Digital Diplomacy. A New Micro- Sphere of Public Communication

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Abstract: It is acknowledged that diplomacy is one of the areas that has been greatly influenced by the evolution of the Internet. Traditional diplomacy experienced the situations in which it failed, and its traditional mechanisms have often required too many personalities and proved to be particularly costly in terms of resources and opportunities. Well-known that diplomacy is one of the areas that have been greatly influenced by the evolution of the Internet. Traditional diplomacy is permanently subject to changes at the communications level, and this "migration phenomenon from offline to online" causes the emergence of a new diplomacy mediated via Internet, dubbed digital diplomacy, e-diplomacy or e-diplomacy. It came into being in the context in which traditional diplomacy began to face time constraints, is overload information, and the rapid emergency of new electronic technologies in the sphere of public communication. Digital diplomacy has emerged, precisely due to of the evolution of media channels and to the desire to facilitate the process of communication and of transmitting messages in due course. Thus, digital diplomacy can be perceived as a micro-sphere of public communication through which career diplomats have found a breath in their ongoing struggle to maintain a balanced world. This article also presents a parallel between the number of followers of foreign embassies in Romania in 2015, with those in 2020 on social networks Facebook and Twitter. This analysis includes a number of 30 embassies based in Bucharest.

Keywords: *Digital diplomacy; classical diplomacy; social media; technology evolution; microsphere of public communication; cyber diplomacy; mediated communication.*

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1. Introduction

Classical diplomacy must be perceived as a form of permanent and effective communication between states through the use of various communication channels, so that it can maintain an economic, political and diplomatic balance between institutions and communities, both internally and externally. Depending on the strategy used, each state has the opportunity to position itself on the international stage in different ways, which can generate new diplomatic relations. The history of diplomacy is considered to be quite versatile. The negotiation between peoples, the exchange of goods and the continuous desire for expansion created the favorable framework for the development of diplomacy. With the passage of time and the emergence of new challenges, both communicatively and strategically, the diplomatic act began to gain new value. In the beginning, the territorial boundaries between states represented a form of diplomatic activity, and the representation had an itinerant principle and an ad-hoc character, as there were no very precise rules or ambassadors, in the sense we understand today. Relations between communities were mediated by an emissary / landlord, who had the necessary capacity and authority to conclude a treaty, a peace treaty, a trade agreement or, conversely, to declare war on another community (Iacob, 2005).

Diplomatic activity can be noticed from the ancient peoples. The documents that can be considered by the leaders in attesting the beginnings of diplomacy and the need of communities to create strategic links and generate new means of communication between the representatives of various peoples are the famous letters from Amarna, Egypt (Geamănu, 1983, pp. 45-89). They date from the middle of the 14th century BC. and consists of 382 ceramic tablets, written unevenly in various ancient idioms. Most are written in the Akkadian language and feature military and diplomatic correspondence between numerous states and the pharaohs Amenophis III and his son Akhenaten. The engraved tablets directly indicate the company's desire to facilitate the exchange of information over long distances. The texts were intended for Syria, Cyprus, Hittite, Babylon, Assyria, Canaan, and Mithana (Cohen, 2006; Toma, 2015). Non-uniform writings were among the first seeds of the evolution of communication between individuals and society. An important stage is also given by the printing age, which helped the diplomatic environment to adapt to the new conditions of communication, easier to use and much more efficient from a military, strategic and economic point of view. These documents represented

an important pillar in the stages that will follow from a diplomatic point of view, they mediated the application of foreign policy between states only with the emergence of state formations. In classical diplomacy, the transmission of messages was based on envoys (negotiator, clergyman, messengers) from one community to another to persuade the interlocutor in order to obtain a political, economic, or military advantage. It should be noted that the term ambassador was first used in the work of Caius Iulius Caesar, "De Bello Gallico", and became common in the mid-sixteenth century. Until then, envoys were called resident speakers and represented the community in certain assemblies (Malița, 1975).

Classical diplomacy has seen three essential stages:

- the first step is related to the temporary (solemn) embassies, which we find in Antiquity and the Middle Ages when dealing with dispatches to different parts of the world on different occasions: closing of the sins or alliances, celebrating an important event (marriages, baptisms, coronations), etc.
- the second stage concerns the permanent embassies, coordinated by the Government, through the institutionalization of diplomatic departments. The stage characterizes the modern and contemporary epochs at the end of the Middle Ages, as well as the embassy ensuring the continuity of diplomatic relations.
- in the third stage, the states of the world appoint their mandates for representation at International Congresses or Conferences (Năstase, 2006).

In order to better understand the dynamics of diplomatic relations, the external relations of the Ottoman Empire must be discussed. Relations with the Government of the Ottoman Empire were particularly important for the Italian states, these being called the Sublime Gates. Thus, interactions between different merchants and clergy from the Italian and Ottoman empires helped inaugurate and create new forms of diplomacy. Finally, the main purpose of a negotiator, evolved into a personality that represented an autonomous state in all aspects of political affairs, today's diplomat (Goffman, 2007). It became clear that all other sovereigns felt the need to adapt diplomatically because of the emergence of a strong political environment of the Ottoman Empire. From the very beginning, this work has placed a great emphasis on crafted words, so "making it" communication was the most important channel of communication. Classical diplomacy had as its basis the transmission of various concise

messages or non-verbal elements, as well as the taking of public positions on certain national or international events, the signing of trusts, the concession of thematic speeches (the oratory art playing a defining role in diplomacy traditional). Later on, the emergence of new language skills led to adaptation to new ways of communication that emphasized the use of calibrated and polished language, so that the transmission of the message would be much easier to different societies irrespective of culture. In traditional diplomacy, jamming has always been an impediment to the transparent perception of diplomatic messages, but as it has embraced new dimensions, obstacles have been removed during the negotiations and the jamming has been greatly reduced, and the whole mechanism is a new orientation in this field, quite volatile. As mentioned by Teodor Frunzeti in his work "Defense Diplomacy", it is worth noting the evolution of the international environment, which plays an important role in diplomacy, and consequently its impact has brought about an adaptation to the new methods, means and rules. Thus, the diplomatic act was offered a new relevant quality by giving up "what was out of the ordinary", and the customary norms turned into contractual norms (Frunzeti, 2013). It is reminded that one of the most important features of classical diplomacy is to preserve peace, security and stability on the international stage. Also, although the new media will interfere with classical diplomacy in order to more easily disseminate the message, it must remain secretive. In other words, classical diplomacy began behind closed doors, just as it continues today.

Traditional communication channels commonly used in traditional diplomacy are: physical meetings, face to face (negotiation) in bilateral or multilateral (conference type) diplomacy, official letters, special encrypted communication systems, telegrams, etc. Experts in social sciences, as well as those in advanced technologies, have found that society is becoming more and more dependent on information. Due to the development and mix of communications technologies, such as the internet, television or mobile, the information is broadcast globally at an impressive speed. The technology of communications networks has contributed to the spread and decentralization of information beyond the "walls" of the political and economic elites of developed societies. Changes in classical diplomacy, in terms of the emergence of used devices and channels of information transmission, generate a series of direct consequences on the dynamics of international relations, which is why many of the diplomatic relations have migrated to cyberspace. The virulent expansion of communications systems and the globalization of information dissemination mark new social coordinates of power at national and international level. Leaders in the

politico-diplomatic environment, regardless of the geographic location of the states they govern, have equal access to the instant transmission of messages at any point and time (Tasențe, 2014). If in the past diplomatic messages could reach long-term interlocutors in the XXI century, the geopolitical phenomenon has changed, with the media taking a central role in the ongoing diplomatic act by providing modern media tools. Modern diplomacy uses advanced connection technologies that facilitate effective communication between public institutions in order to achieve the global interaction process (Sălcudean, 2015).

2. Traditional Diplomacy from Digital Diplomacy

Gradually, telecommunications have begun to gain ground in the "mysterious" field of diplomacy, so governments have had to adapt to the conditions of communication, and to build foreign policy strategies according to the modern tools provided by new technology. Although we are in a connected global era, traditional forms of diplomacy do not exist, but absorb new care technologies that allow global progress. Therefore, diplomatic programs with short messages such as S.M.S, can be adopted (idea borrowed from Sierra Leone and Montenegro, which is not voluntary for its SMS for reporting voting irregularities). During the development of diplomatic communication channels, new approaches are taken into account by changing strategies to adapt to the new geopolitically based context based on advanced technologies. After that, SMSs become used in diplomatic activities, this being a new communication channel and growing. It also comes with a variety of benefits. The advent of radio has been a real intersection in diplomacy, as more and more politicians encourage the interest in the way care can be capitalized, so that it can generate a link between the masses and the diplomatic act. The fact that the radio offers the opportunity to talk directly with people, without having to call to manage the special channel (Subramanian, 2017). Social media networks, such as Twitter or Facebook, are responsible for the most surprising evolution of international relations and diplomacy in the era of computerization. The Arab Spring has succeeded, with the help of new communication technologies, to bring about the country where decades of international diplomacy have failed. And here is the suspicion that, including these riots, they would have been supported by countries with interests and capabilities to manipulate social networks, as an ultramodern strategy of expressing foreign policies in the sense desired by governments. Accelerating scientific discoveries favored the development of a dedicated diplomacy (Chiriță,

2014). Digital diplomacy or cyber diplomacy, according to DigitalDiplomacy.ro, is the online communication conducted in the international diplomatic environment and is the ideal model for building a coherent and effective interaction between public institutions and citizens that benefits both parties and supports fluidization and transparency of institutional services and processes.

These new tools also used in diplomatic work must be seen as an alternative to offline communication, and should not therefore be seen as a way to give up traditional channels used in classical diplomacy. Excessive use of new technologies in the political and diplomatic field can also bring a series of damages, to be remembered that new devices do not eliminate the possibility of transmitting false, willful or less void information. Replacing direct contact between two personalities may be a disadvantage in the proper functioning of the diplomatic act, as communication is not only through the actual discussion but also through other forms of communication that give diplomatic debates values that they cannot an impersonal message, regardless of the form of transmission, but also by the fact that digital diplomacy is poorer in transmitting nuances of actual momentary attitudes and, in particular, perspective intentions. Expanding the phenomenon of manipulation and misinformation brings a minus to digital diplomacy compared to the coercive methods offered by traditional diplomacy. Cyber diplomacy is seen as an indispensable component in the diplomatic act by states such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel or Turkey. We can see that digital diplomacy is of special importance to it, a fact that relies on the growing number of sites, Facebook and Twitter pages (Dincă, 2012).

New technologies have begun to have a growing impact on our everyday activities. They are frequently used to establish contacts with specific people, interest groups and institutions. Social networks and increased number of users have expanded into the diplomatic environment. Governments have the opportunity to react promptly to various national and international events, to generate and decide on new foreign policy strategies and to be actively involved in civil society action. Communication mediated by new tools favors the process of data transmission and decision-making. Dialogue between national and international organizations is based on a new concept, namely digital diplomacy or e-diplomacy. He is also joined by Twitter diplomacy, which refers to the adaptation or incorporation into the communication strategies of the traditional diplomacy of the new channels of communication. The emergence and development of websites and emails led to a fuller growth in social networking, the origin of this trend being in the United States. The rapid evolution of technology and its

breakthrough in the field of diplomacy has led to a number of significant changes for diplomatic missions, both nationally and internationally. By using various media channels and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, official sites, emails, blogs, and audio and video (podcast, vodcast), diplomats can be permanently connected, from home, from their own computers to global interstellar events. Physical location starts to count less and less, they can check important information through encrypted electronic files.

Digital diplomacy brings with it a number of advantages, but we can also notice the disadvantages associated with each mediated communication channel (Rashica, 2018).

- A prime advantage of digital diplomacy is the lack of constraints of drafting and transmitting messages. The diplomat has the opportunity to use a variety of modern channels so that he can convey ideas about topics of public interest to the entire world without being conditioned by publishers or producers.

- The second strong point in cyber-diplomacy is given by the possibility of making bidirectional communication with various groups, organizations and citizens from different corners of the world.

- A third benefit is the presence of feedback, which supports the diplomatic process, as it provides the necessary framework for changing the communication strategy in real time (Susskind, 2019).

- The major disadvantage in this micro - sphere of public communication is the possibility of leakage of information. Society through the use of advanced technologies has a multitude of levers through which it can present messages in various forms depending on the interests of certain groups and organizations.

On the basis of the above, a real advantage is the reduction of the cost of staying diplomats and support staff in the territory of a certain country in order to resolve a diplomatic mission. The new technology favors solving various problems at a distance, through the internet, without the need for a staff shift in the area. This situation changes reporting and provides information in fundamental ways. For example, headquarters officers can benefit from all the advantages and disadvantages of Internet evolution almost as easy as embassy officers. Whether it is trade promotion or cultural promotion, access to information can be provided on the official websites of state institutions, on social networks or on websites (Kissinger, 2010).

According to studies conducted in January 2020, reported that over 4.5 billion people use the Internet. In other words, 3.8 billion of those mentioned are active users of social networks, this number being 9% higher than in 2019. About 60% of the world's population has moved online, which indicates that most activities will be carried out mainly in this media, and the diplomatic environment is not excluded from this category. As a result, the new media is growing as compared to traditional information dissemination environments. The increased number of users highlights the need for them to easily connect with the other participants in the communication process, to exchange eloquent information and to remove any temporal and spatial barriers between the interlocutors (Allen, 2020). Based on this mechanism, digital diplomacy is also perceived as a micro-sphere of public communication.

3. Methodology

The first part of the paper is based on statistics provided by the website <https://www.smartinsights.com>, respectively the website <https://digitaltreemarketing.eu/>, where the information regarding to the number of media channel users in Romania for 2018 and 2020 are found. Based on the data obtained a parallel is made to see the evolution and dynamics of the channels. The data were collected and then a chart is made in Excel to present the situation for each year.

The following step aimed at monitoring 30 foreign embassies based in Romania for a period of one year (starting with January 2020). These were constantly monitored on Facebook and Twitter and the fluctuation of the number of likes, existence or absence on the above-mentioned networks was followed, respectively their dynamics, which consists in creating accounts or deleting them.

The research carried out at the beginning of January 2020, had as a starting point a statistic made in 2015 taken from the site <http://digitaldiplomacy.ro/reprezentantele-diplomatice-din-romania-analiza/>. They followed the same embassies that we monitored in 2020, also on both Facebook and Twitter. They made a ranking according to the number of likes and the activity carried out in new media.

The analysis made for the year 2020 belongs to the author. Both platforms Facebook and Twitter accounts have been monitored for the same 30 foreign embassies based in Romania by analyzing each embassy's page by taking into consideration the number of likes and the existence of

the accounts (e.g. existing account / deleted account). A comparative analysis for 2015 and 2020 have been made.

4. Communication channels used in digital diplomacy

Digital diplomacy has the capacity to incorporate parts of the aforementioned by using communication tools that support the diplomatic act and citizens for the well-functioning of civil society, and e-diplomacy can therefore be considered as a component of communication but with new valences. Due to the rapid evolution of the internet and such media, the diplomatic field has begun to make use of the benefits it offers to deliver messages to the target audience. Rapid provision of information is not only beneficial to the diplomatic environment, but also to societies as a whole, being viewed as an active participant in the political activities and decisions taken by governments. By using the new media, classical diplomacy is transferred to the online environment, triggering the emergence of new diplomacy, or digital diplomacy. Having as reference the data published by digitaltreemarketing.eu from 2020, we can see a change in the use of digital communication channels used in Romania in conjunction with 2018 (Alpha, 2020).

In Figure 1 we will draw a parallel between the most used online platforms and their number of users in 2018 and 2020.

Figure 1. Evolution of online communication channels in Romania 2018 vs. 2020

Source: Author's own conception

Having the above graph, we find that in 2018, respectively in 2020, the social network Facebook occupies a leading place, with the mention that there was an increase of 10%. This network is a favorite for most Romanians. On the other hand, the other networks maintained their positions with small decreases or increases, but not significant. What is noteworthy is that a new social network is present in 2020, this being TikTok. With the appearance of TikTok in Romania, both YouTube and Twitter have dropped another position in the top achieved in 2018. According to statistics, it is used by 3,653,351 people, which shows that it is becoming quite fast among citizens, but the embassies do not deviate from watching and even promoting new videos from TikTok. A good example of this can be the Belgian Embassy in New Delhi, which posts videos made on TikTok on its Facebook page. Not only the society as a whole uses social networks, but also the representatives of the embassies in Romania. The diplomatic field has gradually begun to send messages, to maintain contact with citizens or even to have a dialogue with them through social networks.

A study by digitaldiplomacy.ro, conducted in 2015, shows the online activity of foreign embassies present on Facebook and Twitter. At that time, these networks were the ones agreed by the diplomatic environment. Recently emerging communication channels through the development of internet networks facilitate the offline transfer of data across the Internet, so that a new micro-sphere of public communication, recalled throughout the article, cyber diplomacy, begins to emerge. In the context of new means of communication, the emergence of digital diplomacy serves the mutual-advantageous relations in the public sphere. The new media and the rapid evolution of communication have led to a shift from classical to digital diplomacy, a necessity for effective communication. The identification of the means by which the permanent technology, the flow of information and the online transition of many diplomatic activities are made, make classical diplomacy vulnerable to a new concept, the digital diplomacy, which meets the communication needs of society. Globally, the situation of the media and its frequency of use is slightly different from our country (Hanganu, 2016).

In Figure 2 we will analyze online activity (the number of likes received) on the two social networks, Facebook and Twitter of foreign embassies in Romania. The number of embassies is analyzed by 30 diplomatic representatives with the headquarters in Bucharest.

Figure 2. Online activity (the number of likes received) of Foreign Embassies in Romania on Facebook and Twitter in 2015

Source: Author's own conception

According to the statistical data provided by the above-mentioned site, we notice that foreign embassies in Romania tend to communicate more and more frequently using online communication channels alternatively with the official ones. All 30 embassies analyzed chose different communication strategies. For example, the US embassy chose to use both communication channels as intensely as possible to target a wide audience. The Twitter account is synchronized with that of Facebook and communicates in two directions: one through which it informs the constant activities of the ambassador, and the other direction aims at promoting American national values. At the opposite pole we have the embassy of Mexico which preferred to disseminate the messages only on Facebook, having no Twitter account. Depending on the global positioning, each state chooses the way to make itself visible or not in the online environment, especially since we are talking about foreign embassies in Romania. It is noteworthy that their online activity is also related to the relationships they want to develop or maintain with the state in which the embassy resides.

In 2015 we followed the situation of foreign embassies in Romania, but now is the time to see their evolution or involution in the online environment. As a result, for a period of 5 months (January-May 2020) I followed the online activity on Facebook and Twitter of the 30 embassies based in Bucharest and it was observed that at a distance of 5 years the situation is changed. In figure 3 we will present a parallel of the number of followers of the foreign embassies in Bucharest on Facebook and Twitter for the period January - May 2020.

Figure 3. Number of followers on Facebook and Twitter of Foreign Embassies in Romania 2020

Source: Author's own conception

Figure 3 shows the dynamics of the use of Facebook and Twitter accounts by foreign embassies in Romania. As in 2015, Facebook remained the most beloved social network and also used extensively by the diplomatic environment. It is true that Twitter follows, but according to statistics on the number of followers we can see that the difference is quite large between those who use Facebook and those who like Twitter. Compared to the data obtained in 2015 that were taken from the site digitaldiplomacy.ro, we notice that some of the embassies have created Twitter accounts, but there are also cases in which we have not found the embassy accounts. on Facebook or Twitter. It is true that it is possible that they have changed their name on the networks in the meantime, which made it difficult for me to find them. The Facebook account of the Embassy of Libya is an example of an account that I no longer find in my Facebook searches. It is worth mentioning that in 2015 the Embassy of Libya was present on Facebook with a number of 460 followers. For a greater relevance of the research I will attach the table with the number of followers for each embassy, both on Facebook and Twitter.

The table will compare the data taken from 2015 with those we obtained in 2020.

Foreign embassies in Romania	Facebook 2015	Twitter 2015	Facebook 2020	Twitter 2020
Embassy of Mexico	272	0	2,380	2,824
Embassy of Belgium	294	0	2,572	0
Embassy of Slovenia	432	72	2,591	507
Embassy of Libya	460	0	0	0
Embassy of Denmark	556	0	12,850	0
Embassy of Albania	574	577	2,204	0
Embassy of Ukraine	888	588	2,815	1,781
Embassy of Austria	989	0	3,159	0
Embassy of Japan	1,005	0	7,533	0
Embassy of India	1,130	10	8,827	9,113
Embassy of Finland	1,137	0	5,349	142
Embassy of Azerbaijan	1,171	0	1,663	0
Embassy of Georgia	1,184	0	2,977	0
Embassy of Chile	1,576	0	2,287	0
Embassy of the Republic of Korea	1,849	0	5,576	0
Embassy of Spain	1,336	667	10,088	0
Embassy of Italy	1,901	0	273	2,426
Embassy of Russia	2,246	0	8,127	0
Embassy of Ireland	2,321	83	3,012	315
Embassy of Brazil	2,747	51	4,684	0
Embassy of Turkey	3,203	1,006	8,614	2,810
Embassy of Netherlands	4,725	1,602	11,701	1,602
Embassy of the Czech Republic	5,080	0	5,440	0
Embassy of the Republic of Poland	5,915	1,163	6,962	1,591
Embassy of United Kingdom	6,806	3,578	23,131	7,438
Embassy of Germany	9,465	0	21,687	0
Embassy of Sweden	11,321	0	101,736	727
Embassy of Israel	12,023	1,463	36,306	3,510
Embassy of France	12,027	353	31,821	2,945
Embassy of the United States	65,432	1,805	112,576	7,682

Figure 4. The number of followers of foreign embassies in Romania on Facebook and Twitter 2015 vs 2020

Source: Author's own conception

Communication at the level of institutions through mediated channels is of particular interest to most users of social platforms and beyond. People prefer to be informed in a timely manner, to have access to a relevant amount of data and to be able to have a quick dialogue in order to solve various problems. In order to try to create a connection with the target

audience and to be more easily noticed, the embassies preferred to create accounts on various social networks, but this is done depending on their communication strategy, the global impact on who also want to generate it from the ties they want to build or strengthen from a diplomatic point of view with the country in which they are based.

5. Conclusions

With the evolution of diplomacy, from the classical to the modern digital one, the context of the new means of communication has led to a mutually beneficial relationship in the public sphere. The new media and rapid evolution have led to a shift from classical to digital diplomacy, a necessity for effective communication between states. Throughout the article, the transition from classical to digital diplomacy has been exposed by presenting its development, the means of communication used and the way the Internet has entered the diplomatic field, triggering a new micro-sphere, called digital diplomacy. It is worth mentioning that classical diplomacy has enjoyed communication like: engraved tapes, face-to-face official meetings, special data transmission devices, telephone, telegram, fax and then benefit from the Internet. Gradually, the career diplomat had to adapt to the new channels of communication in order to convey the information in an efficient, fast and secure manner. Thus, classical diplomacy is beginning to gain new valences, and diplomatic activity is easy to move into the online sphere, embassies have begun to denounce Facebook and Twitter pages, world leaders have accounts on social networks, the most widely used media channel being Facebook, followed by Twitter. Through modern technologies, the governmental apparatus presents the most important topics of national and international interest, having permanent contact with civil society through websites, webpages and mobile applications.

In conclusion, diplomacy is a vast field that still has a "degree of intimacy" towards public opinion. The main trait of digital diplomacy is to easily connect participants in the diplomatic communication process in order to maintain peace among states, security and improve international relations. It must respond affirmatively to all the challenges of the online sphere so that digital diplomacy can provide the necessary support for classical diplomacy. Communication achieved through new technologies is not limited to the functioning of embassies in the online environment and their way of transmitting messages of public interest on Facebook and Twitter. From a diplomatic point of view, most of Romania's institutions were trying a new approach to mediated communication. A good example would be the

use of platforms by public institutions in order to maintain a fast and consistent dialogue with civil society. The most commonly used platforms are: RoHelp, Diaspora Hub, Ce trebuie să fac? and Știri Oficiale.

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