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Published online: 06 Jun 2018.

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Revisiting Putnam's two-level game theory in the digital age: domestic digital diplomacy and the Iran nuclear deal

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Abstract   *Few studies to date have investigated the impact of digitalization on Putnam's two-level game theory. Such an investigation is warranted given that state and non-state actors can employ digital tools to influence decision-making processes at both national and international levels. This study advances a new theoretical concept, Domestic Digital Diplomacy, which refers to the use of social media by a government to build domestic support for its foreign policy. This model is introduced through the case study of the @ TheIranDeal twitter channel, a social media account launched by the Obama White House to rally domestic support for the ratification of the Iran Nuclear Agreement. The study demonstrates that digitalization has complicated the two-level game by democratizing access to foreign policy decisions and increasing interactions between the national and international levels of diplomacy.*

Introduction

In April 2015, the members of the P5+1 club of world powers[1] reached a preliminary framework agreement with Iran in Lausanne, Switzerland, by which Iran promised to abandon the military component of its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of economic sanctions by the international community. The framework agreement was followed in July 2015 by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was scheduled for implementation in January 2016. From the very announcement of the Iran agreement, the battle over its ratification started to be waged on social media. Within hours of the announcement that the JCPOA deal had been struck, President Obama took to Twitter to frame the agreement as a great achievement for the United States (US) diplomacy (see Figure 1).

Iran's President, Hassan Rouhani, also took to Twitter to praise the agreement and the respect Iran had finally gained from other world powers (see Figure 2).

Despite managing to persuade Iran to curb its nuclear ambitions, the Obama White House arguably faced a daunting political task, as the Republican-dominated Senate promised to derail the ratification of the agreement. In the months leading up to the ratification, the Speaker of the House, John Boehner, repeatedly stated that the JCPOA 'is far worse than anything I could have imagined. Why?

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[1] The permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China—plus Germany) and the European Union.

Figure 1. President Obama framing Iran Deal as diplomatic accomplishment.
Source: Images from Obama White House Archived Twitter Channel. (Links: https://
twitter.com/ObamaWhiteHouse/status/620911474655936512?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_
url=https%3A%2F%2Fdigdipblog.com%2F2015%2F07%2F14%2Fthe-framing-of-irandeal-
on-digital-diplomacy-channels%2F&tfw_site=wordpressdotcom; https://twitter.
com/ObamaWhiteHouse/status/620911544130383872?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_
url=https%3A%2F%2Fdigdipblog.com%2F2015%2F07%2F14%2Fthe-framing-of-irandeal-
on-digital-diplomacy-channels%2F&tfw_site=wordpressdotcom)

Because the President and his negotiators broke every single one of their prom-
ises' (Speaker of the House 2015). Additionally, Obama had to contend with the
criticism of foreign governments, including American Sunni allies in the Middle
East, especially Saudi Arabia, and his own promise that the only alternative to the
agreement was a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities.

In response to these mounting challenges, the Obama White House took to
Twitter again, this time launching a dedicated Twitter channel (@TheIranDeal)
with the goal of securing the support of the American public for the agreement
and forcing the hand of the sceptical Congress to ratify the deal. @TheIranDeal
channel is thus a prime example of the way in which governments may seek to
shape domestic support for their foreign policies in the digital age. While mainly
used by Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as tools for engaging with foreign
publics in support of their strategies of public diplomacy, digital platforms increas-
ingly serve as instruments of strategic communication between governments and
domestic constituencies in pursuit of foreign policy goals.

The use of social media by foreign governments, especially Russia, to under-
mine the foreign policies of their opponents by targeting their online public, makes
the issue of the digital two-level game timely and relevant. Bjola and Pamment
(2016) analyzed, for instance, Russia's strategic use of social media to target dis-
enfranchised audiences within the EU and spread Euro-Scepticism. Importantly,

Figure 2. President Rouhani praises Iran's newfound respect.
Source: Images from President Rouhani's Twitter Channel. (Links: https://twitter.com/HassanRouhani/status/620915646231113729?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fdigdipblog.com%2F2015%2F07%2F14%2Fthe-framing-of-irandeal-on-digital-diplomacy-channels%2F&tfw_site=wordpressdotcom; https://twitter.com/HassanRouhani/status/620917473911549952?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fdigdipblog.com%2F2015%2F07%2F14%2Fthe-framing-of-irandeal-on-digital-diplomacy-channels%2F&tfw_site=wordpressdotcom)

Russia's communicative tactics often included masking the source of information to enable plausible deniability. More recently Kragh and Åsberg (2017) analyzed Russia's use of digital communications in Sweden which include the use of forgeries, disinformation and masked military threats to prevent Sweden from aligning itself more clearly with NATO. Last, a recent analysis by the Computational Propaganda project at the University of Oxford found that Russian fake news stories were prevalent in the Twitter discourse leading up to the 2016 elections and that such stories often promoted sensational or emotionally driven conspiracy theories (Howard et al.,).

Drawing on Putnam's (1988) two-level game theory, this study argues that the rise of social media makes governments and MFAs more likely to digitally engage with their citizens as a way of shaping their online views and thus potentially securing their support for certain foreign policies. To examine this new development, this study advances a new concept, Digital Domestic Diplomacy (DDD), by which it refers to the strategic use of digital tools by a government to build domestic support for its foreign policy goals, including as in the Iranian case, for the ratification of international treaties. The study thus posits and demonstrates that DDD operates via three key components: broadcasting, listening and engagement.

Broadcasting is the use of social media for crafting messages that bolster support for a foreign policy. *Listening* is the use of social media for tailoring arguments to the target audience. Finally, *engagement* is the use of social media for assembling online coalitions with supporters and for building bridges with critics. By introducing and exploring the concept of DDD, this study advances research on the role of social media in influencing inter and intra-national politics, while also expanding the reach of Putnam's two-level game theory to digital diplomacy.

International negotiations in the digital age

Revisiting Putnam's two-level theory

In 1988, when he introduced his theory of diplomatic negotiations, Putnam made the argument that one could not separate international (Level 1) and domestic politics (Level 2) and hence, international negotiations should be conceptualized as a two-level game. At the national level, interest groups and constituents (for example, labour unions, and activist groups) pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favourable policies. At the international level, governments attempt to meet the pressures and demands of their domestic constituents, while at the same time minimizing the possible adverse impact of foreign developments. The interaction between the two levels is manifest in the fact that a leader who ignores domestic pressures or one who favours domestic politics above international issues will be unable to successfully ratify or negotiate a treaty respectively. Thus, as Putnam argues, "the political complexities for the players in this two-level game are staggering" (Putnam 1988, 433–434).

An important component of Putnam's model is the concept of "win set", which refers to all Level 1 agreements that could be ratified by Level 2 constituents. Indeed, a Level 1 agreement is only possible if the win sets of the negotiating parties overlap. Large win sets make Level 1 agreements more likely. Conversely, small win sets increase the risk of negotiation failures. The larger one's win set, the more the leader can be pressured during negotiations to make concessions. Conversely, the smaller the win set, the more he can pressure others into making concessions (*ibid*, 435–441). The use of stringent domestic ratification rules to improve one's bargaining position has been tested empirically in various studies (Leventoglu and Tarar 2005.; Clark, Duchesne and Meunier 2000; Milner and Rosendorff, 1996). Mo (1995) explored, for instance, a leader's ability to narrow his win set by granting veto rights to domestic agents over an international treaty which, in turn, increased his Level 1 bargaining position. Likewise, Iida examined how leaders could use uncertainty about Level 2 ratification as leverage in Level 1 negotiations (Iida 1993).

Putnam also argues that the size of the win sets is determined by three factors. First, win set size depends on the distribution of power, preferences and possible coalitions among Level 2 constituents. For instance, the size of the win set depends on the relative power of "isolationists", who tend to reject all international collaboration, and the relative power of "internationalists", who tend to favour international collaborations (Putnam, 1988, 442–443). Such is the case with Lisoswski's analysis of President G. W. Bush's win set before the ratification of the Kyoto climate protocol. Lisoswski's (2002) analysis demonstrated that an "anti-Kyoto" coalition was able to secure a Senate resolution opposing any international

climate agreement that would harm the US economy. Additionally, public opinion polls suggested that the political cost of no agreement was small. Thus, President Bush was able to abandon the ratification of Kyoto agreement with minimal impediments.

The second factor that determines the size of the win set is the nature of the ratification process. For instance, the win set is smaller if a special parliamentary majority is necessary to ratify a treaty, such as two-thirds majorities in the US Senate (Putnam, 1988, 448–449). In the case of the European Union (EU), win set configurations become even more complex as treaties must be ratified both at the EU and the national level (Hodson and Maher 2014). Similarly, Hug and Schultz (2007) explored the ratification of the EU constitution. Their study found that EU governments leveraged their Level 1 position by announcing national referendums during the negotiations. Finally, Fink and Konig (2009) found that governments would be more likely to call referendums and add a hurdle to the ratification if they faced an Euro sceptic parliament or wished to obtain treaty gains.

Finally, the win set size depends on the political strategies employed by leaders. Governments may make side payments to certain MPs to gain their support or build new coalitions with domestic constituents, so as to alter domestic power dynamics (Putnam 1988, 450–452). Boyer's Chief of Government (COG) model elucidates the role that public opinion plays in the two-level model by showing that Level 1 negotiators are constantly aware of their approval ratings and that they need to neutralize domestic public opinion if a treaty deals with sensitive issues (Boyer 2000). Using polling data spanning three decades, Peter Trumbore (1998) demonstrated that the public would be more likely to play an important role in Level 1 negotiations if the treaty dealt with issues that were perceived to be accompanied by major gains or major losses. By using framing techniques, political actors could accentuate possible gains or losses thus mobilizing the public (Shamir and Shikaki 2005).

Digital diplomacy & the two-level game

Putnam's study was written in the pre-digital age that is, before the rise of social media networks and their institutional assimilation by governments and MFAs. This invites the question whether the analytical insights offered by two-level model carry value in the digital age as well, and if yes, how? According to the Burson-Marsteller's study, 90 per cent of all UN member states operated a Twitter account in 2016, and 88 per cent had a Facebook account with a combined audience (followers, likes and users) of 325 million and 255 million, respectively (Twiplomacy 2016). Foreign ministries, embassies and diplomats now employ digital tools in support of a variety of activities ranging from the development of consular application for smartphones, communication with nationals during crises, or the use of dedicated platforms for engaging with diaspora communities.

One of the most common forms of digital diplomacy is the use of social media in public diplomacy, whereby MFAs and embassies reach out and communicate with foreign populations. Unlike twentieth-century public diplomacy, which was characterized by one-way flows of information, the digital version is potentially dialogic in nature as social media fosters two-way interactions between messengers and recipients (Kampf, Manor and Segev 2015; Pamment 2013; Hayden 2012;

Metzgar 2012). Recent studies suggest that diplomatic institutions now employ social media in order to set the agenda of discussions with their followers. By using social media to repeatedly address certain issues or events, diplomatic institutions may influence which issues are of interest to their target audience. Additionally, social media may be used by diplomats as a framing device thereby influencing how users view a certain country, issue or policy. Social media has thus become an important tool for the promotion of countries' foreign policies (Bjola and Jiang 2015).

However, diplomatic institutions are by no means the only actors to frame events and issues on social media. As Hayden and Manor argue, social media represents a competitive framing environment in which diplomats, NGOs, media outlets, citizen journalists and foreign governments all compete for the audience's attention, while also offering their own interpretation of current events (Manor 2016, 7–16; Hayden 2012, 3–5). It is this online competition that suggests that in the digital age the two-level game, and the ratification process, have become increasingly complex. Both domestic and foreign constituents may employ social media in order to influence public opinion thereby facilitating, or derailing, the ratification process. For instance, governments may use social media to rally support for a treaty in another country by portraying non-ratification as the abandonment of allies. Similarly, global NGOs (for example, environment, human rights) can become part of domestic discussions over ratification. Last, domestic constituents, ranging from activists to lobbyists, financial corporations and MPs, may all use social media to sway public opinion, thereby increasing or decreasing the likelihood of ratification.

As Bertot, Jaeger and Hansen (2012) note, President Obama became an advocate of new media while on the campaign trail. Once in office, the Obama administration strongly encouraged federal agencies to adopt new media with the goal of providing information to the American public, communicating with the public and offering an array of government services (Bertot, Jaeger and Hansen, 31; Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes 2012). In 2009, the Obama administration published the Presidential directive 'Open Government Initiative', which instructed departments and agencies to 'harness new technologies to put information about their operations and decisions online and readily available to the public' (Mergel 2013). Specifically, the directive emphasized three activities of open government—transparency, collaboration and participation (Lee and Kwak 2012).

Following the Obama directives, federal agencies migrated en-masse to social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter while also launching websites and blogs through which information could be disseminated and relationships with connected publics could be cultivated (Mergel 2013, 123). Additionally, each agency was tasked with developing its own open government plan (Lee and Kwak 2012, 492). To further facilitate this migration online, the Obama administration issued a series of guidelines and recommendations outlining the risks and benefits of utilizing new media in government (Picazo-Vela, Gutiérrez-Martínez and Luna-Reyes 2012). According to Snead, the Obama administration's vision was that of an informed public interacting online with informed policy makers thus increasing the openness and transparency of the government (Snead 2013, 57).

The Obama White House was also an avid user of new media. In addition to its own extensive network of social media profiles, the White House routinely broadcasted events from the Oval Office on Facebook Live while videos of town hall

meetings were uploaded to YouTube (Acker and Kriesberg 2017). Additionally, the White House operated the 'We the People' platform on which petitions could be launched and, subsequently, addressed by the administration (Zavattaro and Sementell, 2014). According to the Twiplomacy study, the Obama White House was the most popular government account on Twitter (Twiplomacy 2016).

This new digital landscape necessitates that governments and MFAs also take part in online discussions to secure support for their foreign policies and ratification of their treaties. To explore the implications of digitally boosting domestic support for a government's foreign policy, this study introduces the concept of Digital Domestic Diplomacy (DDD).

Digital domestic diplomacy

The practice of Digital Domestic Diplomacy is likely to grow in importance in the coming years and for good reasons. The growing competition for social media audiences, the number of actors looking to shape online discussions and the unpredictability of online audiences (Haynal 2011), all suggest that, in the digital age, foreign policies can be more easily derailed by foreign and domestic constituents. To cope with this, governments would likely find themselves under pressure to deploy digital communication strategies that can inspire the public opinion at home to support their policies and that can prevent competing actors from negatively framing their actions.

This study defines DDD as the domestically oriented use of digital platforms by governments in support of their foreign policy. Thus, DDD is distinct from communication campaigns organized by state authorities in support of domestic policies (for example, education, public health) in three ways. First, DDD is conducted by institutions with foreign policy responsibilities, such as MFAs, second, it has a clear foreign policy focus as they seek to work with and advance the foreign policy agenda of the government among the domestic population, and third, it harnesses the power of digital technologies to reach its objectives. DDD thus builds on the concept of domestic diplomacy that has recently been advanced by a number of diplomatic scholars (Sharp 2016). As Sharp notes, in the case of domestic diplomacy, the domestic public is treated by the MFA 'as a target, partner, or interlocutor with which public diplomacy relationships are to be developed and conducted by representatives of the state in which they live'.[2] According to Conley Tyler et. al., domestic diplomacy has matured to such a point that one can now identify multiple models by which MFAs establish relationships with their domestic publics (Conley, Abbasov, Gibson and Teo 2012).

What is novel about DDD is the use of digital platforms, specifically social media networks, to shape and build domestic support for the government's foreign policy. The employment of social media means that governments and MFAs can now directly interact with the public while bypassing traditional gatekeepers such as newspapers and TV channels. Additionally, social media enables governments to micro-target domestic constituents and to tailor their messages accordingly. However, it is the dialogical nature of social media that necessitates that

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[2] See the collection of articles on domestic diplomacy in the special issue of *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy,* Volume 7, Issue 4, 2012.

MFAs not only transmit messages, but also listen to the feedback provided by online publics. Studies have shown that failure to engage in dialogue prevents organizations from effectively communicating with their audiences (Taylor and Kent 2014; Sommerfeldt, Kent and Taylor 2012). As such, DDD means that government messages must take into account the opinions, comments and beliefs of the public, and be carefully tailored to the public's knowledge regarding the issue at hand.

Drawing on Putnam's theory, this study advances the concept of *digital win set* (DWS) to capture and evaluate DDD effectiveness. As pointed out above, Domestic Digital Diplomacy refers to the process by which governments use digital platforms in support of their foreign policy, which may involve a wide range of digital communication tactics. DWS, on the other hand, refers to the use of digital platforms to create a broad win set with online audiences via three key dimensions: broadcasting, listening, and engagement. In other words, while DDD covers the process of digital communication between the government and domestic audiences, DWS seeks to capture the online impact of this process.

This study maintains that DWS rests on three functions. The first is *broadcasting* which is conceptualized as the use of social media to craft messages and calibrate arguments in such a way that maximizes the appeal of the government's foreign policy. For instance, using arguments that raise the cost of non-ratification, arguments that resonate among diverse groups of constituents and arguments that limit the number of issues wrapped into a single treaty. Second, DWS rests on *listening*. By listening this study refers to the process of adapting messages and arguments throughout a digital campaign so that they best resonate with the target audience. Moreover, by listening, this study also refers to the process of responding to, and refuting arguments raised by other constituents be they domestic or foreign.

Third, DWS rests on *engagement*. Here this study considers the dialogical nature of social media. Following Taylor and Kent, this study views dialogic engagement as a process through which organizations and publics come to realize their co-dependence and seek to collaborate to better their community and society. Digital dialogic engagement includes elements such as responding to social media users' questions and comments, querying social media users so as to gain insight into their needs, opinions and beliefs, creating opportunities for co-creation of content, engaging in two-way conversations with social media users and enabling social media users to directly evaluate information so as to demonstrate transparency and accountability. Broadcasting, listening engagement can thus increase the win set size by successfully framing the digital content, side-lining or refuting criticism and fostering supportive online coalitions.

Research question and hypotheses

This study aims to better understand the role of social media in the two-level game theory. As this study examines a case study in which the treaty has already been negotiated, it keeps the international level (Level 1) constant and focuses on Level 2 (domestic) to map the conditions for generating effective DWS. Thus, this study's research question is: *How governments use social media to build domestic*

support for foreign policies? This study answers this question by exploring separately the three elements of the DWS concept.

Broadcasting

The first component of DWS is broadcasting wherein governments employ social media messaging to increase public support for ratification of Level 1 treaties. Following Putnam's work, this study assumed that governments would employ three kinds of arguments that increase the win set. The first are arguments that raise the cost of non-ratification and portray non-ratification as leading to negative effects rather than the status quo.

> *H1: Governments will employ arguments that raise the costs of non-ratification.*

Second, this study assumed that governments would employ arguments that resonate with diverse audiences. Such arguments may overcome the heterogeneous preferences of domestic constituents. Additionally, it was assumed that governments would employ arguments that assuage possible "isolationists" who oppose international cooperation or "hawks" that oppose diplomatic resolutions.

> *H2: Governments will employ messages that resonate with diverse constituencies.*

Third, it was assumed that governments would employ arguments that narrow the number of issues wrapped up in a treaty. Additionally, governments will seek to de-politicize a treaty by making claims based on facts rather than opinion.

> *H3a: Governments will narrow the issues addressed in a treaty.*

> *H3b: Governments will seek to de-politicize a treaty by making factual claims.*

Listening

The second component of DWS is listening, which was conceptualized as the use of social media to adapt arguments throughout the course of a digital campaign so that they better resonates with the target audience thereby swaying public opinion in favour of ratification. This study purposefully separates between two forms of listening. The first includes the tailoring of online content to audience feedback (H4a). This includes analyzing how arguments are received online and abandoning arguments that are poorly received or invoking new arguments that might resonate with audiences. This study focuses on re-Tweets as the key metric of social media feedback for determining which arguments are more likely to be altered. The lower the number of Re-Tweets (RT) received by a topic, the more likely that topic will be removed from the online conversation. Second, listening also includes monitoring one's online opponents and directly refuting their arguments or claims (H4b). The former is an attempt to better engage with audiences while the latter is an attempt to prevent a competitor from engaging with audiences. As these are two separate activities, they were each analyzed separately.

> *H4a: Governments will alter their arguments in line with the feedback received from the audience.*

> *H4b: Governments will directly refute arguments made by other actors.*

Engagement

The third and final component of DWS is engagement. It is assumed that governments will make use of the dialogic nature of social media (direct responses, queries, two-way conversation content co-creation,) to manage relationships with connected publics including coalition building with potential supporters and bridge building with critics.

> H5a: Governments will seek to build online coalitions with supporters.

> H5b: Governments will seek to build online bridges with critics.

Case Study and Methodology: @TheIranDeal Twitter Channel

To test all five research hypotheses, this study analyzed the @TheIranDeal Twitter channel launched by the Obama White House in July 2015 with the explicit goal to 'distribute facts and engage with the public about the deal' (Rhodan 2015). According to White House staffers, the Twitter channel was specifically aimed at raising public support for the Iran agreement, with the hope this would translate into broader congressional support. Such support was necessary as the US Senate had 60 days to review the Iran deal and could have blocked it by a two-thirds majority (Toosi 2015).

The empirical analysis included Tweets published on the @TheIranDeal Twitter channel during three-time intervals: 21–28 July, 21–28 August and 9–17 September. By selecting three intervals, spread out over a three-month period, this study was able to detect and analyze changes in Level 2 messaging strategies throughout the digital campaign. Tweets were collected using the Twitter Time Machine application, and were categorized using the methodology of thematic analysis. The analysis followed the roadmap offered by Braun and Clarke who define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting on patterns, or themes, within a given data corpus (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The Broadcasting Component of DWS

During the first phase of the analysis, all tweets published during 21–28 July, 2015 were examined. Next, a set of categories was created based on the content of these tweets. For example, a large number of tweets suggested that non-ratification of the Iran agreement would hinder the monitoring of Iranian nuclear facilities. Thus, a category named 'Loss of ability to monitor Iran nuclear facilities' was created. Likewise, tweets dealing with Iranian breakout time (that is, time to develop a nuclear weapon) were categorized under 'Reduce Iran breakout time'. Once all tweets were categorized, they were gathered into meta-categories, or themes. For instance, both the 'Loss of ability to monitor Iran nuclear facilities' and the 'Reduce Iran breakout time' categories were gathered into the 'Dangers of non-ratification' theme. Finally, each theme was matched with a corresponding argument that might increase DWS. For instance, the 'Dangers of non-ratification' theme was matched with arguments that increase the costs of non-ratification or portray non-ratification as different from the status quo.

The Listening Component of DWS

In the second part of the empirical analysis, this study compared categories identified in the first time interval with those identified in the second time interval so as to find instances of listening. Similarly, categories identified during the second time interval were compared with those identified during the third time interval. For instance, the 'Loss of ability to monitor Iran nuclear facilities' argument was employed during the first time interval, but not during the second. Additionally, the average number of re-Tweets each category received was calculated so as to investigate whether categories that were excluded from one-time interval to another were those that were poorly received by Twitter followers. For instance, the category 'Loss of ability to monitor Iran nuclear facilities' received the lowest average number of re-Tweets of all categories in the same DWS argument. All @TheIranDeal Tweets analyzed in this study were gathered during December of 2016, five months after the account became dormant. As a result, it is expected that the final count of retweets would suffer no modifications because of the declining public interest in the issue. Tweets were gathered using the TwimeMachine application which enables one to scrape the 3200 most recent Tweets published on any public account.

The Engagement Component of DWS

Finally, this study recorded all instances of dialogic engagement between the @TheIranDeal Twitter channel and its Twitter followers during the three-time intervals. Drawing on Taylor and Kent (2014), this study operationalized dialogic engagement as a combination of several dimensions: answering questions and supplying requested information related to the agreement and its implementation; inviting followers to converse with officials in the Administration; querying followers by posting questions relating to broader foreign implications of the agreement, generating collaborative opportunities such as the co-creation of content or the co-dissemination of information, and offering opportunities to directly review information relating to the Iran agreement. (for example, invitation to read the Iran agreement, invitation to hear Secretary Kerry's testimony in the Senate hearings).

Findings

The Broadcasting Component of DWS

Between 21–28 of July 2015, the @TheIranDeal Twitter channel published 216 Tweets. These Tweets were categorized into six themes covering the main arguments invoked by the Obama administration with regard to the Iran Deal. Next, each theme was analyzed to identify its possible impact on win set size as suggested by DWS hypotheses above. For instance, a theme dealing with the dangers of non-ratification of the Iran Deal could influence the win set size by illustrating the cost of non-ratification. The first theme to be identified, "Dangers of non-ratification", was comprised six categories. The first category included tweets highlighting the loss of ability to monitor Iranian nuclear facilities should the Senate fail to ratify the Iran agreement. Such is the case with the tweet below (see Figure 3).

The second category included tweets arguing that non-ratification would severely reduce Iranian breakout time. The third category portrayed non-ratifica-

Figure 3. Tweet demonstrating the dangers of non-ratification of Iran Deal.
Source: Image from The Iran Deal Archived Twitter channel. (Links: https://twitter.com/
TheIranDeal/status/624276238782365696)

tion as the abandonment of US allies while the fourth stated that non-ratification
would put Israel in peril. The fifth category suggested that non-ratification would
enable Iran to secretly enrich uranium, while the final category suggested that the
Iran agreement is the only way to ensure Iran does not develop a nuclear bomb.
The 'Dangers of non-ratification' theme and its categories, corresponded with the
DWS argument that non-ratification will incur high costs and that non-ratification
does not mean the continuation of the status quo.

The second theme identified, 'Peace and Stability', was comprised two cate-
gories. The first one portrayed the Iran agreement as an important step towards
global stability. The second portrayed the Iran agreement as a peaceful solution
to the Iranian crisis and one that avoids the cost of war. Such is the case with the
tweet below (see Figure 4).

The third theme identified was 'Wide Support'. Categories comprising this
theme demonstrated that the Iran agreement had gained wide support from the
American media, politicians on both sides of the aisle and international actors
such as the UN. Both the 'Peace and Stability' and the 'Wide Support' themes cor-
responded with arguments that resonate across diverse audiences thus increasing
DWS.

The fourth theme to be identified was 'Verification, not Trust'. This theme
included four categories, the first of which highlighted the fact that the Iran agree-
ment was based on verification, not trust, as Iran could not be trusted (for example,
the opening up of all Iranian nuclear facilities to inspection by the International
Atomic Energy Agency). Such is the case with the tweet below (see Figure 5).

Additional categories in the "Verification, not Trust" theme focused on the fact
that the Iranian agreement would be implemented in stages and not at once, that
all financial sanctions may be re-instated should Iran fail to meet its commitments
and that sanction relief would follow Iranian compliance with the agreement. The
'Verification, not Trust' theme aligned itself with the DWS enhancing argument
concerning diverse audiences such as the attempts to assuage 'isolationists' and
'hawks'.

The fifth theme identified was 'Deal is based on Science'. This theme included
Tweets highlighting the scientific aspect of the Iran agreement and the means by

Figure 4. Tweet portraying Iran Deal as peaceful solution to the Iranian crisis.
Source: Image from The Iran Deal Archived Twitter channel (Link: https://twitter.com/
TheIranDeal/status/624636437267267585)

Figure 5. Tweet stating Iran Deal is based on verification and not trust.
Source: Image from The Iran Deal Archived Twitter channel (Link: https://twitter.com/
TheIranDeal/status/623884248060014592)

which science will be used to monitor Iranian nuclear facilities. Notably, many of these tweets quoted Ernst Munitz, the US Secretary of Energy, and one of the negotiators of the Iran agreement. Such is the case with the tweet below (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Statement by Secretary of Energy Moniz.
Source: Image from The Iran Deal Archived Twitter channel. (Link: https://twitter.com/
TheIranDeal/status/626040127920320512)

The 'Deal is based on science' theme corresponded with DWS arguments about de-politicization of the treaty by reference to factual claims. Indeed, according to the @TheIranDeal Twitter channel, the Iran agreement was not a matter of political opinion but of hard science.

The sixth and final theme identified in this time interval was the 'Nuclear Issue Alone' theme. This theme was comprised tweets suggesting that the Iran agreement was always meant to deal with a single issue, Iran's nuclear program, and not with other issues such as Iranian support for terrorism. Such is the case with the tweet below (see Figure 7).

Additional categories in the 'Nuclear Issue alone' theme highlighted US measures to prevent Iranian support of terrorism, US attempts to free American citizens held by Iran and continued US measures against Iranian conventional weapons. The 'Nuclear Issue Alone' theme corresponded with DWS arguments about narrowing the range of issues addressed by a treaty.

Notably, the analysis of the tweets published during the first time interval revealed that the @TheIranDeal channel repeatedly claimed it was providing followers with factual information. Roughly 10% of all tweets published during the first time interval made a claim to facts, as is evident in the tweet below via the infograph (see Figure 8).

During the second time interval (August 2015), the @TheIranDeal Twitter channel published 130 Tweets. Four new categories were identified during the thematic analysis of August 2015. The identification of new categories suggests that the @TheIranDeal channel altered its broadcasting practices throughout the ratification process by introducing new arguments or abandoning old ones. By tracking these changes, this study examined the extent to @TheIranDeal has adjusted its message to the reaction of the online public, as suggested by the listening analysis further below. The first two categories, which were part of the 'Dangers of Non-Ratification' theme, depicted the US as 'walking alone' from the Iran agreement as its allies would still remove their sanctions and a category portraying non-ratification as a blow to US global leadership, as illustrated by the tweet below (see Figure 9).

Figure 7. Statement by Secretary Kerry that Iran Deal was meant to deal with one issue alone. *Source*: Image from The Iran Deal Archived Twitter channel. (Link: https://twitter.com/ TheIranDeal/status/624230657053597696)

Two additional categories identified during August were part of the 'Wide Support' theme. These categories depicted instances in which US army veterans and Christian ministers lent their support to the Iran agreement.

During the third time interval, spanning from September 9 to the 17, the @ TheIranDeal Twitter channel published 52 Tweets. Only two new categories were identified during the analysis of these tweets, both of which were categorized under the 'Dangers of Non-Ratification' theme. The first category argued that the only alternative to the Iran agreement was war while the second suggested that the Iran agreement would help reduce nuclear proliferation.

To summarize, the results of the thematic analysis demonstrated that the @ TheIranDeal channel invoked three types of arguments that could increase DWS. The first were arguments that demonstrated the dangers of non-ratification and portrayed non-ratification as the opposite of the status quo (for example, the loss of ability to monitor Iranian nuclear facilities). The second type of arguments were those that resonated with diverse audiences (for example, 'Peace and Stability' theme) and that might assuage 'hawks' (for example, 'Verification, not Trust' theme). Finally, the @TheIranDeal channel invoked arguments that limited the issues attached to the Iran agreement (for example, 'Nuclear Issue Alone' theme). These findings convincingly validated hypotheses H1-H3a/b.

Figure 8. Tweets making claims to facts. Source: Image from The Iran Deal Archived Twitter channel. (Link: https://twitter.com/TheIranDeal/status/626049883817029632)

The Listening Component of DW

When comparing the first and second time intervals, it was discovered that seven categories were excluded from the @TheIranDeal Twitter channel. Three of these categories dealt with the dangers of non-ratification including the loss of ability to monitor Iranian nuclear facilities, the reduced Iranian breakout time and Iran's ability to secretly enrich uranium. Additionally, the category depicting the Iran agreement as a boost to global security was excluded as well, as were the categories dealing with the release of US citizens held in Iran and continued US scrutiny over Iran's conventional weapons program. The final category to be excluded stated that sanction relief would be dependent on Iranian compliance with the agreement. To test H4, the average number of re-Tweets of each excluded category was calculated and compared to all other categories in the same DWS argument. This measurement, which was based on a sample of 100 Tweets, can be seen in the table below.

As shown in Table 1, the 'Reduced Iranian breakout time' category and the 'Loss of ability to monitor Iranian nuclear facilities' averaged the lowest number of re-Tweets during the first time interval. These two categories were excluded from the second time interval. This was also the case with the 'Global stability' category. Last, the two categories to average the lowest number of re-Tweets in the 'Neutralize criticism narrowing issued addressed in Treaty' were also excluded from the second time interval.

Figure 9. Tweet demonstrating the danger of non-ratification of Iran Deal.
Source: Image from The Iran Deal Archived Twitter channel. (Link: https://twitter.com/
TheIranDeal/status/636889683700543488)

However, it should be mentioned that the category 'Iran's ability to secretly enrich Uranium' was also excluded even though it had the highest average of re-Tweets. As such, these results offer only partial validation to the hypothesis that governments will alter their argument throughout a campaign based on follower feedback.

Between the second and third time interval, four categories were excluded in addition to one entire DWS argument ('Narrowing Issues Addressed in Treaty'). The analysis of the average number of re-Tweets of excluded categories can be seen in the table below.

Table 2 again offers partial validation to this study's fourth hypothesis. The two categories to average the lowest number of re-Tweets in the 'High Costs of Non-Ratification' argument were excluded from the third time interval. However, this was not the case with the 'hawks' argument in which the two categories that were excluded averaged neither a high nor a low number of re-Tweets.

The second element in of the listening component was the direct refutation of arguments made by other actors. As indicated in the introduction of the DWS con-

Table 1. Average Number of Re-Tweets of Excluded Categories

DWS Argument	Category	Average Number of Re-Tweets	Was category excluded from second time interval
High Costs of Non-Ratification	Iran's ability to secretly enrich uranium	109	Yes
	Agreement ensures no Iranian bomb will be developed	67	
	Israel's security is in peril	59	
	Allies will fulfil Iran agreement	42	
	Reduced Iranian break-out time	33.5	Yes
	Loss of ability to monitor Iranian nuclear facilities	31	Yes
Arguments that resonate across wide audiences	Peaceful solution to Iranian conflict	163.4	
	Global support	52	
	Support from both sides of political aisles	48	
	Media support	36	
	Global stability	24	Yes
Neutralizing criticism using factual claims	The US will continue to work against the Iranian regime in other fields	31.4	
	Deal was only meant to address Iran's nuclear program	24	
	The US will restrict Iranian conventional weapons' development	23.75	Yes
	US will continue to demand the release of US citizens held by Iran	21.7	Yes

cept above, direct refutation is an attempt to prevent a competitor from engaging with the target audience. Notably, this study found that the @TheIranDeal channel did monitor and react to other actors' online advocacy throughout the three time intervals. During the first time interval (July 2015), six examples of direct refutation were found. The first example included the rebuttal of an argument made by the Speaker of the House that the Iran agreement included secret addendums that were not presented to Congress. An example of such refutation may be seen in the tweet below (see Figure 10).

Table 2. Average Number of Re-Tweets of Excluded Categories

DWS Argument	Category	Average Number of Re-Tweets	Was category excluded in the third time interval
High Costs of Non-Ratification	Israel's security is in peril	47.8	
	Only way to ensure Iran does not develop a bomb	38.5	
	The US walks away alone	35	
	Damage to US leadership	29.5	Yes
	Other countries' sanctions will remain intact	29.8	Yes
Neutralizing criticism using factual claims	Verification not trust	55	
	Sanctions can be re-instated	36.5	Yes
	Implementation in phases	28	Yes
	Verification methods	25.14	

Figure 10. Tweet directly refuting argument by the Speaker of the House. Source: Image from The Iran Deal Archived Twitter channel. (Link: https://twitter.com/TheIranDeal/status/624234756742508544)

Additionally, the @TheIranDeal Twitter channel refuted the argument that the Iran agreement was based on trust as Senator Marco Rubio insisted, for instance, during a press conference (see Figure 11). Other cases of refutation referred to the argument that a better deal could have been struck, as well as the argument that Iran would have time to hide its enriched uranium from IAEA inspectors.

During the second time period, three examples of refutations were found. The first one involved a rebuttal of the argument that a better deal could have been struck. The second directly refuted the Speaker of the House's comment that Iran would be allowed to inspect its own nuclear facilities. Finally, there were numerous examples in which the @TheIranDeal channel refuted arguments made by the Israeli government. Notably, throughout the congressional review of the Iran agreement, both the Israeli Prime Minister and the Israeli government attacked the agreement portraying Iran's nuclear program as an existential threat to Israel's existence and America's support of the agreement as the abandonment of Israel. Finally, during the third time interval (September 2015) there were three instances in which the @TheIranDeal channel directly refuted, and commented, on statements made by Republican Congressional leaders.

To summarize, the results presented in this section suggest that the arguments invoked by the @TheIranDeal channel changed throughout the campaign. Results indicate that some of these changes correspond with follower feedback (that is, average number of re-Tweets). There were also multiple instances in which the @TheIranDeal channel directly refuted arguments raised by other actors, be they domestic or foreign. Thus, hypotheses H4a/b were partially validated.

Figure 11. Tweet measuring the reliability of statement by Senator Marco Rubio. Source: Image from The Iran Deal Archived Twitter channel. (Link: https://twitter.com/TheIranDeal/status/624595262221070336)

The engagement component

The third and final component of DWS is that of dialogic engagement. The table below lists the elements of dialogic engagement, as identified above, as well as the number of instances in which these elements were employed by the @TheIranDeal channel.

As can be seen in Table 3, the @TheIranDeal Twitter channel issued twelve invitations to its followers to engage in three, separate, and open conversations regarding the Iran agreement. One such conversation enabled followers to query President Barack Obama directly, while another offered followers the ability to query Ben Rhodes, an Obama aide who had taken part in the Iran negotiations. Additionally, Twitter followers were invited to an online Q&A using the "We the People" platform. There were also nine instances in which the @TheIranDeal offered followers the ability to directly evaluate the Iran agreement be it by reading the actual agreement or following Secretary's Kerry testimony in the Congress. The @TheIranDeal channel also directly responded to followers' questions or concerns. Such is the case with the tweet below in which a follower posted a question pertaining to IAEA inspection of Iranian nuclear facilities. During another instance, the @TheIranDeal answered a follower's question pertaining to Iranian self-inspection of nuclear facilities. While such responses are an important element of dialogic engagement, they only occurred twice throughout the three week sampling period.

Finally, there was one instance in which the @TheIranDeal channel directly queried its followers and one instance in which the channel offered its followers (see Figure 12) an opportunity for co-dissemination of online content (see Figure 13).

Notably, this study found no instances in which the @TheIranDeal responded to followers' criticism. The results of this section suggest that while the @TheIranDeal did offer multiple opportunities for online conversations, it did not utilize Twitter to build coalitions through shared creation of content or to build bridges through responding to followers' criticism. These findings thus invalidate hypotheses H5a/b.

Discussion

The focus of this study was to explore the utilization of social media in support of a government's foreign policy agenda among its domestic population. To do so, this study advanced a new theoretical concept, DDD (Digital Domestic Diplomacy), which was defined as the use of digital platforms by governments in support of their foreign policy. This study argued that DDD would be digitally conducted by institutions with foreign policy responsibilities and would have a clear foreign policy focus. Building on Putnam's theory, it was hypothesized that governments would employ DDD to increase their win set and successfully garner public support for the ratification of an international treaty. The utilization of digital platforms to increase the win set was conceptualized as DWS (digital win set).

The first component of DWS is broadcasting. It was hypothesized that governments would use social media to craft and promote messages that would seek to maximize the appeal of the government's foreign policy. Thematic analysis of tweets published by the @TheIranDeal Twitter channel lends support to this hypothesis as

Table 3. Instances of Dialogic Engagement in the @TheIranDeal Twitter Channel

Components of Dialogue Engagement	Number of responses to followers' queries	Instances of supplying requested information	Instances of responding to followers' criticism	Number of overall responses to followers' comments	Number of invitations to engage in conversations	Invitations to directly evaluate information	Instances of querying followers	Number of collaborative opportunities for creation of shared content and co-dissemination of information
Measurement	2	2	0	2	12	9	1	1

Figure 12. Iran Deal Twitter channel answering a follower's question. Source: Image from The Iran Deal Archived Twitter channel. (Link: https://twitter.com/TheIranDeal/status/626088018248601604)

results demonstrate that the Obama administration used Twitter to make cogent arguments to increase DWS. The first argument attempted to raise awareness about the perceived cost of non-ratification by emphasizing the possible loss of ability to monitor Iranian nuclear facilities, the reduction in Iranian breakout time and the danger to Israel. The @TheIranDeal channel also suggested that non-ratification would lead to a different, and more dangerous, reality thus framing non-ratification as the opposite of the status quo. These findings validate this study's first research hypothesis. It should be mentioned that the Obama White House went to great lengths to depict Israeli security specialists' support for the Iran agreement. This finding demonstrates yet again the interaction between the two levels of diplomacy as a Level 1 actor can become the subject of debate in Level 2 deliberations.

Second, the @TheIranDeal channel put forth arguments that resonated with diverse domestic constituencies (for example, peaceful solution to the crisis, global stability) thus overcoming the limitation of heterogeneous preferences among domestic audiences and increasing the win set. The Obama White House also demonstrated that the Iran agreement had support from unconventional allies including military veterans, former members of the Bush administration

Figure 13. An opportunity for co-dissemination of content.
Source: Image from The Iran Deal Archived Twitter channel. (Link: https://twitter.com/
TheIranDeal/status/643894228678914049)

and Christian leaders. This was an attempt to show that most Americans support the Iran agreement, thus adding extra political pressure on the congressional critics of the agreement.

Third, the @TheIranDeal channel put forth arguments aimed at gaining the support of possible "isolationists" or "hawks". The @TheIranDeal channel argued forcefully that the Iran agreement was based on verification, not trust, and detailed the conditions of sanction relief. In the same vein, the @TheIranDeal attempted to de-politicize the Iran agreement by arguing that it was about scientific fact, rather than political opinion. Finally, the @TheIranDeal channel argued that the Iran agreement was meant to tackle one issue only—the Iranian nuclear program. This may be understood as an attempt to limit the number of issues tied into an international treaty so as to increase the digital win set. Overall, findings suggest that social media was used by the Obama White House to craft messages that could increase its win set and win over public support for the Iran agreement. These findings validated this study's second and third research hypotheses.

It was also hypothesized that the second element of DWS would be listening, which was conceptualized as adapting messages throughout a digital campaign to best resonate with the target audience. Listening was conceptualized as responding to messages circulated by other actors, be they national or international. A comparison of the arguments employed by the @TheIranDeal channel in each time interval (that is, July, August, September) found that numerous arguments had been excluded. Indeed, between the first and third time interval, a total of seven arguments had been dropped by the Obama White House including the agreement's contribution to global stability, the US continued monitoring of Iranian conventional weapons and Iran's ability to secretly enrich uranium.

A quantitative analysis offered partial validation for our hypothesis that such arguments were excluded as they received poor feedback from Twitter followers (that is, average number of re-Tweets). Using a sample of 100 Tweets, this study found four instances in which the arguments excluded by the @TheIranDeal channel were also those which received the lowest average number of re-Tweets. Conversely, there were two instances in which the argument excluded received an average, or even high, number of re-Tweets. Overall, it seems that the audience feedback was a plausible indicator of message resonance and could have led the White House to exclude specific arguments.

Throughout the sampling period, there multiple instances in which the @TheIranDeal channel refuted arguments made by other national actors including the Speaker of the House, Congressional leaders and Senators. While Administrations have always been able to refute the arguments of other actors, digital technologies introduce two new dimensions. The first is the ability to negate a competitors' argument in real time and among the same target audience. The second is a reduced reliance on traditional gatekeepers such as the media. The Administration's arguments can now make their way directly to the national citizenry without going through the filter of the media, which may re-frame the government's arguments in a positive or negative manner. Thus, DDD possibly enables governments to reduce the ability of other actors to manipulate public opinion or even 'hijack' the ratification process.

Additionally, this study found that the @TheIranDeal channel dedicated considerable effort to refuting arguments made by the Israeli government. This finding demonstrates the manner in which the two levels of diplomacy now more frequently collide with one another. The Israeli government used digital diplomacy to continuously convey its grievances to the American public. Given that digitalization increases the reach and efficiency of public diplomacy activities, it also increases the ability of a foreign actor to influence the national ratification process. Thus, digital technologies contribute to making Level 1 reverberations a more important factor in the two-game level theory than they were in 1988. Changes in @TheIranDeal arguments, and direct refutation of other actors' arguments, validated this study's fourth research hypotheses as well as its conceptualization of the listening component of DDD.

The final component of DDD is dialogic engagement which was conceptualized as the use of social media to build coalitions with supporters and build bridges with possible critics. Notably, it is this component of DDD that best captures the influence digitalization has had on diplomatic communication as dialogue represents a two-way communication model in which messenger and recipient interact with one another. Results demonstrate that the @TheIranDeal channel employed
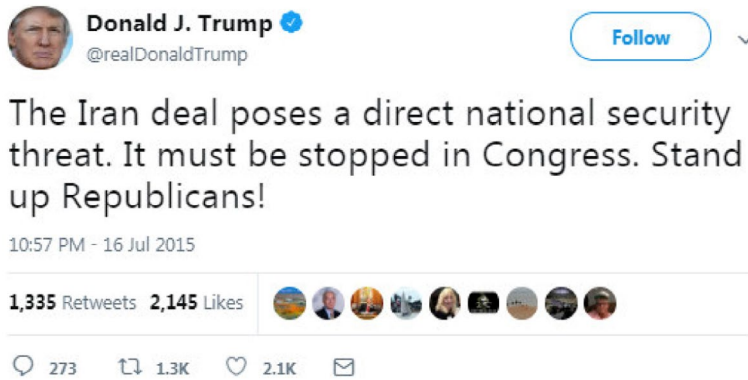
Figure 14. Candidate Trump labels Iran Deal a national security threat.
Source: Image from RealDonaldTrump Twitter channel. (Link: https://twitter.com/
realdonaldtrump/status/621770572108795905?lang=en)

several elements of dialogic engagement. The most common were invitations to online conversations about the Iran agreement and invitations to review the Iran agreement directly. Online conversations enabled the Obama White House to directly interact with critics of the accord thus potentially increasing DWS. More-over, online conversations helped portray the Obama White House as transparent thus refuting arguments that the Iran agreement had secret addendums that were not presented to Congress or the American people.

The @TheIranDeal's invitation to followers to directly review the Iran agree-ment is a good example of digitalization's impact on diplomacy. American citi-zens were offered the opportunity to independently review an international treaty without the prism or framing of the media and other political actors. While the Obama White House held only three online conversations during the sampling period, this is a substantially higher number than that found in digital diplomacy studies (Manor 2017; Bjola 2016). This finding could suggest that governments are more willing to interact online with domestic critics than foreign ones. However, this finding may be representative of the different communication cultures of gov-ernment institutions. Studies suggest that MFAs have an institutional aversion to information sharing and a fear of loss of control over the communication pro-cess, both of which hinder online dialogue (Wichowski 2015; Copeland 2013). The White House, however, might have a different culture of sharing information and engaging in dialogue, at least during the Obama Administration, given its daily work opposite the American and global press.

Despite the fact that @TheIranDeal channel held several online conversations, this study found only two examples of responses to followers' queries and no examples of responding to followers' criticism. As such, the Obama White House arguably failed to use social media to build bridges with critics of the agreement leading to a possible narrowing of DWS. These results led to the rejection of the fifth research hypotheses. The results obtained in this study offer a strong answer to its main research question. By using social media to increase the digital win set size, governments do build domestic support for their foreign policies. It should be noted that while the @TheIranDeal case study is an N of 1, but a very important

one, it is fair to assume that the conceptual framework to demonstrate analytical validity for other cases.

Conclusion

This study aimed to understand how digital platforms are used to manage the interplay between the international and domestic levels of international negotiations. Results demonstrate that governments can increase their win sets through three social media activities of digital diplomatic diplomacy. The first refers to the use of social media to craft messages and calibrate arguments in such a way that maximizes the appeal of the government's foreign policy. The second activity is listening, which is the tailoring of messages to the target audience's feedback and refuting other actors' arguments in real time. The third activity is dialogic engagement which builds coalitions with supporters and bridges with opponents.

The results of this study also capture the global and complex nature of twenty-first-century diplomacy. Throughout July–September 2015, a couple of foreign countries attempted to influence the US' domestic ratification process. Such was the case when the UK embassy in Washington held an online Q&A session in support of the agreement, or Israeli's attempts to negatively portray the agreement as the abandoning of an ally. In both cases, digital tools were used to sway American public opinion. Thus, the two-level game of diplomacy may now be more complex and intertwined than before.

It warrants mentioning that, in May 2018, President Donald Trump announced the US would leave the Iran agreement. Notably, Donald Trump addressed the Iran Deal during the ratification process, as can be seen below, and during his campaign for US President (see Figure 14). Future studies may explore whether candidate Trump used social media to directly refute the Obama administration's arguments in favour of the agreement and whether he was more prone to dialogic communication than the Obama White House. Such analysis may demonstrate how level 1 campaigns affect level 2 agreements even after these have been signed.

Future studies may also employ network analysis to evaluate the extent to which foreign and national governments target and compete over the same audience base. Moreover, future studies should explore whether the arguments of domestic and foreign governments correspond with one another thus increasing the efficacy of DDD. This is an important area of future research as it may demonstrate how social media can both facilitate and disrupt the two level game of diplomacy thereby extending the reach of Putnam's model to the age of digital diplomacy. The growing use of 'sharp power' by authoritarian regimes to pierce, penetrate, or perforate the information and political environments in the targeted countries (Walker and Ludwig, 2017), calls governments' attention to taking seriously the issue of the digital 'two level game' as an additional factor for successfully conducting their foreign policies.

This study's conceptual model of DDD also offers a series of policy recommendations for MFAs looking to secure domestic support for foreign policies. Chief among these is the need to monitor the online activities of policy opponents, be they domestic or foreign ones. Digitalization has dramatically increased the ability of online actors to counter government communication. MFAs thus need to monitor opponents, map their arguments and refute them in near real time. Second,

MFAs should seek to de-politicize foreign policy issues. In the Iran Deal, this was achieved by framing the accord as one based on science, not opinion, and using a credible spokesperson- a Nobel winning physicist. Credible spokespersons may enable MFAs to contend with the current Zeitgeist of 'alterative facts' in which even science is contested. Third, MFAs should utilize the dialogic potential of social media to create broad coalitions with online users and online networks of advocacy. However, such collaborations can only occur if online audiences are given opportunities to engage and converse with policy makers. Crucially, MFAs should also seek to use dialogue to build bridges with critics by answering criticism and holding online conversations with opponents. Finally, MFAs must continuously evaluate the extent to which their messaging appeals to target audiences. This should include quantitative and qualitative assessments such as analyzing comments written by social media users on MFA accounts.

Last, it is important to note two limitations of this study. First, the analysis of broadcasting was limited to the messages crafted and disseminated by the @TheIranDeal Twitter channel. However, it is also important to analyze the broadcasting of other actors. Given that social media is a competitive framing arena, domestic constituents may now find it easier to force the government to change its arguments thereby 'hijacking' the ratification process. Future studies should build on this study's conceptualization of broadcasting to map the online interaction between multiple domestic constituents. Second, the analysis of follower feedback was based solely on one parameter, the number of re-Tweets. Other indicators may be just as important including the number of comments received in response to a Tweet and the sentiment of these comments. Future studies could employ semantic analysis to further evaluate the listening component of DDD. As such, this study should be seen as a stepping stone towards further elucidating the role that digital platforms play in the two-level game of diplomacy.

Disclosure statement

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