

**COMMUNICATIVE AND TECHNOLOGICAL METHODS FOR ENHANCING THE FOREIGN POLICY IMPACT OF A POLITICAL LEADER'S IMAGE****Nuriddin Qolqanov**

Associate Professor, PhD, International Islamic Studies Academy of Uzbekistan

**Ulug'bek Turg'unov**

Student, International Islamic Studies Academy of Uzbekistan

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the role of a political leader's image in strengthening a state's foreign-policy influence through communicative and technological approaches. It examines such methods as framing, agenda-setting, priming, strategic narrative, emotionalization, audience adaptation, digital communication technologies, and image restoration in crisis situations. The article argues that the image of a political leader should not be understood merely as an element of personal reputation, but rather as an important foreign-policy resource that reflects the state's international identity, diplomatic credibility, and soft-power potential. It is emphasized that, in the contemporary global information environment, constructing a political leader's image is not a one-time public relations campaign, but a continuous process of strategic communication based on repetition, consistency, audience-sensitive messaging, and alignment with real political practice.

**Keywords:** political leader, image, foreign policy, political communication, framing, agenda-setting, priming, strategic narrative, digital diplomacy, soft power.

**Annotatsiya:** Mazkur maqolada siyosiy yetakchi imijining davlat tashqi siyosiy ta'sirini kuchaytirishdagi o'rni kommunikativ va texnologik yondashuvlar asosida tahlil qilinadi. Unda ramkalash, kun tartibini belgilash, priming, strategik narrativlash, emotsionallashtirish, auditoriyaga moslashtirish, raqamli kommunikatsiya texnologiyalari hamda inqirozli vaziyatlarda imijni tiklash usullari alohida ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqolada siyosiy yetakchi obrazi faqat shaxsiy reputatsiya elementi emas, balki davlatning xalqaro identiteti, diplomatik ishonchliligi va yumshoq kuch salohiyatini ifodalovchi muhim tashqi siyosiy resurs sifatida talqin etiladi. Shuningdek, zamonaviy global axborot muhitida siyosiy yetakchi imijini shakllantirish bir martalik PR kampaniyasi emas, balki izchil, takrorlanuvchi, auditoriyaga moslashtirilgan va real siyosiy amaliyot bilan qo'llab-quvvatlanadigan strategik kommunikatsiya jarayoni ekani asoslab beriladi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** siyosiy yetakchi, imij, tashqi siyosat, siyosiy kommunikatsiya, ramkalash, agenda-setting, priming, strategik narrativ, raqamli diplomatiya, yumshoq kuch.

**Introduction.** In contemporary international relations, a state's foreign-policy influence is determined not only by its military, economic, or institutional capacity, but also by its image in the international arena, its communicative appeal, and the political image of its leader. Under the conditions of globalization, digital diplomacy, social media, and the intensification of global information flows, the image of a political leader is becoming an important component of a state's foreign-policy identity. This is because international audiences often perceive a state's policy through its leader's speeches, initiatives, foreign visits, diplomatic interactions, responses to crises, and positions on global issues. Therefore, constructing the image of a political leader, projecting it internationally through a coherent communicative strategy, and amplifying it through modern technological instruments acquire particular importance in enhancing a state's



foreign-policy influence. This article analyzes communicative and technological methods that strengthen the foreign-policy impact of a political leader's image, including framing, agenda-setting, priming, strategic narrative, emotionalization, audience adaptation, digital communication, and image restoration in crisis situations.

**Materials and Methods.** One of the most important communicative methods for enhancing the foreign-policy impact of a political leader's image is framing, that is, presenting an event, a person, or a political situation within a specific interpretive frame. Framing not only answer the question "Who is the leader?"; but also directs the audience toward the question "how should this leader be interpreted?" For this reason, in political communication, this method fills a personal image with broader geopolitical meaning. In their review of framing theory, Chong and Druckman explain framing not as a simple instrument for transmitting information, but as a mechanism of cognitive orientation that indicates to audiences what conclusions should be drawn from reality. According to their approach, the success of a frame is often linked to authority, resources, emotional impact, normative values, and the repetition of information<sup>1</sup>.

The methodological conclusion that follows is that, alongside the image of the political leader itself, it is also essential to consider the semantic keys through which this image is continuously reproduced. Consistently framing a leader as a "reformer," a "crisis manager," an "international mediator," a "defender of national interests," or a "stable modernizer" fills not only the leader's personal image, but also the state's foreign-policy image, with these meanings<sup>2</sup>.

The foreign-policy utility of framing lies in its ability to place complex political reality into a comprehensible and relatively simplified system of meaning for international audiences. When a state's various decisions, diplomatic actions, political statements, and international initiatives are perceived separately, the overall image may appear fragmented. Framing, however, connects them within a single semantic template. For example, if a leader's image is framed as that of a "responsible and restrained statesperson," a sharp statement by that leader is more likely to be interpreted as "controlled resolve," while a softer diplomatic intervention may be read as "pragmatism and readiness compromise." In other words, the frame enables individual episodes to be reinterpreted in favor of the general image. For this reason, framing occupies a special place in strengthening the foreign-policy impact of a political leader's image and ensures the semantic discipline of the state's foreign-policy image<sup>3</sup>.

Another important aspect of framing is that it competes with rival interpretations in the international arena. The image of a political leader never exists in a communicative vacuum. On the contrary, rival states, international media, opposition elites, expert communities, and transnational information networks produce alternative interpretations of that image. As Entman's cascading activation model suggests, frames originating from political centers travel through elites, media, and the public; however, this process is not unidirectional, but occurs through constant feedback. Thus, as a method for enhancing a political leader's image, framing is not limited to creating a positive image. It must also marginalize rival frames, delegitimize them, or absorb them into its own interpretive structure. This feature is particularly important for foreign policy, because the strength of a leader's image in the international arena is often determined by the ability to maintain superiority among competing interpretations.

The second major method that strengthens the foreign-policy impact of a political leader's image is agenda-setting. This method serves to shape what audiences perceive as the most important issue. According to Maxwell McCombs's agenda-setting theory, the mass media may not fully determine what people think, but they significantly influence what people regard

<sup>1</sup> Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10, 103–126. <https://fbaum.unc.edu/teaching/articles/Chong-Druckman-FramingTheory.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> McNair, B. (2011). *An introduction to political communication* (5th ed.). Routledge. <https://teddykw2.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/an-introduction-to-political-communication.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10, 103–126. <https://fbaum.unc.edu/teaching/articles/Chong-Druckman-FramingTheory.pdf>



as important. The strong correspondence identified between the media agenda and the public agenda in the Chapel Hill study also confirms this theoretical approach<sup>4</sup>.

**Results.** From the perspective of the foreign-policy impact of a political leader's image, this means that the components of the leader's image brought brought to the foreground are decisive for international reception. If media coverage, diplomatic communication, and official information policy center on the leader's role in economic reforms, peace initiatives, regional mediation, or international cooperation, then the leader's effect on the state's foreign-policy image is strengthened precisely in that direction.

Agenda-setting differs from framing in that it first selects the topic and only then moves to the question of interpretation. If framing answers the question "how is the event explained?", agenda-setting manages the question "which event or attribute is made visible?" Through this method, not all of the leader's characteristics are projected into the international information space; rather, strategically advantageous aspects are foregrounded. This is highly important for foreign-policy image-making: the communicative agenda is organized in accordance with the type of international identification that the state seeks to create through its leader. For example, a state emphasizing regional mediation foregrounds the leader's image as a negotiator, whereas a state seeking to attract foreign investment emphasizes the leader's technocratic, pragmatic, and stable managerial image.

The strength of the agenda-setting method lies in its selectivity. If international audiences repeatedly encounter the same themes among the many possible aspects of a leader's image, relatively stable cognitive associations are formed. As a result, the leader's image becomes a thematic centralizing mechanism for the state's foreign-policy image. This process is carried out not only through the mass media, but also through the rhythm of diplomatic activity. Which visits are widely covered, which meetings are prioritized, and on which international platforms the leader's voice is amplified are all components of attention engineering, or salience engineering.

Priming is another method closely related to agenda-setting but analytically distinct from it. It refers to the prior formation of the criteria by which audiences evaluate a political leader. If agenda-setting answers the question "what is important?", priming manages the question "by which criterion is it evaluated?" The foreign-policy impact of a political leader's image is often strengthened precisely through priming. For example, if the communicative environment consistently associates the leader with stability, caution, and calculation, international audiences will also evaluate the leader's subsequent actions through the criterion of "preserving stability." Conversely, if the leader is associated with courage, speed, and decisive action, these attributes become the evaluative key.

The advantage of priming for foreign-policy image-making is that it moves debates surrounding the leader toward an evaluative criterion favorable to the state. In situations where international criticism or competition intensifies, the state seeks to explain its leader's actions through pre-established criteria such as "rapid effectiveness," "normative loyalty," "pragmatic stability," or "regional responsibility." In this case, the political leader is not merely a subject who conveys a message, but also an actor who proposes the normative criterion through which the audience's judgment is shaped. This is precisely the power of priming: it does not completely negate evaluation, but changes the criterion of evaluation.

One of the most effective methods for strengthening the foreign-policy impact of a political leader's image is storytelling, or strategic narrative. Roselle, Miskimmon, and O'Loughlin identify strategic narrative as a central concept for explaining how international influence operates in the new media environment. In their view, strategic narrative is one of the important

<sup>4</sup> McCombs, M., & Valenzuela, S. (2007). The agenda-setting theory. *Cuadernos de Información*, 20, 44–50. <https://agora.edu.es/descarga/articulo/2489760.pdf>



forms of soft power in the twenty-first century and helps explain the formation, projection, dissemination, and reception of ideas, values, and political objectives<sup>5</sup>.

This approach is directly relevant to the image of a political leader. A leader's image has stronger impact when it is not presented as a set of isolated attributes, but placed within a coherent story about the state's past, present, and future. Storytelling gives the leader's image a temporal axis. Whereas simple framing primarily serves present interpretation, narrative situates the leader within a historical process. The leader is narrated as "the continuation of state modernization," "a new stage of national revival," "the initiator of regional stability," or "a responsible reformer in the international system."

Such a method makes the leader easier for international audiences to remember, because people tend to absorb meaning structures in narrative form more readily than isolated facts. At the same time, if strategic narratives are not supported by real policy, practical outcomes, and factual reality, they lose their long-term force. In other words, reality must correspond to the strategic story. This is a decisive condition for the image of a political leader: if the story becomes completely detached from actual political practice, the result is not an increase in foreign-policy influence, but an erosion of credibility.

From the perspective of the state's foreign-policy image, storytelling lifts the leader's image out of the purely individual level and connects it to state identity. Through this method, the leader's personality does not remain merely a "speaking avatar" of state policy. Rather, the state itself is narrated through the leader. For this reason, narrative is especially effective in long-term image policy. It creates strategic continuity rather than isolated communicative campaigns. Yet in the contemporary information environment, strategic narratives are always competitive. Therefore, the state must not only construct its own story, but also shape it in a way that can compete with other interpretations, survive among different audiences, and be continuously renewed.

The foreign-policy impact of a political leader's image is not strengthened only through logical or informational methods. It is often consolidated at the emotional level as well. At this point, emotionalization - the use of emotional registers such as fear, hope, pride, trust, solidarity, protection, justice, or responsibility - emerges as an independent communicative method. Chong and Druckman also identify psychological, emotional, and moral values among the factors that enhance the success of framing. This indicates that international audiences perceive a political leader not only as a figure who "speaks correctly," but also as one who evokes a particular feeling<sup>6</sup>.

The utility of emotionalization in foreign policy lies in its ability to make abstract geopolitical issues emotionally proximate to audiences. For example, linking security policy to "resolve against threats," diplomatic compromise to "responsibility for peace," reforms to "hope for the future," and regional cooperation to "shared prosperity" makes the leader's image emotionally resonant. Emotional appeals are particularly effective for public diplomacy, international media, and digital communication because they transform a complex political position into a concise, comprehensible, and powerful emotional code<sup>7</sup>.

However, emotionalization has a dual effect. If it is excessive, it may appear populist, manipulative, or artificial. Therefore, its success is usually linked to moral legitimation. In other words, emotion must not be entirely detached from facts and normative grounds. Moral values also occupy a special place in strengthening a leader's image. They present the leader not simply as an agent of interests, but as a bearer of certain values. This is useful for the state's foreign-

<sup>5</sup> Roselle, L., Miskimmon, A., & O'Loughlin, B. (2014). Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power. *Media, War & Conflict*, 7(1), 70–75.

<sup>6</sup> Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10, 103–126. <https://fbaum.unc.edu/teaching/articles/Chong-Druckman-FramingTheory.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Author(s). (Year). Title of chapter. In Editor(s) (Eds.), Book title (pp. xx–xx). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://www.elgaronline.com/display/book/9781035301447/vol1.chapter119.pdf>



policy image because moral language connects the leader's image to the state's broader normative identity. However, this method must be consistent. If a leader uses the language of humanitarianism and justice in one situation, but demonstrates practices that contradict those values in another, emotional and moral amplification may produce the opposite effect. Thus, although emotionalization and moralization are powerful instruments, they produce effective results only when aligned with credibility and political practice.

The next method for strengthening the foreign-policy impact of a political leader's image is audience adaptation: expressing a message and image in accordance with the expectations, experiences, values, and cognitive frames of different audiences. Hallahan emphasizes that strategic communication increasingly takes place under conditions of fragmented audiences and proliferating communication platforms. Chong and Druckman also note that framing strategies are selected with the audience in mind. The methodological conclusion that follows from these approaches is that a single political leader's image is not received through the same code by all audiences<sup>8</sup>.

In foreign policy, this method is especially necessary. Different groups evaluate the same leader's image according to different criteria. For foreign governments, predictability and diplomatic credibility are important; for business circles, stability, rationality, and economic openness are priorities. International publics, by contrast, may attach greater importance to moral position, human proximity, and attitudes toward global problems. Audience adaptation takes these differences into account and adjusts the emphases of the central image without undermining it. For example, the same leader may be interpreted as a "defender of national interests" for domestic audiences, a "stable and pragmatic reformer" for foreign investors, and a "constructive partner" for international organizations. This is not a contradiction, but communicative flexibility.

Yet audience adaptation also has limits. Excessive adaptation may make the image appear unstable, inconsistent, or artificial. Therefore, this method should be based on the principle of "one core - many translations." In other words, the core identity is preserved, while its communicative expression is adapted to the audience. From the perspective of the state's foreign-policy image, precisely this approach is effective: on the one hand, it ensures consistency; on the other, it increases resonance with diverse audiences.

In contemporary conditions, digital communication technologies are also acquiring special importance in strengthening the image of a political leader. Social networks, official web platforms, video formats, short messages, infographics, real-time addresses, and algorithmic dissemination mechanisms make it possible to transmit the leader's image to international audiences rapidly and in multiple layers. In traditional diplomatic communication, messages circulated mainly through official statements, summits, embassies, and international media. In today's digital environment, however, the image of a political leader can be formed directly before a global audience.

An important feature of digital platforms is that they strengthen the image of a political leader not only through text, but also through visual, emotional, and interactive forms. For example, photographs from international meetings, short video clips, quotations, maps, speeches delivered in symbolic locations, and rapid responses on social media reinforce the leader's image through visual codes. In this process, image is shaped not only by the question "what was said?", but also by the questions "how was it shown?", "in which context was it disseminated?", and "what kind of relationship was established with which audience?"

Another important feature of technological methods is the possibility of micro-segmentation. The digital environment creates conditions for producing and disseminating messages adapted to different audiences. Economic stability and reforms can be developed as a separate

<sup>8</sup> Hallahan, K., Holtzhausen, D., van Ruler, B., Verčič, D., & Sriramesh, K. (2007). Defining strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 1(1), 3-35.



communicative block for foreign investors; science and educational cooperation for academic circles; humanitarianism and peace initiatives for international publics; and good-neighborliness and shared interests for regional audiences. This technologically strengthens the method of audience adaptation.

At the same time, digital communication also performs the function of protecting the political leader's image. In the global information environment, negative messages, critical interpretations, and disinformation spread rapidly. Therefore, real-time monitoring, prompt rebuttal, evidence-based explanation, clarification through visual content, and digital response strategies coordinated with diplomatic channels are necessary for protecting the state's foreign-policy image. Under such conditions, managing a political leader's image becomes not only a matter of image construction, but also an issue of continuous information security, reputational stability, and communicative flexibility.

The methods that strengthen the foreign-policy impact of a political leader's image are important not only in positive communicative contexts, but also in responding to negative situations. At this point, image restoration and crisis response methods acquire particular significance. Benoit defines image restoration discourse as a theoretical approach to responding to reputational threats and shows that such discourse has practical value in designing messages during crises. The logic of image restoration is that, when reputation is attacked, a political actor can limit damage and restore trust through various communicative options.<sup>9</sup>

Among image restoration methods are denial, evasion of responsibility, reduction of offensiveness, corrective action, and admission of fault accompanied by apology. From the perspective of the state's foreign-policy image, the key point is that a crisis related to the leader's personality often becomes a judgment about the state as a whole. Accordingly, successful crisis response protects not only personal reputation, but also the entire foreign-policy image. The strength of this method lies in speed, appropriateness, and credibility. If the response corresponds to the event, is morally acceptable, and is supported by subsequent real actions, a negative blow does not turn into a long-term image crisis.

However, image repair is not merely "justification through words." Strategic narratives do not work when detached from reality. It is no coincidence that corrective action occupies a special place in Benoit's theory of image restoration. Therefore, the success of crisis response, especially in the international arena, occurs only when communicative response is accompanied by real political change. Otherwise, correction remains at the level of promise and causes long-term damage to the leader's foreign-policy credibility<sup>10</sup>.

The communicative and technological methods used to strengthen a political leader's image are based primarily on three core principles: repetition, consistency, and orderliness in messaging. Chong and Druckman emphasize the importance of repetition for the success of framing. The literature on strategic communication, in turn, stresses that messages should not be fragmented, but coordinated. Although these principles may appear simple at first glance, they are decisive from the perspective of foreign-policy image-making. International audiences often form perceptions of the state and its leader on the basis of stable messages encountered repeatedly across different channels. Repetition transforms an image from mere information into a mnemonic structure.

Consistency does not mean repeating the same message many times; rather, it means preserving the same identity line across different platforms and situations. If a political leader appears with one image at a summit, another image on social media, and a third image in the domestic political arena, the leader's foreign-policy influence is not strengthened. On the

<sup>9</sup> Benoit, W. L. (1997). Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 23(2), 177–186. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(97\)90023-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(97)90023-0)

<sup>10</sup> Roselle, L., Miskimmon, A., & O'Loughlin, B. (2014). Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power. *Media, War & Conflict*, 7(1), 70–84.



contrary, consistency across different arenas makes the leader credible. Orderliness in messaging is related to this: strategically useful emphases are preserved, while harmful or contradictory signals are minimized. Since even a minor inconsistency can be rapidly amplified in the global information environment, state foreign-policy communication must be semantically, visually, and technologically coherent.

**Discussion.** Overall, enhancing the foreign-policy impact of a political leader's image is not a one-time advertisement, a short-term PR campaign, or communicative activity aimed only at creating a positive image. It is a complex and multi-stage strategic process that integrates framing, agenda-setting, priming, strategic narrative, emotionalization, audience adaptation, the use of digital platforms, and crisis communication. When these methods operate not separately but as an interconnected system, the image of a political leader becomes a real communicative resource that strengthens the state's foreign-policy image.

The analysis shows that the image of a political leader simplifies perceptions of the state in the minds of international audiences, places them within a particular semantic frame, and forms a system of meaning that explains foreign-policy actions. Framing provides the necessary interpretation of the leader's image; agenda-setting determines which aspects become visible; and priming pre-structures the criteria by which audiences evaluate the leader. Strategic narrative, in turn, connects the leader's image not to a set of isolated political episodes, but to a coherent story about the state's past, present, and future. Through this process, the leader's personality becomes the symbolic expression of the state's foreign-policy identity.

In the modern digital environment, this process is becoming even more complex. Social networks, visual content, micro-segmentation, real-time monitoring, and algorithmic dissemination mechanisms make it possible to produce the image of a political leader in a rapid, multilayered, and transnational form. At the same time, competing interpretations, disinformation, critical discourses, and reputational risks are intensifying in the global information space. Therefore, effective management of a political leader's image requires not only the creation of a positive image, but also its protection, restoration in crisis situations, and continuous confirmation through real political practice.

**Conclusion.** From this perspective, the image of a political leader emerges as an important factor that strengthens the state's soft power, diplomatic credibility, and foreign-policy influence in the international arena. However, the stability of such an image depends not only on communicative skill, but also on the coherence between messages, values, and real political actions. If the political leader's image is supported by consistent strategic communication, an adaptive approach to international audiences, and practical results, it becomes an important form of political-communicative capital that strengthens the state's foreign-policy image, increases international trust, and generates long-term influence.

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