ISRAEL 1ST

Digital Diplomacy Conference Summary

MARCH 30-31, 2016

State of Israel
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY אוניברסיטת תל אביב
Partner Institute
for Internet Studies

Thank you all for joining us at Israel's first International Digital Diplomacy Conference.

This conference was a milestone in the advancement of diplomacy in the 21st century. We were able to bring together scholars and practitioners from around the world to discuss and learn about diplomatic outreach in the digital realm. We would like to extend a special thank you to Tel Aviv University for their partnership and hospitality in helping organize and host this event.

We have had the incredible opportunity to learn from esteemed speakers whose lectures covered important topics such as measuring the effectiveness of digital diplomacy, wherein big data and other metrics are used to see the impact and influence of social media outreach by diplomats. This conference hosted some of the most influential minds in the area of digital diplomacy, and it was extremely beneficial to hear them speak on these topics.

Within our roundtable discussions, we had an amazing cast of moderators, panel members and participants, helping lead the conversation and teach us some of the most cutting edge practices in digital diplomatic outreach. They offered us valuable conversations, data, research, and case studies from across the globe offering solutions to some of the world's newest and most pressing problems. For instance, the new digital opportunities and challenges presented to us by shifting the public engagement paradigm from broadcasting, to a communicative paradigm. Our mission extends way beyond sharing content with

users. Our goal is to reach individuals around the globe by engaging and involving them in Israel's story. Digital Diplomacy's emphasis on dialogue and participation exposes millions of users to the important discussions taking place within Israel and abroad.

In a world where over 200 foreign ministries and some 400 heads of state have social media accounts, and in which many countries are creating new apps for nationals travelling abroad, this conference served as a landmark event, declaring a new digital age of diplomacy and outreach. With globalized communication, we can better serve our own populations as well as influence public opinion in other countries around the world.

As we transition from Web 2.0 to Web 3.0, which will be dominated by algorithmic accelerators, bots and artificial voices, the role of Digital Diplomacy will become even more significant. The convergence of computer intelligence, data, and people will present the Digital Diplomacy community with both opportunities and challenges. These are some of the issues and topics that we hope to address at our next conference.

Thank you to all of those who participated and attended Israel's first ever International Digital Diplomacy Conference. We look forward to seeing you, and many new faces, at the next conference.

Sincerely,

Noam Katz

Head of Media and Public Affairs Division

MFA, Israel

State of Israel Ministry of Foreign Affai

Partner Institute for Internet Studies

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY אוניברסיטת תל אביב

Introduction

On the 30th of March, 2016, the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the Partner Institute at Tel Aviv University co-hosted Israel's first Digital Diplomacy conference. Attended by 50 diplomats from 20 countries, alongside scholars from 25 universities, the conference aimed to investigate the impact digitalization has had on diplomacy in general, and on diplomats in particular. This report summarizes the main issues discussed at the conference, and the many insights that arose from its various panels and roundtables.

The first issue addressed by the participants was MFA's (Ministries of Foreign Affairs) new role as digital service providers. This discussion highlighted the fact that digitalization enables MFAs to service citizens in need of aid following a consular crisis. Such provision of services has also enabled MFAs to foster closer ties with their domestic population thereby developing a domestic constituency. The discussion regarding MFAs' new status as service providers offered many insights including:

- The importance of fostering MFA-citizen ties given whole-of-government approaches to diplomacy

- The need to assess the digital proficiency of one's corps diplomatique

- The influence that digital nativity may have on the delivery of aid during a consular crisis

- Developing digital training models that are tailored to the needs and abilities of diplomats

- The need to assess the digital strengths and weaknesses of embassies so as to best coordinate the use of digital tools during a crisis

- MFAs' need to adapt their digital practices to those offered by private institutions

- The challenge of clicktivism- how to ensure citizens follow online links to MFA websites

- The use of big data during a consular crisis

- How to overcome social media algorithms during a crisis so as to reach citizens in need of aid

- Lessons learned from case studies such as the Nepal earthquake and the Paris terrorist attacks

The second issue addressed by the participants was how to best measure the effectiveness of Digital Diplomacy activities. This discussion focused on the following issues:

- Is it time to abandon the goal of influence in Digital Diplomacy activities?
- The need to employ textual and sentiment analysis to analyse digital effectiveness
- Utilizing new feedback mechanisms such as Facebook emoji and Twitter survey questions
- Re-conceptualizing the process of listening and engaging through social media tools
- Addressing the challenges of measuring Digital Diplomacy effectiveness

In addition to panel discussions, the conference saw numerous presentations by scholars as well as diplomats. The main insights that arose from such presentations were:

- Digitally blurred lines: should diplomats use professional accounts for personal messaging?
- When does the use of social media become counter-productive?
- Should diplomats relinquish their social media accounts when leaving a post?
- Exploring participatory opportunities: how to involve the domestic population in nation branding campaigns?
- Involving the domestic population in the creation and dissemination of online narratives

While this report deals with the aforementioned issues, it also includes a plethora of new models that may aid scholars and practitioners of Digital Diplomacy. These models were developed based on the conference discussions and panels. These include:

- A new model for analysing the digital strengths and weaknesses of embassy staff
- A new model depicting the hierarchy of digital skills in MFAs
- A new model for conceptualizing the layers of influence MFAs can aspire to
- A new model for online foreign policy narration that includes MFAs, embassies, non-state actors, citizens and Diaspora members

It is our hope that this report will be both informative and illuminating to all those exploring the impact digitalization has had on diplomacy.

Ilan Manor

Researcher, Partner Institute at Tel Aviv University

MFAs as Service Providers

Traditionally, MFAs have been viewed as organizations that face the world [1]with their backs to their nations. As they were tasked with communicating with foreign populations, MFAs seldom directly interacted with their national citizenry. In the age of mass media, MFAs attempted to influence media coverage of events and actors with the hope of garnering public support for their chosen policies.

The perception of MFAs as outward looking organizations has influenced the Digital Diplomacy research corpus as scholarly work has tended to associate Digital Diplomacy with public diplomacy activities[2]. As such, digital tools have been regarded as enabling direct communication between diplomatic organizations and foreign populations. Yet digitalization also enables MFAs to communicate, and engage, with their domestic populations. Such is the case with the "UK against Daesh" (@UKAgainstDaesh) Twitter channel used by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to demonstrate to British citizens that the struggle against ISIS is advancing successfully. Even more importantly, digitalization has provide MFAs with an innovative channel through which to serve their national citizenry. Examples include digital platforms that enable expats to vote in national elections or consular applications that are made available to smartphone users travelling abroad.

MFAs have thus transformed into digital service providers.

The new relationships being forged between diplomats and their national citizenry are of paramount importance given the impact globalization has had on MFAs. In a globalized world, threats transcend national boundaries as no single nation can reverse the effects of climate change or combat the spread of infectious disease[3]. Consequently, a growing number of national ministries routinely collaborate with their peers from other countries (e.g. in agriculture, health, science). This process has steadily eroded the status of MFAs within governments, as have whole-of-government approaches to diplomacy that tie

---

[1] See Zaharna, R. S., Arsenault, A., & Fisher, A. (2014). Relational, networked and collaborative approaches to public diplomacy: The connective mindshift. Routledge.

[2] See Manor, I. (2016). Are We There Yet: Have MFAs Realized the Potential of Digital Diplomacy?. Brill Research Perspectives in Diplomacy and Foreign Policy, 1(2), 1-110.

[3] See Slaughter, A. M. (2009). America's edge: Power in the networked century. Foreign Affairs, 94-113; Firestone & Dong (2015), Netpolitik: What the emergence networks means for diplomacy and statecraft, Aspen Journal of Ideas

diplomacy to development and defence activities[4]. But by servicing their national citizenry, MFAs may be able to cultivate a domestic constituency, which, in turn, may help safeguard the status of MFAs within their respective governments.

One of the areas in which MFAs can best service their citizens is that of consular aid.

Consular Aid in Times of Emergency

Jan Melissen has asserted that the field of consular aid best exemplifies the transformative impact that digitalization has had on diplomacy and those practicing it. It is in this field that MFAs now routinely utilize innovative digital platforms. Consular activities may be divided into two broad categories. The first includes services routinely offered to citizens (e.g. passport renewal) while the second includes consular aid during crises (e.g. natural disasters, terrorist attacks). Increasingly, both forms of consular aid are being digitalized. For instance, the Kenyan government has recently launched a web-based platform through which foreigners and citizens may apply for entry visas and travel documents. Additionally, the Polish MFA has released a smartphone application, iPolak 3.0 that includes travel warnings for citizens planning trips abroad. In addition, users of the application receive notifications when new travel warnings have been issued. Similarly, Canada turned to Twitter to encourage citizens to download the MFA's consular app before visiting Rio for the 2016 Olympic Games.

Image 1: Global Affairs Canada's Consular Application

Yet the digitalization of consular aid necessitates that the national citizenry be proficient in the use of digital tools. Thus, digital consular aid is contingent upon digital literacy skills.

---

[4] See Stein, J. G. (Ed.). (2011). Diplomacy in the Digital Age: Essays in Honour of Ambassador Allan Gotlieb. Signal

I.   *Digital Literacy and the National Citizenry*

Digital literacy relates to an individual's ability to gather information from a wide array of digital tools[5]. Digital literacy has been defined as the variety of technical, cognitive and sociological skills necessary to perform tasks and solve problems in digital environments[6]. The definition of digital literacy suggests that one must be familiar with digital environments if he is to search, find, and utilize online information. A citizen will require digital literacy skills if he is to find an MFA's website, search the website for a passport renewal application and submit his application online. A citizen must also be digitally proficient if he is to locate, download, and activate an MFA's smartphone application.

The citizenry's digital proficiency becomes crucial during consular crises given MFAs' employment of digital tools to coordinate the delivery of aid. For instance, many MFAs turn to SNS (social networking sites) in order to communicate with their citizens following natural disasters. During the 2014 Nepal earthquake, numerous MFAs took to Twitter in order to provide citizens with information regarding affected areas, evacuation procedures, and the means by which citizens could contact local embassies. However citizens who have yet to migrate online were unable to receive such information. Moreover, citizens with limited digital literacy skills may have been unable to find MFAs' social media profiles or to communicate with local embassies via SNS.

The question that follows is can MFAs continue to digitalize their services at a time when many citizens have yet to migrate online? This dilemma may be even greater for MFAs operating in countries with low Internet penetration rates or limited diffusion of ICTs such as certain African or Middle Eastern countries[7].

Lack of digital literacy suggests that Digital Diplomacy is not an island entire to itself. Rather, Digital Diplomacy must be tailored to the needs and abilities of the society in which it is practiced. This realisation necessitates that MFAs complement digital consular aid with traditional means such as establishing hotlines,

---

[5] See Gilster, P., & Glister, P. (1997). Digital literacy. Wiley Computer Pub; Bawden, D. (2008). Origins and concepts of digital literacy. Digital literacies: Concepts, policies and practices, 30, 17-32.

[6] See Eshet-Alkalai, Y. (2004). Digital literacy: A conceptual framework for survival skills in the digital era. Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia, 13(1), 93.

[7] See Kampf, R., Manor, I., & Segev, E. (2015). Digital Diplomacy 2.0? A Cross-national Comparison of Public Engagement in Facebook and Twitter. The Hague Journal of Diplomacy, 10(4), 331-362; Melissen, J., & Caesar-Gordon, M. (2016). "Digital diplomacy" and the securing of nationals in a citizen-centric world. Global Affairs, 2(3), 321-330.

information dissemination through mass media channels (e.g. radio, television) and face-to-face consular aid at both embassies and MFAs.

Notably, MFAs may also take part in shaping the society in which they operate. To this end, MFAs may collaborate with both state and non-state actors in order to develop their citizens' digital literacy skills. For instance, MFAs can offer online tutorials on how to navigate websites, complete online forms and utilize SNS during crises. Additionally, MFAs can tailor their websites to citizens with limited digital literacy skills by offering online chats with website administrators. Lastly, MFAs may develop smartphone consular applications with easy-to-use interfaces.

While digital consular aid necessitates that citizens be familiar with online and digital environments, it also necessitates that diplomats be digitally proficient. This is not always the case.

II.   Digital Literacy Skills Among Diplomats

The adoption of digital platforms by MFAs has altered the diplomat's toolkit. Tradecraft and knowledge must now be supplemented by a wide variety of digital competencies, all of which become relevant during a crisis. In fact, it is during crises that the digital literacy of a diplomat must far exceed that of the average citizen. When coordinating aid to citizens following a natural disaster, a digital diplomat must be able to identify which hashtags are trending on social media so as to gather information from online publics as events unfold. Moreover, coordinating aid requires that a digital diplomat identify online networks of individuals who are partaking in search and rescue operations. Indeed, online publics may serve as a pivotal source of information as was the case in the 2010 Haiti earthquake[8]. Additionally, a diplomat may need to be familiar with mapping applications as well as messaging applications as some embassies now rely on WhatsApp to coordinate embassy activities during times of crises.

It is therefore incumbent on MFAs to evaluate the digital capabilities of their diplomats and provide the training necessary to develop or enhances a diplomat's digital literacy. Currently, several MFAs offer such digital training. For instance, in the Israeli and Polish MFAs all diplomats slated to be stationed abroad undergo training session which familiarize them with social media platforms, smartphone consular applications and website

---

[8] See Norheim-Hagtun, I., & Meier, P. (2010). Crowdsourcing for crisis mapping in Haiti. innovations, 5(4), 81-89; Meier, P. (2012). Crisis mapping in action: How open source software and global volunteer networks are changing the world, one map at a time. Journal of Map & Geography Libraries, 8(2), 89-100.

administration. Finland's MFA offers embassy staff remote training via digital platforms, while the Norwegian MFA offers one-on-one training sessions to its Ambassadors[9].

Notably, the use of SNS to deliver consular aid requires an additional digital competency, one that relates to the languages diplomats use online. In order to answer a query on Twitter, a diplomat must be familiar with the use of hashtags, abbreviations (w/o for without) and even shortening URLs so that they fit in 140 characters. In addition, SNS followers expect direct, clear and short answers. Thus, diplomats must use a language that differs from the one used in the halls of the UN or the chambers of the WTO. As Cynthia Nixon of the US State Department has argued *"You need to translate the message to the medium. Our audiences aren't speaking diplospeak. They use a different language online and we need to master that language"*.

While the aforementioned MFAs have begun to develop digital competencies among their diplomats, few ministries offer training that simulates the delivery of consular aid. One notable exception is the Dutch Foreign Ministry which has developed a simulation website through which diplomats are trained. The website simulates various scenarios such as internal tensions erupting in a foreign country. As the scenario unfolds, the simulation includes news and media channels, which offer updated information alongside social media content that may or may not be based on rumours and speculations common in times of crisis. It is through such simulations that diplomats acquire relevant skills such as filtering social media content, reaching out to citizens in need of aid via numerous platforms, and coordinating evacuation procedures with the MFA.

MFAs may also find it beneficial to study the digital strategies of non-state actors, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, which are also active in times of consular crisis. Studies have shown that non-state actors tend to be more proficient in the utilization of digital platforms than government ministries[10]. Moreover, during times of crisis MFAs may need to collaborate with non-state actors and additional governmental institutions such as the military and Ministry of Defence. Joint simulations that include MFAs, additional governmental ministries and non-state actors may be one way to bolster a foreign ministry's ability to provide services to citizens in times of crisis.

---

[9] See Manor, I. (2016). Are We There Yet: Have MFAs Realized the Potential of Digital Diplomacy?. Brill Research Perspectives in Diplomacy and Foreign Policy, 1(2), 1-110.

[10] See McNutt, K. (2014). Public engagement in the Web 2.0 era: Social collaborative technologies in a public sector context. Canadian Public Administration, 5

III.   From Passivity to Activity

Digitalization necessitates that MFAs take a new approach to information dissemination. As the State Department's Cynthia Brown argues, MFAs used to rely on mass media channels in order to reach the national citizenry. Next MFAs used websites to reach their citizens and provide them with updated information. Yet in both cases, MFAs employed passive communication models in which information was published with the expectation that citizens would then retrieve that information on their own. In the age of information abundance, MFAs must become active information providers that seek out their citizens and provide them with accurate and reliable information.

The first challenge facing MFAs during consular crises is the need to pool information from numerous sources, assess the accuracy of the information, and provide citizens with instructions in a timely manner. While MFAs are accustomed to gathering and assessing information, the accelerated speed with which events now unfold presents a new challenge. Within minutes of a terrorist attack, social media sites are filled with graphic imagery, half-truths, and rumours. Within an hour of an attack, entire networks may be circulating false information online. MFAs are thus required to sift through, and evaluate vast quantities of information. Moreover, citizens expect diplomatic institutions to be as timely as news channels, citizen journalists and bloggers. Failure to meet these expectations may cause citizens to lose faith in MFAs.

Some MFAs have attempted to meet the aforementioned challenges by creating task forces charged with managing a crisis. In the case of the US State Department and the Israeli MFA, these task forces also include members of the Digital Diplomacy department. By incorporating the Digital Diplomacy department into their task forces these MFAs are able to more efficiently pool resources and more quickly disseminate reliable information to their citizens.

An additional challenge facing MFAs during crises is deciding which digital platform to utilize. Nowadays, MFAs operate social media empires that span numerous platforms. The State Department alone manages some 1,000 social media accounts[11] while other ministries such as Israel, Russia, Canada, and the UK all operate hundreds of SNS profiles. During crises, MFAs must identify which platform and which account should be used in order to reach and engage with citizens in need of assistance.

---

[11] Hayden, C. (2015). Social media at state: Power, practice, and conceptual limits for US public diplomacy. Global Media Journal, 2012.

In order to meet this challenge, MFAs may employ free online surveys using applications such as Survey Monkey and Google forms. Ministries may disseminate surveys among the national citizenry in order to identify the platforms citizens are most likely to employ during crises (e.g. Twitter, website, smartphone application). Additionally, MFAs may use surveys immediately following a consular crisis in order to understand citizens' use of digital platform in times of emergency. In such surveys, citizens may also be asked to reflect on the MFA's ability to deliver aid via digital platforms.

Studies have shown that organizations which query their stakeholder, and are open to stakeholder's criticism, are more likely to forge close relationships with them[12]. Thus, MFAs may find that querying their citizens before or after a consular crisis is but one method of cultivating a domestic constituency.

Additionally, as the State Department has found, social media *redundancy* may also be employed during a consular crisis. MFAs may publish emergency information through multiple platforms and accounts so as to reach the largest number of citizens. As can be seen in the tweets below, during the Nepal 2014 earthquake, both the Canadian MFA and the Canadian Embassy in India tweeted information at their citizens thus utilizing social media redundancy.

Image 2: Use of Social Media Redundancy by Global Affairs Canada

---
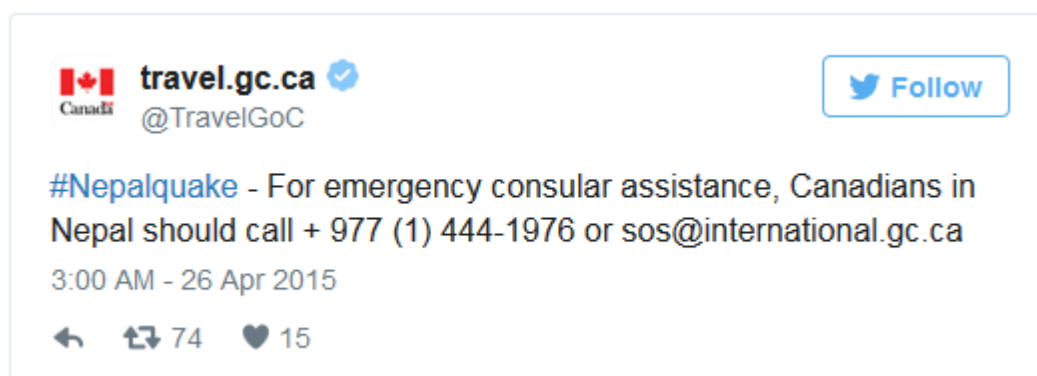
[12] Bortree, D. S., & Seltzer, T. (2009). Dialogic strategies and outcomes: An analysis of environmental advocacy groups' Facebook profiles. Public Relations Review, 35(3), 317-319; Rybalko, S., & Seltzer, T. (2010). Dialogic communication in 140 characters or less: How Fortune 500 companies engage stakeholders using Twitter. Public Relations Review, 36(4), 336-341; Taylor, M., & Kent, M. L. (2014). Dialogic engagement: Clarifying foundational concepts. Journal of Public Relations Research, 26(5), 384-398; Kampf, R., Manor, I., & Segev, E. (2015). Digital Diplomacy 2.0? A Cross-national Comparison of Public Engagement in Facebook and Twitter. The Hague Journal of Diplomacy, 10(4), 331-362.

> **Canada in India** ✔
> @CanadaInIndia
>
> #NepalQuake Let friends & family know you're safe with #SafetyCheck: on.fb.me/1JF7gWS
>
> 9:59 AM - 26 Apr 2015
>
> ↩ ♺ 8 ♥ 1

The Indian MFA chose a different digital strategy. Soon after the earthquake shook Nepal, the MFA launched a dedicated Twitter channel, which published emergency information and to which Indian citizens could send queries or ask for aid. This approach may have enabled the MFA to better pool all requests for aid and collect relevant information from Indian citizens in Nepal.

Image 3: Indian MEA's Use of Twitter Create a Crisis Control Room

> **Vikas Swarup** ✔
> @MEAIndia
>
> We have set up a handle for Control Room @MEAcontrolroom for #NepalQuake. You can tweet to the handle or email controlroom@mea.gov.in
>
> 5:41 AM - 26 Apr 2015
>
> ↩ ♺ 1,172 ♥ 615

> **MEA Control Room**
> @MEAcontrolroom
>
> 14 civilian flights-7 schleduled, 7 special to operate today from Kathmandu to Delhi @MEAIndia #nepalearthquake
>
> 5:54 AM - 27 Apr 2015
>
> ↩ ♺ 15 ♥ 6

The third challenge facing MFAs during consular crises lies in encouraging citizens to follow a certain link or visit a certain website. During the Nepal earthquake, several MFAs

encouraged their SNS followers to send emails to a certain address or visit the MFA website and fill out online forms. However, MFAs soon learned that SNS followers were not inclined to follow links or visit external websites. Thus, MFAs were soon facing the challenge of *"clicktivism"* or causing their online followers to click a link at the end of a Tweet or a Facebook post.

Image 4: US State Department Tweet Urging Clicktivism
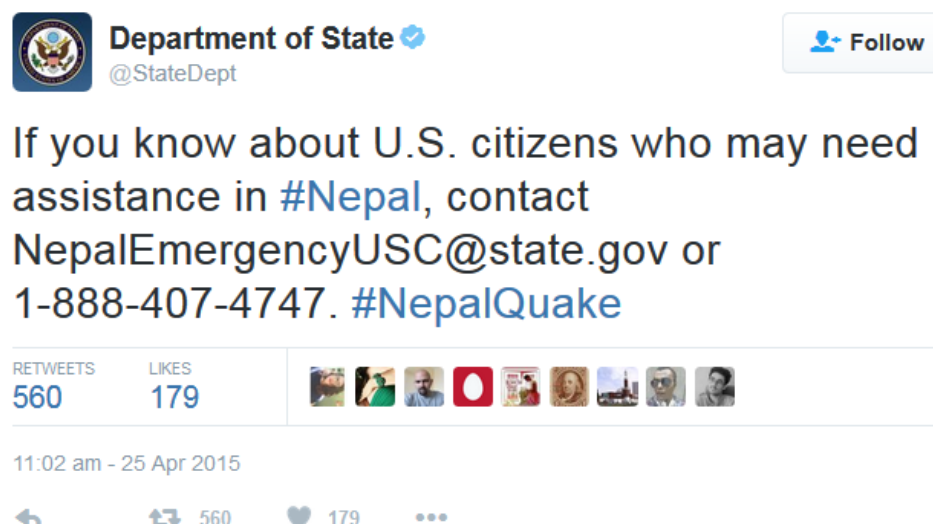

The challenge of "clicktivism", experienced by several MFAs during the Nepal earthquake, may have been the result of MFAs' failure to understand the manner in which citizens use SNS. As Charles Brisebois of Global Affairs Canada explains

> *"MFAs must understand its online audience, we need to learn how they are doing their online shopping and online banking…SNS users expect the interaction to take place on social media and not on websites. This is what companies have taught them. So MFAs must also adopt these practices"*

Brisebois's statements suggest that the delivery of consular aid via digital platforms necessitates that interactions with citizens take place within social media platforms. Citizens are no longer likely to follow a link to external websites or to fill out application forms. Thus, meeting citizens' consular needs means meeting citizens' expectations from online engagement. MFAs cannot settle for information dissemination during crises but must rather commit staff and resources to online interactions. One MFA that was quick to realise its citizens' expectations was the British FCO, which during the Nepal earthquake, took to answering citizens' questions on Twitter in real time.

Image 5: FCO-public Engagement on Twitter during the Nepal Earthquake
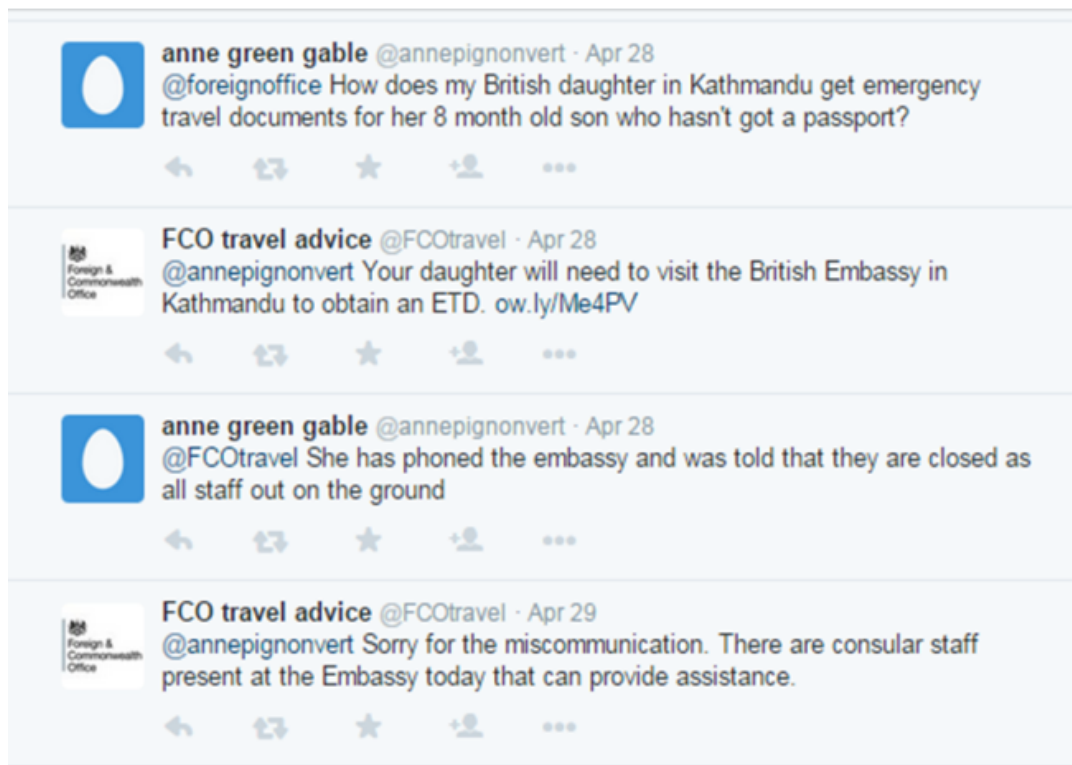
As stated above, diplomats must now be active information suppliers that not only reach their citizens but also ensure that they take note of the information being disseminated. In an attempt to meet the challenge of "clicktivism" some MFAs have altered their use of SNS. Such was the case with the US State Department who following the 2015 Paris terrorist attack, allocated staff to answering queries on social media rather than directing followers to a website or a travel warning message.

Some MFAs also employ direct messaging during a consular crisis. For instance, following the bombing of a Russian aeroplane in Egypt in 2015, the Russian MFA sent a direct message to all citizens in Egypt via the Vkontakte.ru social network. These messages included information on civilian flights leaving Cairo as well as links to a cellular application that included travel warnings and contact details of Russian embassies.

IV.   *Complementing Digital Diplomacy with Traditional Diplomacy*

Despite the growing reliance on digital platforms to deliver consular aid in times of crises, there are instances when traditional diplomacy must complement Digital Diplomacy. This is especially true during times of emergency in which cellular and internet infrastructure often collapse either due to damage or due to an overload of users. When such infrastructure collapses, citizens may no longer be able to access information disseminated online.

The possible collapse of technological infrastructure does not imply however that MFAs need not bother with SNS during an emergency. This is due to the fact that information posted online may be accessible to citizens in neighbouring areas and that such infrastructure may be fixed within a short time span. Moreover, information posted on MFA social media platforms is often viewed by the domestic population. Following the Nepal earthquake, the State Department was contacted by American citizens in the US who had seen its online messages and who were able to provide information on loved ones in need of assistance. Thus, digital consular diplomacy should also target the domestic population that may supply MFAs with valuable information regarding missing citizens or citizens in need of aid.

However, the likely failure of cellular and internet infrastructure does suggest that MFAs and embassies on the ground need to employ both online and offline strategies. One notable example of offline consular aid is the mobilization of the Russian Diaspora in Paris following the 2015 terrorist attacks. In the hours following the attacks, the Russian embassy contacted leaders of Russian Diaspora organizations so that they could help find accommodation for Russian citizens stranded in Paris. Next, the embassy staff manned the telephones in order to answer calls from citizens and direct them to houses of Diaspora members where they could spend the night. Similarly, following the 2010 Haiti earthquake, diplomats in Port-au-Prince relied on traditional mass media channels such as the radio in order to direct their citizens to the embassies where diplomats were able to offer aid and information.

V. Guidelines and Best Practices

Diplomatic institutions are large and bureaucratic institutions that operate through routines and SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures). As such, they are often characterized by a rigidity that limits their ability to quickly adapt to changes[13]. However, diplomats tend to excel when they are guided by best practices and specific guidelines. Thus, some MFAs have issued best practices and manuals that are meant to guide embassy staff in the use of digital platforms during consular crises.

---

[13] For longer discussion see Bjola, C., & Holmes, M. (2015). Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice. Routledge; Hocking, B. L., & Melissen, J. (2015). Diplomacy in the Digital Age. Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations; Also special forum in Global Affairs on Digital Diplomacy accessible at http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rgaf20/current

For instance, during the earthquake in Nepal, Norway's local embassy employed an emergency manual circulated by the MFA. In line with the guidelines set out in the manual, the Norwegian embassy soon took to social media in order to disseminate emergency information and details on how citizens may contact the embassy. Most importantly, the embassy also monitored SNS content published on local networks and relayed relevant information to the MFA. This procedure increased the Ministry's ability to coordinate aid to civilians and collaborate with other governmental agencies.

Similarly, the Israeli MFA has recently published a guide to social media best practices. This guide offers diplomats insight into various social media platforms including what content best suits each platform (i.e., text or images), rules of engagement with followers on each platform, which languages should be used (i.e., local or Hebrew), and specific information regarding how to formulate messages on each platform (i.e., use of hashtags on Twitter and Instagram). These best practices may enable embassies to better utilize SNS in times of calm and crisis.

VI.   Digital Diplomacy & Digital Nativity

Charles Brisebois of Global Affairs Canada has stated that crises see a surge in activity at both the MFA and embassy level. Staff from various departments and desks are called on to assist in an organization-wide collaborative effort. At the embassy level, trade representatives and cultural attachés may soon find themselves tasked with responding to citizen queries online as might members of various desks at the MFA level. To do so, these diplomats must have the ability to collect and gather information on various digital platforms each with its own language, interface, and follower base. Therefore, the core diplomatic service in its entirety must become digitally proficient. Creating such digital proficiency is a challenge given the vast differences between the digital skills of various diplomats. For instance, younger diplomats are much more likely to be familiar with Twitter and smartphone applications than more veteran diplomats.

One way to meet this challenge is to narrow existing gaps between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants'. The term digital natives refers to individuals born into the digital age (circa 1980). Such individuals grew up in a digitally rich environment and have therefore developed digital skills that enable them to easily master new technologies. Such is the case with 30-year-old diplomats who had an email account while in high school and a social media account soon thereafter. Conversely, digital immigrants is a term that refers to individuals who were born into an analog world and are now attempting to adapt to a digital one. Such is the case with 60-year-old ambassadors who still recall the arrival of

the facsimile machine. Digital immigrants are likely to take more time to master new technologies as they lack the digital intuitiveness of the natives[14].

In order to best meet the demands of digital consular aid, MFAs must substantially increase the digital skillset of their more veteran diplomats. This is not merely a functional capability but also a conceptual one. If veteran diplomats have yet to migrate online, they may fail to grasp the potential application of digital tools in emergency scenarios. Moreover, they may fail to grasp the difficulties that accompany the digitalization of MFA services such as the need to offer citizens information in real-time.

Yet digital natives may also require training as these may be less fluent in "diplospeak". In other words, younger diplomats may find it more difficult to condense foreign policy messages or emergency information into 140 character bursts of diplomacy[15]. In addition, younger diplomats may be unfamiliar with the chaos that accompanies consular crises as opposed to veteran diplomats.

Notably, locally employed staff at the embassy level may prove a burden or an asset during a consular crisis. Local digital natives may be familiar with both local languages and local social networks. As such, they can more quickly gather information from local networks, identify local influencers, and separate fact from fiction or rumor. However, local digital immigrants may be unfamiliar with both digital platforms and emergency response to a developing crisis.

Embassy size may also prove an important factor in consular response. MFAs with limited resources tend to maintain small embassies with minimal diplomatic staff. The smaller the embassy on the ground, the lesser its ability to contend with a natural disaster or a coordinated terrorist attack. Small embassies may also often include diplomats' spouses who are neither familiar with crisis management or digital platforms.

It is the existing gaps between natives and immigrants, diplomats and locally employed staff and embassy size, which suggests that MFAs need to tailor their consular guidelines to the characteristics of their embassies abroad. Thus, the guidelines shaping the consular response of a small embassy in Ethiopia should be quite different than those guiding the response of a large embassy in Paris.

---

[14] For discussion on digital nativity and Digital Diplomacy see Manor, I. (2016). Are We There Yet: Have MFAs Realized the Potential of Digital Diplomacy?. Brill Research Perspectives in Diplomacy and Foreign Policy, 1(2), 1-110.

[15] See Williamson, W. F., & Kelley, J. R. (2012). Kelleypd: Public Diplomacy 2.0 Classroom. Global Media Journal—American Edition, 11, 21.

While digital training and simulations may help narrow gaps between digital natives and immigrants, embassy guidelines for consular crises may need to be updated on a yearly basis so as to ensure the applicability of the guidelines. This includes periodically analysing the staff at each embassy and assessing their digital weaknesses and strengths. Such an analysis may enable the MFA to best manage a crisis. For instance, the MFA may take over the SNS accounts of a small embassy with digital immigrants so as to disseminate information online more effectively while the embassy's staff focuses on information gathering.

The table below includes a hypothetical analysis of an embassy's Digital Diplomacy capabilities. As can be seen, the embassy staff consists of three trained diplomats, the life partner of a diplomat and a local employee. Given that the majority of the staff has not had digital training and is unfamiliar with the use of digital tools in times of crises, the MFA my chose to take over the embassy SNS account while directing embassy staff to gather information from online networks, man the embassy telephones, and coordinate consular response with local police and security forces.

Table 1: Analysis of Embassy's Digital Strengths and Weaknesses

Role	Digital Native/Digital Immigrant	Training	Strengths	Weaknesses
Ambassador	Digital Immigrant	None	Veteran diplomat. Knows how to explain complex foreign policy issues. Familiar with use of traditional media during times of crises	Unfamiliar with digital platforms. Unfamiliar with guidelines and best practices for use of digital technologies in times of crises
Trained Diplomat- Press Attaché	Digital Immigrant	Use of social media for cultural affairs	Familiar with work opposite news channels and journalists. Knows how to phrase press releases. Familiar with consular crises	Unfamiliar with guidelines and best practices for use of digital technologies in times of crises
Trained Diplomat- Consular Officer	Digital Native	Use of social media, crises simulations	Familiar with digital technologies, familiar with best practices and guidelines for consular emergencies	
Life Partner	Digital Immigrant	None		No experience with digital technologies, no experience working opposite press, no experience with consular crises
Local Employee	Digital Native	None	Familiar with local culture, language and patterns of use of social media. Can tailor MFA messages to local population	No experience with consular crises

VII.   Know Thy Audience

Global Affairs Canada is but one MFA that routinely analyses the digital platforms being employed by various demographic groups. According to Charles Brisebois, such an analysis is imperative for consular aid.

> *"MFAs must keep track of where the public is. Youngsters, for instance, have migrated from Facebook to Instagram. MFAs need to know this…we need to know that youngsters use YouTube as a search engine before going to Google… the main challenge is that our citizens continue to migrate from one platform to another".*

Understanding citizens' use of digital technologies is of paramount importance during a consular crisis. In order to reach their citizens, MFAs must first know where their citizens congregate online. Information may thus first need to be posted on YouTube or SnapChat before being posted on the MFA website or consular application.

The issues of audience migration from one platform to another represents a substantial challenge for MFAs and embassies who are suddenly forced to commit resources to mastering a new platform, language, interface and user expectations. It is this continuous and fast evolution of digital platforms that lends credence to Manor's assertion that Digital Diplomacy is not necessarily cost effective diplomacy.

For MFAs and embassies, digitalization has created a paradox of plenty. On the one hand they may communicate with increasingly diverse audiences. On the other hand, each[16] audience group has adopted its own medium, language and manner of interaction. It may therefore be argued that MFAs' national citizenry constitutes an online public that is fragmented to networks of selective exposure[17]. Reaching each group and meeting its needs, has and will continue to prove a burden on MFAs.

One way of meeting such a burden is making a clear separation between MFA and embassy online activities during a crisis. Embassy staff may be tasked with gathering and disseminating information from SNS that they are most familiar with and with which they work on a regular basis. MFAs may be tasked with utilizing novel digital platforms. In this manner, it is only the MFA's Digital Diplomacy department that must continually master new technologies. Alternatively, MFAs may reach out to non-state actors who are quicker to master new platforms. These actors may be asked to aid in disseminating MFA

---

[16] See Hocking, B. L., & Melissen, J. (2015). Diplomacy in the Digital Age. Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations; Bjola, C. (2016). Digital Diplomacy–the state of the art. Global Affairs, 1-3.

[17] Hayden, C. (2015). Social media at state: Power, practice, and conceptual limits for US public diplomacy. Global Media Journal, 2012.

content. At the embassy level, Diaspora groups may aid in a similar fashion. However, for such collaborations to be most effective, they must be thought of and tested prior to a crisis in the form of online simulations and scenario building.

An important part of *knowing thy audience* is evaluating the manner in which the national citizenry can partake in diplomatic activities. For instance, younger social media users are more likely to be *prosumers*-they not only consume information, but also generate and share it. In recent natural disasters, social media users have taken to creating online maps that identify areas afflicted by an earthquake or hurricane. These maps may then be used by MFAs and embassies to concentrate consular efforts. Moreover, citizens may be willing to share MFA SNS content among their own online networks. Such "sharing" may exponentially increase the reach of MFA content enabling it to contact more citizens. Indeed following the 2014 Nepal earthquake, the Canadian MFA asked its followers to share its content as can be seen in the tweet below.

Image 6: Global Affairs Canada Asking Citizens to Share Emergency Information on Twitter

MFAs may thus choose to incorporate segments of the public in their simulations. Such co-creation of value has also been shown to strengthen relationships between organizations and their stakeholders[18]. Additionally, MFAs and embassies may host hackathons in which citizens, and members of Diasporas and tech companies, collaborate on the creation of new techniques, tools, and platforms for the delivery of consular aid via digital technologies.

---

[18] See Kampf, R., Manor, I., & Segev, E. (2015). Digital Diplomacy 2.0? A Cross-national Comparison of Public Engagement in Facebook and Twitter. The Hague Journal of Diplomacy, 10(4), 331-362.

VIII. Know Thy Self

Some have argued that the digital age has caused a *culture clash* between MFAs and the societies in which they operate[19]. The digital age is one that favours information sharing while MFAs have a historic preference for information keeping. Moreover, MFAs are hierarchical institutions while the digital public is increasingly networked. Finally, MFAs prefer message accuracy to message timing as opposed to bloggers and citizen journalists. Meeting the demands of the digital age has been referred to by Philip Seib as the practice of real time diplomacy[20].

Hugh Elliot of the FCO argues that one cannot integrate digital technologies into the practice of diplomacy without taking into account the culture of MFAs. This is also true for the use of digital technologies to deliver consular aid. For instance, embassy level diplomats may be apprehensive about commenting on events before the MFA has done so given the hierarchical structure of MFAs. Moreover, both MFA and embassy level diplomats may fear online interactions with followers given the unpredictable and volatile nature of online publics.

In addition, if they are to operate as service providers, MFAs must gain their citizens' trust. According to the Spanish MFA, trust requires that MFAs, embassies and diplomats become more transparent. As Manor states, at a time when even the CIA is tweeting its way in to the limelight, the pressure on MFAs to become more open is mounting. Yet, MFAs are by nature discreet institutions that manage sensitive dialogue and gather sensitive information.

Taken together, these institutional characteristics can cause a time lag between an embassy's commenting on events and social media content being disseminated online by individuals. As such, MFAs may soon become the last to offer information and aid in the wake of a crisis thereby rendering their activity irrelevant.

Overcoming MFAs' institutional culture necessitates a conceptual shift, which will lead to a practical shift. As the definition of the term digital literacy suggests, being literate in the digital age requires the adoption of certain cognitive schemata or metaphors, through which diplomats view thier work. As Manor argues, before Digital Diplomacy can be practiced it must be imagined. For MFAs this schemata may be that of a network. By migrating online, MFAs have become members of a myriad of intersecting networks. One of these networks consists of the online accounts of the MFA and its embassies abroad.

---

[19] Bjola, C., & Holmes, M. (2015). Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice. Routledge

[20] Seib, P. (2012). Real-time diplomacy: politics and power in the social media era. Springer

It is through this network that an MFA can gather and disseminate foreign policy messages on a global scale. Secondly, the MFA is part of an online network of governmental institutions including other ministries, agencies and officials. Third, the MFA is part of the online network of foreign ministries. It is through this network that one MFA can monitor its peers and anticipate events in foreign countries. The MFA is also part of information networks consisting of journalists and media organizations.

Yet adapting this metaphor alone will not suffice. MFAs and embassies must come to realize what behaviour is rewarded within the network structure. Networks thrive on collaboration. They reward information sharing not information guarding. They serve as platforms for co-creation of content, ideas and value and they run counter to hierarchies[21]. In fact, networks are built on diverse actors coming together rather than departmentalizing. By using the network metaphor, MFAs and their diplomats may begin to abandon their risk-averse culture and proclivity towards information keeping. It should be mentioned that technological metaphors have always influenced the conceptualization and practice of diplomacy. The telegraph, which was likened to the nervous system, saw the migration of power from the ambassador to the capital. The radio, which was linked to a hypodermic needle, saw the rise of propaganda in diplomacy while mass media channels brought about the practice of public diplomacy.

The networked age should not be any different.

The need to balance the culture and SOPs of MFAs with the demands of the digital age has accompanied Digital Diplomacy since its inception nearly a decade ago[22]. While this transition has not been an easy one, more and more MFAs have attempted to embrace a more open approach to diplomacy. Studies have found that some MFAs employ lax supervision models of online activities thereby bestowing a sense of agency and autonomy on their diplomats and embassies. According to Hugh Elliot, the digitalization of diplomacy requires above all, an institutional willingness to make mistakes. The abhorrence of faux pas must be replaced with an understating of the Digital Diplomat's learning curve. Such institutional change however, can only take place if it is supported by the upper rank of the MFA's hierarchy.

---

[21] Metzl, J. F. (2001). Network diplomacy. Geo. J. Int'l Aff., 2, 77.

[22] See Khatib, L., Dutton, W., & Thelwall, M. (2012). Public diplomacy 2.0: A case study of the US digital outreach team. The Middle East Journal, 66(3), 453-472.

Consular Aid in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities

I.   Diplomacy in the Age of Algorithms

According to James Pamment, 20th century communication mediums were based on linear communication models in which information was transmitted directly from communicator to recipient. Such models, which saw limited interaction between the author of the information and its recipient, shaped 20th century diplomacy. Indeed when attempting to narrate their country's foreign policy, ambassadors would write an opinion article for a newspaper or appear on a televisions show. By doing so they would feel confident that their message had reached a large section of the intended audience.

Yet SNS and digital platforms are not predicated on linear communication models. Rather, they are based on algorithms that customize a social media user's online experience. Essentially, algorithms tailor online content to a user's interests, social surroundings and political ideology. Thus, algorithms serve as filter bubbles which determine what content will be available to each user.

For diplomats and MFAs, algorithms are becoming increasingly important as they sit on the juncture between an MFA and its potential audience base. For instance, a Facebook post published by the Russian MFA would only be seen by those users who have either "liked" the MFA's Facebook profile or who have demonstrated an interest in Russian politics and Russian foreign policy. All other users would be unable to see this post given the algorithm that serves as a filter bubble.

Consequently, linear communication models do not apply online. In fact, in order to reach their intended audience base, MFAs are required to find the means through which they can overcome SNS algorithms and fracture users' filter bubbles. This is a daunting task in times of calm and an imperative one in times of crises.

Some MFAs have recently begun to utilize various strategies in order to burst algorithmic bubbles. One such strategy, employed by the US state Department during the Nepal earthquake, is the use of trending hashtags in order to increase the visibility of a Tweet. As can be seen below, the State Department used both the "NepalEarthquake" and "NeaplQuake" hashtags, which were already trending on Twitter. By doing so, the State Department increased the number of US citizens it could reach online.

Image 7: Use of Trending Hashtags in State Department Tweets

An additional strategy for bursting algorithmic bubbles is for MFAs to re-tweet one another's content. As Cassidy and Manor write[23], this strategy is currently being used by the British FCO and the US State Department. Both these MFAs operate Twitter channels as part of their online struggle against ISIS (the US @ThinkAgainTurnAway and British @UKAgainstDaesh). Moreover, both of these accounts routinely re-tweet one another's content. Given that each account attracts its own audience base, these re-tweets enable each MFA to reach a new audience base and increase the reach of its content. During times of consular crises, MFAs and embassies may follow a similar strategy of re-tweeting their peers' content thus amplifying their online reach.

Alternatively, MFAs may utilize their followers' accounts in order to increase the reach of their online messaging. The Russian Embassy to the UK employs such a strategy as part of its Diplomatic Club program. SNS users who sign up for the program enable the embassy to publish tweets through their own personal accounts. Such tweets are thus published from both the embassy's account and all the personal accounts of the program's participants. Given that each participant is a member of his own online social network, the embassy's content reaches a large and diverse audience base. The embassy estimates that through its 200 participants, it can reach up to half a million Twitter users. Subsequently, the embassy is able to circumvent many SNS users' algorithmic bubbles. Other MFAs may adopt a similar strategy, asking their followers to sign up for a program that would enable the ministry to tweet via their personal accounts in times of crises.
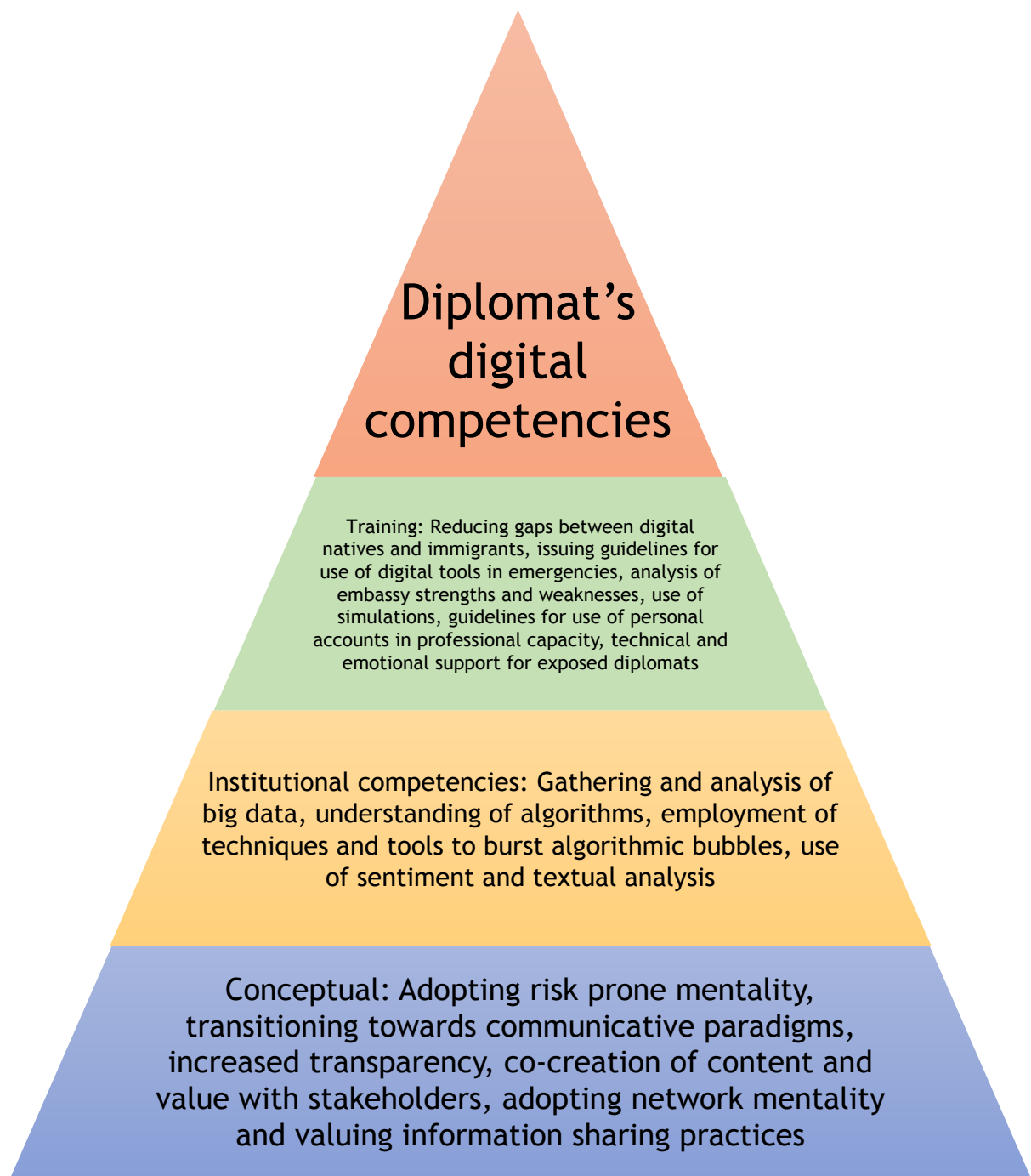
---

[23] See Cassidy, J., & Manor, I. (2016). Crafting strategic MFA communication policies during times of political crisis: a note to MFA policy makers. Global Affairs, 1-13.

Taylor Owen[24] has argued that understanding how algorithms work and how they can be overcome is now part of a diplomat's toolkit. However, one may need to separate between an individual's digital capabilities and those of an institution. Diplomats may only be required to understand the fundamental logic of algorithms so that they can comprehend the limitation of non-linear communication models. However, one cannot expect diplomats to become computer scientists. The same cannot be said of MFAs. These institutions require an in-depth understanding of algorithmic bubbles and a planned strategy to overcome them when required. Such strategies must be tested by the MFA so that they can be implanted by the embassy.

The image below identifies the hierarchy of digital skills within an MFA. This model argues that a diplomat's digital competencies are dependent on three pillars. The first is the need for a conceptual shift within MFAs which may bring about an institutional culture that is conducive to the use of digital tools by diplomats. The second relates to institutional competencies. These differ from those of the diplomat but may help him to best utilize digital tools. For instance, an MFA may employ sentiment analysis to evaluate the extent to which SNS followers positively engage with a diplomat's online content. Conversely, MFAs may analyse big data sets so as to enable a diplomat to identify potential online influencers that he should target. The third pillar relates to the training a diplomat receives at the MFA and on which his digital competencies most rely.

---

[24] Owen, T. (2015). Disruptive power: The crisis of the state in the digital age. Oxford University Press, USA.

Image 8: Hierarchy of Digital Skills in MFAs

Diplomat's digital competencies

Training: Reducing gaps between digital natives and immigrants, issuing guidelines for use of digital tools in emergencies, analysis of embassy strengths and weaknesses, use of simulations, guidelines for use of personal accounts in professional capacity, technical and emotional support for exposed diplomats

Institutional competencies: Gathering and analysis of big data, understanding of algorithms, employment of techniques and tools to burst algorithmic bubbles, use of sentiment and textual analysis

Conceptual: Adopting risk prone mentality, transitioning towards communicative paradigms, increased transparency, co-creation of content and value with stakeholders, adopting network mentality and valuing information sharing practices

II.   *Diplomacy in the Age of Big Data*

The digital age is also known as the age of big data. Every day, 2.5 quintillion bytes of data are generated online. On YouTube alone, social media users upload 300 hours of movies every minute of every day. The reality of big data has not gone unnoticed by governments and some ministries have taken to analysing big data in order to better the

services they provide. In the area of urban transportation, data from collaborative applications such as Waze help anticipate congestion and alter bus routes. In the field of health, social media data may be utilized to predict the outbreak of pandemics following the Google flu model. Ministries of Finance may also analyse swarms of financial data in order to detect and prevent international money laundering while regulatory bodies such as the US Food and Drug Administration may use big data to evaluate if medications require warning labels.

For MFAs, big data may aid in the delivery of services in both times of relative calm and crises[25]. For instance, MFAs may analyse big data in order to identify influencers who shape online conversations and through which MFA content may reach larger and more diverse audiences. For instance, the British FCO recently found that Pope Francis facilitates online conversations and boosts the reach of FCO content. Textual analysis may also be employed in order to better understand the language used by online publics following natural disasters (i.e., hashtags, abbreviations, types of questions asked). MFAs can then use this insight when authoring their online content[26]. Textual analysis may also be employed to anticipate events in foreign countries that may escalate into a consular crisis. This can be achieved by using sentiment analysis when analysing online discourses. Lastly, MFAs may create their own platforms for big data generation in the form of smartphone applications. The Israeli and Polish MFAs are but two ministries that have launched consular applications that during a crisis can help identify citizens in need of aid.

Notably, big data may also enable MFAs to transition from targeted communication strategies to tailored ones. Targeted campaigns aim to reach the largest possible audience. As such, they are comprised of content that is applicable to a large and diverse audience. Such is the case with an advertisement titled "Don't Drink and Drive" which is relevant to all drivers. Conversely, tailored communication campaigns target specific audiences, such as drivers under the age of 20.

Some governmental ministries such as health departments have already found that tailored communication campaigns are far more effective than targeted ones in reaching a desired audience, altering that audiences' perception and, subsequently, its behaviour. This is due to the fact that such campaigns are tailored to the values, norms, beliefs, pre-dispositions, and behaviours of the audience in question.

---

[25] See Hocking, B. L., & Melissen, J. (2015). Diplomacy in the Digital Age. Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations

[26] For discussion on big data and diplomacy see Ali Fisher blogs at the USC Annenberg Public Diplomacy blog available at http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/users/ali_fisher

Big data may enable MFAs to employ tailored communication strategies. For instance, MFAs can analyse their SNS followers' engagement patterns (e.g., shares, re-tweets) in order to identify what content best suits each platform (i.e., images versus text on Twitter). Such an understanding may increase the virility of MFA content during a crisis. Additionally, MFAs may analyse the audience base they attract on each platform. Thus, if they are attempting to reach youngsters backpacking through India, the MFA may turn to Instagram and Snapchat rather than Facebook or LinkedIn. From a behavioural perspective, ministries may also analyse big data in order to identify the characteristics of SNS users that are most likely to share and spread MFA content online (e.g., 20 year old YouTube users). During a crisis, the MFA may directly target such followers knowing in advance that they are likely to increase the MFAs' online reach. Lastly, MFAs may analyse SNS users' behaviours in past crises to anticipate the next one. For instance, should they find that SNS users tend to ask questions online MFAs may allocate additional staff to engage with followers in real time.

At the embassy level, big data may be analysed in order to evaluate which language should be employed in online content. For instance, the Israeli Embassy to France may post content in English and French, given a desire to reach both the domestic population and the diplomatic community in Paris. Yet during a terrorist attack, the embassy might find it useful to tweet in Hebrew thus reaching citizens in need of aid and obtaining re-tweets from Israeli citizens monitoring events online.

As is the case with other issues reviewed in this section, tailoring can prove beneficial beyond consular crises. By creating content that takes into account the language, values, norms, and behaviours of SNS followers, diplomats and their institutions may best meet the needs and desires of their followers. This in turn may increase the likelihood of engagement between diplomats and online publics. As such, tailoring and big data may be important tools in the practice of public diplomacy. As Ali Fisher has stated

"It would be absurd to suggest that diplomacy should be conducted only on the basis of big data. However, it would be equally absurd to conduct public diplomacy without using big data when it is available."

Measuring Digital Diplomacy Effectiveness

During their initial migration online, MFAs dedicated most of their resources to creating a formidable online presence. Social media accounts of embassies and diplomats were all launched in flurry of activity. However, MFAs soon learned that presence was not enough. Realizing the potential of Digital Diplomacy would require strategic thinking and long-term planning. As MFAs transition from social media presence to social media efficiency, the issue of measuring Digital Diplomacy effectiveness becomes one of great importance.

What Are We Measuring?

### I.	The Goal of Online Influence

According to Corneliu Bjola, Digital Diplomacy units are often required to measure their online activities given a need to demonstrate a return on investment in digital activity. This may lead to a misguided affinity to quantitative measures such as ones' number of followers online or levels of engagement with one's SNS content (i.e. shares, re-tweets). However, such figures are often misleading as they do not measure the extent to which online content has influenced the perceptions and attitudes of online publics. Influence, according to Bjola, was and remains an important goal for diplomats seeking to shape how foreign populations view their countries and their foreign policies.

Aside from influence, measuring Digital Diplomacy activity may also bring structure to digital activities. As Bjola argues, measurement necessitates that MFAs clearly define their goals and the parameters for evaluating successful achievement of these goals. As such, measurement enables MFAs to moves far beyond mere social media presence.

Online influence may be conceptualized as consisting of several layers each requiring different strategies. In order to obtain the ultimate goal of influence, changing one's behaviour and activities, MFAs must progress from one layer of influence to another. The first layer of influence relates to the issues being discussed by online publics. For instance, MFAs have found that through one-way message dissemination online they can influence the issues being discussed by news channels thus setting the media's agenda[27]. Even more importantly, message dissemination can impact the issues discussed by local SNS users. Such was the case when the US embassy in China began publishing its measurements of pollution in Beijing.
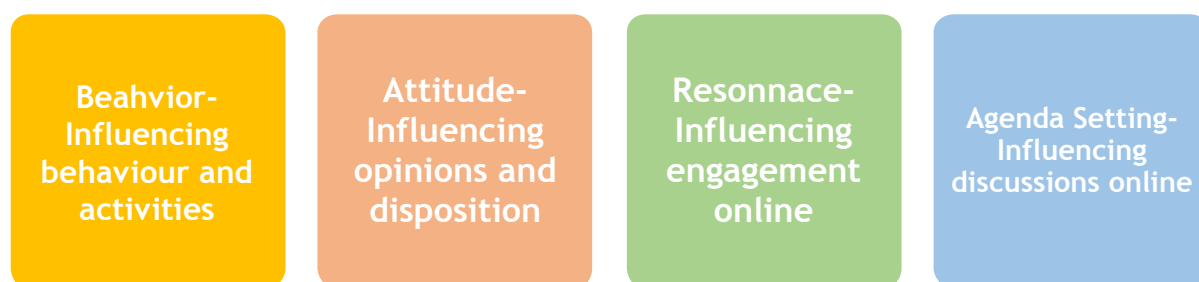
---

[27] See Bjola, C., Jiang, L., & Holmes, M. (2015). Social Media and Public Diplomacy: A Comparative Analysis of the Digital Diplomatic Strategies of the EU, US and Japan in China. Digital Diplomacy Theory and Practice, 71-88.

The second layer of influence relates to online publics' engagement with Digital Diplomacy content. This form of influence is achieved through *resonance*. MFAs and diplomats need to author online content that will resonate with their followers' values, norms, culture and attitudes. It is such resonance that can lead to simple forms of engagement such as SNS users' willingness to share or comment on MFA content.

The third layer of influence relates to changing one's attitude and predispositions. It was the desire to influence the attitudes and pre-dispositions of Arab internet users towards the US that first motivated the State Department to migrate online[28]. This form of influence may be achieved through continuous dialogue between diplomats and online publics. It is at this layer of influence that the dialogic nature of SNS may best be utilized by MFAs and embassies.

The final layer of persuasion is behaviour change. This is the ultimate goal of diplomatic activities: causing a foreign population to accept another country's foreign policy and lobby support for that policy among national policy makers. This layer was and remains the most elusive for diplomats.

Image 9: Layers of Digital Diplomacy Influence

| Beahvior-Influencing behaviour and activities | Attitude-Influencing opinions and disposition | Resonnace-Influencing engagement online | Agenda Setting-Influencing discussions online |

II.   *How Do We Measure?*

Parameters such as the reach of one's online content and levels of engagement (i.e., shares, likes) may not be suitable for measuring influence. The number of re-tweets attained by a tweet, for instance, says nothing about that tweet's resonance with the target audience. In fact, as Bjola argues, such measurements are often misleading. Indeed online followers may be re-tweeting MFA content while adding criticism and verbal abuse. Thus, SNS users may hijack an MFA's tweet and use it in order to promote their own agenda. In such cases, the number of re-tweets an MFA obtains loses meaning.

---

[28] For a history of US public diplomacy activities see Gregory, B. (2011). American public diplomacy: Enduring characteristics, elusive transformation. The Hague Journal of Diplomacy, 6(3-4), 351-372.

Measuring agenda setting and resonance may thus require different parameters and tools. Textual analysis may be employed to evaluate the issues being discussed by online publics while sentiment analysis may be employed to analyse the resonance of a message among online publics. A more novel application suggested by Bjola is the evaluation of emoji used by online users when commenting on MFA content. Emoji are now an integral part of the Facebook interface and as such they are being used by growing numbers of SNS users. Moreover, emoji enable users to easily articulate their emotional response to online content. Thus, they enable insight into message resonance. The post below, for instance, has elicited a range of emotions including anger. MFAs may use such feedback in order to better tailor content to their target audiences. In addition, MFAs may use such feedback to analyse which policies are met with resentment and thus require better articulation online be it through messaging or opportunities for dialogue and two-way engagement.

**Image 10: Emoji Reactions to Comments by President Obama**

Measuring attitude change following public diplomacy activities has traditionally been regarded as a difficult task. Yet, digital platforms offer new opportunities for such an endeavour. For instance, embassies and MFAs may use sentiment analysis in order to evaluate online discourse among select SNS users before and after an advocacy campaign. Similarly, diplomats could analyse the comments written by SNS users in response to Digital Diplomacy content. While some might argue that SNS followers do not provide enough

comments to conduct such an analysis, Manor recently found that the average US State Department Facebook post elicits 60 comments. Additionally, 20% of State Department posts elicit more than 100 comments. Taken together with emoji, these comments can offer a breadth of information for MFAs.

In addition, MFAs and embassies may utilize Twitter survey questions in order to query their followers before and after advocacy or policy campaigns. One MFA that has embraced such survey questions is the FCO. The @UKAgainstDaesh account routinely queries its followers in order to better tailor the content published online to the informational needs and desires of its followers (see example below). Such tools may also be employed in order to understand followers' positions and attitudes towards policies.

Image 11: Use of Twitter Survey questions by British FCO
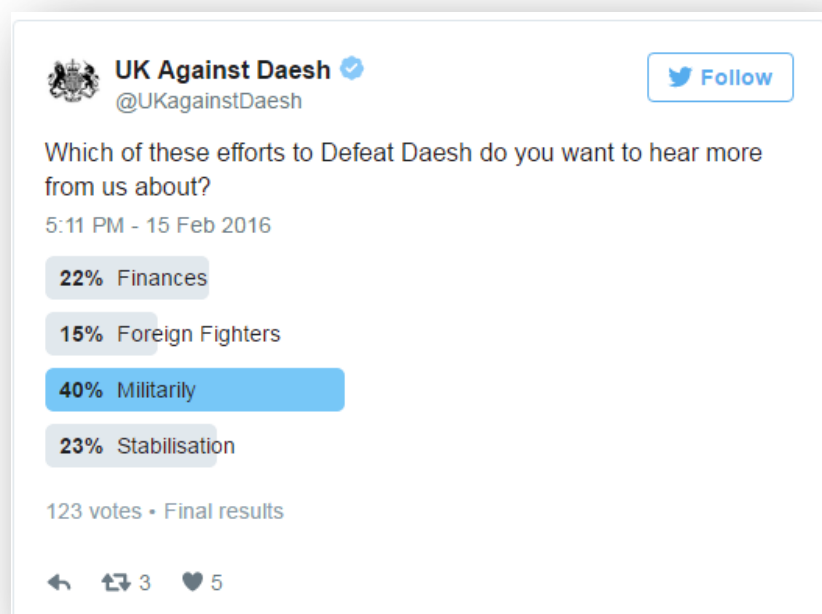
Lastly, measuring changes in SNS users' behaviours and activities may be achieved through networked and collaborative approaches to diplomacy. Following online advocacy campaigns, MFAs may reach out to select target audiences and offer them opportunities for collaborative action, be it in the form of co-creating online content, co-authoring policy recommendations, or creating networks that seek innovative solutions to joint challenges. SNS users' willingness to collaborate and network with MFAs can signify changes in behaviour.

III.   *Obstacles for Measuring Digital Diplomacy Activity*

The first obstacle towards measuring Digital Diplomacy activity stems from one's limited ability to reach his target audience. As argued earlier, SNS create algorithmic bubbles that adhere to ones' interests and world-view. Thus, MFAs may be unable to reach online

followers who have a negative view of their country or its policies. As such, Digital Diplomacy cannot be practiced let alone measured.

The second challenge arises from the growing use of Bots to warp social media discourse. Bots are automated computer software that mimic the online behaviour of individuals. Within social media, Bots are used in order to flood profiles with either positive or negative comments. By doing so, Bots warp social media discourse and impede its analysis.

For instance, Bots may lead an MFA to deduce that a large portion of its followers oppose a certain policy. This in turn, may influence an MFA's policy recommendations given that public opinion often shapes a country's foreign policy. However, such a recommendation would be formulated based on a false premise for it is not SNS users that oppose a policy, but artificial Bots. In addition, Bots may cause MFAs to falsely anticipate changes or crises in foreign countries. Should Bots flood online networks with calls for a revolution, an embassy may mistakenly think that the political tides in a certain country are changing. Bots therefore represent a challenge to MFAs attempting to use SNS as an information source for policy making.

The third challenge relates to the vast quantity of data that can be gathered by MFAs. Foreign ministries now maintain social media empires that produce a great deal of content and in turn, a great deal of engagement with followers. Thus, MFAs have at their disposal an abundance of information that may be analysed. However, to do so may require that MFAs develop and employ algorithms that can detect positive signals, negative signals, and distill the "noise" that accompanies big data.

According to Corneliu Bjola and Taylor Owen, the aforementioned challenges can only be solved once MFAs employ data analysts and computer scientists. Such recruitment can be seen as part of the organizational and cultural changes that MFAs will continue to experience in the digital age.

IV.   *Analysing is Listening*

An important aspect of Digital Diplomacy activity relates to its durability. As Jennifer Cassidy asks: can social media campaigns really lead to long-term change in the opinions, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals, or can they simply bring attention to certain issues and countries? The answer to this question may lie in the notion of incremental change. Social media campaigns should not be envisioned as individual components but rather as one part of a much larger digital strategy. In such a strategy, each campaign is but one building block in an on-going attempt to influence the manner in which online publics view the world and the nations that comprise it.

Moreover, SNS campaigns are but one tool that is at the disposal of MFAs. Two additional tools are engagement and listening. Engagement according to Emily Metzgar[29], refers to the need to converse with online publics. Listening refers to the utilization of digital platforms in order to understand foreign publics and shape foreign policy accordingly. Indeed it is the use of digital platforms to talk with, rather than at foreign populations, that represents the fundamental difference between Digital Diplomacy and 20th century diplomacy practised via the radio and television[30]. And it is through on-going conversation with SNS followers, website visitors, and blog readers that embassies, MFAs and diplomats can also lead to incremental change in beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours.

MFAs may employ big data analysis in order to listen to online discourse and detect incremental change. As Cassidy states, diplomacy aims to manage change in the international system. One type of change is top-down and consists of major world events such the collapse of the Soviet Union. In such instances, traditional diplomacy may be employed by leaders and diplomats to forge new relationships. The second kind of change is bottom-up and consists of events such as the Arab Spring in which change arises from the actions of individuals. Such change is incremental and may not be detected by the human eye until it erupts. However, such change may be identified through sentiment and textual analysis of online discourse. Such an analysis may enable MFAs to identify incremental change in public opinion that may lead to substantive change at the national or international level. As former British Ambassador to Lebanon Tom Fletcher famously asked, "Would we have *been* better prepared for the *Arab spring* if we had discovered the *hashtag #Tahrir* earlier?"

Big data may also be employed in order to listen to a transnational or even global public sphere. Summit diplomacy offers a unique opportunity for such an analysis as international summits lead to a peak in online activity pertaining to an issue of great importance (e.g. climate change). Moreover, during such summits, national, regional, and global networks all collaborate online in order to promote ideas, policy recommendations and solutions to mutual challenges. Lastly, it is during summits that such networks are most active as they attempt to exert influence on diplomatic negotiations. Given that summits last only a few days, they yield a suitable sized database for sentiment and textual analysis. Such analyses may enable MFAs to gauge public opinion with regard to global challenges and

---

[29] Metzgar, E. T. (2015). Is it the Medium or the Message Social Media American Public Diplomacy. Global Media Journal, 2012.

[30] Pamment, J. (2012). New public diplomacy in the 21st century: A comparative study of policy and practice. Routledge.

select policies. Moreover, MFAs may use such data in order to identify online influencers and network participants who can then be contacted by the MFA in order to partake in shaping and branding a new policy stance.

Notably, if Digital Diplomacy is to succeed where public diplomacy has failed it must abandon the goal of influence. Rather, MFAs must commit themselves to the goal of meaningful dialogue with foreign populations. Dialogue should be viewed as an especially ethical form of communication as it mitigates power relations and enables organizations and their stakeholders to exchange ideas in order to reach mutually beneficial decisions. This implies that MFAs must be willing to take their followers' opinions into account when formulating policy. Moreover, MFAs must be willing to supply stakeholders with the information necessary to reach mutually beneficial decisions and to relinquish control over the communication process. In other words, MFAs should welcome not fear online comments. The ultimate goal of dialogue is therefore not persuasion but an open exchange of ideas, which may lead to incremental change in how governments and online publics view and communicate with one another.

V.   Engaging & Listening- The Nervous System Model

While MFAs can be conceptualized as global networks, they may also be regarded as a nervous system. In the nervous system model, the MFA serves as the brain while the embassies serve as sensors that are able to transmit information to and from the MFA. The image below demonstrates this nervous system approach to Digital Diplomacy. A foreign policy message is formulated by the MFA and disseminated to foreign populations via embassy social media accounts. The embassy then evaluates the manner in which this message is received by local social media users through analysing their comments, like, shares, and emoji. This is the process of "listening" to publics assembled online.

Next, the embassy informs the MFA that the policy message has either been accepted or rejected. If the message has been rejected, the MFA can either reformulate its message or reformulate its policy. This is the process of "engaging". Once the message, or policy in question has been reformulated, it is again disseminated by the embassy through its social media accounts.

Image 12: The Process of Listening and Engaging at the Embassy Level
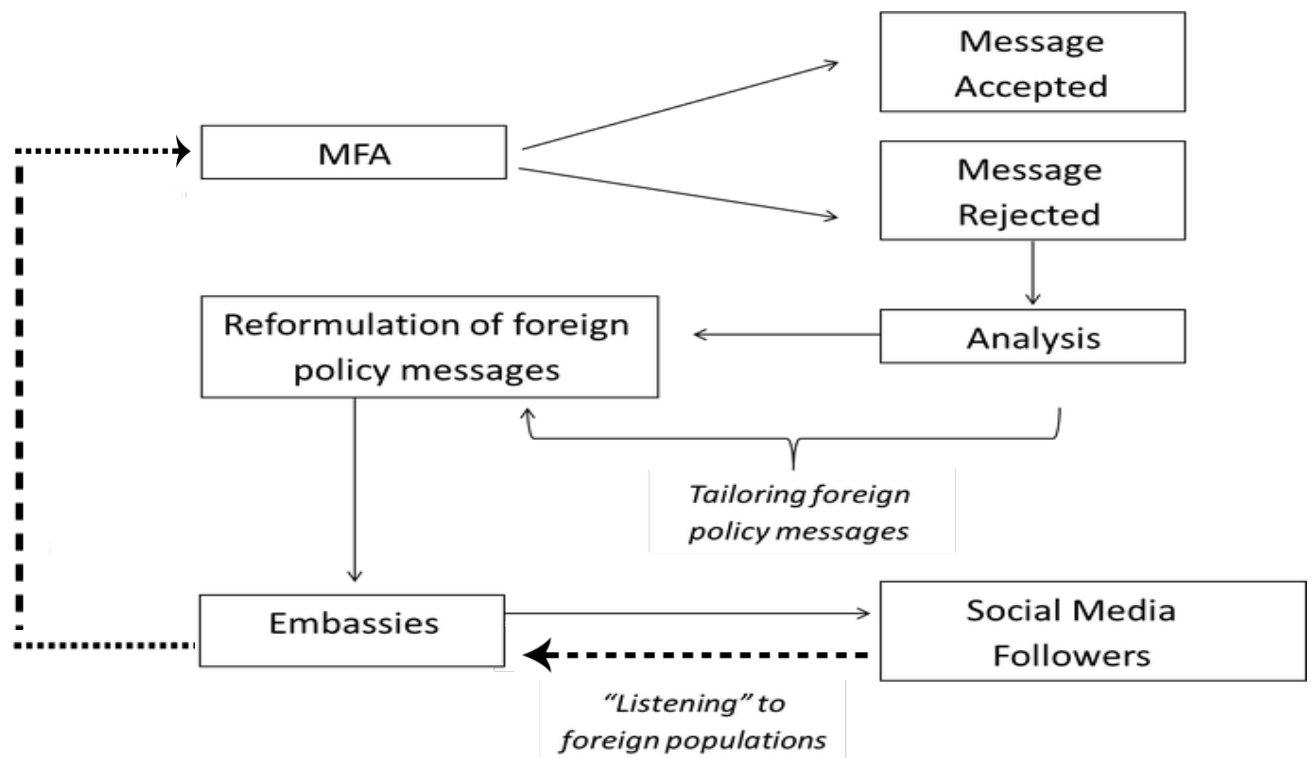
Notably, MFAs do not work alongside one embassy but rather dozens of embassies located around the world. Thus, MFAs and embassies constitute a global nervous system in which foreign policy messages can be tailored to specific populations through the process of listening and engagement.

Image 13: The Process of Listening and Engaging at the MFA Level
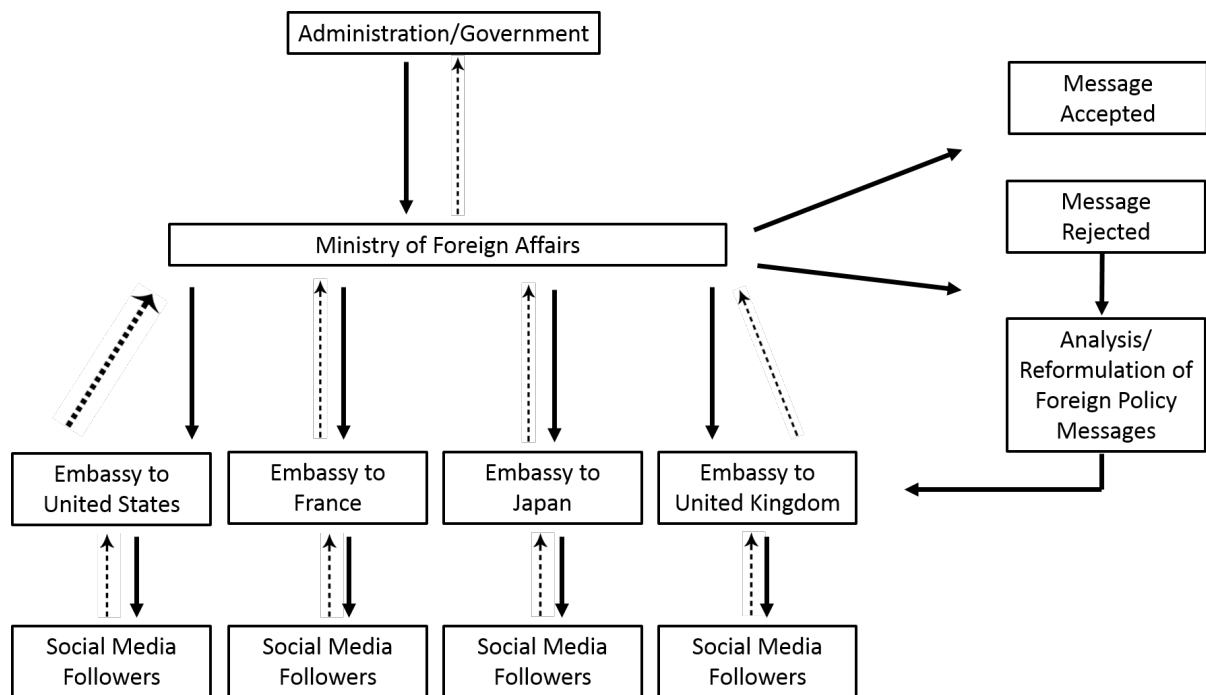
Digitally Blurred Lines: Between the Professional and the Personal

I.   Know thy Audience

Another tool for measuring Digital Diplomacy efficacy lies in defining one's target audience and then evaluating one's ability reach this audience. Although MFAs are now active on numerous digital platforms, each platform and account may be targeted at a different audience base. For instance, the Israeli MFA manages a Facebook profile called "CultureBuzz Israel" which aims to promote Israeli culture and art. As such, this profile's target audience may include museums, art critics, art bloggers, and even curators of important museums. Conversely, the MFA also manages the "GreenIsrael" Profile that highlights Israel's use and development of Green technologies. This profile's audience base may include science editors, foreign companies, and environmental NGOs. Assessing these channels' efficacy may be achieved by evaluating their ability to attract the targeted audience base.

It may therefore be possible to conceptualize Digital Diplomacy as a means to obtain two forms of resonance – **message resonance** and **audience resonance**. Message resonance relates to the extent to which social media content is tailored to the norms, values, beliefs, and behaviours of online publics[31]. Audience resonance relates to the extent to which MFAs are able to disseminate online content to key demographics so that such content will quickly reverberate among select networks. For instance, audience resonance may enable MFAs to quickly disseminate news regarding technological achievements among networks of related professionals and journalists.

While message resonance can be measured through parameters such as re-tweets, shares and emoji, audience resonance necessities that one first map his online target audience and then measure the extent to which this audience follows his account. Should an MFA discover that an account lacks audience resonance, it may devise a new digital strategy such as engaging with members of the target audience online. Such mapping and analysis demonstrate yet again that measurement brings with it structure to Digital Diplomacy activities.

II.   Know Thy Self

As part of their evaluation of Digital Diplomacy activities, some MFAs measure the online activities of their diplomats with regard to volume of content and number of followers. In an attempt to increase their diplomats' online ratings, some MFAs encourage diplomats to use their personal accounts for professional purposes. The Finnish MFA for instance, has found that diplomats using personal accounts often obtain more followers than those using professional ones. The reason may lie in the fact that when using their personal accounts, diplomats abandon their rigid working practices and communicate more freely. Additionally, personal accounts offer followers a "behind the scenes" glimpse into the of world diplomacy. Finally, personal accounts may also signal a willingness by diplomats to abandon official protocols and openly converse with their followers.

Some high-ranking diplomats have been able to use their personal accounts in order to establish a large online following. Such diplomats tend to incorporate their personal life into their account while also expressing their own opinion and views on world affairs. One notable example is France's Ambassador to the US, Gérard Araud. Although Araud is one of the most popular Ambassadors on Twitter, his tweets often blur the line between a professional diplomat and a private individual. For instance, during the 2015 negotiations

---

[31] See Olsson, E. K. (2013). Public diplomacy as a crisis communication tool. Journal of International Communication, 19(2), 219-234.

between Greece and the EU, Araud openly supported a financial rescue package. However, he also took to brawling online with SNS users and accusing them of "Hellenophobia" as can be seen in the Tweets below.

Image 14: Gérard Araud Brawling with SNS Followers
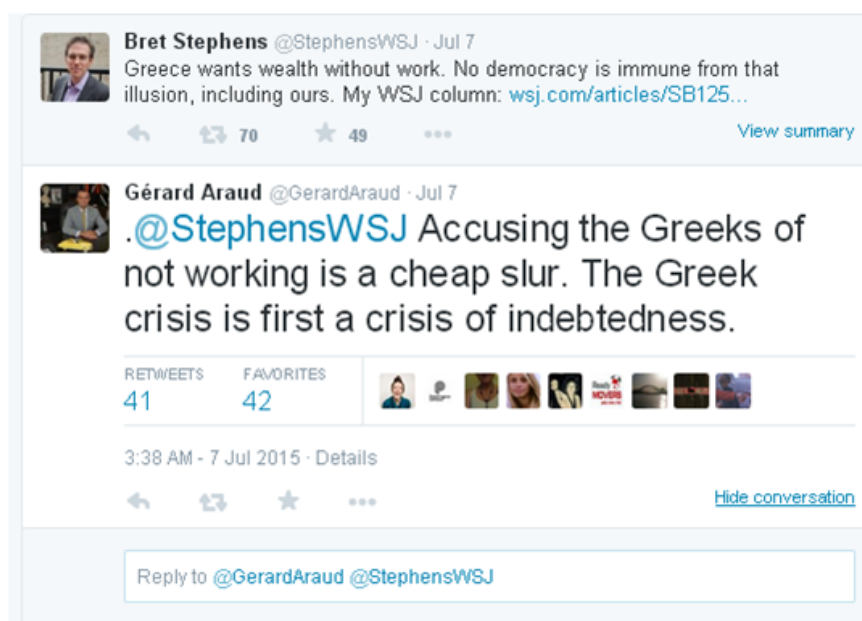
In addition, the Ambassador has openly attacked the US government for allegedly spying on world leaders while also referring to Donald Trump as a vulture following Trump's assertion that the Paris terrorist attacks could have been prevented if more French citizens had access to firearms.

Image 15: Gérard Araud Brawling with Donald Trump

The question that soon arises is should diplomats shed their professional shell in order to increase their online ratings? Presently, there seems to be a lack of consensus among MFAs with regard to these questions. While the Finnish and British MFAs encourage the use of personal accounts for professional means, other MFAs are more cautious and prefer diplomats separate the personal from the professional.

The danger of personal expressions of opinions such as Araud's evaluation of Trump, is that they might actually damage bi-lateral relations or stain the image of a country. It is this danger that highlights MFAs' need to employ digital tools to achieve foreign policy objectives. If the French diplomatic objective is to cultivate a close relationship with the US, then Ambassador Artaud's Twitter comments may be seen as detrimental. However, if the French diplomatic objective is to influence the US discourse surrounding firearms then the Ambassadors' comments may be seen as constructive. It is the view of Digital Diplomacy as a tool for achieving diplomatic goals that must guide MFAs looking to increase their diplomats' ratings.

Moreover, those MFAs encouraging the use of personal accounts for professional use must also provide their diplomats with the necessary support. This is due to the fact that expression of opinion regarding sensitive issues may soon lead to verbal attacks, smear campaigns and abuse being heralded at diplomats. As such, MFA training must include strategies for avoiding confrontations with 'online trolls' and selecting which comments to respond to and which to avoid. MFAs must also clearly define what can and can't be said online, otherwise diplomats may soon find themselves reprimanded for the content they share on SNS.

MFAs also need to provide their diplomats with emotional support given their new levels of exposure. Digital Diplomats may be viewed as front-line diplomats. They have abandoned the trenches of diplomacy and have stepped out of their embassies' walls. Consequently, as Corneliu Bjola has observed, diplomats are now far more exposed. From an ethical perspective, MFAs need to support diplomats so that they may leave the trenches of diplomacy without falling prey to online mobs.

For MFA cadets, the use of personal Twitter accounts for professional means is especially difficult. As the Israeli MFA has learned, cadets are familiar with SNS profiles and have become accustomed to information and opinion sharing online. However, as diplomats, they must become accustomed to setting their own political agenda aside. In order to help with this transition, Israeli MFA cadets operate a shared Facebook account, Twitter account and blog throughout their training. By doing so, they are able to familiarize themselves with best practices and guidelines for diplomatic use of personal SNS accounts.

Additionally, cadets become familiar with Digital Diplomacy SOPs such as what type of content requires approval before being published.

It may also be argued that diplomats' forte lies in their expertise as foreign policy experts that are able to illuminate and offer analysis of local and global events. As such, diplomats may serve as online guides to global affairs. Moreover, diplomats are communication experts that are able to synthesize information published in the media. Thus, they may serve as online curators of information. It is these strengths that may draw followers to a diplomat's accounts rather than his personal interpretation of events or opinions of politicians. Thus, it is actually the professional aspect of diplomats that should be accentuated online rather than their personal one.

Finally, the use of personal SNS accounts for professional purposes may complicate transitions between diplomats. During his time in Lebanon, British Ambassador Tom Fletcher was able to amass a large local following. Yet once he finished his tenure, he left Lebanon while taking his account and its followers with him. Thus, the next British Ambassador had to dedicate time and resources towards amassing his own following. Conversely, the Obama administration undertook "the biggest social media handoff in American history". Consequently, Obama's successor inherited a social media presence followed by tens of millions of people throughout the world. However, given the different policies pursued by President Trump, these accounts may turn into a troll's paradise.

Some such as Twiplomacy's Matthias Lüfkens, have argued that diplomats should take their followers with them to their next posting. Such a policy would enable a diplomat to amass new followers with each new posting so that by the time he is an ambassador he may converse online with a globally diverse following. Others have stated the contrary that diplomats should handoff their account to their successors so that these accounts continue to grow amongst key demographics.

The new exposure of diplomats, alongside the debate regarding the use of personal accounts for professional purposes, has prompted the Australian MFA to create a digital advisory board. This board will be comprised of MFA officials and diplomats who could together formulate best practices and strategies for Australian diplomats. The board will also serve as a peer review mechanism in which diplomats offer one another insight and advice.

Digital Opportunities

The debate regarding the use of digital platforms often reveals organizational tensions between those who view digital technologies as a risk and those who view them as assets. According to Kathleen McNutt[32], governmental ministries' ability to adapt to the digital age will depend on a willingness to

Shift public engagement activities from the web 1.0 'broadcast paradigm' to the web 2.0 'communicative paradigm'. McNutt uses the term Government 2.0 in reference to the embracing of a web 2.0 ethos comprised of the following elements: transparency; participatory opportunities (such as crowd-sourcing); co-production; collaboration; and openness.

While digital technologies are not compatible with MFA's risk verse culture, the many opportunities they afford have caused the majority of MFAs to migrate online. This section reflects on the benefits of digital technologies, which have yet to be addressed by scholars of diplomacy.

I.   *The Half Life of Online Blunders*

Given the novelty of Digital Diplomacy, mistakes and faux pas are unavoidable. However, one of the benefits of the digital age is the speed with which issues and stories garner and lose attention. Hugh Elliot of the British FCO asserts that the half-life of a Digital Diplomacy blunder is short meaning that experimentation with online content should be encouraged. Elliot adds that diplomats are likely to learn as much about Digital Diplomacy from their mistakes as they do from their successes.

From an organizational perspective, the short half-life of online blunders may assuage some of the apprehension from migrating online. In addition, this half-life may make it easier for high-level policy makers to support their diplomats when mistakes do occur. Such institutional support is likely to encourage digital activities by diplomats thereby narrowing gaps between digital natives and immigrants, and fully harnessing the potential of digital platforms to obtain diplomatic goals.

As the former spokesperson of the UN Secretary General told Andreas Sandre[33]:

"All of us who are involved in social media have made big mistakes at some point, sometimes very public mistakes. My first day of Spokesman for Ban Ki-moon, I wanted to do something different, and I wound up making a huge mistake on Twitter on his behalf.

---

[32] See McNutt, K. (2014). Public engagement in the Web 2.0 era: Social collaborative technologies in a public sector context. Canadian Public Administration, 5

[33] See Sandre, A. (2015). Digital Diplomacy: Conversation on Innovation in Foreign Policy

The news cycle moves very quickly, and fortunately very few people picked up on it… Mistakes happen. It's like a trapeze without a net. As managers we have the responsibility to have the right people dealing with social media channels, but we also have to make sure that we back them up when mistakes do occur. It is a risk-taking endeavour, and mistakes are public and can possibly affect many people very quickly. Social media communicators and staffers need to have the right managers who are able to support them through the entire process, even when mistake happen".

Cynthia Nixon of the US State Department described one online blunder that took place midway through a consular crisis. Following the 2015 attacks in Paris, the US embassy took to Twitter in order to publish emergency contact information. During these hours, the embassy mistakenly published pre-scheduled tweets, one of them inviting visitors to the US Embassy to enjoy ice cream. Yet as Nixon stated, it was through this short lived blunder that the State Department was able to issue new guidelines for social media use including the cancelation of automated tweets during crises.

II.   New Measurements for Old Concepts

The migration of diplomatic institutions to digital platforms may also offer diplomats new means through which to measure old concepts. While power is a somewhat illusive concept, some have begun to explore whether Soft Power can be measured, or at the very least evaluated. The Soft Power Index represents such an attempt, as does the Good Country Index. Using a wide array of variables, and big data sets, these indexes may offer nations an indication as to their ability to use culture, values, and ideology, in order to achieve their foreign policy goals.

Another concept that may now be re-conceptualized and quantified is diplomatic prestige or clout. One may argue that online diplomatic clout arises from the ability of diplomats and diplomatic institutions to engage with key demographics such as policy makers, opinion makers, influencers, and the diplomatic milieu. Next, one may assess the extent to which he is able to engage with these demographics via online interactions. Such an exercise may also enable a comparison between the diplomatic clout of two actors. For instance, Manor recently found that among European capitals, Israeli embassies hold considerable more online clout than Palestinian ones[34].

Additionally, nations may now attempt to evaluate their national image or brand more accurately. Twitter survey questions, sentiment analysis, and opinions expressed by networked influencers may all offer insight into how one nation is viewed by the population of another. This, in turn, may enable embassies to narrate a national image

---

[34] See https://digdipblog.com/2016/02/02/the-state-of-palestinian-digital-diplomacy/

that is tailored to the opinions, beliefs, and perception of specific populations. For instance, it is hard to assume that Tunisian SNS users and Chinese ones have a similar view of France. Once the French MFA has evaluated how it is viewed by each population, its embassies to Tunisia and China may begin to tailor France's national image, or Selfie.

Lastly, diplomacy scholars have asserted that the 21st century is the century of networked diplomacy. Yet networks are not a new concept in diplomacy. The Catholic Church served as a diplomatic network of Papal Legates as did Dutch trade merchants. However, scholars have asserted that nowadays a nation's power no longer stems merely from its military and economic strength, but from its role in transnational networks that shape global events and global discussions. Networks also excel in offering innovative solutions to global challenges. Nations that are not part of the networked sphere will be unable to harness this potential for problem solving. It is therefore incumbent on MFAs to become supernodes – nodes that are most connected to other members of the network. Thorough network analysis, MFA and embassies can identify relevant networks, join such networks, and measure the extent to which they are imbedded into the networks structure.

Networked-ness is thus another concept that may now be re-conceptualized and measured[35].

III. Participatory Opportunities of the Domestic Population

As stated earlier, MFAs have traditionally communicated with foreign rather than domestic populations. In an attempt to forge new relations with their domestic populations, some MFAs have begun offering their citizens opportunities for online collaborations. Such is the case with Finland's National Emoji Project.

In November of 2015, the Finnish MFA created a smartphone application that enables one to use a variety of emoji that are representative of Finland's culture and history. One such emoji features a couple in a sauna. Another displays a heavy metal music fan (see below). Through this project, which attracted mass media attention, Finland was able to brand itself as a vibrant, technologically oriented, and humoristic nation challenging the common perception of Finland as a dark and desolate country.

---

[35] See Slaughter, A, M. (2016) How to success in a networked world, a grand strategy for the digital age available at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2016-10-04/how-succeed-networked-world

Image 16: Finland's National Emoji Application in the Apple Store
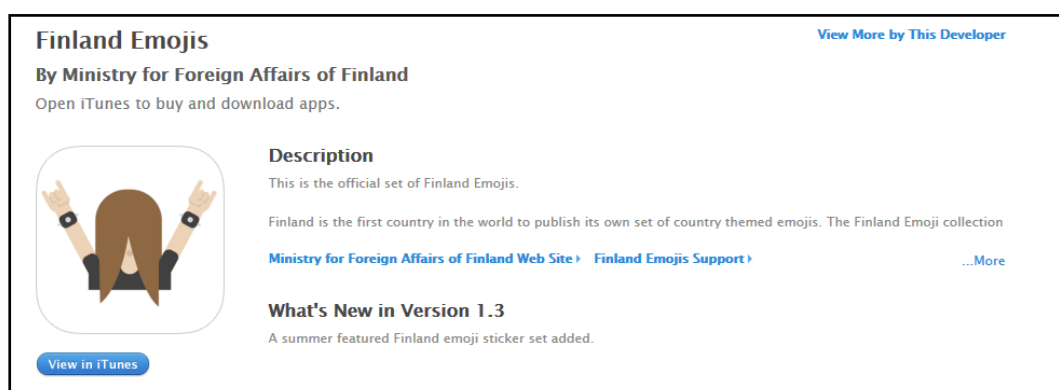
Yet even more importantly, the application enabled the domestic population to partake in this nation branding campaign by using the national emoji in their online communications with friends and acquaintances from all over the world. Soon, Finnish emoji were disseminated across a myriad of transnational networks.

It should be mentioned that by encouraging its citizens to disseminate the national emoji, Finland may have overcome a substantial limitation of Digital Diplomacy. Digital Diplomacy content disseminated by MFAs and diplomats may at times be regarded by SNS users as government intrusions into online public spheres. Moreover, users may view MFA content as *Twipoganda* rather than Twiplomacy. Yet when such content is shared by friends and acquaintances, SNS users may be more willing to engage with it and be more receptive to the content at hand. As such, peer-to-peer[36] diplomacy involving the domestic population may prove a force amplifier for online diplomatic activities.

IV.   Six Degrees of Foreign Policy Narration

Digital Diplomacy has enabled diplomatic actors to circumvent traditional information gatekeepers such as journalists and news outlets. Indeed MFAs and diplomats can now narrate their nation's policies and image and directly disseminate these narratives among online publics. Additionally, diplomats may now counter the narratives spread online by other actors be it another country, a non-state actor or even a terrorist organization.

Countering online narratives holds both benefits and challenges. On the one hand, diplomats can more easily partake in shaping the public discourse and interpretation of global events. In other words, diplomats have found a new seat in the town square. Likewise, MFAs and embassies can communicate and disseminate their narratives among

---

[36] See Attias, S. (2012). Israel's new peer-to-peer diplomacy. The Hague Journal of Diplomacy, 7(4), 473-482.

publics that were traditionally out of their reach, either due to geographic location (e.g., citizens outside the capital), a hostile local press, or even lack of diplomatic ties.

However, effectively countering online narratives requires that MFAs adopt networked and collaborative approaches to Digital Diplomacy. For instance, MFAs may come to view themselves and their embassies as nodes in a myriad of intersecting social networks. First, MFAs are part of a governmental network that is comprised of the SNS accounts of governmental ministries and agencies. Second, MFAs are part of a network of advocacy organizations, NGOs, non-state actors and engaged citizens that may all take part in public diplomacy campaigns. Third, MFAs are nodes in a network comprised of other Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Fourth, MFAs are super-nodes in their own network which consist of all their embassies around the world. Fifth, embassies are part of the social network of embassies located in a foreign capital (i.e. foreign embassies in London). Six, embassies are nodes in networks comprised of Diaspora organizations, expats, and journalist who may all share embassy content online. Together, these networks may be conceptualized as the six digress of foreign policy narration online[37].

All six networks may all be employed by MFAs when attempting to counter narratives spread online. Yet to do so requires that MFAs, embassies, and diplomats all become active members in all these networks. That includes creating collaborative opportunities such as the co-creation of advocacy campaigns by embassies and Diaspora organizations or MFAs and engaged citizens. Additionally, MFAs may co-create campaigns with additional governmental agencies so that joint working routines are established. Lastly, MFAs and embassies need to be active members of these networks as networks reward participation. Thus, diplomats must partake in online discussion initiated by expats while embassies must share content posted by Diaspora groups . Maintaining close ties with the aforementioned networks may enable MFAs to quickly and effective disseminate their narrative of events on a global scale while harnessing the power of online networks and peer-to-peer diplomacy.

---

[37] See Manor (2015), Six degree of foreign policy narration available at https://digdipblog.com/2015/10/26/six-degrees-of-foreign-policy-narration/

Image 17: The Six Degress of Foreign Policy Narration- the Israeli Example