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KAZAKHSTAN'S DIGITAL CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: INSTRUMENTS AND EXPERIENCES OF COOPERATION WITH EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES

Abstract. The rapid development of digital diplomacy today has ensured the widespread use of digital cultural diplomacy in international relations. This article examines from different angles the tools and practices of digital cultural diplomacy of Kazakhstan in Asia, primarily in China, the Republic of Korea and Japan and analyzes the dynamics of development.

The aim of the research is to analyze, based on the theories of soft power and constructivism, digital projects and cultural diplomacy initiatives aimed at a foreign audience and implemented with the participation of the state in the context of technological change. Special attention is paid to the activities of non-state actors - diasporas, bloggers, and cultural intermediaries - who use local and international digital platforms to promote culture abroad, as well as a comparative analysis of the importance and benefits of these practices.

The research is based on qualitative analytical methods; SWOT analysis is additionally used to identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats in digital cultural diplomacy. The results obtained emphasize the need to adapt the Asian experience and modernize the Kazakh content strategy for cultural promotion. The long-term goal is to increase the number of joint projects with Asia and create gamification based on the national social heritage.

Keywords: *digital cultural diplomacy, soft power, Kazakh diasporas, social networks, digital platforms, bloggers, virtual communication.*

Тахира Камалджанова, Зәмза Қожахмет

ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ ЦИФРЛЫҚ МӘДЕНИ ДИПЛОМАТИЯСЫ: ШЫҒЫС АЗИЯ ЕЛДЕРІМЕН ҮНТЫМАҚТАСТЫҚ ҚҰРАЛДАРЫ МЕН ТӘЖІРИБЕСІ

Андатпа. Цифрлық дипломатияның қарқынды дамуы бүгінде халықаралық қатынастарда цифрлық мәдени дипломатияның кеңінен қолданылуын қамтамасыз етті. Бұл мақалада Азиядағы, әсіресе Қытайдағы, Корея Республикасындағы және Жапониядағы Қазақстанның цифрлық мәдени дипломатиясының құралдары мен тәжірибелері әртүрлі тұрғыдан қарастырылады және оның даму динамикасы талданады.

Зерттеудің мақсаты - жұмсақ күш пен конструктивизм теорияларына сүйене отырып, шетелдік аудиторияға бағытталған және технологиялық өзгерістер аясында мемлекеттің қатысуымен жүзеге асырылатын мәдени дипломатиядағы цифрлық жобалар мен бастамаларды талдау. Шетелде мәдениетті насихаттау

үшін жергілікті және халықаралық цифрлық платформаларды пайдаланатын мемлекеттік емес субъектілердің - диаспоралардың, блогерлердің және мәдени делдалдықтардың қызметіне, сондай-ақ осы тәжірибелердің маңыздылығы мен артықшылықтарын салыстырмалы талдауға ерекше назар аударылады.

Зерттеу сапалы аналитикалық әдістерге негізделген және цифрлық мәдени дипломатияның күшті, әлсіз жақтарын, мүмкіндіктері мен қауіптерін анықтау үшін қосымша SWOT талдауын пайдаланады. Зерттеу нәтижелері Азия тәжірибесін бейімдеу және мәдени насихаттау үшін Қазақстанның контент стратегиясын жаңғырту қажеттілігін көрсетеді. Ұзақ мерзімді мақсат - Азиямен бірлескен жобалар санын көбейту және ұлттық әлеуметтік мұраға негізделген ойындық технологияларды құру.

***Түйін сөздер:** цифрлық мәдени дипломатия, жұмсақ күш, қазақ диаспоралары, әлеуметтік медиа, цифрлық платформалар, блогерлер, виртуалды коммуникация.*

Тахира Камалджанова, Зәмза Қожахмет

ЦИФРОВАЯ КУЛЬТУРНАЯ ДИПЛОМАТИЯ КАЗАХСТАНА: ИНСТРУМЕНТЫ И ОПЫТ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА СО СТРАНАМИ ВОСТОЧНОЙ АЗИИ

Аннотация. Быстрое развитие цифровой дипломатии сегодня обеспечило широкое использование цифровой культурной дипломатии в международных отношениях. В данной статье рассматриваются с разных точек зрения инструменты и практики цифровой культурной дипломатии Казахстана в Азии, прежде всего в Китае, Республике Корея и Японии, и анализируется динамика развития.

Цель исследования – анализ, на основе теорий мягкой силы и конструктивизма, цифровых проектов и инициатив в области культурной дипломатии, ориентированных на зарубежную аудиторию и реализуемых с участием государства в контексте технологических изменений. Особое внимание уделяется деятельности негосударственных субъектов – диаспор, блогеров и культурных посредников, использующих местные и международные цифровые платформы для продвижения культуры за рубежом, а также сравнительный анализ значимости и преимуществ этих практик.

Исследование основано на качественных аналитических методах; дополнительно используется SWOT-анализ для выявления сильных и слабых сторон, возможностей и угроз в цифровой культурной дипломатии. Полученные результаты подчеркивают необходимость адаптации азиатского опыта и модернизации казахстанской контент-стратегии по продвижению культуры. Долгосрочная цель состоит в увеличении числа совместных проектов с Азией и создании геймификации на основе национального социального наследия.

Ключевые слова: цифровая культурная дипломатия, мягкая сила, казахские диаспоры, социальные сети, цифровые платформы, блогеры, виртуальная коммуникация.

Introduction

Cultural diplomacy can be considered as a mechanism for promoting the national values and interests of a country, contributing to the development of the country, and strengthening relations with other countries. In the age of globalization, it is very important to create peace and mutual understanding with other countries for

the prosperity and independence of each state, and digital diplomacy can serve as a guarantee of this.

The main goal of this approach in international relations, which developed rapidly in the 19th and early 20th centuries and became official, was to ensure mutual understanding and trust between states without war, without relying on military power, increase prestige and to establish long-term agreements. The method was first used in the United States and Europe during World War II and the Cold Wars of the 1940s and 1960s.

Subsequently, these approaches developed beyond Western countries, including in East Asian countries, namely Japan, China, and South Korea, where digital technologies have become an important tool for cultural and humanitarian interaction.

This study focuses on the Asian approach to cultural diplomacy, in particular the experience and practices of Kazakhstan's interactions with China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. It should be noted that initially cultural diplomacy was carried out only through closed negotiations and agreements between diplomats and government officials, but later society began to use it to promote the traditions, language and mentality of their peoples abroad. The main reasons for such changes in cultural diplomacy are globalization, the development of international relations and the development of digital communication and social networks.

Cultural diplomacy has gained special importance for Kazakhstan in connection with the establishment and deepening of relations with Asian countries, primarily with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. These countries are important political, economic and cultural partners for Kazakhstan, which has led to the active development of bilateral and multilateral forms of cultural interaction, including digital formats.

At the same time, despite the rapid development of digitization, Kazakhstan's experience in the field of digital cultural diplomacy in Asia is still insufficiently systematized. In particular, the limited distribution of programs aimed at an international audience, as well as insufficient feedback from foreign participants slow down the development of the most effective tools for large-scale and sustainable cultural promotion in the digital environment.

The aim of this study is to analyze Kazakhstan's digital cultural diplomacy using the example of its interactions with China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, and to identify key digital tools that facilitate the promotion of Kazakhstani culture and soft power in the region.

Literature review

The modern diplomatic system, as well as the strategies and instruments associated with it, are undergoing significant changes due to changes in international relations. The rapid development of data processing and communication technologies has led to the development of enhanced discretion.

Kazakhstan has been successfully developing digital diplomacy for a long time, paying special attention to the cultural dimension of foreign policy events.

The purpose of this literature review is to systematize the works of international researchers and existing publications devoted to digital cultural diplomacy in Kazakhstan, as well as to analyze its theoretical foundations, tools, and practical implementation forms.

This analysis of the scientific literature reflects the evolution of the transition from traditional cultural diplomacy to its digital forms. J. Nye linked cultural

diplomacy with the concept of “soft power,” demonstrating that it is implemented through state programs for educational, artistic, and linguistic exchange [1]. Bjola and Holmes and Pamment believe that a major transformation in cultural diplomacy has occurred, leading to virtual communication among members of society through various social media, while the development of virtual museums and other digital platforms has become part of everyday life [2; 3]. This has significantly facilitated direct communication between societies and accelerated public debate around cultural products, creating additional conditions for peaceful cooperation between states.

At the same time, research on digital cultural diplomacy in the context of Kazakhstan is still fragmentary. The existing literature is mainly devoted to China and Russia, while the Central Asian region is often mentioned casually in the context of foreign policy and multilateral diplomacy. Given the technological development, it becomes especially important for Kazakhstan to develop its own systemic digital cultural agenda.

The digital reach of virtually all members of society indicates the development of multi-format cultural diplomacy.

With the help of these tools, the foreign audience and compatriots abroad receive more complete and reliable information about the country. For example, the QazCulture portal collects materials about traditions, history, and art of Kazakhstan, while international social networks such as Instagram, TikTok and Facebook are used to visually promote language, cultural values and national space. Thanks to these tools, foreigners have more opportunities to get reliable information and explore the country both culturally and taking into account traditional nuances.

These platforms provide interactivity not only in one area, but also in a combination of several at once, which is important for a foreign audience in terms of interaction and engagement in discussions.

Thus, cultural diplomacy is constantly evolving from a unilateral component of data exchange into a multilateral communication channel. Kazakhstan is given the opportunity not only to assimilate external social influences but also to promote its declared social character and strengthen its position at the global level. Despite the practical implementation of these instruments in the Asian region, which is the subject of this study, their effectiveness, the perception by the audience and the actual effects are still poorly understudied.

Research on Kazakhstan’s interaction with Asian countries is mainly focused on security, economic and political issues. In the scientific literature, one can often see a tendency towards Asian cultural influence on Kazakhstan, and not vice versa. In this regard, Kazakhstan is presented purely descriptively. Empirical research on this topic is also extremely rare.

Li Jipeng (2025) compares the digital cultural brand strategies of China and Kazakhstan and concludes that Kazakhstan’s strategy is mainly limited to the Russian-speaking and English-speaking segments [4].

However, the use of the Kazakh language should not be regarded as a restriction; on the contrary, it can serve as a unique tool for promoting culture. Experience shows that the digital content of Kazakhstani youth is distributed in international social networks in several languages, which contributes to a wider reach of the global audience.

In the Asian context, there remains a clear lack of research on the activities of informal actors promoting Kazakhstani culture through local digital platforms

(WeChat, KakaoTalk, LINE) and using local languages. Eliminating this research gap is one of the main goals of this article.

Recent scholarship also demonstrates that digital cultural diplomacy should be examined through several interconnected dimensions rather than through the presence of individual digital platforms alone. Grincheva argues that the digitalization of cultural diplomacy has expanded the range of relevant actors from traditional governmental institutions to cultural organizations, communities and individual influencers, while digital platforms themselves increasingly constitute the infrastructure through which cultural communication takes place. This perspective is particularly relevant to Kazakhstan because its digital cultural diplomacy involves not only governmental initiatives but also museums, media organizations, diaspora communities, bloggers and individual cultural intermediaries. Accordingly, the present study distinguishes between state-led digital platforms, digital cultural heritage projects, social-media communication, international cultural-media initiatives and non-state cultural mediation. Such classification makes it possible to examine the scope of Kazakhstan's digital cultural diplomacy and to compare its institutional and communication practices with those of China, South Korea and Japan.

Despite the fact that Kazakhstan's digital cultural diplomacy is still at the earliest stages of its development and is insufficiently represented in the logical literature, its study is especially relevant in the context of rapidly changing models and innovations. Perhaps the geographical location of a country between great powers often reduces attention to its initiatives as an independent entity.

Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of Kazakhstan's digital cultural diplomacy in the current context is a priority research objective.

Research Materials and Methods

Digital cultural diplomacy is a relatively new and developing concept in international relations theory. This article uses various statistical materials, articles, and social media data to examine Kazakhstan's digital cultural diplomacy with Asian countries, particularly China, Japan, and South Korea. To assess the level of cultural promotion, a study was conducted of the official websites and social media pages of ministries and embassies of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as the pages of Kazakh and foreign citizens.

News and articles on various websites allowed us to analyze Kazakhstan's efforts to develop digital culture internationally. Furthermore, local platforms in Asian countries were examined to study the effectiveness of "soft power." As mentioned, digitalization is becoming an important part of Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power." This article comprehensively examines the formation and development of these concepts, namely "soft power" and "new diplomacy."

The article utilizes qualitative research methods. Official documents, reports, and strategic materials from government programs and international organizations were used for the study. Additionally, examples demonstrating the use of digital cultural diplomacy are examined. Online content, virtual exhibitions, documentaries, and digital cultural projects demonstrate the importance of "soft power". These studies highlight the role of digital diplomacy in shaping the state's image, maintaining peaceful relations with other countries, and promoting national culture around the world.

The study uses the SWOT analysis as an analytical tool to assess the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and perceived threats of digital cultural diplomacy.

To complement the qualitative analysis, selected quantitative indicators were used to characterize the scale and visibility of digital cultural diplomacy initiatives. These indicators include the number of digital platforms and cultural projects identified in the selected cases, available audience and engagement measures reported in academic studies, and documented indicators of digital cultural participation where comparable data were available. Quantitative indicators are used descriptively rather than as direct measures of diplomatic effectiveness. This distinction is important because the number of followers, views or digital interactions does not by itself demonstrate the achievement of cultural-diplomatic objectives. The analysis therefore combines quantitative indicators with qualitative assessment of the content, institutional actors, target audiences and communicative functions of digital initiatives.

Results and discussion

Theoretical Framework: Soft Power and Digital Cultural Diplomacy.

Cultural diplomacy is one of the key instruments of a state's soft power. The concept of soft power was first coined by Joseph Nye. According to Nye, "soft power" means the ability to influence other people's behavior and achieve the desired results through interaction and cooperation [1,p.5]. The currently most common form of "soft power" is digital diplomacy.

States use digital tools and technologies to achieve their foreign policy goals, establish direct contacts with society, strengthen their influence and shape public opinion.

For example, according to contemporary experts, social media has accelerated diplomatic communication, increased accessibility for people in every corner of the world and allowed foreign ministries to instantly interact with a global audience. Not only at the state level, but also through citizen participation, society, using digital tools, quickly and widely communicates the state's image to the world.

In 1994, the official website of the US Department of State was launched, which was used as a means of disseminating information [5]. Since then, other countries have begun using websites and email in diplomatic correspondence. It is worth noting that the term "digital diplomacy" was first used in an academic context in 2001 by Wilson Dizzard in his book "Digital Diplomacy: American Foreign Policy in the Information Age" [6].

Bjola, in turn, defines digital diplomacy as public diplomacy focused on interaction with a broad international audience and relying on the capabilities of information technology, primarily social media. Its main difference from traditional public diplomacy is that it allows for the creation and maintenance of long-term interactive relationships with foreign audiences in real time. The subjects of digital diplomacy in international organizations include employees of secretariats or other structural divisions, representatives of member state delegations, as well as employees of international organizations in their personal capacity – that is, all those who can maintain accounts on social media, attracting the attention of a wide audience to the activities of the relevant organization. Later, digital diplomacy began to be perceived as a fully-fledged diplomatic tool that evolved and began to develop rapidly.

According to the study, the theoretical basis of digital diplomacy is the theory of "constructivism", which assumes that reality in international relations is characterized not by material structures, but by relationships between people [7]. In

other words, individuals shape their image of a nation by watching the activities of its citizens.

In this manner, digital cultural diplomacy nowadays has two fundamental establishments: soft power and constructivist hypothesis. While soft power theory assumes achieving goals by influencing others, meaning that in this context, the state actively intervenes and attempts to strengthen its influence in a specific direction, constructivism often involves non-state actors, and their interactions create a multifaceted and heterogeneous diplomacy that changes rapidly. For example, government organizations, bloggers, tourists, and public figures represent the country from different perspectives on various social platforms. Thus, not just one, but several points of view and opinions about the country are formed. With the help of both theories - soft power and constructivism - the state shapes its image and position on the world stage.

Evolution of Kazakhstan's Digital Cultural Diplomacy. Since gaining independence on December 16, 1991, Kazakhstan has established official diplomatic relations with a number of Asian countries, including the People's Republic of China (January 3, 1992), Japan (January 26, 1992) and the Republic of Korea (January 28, 1992), and has consistently made efforts to develop cooperation, strengthen and maintain these friendly relations with Kazakhstan [8]. These steps had not only political and economic, but also cultural, historical and geographical significance and laid the foundation for the development of multifaceted international cooperation.

As part of the expansion of multilateral diplomacy, educational cooperation has acquired particular significance. Kazakhstanian students eager to study have received excellent opportunities to participate in scholarship programs providing access to a high-quality education. This primarily concerns government grants from China and scholarship programs from Japan (MEXT) and the Republic of Korea (KGSP). Also, relatively recently, the awarding of educational grants through the "One Belt, One Road" initiative on a competitive basis for potential students in Kazakhstan has become relevant in this context. Such initiatives have not only facilitated academic mobility but also strengthened cultural relations between the countries. Additionally, joint educational programs with the Confucius Institute, Japanese and Korean cultural centers, and specialized language education centers have been established in Kazakhstan. For a long time, until the 2010s, Kazakhstan considered cultural diplomacy in traditional framework. However, with the development of digital technologies and communications, cultural diplomacy has reached a qualitatively new level. It has become possible to disseminate domestic culture abroad remotely through various digital platforms and social media.

With the digitalization of international relations and the active use of online tools, cultural interaction with Asian partners has become particularly relevant. It's no secret that embassies and consulates are currently holding some summits and meetings remotely through various online platforms. Cultural events, educational programs and various community festivals are also held online.

The development of Kazakhstan's official presence on the Web has become a critical step within the digital transformation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan has maintained official Twitter accounts (presently X) since December 2011, and Instagram since 2013. These digital platforms play a vital part in forming the political and cultural image of Kazakhstan, conducting data campaigns and organizing worldwide programs.

The activities of embassies and cultural centers overseas also play an important role. They organize a wide range of online events and virtual presentations to promote the national culture and traditions of the Kazakh individuals. Such events

are very useful for the organizers, since they do not require large financial costs and reach a huge gathering of people, which makes them more common than offline events. As a result of the digital transformation of cultural diplomacy, Kazakhstan has significantly expanded the scope of its cultural presence abroad and has been given the opportunity to exert influence and establish multilateral cultural relations in the global digital space without geographical restrictions.

State-Led Digital Cultural Diplomacy Instruments. Using the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' social media pages alone is insufficient to attract foreign audiences, as they are official and political in nature. Therefore, the Ministry of Culture and Information and other government organizations are launching websites and various online competitions to reach a broad international audience, primarily creatively inclined citizens. This format allows us to perceive culture not only as a propaganda tool, but also as a form of mutual exchange that maximizes the impact of cultural images. Among the main initiatives in this area are such projects as “Culture of Kazakhstan”, “Kazakhstan through the eyes of foreign media” and “Google Arts & Culture”.

Table 1 - Classification of Kazakhstan's Digital Cultural Diplomacy

Type of instrument	Examples	Main function
State digital platforms	Culture of Kazakhstan / Qazaq Culture	Digital presentation of national culture and heritage
Digital cultural heritage	Google Arts & Culture	International access to Kazakh cultural heritage
International media projects	Kazakhstan through the Eyes of Foreign Media	Promotion of Kazakhstan through foreign media
Diplomatic social media	MFA and diplomatic missions	Cultural and public communication
Non-state actors	Diaspora, bloggers, cultural intermediaries	Community-based cultural representation

**Compiled by the authors based on the source [9-11].*

The “Culture of Kazakhstan” website, created on the initiative of the Ministry of Culture and Information, is a source of information about the culture and history of Kazakhstan, the purpose of which is the digitization of information materials. Researchers interested in the history of Kazakhstan can access historical documents and archival materials on the website. The site also publishes cultural news and books from around the world, offers virtual 3D tours of the sights of Kazakhstan. The website is available in Kazakh and six other official UN languages [9]. The project's multilingual nature expands the opportunity to provide foreign citizens with a wide range of information about history and traditions. While the website's concept, content, and quality are excellent, its reach is limited due to its low reach and influence. Therefore, connecting with social media, which subscribers use daily, and posting content there is an excellent opportunity to increase its popularity.

The next project is the “Kazakhstan through the Eyes of Foreign Media” competition. Experts consider it one of the most attractive projects among foreign participants. The competition has been held annually since 2014 at the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Undoubtedly, the competition is intended for a wide audience of foreign citizens who subsequently publish documentary, cultural, entertaining, and analytical works about the history

and culture of Kazakhstan in foreign media, on various online platforms, and on social media. The competition selects winners who receive a unique opportunity to visit cities across Kazakhstan, the most popular of which are Astana, Almaty, and the Mangystau region [10]. The key feature of this program is that it is presented not through official government sources of information about Kazakhstan, but through the views and personal experiences of foreign representatives, making the content more credible and appealing to external audiences.

The third project focuses on promoting culture through international digital projects. The virtual exhibition “National Heritage of the Silk Road” on the Google Arts and Culture platform includes ten exhibits from the National Museum of Kazakhstan [11]. In addition, projects such as IchLinks - Asia - Silent Heritage Project, Central Asian Archaeological Landscapes, and Silk Road Heritage Corridors in Central Asia are being implemented.

Projects in the field of digital culture are carried out in cooperation with international organizations, including UNESCO, ICOM and the Digital Culture Network. This allows Kazakhstan not only to present its cultural heritage in museum premises, but also to disseminate it using modern methods. As a result, the country was given the opportunity to present its culture not only at the national, but also at the global level in accordance with international standards.

As a rule, such projects are often limited to the dissemination of general information about official events, cultural heritage, and news. From a constructivist point of view, such state-oriented content does not always promote lasting trust among a foreign audience since the cultural image is perceived more indirectly than through direct experience [11].

For outside audiences, formal recognition with another country’s cultural image is regularly less engaging than the individual feelings and impressions of genuine individuals. In this setting, true and candid substance on social media is becoming a progressively sought-after and compelling instrument for cultural interaction.

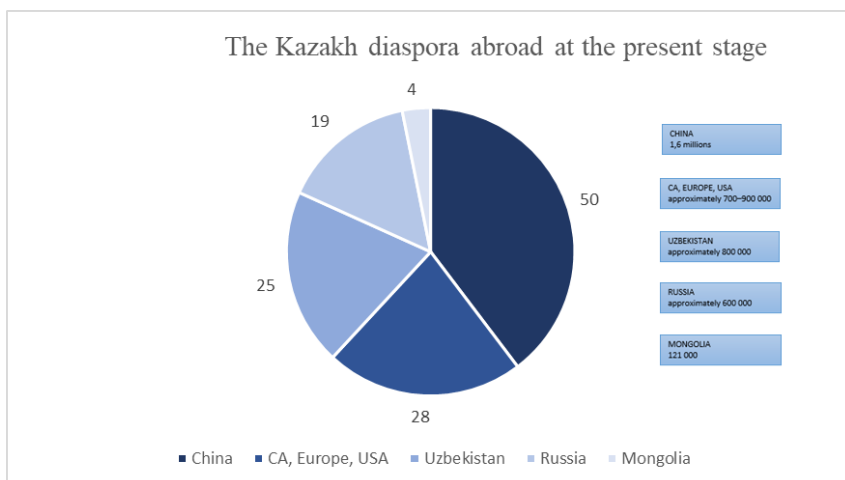
Non-State Actors: Diaspora, Bloggers, and Cultural Mediators. Non-state actors acquire a special status in the context of cultural diplomacy. Digital content from the Kazakh diaspora, promoting values such as tolerance, uniqueness, and cultural diversity, is a unique tool for foreigners to gain an understanding of Kazakhstan as a country of cultural diversity.

The formation of the Kazakh diaspora dates to the 18th century, during the Kazakh-Dzungar wars. The Dzungar invasion triggered a mass exodus of Kazakhs from their historical homeland, primarily to Central Asia, including Tashkent [12]. Subsequent stages influencing the expansion of the Kazakh diaspora abroad were associated, firstly, with Stolypin’s agrarian reform in Kazakhstan (1906-1913) and the events of 1916, which forced a huge number of kazakhs to emigrate to neighboring countries such as China, Afghanistan, and Turkey. Secondly, factors such as the establishment of Soviet power, the process of collectivization, World War II and the socio-economic instability after the collapse of the Soviet government led to an emigration mood among the Kazakhs and, accordingly, their outflow [13].

According to experts, the largest number of Kazakhs at that time ended up in China. The rest of the Kazakhs were also recorded in Mongolia, Afghanistan, Siberia, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Karakalpakstan and European countries. According to statistics, almost 4 million people emigrated from the territory of the Kazakh lands in the 20th century. Moreover, if in 1930-1933 1.1 million people emigrated, then the population censuses of 1989 and 1999 recorded a decrease in the number of Kazakhs from 16,199,000 to 14,953,000, which indicates the emigration of almost 1.2 million people during this decade [14].

Currently, according to official data, the Kazakh diaspora living abroad numbers over 3 million people. Of these, a high percentage of Kazakhs reside in China (1.6 million) [15]. See the figure below.

Figure 1. *The Kazakh diaspora abroad at the present stage*



**Compiled by the authors based on the source [16]*

The Kazakh diaspora carries out an informal diplomatic mission to advance Kazakh conventions among foreigners. They reinforce Kazakhstan's soft power potential by organizing different forms of national art, including singing and moving in their home nations. Holidays such as Nauryz, Republic Day and Independence Day have already become recognizable for a foreign audience. Experts believe that participation in humanitarian projects and educational programs also contributes to shaping Kazakhstan's international image through humanitarian projects and educational programs.

In a number of countries, particularly China, Kazakh-language schools and classes have been opened for Kazakh children, which in turn contributes to the development of Kazakh culture and the preservation of Kazakh identity. The Kazakh diaspora in East Asia uses both local and international social media to share their daily lives and holidays, thereby introducing foreigners to Kazakh culture. Excellent proficiency in both Kazakh and local languages allows them to convey elements of Kazakh tradition in a manner understandable to foreign audiences.

This practice isn't limited to diasporas in certain regions but is also carried out by users of international social media. The promotion of Kazakh songs and films through Asian and global media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube has become widespread. Korean singer Son Wan-sub translates many Kazakh modern and folk songs into Korean and also performs some songs on the dombra.

The film industry plays a huge role in the dissemination of Kazakh culture, providing an opportunity for foreigners to learn about the history of the Kazakh people. In 2025, the films "Kazakh Khanate: The Diamond Sword" and "Dos

Mukasan”, dedicated to the history of Kazakhstan, were screened as part of the days of the Kazakh Cinema Festival in Tokyo [17]. The film “The Walnut Tree” won the Award for New Direction at the 20th Busan International Film Festival and was also screened at several festivals in Japan and China [18]. “Kazimukan” won the grand prize and the Best Actor Award at the Seoul International Web Film Festival [19].

Furthermore, numerous films about nomadic Kazakhs have been made in China. The most notable is the television series “My Altai.” It tells leisurely about the way of life of Kazakh nomads in China, their traditions, horse riding education and interaction with the local population. At the same time, such projects as “The Pastoral Business of the Tien Shan”, “Kazakh Shepherds” and “The Irtysh” also explore the traditions of the Kazakhs, primarily their way of life, the development of animal husbandry, seasonal migration and division of labor.

In general, most Kazakh works depict changes in Kazakh society after the end of the nomadic period. Despite their stationary lifestyle, Kazakhs adhered to the preservation of animal husbandry culture. Social life in these conditions of civilization was exhausting, but despite this, a more mature part of society took care to preserve the traditions of its predecessors and still continue develop them in our time. Such content in various formats is becoming accessible to a wider audience through the use of informal communication channels and digitalization. The development of digital diplomacy has a positive impact not only on cinema and music but also on the development of Kazakhstan’s tourism industry.

Kazakhstani users contribute to tourism by publishing videos dedicated to Kazakhstan’s landscape design on social media. This format is very attractive for foreigners. According to the information received, visitors and travelers regularly share their authentic impressions of the places they visit, thereby refuting far-reaching generalizations about society and providing more valuable data on almost regular changes in the lifestyle of local residents. It is extremely important for subscribers to share their feelings and ask questions to the manufacturer of the substance, as well as to familiarize themselves with the location of the desired places, especially on the Internet.

A prime example is the blogger @bydastann, who has 1.2 million followers. He masterfully posts Kazakhstan’s national landscapes and beautiful places on Instagram and shares them with a global audience. Some of his videos have been posted on official Instagram accounts, including the account of the famous Turkish Airlines, which increases the reach and awareness of his content.

Similarly, Taotao Aima, tourism ambassador in Kazakhstan, creates content about typical national sports, traditional clothing and attractions for an audience of millions on Chinese social media to publicize horse riding and bird watching.

Another Kazakh tourism ambassador, Yuji Natsuma from Japan, promotes the Kazakh language both in Japan and abroad. He publishes numerous posts and videos about Kazakhstan on social networks (TikTok and Instagram).

Hence, bloggers and agents of the diaspora not as it were make visual substance, but moreover present nature, conventions and dialect to a remote gathering of people through advanced communication, uncovering the foremost vital viewpoints of culture from a modern, bizarre point. Their exercises have ended up an fundamentally portion of computerized social strategy.

However, the viability of such promotion depends not only on the quality of the substance, but also on the group of onlookers. In spite of the fact that East Asians effectively utilize prevalent social platforms, they have not, however, made them a part of their day-to-day lives. Therefore, they ought to investigate and utilize

neighborhood stages to extend their reach to the Asian gathering of people is getting to be increasingly pressing.

Regional Digital Platforms and Cultural Outreach in Asia. In Asian countries, regional social networks are used not only because of their versatility and convenience, but also because in some countries access to foreign platforms is restricted and regulated. In this regard, the creation of content about Kazakhstan on local digital platforms is especially important for the development of cultural and humanitarian relations with East Asian countries.

In this regard, it appears fitting to require under consideration the foremost far-reaching territorial social media platforms in Asian nations, specifically in China, the Republic of Korea and Japan.

The most common social media platforms among the Chinese population are WeChat, Weibo and Bilibili. These tools differ significantly from the social media platforms used by Kazakhstanis.

WeChat is a super-popular application created by Tencent in 2011. Originally known as Weixin, it was officially renamed WeChat for the international market in 2012. Over the past ten years, the platform has become one of the world's largest standalone mobile apps [20]. WeChat's advantage is that users can exchange emails, send voice messages, and make video calls. Posting visual content is another popular feature of WeChat. Users can share their location with followers. In this regard, it is similar to Instagram and TikTok, which used by a great many of population in our country.

Unlike other platforms, WeChat is a multifunctional ecosystem: approximately 90% of user payments are made through the app using QR codes. WeChat also provides access to national services and digital documents, as well as tickets for transportation and cultural events, including cinema.

It is estimated that Chinese users spend a third of their mobile internet time on WeChat and typically return to the app ten times a day or more.

The platform integrates over 300 mini-apps. However, the app is largely isolated from the Western digital space, has a strict system of rules and the registration process for foreign users remains difficult.

Weibo, another app, is considered the Chinese equivalent of Twitter. Launched by Sina Corporation in 2009, it began to gain a large audience after China restricted access to social networks like Facebook and Twitter [21]. This platform is characterized by its active presence in official media and the presence of a distinct fan culture. However, unlike advanced visualization-oriented social systems, they are overloaded with meaningful publications and official information, and their main target audience is elderly customers.

The Bilibili program, launched in 2009, is widely used among young people. Originally developed exclusively for anime, comics and games, it has since undergone significant changes and now offers high-quality PCG content and interactive comment systems [22].

South Korea, like China, has its own local platforms. Kakao Talk and Naver apps are worth mentioning. Kakao Talk, which has been successfully operating since March 2010, quickly gained great popularity among users. In just one year, the number of users exceeded 10 million, by 2012 it reached 60 million worldwide, and by 2022-2024 an increase to 45-48 million is expected [23]. Kakao Talk is more than just a messaging tool, it's a huge system that combines payments, games, comics and music content in one place. This application includes, among other

things, a video platform, a navigation and booking service, including taxi. Kakao Talk is currently the most popular app used by 96% of the South Korean population.

Another existing network, Naver, was founded in 1999. In 2000, the platform first introduced a “complex search” service, and in 2002, a question-and-answer system was introduced. In 2009, the launch of Naver Webtoon and Naver Music significantly expanded the platform’s audience [24]. Naver subsequently developed an ecosystem of digital services, including a blog platform, thematic forums, video content, and digital comics. Additionally, a multilingual dictionary and a mapping system capable of competing with Google Maps were introduced.

According to data, three local apps are widely used in Japanese society: LINE, Note, and Ameba. LINE, founded in 2011, offers users not only messaging but also online payments [25]. It also features anime and manga-style content, as well as a huge number of sticker sets, which are popular among teenagers. In Japan, many companies maintain official pages on the platform, and approximately 70% of small businesses use LINE for marketing. In addition to LINE, other digital platforms are also popular in the country. For example, the note-taking service, introduced in 2014, is primarily aimed at authors and content creators. By 2025, the audience has already reached 1 million users [26]. No less popular is the Ameba platform, which is mainly focused on blogging and personal media projects.

Thus, we see that in all three Asian countries, social media is an integral part of people’s lives. Messaging and content sharing, online payments, and much more have become everyday tools for social media users. Although these applications may seem similar at first glance, they differ strikingly from each other due to the national preferences and interests of the countries in which they are used. In China, social platforms are considered universal and capable of competing with other international networks, but their operation is strictly regulated by rules [27].

The situation is different in the Republic of Korea, where digital platforms generally oppose deep integration of services, which reduces social barriers and promotes more open and direct dialogue between users. This, in turn, promotes faster and more sincere communication.

Given the cultural peculiarities of Japanese society, their digital platforms are based on elements of gentleness, politeness and a certain restraint in expressing emotions. An analytical comparison of social networks in the three countries is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Analytical table of digital platforms of China, South Korea and Japan

Country	Platforms	Functions	Advantages	Limitations
China	WeChat, Weibo, Bilibili	Messaging, payment, national services, content, games and anime	Over 300 apps in one place, with a stable internal audience	Strict rules, restrictions on certain content, difficulties with registration for non-locals.
South Korea	KakaoTalk, Naver	Messaging, payment, comics and music, video content, navigation, dictionary	Can compete with Google Maps – connected, global communication	Mostly aimed at the Korean market, very difficult to use without knowing Korean language

Japan	LINE, Note, Ameba	Messaging, payment, anime, manga, marketing, article	Thousands of stickers expressing emotions, convenient for running a small business	Limited commercial content, no international audience, services may be region-specific
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Kazakhstan can develop its own digital cultural diplomacy by drawing on the experience of these platforms. As shown in the table, each country's platform has both its own unique features and similarities in functionality. The most striking of these is the integration of multiple applications and services into one place. Currently, in Kazakhstan, content-rich social networks, however payments, national services, music platforms, translation, mapping services, and other frequently used functions are not integrated and operate separately in different applications. On the one hand, this facilitates sustainable communication with domestic audiences and the formation of local digital communities. On the other hand, the experience of Asian platforms can serve as an example of the effective integration of digital services in this regard.

Table 3. *Digital Cultural Diplomacy Platforms in Kazakhstan and East Asian Countries*

Country	Main platforms	Main cultural and diplomatic functions	Key audience
Kazakhstan	Qazaq Culture, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube	Cultural heritage, national identity, cultural promotion	International and domestic audiences
China	WeChat, Weibo, Bilibili	Cultural content, public communication, national image	Domestic and foreign audiences
South Korea	KakaoTalk, Naver	Popular culture, cultural content, public engagement	Domestic and international audiences
Japan	LINE and other digital platforms	Cultural and creative content, public communication	Domestic and international audiences

* *Compiled by the authors based on the source [28-30] and the empirical materials examined in this study.*

Academic studies demonstrate that the effectiveness of digital diplomacy depends not only on the availability of digital platforms but also on audience engagement and the structure of communication networks. Park and Lim [28], in their comparative analysis of South Korean and Japanese public diplomacy, identified differences in network structures and patterns of foreign-public engagement, while Jiang demonstrated the importance of Weibo as a platform for diplomatic communication in China [29]. In the case of Kazakhstan, Collins and Bekenova found that diplomatic communication through Facebook was predominantly characterized by one-way communication [30]. These findings suggest that Kazakhstan's digital cultural diplomacy should move beyond the simple dissemination of cultural content toward more interactive and audience-oriented communication.

However, limitations in the use of these platforms should not be ignored, as the high degree of regulation can hinder international recognition of the state and the promotion of national culture among foreign audiences. Based on the obtained results, a comprehensive SWOT analysis of Kazakhstan's digital cultural diplomacy in East Asian countries.

SWOT Analysis of Kazakhstan's Digital Cultural Diplomacy in East Asia

Strengths	A rich and unique cultural heritage that attracts interest from Asian audiences Active participation of the diaspora and bloggers in creating authentic content Use of digital formats (online exhibitions, social media, media content) Positive international image as a peaceful and multinational country Government support and Establishing friendly relations with Asian countries
Weaknesses	Lack of content in foreign languages Limited content targeted at the Asian region Lack of online educational programs for international students Insufficient systematization of digital cultural initiatives
Opportunities	Leveraging the experience of Asian digital platforms (WeChat, Naver, LINE) Growing interest in authentic and emotional content Developing localized content for China, Korea, and Japan Expanding digital collaboration with Asian cultural institutions
Threats	Limited access of foreign content to local audiences Competition with strong cultural brands from other countries Risk of stereotyping and distortion of cultural images Rapidly changing digital trends and platforms Insecurity of the Internet

The SWOT analysis has shown that one of the main qualities of Kazakhstan is the preservation of its cultural heritage and conventions, as well as the basis for long-term, calm and trusting relations with major Asian countries, which guarantee stability and prospects for further improvement. However, the need for knowledge of other foreign dialects and the limited number of online training programs for remote countries, including Asian ones, are hindering the dissemination of the country's social heritage abroad.

The preceding classification and comparative analysis indicate that Kazakhstan's main challenge is not the absence of digital cultural resources, but the limited systematic measurement and targeting of their international reach. In contrast, research on South Korea and Japan has demonstrated the value of examining audience engagement and organizational network structures, while research on China highlights the importance of adapting diplomatic communication to the specific architecture of domestic digital platforms [28-29]. For Kazakhstan, therefore, the development of digital cultural diplomacy requires a transition from the simple presence of cultural content online toward systematic audience-oriented communication and measurable international engagement.

To overcome these obstacles, Kazakhstan's activities should be focused on increasing the number of joint ventures with Asian countries, improving the quality of online platforms, creating virtual and interactive groups, including the most modern entertainment reflecting the social uniqueness of the country and distributing it among young people.

At the same time, issues of internet security, existing restrictions, the spread of disinformation and the growing number of competing countries are considered potential threats to the development of Kazakhstan's digital diplomacy.

In general, the analysis allows us to consider digital cultural diplomacy as a promising area for further development. It can be used to develop a strategy for spreading the national culture internationally and using it as an instrument of influence in regional and international diplomacy.

Future Prospects: The history, mythology and historical heritage of the nomads of Kazakhstan have a significant potential for attracting the interest of an international audience. At the same time, as demonstrated in the SWOT analysis, high-quality gamification, widely used among young people, can be an effective tool for introducing the new generation to this culture through the incorporation of game elements.

Strategic and digital games are widely used in countries such as China, South Korea, and Japan, so gaming could very well become a new platform for developing Kazakhstan's cultural diplomacy. Joint virtual gaming projects with these Asian countries could also become an effective initiative at the regional level. Kazakhstan, as a cultural hub for Central Asia, provides access to the market, while its Asian partner countries enhance the quality and impact of games through advanced technology, a broad audience, and a sophisticated visual style.

Properly designed gamification creates conditions for young people to develop research, analysis, and practical application skills, as well as thinking and flexibility. For the older generation, this is an opportunity to receive new information and spend their free time creatively. Players can plunge into the mythological world through quests, group games, simulations and platformers, take on the role of heroes and heroines and get not only information about them, but also a special cultural experience. Virtual tours allow followers to become acquainted with historical geography and ethnography. Such projects become not only a playground full of engaging entertainment but also a center for the dissemination of cultural knowledge and the contemporary presentation of heritage.

Conclusion

This paper explores a deep understanding of digital cultural diplomacy. This type of diplomacy is examined from a constructivist perspective, using soft power theory in a relatively new analytical context. Additionally, emphasis is placed on the idea of gamification and its potential for transmitting cultural values, as well as their potential for use in joint projects between Asian states.

Overall, Kazakhstan's relations with Asian countries are developing peacefully and sustainably. In recent years, amid the rapid development of digital technologies in the context of globalization, diplomatic interactions have been conducted online not only between official representatives of states but also between members of society. Thanks to the availability of foreign information sources for citizens and the speed of communication, the promotion of Kazakh culture is growing every day. Although digitalization creates great opportunities for Kazakhstan to improve its reputation on the world stage, the field of digital cultural diplomacy is developing slowly.

The comparative evidence also demonstrates that the development of digital cultural diplomacy should be assessed through both the diversity of available instruments and measurable forms of public engagement. Kazakhstan has established a number of digital channels for presenting its cultural heritage and

national identity, but their international reach and audience interaction remain insufficiently documented. The experience of East Asian countries shows the importance of adapting communication to local digital ecosystems and developing institutional mechanisms for monitoring audience response. Thus, Kazakhstan's future digital cultural diplomacy should combine the digitization of cultural heritage with localized content, interactive communication and systematic evaluation of international audiences.

However, the combination of rich traditional heritage and modern technology culture of Kazakhstan is spreading all over the world. As demonstrated in the study, the Kazakh diaspora abroad plays a key role in this process. The promotion of national culture and ideological values is carried out through regional digital platforms, the activities of education, film and music content. However, this process faces a number of challenges. The limited number of educational programs, as well as the focus of most domestic content on a domestic audience, are hindering the development of a cultural presence abroad.

Addressing these challenges, expanding joint cultural projects with Asian organizations and companies, and creating new virtual gaming formats and useful platforms will provide a solid foundation for further growth. Digital cultural diplomacy will not only promote the development of national culture but also create peaceful and lasting bridges of communication globally.

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