COVID-19 PANDEMIC AS A CHALLENGE FOR REDEFINING TOOLS IN DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract: This paper will discuss the differences between traditional and modern diplomacy following the COVID-19 pandemic. It will examine how the use of internet technology and digital communication tools has changed the way diplomacy is conducted, and how this has impacted international relations. It will compare and contrast traditional methods of diplomacy with those used in the post-COVID era, including the role of social media, virtual meetings, and joint efforts between countries to tackle global issues. It will also explore new technology's implications for diplomacy, including security concerns, difficulty in developing trust, and the potential for increased speed of international negotiations. This paper will discuss how diplomacy and international relations have been redefined in the 21st century. It will examine how new technology, such as social media and virtual meetings, has changed the way countries interact and negotiate with one another. It will also analyze how these changes have impacted global politics and international security. Finally, the paper will explore potential implications of this new form of diplomacy for the future of international relations.
Keywords: diplomacy, international relations, development, digital age, foreign affairs, corona virus.

1. INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy is one of the most important components of international relations, which aims to improve communication between states and resolve any problems and disputes that may arise. But with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, diplomacy has faced many challenges and changes.

One of the major changes in diplomacy during the pandemic is the increased use of virtual means of communication. Travel bans and social distancing have prevented the usual face-to-face interaction between diplomats and heads of state. Therefore, diplomats had to reorient themselves to the use of virtual means such as video conferencing and virtual meetings.

This challenge in diplomacy has several advantages. First, virtual communication is very efficient and economical, as it does not require additional travel and accommodation expenses. Second, this change allows communication between leaders and diplomats to continue even during a pandemic.

However, although virtual communication is effective, it cannot replace face-to-face communication. Diplomatic relations are based on personal contacts and mutual understanding and therefore virtual communication is not an ideal alternative, so the diplomats should prepare for a return to personal communication as soon as possible.

In recent years, the use of digital and networked technologies for diplomatic practices has become more prevalent and significant, known as digital diplomacy, diplomacy 2.0, or e-diplomacy. This includes the utilization of tools such as the internet, mobile devices, and social media channels.

The author Britney Harris (2013) examines case studies of the successful implementation of Twitter diplomacy and the use of Twitter for crisis management. Harris emphasized the importance of social media as a tool of public diplomacy has gained traction in U.S. foreign policy initiatives. The Obama administration's creation of "Diplomacy 2.0" has brought the use of Twitter and other social media sites to the front line of public diplomacy practices. This author looks at why social media are an effective tool for two-way communication and how it can enhance U.S. public diplomacy initiatives.

Therefore, the digitalization has become an integral part of modern society and has impacted various social domains through the use of technology.

By developing a theory of Collective Action Space, Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl (2012) explore how people's attitudes, behaviors, motivations, goals, and digital media use are related to their organizational involvement. They find that using technology does not necessarily make people more likely to act collectively, but contributes to a diversity of "participatory styles," which hinge on people's interaction with one another and the extent to which they shape organizational agendas. In the digital media age, organizations do not simply recruit people into roles, they provide contexts in which people are able to construct their own collective experiences (Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl, 2012).

It is important to consider the implications of digitalization and ensure that digital technology is used responsibly.

This implies that the widespread adoption of technology has led to changes in how people interact with each other and institutions, and that these changes are likely to persist in the future.

The pandemic has also caused changes in diplomatic decision-making. States had to adapt to the new reality and take quick and efficient decisions. These decisions had to be based on scientific evidence and recommendations, which made diplomatic decisions better and wiser.

However, these changes in diplomacy can also have negative aspects. The increased use of virtual communication may cause a loss of personal connection between diplomats and state leaders, which may have a negative effect in the long term. Also, quick decisions can be imperfect and have negative consequences. Virtual meetings are replacing physical visits and summits, allowing leaders to interact without having to travel. Moreover, technology provides an easy way for countries to record diplomatic decisions, ensuring greater accountability and transparency in the process. The new methods of diplomacy have made it possible for countries to coordinate global efforts to address issues like climate change and global poverty. Technology has enabled countries to come together faster than ever before to tackle some of the world's most pressing issues. Digital platforms are being used to share information and coordinate projects, allowing countries to work together more effectively.

2. COVID-19 PANDEMIC AS A CHALLENGE FOR REDEFINING TOOLS IN DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Today, the international community is living with the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic and globalization. Therefore, the issues of international interdependence must gain an important status in the national political agendas, and the promotion of international cooperation between the states must not squeeze the national responsibility of the states, which should preserve the cultural, historical and identity differences, while making a moral contribution to the advancement of a global culture.

International relations have always been profoundly affected by technology, and the digitalization has a major impact on diplomacy. The pandemic demanded virtual meetings that have impact on reduced travel budgets and also a need for improving access to technological tools and improved skills of diplomats such as improved digital capabilities and experience in virtual negotiation rooms. (Stojanovska-Stefanova and Magdinceva-Sopova, 2020a:1073). Almost overnight, **diplomats have been asked to become advanced users of virtual platforms.** They have been asked to face challenges such as the gap in digital skills, meaningful connectivity, and other matters pertaining to the digital divide.

The Covid -19 pandemic requires from diplomats:
-to use technological platforms;
- to have technical knowledge;
-to have innovative thinking skills;
-to negotiate in a whole new environment;
-to participate on virtual meetings;
-to play a key role in dealing the pandemic;
-to continue the bilateral and multilateral dialogues;
-to promote their own country in the best light;
-to help the healthcare system in their own countries;
- to help in recovering the economy etc.

Therefore, the way of realization and presentation of diplomacy has radically changed and is increasingly removed from the traditional diplomatic elements. Traditional diplomacy relied on person-to-person communication, on both a bilateral and multilateral level. On the other side, the internet, social media, the training courses as well, started the new digital era in the community. They are currently the most popular, especially the platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and so on, so it was necessary to educate diplomats on how to use these tools in the safest and most influential way. World leaders and diplomats are using social media, and Twitter in particular, to deliver messages directly to the audience they seek to influence.

Foreign policy is designed to protect the national interests of the state. Modern foreign policy has become quite complex. In the past, foreign policy may have concerned itself primarily with policies solely related to the national interest–for example, military power or treaties. A country's foreign policy consists of self-interest strategies chosen by the state to safeguard its national interests and to achieve its own goals through relations with other countries. The approaches are strategically employed to interact with other countries.

Modern diplomacy requires a variety of skills, in particular, a familiarity with the art of negotiation, an ability to work in a multicultural environment, and openness to co-operation with different actors, in particular, civil society (DiploFondation, 2020). Modern diplomacy is currently experiencing fundamental changes at an unprecedented rate, which affect the very character of diplomacy as we know it. These changes also affect aspects of domestic and

international politics that were once of no great concern to diplomacy. Technical developments, mainly digitization, affect how the work of the diplomat is understood; the number of domestic and international actors whose activity implicates (or is a form of) diplomacy is increasing; the public is more sensitive to foreign policy issues and seeks to influence diplomacy through social media and other platforms; the way exchange between states, as well as the interchange between government and other domestic actors, progresses is influencing diplomacy's ability to act legitimately and effectively; and finally, diplomats themselves do not necessarily need the same attributes as they previously did. These trends, reflecting general societal developments, need to be absorbed by diplomacy as part of state governance. Ministries of Foreign Affairs, diplomats and governments in general should therefore be proactive in four areas. First, the diplomats must understand the tension between individual needs and state requirements. Second, the digitization must be implemented in such a way that gains in efficiency and not at the expense of efficacy. Third, the forms of mediation should be developed that reconcile the interests of all sides allowing governments to operate as sovereign states, and yet to use the influence and potential of other actors. And last but not the least, the new and more open state activities need to be advanced that respond to the emotionalized publics (German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Stanzel V, 2020).

The consular challenge is perhaps the most pressing one at the opening of the digital age, with citizens demanding help from government and services that meet both the technological standard set by society as well as the human touch that is essential to this form of diplomacy. The rather outmoded term 'consular affairs' no longer covers what is going on, and harks back to the image of a world that never existed: one in which consular matters and diplomatic affairs did not appear to intersect. Consular diplomacy overlaps with other areas of MFA activity such as economic diplomacy, public diplomacy, and development aid and consular controversies have the capacity to seriously affect overall bilateral relations. There are many examples of serious political frictions triggered by consular issues, and high-profile cases tend to attract a lot attention at home. What could be called the 'five P's' – public opinion, parliament, the press, principals within foreign ministries, and politicians – need no persuasion that consular services are a core task of government, and this is the area of diplomatic activity where the technological challenge is most palpable (Hocking and Melissen, 2015).

In recent times, due to the deepening level of globalization and transnational activities, states also have to interact with non-state actors. The aforementioned interaction is evaluated and monitored in an attempt to maximize benefits of multilateral international cooperation. Since the national interests are paramount, foreign policies are designed by the government through high-level decision-making processes. In the digital era, strengthening e-democracy and protecting civil rights is great challenge. Digital tools and social media have empowered people through widespread access to information and global connections. (Stojanovska-Stefanova A.et al, 2020a:54)

Citizens are using technology to hold governments to account and to exercise their civic rights. Governments are using technology to be more transparent, accountable and inclusive. Digital government can play a role in building effective, inclusive and accountable institutions to support policy making and service delivery for United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, the United Nations supports digital government development, and in the context of the rapid pace and change in technologies relevant to digital government, this work is essential. Also, the Council of Europe has organised a high number of national, regional and international events to raise awareness of the specificities of the online environment when it comes to access to and exercise of human rights online (Stojanovska-Stefanova. et al, 2020b:55).

Digital diplomacy is very important form of new public diplomacy. During the pandemic caused form Covid 19 the role and importance of the digital forms of communication, including social distance is steadily increasing, therefore digital diplomacy has become one of the most useful working tools for the diplomats. Digital diplomacy is characterized by the great influence on the realization of diplomatic practices, providing an influential space for information communication technologies, internet and social media, which are at the same time its core elements (Stojanovska-Stefanova and Magdinceva-Sopova, 2020:158).

Hanson defines it simply as the use of the internet and new Information Communications Technologies to help carry out diplomatic objectives. He outlines eight policy goals for digital diplomacy:

(1)   Knowledge management: To harness departmental and whole of government knowledge, so that it is retained, shared and its use optimized in pursuit of national interests abroad.

(2)   Public diplomacy: To maintain contact with audiences as they migrate online and to harness new communications tools to listen to and target important audiences with key messages and to influence major online influencers.

(3)   Information management: To help aggregate the overwhelming flow of information and to use this to better inform policy-making and to help anticipate and respond to emerging social and political movements.

(4)   Consular communications and response: To create direct, personal communications channels with citizens travelling overseas, with manageable communications in crisis situations.

(5)   Disaster response: To harness the power of connective technologies in disaster response situations.
(6)   Internet freedom: Creation of technologies to keep the internet free and open. This has the related objectives of promoting freedom of speech and democracy as well as undermining authoritarian regimes.
(7)   External resources: Creating digital mechanisms to draw on and harness external expertise to advance national goals.
(8)   Policy planning: To allow for effective oversight, coordination and planning of international policy across government, in response to the internationalisation of the bureaucracy (Hanson, 2012).

Holmes defines digital diplomacy as a "strategy of managing change through digital tools and virtual collaborations", adding an emphasis to the inherent collaborative nature of diplomacy both online and off line, which the digital does not affect in any way. One of the salient tasks of diplomacy is the gathering of information and reporting, by lawful means, on conditions and developments within the host country for the sending government as well as the promotion of friendly relations between the two states (Holmes, 2015:15).

The 21st century has seen unprecedented advances in technology that have dramatically changed the way states interact and negotiate with one another. Social media has become an increasingly common tool for communication between states, allowing for faster dialogue and exchanges than ever before. Virtual meetings are now replacing physical visits and summits, providing a cost-effective and time-efficient way for leaders to interact without having to travel. Digital platforms are being used to share information and coordinate projects, enabling countries to collaborate more effectively.

These changes have had profound implications for global politics and international security. Nations can now communicate more quickly, leading to faster negotiations and more frequent dialogue. Digital communication has improved transparency and accountability in diplomatic relations, as decisions are documented and easily tracked. Technology has also enabled countries to coordinate on global projects, allowing them to work together more efficiently on issues like climate change and poverty. However, there are security concerns about the use of technology, as digital platforms are vulnerable to cyber-attacks.

According to André Barrinha & Thomas Renard (2017) cyber-diplomacy can be defined as diplomacy in the cyber domain or, in other words, the use of diplomatic resources and the performance of diplomatic functions to secure national interests with regard to cyberspace. Such interests are generally identified in national cyberspace or cybersecurity strategies, which often include references to the diplomatic agenda.

"Organized around a common theme of investigating digital diplomacy as a form of change management in the international system, it combines diverse theoretical, empirical, and policy-oriented chapters centered on international change" (Bjola C& Holmes M, 2015).

Social media has transformed contemporary diplomacy, providing the public with instantaneous access to information and enabling global broadcast technologies that facilitate intervention in international flows of political communication. As a result, modern diplomacy has become multilayered, multidirectional, and dispersed among various actors.

The use of social media has an impact on diplomacy, enabling the public to access information instantly and intervene in international political communication. This has led to a more complex and dispersed form of diplomacy, with multiple actors involved.

The use of technology in diplomacy has transformed the international relations in the 21st century. This new form of diplomacy has enabled states to communicate and negotiate more quickly, improving transparency and accountability in diplomatic relations. It has opened up opportunities for countries to coordinate global projects and tackle some of the world's most pressing issues. However, there are still challenges that need to be addressed, such as security concerns. Nevertheless, the potential for diplomacy in the future looks promising if these challenges can be properly addressed.

3. CONCLUSION
Despite the challenges presented by digital diplomacy, there is much potential for diplomacy in this new era. The use of technology in diplomacy has enabled countries to engage more quickly and effectively with one another, making negotiations swifter and allowing for deeper collaboration on global issues. Additionally, digital diplomacy provides an opportunity for increased transparency and accountability, as decisions are documented through digital platforms and can be easily tracked. As such, it may be beneficial for the diplomatic process in the future. Furthermore, digital diplomacy may open up opportunities for countries that don't have direct access to traditional diplomatic channels. For example, countries with limited resources may be better able to participate in international dialogue and negotiations due to the lower cost of digital communication. Finally, digital diplomacy could lead to an overall increase in the quality of diplomatic relations between states, as digital communication allows for more frequent exchanges between world leaders.

So, while there are some challenges associated with digital diplomacy, there is much potential for diplomacy in the post-COVID era. Technology has enabled countries to communicate, negotiate, and coordinate global projects faster and more effectively than ever before. Digital diplomacy provides an opportunity for increased transparency and accountability, as well as opening up new opportunities for countries without access to traditional diplomatic channels. As technology continues to evolve, its implications for diplomacy will need to be addressed in order to ensure successful diplomatic negotiations.

Therefore, we may conclude that the COVID-19 pandemic has forced countries to redefine their diplomatic tools. Virtual meetings and social media have become increasingly important tools for global states to communicate and negotiate with one another. This has had significant implications for global politics and security, as decisions can now be communicated and recorded more quickly and easily. However, security concerns still need to be addressed in order to ensure successful diplomatic negotiations going forward. As technology continues to evolve, its implications for diplomacy and international relations will need to be considered in order to ensure successful outcomes in the future.

At the end of the paper, we could also conclude that the tools of the digital age create new routines and simultaneously redefine existing ones, hybridity is the norm in the current media and diplomatic environments. Current developments in the international system are characterized by the emergence of a much wider range of entities operating in international relations, diffusion of power in the fields of economics and telecommunications, and the decline of the sovereignty of states. These changes and challenges need to be met with the evolution of diplomatic methods, which we can expect to see in the forthcoming period.

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