy. Hans Morgenthau treats demonization as a form of foreign policy. In the second point of the six main

principles of *realpolitik*, Morgenthau highlights demonization as one of the principles of politics and state relations. A state can convince neutral countries or any third party that its rival has a certain negative image and that its actions are condemnable. "By eliminating once and for all certain groups of people or individuals, it is thought that the problems represented by them can also be eliminated" (Belli, 2003. p. 94). This is done by praising oneself and reviling others, that one is always for peace and war is imposed by the aggressor.

The demonization strategy has not changed for as long as politics are practiced. What has changed is the communication channels and new media. Nowadays, the media and social networks have become a powerful source of information. For example, in the US, four out of ten Americans (43%) access news from Facebook. Although the credibility of social networks is lower than the traditional media (Shearer & Eva Matsa, 2018), the massive following can help disseminate information and situate the positions of political and diplomatic actors

Despite the rapid growth of social media, mainstream mass media, such as television, still hold a pivotal role. The public still access information from television and other mainstream news media. Their competitive advantage is their commitment to professional journalism, such as exposing fake news and correcting disinformation (Tsfati et al., 2020). Ammon (2001) calls the use of media diplomacy via television to influence and mobilize support in the world *telediplomacy*. The role of this kind of interaction between media communication and diplomacy remains strong. According to the Reuters Institute (Newman et al., 2019), in European countries, the US, Canada, Australia, and many other countries, television remains the main and most relied upon source of information. For example, the Russia-Ukraine war in the spring of 2022 has been reported mainly by television and much less by online

and social media. In countries like Poland, Germany, the US, and Brazil, the coverage of this event is watched by 31-46 percent on TV, 13-23 percent via online news websites, and 6-23 percent by social media (Newman et al., 2022).

Defining Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is done through direct communication with foreign peoples to influence their thinking and, ultimately, their governments' decisions (Malone, 1985), especially in the formation and execution of foreign policies (Cull, 2006). "Public diplomacy is an instrument used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; [to] build and manage relationships; influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values" (Gregory, 2011, p. 353). In other words, public diplomacy is communications between state and non-state actors and the international public in order to inform, engage, and influence them and to realize the state interests (Saliu, 2013, 2021, 2020b, 2022b, 2020a). It is based on the premise that "the image and reputation of a country are public goods" (Leonard, 2002, p. 9). Favorable global image and reputation, achieved through attraction and persuasion, "have become more important than territory, access, and raw materials, traditionally acquired through military and economic measures" (Gilboa, 2008b, p. 56). "National images, that is, the foreign publics' perception of a nation, is also a social construction based on personal experiences, the experiences of personal connections and mediated messages" (Fjällhed, 2021, p. 230).

Studies on international relations and communications have become more connected over the last five years because public diplomacy has become increasingly digital and cannot be explained without the global social networks of communications (Bjola et al., 2019; Crilley

et al., 2020; Golan et al., 2019; Manor, 2019; Pacher, 2018; Saliu, 2018). This shows that public diplomacy is increasingly seen as a communication process (Di Martino, 2019; Jönsson, 2016).

The main activities of public diplomacy are (a) information management, which regulates information shown through the media to the international public; (b) strategic communication, which manages occasional campaigns throughout the year; and (c) cultural diplomacy, which involves various exchanges to establish long-term relationships with foreign audiences (Gilboa, 2008b; Leonard, 2002; Nye, 2004, 2008, 2019). Public diplomacy activities also include cultural diplomacy, which deals with people-to-people programs, cultural exchanges, education, language learning programs, and sports (Cull, 2006, 2008; Saliu & Llunji, 2022a). This dimension is direct, people-to-people, without media mediation (Golan, 2015). The following section explains how public diplomacy is distinguished from media diplomacy.

The Differences Between Media Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy

Most people have the opportunity to be involved and access information about other countries from the media. Public diplomacy is mediatized (Golan et al., 2019). This perhaps blurs the distinction between public diplomacy and media diplomacy, but the key differences are the purpose of the communication and the communication channels. Meanwhile, the commonality is that "the media diplomacy includes all aspects of public diplomacy where the media are involved as well as others not associated with public diplomacy including the sending of signals by governments through the media, and the use of the media as a source of information" (Cohen, 1986, p. 7).

The goal of media diplomacy is to influence other governments and to reach an international agreement beneficial to the country (Gilboa, 1998, 2001); to achieve conflict resolution and garner international support (Gilboa, 1998, 2001, 2008b), usually in times of conflict or crisis (Semetko, 2009). On the other hand, public diplomacy aims to inform, influence and engage the international public (Cull, 2008; Nye, 2004), which eventually influences their governments (Frederick, 1992; Malone, 1985); builds relations in the economic, political, cultural sphere (Saliu, 2020a; Zaharna, 2014); increase public presence (Yun, 2012), win the hearts and minds of people (Szondi, 2008), and promote a favorable image of the country in times of peace.

Regarding the actors and communication channels, media diplomacy is done by state actors, whiles public diplomacy can be done by either state or non-state actors. In media diplomacy, the messengers are the state actors who convey messages through the media (Gilboa, 1998). In public diplomacy, the messengers are organizations, NGOs, diasporas, and individuals who convey a message directly through activities, such as educational and cultural exchange programs, scholarships, cinematography, language programs, sports, and arts (Golan, 2015; Snow, 2020).

In brief, the three dimensions of public diplomacy are information management, strategic communication, and cultural diplomacy. The communications in the third dimension are direct, without mediation. Meanwhile, media diplomacy messages are communicated only through the media, as shown in Table 1.

Methods

The data were analyzed based on the *framing* theory of media effects. This analysis method considers the aims of media messages, which influence the audience and often have to do with the social construct of reality (Scheufele, 1999). According to Entman (1993), frames define problems, diagnose causes,

Table 1.
The differences between public diplomacy and media diplomacy

Features	Public Diplomacy	Media Diplomacy
Context	Ideological confrontation	Negotiations
Time frame	Long range	Short range
Goals	General/fundamental	Specific
Method	To promote a favorable image	To appeal for conflict resolution
Medium	Multiple channels	Mass media only

Source: Gilboa, 1998, p. 62

make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/ or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Frames were identified using an inductive approach (De Vresse, 2005; Golan et al., 2019; Manor & Crilley, 2018). The stages include selecting and highlighting; using the highlighted elements to construct an argument about the problems; and providing evaluation and solution (Entman, 1993).

The first stage is to select the statements of the state leaders of Kosovo and the prime minister, and the president of America. These statements were broadcasted in international media such as CNN, Al Jazeera, Reuters, The New York Times, and in local media. The selection also considers three key moments: before and after Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, and Russian aggression in Ukraine in 2022. Regarding the latter, the statements included are also structured within media diplomacy (aimed at mobilizing support) and not public diplomacy (aimed at increasing the international image) emerging as a result of the conflict in Ukraine. All statements aim to influence the audience, i.e., the international state actors, observed under the lens of the *framing* theory, which examines the media effects on the social construction of reality (Scheufele, 1999). This leads to the adoption of new practices, such as framing

events as they unfold in near-real time, thereby competing with the frames disseminated by media institutions, citizen journalists, and other diplomatic actors (Cassidy & Manor, 2016; Golan et al., 2019).

Results
Kosovo's media diplomacy before and after the declaration of independence

Kosovo is the most typical example of media diplomacy in this century in Europe. This section outlines the most typical cases of media diplomacy. The cases were selected according to two criteria: the international media and the messengers speaking about Kosovo are prominent political figures, i.e., prime ministers or presidents of Kosovo, the US, and Albania. The inclusion criteria (powerful media and important personalities) seek to capture the significant effect on other governments' views and international opinions.

The US President, George W. Bush, had chosen neighbouring Albania to declare that Kosovo (with a 90 percent Albanian population) should be independent. These statements received a great deal of media coverage. The American television, ABC News, reported that "Bush Gets Rock Star Welcome in Albania. The president's reception in a majority-Muslim nation is just the kind of image the president wants the world to see" ("Bush Gets Rock Star Welcome in Albania," 2007).

The pro-America fervor in Albania dates back to World War I when President Woodrow Wilson staved off efforts to split Albania among its neighbors. For his part,

Bush has enhanced the US reputation with his efforts to help Kosovo, which has a huge Albanian population, gain independence. "At some point in time, sooner rather than later, you've got to say, 'Enough is enough, Kosovo is independent,'" Bush said at a Sunday press conference. (Bush Gets Rock Star Welcome in Albania, 2007).

The British daily newspaper *Telegraph* wrote that President Bush was given a hero's welcome that day as he became the first American president to visit the former communist state, Albania, from where he declared that neighboring Kosovo with an Albanian majority should be independent ("Bush Makes Landmark Visit to Albania," 2007).

Al Jazeera reported similarly but in a long chronicle from Tirana. With the title "Bush calls for independent Kosovo," Al Jazeera gave a long overview of the history of Kosovo, with the NATO bombing of Serbia to end the Serbian crimes perpetrated against the Albanians in Kosovo. The article reported that Bush from Tirana has called on Russia not to block the resolution for Kosovo's independence at the UN. "Sooner rather than later, you've got to say enough is enough: Kosovo is independent. We need to get moving, and the result is independence. Independence is the goal" ("Bush Calls for Independent Kosovo," 2007).

With the title "Bush Insists Kosovo Must Be Independent and Receives Hero's Welcome in Albania" (2007), the British newspaper *Guardian* writes that "Independence is the goal. That's what the people of Kosovo need to know. We believe Kosovo ought to be independent. Sooner rather than later, you've got to say enough is enough. Kosovo's independent," Mr. Bush announced at a press conference in Tirana, the capital of Albania.

Likewise, the American daily newspaper *The New York Times* wrote that Bush in Tirana insisted that we should no longer wait for Kosovo's independence and that the time had already come. "At some point in time, sooner rather than later, you've got to say, enough is enough - Kosovo is independent," *The New York Times* quotes Bush's statement in Tirana ("Thousands Hail Bush in Visit to Albania," 2007).

CNN reported (from Tirana, Albania) that Bush asked the United Nations to act now on Kosovo. According to CNN, President Bush said that the time was then to grant independence to the Serbian province of Kosovo and called on Moscow not to slow down the process ("Bush: U.N. Must Act Now on Kosovo," 2007).

Reuters news agency reported the event titled "Bush says Kosovo to be independent, delights Albania" (Zakaria & Tzortzi, 2007). Reuters also spotlighted the reaction of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Agim Ceku, who appeared in the capital of Kosovo in a special news conference following Bush's statements, "This is a clear and strong message. President Bush not only confirmed once more his strong support for independence, but in a sense, he declared the independence" (Zakaria & Tzortzi, 2007).

Meanwhile, CNN followed the itinerary of Bush's visit from Tirana to Bulgaria. "The time is now to move the Ahtisaari Plan. America believes that Kosovo ought to be independent", Bush said, noting that he had discussed the matter with the President of Bulgaria, Georgi Parvanov ("Serbian Outrage over Bush Remarks," 2007).

After the declaration of independence, the statements from Kosovo political actors and the pro-independence world leaders could be considered more as media diplomacy than public diplomacy. The designers and advocates of foreign policy drew attention through the media. Regardless of their geographical locations, their statements went global without the need to broadcast through traditional diplomatic channels. The media disseminate them to the international audience in real time. In fact, foreign policies were formulated through media diplomacy and not just based on the government's statements, as was the

case a while ago. The most practical example is the statement of President Bush. A day after the proclamation of independence, during a visit to Tanzania, he gave a statement to the TV network NBC that the United States of America supported the proclamation of independence of Kosovo. "Kosovars are now independent. It is something I have advocated, along with my government" (Kruzel, 2008). Meanwhile, the Prime Minister of Albania, Sali Berisha, on the day Saudi Arabia acknowledged the independence of Kosovo, on 20 April 2008, sent a message of gratitude to Riyadh from China, where he was on a visit.

The media have provided a channel for political actors of different countries to give political statements on specific matters without having to meet or have one party visit the other. The foreign policy actors could even communicate simultaneously from their respective countries, without visiting the country in question. Countries can check each other's political standing or opinions on a specific matter. They can even conduct political communication with those not accepting traditional diplomatic communication. In February 2009, the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, stated from Pristina that Russia would also recognize Kosovo ("Thaci: Rusia do ta njohë Kosovën," 2009). The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, reacted immediately. He stated, from Moscow, that Russia had not changed its position. Potter (2002) believes that increasing opportunities to access news and the speed or abundant dissemination of news and information to the global audience in real time have made the management of state affairs more complex than ever.

Kosovo's media diplomacy during the Russian invasion of Ukraine

A few years after the independence of Kosovo, media diplomacy started to gain traction. The Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014 sparked debate and tension between Serbia and Kosovo three years later. In January 2017, a train from Serbia carrying Serbian and Russian extremists attempted to force its way into Kosovo. The train was painted with the slogan "Kosovo Is Serbia" (Middleton, 2017). The prestigious news agency, Reuters, wrote quoting the Serbian president:

"If they are killing Serbs, we will send the army. All of us will go. I will go as well. It would not be my first time," said Nikolic, a former member of the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party and in the 1990s fought alongside Serb paramilitaries in Croatia (Bytyci, 2017).

Meanwhile, the President of Kosovo sought to avoid tensions in northern Kosovo but, at the same time, warned that Serbia intended to annex a part of Kosovo according to the Crimea model (Taylor, 2017). "President Hashim Thaci of Kosovo has accused Belgrade of planning to seize a segment of northern Kosovo using the 'Crimea model,' a reference to Russia's annexation of the peninsula" ("US Urges Serbia, Kosovo to Avoid Nationalist Rhetoric," 2017). On the other hand, the US demanded calming the situation, giving Kosovo the right to stop the provocative train. "Kosovo is a sovereign, independent country, and we respect the right of Kosovo to manage who and what crosses its borders. We urge all sides to avoid dangerous rhetoric," stressed the US Embassy (The US Embassy in Kosovo, 2017).

Regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, media diplomacy was also at play. For example, Kosovo was often mentioned by the Russian president. CNN, in particular, gave a spotlight to Kosovo state leaders. Meanwhile, The New York Times wrote that Putin attempted to justify aggression against a sovereign state, Ukraine, by mentioning the case of Kosovo in 1999. At that time, NATO was forced to bomb the Serbian army to stop mass crimes in Kosovo (Fisher, 2022). Attempting to garner global support for the aggression on Ukraine, Putin compared two incomparable things: Russian

aggression and NATO's military intervention for humanitarian reasons.

On the other hand, in an interview with CNN about the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani, stated that Kosovo was a victim of a similar policy 23 years ago. Even today, the president feels the danger of Russia (through its satellite, Serbia) in destabilizing Kosovo, Bosnia, and Herzegovina ("Kosovo President: We'll Pay Any Price to Defend Democracy," 2022). According to the president, Serbia threatened the Kosovo border with Russian-made MIG planes and tanks a few months prior. Therefore, she believes that it is imperative for Kosovo to join NATO.

In an interview with CNN, the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, raised the same concern. He believes that Russia endangers the Balkans through Serbia. Therefore, the five EU countries (Spain, Greece, Slovakia, Cyprus, Romania) that have not recognized Kosovo need to declare their recognition of Kosovo and immediately support Kosovo's membership in NATO ("Kosovo PM: 'Serbia Is on the Side of the Russian Federation,'" 2022).

Discussions

The above examples show that Kosovo has received more media coverage from prominent international media than its neighboring countries, such as North Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro. Amid the conflict in Ukraine, none of the heads of state of Kosovo's neighboring countries were given media space on CNN and Reuters. Meanwhile, the president and prime minister of Kosovo appeared in these media frequently. In April 2019, two decades after the liberation of Kosovo from Serbia, the search result of news about Kosovo on Google (in English) showed 190 news, Northern Macedonia 180, Albania 140 and Montenegro 140. The rising interest from the global media in Kosovo stems not only from the country's internal developments but also from its location, which has become a clashing spot

between the West (Euro-American) and Russia, and the rest of the world. "Kosovo is important to the West because it is considered a symbol of Western power and efficacy" (Hehir, 2019).

The province of Kosovo was part of the former Yugoslavia, which was disbanded in 1991. As an autonomous province within Serbia, Kosovo was liberated from Serbia when NATO intervened in 1999 to end the crimes committed by the Serbian authorities against the Kosovo-Albanian majority population. After a period of administration by the UN, Kosovo, supported by the US and other Western states, declared independence in 2008. To date (2022), it has been recognized by 114 countries worldwide but opposed by Serbia, Russia, etc.

Kosovo finds it difficult to establish traditional diplomatic contacts (communication between the state actors of one country and the state actors of another country) with some countries that have positioned themselves against Kosovo's independence. These include Russia, China, countries allied with Serbia, and countries with internal problems with secessionist regions. For this reason, state actors welcomed the opportunity to convey diplomatic messages through the media and to call on other countries for recognition.

In the cases mentioned above, Kosovo's state actors speaking to the global media and other global politicians, such as President Bush, can be considered media diplomacy. They aim for a broad impact. In the case of President Bush, who was received as a hero in neighboring Albania with the historic statement "Kosovo must be independent," there was a mutual interest in the effects of media diplomacy. On the one hand, the US president's public relation team used this reception to send a message to the Arab world that that was how the American president was expected in a country with a Muslim majority. This is important in restoring the international image of the US and its president, which had fallen in some Muslim countries because of his

interventionist policy at that time (in Iraq and Afghanistan).

His reception in Albania was also highlighted by the American media, "The president's reception in a majority-Muslim nation is just the kind of image the president wants the world to see" ("Bush Gets Rock Star Welcome in Albania," 2007). Here, the interests with Kosovo were aligned, and all the media coverage for this visit and Bush's powerful statement about Kosovo's independence in 2007 were quite important. Eight months after this statement, Kosovo declared its independence in coordination with the US and European countries.

These statements give an example of how powerful media diplomacy can be. The effect was that other countries allied with the US to support Kosovo's independence. As Gilboa (2001) pointed out, the American president is accompanied by hundreds of correspondents who follow his every step and statement on his important visits abroad, especially to places of significance or when they want to give a strong message to other countries or cultures.

Statements from other state leaders of Kosovo, the prime minister and the president, were also broadcasted by CNN or other international media. They also aim to generate certain effects and to reach an international agreement (as part of media diplomacy). Heads of state have previously raised concerns that Russia wants to destabilize Kosovo through Serbia. Therefore, Kosovo should join NATO immediately ("Kosovo President Accuses Russia of Destabilising Balkans," 2022).

The cases mentioned above relate to media diplomacy and are analyzed from the perspective of framing. Such political messages aim to define the problem, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. All these cases exemplify media diplomacy and not public diplomacy. The lack of studies on media diplomacy in the last 20 years is due to the calm after the Cold War, especially in Europe. In times of conflict, media diplomacy appears as an alternative channel of communication (Semetko, 2009).

Conclusions

Studies in media diplomacy after the Cold War were limited. In the 21st century, studies focused on public diplomacy because global tensions had fallen, and the states focused on building images and reputations for economic purposes. In the case of Kosovo, the enhanced international image is not attributable to public diplomacy but to media diplomacy actions aiming to reach an agreement at the international level. After the declaration of independence, the statements of the heads of state of Kosovo were aimed at increasing recognition of the new state and accelerating the acceptance of its NATO membership. In this sense, the message of the political actors from a small country like Kosovo was conveyed to and received by the public and political actors in countries that did not recognize Kosovo or have no diplomatic relations with it. This is a feature and opportunity created by media diplomacy.

Media diplomacy also has some specifics that should be singled out. It enables communication even between countries that do not have diplomatic relations, and these messages and attitudes are conveyed through the media. Also, media diplomacy has weakened the importance of the government headquarters because the state actors can speak in the media, regardless of whether he makes the statement from the headquarters or a foreign country far from his government headquarters. This has increased the urgency and, at the same time, made the articulation of the diplomatic message more complex.

The case of Kosovo can only be explained by the concept of media diplomacy and not public diplomacy, although media diplomacy has been absent in the literature in the past few decades. In the cases mentioned above, Kosovo

has not tried to increase its international image in order to derive commercial benefits, investments, tourist benefits, etc., as public diplomacy aims, but to sensitize the global audiences and Western governments to the risk of destabilization by Serbia as an ally of Russia. Media diplomacy achieves its effect when a certain country has media coverage by the powerful international media, as was the case with Kosovo.

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