

Is Digital Diplomacy Triumphant Over Political Diplomacy?

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ABSTRACT

Regardless of how much the role of digital diplomacy increased in realizing the priorities of the subjects of international relations, the opinion that it would have the power to triumph over political diplomacy was opposed by most of the diplomatic law experts. However, the appearance of the coronavirus in 2020 proved that such a thing could happen. The main purpose of this paper is to explain how digital diplomacy triumphed over political diplomacy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The realization of the paper is based on the usage of qualitative methods, respectively from the data collected in literature and credible Internet sources related to diplomatic law and digital diplomacy. The research results show that not only during the coronavirus pandemic, but also in the future there may be such situations when digital diplomacy can triumph over political diplomacy. The conclusions of the paper aim to contribute to the increase of information regarding the importance that digital diplomacy has had, has and will have in the future.

KEYWORDS: political diplomacy, digital diplomacy, digital platforms, international actors, interdependence

POVZETEK

Ne glede na to, koliko se je povečala vloga digitalne diplomacije pri uresničevanju prioritet subjektov mednarodnih odnosov, je mnenju, da bo imela moč zmagati nad politično diplomacijo, nasprotovala večina diplomatskopравnih strokovnjakov. Pojav koronavirusa leta 2020 pa je dokazal, da se kaj takega lahko zgodi. Glavni namen tega prispevka je razložiti, kako je digitalna diplomacija med pandemijo COVID-19 zmagala nad politično diplomacijo. Izvedba prispevka temelji na uporabi kvalitativnih metod oziroma podatkov, zbranih v literaturi in verodostojnih spletnih virih, povezanih z diplomatskim pravom in digitalno diplomacijo. Rezultati raziskave kažejo, da ne le v času pandemije koronavirusa, ampak tudi v prihodnosti lahko pride do situacij, ko bo digitalna diplomacija lahko zmagala nad politično diplomacijo. Zaključki prispevka želijo prispevati k povečanju informiranosti o pomenu, ki ga je digitalna diplomacija imela, ga ima in ga bo imela v prihodnosti.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: politična diplomacija, digitalna diplomacija, digitalne platforme, mednarodni akterji, soodvisnost

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INTRODUCTION

Based on the title of the paper, it is understood that the topic treated in the latter deals with has to do with a very important part of diplomacy in general. In recent years, with the advancement of Information and Communications Technology and the increased role of social media, the importance of digital diplomacy has also increased. However, despite this fact, the idea that digital diplomacy will have the power to triumph over political diplomacy has always faced contradictions. The purpose of this research paper is to explain how such a triumph of digital diplomacy happened during the coronavirus pandemic. The research question of the paper is: What will happen to diplomatic practices after the COVID-19 pandemic? In parallel, the hypothesis of the paper is: In the post-pandemic period, the increased importance of digital diplomacy will not decrease.

To answer the research question as accurately as possible, as well as to verify the raised hypothesis, the research paper, in addition to the abstract, introduction, conclusion and references, also has four separate chapters. The first chapter presents the main characteristics of political diplomacy. Meanwhile, the second chapter provides information to understand what digital diplomacy is and shows the arguments why it has such an important role. The third chapter and the fourth one are the most important chapters of the paper because within them there are data that answer the research question and prove the raised hypothesis in this paper. The third chapter describes how the coronavirus disfavored political diplomacy and greatly favored digital diplomacy, and the fourth chapter specifies some changes that will have diplomatic practices in the near future after the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper has a descriptive, explanatory, comparative and analytical nature. For its realization the qualitative methodology was used, based on data gathered from books and internet resources related to political diplomacy and digital diplomacy.

THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL DIPLOMACY

Foreign policy is the activity of the state with which it realizes its goals and interests in the international environment (Petrič, 2012, p.15). Meanwhile, the tool through which foreign policy is realized is called diplomacy. There are many definitions for the latter. According to nineteenth century British diplomat Ernest Satow, “diplomacy is the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations

between governments". Whereas, according to the authors John R. Wood and Jean Serres, "diplomacy is the art of solving international difficulties in a peaceful way". However, the term "diplomacy" has a threefold meaning:

- The science and mastery of representing the state and developing negotiations;
- Foreign missions of a state, meaning the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all its political representatives;
- Diplomatic service.

While in practice, the construction of diplomatic activity is done in different forms:

- By participating in congresses, conferences or international councils, in which heads of state, prime ministers, ministers of foreign affairs and other state representatives take part;
- Through diplomatic correspondence², which represents a very important matter of communication because through it, it is done the assessment for the state and for those who represent it. It takes place between persons and bodies that are competent to represent the subject in its international relations (Gruda, 2009, pp.239-240). There are some important terms within diplomatic correspondence, such as letters, statements, notes, memorandums etc. Credentials is the name for letters given to an ambassador by his/her head of state, and addressed to the head of state of the host country. They are delivered to the latter by the ambassador in a formal credentials ceremony, which generally takes place shortly after his/her arrival at a new post. The letters are termed "letters of credence" because they request the receiving head of state to give "full credence" to what the ambassador will say of behalf of his/her government (Gruda, 2009, pp.136-137). Note is a term that is generally used to designate any type of official correspondence between diplomatic missions, as well as with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the receiving state. Diplomatic notes can be: personal; verbal; secret; protest etc. The memorandum is a document that explains in detail or argues the position regarding any factual or legal issue, or contests the arguments of the other party (Gruda, 2009, pp.253-254).
- With the preparation and signing of international agreements;

² According to French terminology, diplomatic correspondence is divided into: official correspondence; personal correspondence; private correspondence. While according to Anglo-Saxon terminology, diplomatic correspondence is classified into: official correspondence; semi-official correspondence; private correspondence.

- With daily representation by state representations in the outside world;
- With representation and participation in the work of international organizations (Gruda, 2009, pp.18-19).

Based on historical development, three specific points can be emphasized in the characterization of diplomacy as a professional activity:

- The establishment of permanent diplomatic representatives in the period of small medieval Italian city-states and their continuous communication between them and their rulers;
- The Congress of Vienna of 1815 (adoption of regulation on classes and rank of diplomatic representatives);
- Acceptance of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) of 1961 and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963 (Jazbec, 2010, p.144).

The general characteristic of diplomacy is the regulation and development of relations between states and international organizations in the classical field of foreign policy. Therefore today's diplomatic practice is based on two types of diplomacy, which are: bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. For the first type of diplomacy, we can say that it is present in diplomatic practice since its beginning, while for the other, we can state that it appears later with the creation of international conferences in the nineteenth century. Conferences and international organizations experience their own sensational development in the twentieth century and become an active sign of modern diplomacy. Bilateral diplomacy is based on two-way official communication between the representatives of the sending state and the receiving state. The language in which bilateral communication takes place depends on the agreement of both parties, which means that it can be any language, although for practical purposes it is in principle one of the six official diplomatic languages (English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese). Multilateral diplomacy is based on multilateral official communication between the representatives of the sending states at the headquarters of the international organization, to which these representatives are accredited. The representatives of the mentioned international organization are also included in this communication. The bearers of diplomatic communication in multilateral diplomacy are at least three, usually diplomats from different sending countries, which at the headquarters of the international organization make agreements with its representatives and regulate the issues, namely the topics common to all parties. The language in which multilateral communication

takes place is always the official language of the international organization. So far, contemporary diplomatic practice shows that those official languages are often diplomatic languages (Jazbec, 2010, pp.15-18). Diplomacy has expanded and developed both in terms of form and content, that is best shown in the following table:

Table 1: The main factors and characteristics in the development of diplomacy in different time periods

Initial diplomacy	Classical diplomacy	Modern diplomacy	Post-modern diplomacy
The period until 1648 ^{2a}	1648 - 1920	1920 - 1989	1989 -
Greek polis and Italian city-states	Nation state	Nation state and international organizations	Nation state and integrative processes
Individuals and the circle of rulers	Permanent diplomatic organization and personnel	Permanent diplomatic organization and personnel	Permanent diplomatic organization and personnel
Ad-hoc missions	Permanent diplomatic missions	Permanent diplomatic missions	Permanent diplomatic missions and the rapid development of the diplomacy of envoys
Instructions for going on the mission and reporting after its completion	Continuous two-way communication between the center and the mission	Continuous two-way communication between the center and the mission	Continuous two-way communication between the center and the mission
The genesis of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy	Bilateral diplomacy and partially multilateral diplomacy	Bilateral and multilateral diplomacy	Bilateral and multilateral diplomacy
Secret diplomacy	Secret diplomacy	Public diplomacy	Public diplomacy
Temporary and indirect communication of rulers	Congresses of rulers	League of Nations, United Nations	UN, G8, European Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, various meetings at the highest level

Source: Jazbec, 2010, pp.38-39.

When we talk about traditional diplomacy in general, which otherwise can be called political diplomacy, some very important data should be mentioned. States as the primary subjects of international relations act through their own bodies. Domestic law and international law

2a The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 is regarded as the beginning of the modern era of international relations. It is the collective name for two peace treaties signed in October 1648 in the Westphalian cities of Osnabrück and Münster. They ended the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) and Eighty Years' War (1568–1648), and brought peace to the Holy Roman Empire, closing a calamitous period of European history that took the lives of millions of people. The Holy Roman Emperor, the Spanish Empire, the kingdoms of France and Sweden, the United Provinces, and their respective allies among the princes of the Holy Roman Empire participated in these treaties. Unlike the medieval system of international relations, the Westphalian system of new relations is characterized by these features: separation of ecclesiastical power from sacred power; the power of the emperor was visibly weakened; the system relies exclusively on contemporary states, which are the only protagonists of international relations.

expressly determine which are the bodies whose actions cause international legal consequences. Some of these bodies have the sole task of representing the state abroad, while others exercise their external functions in parallel with the functions they have according to the internal state order. State bodies for international relations are divided into two groups:

- Within the state: the head of state, the government and the prime minister, the minister of foreign affairs;
- Abroad: embassies, consulates, temporary missions, delegations (Gruda, 2013, p.241).

In diplomatic practice and theory for different types of diplomatic-consular representations, is used the common term mission, respectively diplomatic mission. The mentioned term includes three types of diplomatic-consular representations, which are:

- Embassy;
- Mission to the international organization;
- Consulate (Jazbec, 2010, p.84).

According to Article 3 of the VCDR, the diplomatic functions of the mission consist in particular of:

- Representing the sending State in the receiving State;
- Protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law;
- Negotiating with the Government of the receiving State;
- Ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State, and reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State;
- Promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, and developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations (United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, 2005). Embassies and consulates have some differences, which are presented in the following table:

Table 2: General differences between embassy and consulate

Representation	Headquarters	Leader	Document
Embassy	The capital of the host country	Ambassador	Agrément Credentials
Consulate	The capital of the state unit	The consul general	Exequatur

Source: *Jazbec, 2010, p.140.*

Certainly, what constitutes diplomacy today goes beyond the sometimes rather narrow politico-strategic conception given to the term. It is not appropriate to view diplomacy in a restrictive or formal sense as being the preserve of foreign ministries and diplomatic service personnel. Rather, diplomacy is undertaken by a wide range of actors, including “political” diplomats, advisers, envoys and officials from a wide range of “domestic” ministries or agencies with their foreign counterparts, reflecting its technical content between officials from different international organizations, or involving foreign corporations and a host government transnationally, and with or through non-governmental organizations and “private” individuals (Barston, 2014, p.1). In recent times, diplomacy has begun to be classified according to the number of participants, according to the method of realization, according to the methods that are used, etc. The following table shows some of the most important types of diplomacy:

Table 3: Comparison of the types of diplomacy, their implementers, objects and types of relations

Type of diplomacy	Implementer	Object	Type of relations
Political	Diplomat	State; international organization	Bilateral and multilateral
Military	Military attache	Armed forces	Bilateral
Defensive	Defense advisor	Defense system (alliance - NATO)	Multilateral and bilateral
Parliamentary	Parliamentarians	Parliament (national and other)	Bilateral and multilateral
Economic	Economic attache	Economic systems and international organizations	Bilateral and multilateral
Cultural	Cultural attache	Cultural systems	Bilateral and multilateral
Scientific	Scientific attache	Scientific systems	Bilateral and multilateral
Highest level	Politicians	The highest political sphere	Bilateral and multilateral
Public	Diplomats	Local and international opinion	Bilateral and multilateral

Source: Jazbec, 2010, p.62.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a special type of diplomacy has appeared- the digital one. It differs from the above-mentioned types of diplomacy because it is present in bilateral and multilateral relations, and is realized by all the implementers in all the objects that are mentioned in the table above.

WHAT IS DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AND WHY IT HAS SUCH AN IMPORTANT ROLE?

An excellent opportunity to begin bridging the “change management” gap in diplomatic theory is offered by the recent spread of digital initiatives in MFAs, which probably can be described as nothing less than a revolution in the practice of diplomacy. Digital technology has already changed the ways by which firms manage their business, individuals conduct social relations and states govern themselves. Governments and international organizations are now realizing that social media is also a potential game changer for how international relations can be pursued. In particular, the adoption of digital diplomacy change practices of how diplomats engage in information management, public diplomacy, strategy planning, international negotiations or even crisis management (Bjola and Holmes, 2015, p.4). But, what is digital diplomacy? The latter is a form of new public diplomacy, which aims to realize the diplomatic activities of international relations subjects through the use of Information and Communication Technologies, the Internet and social media (Rashica, 2019). To understand much better digital diplomacy, the differences between classic public diplomacy and new public diplomacy should be noted first, as shown in the following table:

Table 4: Differences between classic public diplomacy and new public diplomacy

Dominant characteristics	Classic public diplomacy	New public diplomacy
Identity of international actor	State	State and non-state
Technological environment	Short wave radio, Print newspapers, Land-line telephones	Satellite, Internet, real-time news, Mobile telephones
Media environment	Clear line between domestic and international news sphere	Blurring of domestic and international news sphere
Source of approach	Outgrowth of political advocacy & propaganda theory	Outgrowth of corporate branding & network theory
Terminology	“International image”, “Prestige”	“Soft power”, “Nation Brand”
Structure of role	Top down, actor to foreign peoples	Horizontal, facilitated by actor
Nature of role	Targeted messaging	Relationship-building
Overall aim	The management of the international environment	The management of the international environment

Source: Cull, 2009, p.14.

It can be said that as a unique strategy, digital diplomacy is growing tremendously and has an undeniable impact in terms of fulfilling state in-

terests and managing global changes through digital tools and virtual collaboration. While searching for information related to digital diplomacy, it is seen that different terms are used in relation to it that have caused terminological confusion, which has also influenced discussions and policies in this field. The question is, should diplomacy be “digital”, “cyber”, “technological”, “virtual”, etc., or should the prefixes “e”, “net”, “Twitter”, “Instagram”, “Zoom” and so on be used? The aforementioned prefixes even some special terms created by different countries for digital diplomacy such as “la Diplomatie Numérique”, “21st Century-Craft”, “Open Policy”, etc., despite being different enough and able to cause terminological ambiguity, they have the same meaning. All the terms created from the aforementioned prefixes or adjectives so far together with many other terms that can be created in the future are synonyms of digital diplomacy because they describe the digitization of diplomacy or the use of social media in in diplomatic practice.

Digital diplomacy aims to use specific data that are available to the relevant state institutions, which are considered useful for the foreign policy of the state. It has proven its effectiveness in gathering and analyzing information that facilitates understanding and predicting goals, managing relations, and reducing uncertainty. Digital diplomacy with new means of communication, especially social media, has facilitated communication, targeting, and the extension of influence to different audiences. Various digital platforms are used by diplomats in their daily work, ranging from negotiations and representation, to communication and policy analysis, but their greatest use is concentrated in various emergencies and crises. The usage of digital mechanisms to attract and utilize external expertise in the advancement of national goals is another goal of digital diplomacy. Digitization and the redistribution of power in international relations, new types of conflicts, digital interdependence and sovereignty, etc., then also the emergence of new policy topics in diplomatic negotiations, which include such topics of digital governance as cyber security, privacy, data storage, electronic commerce, cybercrimes, etc., all these have presented the need for policy planning. But, it should be emphasized that also one of the main goals of digital diplomacy is to use the freedom offered by the Internet and social media for the dissemination of democratic values, as an effort towards the destruction of authoritarianism.

The ICT revolution stands out for four main effects in the field of diplomacy, which are:

- The transboundary effect of information technology that has modified the relation between distance and time;
- It has had the effect of altering the tempo of diplomacy and reducing or removing the effects of distance;
- The constant search for competitive advantage has driven technical development in integrated personal communications systems, making them an essential diplomatic tool;
- An impact on the diplomatic setting and conduct of diplomacy has been with regard to the generation of a variety of new threats to diplomatic systems (Barston, 2014, p.112).

Talking about the importance of ICT for digital diplomacy, the role that the smartphone had in the practice of diplomacy should be mentioned. It has influenced the speed of diplomacy and working hours; as well as created much closer working relationship and greater cooperation at the Ambassador level (Digital Diplomacy Blog, 2014).

Many world leaders and diplomats nowadays conduct all their correspondence by e-mail. Meanwhile, the creation and use of websites by heads of states, governments, relevant ministries of states and their diplomatic missions is a standard practice. Websites of MFAs serve to explain and record national foreign policy and rebut unacceptable actions or claims by other states. They are also used by international organizations; even their bodies have special websites where they publish their activities. Maintaining and updating data on websites requires great care. A non-operational MFA or international organization website closed for “service”, redesign or containing seriously out-of-date information significantly harms image, and, can undo or counteract other media activity (Barston, 2014, p.16). Despite the large role of social media for digital diplomacy, the importance of websites for all subjects of international relations cannot be underestimated.

Social media have such an important place in digital diplomacy that they are now considered as its basis. Application of these platforms has been hailed as a transformative development of international politics. Not only are social networks able to transcend hierarchical chains of diplomatic communication, but by bringing ordinary people into the spotlight of political life and making their voice heard, they also allow diplomats to directly engage foreign publics in a sustained dialogue (Bjola, Holmes, 2015, p.71). Although the number of social me-

dia continues to increase, the most used ones from states and international organizations are: Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Twitter has become a diplomatic barometer, a tool used to analyze and forecast international relations. According to the latest studies of the blog “Twiplomacy”, the governments and leaders of 189 countries had an official presence on Twitter, representing 98% of the 193 UN member states (Twiplomacy, 2020). Meanwhile, over years Facebook has become the channel of choice for community engagement with world leaders. The governments and leaders of 184 countries had an official presence on the social network, representing 95% of the 193 UN member states (Twiplomacy, 2020). Diplomacy is becoming more visible and more visual through social media, especially Instagram. The latter has become the fastest growing social media network among world leaders, governments and foreign ministers and is the third most used social media platform (Twiplomacy, 2018). Otherwise hashtags³ are an important part of social media posts because MFAs and world leaders have used and continue to use hashtags in their posts to promote specific issues (Twiplomacy, 2017).

The benefits of digital diplomacy are numerous. The flow of international relations in the twenty-first century is characterized by a large number of international actors operate, such as states, ethnonationalist factors, multinational corporations, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, various transnational movements or networks, and individuals. The rapid growth of this network of actors and the increasing communication and interaction that takes place within it are the best indicators of the growth of international interdependence, growth to which digital diplomacy has greatly contributed. Digital diplomacy has brought international actors closer to various audiences all over the world, avoiding all geographical distances. One of the main benefits of digital diplomacy is regular communications and the fast exchange of information. This is very favorable for all types of states, especially for small states. Since human resources are primary resources for digital diplomacy, which stands out for its low financial cost, for small states that have limited territorial, population, GDP, and military capacities, digital diplomacy is considered the key tool for realizing their foreign policy goals and for their extension in the international arena. Then, the reduction of financial expenses, which saves states and international organizations from budget dam-

3 Hashtag or the symbol # is used in order for a photo or idea to go public. That is to be viewed by many users. Hashtag will appear in blue as one word, and there is no space in a hashtag.

ages, has made digital diplomacy even more attractive for them. Of course, digitization, in addition to the benefits, also has many risks, and cyber-attacks are the most serious category of them. Therefore, in recent years, cyber security has been listed among the primary issues on the agendas of international actors (Rashica, 2019).

2020, THE YEAR OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

In December 2019, an infectious disease was discovered in Wuhan, China, which spread rapidly and also caused deaths. This was the COVID-19 disease⁴ caused by a coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. At the beginning of 2020, as a result of the large number of infected people, the Chinese authorities were alarmed and requested the help of the World Health Organization to investigate the outbreak of the coronavirus. The latter began to emerge from China, spreading rapidly to other countries of the world in all continents. Deeply concerned by the alarming levels of spread and severity, on March 11, 2020, WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic (CNN Health, 2020). This virus had the power to completely change the world, attacking all aspects of life and causing staggering consequences, the presence of which will be seen for a very long time. According to WHO data, by September 2022, over 600 million people have been infected with coronavirus, of which nearly 7 million have died (World Health Organization, 2022). On December 18, 2020, CEPI⁵, alongside Gavi⁶ and the WHO, launched COVAX, the vaccines pillar of the ACT Accelerator⁷, with the aim of ending the acute phase of the pandemic by the end of 2021 (The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, n.d.). Based on the latest data from the WHO, over 12 and a half billion vaccine doses have been administered (World Health Organization, 2022).

The COVID-19 has thoroughly upended diplomacy, as a profession which involves a fair amount of travel, physical meetings and in-per-

4 According to the WHO, The symptoms of COVID-19 are divided into three groups: Most common symptoms: fever, dry cough and tiredness; Less common symptoms are: aches and pains, sore throat, diarrhea, conjunctivitis, headache, loss of taste or smell, and a rash on skin, or discolouration of fingers or toes; Serious symptoms are: difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, chest pain, pressure and loss of speech or movement.

5 The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations is a foundation that takes donations from public, private, philanthropic, and civil society organisations, to finance independent research projects to develop vaccines against emerging infectious diseases.

6 GAVI, officially Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance is a public-private global health partnership with the goal of increasing access to immunisation in poor countries.

7 The Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator, or the Global Collaboration to Accelerate the Development, Production and Equitable Access to New COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines, is a G20 initiative announced by pro-tem Chair Mohammed al-Jadaan on April 24, 2020.

son interactions. The traditional work of world leaders and diplomats had come to a sudden stop as travel restrictions, border closures and shelter-in-place orders had scuppered in-person diplomatic activity. There were no handshakes of world leaders and diplomats during bilateral meetings or multilateral summits (Twiplomacy, 2020). After the coronavirus had spread globally, world leaders and diplomats were also isolated, some of whom either had family members infected with COVID-19, or were infected themselves. The pandemic forced them to work from their homes and for specific communications or important meetings they used digital platforms. This virus disfavored political diplomacy, but it greatly favored digital diplomacy, thus making 2020 the year which in the literature of diplomacy will be known as the year of the brilliance of digital diplomacy. Before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, it seemed totally impossible that political diplomacy would be replaced by digital diplomacy. A large number of diplomats and experts of diplomatic law thought that such a thing would never happen, regardless of the extraordinary growth of the role of digital diplomacy.

States were forced to impose travel restrictions. Closing airports, suspending all incoming and outgoing flights and nationwide lockdowns were just some of the measures countries were adopting in an effort to contain the pandemic. The world leaders were very aware that such a lockdown would have long term consequences. The COVID-19 has damaged in the same way the economies of all states, whether large, medium or small. Many people have lost their jobs or seen their incomes get reduced due to the pandemic. Thus, the International Monetary Fund described the global economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic as the worst since the Great Depression⁸ of the 1930s (International Monetary Fund, 2020). Health systems around the world were challenged by increasing demand for care of people with COVID-19, while the provision of routine health services became more and more difficult (World Health Organization, 2020). Then, the temporary closure of educational institutions as an attempt to contain the spread of the coronavirus, as well as the imposition of online teaching, had a negative impact on the field of education around the world, from which students of all educational levels suffered (UNES-

8 The Great Depression is known as a severe worldwide economic depression that occurred during the 1930s, beginning in the U.S. after a major drop in stock prices on September 4, 1929, and making worldwide headlines with the stock market crash of October 29 1929, otherwise known as Black Tuesday. This was the longest, deepest and most widespread depression of the 20th century. Between 1929 and 1932, global GDP declined by about 15%. In fact, in many other countries of the world, the negative effects of the Great Depression continued until the beginning of the Second World War.

CO, 2020). This century is characterized by challenges and problems of various natures, and in certain situations states are powerless to choose them themselves. But the difficulties of the pandemic continued to grow and states were even more powerless to solve them on their own, so multilateral cooperation was imposed on them. As a result, such situations have influenced the increase of the role of international organizations, which now challenge the undisputed position of states as the primary subjects of international relations. The COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest crisis of this century so far and it is more than understandable that multilateral cooperation, whether through conferences, summits, councils, or meetings, became more than necessary during this pandemic.

The coronavirus pandemic had a dramatic impact on the role of digital diplomacy because diplomatic distancing measures had brought leaders and diplomats very close to each other, in which case this had in a way disfavored “national distancing”. Then, the pandemic has had a profoundly transformative impact on how world leaders use digital platforms. In addition to engaging with their followers on social media, especially on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, leaders during their work used a lot of digital platforms like Google Meet, Skype and Zoom. Most diplomatic activities moved online with leaders facing each other off via their respective computer screens. Bilateral and multilateral meetings took place via telephone or video conferencing applications, and their traditional pictures were replaced by a mosaic of screens with leaders sitting in front of their respective flags. Even Pope Francis joined a Skype interview on his laptop. The setup for online summit was more professional with each leader seated in front of a large flat screen. The year 2020 was a very special year for the UN because it was celebrating its 75th anniversary. The 75th session of the UN General Assembly in 2020 was expected to bring a large number of leaders to UN headquarters to celebrate, but due to the circumstances caused by the pandemic, it went viral for the first time (The Economic Times, 2020). Also, the 46th summit of G7 was cancelled, the 15th summit of G20 went virtually and the 36th ASEAN⁹ Summit was held via teleconference (Twiplomacy, 2020). The third phase of the Brexit negotiations was a typical example of hold-

9 The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was established in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, and now has 10 member states since Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos PDR, and Cambodia have joined. ASEAN in the first instance, was a political and security organization and offered a different model for regional integration. While now the acceleration of economic development within the region is ASEAN's primary aim.

ing bilateral meetings via video conferencing between the parties of the UK and the EU (European Council, n.d.). The leaders of the latter together with the member states also held all the meetings virtually (European Council, 2020).

World leaders and diplomats used social media to communicate and explain lockdown rules, but also many of them shared guidance on strict hygiene protocols and observing social distancing rules, as an effort to prevent infections. The main hashtags used by world leaders and diplomats on their institutional and private accounts on social media during the pandemic were: #StayHome; #StayAlert; and #Save-Lives (Twiplomacy, 2020). Social media users were looking for guidance and leadership from their leaders online. Millions were flocking to social media for answers, advice and support, in which case the pages of governments and world leaders have literally exploded (Twiplomacy, 2020). But, the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how the spread of misinformation, amplified on social media and other digital platforms, was proved to be as much a threat to global public health as the virus itself. Technology advancements and social media create opportunities to keep people safe, informed and connected. However, the same tools also enable and amplify the infodemic that continues to undermine the global response and jeopardizes measures to control the pandemic (World Health Organization, 2021). Since along with the virus, disinformation was also spreading rapidly, social media decided to surface relevant and trusted sources on the platforms. Social media had created special coronavirus search prompts to direct users to trusted and authoritative sources about the novel coronavirus. Almost all the accounts of world leaders, governments and international organizations on social media, almost all of them have been verified. But social media also decided to actively verify hundreds of health experts, including health ministers around the world as well as the entire WHO senior management (Twiplomacy, 2020).

Resident embassies are the normal means of conducting diplomacy between any two states (Berridge, 2015, p.119). From a supranational perspective, diplomats face a difficult dilemma: whether they should represent only the interests of their governments or whether they should also consider the impact the representation of these interests may have on the international order (Bjola, Kornprobst, 2013, p.163). Therefore, being a diplomat is considered one of the most difficult

professions, and sending the right people for diplomats is a process of several stages. In the early 2010s, methods of diplomatic recruitment, promotion and training failed to fully acknowledge the needs of the twenty-first-century diplomat. The use of social media for diplomatic purposes was generally neglected, while diplomatic training placed excessive focus on vocational training at the expense of academic education. Meanwhile, sending credentials in virtual ways was not practiced before. But, was this another newness that the coronavirus pandemic brought to the practice of diplomacy? In fact, the VCDR of 1961 does not specify how countries have to be represented. They are usually represented in another country by an embassy or other types of diplomatic missions. But, there are many other representation options available. One such is the diplomatic representation through digital platforms, which can be considered legal. Due to the pandemic in 2020 there were cases when state leaders received copies of credentials from a number of ambassadors-designate via video conference. The Foreign Minister of Bahrain, Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, received copies of credentials from a number of ambassadors-designate via video conference (Twiplomacy, 2020).

THE FUTURE OF DIPLOMACY AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Online meetings have long been seen as a poor substitute for face-to-face ones. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the responses from governments around the world, this view has changed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, diplomacy shifted online to conferencing platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet. But online meetings are not as new as one might think. The first online participation session in multilateral diplomacy was held by the International Telecommunication Union in 1963. Since then, the availability of the internet in conference rooms has made remote participation a reality for more inclusive and open international negotiations. However, online meetings come with many pros and cons. They also increase inclusion by allowing participation without being physically present, which is often conditioned by travel and other expenses. While, among the major cons of online meetings is the lack of physical contact, which is important for building trust and empathy that are essential for dealing with, in particular, controversial and political issues. After the pandemic, in addition to traditional physical and remote meetings, there will be the emergence of “hybrid (blended)” meetings that will combine in situ and online participation (Diplo Blog, n.d.). Therefore, it should be em-

phasized that the accelerated transition towards online meetings and diplomacy requires three major changes:

- Online platforms need to be improved to offer the stability and security required in diplomacy;
- The social face-to-face dynamics need to be adapted to new online dynamics;
- Many of the centuries-old rules of protocol need to be revisited (Diplo Blog, n.d.).

This means that after the pandemic, political diplomacy will return, but the increased importance of digital diplomacy, in which the coronavirus has a great contribution, will not decrease.

In the near future, there will be ten trends that will impact digital diplomacy across three main areas:

1) Digital geopolitics and geoeconomics:

- 1) Digital redistribution of economic and political power will accelerate. The power of tech companies goes way beyond the economy. This power extends also into politics, where tech companies are able to influence elections as well as other aspects of society such as health, culture, and sport;
- 2) The push for digital sovereignty will intensify. It is based on the need for governments to have legal jurisdiction over digital activities on their territory, and to reduce negative spillovers from integrated digital networks. Full sovereignty will be much more difficult to achieve in the digital realm due to the networked nature of the internet and the power of tech companies;
- 3) Digital interdependence will require delicate trade-offs and tough decisions. It relies on cooperation between a wide variety of actors. Today, digital interdependence depends more and more on cooperation among countries themselves and tech companies. However, managing and optimising digital interdependence will be one of the major challenges in times ahead.

2) New Topics on the Diplomatic Agenda:

- 1) Digital is becoming mainstream in international negotiations. As prefixes digital/cyber/e/tech are dropped, technology's impact increases in shaping traditional policy issues. MFAs and international organisations need to adjust fast to this transition by, among others, adapting their internal organisations, introducing the digital foreign policy, and preparing diplomats to become boundary spanners between technological and traditional

- policy. Mainstreaming of digital technologies can be followed under three main areas of global diplomacy: peace and security, economy and development, human rights and humanitarian assistance;
- 2) The maturing global cybersecurity negotiations will help speed up digital peace and security;
 - 3) Economy and development in the future will be shaped around digital trade negotiations and initiatives to regulate the enormous power of tech companies via antitrust, fiscal, data, and other instruments;
 - 4) An increased focus on values in digital governance will elevate the importance of human rights online;
 - 5) 'Open' is likely to become the digital governance keyword in the future.
- 3) New Tools for Diplomatic Activities:
- 1) Hybrid meetings are becoming 'the new normal' in diplomacy. These meetings are where some participants gather in situ and others interact online. In order to ensure equal participation as key pillar of multilateral diplomacy, the future of hybrid meetings will depend on addressing new set of issues and questions in the future;
 - 2) In 2022, diplomats will use AI¹⁰ and data technologies more for negotiations, policy planning, consular affairs, and engaging with the public (Kurbalija, 2022).

¹⁰ Artificial intelligence is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. Specific applications of AI include expert systems, natural language processing, speech recognition and machine vision.

CONCLUSION

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic brought many changes in the international arena. Although the alarming numbers of those infected with COVID-19 belong to the past, the consequences of the pandemic are still present and will be seen also in the future. That states do not have the power to solve many problems by themselves, something that has been proven even before the coronavirus pandemic. Now with the countless difficulties from the latter, multilateral cooperation is indisputable. Meetings of heads of state, prime ministers, foreign ministers and diplomats, whether bilateral or multilateral, are characterized by specific ceremonies with strict protocol rules. In the post-pandemic period, there will probably be no obstacles to the traditional realization of diplomatic activities, but on the other hand, the role of digital diplomacy will not be minimized. In addition to meetings with physical presence, the online option of participating in them will be open, thanks to digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet and Skype. Precisely this option makes a kind of equalization between political diplomacy and digital diplomacy. Then, other digital platforms are being added to the trio of the most used social media, which includes Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The great role of social media, which at the same time is the basis of digital diplomacy, increases the importance of the latter even more. The literature of the field of diplomacy will highlight the year 2020 as the year of digital diplomacy, but also the future will prove that not only during the COVID-19 pandemic digital diplomacy has triumphed over political diplomacy.

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