RADIO ROMANIA INTERNATIONAL –
A JOURNALISTIC TOOL TO CROSS BORDERS

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Abstract

The paper analyzes how international broadcasters cross all types of borders, physical or conceptual, in order to reach the public and fulfill their role of public diplomacy tool for their countries in a difficult context for international stations and for media in general. We focused on Radio Romania International, which produces and broadcasts programs in 13 languages, aiming at promoting Romania, its domestic and foreign policy.

Keywords: international radio, borders, information, promotion, credibility

Introduction

Radio Romania International (RRI) has mission to promote Romania, its domestic and foreign policies. Our main objective is to find how international broadcasters can overcome different types of borders: physical, conceptual, linguistic, of mentalities, in order to fulfill their mission. The study will elaborate on the roles and effectiveness of international stations in an era of disinformation, fake news, and on the journalistic tools allowing them to keep their most important asset, credibility.

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Research questions and used methods

How can the international broadcasters (IBs in text) reach the public when less democratic political regimes have built legal, physical or electronic borders to prevent their populations from free information? How can the IBs efficiently communicate their messages to very different and diverse audiences? We used the bibliographic research and the observation methods.

Fundamental concepts in Communication

Communication Sciences developed based on communication models. Rus described more models: Lasswell's linear model, Shannon's linear model (1948), Weaver, Meyer-Eppler's model (1963), the circular model (1974) of Hiebert, Ungurait and Bohn, the interactive model, the two-steps flow communication model (1948, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Gaudet).[1] Petcu et al have also studied the most important communication models: Laswell (1948), Shannon and Weaver (1949), Newcomb (1953), Osgood and Schramm (1954), Gerbner (1956), Dance (1967).[2] Rus classifies the communication forms: verbal, non verbal, interpersonal, intrapersonal, group, mediated (publicized), mass communication, Aesopian, political&electoral, business communication, public communication, advertising communication, educational, civil society organizations' communication, paradoxical, international.[3]

Mediated communication

The communication of a radio with the public is mediated, unidirectional, "presupposes the existence in the communication process of one or more transmitters or a collective transmitter, which broadcasts messages through technical devices and means of communication for transmitting the information to multiple receivers", considers Rus.[4] The

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[1] Flaviu Călin Rus, *Introduction to the science of communication and public relations*, Iaşi: European Institute, 2002, pp. 40-47.

[2] Marian Petcu (coordonator), *Dicționar enciclopedic de comunicare și termeni asociați*, București: Editura C.H. Beck, 2004, pp. 326-327.

[3] Rus, *op.cit.*

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 25.

journalists do the so-called mass communication, explains Rus. It addresses large masses and can be subjective (aimed at "manipulating public opinion in the sense desired by communicators")[5] or objective. "In journalism, the notion of objectivity is of central importance," said Kunczik and Zipfel, meaning the public can form its opinion based on the information received.[6]

Radio, a credible medium

Radio and TV are the most trusted media in the EBU (European Broadcasting Union) area.[7] Radio is most trusted in 73% of countries surveyed, TV in 9%. Social networks are least trusted in 85% of the countries. The trust in PSMs (public service media) is high and the higher the level of trust, the higher press freedom is in that country. This correlates directly with the 2020 World Press Freedom Index.[8] In another survey the EBU shows that in 65% of European markets PSMs, including international stations, are the most trusted source of news and their contribution to democratic societies remains crucial. "With 47 international all-news services active in 2020, EBU PSMs appear as reference news providers not only for their domestic audiences, but also for Diasporas abroad, travelers and international audiences. In addition, more EBU PSMs broadcast specific international versions of their generalist channels, which also play a vital role in informing diasporas abroad."[9] The international broadcasters do not have an intrinsic credibility, but they largely rely on credibility. They represent mainly states and in democratic countries they have to observe strict legal, journalistic, ethical rules, which allow them to be more reliable and unbiased. The states use IBs as a soft diplomacy tool. Cull

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[5] *Ibidem*, pp. 25-26.

[6] Michael Kunczik, Astrid Zipfel, *Introduction to the science of journalism and communication*, Cluj: Cluj University Press Publishing House, 1998, pp. 97-98.

[7] Media Intelligence Service, "Trust in Media", *European Broadcasting Union (EBU)*, June 2020, [https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/MIS/open/Trust_in_Media_ 2020/EBU-MIS-Trust_in_Media_2020.pdf], 25 July 2020.

[8] "2020 World Press Freedom Index", 2020, [https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/carte_ 2020_en.pdf], 25 July 2020.

[9] Media Intelligence Service, "Public Service Media and News", *European Broadcasting Union (EBU)*, August 2020, p. 13 [https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/MIS/ login_only/psm/EBU-MIS_PSM_and_News_2020.pdf], 15 August 2020.

considers IBs are aware that the impression of the public of an editorial connection to Governments negatively affects their credibility. O'Keeffe and Oliver also consider that "the broadcaster's reputation rises or falls on the credibility of the news it reports. (…) Independence is the lynchpin of credibility. As soon as interference is detected, credibility is shattered and audience loyalty vanishes."[10] They are in line with Rawnsley: "When communications technologies now shatter the boundaries between domestic and international domains, and space/time are no longer as relevant as they once were, political actors and broadcasters are speaking to multiple audiences simultaneously. This means any inconsistences or contradictions in messages across platforms, or between messages and events (…) impact on and ultimately damage the source's credibility."[11]

International radio, a radio with history

International broadcasting has a long history reminds Rawnsley: "The earliest recorded instance of the organized use of radio for political purposes was in 1926 when Russia used radio broadcasting to demand the return of Bessarabia from Romania. Moscow was also the first to employ international radio as a tool of its foreign policy: the inauguration of Radio Moscow in 1929, first in four languages and growing to 11 by 1933, resulted from an aspiration to explain the Communist revolution to the wider world and communicate its accomplishments".[12] A 1933 article published in "Nature" raised concerns over the use of IBs for propaganda, while jamming the "enemy" station signal was already discussed: "More objectionable is the increasing use of broadcasting in languages other than that of the country of the transmitting station for propaganda purposes. The new 500 kW

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[10] Annmaree O'Keeffe, Alex Oliver, "International Broadcasting and its contribution to Public Diplomacy", *Lowy Institute for International Policy Working Paper*, September 2010, p. 32 [https://archive.lowyinstitute.org/publications/international-broadcasting-and-its-contribution-public-diplomacy], 12 August 2020.

[11] Gary D. Rawnsley, "To Know Us is to Love Us: Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting in Contemporary Russia and China" in *Politics*, vol. 35 (3-4), 2015, p. 281, 9 August 2020.

[12] Gary D. Rawnsley, Introduction to "International Broadcasting and Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century" in *Media and Communication*, Volume 4, Issue 2, 2016, p. 43, 10 August 2020.

station of the Comintern at Moscow is apparently used for transmitting Communist propaganda in English, French, German and Italian. (…) This may lead to retaliatory measures which will not improve the hearing of broadcasting".[13] For instance, Pleikys showed that the USSR and its satellites used 6 types of jamming audio signals: "In the late 20's Berlin started to jam the programs of Radio Komintern. In 1931 the USSR jammed the Romanian radio; in 1934 Austria jammed the German radio. (…) Massive jamming of foreign radio broadcasts was initiated by the USSR in February 1948. (…) Eventually jamming developed into a true monster".[14] O'Keeffe and Oliver summarized the history of IBs: "For more than 80 years, international broadcasting funded by government has played an important role in advancing the strategic and national interests of countries around the world. It is one of the principal means of presenting a country's perspective, views and values to foreign publics and their leaders. A growing number of countries are investing increasing amounts in their international broadcasting efforts as part of targeted public diplomacy programs."[15]

The missions of international broadcasters

Radio Romania International produces and broadcasts programs in Romanian and other languages to promote the image of Romania, its internal and foreign policy.[16] In turn, "BBC World Service broadcasts and distributes accurate, impartial and independent news and content in a range of genres aimed primarily at users outside the UK. (…) BBC World Service should contribute to the BBC's international news mission to address the global gap in provision of trusted international news, by providing accurate,

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[13] ***, "Future of International Broadcasting" in *Nature* no. 132, 2 December 1933, p. 848 [https://www.nature.com/articles/132848b0], 30 July 2020.

[14] Rimantas Pleikys, "Radio Jamming in the Soviet Union, Poland and others East European Countries" in *ANTENTOP*, 01-2006, p. 71 [http://www.antentop.org/008/jamm008.htm], 9 August 2020.

[15] Annmaree O'Keeffe, Alex Oliver, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

[16] Legea nr. 41 din 17 iulie 1994 privind organizarea și funcționarea Societății Române de Radiodifuziune și Societății Române de Televiziune (republicată și actualizată), art. 16 (1) [www.srr.ro/legea_nr_41_din_17_iulie_1994_republicata_si_actualizata-11879], 30 July 2020.

impartial and independent news and analysis of the highest quality. In developing countries the World Service aims (…) to improve the welfare and economic development of citizens."[17] Radio France Internationale "offers its listeners information meetings and magazines offering the keys to understanding the world."[18] Germany's Deutsche Welle "is an unbiased media organization, based in Germany. We provide our journalistic content to people worldwide, giving them the freedom to make up their own minds and the information required to form their own opinions".[19] The American IBs (USAGM: Voice of America, Office of Cuba Broadcasting, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Open Technology Fund), have the mission "to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy".[20] USAGM's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan includes two strategic goals: "1) expanding freedom of information and expression and 2) communicating America's democratic experience and values".[21]

O'Keeffe and Oliver have classified the missions of IBs into 5 categories: "to provide credible alternative sources of information and ideas, particularly to nations which may have insufficient resources to support robust independent media (such as former colonial possessions); to access and influence the overseas residing diaspora; to preserve non-English languages; to counter Western and English language media, cultural or political dominance; to project a country's culture, ideals, values and expertise."[22] They recommend

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[17] BBC Trust, "BBC World Service Operating Licence", *BBC*, 2016
[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/world_service/2016/wsol.pdf], 30 July 2020.
[18] ∗∗∗, „Qui sommes-nous?", *Radio France Internationale*, [https://www.rfi.fr/fr/qui-sommes-nous], 30 July 2020.
[19] ∗∗∗, "Unbiased information for free minds", *Deutsche Welle*,
[https://www.dw.com/en/about-dw/profile/s-30688], 30 July 2020.
[20] ∗∗∗, "Who we are – Mission", United States Agency for Global Media
[https://www.usagm.gov/who-we-are/mission/], 30 July 2020.
[21] Vivian S. Walker, Shawn Baxter, "2019 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting: Focus on FY 2018 Budget Data", The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, p. 151, [https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2019-ACPD-Annual-Report.pdf], 9 August 2020.
[22] Annmaree O'Keeffe, Alex Oliver, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

the best "mix" for IBs: "Clear goals and direction are fundamental ingredients for successful broadcasting. Part of a broadcaster's strategic strength lies in the selection of the target markets and target audiences."[23]

A tool of public diplomacy, under threat

The IBs were until 1989 propaganda tools for Western and Communist regimes, crossing borders over the Iron Curtain. After the collapse of Communism they were empowered with more roles: public diplomacy tool, to promote their countries, to export democracy, to express the points of view of their countries or…to continue propaganda. Cull classifies public diplomacy's components and interrelationships: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange, international broadcasting. He considers the most important element of IBs is the use of objective news. Price is more direct about what IBs really are: "International broadcasting is the elegant term for a complex combination of state-sponsored news, information, and entertainment directed at a population outside the sponsoring state's boundaries. It is the use of electronic media by one society to shape the opinion of the people and leaders of another."[24] Rawnsley considers "International broadcasting remains a key activity in public diplomacy. International broadcasting has long been associated with the projection of foreign policy interests, from an instrument of empire building in the 1920s and 1930s, through the Cold War and beyond. (…) The internet and social media have transformed the way international broadcasting contributes to public diplomacy".[25] Price considers that after the fall of Communism, IBs had difficult times: "As the Cold War ended and with it the established basis for this ethereal penetration of sovereign borders, fundamental geopolitical change has required the reconfiguration of international broadcasting as new targets, new justifications, and new purposes were explored. Until resuscitated by the war on terrorism, international broadcasting underwent a

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[23] *Ibidem*, p. 34.

[24] Monroe Price, "Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of International Broadcasting" in *Cardozo Arts and Entertainment Law Journal*, 21 (1), 2003, p. 53. Retrieved from [https://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers/120], 9 August 2020.

[25] Gary D. Rawnsley, Introduction to "International Broadcasting and Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century", p. 42.

deep crisis of purpose and credibility in the mid-1990s. Budget considerations, new technologies, and new industrial modes of distributing information were influential in the reassessment process."[26] So, the IBs had to re-invent themselves, explains Price: "In the face of this effective opposition, the Radios began to rethink their missions. No longer facing an authoritarian regime where they served as surrogates expressing the views of dissenters, they created a new role for themselves: facilitating transitions. The Radios' missions, they claimed, had evolved from the purely surrogate task of providing news and analysis on internal events where no such media were available, to compensating for the limitations of domestic media and setting a standard by which emerging free media could judge themselves".[27] This transformation included a shift towards TV, Internet, domestic rebroadcasting on FM. Price considers that 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had a big impact on all of public diplomacy, including IBs. Price et al. warned that "the performance of international broadcasting is, undoubtedly, related to complexities of foreign policy and their relationship to the current geopolitical environment."[28] Kent asked and answered: "Why do US international media exist? Few debate the need for a strong US capacity to speak to the world, particularly amid the disinformation and propaganda of the present day. But the message to be delivered by those media has often been controversial".[29] He made some recommendations for the USA IBs: separate missions of the government and surrogate broadcasters, adequate funding, "preparation for worst-case scenarios" (web blocking; broadcast jamming, restrictions on local media distribution and harassment and brutality toward its reporters). In line with Kent, O'Keeffe and Oliver explain the still robust use of IBs as public diplomacy tool: "Commercial, and arguably more appealing, broadcasters are already crowding the international marketplace. So what prompts a

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[26] Monroe Price, *op.cit.*, pp. 57-58.

[27] *Ibidem*, pp. 60-61.

[28] Monroe E. Price, Susan Haas, Drew Margolin, "New Technologies and International Broadcasting: Reflections on Adaptations and Transformations" in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 616, 2008, p. 166, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/25097999], August 2020.

[29] Thomas Kent, *US International Broadcasting Recommendations from the Eurasian Experience*, Atlantic Council Eurasia Center, 2019, p. 1 [https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/US_International_Broadcasting-Recommendations_from_the_Eurasian_Experience.pdf], 9 August 2020.

government to spend annually tens of millions of dollars on their country's broadcaster to attract a fickle audience? While there are overlaps in the answers for every one of those broadcasters, the diversity underscores the plurality of international broadcasting's role in public diplomacy."[30]

The challenges of international broadcasters

The IBs have to face more challenges. They have to convince decision makers to finance them. For instance, Nye argues: "Some skeptics have concluded that Americans should accept the inevitable and let market forces take care of the presentation of the country's culture and image to foreigners. Why pour money into VOA, when CNN, MSNBC, or Fox can do the work for free? But such a conclusion is too facile. Market forces portray only the profitable mass dimensions of American culture, thus reinforcing foreign images of a one-dimensional country".[31] They IBs have to cross borders, despite physical or digital obstacles raised by less democratic regimes. For instance USAGM's Open Technology Fund works to "support open technologies and communities that increase free expression, circumvent censorship, and obstruct repressive surveillance as a way to promote human rights and open societies".[32] The Association for International Broadcasting warned that jamming never ceased after 1989: "As shortwave broadcasting has slowly faded away, satellites have become the target. (…) The satellite industry has responded, and now far greater levels of security exist that prevent almost all attempts to stop TV and radio signals from reaching their intended audiences. This does not mean that the free flow of information across borders is guaranteed today. Some governments continue to try to restrict the work of international broadcasters."[33] Cull speaks about the new world of IBs: "Commercial channels now compete with the old state-based providers; new media offer both new mechanisms

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[30] Annmaree O'Keeffe, Alex Oliver, *op.cit.*, pp. 10-11.

[31] Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power" in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 616, 2008, p. 105, [www.jstor.org/stable/25097996], 9 August 2020.

[32] ∗∗∗, "Who we are – Mission", United States Agency for Global Media.

[33] ∗∗∗, "AIB history brief – jamming", Association for International Broadcasting, 30 June 2020 [https://aib.org.uk/aib-history-short-jamming/], 12 August 2020.

to access old services and make alternatives readily available. While there is still a place for the traditional services, international broadcasters need to respond creatively to the new world and guard against preserving old practices and approaches for their own sake."[34] He is in line with Rawnsley, who thinks that "now we must also consider more carefully the impact of the Internet, social media and other platforms of communication on how a political or diplomatic actor uses international broadcasting to further their own interests and ambitions".[35] In a previous article, Rawnsley speaks about the convergence of media and platforms. More than that, Miazhevich thinks we are in a "post-broadcast epoch": "The post-broadcast epoch presupposes the use of multi-platform systems for producing and delivering media content."[36] This leads to fragmentation of the audience who consume media at different times, in different ways and places, with different degree of concentration. The IBs also have to carefully communicate the messages to be sure they are understood. According to Miazhevich the "construction of a media event for a transnational public needs both to adhere to the 'soft power' strategy of a particular nation state and to take into account the reception and re-negotiation of this mediation within a particular (national) context."[37]

The IBs have to be competitive from a technical point of view. "The information technology revolution has created its own revolution in international broadcasting. (…) 21st century international broadcasting exploits the digital potential and makes use of podcasting, webcasting, streaming; it is 24/7 in nature and its appeal is widespread.", stated O'Keeffe and Oliver.[38] At the same time, they have to compete with the 24/7 world news outlets, as Rawnsley says: "The rapid development of live round-the-clock international news programming has since morphed again

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[34] Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories'" in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, 2008, p. 52,
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/25097993?seq=1], 9 August 2020.
[35] Gary D. Rawnsley, Introduction to "International Broadcasting and Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century", p. 43.
[36] G. Miazhevich, "International Broadcasting and the Conflict-related National Media Events: The Framing of EuroMaidan by the BBC and RT" in B. Mitu, S. Poulakidakos (eds), *Media Events*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 54.
[37] *Ibidem*, p. 56.
[38] Annmaree O'Keeffe, Alex Oliver, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

to provide for live and instant news broadcasting via the Internet. (…) Moreover, the likes of CNN and the BBC no longer tower above the global news media environment that is now characterized by more regional actors facilitating a multi–directional flow of news and information".[39] All these efforts are worth doing because consider O'Keeffe and Oliver, "As a tool of public diplomacy, international broadcasting is a remarkably cost effective way of reaching audiences in their millions on a regular basis."[40] But to reach the audience, the IBs must enjoy several cumulatively conditions, consider the authors: independence, financial security and legislative protection.

Case study

We focused on Radio Romania International, which produces and broadcasts programs to promote the image of Romania, its internal and foreign policy. The stations use a mix of broadcasting tools: shortwaves (analogue, digital), satellite, Internet (website, apps, social media), rebroadcasting. According to our experience and observation, the station is a real soft power diplomacy tool for Romania.

Conclusions, limitations, further research

The IBs from democratic countries are offering the information missing in different areas. Based on research of big IBs, we estimate the role of international broadcasters has become more important today, maybe more than during Cold War. We live now in a more complicated world, with multiple poles of power/influence in motion, with trade wars, disinformation, misinformation, fake news, and information "bubbles" isolating people from reality. In many countries local populations are denied the right information. Here comes the role of IBs, to fill this gap via terrestrial broadcasts over the boundaries, via satellite or Internet, using different ways to avoid the blocking/jamming of their programs. In a time when many political regimes close the borders or switch off Internet, IBs should continue their mission to keep informed listeners/users with very

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[39]   Gary D. Rawnsley, Introduction to "International Broadcasting and Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century", p. 43.

[40] Annmaree O'Keeffe, Alex Oliver, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

different backgrounds. We consider that the possibility of IBs to cross the physical borders and to offer the missing information to large numbers of people is the biggest asset (added value) of these broadcasters. Some of them are doing even more: they try to change mentalities, to promote their countries, to dissolve the conceptual, educational, linguistic barriers. The study should be continued and extended to more IBs, because propaganda, fake news, disinformation are again prominent in more and more countries and in more and more online "bubbles".

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