Digital Age of Diplomacy and Its Impact on Foreign Policy

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Abstract

Obviously, digital technology has had a significant impact on how the modern world operates, and it has even inspired the creation of a new trend in diplomacy known as "digital diplomacy." This article discusses the concept of "digital diplomacy" and seeks to understand the evolving nature and characteristics of this type of foreign affairs. Also, this paper explores how governments, diplomats and other state officials, use digital tools in order to pursue a country's foreign policy and determine its impact on international relations. Additionally, the research explains the advantages and disadvantages of the modern type of diplomacy and underlines, that this product of globalization enables diplomats to overcome many of the limitations of traditional diplomacy, but at the same time traditional diplomatic techniques still continue to be effective.

Keywords: Cyberspace Diplomacy, Digital Diplomacy, social media, public diplomacy.

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Introduction

The significant issue, that has had an impact on diplomacy in the modern era, is the revolution in information and communication technologies (ICTs). The digital tools, revolutionized the way in which people exchange information and communicate in the worldwide. Essentially, this IT revolution has also led to significant modifications in how diplomacy is conducted around the world. According to American author, Alec Ross, the 21th century statecraft or digital diplomacy, includes traditional foreign policy tools with newly innovated and adapted instruments, that fully utilize the networks, technologies, and demography of our networked world. The rapid development of communications and information, advent of social media and the increase in mobile penetration, this engagement now take place from people to government and from people to people. This direct channel between the citizens and the government enables diplomats to meet and interact with non-traditional audiences and this consequently enables citizens to influence their governments in ways that were not possible several years ago (Ross, 2012). It is currently standard procedure for foreign ministries, embassies, and delegations of international organizations to advance their websites. For instances, the websites of foreign ministries serve to describe and record their country's foreign policies and refute objectionable acts or assertions made by other states. Diplomats and government officials have started to use new technologies to their advantage.

The article aims to discuss traditional tools of diplomacy and then to define the term of "digital diplomacy", concentrating on how states are advancing their foreign policies, through the digital media, how governments are using these instruments to enhance their foreign policy. Additionally, it analyzes the positive and negative aspects that digital age present for diplomatic activities and how the online media affects core diplomatic functions of representation and communication. This paper seeks to explore the degree of successes and limitations of digital diplomacy, also evaluate difficulties of the cyberspaces, and finally try to answer the question, that rose in the academic space, could the digitalization fully overcome the traditional methods of diplomacy?

Traditional Diplomacy

In general, Diplomacy is the art and science of maintaining peaceful relationships between governments, organizations or individuals. Diplomacy frequently refers to representatives from various parties addressing problems such as war, trade, the environment, technology, or security (Diplomacy, 2023). Diplomacy is the primary tool of foreign policy, representing the main goals and strategies that shape a state's relations with the rest of the world. Diplomatic negotiations and processes usually culminate in international treaties, agreements, alliances, and other expressions of international relations. According to the American politician and diplomat Henry Kissinger "*Diplomacy is a new world order and modern diplomacy is the balance of power between the forces of war and peace "(*Kissinger,1994). Another viewpoint expressed by the Headley Bull, who explain that the Diplomacy is a "conduct of relations between states and other entities involved in world politics through official policies and peaceful means" (Bull,1932). Diplomats are people who practice diplomacy. Diplomats strive to support their own country, encourage international collaboration, and promote peace. A diplomatic mission is a group of diplomats representing from one country who live in another. An embassy is a permanent diplomatic mission and an ambassador is the embassy's lead diplomat. In addition, a big diplomatic mission may have representation, besides a single embassy. Consulates are other forms of representation (Diplomacy, 2023).

"Traditional diplomacy" refers to the manner in which diplomacy has been conducted throughout the past several centuries. Originally the term *diplomacy* is derived via French from the ancient Greek *diplōma*,

composed of *diplo*, meaning "folded in two," and the suffix *-ma*, meaning "an object." The French term diplomate ("diplomat" or "diplomatist") originated to refer to a person authorized to negotiate on behalf of a state in the 18th century (Marks & Freeman, 2023). Diplomatic activity has a long history dating back at least two millennia. Sovereigns have sent envoys to other sovereign governments for a variety of reasons, including preventing conflicts, ending hostilities, or just maintaining cordial relations and expanding commercial exchanges. In literature, there are mostly divide diplomacy in two period, such as old (Ancient) diplomacy and new diplomacy. Ancient diplomacy took the form of diplomacy between Ancient Greece, Rome, Ancient Egypt, and the Hittites, as well as diplomacy managed in Ad-hoc. While the modern diplomatic procedures, practices, and principles were substantially influenced by 17th-century European custom. Diplomacy that developed following the French Revolution, was mostly created during the Congress of Vienna and the Hague Peace Conferences (Abdurahmanli, 2021). The first foreign ministry was created in Paris by Cardinal Richelieu in 1626.Then, numerous European countries followed the French practice. As absolute monarchy gave way to constitutional monarchies and republics, embassies and legations became increasingly more organized and by the 19th century, European-style diplomacy had been adopted throughout the world (Roberts, 2006).

Contemporary diplomacy became professionalized in the early twentieth century, with the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, ratified by the majority of the world's sovereign governments, providing a framework for diplomatic protocols, methods, and conduct. Most diplomacy is conducted by accredited officials, such as envoys and ambassadors and they operate through the diplomatic missions, as well as consulates and embassies (Stevenson, 2014). Without diplomacy, governments in the international system would be left to try to accomplish their interests in less peaceful ways, with a lack of dialogue and compromise. Diplomats carry out their duties in three basic ways. The first is by representing the interests of the country from which they are coming from, second part of the task entails spending the time to learn about the country's interests and reporting this information back home, and finally embassies use diplomacy to strengthen bilateral political, economic, and cultural connections. Similarly, consulates in foreign states assist visitors with visas and keep them informed about what is going on within a country so that people can continue to travel back and forth. Diplomacy is utilized for more than merely managing bilateral ties. In more recent times, international institutions have been established to mediate the interests of multiple states. With this regard, states able to express their views on the global issues by sending delegates to forums, where they can meet and take part in discussions with others, and also via the multilateral diplomacy seeking to find the best solution and reach the foreign policy goals (Verrekia, 2017). For instance, here are some examples of international organizations, through which states conduct their multilateral diplomacy, such as: The United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organizations (WTO), the Council of Europe and European Union (EU) and etc.

Digital Diplomacy

Political, economic, and cultural exchanges across borders have increased and intensified during the current age of globalization. International actors in the twenty-first century include: governments, ethno-nationalist factors, multinational organizations, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, numerous transnational movements and networks, or even individuals. (Rashica, 2018). The rise of digital technologies has had a significant impact on the practice of diplomacy. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFAs), embassies and diplomats are constantly adopting new technologies and platforms, as well as reinventing the environment in which diplomacy is practiced. There are also increased

academic interest in the intersection between diplomacy and digital technologies, researchers have examined how diplomats interact with new audiences using digital means, overcome the restrictions of traditional diplomacy, work with new actors, and advance intercultural communication (Manor, 2018).

It still lacks an official definition of the term "Digital Diplomacy ". Due of this, different academics have approached the study of digital diplomacy in various ways. The terms have been used by academics such as cyber diplomacy", "digital diplomacy", "Internet diplomacy", "online diplomacy", "e-diplomacy" and "Twiplomacy" (Verrekia, 2017). Despite the fact that these phrases have identical meanings, each prefix focuses on a different area of the issue. For example, "e" for business-related topics, "cyber" is typically used to discuss security issues and "Twi" should only be used to specifically refer to Twitter (Digital diplomacy, 2023). Nevertheless, that Twitter is currently one of the most popular e-diplomacy tool, foreign ministries around the world are using a variety of other methods to participate in the most popular and exciting new development in modern diplomacy (Andreas, 2013). For instance, Skype used by Norwegian ambassadors to communicate with university students, while Facebook is being used by Palestinians to communicate with Israeli citizens. The Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is creating video games for children of Indian Diasporas. While the United Nations Ambassadors are coordinating their votes on several resolutions using WhatsApp, the Kenya's foreign ministry is increasingly use Twitter to provide emergency consular assistance and etc. (Manor, 2018).

In the academic space, the origins of digital diplomacy can be traced back to the United States. They specifically acknowledge the ways in which Hillary Clinton, a former secretary of state, was able to influence the State Department's foreign policy targets to exploit new technology. She integrated social media into many programs run by the Department of State (DOS), seeking to use this new trend as a statecraft tool. Clinton stated that she wanted to lead a platform for 21st-century statecraft that would move beyond traditional government-to-government interactions and engage with people all over the world (Bjola & Holmes, 2015). It is remarkable that her commitment to prioritizing digital diplomacy is evident from the fact, the DOS currently has 25 separate nodes at its headquarters that concentrate on digital diplomacy, and more than 1,000 personnel use it in their work both at home and abroad (Andreas, 2013). Also, the Department of State regularly uses social media to monitor information posted online, so it can modify its messages to respond to public opinion and track Twitter feeds in more than 100 different languages (Zhang, 2013). Additionally, remarkable that the U.S. president Barack Obama, on his Economic Statecraft Day, sent the video message to the U.S. Embassies around the world and said: "In the 21st century, our nations are connected like never before. In our global economy, our prosperity is shared. That's why, as President, I've committed the United States to a new era of engagement with the world, including economic partnerships that create jobs and opportunity for all our citizens. It's part of our larger effort to renew American leadership" (Obama,2012). Through the utilization a variety of foreign policy strategies, including technology and social media, Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, had been trying to improve country's prosperity, both domestically and internationally (Andreas, 2013).

In modern diplomacy, the art of shaping and promoting a country's image abroad is often referred to as nation branding and digital tools have proven to be an effective instrument. One notable example is Finland's national emoji app, which is currently accessible via the App Store. Users of the app can choose from a wide range of emojis, or graphics, that are representative of Finnish history and culture. Through this initiative, which attracted global attention, by positioning itself as a dynamic, technologically advanced, and humorous state (Manor, 2018).

Over the last decades, the use of digital technologies in diplomacy has expanded in variety. in 2023, have passed sixteen years, since the invention of "digital diplomacy". At first, it was an experiment, carried out by a small group of foreign ministries and experimental diplomats, has now been adopted as a regular procedure by diplomatic organizations all around the world. In 2007, one of the earliest examples of "digital diplomacy", was the Sweden's virtual embassy in the popular virtual world Second Life. Visitors may explore Swedish art, learn about Swedish culture, and even take part in seminars held by the virtual embassy, which served as a cultural embassy. Another example was emerged in 2011, when the US State Department launched Virtual Embassy -Teheran. It was a website aimed to fostering communication between the US and the Iranian people. While both virtual embassies sought to connect with and encourage dialogue with international audiences, Teheran's Virtual Embassy was even more ambitious, it stood for the idea that where traditional diplomacy had failed, the digital diplomacy could be successful. Through the cyberspace, as a neutral meeting place, Iranians and Americans might build a bridge over the troubled international tense. In an effort to emulate Sweden and America, Israel opened its first virtual embassy in July 2013. The Israel's embassy on Twitter is intended to promote dialogue between Israel and the people of the six gulf countries, with that Israel doesn't have formal diplomatic relations. Over the past decade, Israel's virtual embassy attracted 107.3K followers (digdipblog, 2014).

We can say, that digital diplomacy has gained popularity around the world since the United States started using it. Today, interactive websites for embassies and consulates are very widespread, and state offices often have Facebook and Twitter accounts. Individual countries have made efforts to incorporate digital technologies into their statecraft; the United Kingdom has now formed an official Office of Digital Diplomacy inside its government, and countries like France and Poland have increased their attention

with this regard. Furthermore, Germany used ICT platforms to crowdsource public opinion and innovation for its 2014 foreign policy review, Israel's aggressive traditional diplomacy has been matched by one of the world's active digital diplomacy teams, which has worked hard to influence the results of the U.S-Iran nuclear negotiations (Adesina, 2017).

In Asia, India appears to be leading the new trend and in 2010, its Ministry of Foreign Affairs tweeting for the first time. There hasn't been much progress made in this direction in other regions, like in Africa (Verrekia, 2017).

The digital tools in practical diplomacy, was also actively used during the Covid-19 pandemic period, when Zoom and other conferencing platforms were applied. Remarkable, that online meetings, was not new. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) hosted the first global diplomatic session through online participation in 1963. Since then, more inclusive and transparent international negotiations have become a reality because to conference rooms' access to the internet. Online meetings, have both advantages and disadvantages. As the pandemic crisis has shown, it helps to business continuity, also promote inclusion by enabling involvement without being physically present, which is sometimes constrained by travel and other costs. But, in the other hand, one of the main drawbacks of online meetings is the absence of physical contact, which is crucial for fostering trust and empathy and that is necessary for dealing with, especially contentious and political subjects (Digital diplomacy, 2023).

Another initiative, was the Geneva Engage, this a project, of the Geneva Internet Platform (GIP) started in 2016, and supported of the State and Republic of Geneva as well as the DiploFoundation, evaluates how International Geneva interacts with global stakeholders, whose interests are affected by the policies discussed and negotiated in Geneva. In this regard, the annual Geneva Engage Awards, are intended to acknowledge the efforts of actors in International Geneva in social media outreach and

engagement. By examining the social media activity of Geneva-based organizations as well as Geneva's web relevance and online meetings, Geneva Engage analyzes Geneva's global footprint. In the end, Geneva Engage looks at the connections between International Geneva and the communities over the world (including: international organizations, non-governmental, and non-profit organizations, as well as permanent representations to the United Nations Office in Geneva) influenced by the policies discussed and negotiated in Geneva in areas like development, human rights, and digital issues. (Geneva Engage Awards, 2023).

Advantages and Challenges of Digital Diplomacy

Digital diplomacy does not take the role of traditional diplomacy, but it can swiftly and more effectively bolster the state's efforts in international relations. In order to further its foreign policy objectives, increase international alignment, and influence people who have never visited any of the world's embassies, digital diplomacy is quite helpful and essential component for implementing country's attractive foreign policy. Many governments employ their social media for the direct public interaction and the involvement of non-state actors (Rashica, 2018).

Using digital diplomacy as a means to uphold credibility and develop or improve partnerships in a changing world. Also, the geographic distance between MFAs and embassies is no longer as significant as it was before Websites, blogs, and social media platforms on the internet have drawn an increasing number of international leaders in politics, diplomats and as well as users from all over the world (Rashica, 2018). Digital tools enable diplomats to observe events, gather information, and identify important influencers. They also offer ways, provide channels to have an impact, beyond the traditional audience. They can support the development of policies, the consultation process, and idea sharing. In

order to penetrate deeply within different audiences and effectively reach positive attention in social media, there must be used the principle "Think Global, Act Local" (Shih, 2009).

Quick knowledge of various events can be promoting an advantage to national interest in many cases. Digital technologies are extremely useful for gathering and processing information regarding diplomatic activities as well as for fast communications in urgent situations. For governments make it possible to consider how developments in other regions of the world may influence their nation. For instance, during a crisis, embassies can set up WhatsApp groups including the ambassador, consular officer, press secretary, staff members who gather online data and diplomats from the headquarters and staff member who online answering citizens questions. This team can serve as a crisis management cell and facilitate the gathering of real-time data, decision-making, and sharing the information. Whereas, people who live in authoritarian regimes and have a restriction to communicate both domestically and internationally, through the digital technology they can avoid this kind of limitation and enable them for the open expression of disagreement with specific issues and reducing authoritarianism (McGlinchey, 2017).

It is obvious, that the social media revolution is influencing people's interactions and visions of the world. With regards to the difficulties of digital diplomacy, critics first of all underline the cyber security issue. They consider that freedom from the internet may be risky such as "Trojan Horse". The internet multiplies the interests involved in creating international policies, increasing the complexity of global decision-making and reducing the country's exclusive control over it. Various state and regime actors, with their own interests, objectives and values, create various security scenarios (Kolodziej, 2005).Also, external threats which a state must be consider, coming from other states or other international players, like terrorists. Social media platforms have shown to be quite useful for terrorist

organizations when it comes to spreading ideology, recruiting terrorists, and organizing operations. Leaders on the national and international levels have frequently emphasized the threats that terrorists pose to the general public and state institutions (Tsesis, 2017). For instance, there was a case, when Twitter deleted 1.2 million accounts for terrorist apology in an effort to stop the promotion of terrorism (Rashica, 2018).

Moreover, MFAs' social media activity may soon cause controversy. There was the case with the Selfie that U.S. First Lady Michele Obama (published in 8th May, 2014). Obama holds a sign with the following hashtag "Bring Back Our Girls". This post was referring to the abduction of about 300 Nigerian schoolgirls by the Islamic Boko Haram-jihadist terrorist group. The selfie was intended to draw media attention to the abduction and imply that the girls' release was a priority for U.S foreign policy. But, what followed was in a social media campaign by Twitter followers criticizing the First Lady. Opponents of the Obama administration's drone strike policy against, suspected terrorists and quickly shared their own Selfies with the hashtag "Bring Back Your Drones" (Manor, 2018).Both of these Selfies have been reproduced and retweeted thousands of times and they serve as new examples of social media's unpredictability and how even words with the best of intentions can easily become politicized (McCoy, 2014).

Also, there are some technological challenges with digital diplomacy. One of the first examples of is Bots, which are computer programs designed to imitate(fake) Internet users and publish particular comments and ideas on social networking sites and webpages. By using Bots, one country can influence the social media discourse. For example, it's been claimed that Russia is using bots to create online criticism of German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Based on this, users of the internet, who frequently visit social media platforms, or even read online publications, will consequently believe, that many in Germany oppose the Chancellor and her migration polices. In this way,

bots distort online discourse and how individuals perceive the world (Manor, 2018).

Conclusion

As we see above, modern public diplomacy has formed as a new trend called "digital diplomacy", which combines social media, with new information and communication technologies (ICT), and the internet to improve diplomatic ties. Digitalization of diplomacy, enable to international actors, governments, diplomats to overcome limitations of traditional diplomacy and maintain constant engagement with a large and different audience. More access to information, more contact between individuals and organizations, and greater transparency are the primary differences with traditional public diplomacy. As we know, traditional diplomacy was based on person-to-person communication and representatives, both bilaterally and internationally, however today, they can directly engage with certain audiences and people, with the growth of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Social media, as well as other types of technology, become essential elements for pursuing foreign policy and, at the same time greatly help to enhance democracy in societies. Nevertheless, it also gives them new instruments for enforcing control over power.

Despite the fact that technologies have reshaped traditional methods of diplomacy, the overall purpose of diplomacy continues to be an important part of government's ability to gain influence within the global system. We can say that digital diplomacy does not replace traditional diplomacy, but it can expeditiously and more effectively enhance the state's efforts in international relations. In history, there was a case, when the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston received the first telegraph massage in 1860, he exclaimed, "My God, this is the end of diplomacy", thus as history has shown diplomacy has survived. Not the telegraph, nor other technological innovations, such as the radio, telephone, faxes,

television and eventually cyberspace, were able to replace traditional diplomacy (Adesina, 2017). Consequently, "The modern art of diplomacy is to use Theodore Roosevelt's big stick, but digitally – and never ever to speak softly", this or something similar, may serve as the definition of "diplomacy" in the twenty-first century (Stanzel, 2018).

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