Chapter 10
Understanding Digital Diplomacy Through Ukraine–Russia Events:
The Truth Behind Events in Ukraine and Donbass

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ABSTRACT

Digital diplomacy is a form of new public diplomacy that uses the internet, new information and communication technologies, and social media as a means to strengthen diplomatic relations. The main differences from classical public diplomacy are greater access to information, more interaction between people and organizations, and greater transparency. Diplomacy is radically transforming in front of our eyes. In the face of new challenges, its structure and methods are changing, and new directions are emerging. The chapter analyzes new opportunities and technologies for use by the diplomatic departments of the Russian Federation and Ukraine in the course of current activities in the field of international relations. The authors also presented a descriptive analysis of the document entitled "The Truth behind Events in Ukraine and Donbass (2014-2022)" published on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

INTRODUCTION

Jan Melissen argues that public diplomacy should be seen as "old wine in new bottles" (Melissen, 2005, p. 28), amphasizing that public diplomacy aims to communicate the positive aspects of a country to

a foreign public. In his article "The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice," Melissen writes that three concepts that should be briefly considered in a discussion of public diplomacy are propaganda, nation-branding, and foreign cultural relations. Like public diplomacy, propaganda and nation-branding are concerned with the transmission of information and ideas with the aim of changing the attitudes of people in other countries towards their country or to strengthen the existing image. Cultural relations are much closer to the latest trends of the new public diplomacy than propaganda and nation-branding. The new public diplomacy as well as cultural relations focus more on interacting with foreign audiences rather than selling messages, building reciprocity and stable relationships rather than just political campaigns, securing "long term" needs rather than "short term" and "winning hearts minds" to build trust (Melissen, 2005, pp. 16-21).

In today's world, the informational effect is generally recognised internationally as 'soft power'. "Soft power" uses methods based on communication skills (Çaglar, 2019). "Soft power" is the opposite of "hard power", which includes military or economic power. The focus of soft power strategy is the use of persuasive techniques.

Diplomacy, which Bull defines as "the peaceful conduct of relations between states and other entities in world politics by official agents" (Bull, 1997, p. 156), continues to be the most widely used definition among diplomatic scholars. It follows Watson's characterization of diplomacy as a process of "negotiation between political entities that accept each other's independence" (Watson, 1984, p. 33).

The Internet, defined, as "a communication tool for publishing, sharing and storing information" (Westcott, 2008, p. 2), has become a hub for public and private communication. Facebook, Twitter, Qzone, Snapchat, VKontakte and other social networking platforms are used by over 2 billion people every day. Digital communication has shrunk the world and in the process changed the daily lives of billions of people (Adesina, 2017, p. 7). Web 2.0 technologies have paved the way for the development of social media. Online social networking tools allow users to create content, interact with other users and build communities (Payne et al., 2011, p. 54). The mediation and exchange of information between people from all over the world now takes place 24 hours a day, all year round. Social networks offer tremendous opportunities for governments and international organizations trying to participate in the new policy areas that are developing on the Internet.

Globalisation has affected not only the way people act and live, but also more importantly the way states and international actors act on the world stage (Westcott, 2008, p. 4). This rapid transformation of society has led to the emergence of various disciplines such as digital diplomacy or data diplomacy, also known as e-diplomacy. In the era of globalisation, diplomacy includes and promotes citizen participation, mass movements and people-to-people communication (Payne et al., 2011, p. 47).

Digital diplomacy makes active use of soft power through social media as a powerful tool for communicating with target audiences. In this case the social network acts as a platform on which social relations are built.

Marcus Holmes in The Theory and Practice of Digital Diplomacy (Corneliu Biola, Marcus Holmes, 2015, pp. 13-32) begins the first chapter on political innovation and digital diplomacy as an international practice. He challenges the common understanding of digital diplomacy as a purely cost-effective form of public diplomacy and argues instead that a more effective approach would be to explore the broader role of digital diplomacy in managing international change.

With the digitalisation of communication technologies, temporal and spatial constraints on individuals' communicative activities have disappeared and one-way interpersonal communicative activities have become very comfortable group communication (Dogan, 2013, p. 8). According to Westcott, the Internet

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