

THE COMMUNICATIONAL DIMENSION OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

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Abstract: *Diplomacy has emerged in interstate relations as a mechanism that facilitates the achievement of state objectives, with the task of promoting and protecting state sovereignty. It has had to be reinvented with every important discovery in world history and with every substantial change in the field of communication. The fourth industrial revolution changed the whole panoply of interpersonal and interstates relations, having an important effect on the way international relations unfolded. The emergence of 24/7 news networks, social networks, blogs and streaming has led diplomacy to enter a new stage of its transformation and adaptation to the realities of the contemporary world, giving rise to the so-called digital diplomacy. In this article cyber diplomacy is described from its communicational dimension point of view underlining its importance for assuring national interest of states.*

Keywords: *public communication, cyber diplomacy, technology, international relations*

1. DIPLOMACY – THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

The fourth industrial revolution changed the whole panoply of interpersonal and interstates relations, having an important effect on the way international relations unfolded. Diplomacy is a field that has had to be reinvented with every important discovery in world history and with every substantial change in the field of communication. Diplomatic mobility was positively influenced by the advent of steam engines and railways, and the telegraph produced fundamental changes in the way the governor, ministry and diplomatic representative communicated.

Subsequently, the advances registered in the field of information and communication technologies and the development of air transport led to infinitely more possibilities of communication between diplomats but also to the increase of the possibility of their effective interaction. Inventions such as radio and television have fundamentally changed the way states have the ability to achieve their national goals. For example, the coming to power of the Nazi regime benefited greatly from the promotion of their ideas through radio propaganda in neighboring countries, where the spread of their ideas led to the external legitimation of a deeply inhuman regime. Thus, the birth certificate of what was later called public diplomacy was signed.

Diplomacy has emerged in interstate relations as a mechanism that facilitates the achievement of state objectives, with the task of promoting and protecting state sovereignty. Invented since the seventeenth century, the practices of diplomacy have had to keep up with the times, being forced to cover various activities specific to international relations such as summits, meetings, conferences, in an extremely volatile and changing

context of the international environment and the emergence of supranational structures that have the capacity to participate in public, economic, international legal life, such as the United Nations, European Union, Nord Atlantic Treaty Organization, African Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Moreover, diplomatic practices have been taken over and applied by government organizations involved in resolving issues with supranational impact.

2. THE COMMUNICATIONAL DIMENSION OF PUBLIC TRADITIONAL DIPLOMACY

Diplomacy seeks to resolve the conflicting problems and interests of states through direct communication with the public. In 1965, American career diplomat Edmund Gullion laid the foundations of public diplomacy as a mechanism that aims to promote the messages of a government among public opinion in other countries.

Thus, diplomacy has come to be understood as a specialized system of communication between sovereign states and / or other non-state international actors through which they promote and defend their interests and / or express dissatisfaction with the way in which the interaction takes place. In addition, diplomacy is that channel of contact that can be used to clarify positions, poll opinions, obtain the desired information and persuade international actors to position themselves in a certain way in the relationship between them [1].

Peter Barber defined diplomacy as the peaceful management of international relations. This definition of diplomacy has been criticized as limited, because sometimes diplomacy is part of the preparation for war, in the period of formation of coalitions and the separation of belligerents. Because of these reasons, James Der Derian will define diplomacy as a communication between foreigners [2], a mediation between foreign persons, groups or entities [3].

Hedley Bull [4] defined diplomacy as a communication that facilitates international society, the diplomatic profession being the custodian of the idea of international society. In the same year, Professor Geoff R. Berridge pointed out that diplomacy represent conducting international relations through negotiation and not by force [5]. An opposing school [6] considers diplomacy to be the conduct and content of foreign affairs as a whole.

We can conclude that diplomacy is a tool to promote the interests of state and non-state actors through official or informal representatives who use communication as the main tool to influence the decisions and conduct of foreign governments and their officials through dialogue, negotiation and other non-violent governmental means. We can notice that in its traditional form, diplomacy has a substantial component of public communication, which allows it to facilitate the achievement of state objectives.

3. THE COMMUNICATION REVOLUTION AND THE BIRTH OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

Globalization, through its characteristics such as the disappearance of national barriers and the global spread of trade, investment, travel and access to information, brings societies and civilizations into contact as never before, and this has produced substantial changes in the way development of international relations. The democratization of information determined by the rapid evolution of communication technologies has led to the assertion of postmodern characteristics of society, such as the compression of time

and space, but also to the exponential multiplication of mutual exchange of information between individual or state actors.

The unprecedented development of information and communication technologies has led to spectacular changes in areas that rely intensively on such processes in carrying out their specific activities. Diplomacy was not an exception, and digitalization became more and more present in the activities of negotiating, promoting national interests and in the compromise negotiation processes.

Harold Innis estimated half a century ago that, as a result of the accelerated communication between the actors of the international system appeared the germs of generating cultural disorders. Through an inductive reasoning, we can appreciate that in the conditions of a communication revolution of the present we face cultural disturbances, overall proportions, similar to that resulting from the appearance of the Gutenberg Galaxy.

Thus, since 1998, in the report *Reinventing Diplomacy in the Information Age* of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Barry Fulton notes that traditional international relations were in an accelerated process of change, in which interactions in regional / global networks already it becomes a habit, capital moves quickly, and transparency becomes a preferred principle of collaboration, to the detriment of secrecy.

Moreover, the principle of transparency and accessibility of communication have determined an opening of the field to non-state actors who are increasingly involved in achieving the objectives of the state, so that traditional diplomacy becomes a diplomacy of everybody. The emergence of 24/7 news networks, social networks, blogs and streaming has led diplomacy to enter a new stage of its transformation and adaptation to the realities of the contemporary world, giving rise to the so-called digital diplomacy.

To cope with these major social changes, most states have included in their diplomatic services a number of activities and services based on digital technologies. Among the early initiatives of digital diplomacy are examples such as the US diplomatic service which has integrated a number of online tools on their website (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>), and Lithuania which has modernized its service, based on the use of digital technologies [7] (Rimkunas, 2007), or as Germany, which updated its internal communication procedures in the external service after the introduction of local computer networks in 2002 [8] (Rana, 2007). The promotion of national interests today uses modern communication tools such as the websites of foreign ministries, embassies and delegations, international organizations and even specific for certain projects carried out on behalf of states [9] (Barston, 2014). Obviously, at present, features and uses characteristic of social media platforms are added for direct communication with the target audience from different states. Online diplomatic communication tools have become very powerful tools, which handled skillfully can bring multiple benefits and unsuspected opportunities.

The most important change that the internet has determined is unlimited and instant access to information, and with the advent of social media there has been another revolution - instant and unlimited access to public opinion. Through these tools, the way people perceive and interpret the world has changed, but at the same time they have facilitated the interaction between people, who find it easier than ever to get in touch, to consult on various issues. Governments and embassies interact, meet general public, in order to have access to currents of opinion, but also to influence them, to set the public agenda, sometimes with a simple tweet or a Facebook comment. Therefore, the human resource working in diplomacy is necessary to complete its contingencies with solid training in the proper use of digital technologies.

Under these conditions, maintaining discretion becomes a real challenge for diplomats. It is increasingly difficult for them to keep the secret, to ensure that their thoughts or leaks of nonverbal language are not publicly disclosed and that the information that will underpin the negotiations and decision will not become public too soon.

Civic participation was, in turn, greatly favored by the way information is currently distributed. Citizens are up to date with the administration's policies, which they actively follow and comment on in digital space. Unfortunately, the anonymity offered by the activities in the digital space can be perceived by certain people as a screen behind which frustrations can be unloaded or certain situations can be manipulated with bad intentions. Anyone can assume a false name and position, behind which conflicting situations can be generated, false information can be disseminated leading to misinformation or wrong decisions. In addition, different political opinions can take the form of insults or slander against political leaders, who, because of their position, will find it difficult to defend themselves or their ideas.

The culture of digital ethics is not yet sufficiently developed among the public, as the security culture of information gatekeepers may be insufficient as everybody should ask oneself about what can and cannot be distributed on the internet before distributing information in the digital environment.

The efficiency of digital diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy depends on how it is integrated into a foreign policy and international relations strategy. Digital first as a communication theory has been integrated into the diplomatic field with its inherent adaptations. The fundamental premise of this theory is that after the advent of the Internet, there was an inertia that characterized most of the media organizations, which paid more attention to the traditional way of organizing. Digital first refers to the decision to publish the news with priority in online editions at the expense of traditional ones. This concept has been important and adapted in other areas, including foreign policy. Therefore, the organization of the activity around the digital first concept presupposes the emphasis on the distribution of public and diplomatic communication messages on digital channels while ensuring the collection of information, knowledge management, negotiation and consular services using digital tools.

4. DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE

At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the concept of digital diplomacy was first used in the e-mails of civil society that were involved in the lobby. At the same time, in Malta, a country recognized for its high rate of innovation, the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies laid the foundations for the first unit for computer applications for diplomacy.

In 2010, the WikiLeaks scandal revealed about 250,000 catches of messages sent between US missions and Washington. It was the strongest signal that the digital age involves changing traditional methods of ensuring confidentiality, and imposed a fundamental overhaul of working procedures, methods and tools used in diplomacy.

But none of the aforementioned moments were so visible as the impact of the protest movements known as the Arab Spring, regarding the way in which digital technologies have evolved and applied in state policies.

It is estimated that even before these events, in 2008 the Internet was used to recruit about 80% of young people enrolled in jihadist movements. To combat this reality with devastating effects on democratic countries, the administration of President G.W. Bush laid the foundations of the concept of public diplomacy 2.0.

This initiative involved the proliferation of digital forms of communication by the state - the US State Department has created an account on Facebook, a departmental blog has been launched and teams have been set up to combat online propaganda carried out by Al Qaeda.

The impact of the media was visible during Arab Spring protests in the online activity of revolutionaries who made their positions known and disseminated images of their struggle through social media. Social media visibility on this occasion led to the emergence of the term Twitter diplomacy - a name generated by the use of this social network by diplomats and public authorities to support public communication.

Gradually, digital diplomacy overlapped semantically with terms such as diplomacy 2.0, e-diplomacy, Twitter diplomacy, computerized diplomacy. Gradually, the associated activities were decanted and there are three important and specific dimensions for the symbiotic relationship between ICT and diplomacy, in the specialized literature:

1. changes in the environment in which diplomatic activities are carried out due to the use of ICT in the environment in which diplomacy takes place (geo-political, geo-economic, sovereignty, interdependence);

2. the emergence of technological topics on diplomatic agendas (internet governance, cyber security, privacy and more);

3. the emergence of new tools for diplomatic practice facilitated by technology (social media, big data and more).

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we have focused upon the changes of international relations that emerged in the contemporary period under the influence of modern technologies which had caused a true revolution in the communication field. Diplomacy was a profoundly affected by these changes and web 2.0 technologies have managed to change significantly the way diplomatic negotiations are conducted today. Diplomatic communication had to be changed in response to the way everybody is using new technologies. Today it is much easier for regular people to actually manage to change the world and diplomacy has to deal with this.

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