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Digital diplomacy: aspects, approaches and practical use

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ABSTRACT

Digital diplomacy is considered as the one of the major trends of the twenty-first century in diplomatic communication, the role and importance of which is growing with extraordinary speed. The main purpose of this paper is to highlight the features of this form of new public diplomacy. For the realization of the research are used qualitative methods, based on recent literature that is related to international relations and diplomacy, especially public diplomacy, as well as the credible internet sources within which there are valuable data about the characteristics of digital diplomacy. The results show that digital diplomacy has become an essential element for realizing the foreign policy of the states and also for the development of various diplomatic activities of other international actors. Whereas the conclusions of the research aim to contribute to the increasing knowledge about the general characteristics of digital diplomacy, by providing important information for the definition, origin, goals, effectiveness, the most used digital platforms, and its benefits and risks.

KEY WORDS: Digital diplomacy, globalization, international actors, digital platforms

POVZETEK

Digitalna diplomacija velja za enega glavnih trendov enaindvajsetega stoletja pri diplomatskem komuniciranju, katerega vloga in pomen naraščata z izjemno hitrostjo. Glavni namen tega prispevka je osvetliti značilnosti te oblike nove javne diplomacije. Za uresničitev raziskave se uporabljajo kvalitativne metode, ki temeljijo na novejši literaturi, ki je povezana z mednarodnimi odnosi in diplomacijo, zlasti javno diplomacijo, ter na verodostojnih internetnih virih, v katerih so dragoceni podatki o značilnostih digitalne diplomacije. Rezultati kažejo, da je digitalna diplomacija postala bistven element za uresničevanje zunanje politike držav in tudi za razvoj različnih diplomatskih dejavnosti drugih mednarodnih akterjev. Zaključki raziskave želijo prispevati k povečanju znanja o splošnih značilnostih digitalne diplomacije z zagotavljanjem pomembnih informacij za opredelitev, izvor, cilje, učinkovitost, najbolj uporabljene digitalne platforme ter njene koristi in tveganja.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Digitalna diplomacija, globalizacija, mednarodni akterji, digitalne platforme

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Introduction

The paper treats one topic which is about a very important form of the postmodern diplomacy and today's public diplomacy, known as digital diplomacy. The latter one is characterized by a great influence on the realization of diplomatic practices by the international actors, providing also an influential space for ICT, the Internet and social media, which are at the same time its basic elements. The main research purposes of the paper are these: To clarify the definition and goals of digital diplomacy, to describe its evolution from the last years of the twentieth century to the present day, to explain the main points of its effectiveness, to emphasize the most used digital platforms by digital diplomats and to classify the main benefits and risks of digital diplomacy. The research question of the paper is: Why digital diplomacy is considered an essential element for the realization of diplomatic activities? While the hypotheses of this paper are these: Social media represent the basis of digital diplomacy; if benefits and risks of digital diplomacy would be placed in scale, the benefits will raise up, arguing enough that digital diplomacy is very beneficial for the realization of diplomatic activities.
Therefore, to give the research question the right answer and to identify the raised hypotheses, the paper is divided into seven chapters. The second chapter explains what digital diplomacy is and the third one describes its evolution from e-diplomacy to instaplomacy. The fourth chapter highlights the main points of the effective digital diplomacy, while the fifth one gives a ranking of the most used digital platforms by digital diplomats. The sixth and the seventh chapters are very special, because within them are information about the classification of the most important benefits and risks of digital diplomacy. This paper has an explanatory, descriptive, analytical and comparative nature, and for its realization are used qualitative methods, relying in the latest literature and the credible internet sources that are related to international relations and the field of diplomacy.

The definition and goals of digital diplomacy

An excellent opportunity to begin bridging the change management gap in diplomatic theory is offered by the recent spread of digital initiatives in foreign ministries, which probably can be described as nothing less than a revolution in the practice of diplomacy (Bjola and Kornprobst, 2015, p.201), bringing to light a new form of public di-

plomacy, the digital one. Digital diplomacy is a form of new public diplomacy, which uses new information and communication technologies (ICT), the Internet and social media as means for strengthening diplomatic relations between international actors (states, international governmental and non-governmental organizations and others). The main differences of new public diplomacy with the classical one lie in a greater access to information, greater interaction among individuals and organizations, and greater transparency (Chakraborty, 2013, p.37).

The usage of websites by foreign ministries, embassies and international organisations is now a standard practice. Social media has become diplomacy's significant tool, which provides a platform for unconditional communication, and has become a communicator's most powerful tool (Twiplomacy, 2017). Thanks to them world leaders can communicate with massive audiences around the world in unimaginable ways and the list of social media is growing at extraordinary speed. There are other e-tools, which are important for digital diplomacy like blogs[2], which are immensely popular and wikis, which are nowadays more frequently used for internal purposes, such as knowledge management. This worldwide embrace of online channels has brought with it a wave of openness and transparency that has never been experienced before.
Digital diplomacy cannot flourish in the bureaucratic framework of conventional foreign ministries. It thrives in a work environment that stimulates informal teamwork, creativity, innovation and out-of-the-box thinking. It is entirely supported in soft power, increasing lobbying opportunities for different issues, creating favorable spaces for the involvement of non-state actors in global governance, and resulting with cooperation between all the international actors. There are five principles that characterize impactful digital diplomacy: Listening, which means that actively monitoring online conversations is a critical step towards developing an impactful digital diplomacy, prioritization, which states that no digital strategy can succeed without clearly defined short-term and long-term objectives, hybridization, which emphasizes that digital outputs and outcomes cannot be allowed to substantially diverge or contradict objectives set for traditional diplomacy, engagement, which shows that key advantage of digital diplomacy is the possibility of directly reaching large audiences in real time, and adaptation, which highlights that digital diplomats do not operate in a static environment as their actions are constantly influenced, shaped

2 Blog is a regularly updated website or web page, typically one run by an individual or small group that is written in an informal or conversational style.

and constrained by the actions of other digital players (Bjola and Kornprobst, 2018, pp.698-701). The main goals of digital diplomacy are: Knowledge management, the successful realization of public diplomacy, information management, consular communications and response in disaster situations, internet freedom or the creation of specific technologies to keep the internet free and open, external resources and policy planning (Adesina, 2016).

From e-diplomacy to instaplomacy

Digital diplomacy emerged after the end of the Cold War when democracy and its values were spreading in the former communist countries and when people's access to international information was highly increasing. The development of ICT and the media triggers and promotes the increasing public interest in information on government foreign policy activity, thus enabling and encouraging the influence of the public on shaping foreign policy (Jazbec, 2010, p. 60). The first developments of digital diplomacy belong to 1992, when at the Earth Summit[3] in Rio de Janeiro for the first time civil society emails were used for lobbying in negotiations, as well as in Malta at the same time was founded the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, as the first unit for computer applications in diplomacy (DiploFoundation Blog, 2017).

The next milestone was the WikiLeaks scandal of 2010 in which WikiLeaks[4] published 250,000 diplomatic cables sent between US missions and Washington, which taught diplomats that secrets can hardly exist in the digital age, or do not exist at all. Digital diplomats and scholars have often viewed the Arab Spring[5] as the origin of digital diplomacy. Indeed the revolts that swept through the Middle East in 2011, and that saw the fall of Egyptian President Mubarak[6], were a for-

3 The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, the Rio Summit, the Rio Conference, and the Earth Summit, was a major United Nations conference held in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June in 1992.

4 WikiLeaks is a multi-national media organization and associated library that was founded by its publisher Julian Assange in 2006. WikiLeaks specializes in the analysis and publication of large datasets of censored or otherwise restricted official materials involving war, spying and corruption. It has so far published more than 10 million documents and associated analyses.

5 The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across North Africa and the Middle East in the late 2010s.

6 Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak was a former Egyptian military and political leader who served as the fourth president of Egypt from 1981 to 2011. On 13 April 2011, Mubarak and both of his sons (Alaa and Gamal) were detained for 15 days of questioning about allegations of corruption and abuse of power. Mubarak was then ordered to stand trial on charges of negligence for failing to halt the killing of peaceful protesters during the revolution. These trials began on 3 August 2011. On 2 June 2012, an Egyptian court sentenced Mubarak to life imprisonment. After sentencing, he was reported to have suffered a series of health crises. He was acquitted on 2 March 2017 by the Court of Cassation and he was released on 24 March 2017.

mative event in the history of digital diplomacy. During and following the Arab Spring, young activists used social media to spread dissident discourse, shape narratives, and broadcast live footage of revolutions across the world. It was at this moment that MFA, embassies and diplomats realized that events that occur offline take shape online. Moreover, social media emerged as a platform that could offer valuable insight into public opinion and public sentiment thus facilitating foreign policy analysis. (Manor, 2017).

When we search about digital diplomacy, we find different names for it such as la Diplomatie Numérique, e-Diplomacy[7], Digiplomacy, Public Diplomacy 2.0[8], 21st Century Statecraft[9], Open Policy[10], etc., (Deos, 2015, p.39). Twitter Diplomacy appeared as a synonymous of digital diplomacy based on the fact that Twitter is the most important social network for presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers and diplomats of the world (Sandre, 2013, p.24). The newest synonymous of digital diplomacy is Instaplomacy because Instagram Stories have become a secondary channel for digital diplomats, where world leaders meet, greet and tag each other. To see what world leaders are doing at international conferences and summits, it is useful to follow their Instagram accounts to glean valuable behind-the-scenes insights into the halls of power (Twiplomacy, 2018). Many of us may be confused with interchangeable use of prefixes digital, net, e-, Twitter, Insta etc., but all prefixes describe an impact and various developments of the Internet and social media in diplomacy. Meanwhile, some states want to give a special name to digital diplomacy, the best example are the French, who from the first appearance of digital diplomacy until today use a special term "la Diplomatie Numérique".

The effective digital diplomacy

Digital diplomacy innovation needs support from the top leadership. It is preferable to avoid grandiose digital diplomacy strategy, because the over-formalisation of a vision can be counter-productive, as it could create rigid structures that might not allow for the flexibil-

7 Digital diplomacy was known as "e-Diplomacy" by the British, as a description of the early commercialization of the Internet and its use in diplomacy.

8 The U.S. State Department uses social media in its public diplomacy initiative, which was dubbed "public diplomacy 2.0" by James K. Glassman, under secretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs.

9 The State Department of the United States calls digital diplomacy as "21st Century Statecraft".

10 The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development refers to digital diplomacy as "Open Policy".

ity needed to adapt to new technologies. Then, digital diplomacy is much more than social media and public diplomacy, because a much broader array of its activities takes place in thousands of diplomatic negotiations, policy initiatives, and crisis management actions every day worldwide and they all depend heavily on digital technologies. It should be emphasized that high budgets sometimes yield low impacts and low budgets sometimes yield high impacts. Selection of the most effective digital platform for special needs depends on many factors, including the target audience and the availability of human resources for maintaining the ministry's online presence on the platform. Putting diplomats, particularly young officials, in the driving seat is very important. Encouragement of early adopters can generate enormous results by involving experienced diplomats in digital diplomacy processes with a bit of patience and innovation. Learning from others and being open to innovative ideas are given prerequisites for successful digital diplomacy. The main element of digital diplomacy investment are human resource expenses, which should be used in calculating an entity's return on investment (Kurbalija, 2016).

Cybersecurity is about risk management. This is particularly important in the use of social media, where openness and engagement increase cyber-risk. It is understandable that without failure there are no successes, but must be sure that failures are contained and that lessons are learned. Digital diplomats need to be aware of the time needed: one day – one month – one year dynamics. They need to experiment and try to be among the early adopters, but also occasionally benefit from a delayed start (Kurbalija, 2016).

Constant engagement and timely content attract followers and make online presence vibrant and what matters is the context in which the content is presented. Social media reaches a wide variety of audiences and must be aware of the predominant audiences of the platform through which the message is sent. There are some useful tips and tricks on social media: Avoid drafting posts by committee, simplify, and don't over-complicate the message. Simplify the sign-off structure. Move from control to trust your social media manager. Don't create a culture, where all posts need to be approved. Instead focus on getting an editorial line approved, so you can create content within the editorial line. Train the inner circle of political advisors, especially on how to take engaging pictures. No handshakes! Always do a background check on hashtags, so you don't use a hashtag that is used with content

you don't want to be associated with. Consider using social media to ask for help and inspiration. It is a good way to start conversations (Twiplomacy, 2019). It is important to separate official from informal communication channels and also to separate professional from private communication in the digital space, which is probably the main challenge for, and a potential weakness of digital diplomacy. In the social media space, it is almost impossible to control the interpretation of messages and diplomatic services should be aware of this risk. Crises and difficulties will come sooner or later in digital diplomacy efforts. The best preparation for that consists of building and maintaining credibility within the community that follows (Kurbalija, 2016).

The most important digital diplomacy resource is found in the knowledge and experience of diplomats, so the MFA need to know how to use them. As Italian authors Stefano Baldi and Pasquale Baldocci stressed, "diplomats are born with a pen in their hand", yes, diplomacy happens in corridors and at dinners, but ultimately, diplomatic deals have to be put onto paper, even if this has transformed into an electronic version. Within diplomatic services, the ability to write informative and concise reports is often a criterion for diplomatic professionalism and advances in career. With this centrality of writing, diplomats are already trained and prepared to begin the practice of social media and digital diplomacy (Kurbalija, 2016).

Diplomats should have sufficient skills and knowledge to judge what they can, and what they cannot publish on social media. It is necessary to build learning into digital organization between senior diplomats that have a lot of experience and knowledge about the diplomatic profession and junior diplomats who tend to be masters of social media. Digital diplomats should know that the main and most important point of the effective digital diplomacy is training and practice.

The most used digital platforms

Twitter in particular, has become a diplomatic barometer, a tool used to analyze and forecast international relations. *97%* of all 193 UN member states have an official presence on the platform and only the governments of only six countries, namely Laos, Mauritania, Nicaragua, North Korea, Swaziland and Turkmenistan do not have an official presence on Twitter. Six of the G7 leaders have a personal Twitter account, which means that German Chancellor Angela Merkel is the only G7

leader to shun the social network. Have been identified 951 Twitter accounts (372 personal and 579 institutional) of heads of state and government and foreign ministers of 187 countries. The US President Donald J. Trump has made the biggest impact on Twitter since taking office on January 20, 2017. He is the most followed world leader with more than 59 million followers (Twiplomacy, 2018). A total of 97 multi-lateral international organizations and NGOs are actively present on Twitter (Twiplomacy, 2017).

Facebook is the second-most popular network among government leaders and it is where they have the biggest audiences. The heads of government and foreign ministers of 179 countries are present on the platform, representing 93% of all UN member states with 677 Facebook accounts. While some pages merely broadcast the daily activity of their leaders, others engage with their citizens, replying to the most salient comments and even allowing a free-flow of visitor posts on their respective pages. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi has the biggest audience on Facebook, with more than 43.5 million page likes (Twiplomacy, 2018). Facebook is the key platform of 97 international organizations, when they have their biggest and most engaged audiences (Twiplomacy, 2017).

Diplomacy is becoming more visible and more visual through social media and especially Instagram. What was once hidden behind closed doors is now becoming public for everyone to see. History is now being immortalized on the mobile photo and video sharing platform. Instagram has become the third-most popular social network for governments and 81% of all UN member states have 403 accounts, many of which are sharing daily Instagram stories. India's Prime Minister Modi is the most followed world leader on Instagram with 19.3 million followers (Twiplomacy, 2018). Almost three quarters of the international organizations have active profiles on Instagram and more of them are now sharing daily Instagram stories to win the hearts and minds of their followers or simply promote their latest blog post on their website (Twiplomacy, 2017).

YouTube is ranked into fourth place and 80% of all UN governments use it as a video repository, where are identified 355 accounts (Twiplomacy, 2018). YouTube is used by 88 international organizations to host their long-form videos (Twiplomacy, 2017).

Periscope or Twitter's Periscope platform for live broadcasts has grown, and there are 204 Periscope channels representing almost half (49%) of the 193 UN member states (Twiplomacy, 2018). Also, Periscope is used by 55 international organizations (Twiplomacy, 2017).

Snapchat is unique platform because it neither indicates the number of followers nor the number of views of each post, which disappear after 24 hours. It is also a safe social network for governments, as users cannot publically comment or criticize other users' posts or profiles. Snapchat is used by 30 world leaders, representing 11% of all UN governments (Twiplomacy, 2018). There are 14 international organizations which have a presence on Snapchat (Twiplomacy, 2017).

The benefits of digital diplomacy

In the twenty-first century, international politics has a wide variety of international actors, including states, ethno-national factors, multinational corporations, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, various transnational movements and networks, or even individuals (Mingst, 2008, p.343). The activity of international actors, especially sovereign states, is tightly related to the concept of power and interest, but the way in which we define power and realize interests has changed in the conditions of increasing interdependence, the development of technologies and the non-governmental actors' intrusion into international politics (Jazbec, 2014, p. 152). Today, digital diplomacy is an essential element for realizing foreign policy because it helps states a lot in advancing foreign policy goals, expanding international alignment, and affecting people who never set foot in any of the embassies of the world. Direct public interaction and the involvement of non-state actors make countries to use social media and digital diplomacy as a way to maintain legitimacy and develop or strengthen relationships in a changing world (Deos, 2015, p.60). Digital diplomacy strengthens international relations by increasing interdependence between international subjects and also their cooperation that is more than necessary for the management of various global issues of the twenty-first century.

Websites, blogs and social media have brought politicians and diplomats of the world closer with the citizens from all corners of the globe. Blogs can contribute to the generation of a principally individual identity of the owner, which can be active, interactive, reflective and multidimensional. Social media enable diplomats to observe events, gather

information, and identify key influencers. These platforms can help in consultation process, policy formulation and help disseminate ideas, and also provide channels to influence beyond the traditional audience. To penetrate deeply within different audiences, in social media must be applied the Think globally, act locally formula (Shih, 2009, p.166).

Digital technologies are extremely useful for gathering and processing information regarding diplomatic activities as well as for quick communications in urgent situations. They enable governments to think about the consequences of events in different parts of the world and how they can affect in their country. Quick knowledge of various events can be an advantage to national interest in many cases. For example, in times of crisis, embassies can create groups in WhatsApp[11] that include the ambassador, consular officer, press secretary, staff who collects online information, diplomats from the headquarter and staff answering citizens questions on the internet. This group can function as a crisis management cell and enables the collection of real-time information, decision-making and dissemination of information (Manor, 2018). Whereas, people who live under authoritarian regimes that aim to limit their ability to communicate internally and internationally, thanks to digital technologies can avoid this kind of limitation, enabling the free expression of objections to certain issues, as well as affecting the minimization of authoritarianism (McGlinchey, 2017, p.139). Even the Chinese government, which is known for blocking Western social media networks behind the Great Firewall[12], is slowly opening to social media engagement such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube and seven Chinese embassies are now active on Twitter (Twiplomacy, 2018). Social media, like other forms of technology, are making societies much more democratic.

The costs of using new technologies are falling rapidly as a result of continuous technology advancements. Moreover, digital diplomacy does not always require financial investments. On the contrary, it is often aimed at reducing costs. This fact makes digital diplomacy more attractive to governments, MFAs and embassies for spreading their work, as it does not cause budget damage. E.g., Twitter posts can help investi-

11 WhatsApp Messenger is a freeware, cross-platform messaging and Voice over IP service owned by Facebook. It allows users to send text messages and voice messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user locations, and other media.

12 The Great Firewall of China is the combination of legislative actions and technologies enforced by the People's Republic of China to regulate the Internet domestically. Its role in the Internet censorship in China is to block access to selected foreign websites and to slow down cross-border internet traffic. Reasons behind China's Internet censorship include social control, sensitive content and economic protectionism.

gate and identify troublesome issues and exposing those responsible, by pushing the public, media and political-diplomatic engagement in order to achieve positive change (Twiplomacy, 2017).

The definition of small states is determined by certain quantitative criteria, like the size of the territory, the number of inhabitants, the GDP and the military size (Petrič, 2012, p.520). Some of the small states during the realization of their foreign policy face many challenges, and the main one which limits their foreign policy execution is the financial capacity. It is true that digital diplomacy favors all kinds of states, but mostly small states. Typical example is the Republic of Kosovo, which, as a new and small country with limited financial resources, sees digital diplomacy as a contributor to its cause by linking its diplomats and citizens with people of other states, than they to put pressure on their states to recognize the newest state of the Balkans (Reka, Bashota & Sela, 2018, pp. 250-251). Small states have already become leaders in the trends of using the internet pages and ICT for their advantages. The technological revolution in most of the poor countries will act as a promoter or new requirements on public services, including MFA (Rana, 2011, p.72).

The risks of digital diplomacy

Although it is perceived as very positive in many cases, mostly in minimizing authoritarianism, freedom from the Internet and social media has its own negative sides. New communication technologies have had a profound impact on negative events as well because terrorist and xenophobic groups also mobilize and recruit supporters through them (Kinsman & Bassuener, 2010, p.13). The Internet is also perceived as a channel for the spread of extremism, terrorism and the imposition of foreign ideologies. Then, part of social media can be anyone, from world governments to various extremist organizations, in which the latter ones distribute their norms, values and objectives, whatever they are (Kalathil, 2013, p. 21). Critics of digital diplomacy consider dangerous such as Trojan Horse freedom from the Internet and social media, because this kind of freedom has contributed to the presence of jihadist movements, which still continues to exist and cause lots of problems that do not recognize any state borders. Between August 2015 and December 2017, the social network Twitter had closed 1.2 million accounts for terrorist apology with purpose to prevent the promotion of terrorism (Le Monde, 2018). However, Twitter, Facebook and You-

Tube still continue to have pressures from some world governments, which are criticizing them about not being strict enough in their fight against terrorist propaganda (Le Monde, 2018).

In practice, secrets no longer exist on the Internet and social media revolution is changing the way how people see the world, and how they are communicating with each other. Not only it has made easier for governments and ambassadors to engage with the public, but it has made everybody more aware of the effects – both positive and negative – a single word, tweet, Facebook comment, video, or image can have in a relatively short timeframe. Lack of knowledge about using new communication technologies, the Internet and social media can result with terrible consequences, severe conflicts, even with dismissals of politicians (Adesina, 2017). That's why diplomatic missions of large countries employ permanent staff specialized in dealing with science and technology related files (Ruffini, 2017, p.47). For more, that is the reason why trainings and practices about the usage of digital diplomacy by all the world leaders and diplomats are so important.

Information about international crises, which used to take hours and days for government officials and media to be scattered, are now being broadcast live in world not only through radio and television, but also from the Internet and social media. Diplomats can no longer be certain that their thoughts will not be revealed to the audiences they have never targeted, and it is now impossible to leave the public eye. For policymakers, the immediate distribution of information about distant and nearby events is likely to be more a risk than a benefit. It seems that the era of secrecy has already been replaced with the era of distribution in which ordinary citizens spend hours reading, marking and criticizing government policies each day, and then sharing their thoughts on the internet and social media. Unfortunately, the level of communication culture in social media is very low, where many political leaders and diplomats face with insults as well as with provocative and threatening messages, thus causing many disagreements. Digital frustration is also linked with digital ethics. What can and cannot be distributed on the internet? What is hate speech and what should be protected as part of freedom of speech? Thus, MFA and diplomats, together with civil society, are indispensable to promote a global discussion on the issues of digital ethics (Manor, 2016).

Another challenge of digital diplomacy is the culture of anonymity, because anyone can pretend to be someone else and cause damages to certain persons. The culture of anonymity can lead to complicated crises as a result of the publication of conflictual information, even untrue. This kind of widespread disinformation on the Internet can hinder the ability of leaders to manage the ensuing crises (Manor, 2017). Social media are being abused, so they have to fix their pages and to make clear whether a post comes from a trustworthy source. The year 2018 will be remembered as the most critical year for Facebook that was faced and is facing with the harshest criticism of its 14-years history of privacy practices and how it treats user data, known as the Cambridge Analytica Data Scandal. The analytical data firm that has worked with the US President Donald Trump's electoral team and the Brexit winner campaign has taken millions of American voter's data and has used them to build a powerful software program to predict and influence the US presidential election of 2016. This has damaged a lot Facebook, because many of its users have deactivated their accounts.

Growing pervasiveness of the digital world, alongside the fear of future attacks of sensitive institutions, has turned many cyber optimists into cyber pessimists. Hacking is a risk, which has existed since the invention of the Internet. Very rightly, it is considered to be the main risk of digital diplomacy, because many heads of states, governments and diplomats around the world have been its victims, which has jeopardized their careers. Diplomatic rivals, including state and non-state actors, try to attack government systems in order to extract information that would serve them for certain purposes. Cyber security has reached the top of the international diplomatic and political agendas of the UN, NATO, ITU[13], OECD[14], OSCE[15], Commonwealth, G7 and G20. Many countries have adopted national cyber security strategies and relevant legislation. Nevertheless, the risks are increasingly sophisticated, and the groups concerned to exploit the cybernetic vulnerabilities have been expanded by black-hat hacking secret hackers in well-organized

13 The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), originally the International Telegraph Union, is a specialized agency of the United Nations that is responsible for issues that concern information and communication technologies. It was founded in 1865 and it is the oldest among all the 15 specialized agencies of UN.

14 The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 36 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. It is a forum of countries describing themselves as committed to democracy and the market economy, providing a platform to compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices and coordinate domestic and international policies of its members.

15 The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest security-oriented intergovernmental organization which was founded in 1973. Its mandate includes issues such as arms control, promotion of human rights, freedom of the press, and fair elections.

criminal and terrorist groups, government security services and defense forces. To make things more complicated, most of the infrastructure and internet services are privately owned, with operators spread around the various global jurisdictions (DiploFoundation Blog, 2017).

Conclusion

This paper has elaborated a special form of the postmodern diplomacy, which can be considered as the newest trend of the twenty-first century in diplomatic communication. Digital diplomacy uses ICT, the Internet and social media for strengthening diplomatic relations, and is not only used by states, but also by other international actors like international organizations and NGOs. The usage of websites by MFA, embassies and international organizations is now a standard practice, while the social media has become diplomacy's significant tool, providing a platform for unconditional communication between world leaders with different audiences all over the world.

The first developments of digital diplomacy belong to the year 1992, when at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro for the first time civil society emails were used for lobbying. However, the Arab Spring is viewed as the origin of digital diplomacy, because it was at this moment that MFAs, embassies and diplomats realized social media emerged as a platform that could offer valuable insight into public opinion and public sentiment thus facilitating foreign policies analysis. To have an effective digital diplomacy, digital diplomats should pay attention to six sections that are its organization and management, security, time, content, context and failures, maximizing knowledge, and training and support of digital diplomats. There is a wide range of digital platforms, the number of which is growing by extraordinary steps, but the most used ones in digital diplomacy are Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Periscope and Snapchat. Digital diplomacy has brought world leaders closer to citizens from all over the globe, enables fast communications in urgent situations, has a low costs which favors especially small states in the realization of the foreign policy, and the most important, increase the interdependence between international actors, which results with the strengthening of international relations. However, freedom of the Internet and social media can be used also to spread extremist and terrorist ideologies. The lack of knowledge about the usage of new communication technologies, the Internet and social media can result with terrible disagreements. Then hacking is

the main risk of digital world, victims of which were and are many heads of states, governments, and diplomats all around the world.
As can be seen, digital diplomacy is accompanied with benefits and risks, but if they would be placed in scale, the benefits will raise up, arguing enough that digital diplomacy is not risky, rather it is very beneficial. Digital diplomacy as a product of soft power should be combined with smart power, which means maximum utilization of the benefits of digitization and empowering protection policies against various threats arising from digitization.

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