

Chapter 5

Transformation of Diplomacy: Digital Diplomacy in the Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Process

Ekrem Yaşar Akçay
Hakkari University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

In this study, the transformation and digitalization of diplomacy within the framework of digitalization is discussed. Primarily, classical diplomacy and public diplomacy will be examined in the study. Then digital diplomacy will be discussed. After digital diplomacy is defined, the use of digital diplomacy during and after the pandemic process will be analyzed. In the study, it will be inferred that digital diplomacy, which is actively used during the pandemic process, will be used intensively after the pandemic process, and that the digitalization process and digital diplomacy will be an indispensable element among the actors in the international system. Comparative method will be used as a method in the study.

INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy is the peaceful execution of relations between states and other institutions in world politics. It is also described as “negotiations between political entities that recognize each other’s independence” (Kelley, 2010, p. 287). Diplomacy involves international actors taking non-violent, compromising approaches to inter-state interests. The important point to be conveyed here is that diplomacy represents an advanced method of change management (Bjola & Kornprobst, 2013, p. 10). Furthermore, it includes a certain type of behavior among international actors; however, the success or failure of these relationships depends on the ability of diplomats to be accurately aware of the developing power dynamics (Cooper, Heine & Thakur, 2013, p. 3).

Toward the end of the 1960s, some diplomats predicted a golden age in communication thanks to the computer network. This prediction has been the harbinger of internet-based public diplomacy (Manor, 2019, p. 7). In February 1968, Leonard Marks, the director of the US Information Agency and one of the nation’s leading diplomats, argued that a world information network connecting computers would be

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a crucial step toward lasting world peace. As long as technology allows, cultures of different countries should be able to enter homes all over the World (Kitsou, 2013, p. 25). However, this happened in the mid-1990s when the browser system called Mosaic enabled the introduction of personal computers, which became widespread in the 1980s, into data platforms in the rapidly growing World Wide Web (Naughton, 2016, p. 12). As a communication tool, press releases via internet technology have become an alternative to one-way and top-down communication. For example, the “Voice of America,” the pride of American public diplomacy, was a print publication in the beginning but was later broadcast and, today is an online form of communication (Cowan & Arsenoult, 2008, p. 15).

Journals are now being published online because it is less expensive than printed publications. Along with developments in the digital world, there have been developments in diplomacy. After hard power turned into soft power with public diplomacy, diplomacy began to take place in digital environments in the world, where the internet was shrinking (Adesina, 2017, p. 3). Digital diplomacy, which is a fairly new concept, has a short history. Its focus is the application of social media to conduct foreign policy (Stanzel, 2018, p. 8). The concept of digital diplomacy started to attract attention when a book was published in 1984 titled *Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age*, an analysis written by Allen C. Hansen that investigates public diplomacy implemented by the American Information Agency (USC Center on Public Diplomacy 2020). The first email communication on the topic of diplomacy was about the lifting of the embargo on Vietnam and occurred in 1994 between Swedish diplomat Carl Bildt and U.S. President Bill Clinton (Manor, 2019, p. 34). Social media platforms started to appear later. The Republic of Maldives opened the first virtual embassy in 2007, followed by Sweden. Arturo Sarukhan, Mexican Ambassador of the US, was the first ambassador to post a tweet on the social media application Twitter in 2009; he states that it is a good way to talk directly about the US and Mexico (Singh, 2018, p. 3). The digitalization of diplomacy was the focus of the Hague Digital Diplomacy Camp that was organized by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; it took place at the Hague, the bureaucratic center of the Netherlands, on February 1–2, 2017. During the meeting, it was shown that countries use digital resources as much as global brands do, to develop foreign policy and plan strategic goals. they use digital channels directly and thus affect the international community (The Hague Digital Diplomacy Camp, 2017).

Digitalization has become an integral part of life—almost everything has started to become digital due to globalization, making technology cheaper, more intensive, and easier. This is also reflected in diplomacy, which has transcended to digital diplomacy. Digital diplomacy, which first appeared in the USA and the UK in 2001, has been frequently mentioned since the Arab Spring. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused havoc in the entire world, everything from education to health and from foreign policy to trade has been used intensively. Leaders and international actors have participated in meetings concerning the international system and use of digital tools. This process, in which digitalization was a prominent factor, has become the harbinger of a new order. It is suggested that the process of digitalization will continue even after the pandemic, leading to very different diplomatic processes in the long term.

In other words, digital diplomacy has attracted attention and is used almost everywhere. For this reason, it is essential to investigate what digital diplomacy is, how it is perceived, what the different types are, and how it has improved. This study will analyze the positive and negative sides of digital diplomacy and the rules of the new order. In the first part of the study, the definition of classical diplomacy and public diplomacy will be made. Then, the definition and importance of digital diplomacy will be discussed and analyzed within the framework of the pandemic process and post-term examples. The main problem of the study will be that the importance of digital diplomacy in relations increases day by

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