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Digital Diplomacy and Its Effect on International Relations

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Abstract

Digital technology has undoubtedly shaped the way in which the modern world works, going so far as to create a new form of diplomacy known as digital diplomacy. This paper seeks to explore the evolving nature of digital diplomacy and determine its effect on international relations. Four in-person interviews and 20 academic sources were used in order to assess the advantages and challenges that digital diplomacy presents. Acknowledging the way in which diplomats have been able to utilize social media to further the interests of their nations, this paper argues that digital diplomacy is a positive tool that can be used by governments in modern day statecraft. However, traditional methods of diplomacy still remain relevant.

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Introduction

The digital age of smart phones and Twitter accounts has threated to change diplomacy as we know it. With new technology providing access to instant information and interactive online communication, diplomats and government officials have begun to use this to their advantage. This research paper seeks to examine the way in which digital diplomacy is affecting international affairs.

Scholarly research is reviewed at the beginning of the paper in order to situate the topic amongst important literature and present the major debates about digital diplomacy that exist today. The paper then uses the research methodology section to explain how information for analysis was obtained. Concepts such as traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy, and digital diplomacy are then discussed in detail to later answer the research question. The advantages of using digital technologies for diplomacy are explored in the analysis section, as are the potential challenges and threats. Finally, the conclusion seeks to put the findings into a larger context, explaining what digital diplomacy means for the future of international relations

The conclusions reached in this paper are important because they help to put the future of diplomacy in perspective. With traditional methods of diplomacy quickly changing due to innovations in technology, many have been left to question whether or not diplomacy is still valuable. By assessing both the advantages and challenges that digital diplomacy presents, an argument can ultimately be made for the ability of digitalization to enhance diplomacy in the modern world. However, although these digital tools can be strategically used to improve a country's international relations, they will never completely eliminate the need for humans in the field, travelling to foreign countries, analyzing information, and providing foreign policy suggestions.

Literature Review

Since digital diplomacy is such a new concept, there is little existing literature about it. Journal articles such as "Public diplomacy" by J. Melissen and "What is public diplomacy? Past practices, present conduct, possible future" by W. Roberts first explain the transformation from traditional diplomacy to public diplomacy. These sources highlight the way in public diplomacy reshaped foreign policy discussions from occurring only between elites, to now occurring between government officials and foreign publics. However, there is debate amongst scholar as to how new digital technologies are affecting public diplomacy. Literature such as *Diplomacy in the Digital Age* by Brian Hocking and "The digital diplomacy potential" by Kamen Lovez point out two different theories, with some scholars believing digitalization enhances public diplomacy, and others claiming that it completely alters it into something new, known as digital diplomacy.

DiploFoundation, an organization that promotes more inclusive diplomacy, has been the leading source for discussions about digital diplomacy. Blog posts found on the organization's website have begun to popularize the topic by noting examples of its use. In *Twitter for Diplomats,* Andreas Sandres compiles a collection of tweets made by government officials to provide real-life evidence of digital diplomacy at work. In an attempt to assess the impact digital diplomacy has had on international relations, Twiplomacy, an online website, has conducted several case studies. However, it has ultimately concluded that digital diplomacy is too new to be able to measure any long-lasting effects.

Even though scholars are becoming more interested in digital diplomacy as it continues to evolve, gaps still remain. This paper seeks to determine what effect digital diplomacy is having on international relations by analyzing the advantages and challenges it presents.

Research Methodology

Several different approaches were taken in order to collect data on this topic. With social media being such a new concept in the discussion of diplomacy, it was difficult to know where to begin to look for information. However, both primary and secondary sources were able to provide this paper with information.

Interviews served as the primary source of data for this project. Four in-person interviews were conducted in the spring of 2017, with interviewees being contacted via e-mail. Interviewees were chosen based on their expertise of the subject and location to Geneva. Individuals who had previously worked as diplomats or were currently working for organizations that promoted diplomacy were selected. Ethical considerations were made prior to each interview, with each interviewee giving their consent to be mentioned in the paper.

Academic literature served as the secondary source of data for this paper. Twenty scholarly sources and several other websites provided this paper with a range of information about digital diplomacy. Many of the individuals that served as interviewees were also able to recommend books and journals that are referenced throughout this paper. In addition, the United Nations Library in Geneva and Gettysburg College's remote library resources made it possible to access scholarly sources that would have otherwise needed to be purchased. The qualitative research obtained from these sources was then analyzed in order to determine the effect digital diplomacy is having on international relations.

Traditional Diplomacy

Diplomacy is a concept that has existed for many centuries, even before it was given an official name. Diplomacy refers to negotiations made between actors as they attempt to reach certain objectives. In the context of international affairs, diplomacy is a method by which states manage their relationships with one another and try to achieve their national interests.[1] There are several incentives for states to work with each other within the international system. As described by the realist theory of international relations, states seek security and power within the international system. In order to obtain security and power, states build strategic relationships with one another, constructing alliances to defend their own interests. Therefore, the vulnerability of states, their desire for power, their common interests with other states, and their realization of the benefits of trade, motivate states to partake in diplomacy.[2]

Although diplomacy is often carried out by states for self-interests, diplomacy has resulted in a lot of good for the world. Diplomacy has commonly been used to prevent war and violence, address global issues, and promote trade. Without diplomacy, states in the international system would be left to try to achieve their interests in less peaceful ways, with a lack of communication and compromise.[3]

Diplomacy is carried out through multiple channels in the international system, one of the most well-known being through diplomatic missions. Foreign embassies are established around the world in order to address bilateral issues, enhancing the relationship between the country the

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[1] Amacker, Christopher. 2011. "The Functions of Diplomacy," *E-International Relations Students.* July 20. http://www.e-ir.info/2011/07/20/the-functions-of-diplomacy/

[2] Rozental, Andres and Alicia Buenrosrto. 2013 "Bilateral Diplomacy," *Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy.* 230-235.

[3] Amacker, Christopher. "The Functions of Diplomacy."

embassy is from and the country they are in. By ensuring that the host country approves of the presence of the embassy and that the embassy does not infringe upon the sovereignty of the host country, embassies are able to conduct international affairs diplomatically.[4] Diplomats execute their missions in three major ways, the first being by representing the interests of the country they are coming from.[5] By engaging in conversations with the government of the country they are in, diplomats are able to make their foreign interests known. If the government recognizes common interests between the two countries, it may develop policies to benefit the country that the embassy is coming from. The second part of the mission includes taking time to learn about the interests of the country they are in and reporting this information back home.[6] With this information, ministries try to determine what foreign policies should be initiated in regard to that country. These foreign policy plans are then offered up to political leaders, who make the final decision about what to do.[7] Finally, embassies use diplomacy to expand the political, economic, and cultural ties between two countries.[8] Helping set up study abroad opportunities in each other's countries is an example of how diplomatic missions allow two states to strengthen their relationship.[9] In the same way, consulates in foreign countries help provide visitors with visas and keep them up to date on what is going on inside a country so that people can continue to travel back and forth. Performing these tasks allows diplomats to engage in negotiations with another country that will ultimately enhance their relationship.

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[4] Amacker, Christopher. "The Functions of Diplomacy."

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Imhoof, Rodolphe. Swiss Ambassador. 3 April 2017. Formal Interview. Café Léo, Geneva.

[8] Amacker, Christopher. "The Functions of Diplomacy."

[9] Ujvari, Balazs. Research Fellow for Egmont Institute. 6 March 2017. Formal Interview. Egmont Institute, Brussels.

Diplomacy is not just used to manage bilateral relationships. In more recent times, international institutions have been created in order to mediate the interests of multiple states. By sending representatives of their countries to forums where they can meet and take part in discussions with others, states are able to make their stance on global issues known. Although these states continue to seek power and security, in multilateral diplomacy, they are often also seeking to find the best solution to a world problem. Diplomacy allows these states to engage in dialogue in order to make compromises and reach agreements.

The United Nations is probably the first international organization that comes to mind when thinking of examples of multilateral diplomacy.[10] Consisting of 193 member states, the United Nations works to negotiate international treaties to solve global issues such as human rights violations, climate change, and lack of education. The General Assembly of the United Nations holds regular meeting sessions in which representatives from each member state have a chance to discuss the issues. With each state only being granted the power to give one vote, the United Nations highlights how necessary compromise and discussion is in diplomacy.

The World Trade Organization is another example of an international organization that utilizes multilateral diplomacy. In modern times, states have recognized the benefits that come from trade, and have sought to become more powerful within the international system by improving their own economies. This has led some states to conduct trade in ways that others consider unfair or discriminatory. The 164 member states of the WTO have committed themselves to reaching diplomatic solutions to solve this issue, benefitting both themselves and the international system as a whole. Like the United Nations, the member states of the WTO

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[10] Mahbubani, K. 2013. "Multilateral Diplomacy," *Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* 249-262.

meet to negotiate agreements, ultimately creating trade rules regarding international commerce. Members of the WTO help create, practice, and enforce all of these rules.[11] It is important to note that WTO members must reach a consensus in order for an agreement to go into effect, again demonstrating the necessity for dialogue in diplomacy.

The way in which diplomacy has been carried out for the last several centuries can be referred to as "traditional diplomacy." Throughout time, traditional diplomacy has grown to acquire a stereotype for the way in which it operates. For example, when the public thinks of a diplomat, they often imagine a well-dressed man who attends important social functions and has a wealth of knowledge about confidential affairs.[12] Diplomacy is seen as a field that is formal and secretive, taking place within small networks of important contacts rather than extended public circles.[13]

Within traditional diplomacy, diplomats have played a very specific role. Acting as a messenger between their home government and the government of the country they were sent to, diplomats were given one or two topics to focus their mission on.[14] In the past, traveling to a foreign nation and getting set up at a post may have taken a diplomat a long time, during which the situation within the country could have changed. This meant that the when diplomats arrived at their post, they needed to know how to adapt and make decisions that were in the interest of

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[11] "Understanding the WTO." 2015. WTO publications.
https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/understanding_e.pdf

[12] Rozental, Andres and Alicia Buenrosrto. "Bilateral Diplomacy"

[13] Zeepedia. "Diplomacy."
http://www.zeepedia.com/read.php?diplomacy_how_diplomacy_functions_traditional_versus_modern_diplomacy_international_relations_ir&b=100&c=10

[14] Imhoof, Rodolphe. Formal Interview.

their government on their own.[15] Diplomats were given broad frameworks to operate under, not having the ability to obtain direct advice from their home government on a frequent basis.[16] In the eyes of their government, diplomats were a truly valuable resource. Being present in the field by living in this new country for several years allowed diplomats to gain important information about what was going on within the country's borders.[17]

Traditional diplomacy relied on person-to-person communication, on both a bilateral and multilateral level. Diplomats travelling to foreign countries were expected to be socially skilled. They needed to know how to aggressively promote the interest of their country while also being able to make smart compromises.[18] In regard to embassies, countries believed that the number of missions they had abroad directly correlated to their international success. They looked to expand the locations where they had diplomats posted, seeing the advantage in these direct lines of communication.[19] International institutions, too, valued this in-person communication. Holding large international conferences in locations such as Vienna and Geneva, international leaders from around the world were able to come together to discuss their interests. However, as globalization and technology began to change the world, traditional diplomacy changed too.

The Digital Age

The development of the internet caused a major change in the world. The internet, along with computer systems, provided the first opportunity for instant access to new information and the ability to send a written message in a matter of seconds. In its early innovation, the internet

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Imhoof, Rodolphe. Formal Interview.

[17] Ibid.
[18] Rozental, Andres and Alicia Buenrosrto."Bilateral Diplomacy."
[19] Ibid.

was a tool used only by the government. It was a state-controlled project that relied on expert coders to know how to operate it.[20] Then, as the internet slowly became available to the general public, it became evident that it was going to grow into something larger.

Many believe that the world is currently experiencing a second revolution in internet technology, referring to it as the "Web 2.0."[21] The twenty-first century has been marked by its transition to mobile technology, where people no longer have to sit by their computers in order to access the internet. The development of smartphones allows people to bring their phone with them anywhere they go, continuing their instant text communications throughout the day. In addition, the plethora of mobile satellites around the world has now made it possible for people in less developed areas of the world to join in on these conversations.[22] With mobile devices and the internet promoting instant, yet perpetual communication, the way individuals live their lives has changed, making it much easier to get into contact with someone.[23]

Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Snapchat have only furthered this digital age. Studies have found that mobile users usually spend at least 3.1 hours per week on social networking sites, feeling the need to stay updated on the latest news.[24] Another study found that 70% of adults online receive most of their news from links posted through their personal social network on Facebook, and 36% receive news and information via

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[20] Dentzel, Zaryn. 2017. "How the Internet Has Changed Everyday Life." *OpenMind*. https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/article/internet-changed-everyday-life/?fullscreen=true

[21] Ibid.

[22] Dizrad Jr, W. 2001. *Digital Diplomacy U.S. foreign policy in the information age*. London: Praeger

[23] Costigan, Sean S. and Jake Perry. 2012. *Cyberspaces and Global Affairs*. New York: Routledge.

[24] Sandre, Andreas. 2013. *Twitter for Diplomats.* Geneva: DiploFoundation.

Twitter.[25] Sites such as Facebook boast of 845 million monthly active users, while it has been

recorded that Twitter generates 175 million new tweets a day.[26] The popular use of these social

media sites has caused the world to feel like a much smaller place, with people all over the globe

having similar access to news about politics, pop culture, and more.[27]

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Digital Diplomacy

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Although digital diplomacy is becoming an important topic, it still lacks an official

definition. Several organizations have attempted to form a concrete definition of the term, yet it

continues to be used vaguely. This lack of precision in definition has caused different scholars to

research digital diplomacy in different ways, focusing on everything from cyber security to

social media to internet governance.[28] Another reason for this lack of precision stems from the

fact that digital diplomacy is often referred to by different names. Scholars have been using the

terms "cyber-diplomacy," "net-diplomacy," "e-diplomacy," and "Twiplomacy"

interchangeably.[29] Although these terms mean relatively the same thing, each prefix concerns a

more specific area of the topic that needs to be used in the right context. For instance, "cyber" is

usually used when discussing security issues, "e" for business matters, and "twi" should only be

used when referring specifically to Twitter.[30] The interchangeable use of these words may seem

harmless, but they are partially responsible for the inability of digital diplomacy to be concretely

defined. The definition offered by DiploFoundation, an organization that focuses on the nexus

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[25] Mergel, Ines. 2012. "The social media innovation challenge in the public sector." *Information Polity: The International Journal Of Government & Democracy In The Information Age* 17, 281-292.
[26] Sandre, Andreas. *Twitter for Diplomats*.
[27] Costigan, Sean S. and Jake Perry. *Cyberspaces and Global Affairs*.

[28] Hocking, Brian and Jan Melissen. 2015. *Diplomacy in the Digital Age*. Netherlands: Clingendael.
[29] DiploFoundation. "Digital Diplomacy, E-diplomacy, Cyber diplomacy." https://www.diplomacy.edu/e-diplomacy.
[30] Ibid.

between digital technology and diplomacy,[31] seems to be a relatively good one, stating that digital diplomacy "describes new methods and modes of conducting diplomacy with the help of the internet and ICTs, and describes their impact on contemporary diplomatic practices."[32] In recent times, diplomats and political leaders have begun to recognize the ways in which they can use the popularity of technology in this digital age to enhance their international relations and ultimately further the interests of their country.

Scholars unanimously agree that the origins of digital diplomacy can be traced back to the United States. More specifically, they acknowledge the ways in which former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, was able to shape the foreign policy strategies of the State Department to exploit new technology. During her time as Secretary of State, Clinton made social media an integral part of many of the programs run by the Department of State (DOS), seeking to utilize this popular new trend as a tool for statecraft. In her own words, Clinton wanted to run a 21st Century Statecraft Platform that would "reach beyond traditional government-to-government relations and engage directly with people around the world."[33] Her dedication to prioritizing digital diplomacy is demonstrated by the fact that the DOS currently has 25 different nodes at its headquarters that focus on digital diplomacy, with over 1,000 employees utilizing it in their work at home and abroad.[34] On an everyday basis, the DOS also uses social media to monitor information posted online so that it can modify its messages to respond to public opinion, and monitor Twitter feeds in over 100 languages[35].

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[31] Jacobson, Barbara. 2017. Formal Interview. WMO in Geneva.
[32] DiploFoundation. "Digital Diplomacy, E-diplomacy, Cyber diplomacy."
[33] Bjola, Corneliu and Marcus Holmes. 2015. *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*. Routledge.
[34] Sandre, Andreas. *Twitter for Diplomats.*
[35] Zhang, Juyan. 2013. "A Strategic Issue Management (SIM) Approach to Social Media Use in Public Diplomacy," *American Behavior Scientist* 57 (9).

Since the United States' adoption of digital diplomacy, countries all over the world have been following suit. It has now become very common for embassies and consulates to have interactive online websites, and for state departments to have Facebook and Twitter accounts. As far as individual countries go, the United Kingdom has since established an official Office of Digital Diplomacy within its government and countries such as Sweden, France, and Poland have been noted for their attempts to incorporate digital tools into their statecraft. In regions such as Asia, India seems to be leading the way, with its Ministry of External Affairs posting its first tweet in 2010. Some regions, like Africa, have yet to show much progress towards moving in this direction.[36]

It is difficult to talk about digital diplomacy without mentioning a popular debate about it that has risen among scholars. This debate questions whether or not digital diplomacy uses new technology to conduct public diplomacy in a more modern way, or if it completely alters the way in which public diplomacy operates, changing the conversation from a monologue to a dialogue.[37] In order to weigh in on this discussion, it is important to understand what public diplomacy is. Public diplomacy pertains to the way in which countries communicate with foreign publics in an attempt to achieve their international interests.[38] Public diplomacy emerged in the early twentieth century, with the invention and popularity of the radio enhancing means of communication.[39] Political groups such as the Nazis and the Bolsheviks used the radio as a tool to spread their political propaganda to citizens of other countries. For the first time, these groups were able to directly communicate with foreign publics without having to engage with their

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[36] Bjola, Corneliu and Marcus Holmes. *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*.
[37] Manor, Ilan. "What is Digital Diplomacy?" *Digital Diplomacy Blog.*
[38] Ibid.
[39] Melissen, J. 2013. "Public diplomacy," *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy.* 436–452.

governments.[40] These interactions with the public became important for international policy

success.[41] While meetings between government officials are important, public opinion can also

be essential in shaping international policy.[42] Public diplomacy has continued on today, as

diplomats try to reach out to the public of the country they are posted in, rather than just the

elites.[43]

Although it can be a useful diplomatic tool, public diplomacy can be difficult to actually

carry out in the field. Despite trying to engage with their foreign publics, diplomats often find

themselves separated from the public, not able to engage with them. This is largely because

embassies, especially American ones, are set up like compounds, surrounded by big fences

which people are unlikely to enter. Without meaning to, diplomats have built up communication

barriers between themselves and the public, when in reality they are trying to tear them down.[44]

This is why many have found a positive link between digitalization and public diplomacy, with

new technology allowing diplomats to use the internet and social media to directly reach out to

citizens in a way even the radio could not. This is why some argue that digital diplomacy is

different from public diplomacy, changing interactions from a monologue to a dialogue.[45]

Foreign policy can benefit when there is a two way exchange of information between the public

and the government.[46] As public diplomacy moved from the radio, which usually sent out one

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Roberts, W. R. 2007. "What is public diplomacy? Past practices, present conduct, possible future." Mediterranean Quarterly.
[42] Nye, J. 2004. *Soft power*. New York: Public Affairs.
[43] Ujvari, Balazs. Formal Interview.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Manor, Ilan. "What is Digital Diplomacy?"
[46] Grunig, J.E. and T. Hunt 1984. *Managing Public Relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

message to everyone, to the internet, where people are exposed to many different points of view, people could tune in to the message that matched their interest.[47]

Advantages of Digital Diplomacy

The growing popularity of digital diplomacy is enough to suggest that there must be advantages to its use, so it is important to analyze what some of these benefits are. One of the most appealing aspects of digital diplomacy is its ability to foster two-way communication.   The Netherlands Ambassador to the United States, Rudolf Bekink, notes that "the digital arena opens new possibilities from one-on-one conversations to dialogues with communities."[48] As mentioned previously, methods of traditional diplomacy relied strictly on interactions between government officials. Although the adoption of public diplomacy sought to change this, government officials still only interacted with the public on a general level, usually addressing them through one-sided radio broadcasts. The development of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook have created open conversation spaces where government officials can directly communicate with certain audiences and individuals. These lines of two-way communication allow individuals to influence their government in ways that were not previously possible.[49] Governments, and ultimately their foreign policies, benefit from these conversations with the public, because they are able to gain a better grasp of public opinions on certain issues.[50]

One of the best examples of this was displayed by UK Foreign Secretary, William Hague, who used his Twitter account to launch an initiative called "Meet the Foreign Secretary." This

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[47] Cull, N. 2011. "WikiLeaks, public diplomacy 2.0 and the state of digital public diplomacy," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy,* 7(1):1-8.

[48] Hocking, Brian and Jan Melissen. *Diplomacy in the Digital Age.*

[49] Ross, Alec. 2011 "Digital Diplomacy and US Foreign Policy." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* (6): 451-455

[50] Bjola, Corneliu and Marcus Holmes. *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*.

initiative asked his followers to tweet him with their ideas of what issues they thought the Foreign Office's priorities should be in the upcoming years, with the promise of rewarding several participants with the ability to meet him.[51] Hundreds of people joined in to tweet Hague with their opinions, showcasing how social media can provide a platform for the public to be included in conversations about foreign policy. Other foreign officials have become well-known for their online interactions as well. For example, the Twitter account for the Dutch government devotes every weekday from 8 in the morning until 8 at night to answering questions posed by its followers, and reportedly 81% of Rwandan President, Paul Kagame's tweets are replies to other users.[52] New social media features such as Facebook live video chat and Twitter polls have made these interactions even easier.[53]

In the same way, social media has allowed diplomats and world leaders to easily extend their diplomatic networks and build strategic relationships. Because digitalization has caused so much to be easily accessible online, diplomats no longer exercise a monopoly on information.[54] This loss of power has left room for other non-state actors to become more valuable than before, creating new incentives for diplomats to break free from their confined network of elites.[55] Social media has made it easy for government officials to do so. Although government officials have used these sites to interact with each other, they much more often use them to connect with others.[56] Michael Oren, Israeli Ambassador to the United States notes that many diplomats use social media in order to be able to connect with the younger generation, acknowledging how

[51] Sandre, Andreas. *Twitter for Diplomats.*
[52] Twiplomacy. "Twiplomacy Study 2016." http://twiplomacy.com/blog/twiplomacy-study-2016/
[53] Ibid.
[54] Lovez, Kamen and Art Murray. 2013. "The digital diplomacy potential." *KMWorld* 22(6).

[55] Hocking, Brian and Jan Melissen. *Diplomacy in the Digital Age.*
[56] Twiplomacy. "Twiplomacy Study 2016."

often they use it.[57] Further examples of this are exhibited by the Digital Outreach Team of the

DOS, which has made profiles on popular Arabic, Urdu, and Persian language internet forums in

order to make connections with citizens living in the Middle East.[58]

Digitalization has even brought about a new, unique type of networking known as

"Twiplomacy."[59] Twiplomacy refers to the way in which individuals in the modern world form

relationships simply by "following" each other on Twitter.[60] Researchers have begun to look

into the effects these connections can actually have on international relations. A fascinating

example can be found in how the United States regained its relationship with Cuba after several

years of issuing an embargo. On May 26, 2015 the DOS decided to "follow" the State

Department of Cuba on Twitter. Later that day, the same gesture was returned by Cuba. What is

important to note is that this online connection occurred 2 months before the two countries

officially welcomed each other back into their networks.[61] Although talks about renewing an

alliance had been happening before this event, this example highlights the way social media

allows relationships to develop.   Other countries have sought to make similar connections

through the simple click of a button. Researchers studying Twiplomacy have recorded the way

in which smaller countries have gone out of their way to try to form relationships with the rest of

the world. Peru, for example, follows 509 world leaders on Twitter.[62]

Another important advantage of digital diplomacy is that it leads to an increased sense of

transparency. In the modern world, people put everything online. Individuals broadcast their

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[57] Sandre, Andreas. *Twitter for Diplomats.*
[58] Bjola, Corneliu and Marcus Holmes. *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*.
[59] Twiplomacy. "Twiplomacy Study 2016."
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

lives to the public by updating their Facebook statuses and posting pictures on Twitter. This

trend, along with a natural desire to want to know what one's government is up to, has led to a

public demand for transparency[63]. With diplomacy being a profession that is notorious for its

confidentiality, it has been difficult for some diplomats to find a balance between the two.[64] Yet,

it is important for diplomats to utilize this new technology to its full potential. By making

personalized posts about the activities they are carrying out, diplomats and political leaders are

able to make the public feel as though they are included in important conversations.[65] For

example, United States President Donald Trump posts daily tweets to let his followers know who

he is meeting with that day and what they will be discussing. Research has shown that

personalized messages such as these have positive effects, causing audiences to pay higher levels

of attention to the information they read by creating visual images in their mind.[66] Research has

also shown that emotionally-charged tweets receive the most attention online.[67] Many tweets by

President Trump are often retweeted, sent to others, ultimately spreading his message. This

personalization is good for diplomats and political leaders who want to engage with the public

and appear as though they are being transparent.

The use of digital diplomacy also leads to a decrease in financial and environmental

costs. With the advancement of technology, foreign representatives no longer need to get on a

plane and travel to a distant country in order to hold a meeting. Telecommunication technologies

such as Skype and Facetime allow people to communicate remotely, being able to discuss issues

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[63] Finaud, Marc. Formal Interview.

[64] Hocking, Brian and Jan Melissen. *Diplomacy in the Digital Age.*

[65] Bjola, Corneliu and Marcus Holmes. *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*.

[66] Strauß, Nadine, Sanne Kruikemeier, Heleen van der Meulen, and Guda van Noort. 2015. "Digital diplomacy in GCC countries: Strategic communication of Western embassies on Twitter," *Government Information Quarterly* 32, 369-379.

[67] Ibid.

as if they were in the same room.[68] This means that foreign offices no longer need to spend as much on transportation costs and can instead use that money to invest in other areas. But telecommunication does not only provide diplomats with a financial benefit, it also provides an environmental one.[69] Digital technology in general has a great potential to reduce effects on our environment. For example, digitalization has led to newspapers and books being printed online, reducing paper and printing production. Telecommunication is another way that the environment benefits. The ministry of Japan conducted studies within their country and determined that the use of digital technology can reduce their CO_2 emissions by up to 7%. By decreasing the need for physical travel, digital diplomacy causes financial and environmental costs to decline.[70]

Challenges of Digital Diplomacy

Although this new technology comes with many benefits, it also introduces a set of challenges. One of these challenges is that some of the aforementioned benefits are not actually being achieved in practice. For example, although social media sites provide government officials with the ability to extend their influence by being interactive, personal, and transparent, not all leaders seem to be taking advantage of this opportunity.[71] A study examining the communication strategies used by Western countries on social media provides disappointing results, revealing that most diplomats are not connecting with diplomats outside of their country. It also reveals that the non-government institutions they choose to follow are not very diverse,

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[68] Ujvari, Balazs. Formal Interview.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Loerincik, Yves. 2006. "Environmental Impacts and Benefits of Information and Communication Technology Infrastructure and Services, Using Process and Input-Output Life Cycle Assessment." Thesis for the École Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne.

[71] Strauß, Nadine. "Digital diplomacy in GCC countries: Strategic communication of Western embassies on Twitter."

following mostly businesses.[72] This information suggests that states and their representatives are still failing to exploit social media to its full potential.

Further studies about social media show that many actors are just generally misled when it comes to Twitter and how to use it. For instance, Ambassador Djalal of Indonesia has done a great job of acquiring a large following-base on his Twitter account; yet rankings indicate that he is much less influential than ambassadors with fewer followers. This means that although he has a large audience, Ambassador Djalal is not tweeting in a way that leads to increased interactions or an extended influence.[73] He is not alone; many governmental officials have started to use Twitter without really knowing what they are doing.[74] For example, Swedish foreign minister, Carl Bildt, is reported to have made a media mistake when he posted a tweet reading: "Leaving Stockholm and heading for Davos. Looking forward to World Food Program dinner tonight. Global hunger is an urgent issue!" With his followers finding a problem with the wording of his statement, Bildt ended up hurting his image instead of bolstering it.[75] Another example is seen in how the French Ambassador to the United States tweeted about the world coming to an end when Donald Trump was elected president, shaming those in the United States who had voted for him. Being stationed in the United States, this tweet was seen as highly controversial and largely frowned upon, so he eventually took it down.[76] This is problematic, as the whole point of digital diplomacy is to use social media as an easier way to communicate a state's interest and develop important relationships.

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Sandre, Andreas. *Twitter for Diplomats.*
[74] Strauß, Nadine. "Digital diplomacy in GCC countries: Strategic communication of Western embassies on Twitter."
[75] Adesina1, Olubukola S. 2017. "Foreign policy in an era of digital diplomacy," *Cogent Social Sciences*.
[76] Finaud, Marc. French Diplomat. Formal Interview.

Social media training seems to offer a solution to this challenge.[77] Some government officials have begun hiring communication professionals to run their social media accounts for them, leaving it up to these experts to know how to spread their policy ideas in the best way. For others, it seems that courses on social media may be in the works to be available to help those who want to run their accounts on their own. Handbooks such as Twitter for Diplomats provide basic tips for how to use social media, such as encouraging the use of slang and noting that deleting tweets is frowned upon.[78] Although digital diplomacy is challenging because there is no specific protocol on how to use social media successfully, if government officials make an effort to use this tool to its full potential, they will see rewards.

Another difficult challenge that digital diplomacy presents is cybersecurity. Although the rapid spread of information is often an advantage for digital diplomacy, it can also turn out to be a great disadvantage.[79] The dangerous ability for information to be leaked and accounts to be hacked has caused many online users to be wary of attack.[80] The most well-known example of information leakage is found in the recent United States scandal known as WikiLeaks.[81] When WikiLeaks publically released private foreign policy files that had been shared between US embassies and the DOS, the whole world gained access to frank assessments that had been made by US diplomats about other world leaders and their host countries.[82] With the United States feeling as though they had been directly attacked through WikiLeaks, and many other diplomats

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[77] Ujvari, Balazs. Formal Interview.

[78] Sandre, Andreas. *Twitter for Diplomats.*

[79] Jacobson, Barbara. Formal Interview.

[80] Adesina1, Olubukola S. 2017. "Foreign policy in an era of digital diplomacy."

[81] Jacobson, Barbara. Formal Interview.

[82] Manor, Ilan. 2015. "WikiLeaks Revisted." *Digital Diplomacy Blog.* https://digdipblog.com/2015/11/09/wikileaks-revisited/

recognizing the potential for their private foreign policy information to be exposed online, people became hesitant about the idea of digital diplomacy.[83] This information puts targets on the backs of individuals, putting their lives in physical danger.[84] Cyber-weapons that can interfere with government transmissions and disrupt the system have furthered these doubts.[85]

Falling under the same theme of cybersecurity is the threat posed by anonymity online.[86] Social media and the internet limit the need for face-to-face communication, leaving people to interact online only through the words they type and the photos they choose to share. Because of this, it is very easy for users to hide behind a computer screen and pretend to be someone they are not.[87] This could lead to trouble, especially if the public relies on social media accounts as their main source for information from their government officials. If they are accidentally following an account that is run by an imposter, they may be receiving false or fake information. In addition, the ability to be anonymous has also been seen to encourage negative behavior. For instance, if a person knows they can verbally attack someone online without being caught or experiencing repercussions, they are more likely to cause mischief.[88] Because identity can be so easily concealed online, cyber-attacks are likely to happen.[89] This is worrisome in environment that is supposed to be able to promote diplomacy.

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[83] Bjola, Corneliu and Marcus Holmes. *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*.

[84] Finaud, Marc. Formal Interview.

[85] Kurbalija, Jovan. 2017. *An Introduction to Internet Governance*. Geneva: DiploFoundation.

[86] Adesina1, Olubukola S. "Foreign policy in an era of digital diplomacy."

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Costigan, Sean S. and Jake Perry. *Cyberspaces and Global Affairs*.

Threats to cybersecurity have caused diplomats to worry that digital diplomacy is not possible. With diplomacy being a field known for its confidentiality, in the months following the WikiLeaks incident, many diplomats struggled to carry out their jobs as information-gatherers knowing that there was a constant threat of exposure. However, as time passes, it seems that governments are learning how to take the precautions necessary to prevent information leakage to still gain the benefits of digitalization.[90] Social media training courses are currently being created in order to educate diplomats on how to use this tool in the safest and most influential way.

Possibly the greatest challenge for diplomats pursuing digital diplomacy is the fact that their role as diplomats is changing. Prior to digitalization, the main responsibilities of diplomats were to represent their governments while they were abroad and report information to their governments when they returned.[91] Because diplomats were mostly unable to communicate with their governments while they were away, the information they provided when they returned was regarded as being new and valuable. However, this is not the case anymore.[92] With social media sites now allowing any person to be both a producer and a consumer of information,[93] diplomats have lost their monopoly on being able to report about what is happening in other countries.[94] Diplomats are now competing with journalists and ordinary citizens who can easily pick up their phones and tell the world about what they have seen, a competition that diplomats will not win.[95]

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[90] Manor, Ilan. "WikiLeaks Revisted."

[91] Rozental, Andres and Alicia Buenrosrto. "Bilateral Diplomacy."

[92] Ibid.

[93] Finaud, Marc. French Diplomat. 28 April 2017. Formal Interview. Geneva Center for Security Policy, Geneva.

[94] Manor, Ilan. "WikiLeaks Revisted."

[95] Imhoof, Rodolphe. Formal Interview.

Due to this shift in information technology, governments are no longer left in the dark when diplomats are away at foreign embassies. Officials at headquarters have instantaneous access to international media, and are able to adjust the goals of their foreign policy missions accordingly.[96] Because of this, diplomats in the modern world are less free within their given frameworks to develop the relationship between the country they come from and the country they are in.[97] Foreign ministries themselves have been given much more power, having access to reports that diplomats used to be responsible for generating.

Diplomats can overcome this challenge if they adapt their role to fit this new communication system. If diplomats no longer just report on the information they gather, but instead are able to analyze it, they will be able to play a valuable role in international affairs.[98] Scholars note that the WikiLeaks incident actually helped to highlight the quality of analysis that can be provided by diplomats, with the released files revealing the in-depth accounts of political and cultural transitions occurring around the world.[99] This incident reminded the world that diplomats carrying out missions in foreign countries truly are foreign policy experts, with access to unique knowledge about the places they are stationed. With so much information being posted online, diplomats are needed to be able to decipher what is true and what is false.[100] If diplomats in the modern world can transition from merely reporting information to being able to create hypothesis and facilitate discussions, they will be able to have a stronger influence on foreign policy decisions than ever before.[101]

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[96] Rozental, Andres and Alicia Buenrosrto. "Bilateral Diplomacy."

[97] Imhoof, Rodolphe. Formal Interview.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Manor, Ilan. "WikiLeaks Revisted."

[100] Finaud, Marc. Formal Interview.

[101] Imhoof, Rodolphe. Formal Interview.

Conclusion

Upon receiving the first telegraph message in 1860, British Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, is reported to have exclaimed, "My God, this is the end of diplomacy!"[102] Although it is true that internet technologies have reshaped traditional methods of diplomacy, the overall purpose of diplomacy remains the same. Diplomacy continues to be an essential part of a government's ability to gain power within the international system.

Innovations in the digital age have made the execution of diplomacy easier. Social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook have expanded communication from being a monologue to a dialogue, allowing government officials to be able to engage in two-way conversations with public individuals. These sites have also made it easier for officials to expand their networks, making connections by the click of a button. Another advantage is that Twitter and Facebook have allowed diplomats to appear more personal and transparent to the public, developing a sense of public trust and ultimately extending their influence.

However, although technology is an asset that can greatly benefit those who use it in the right way, it is not a requirement and should not replace all parts of diplomacy. Poorer countries that are unable to keep up with the latest technologies should not fear that they will fall behind in the international system because traditional methods of diplomacy are still important. When it comes to international affairs, technology will never replace the expertise that can be gained from sending diplomats to foreign countries to observe these places first-hand. There is no certainty in where digital diplomacy will lead the world in the next few years, but there is certainty that diplomacy will remain an important part of international affairs.

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