

Call for Chapters: *The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Digitalisation of Public Diplomacy*

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Publisher: IGI Global, Hershey, USA.

Introduction

In a 2013 commentary article posted on the US Department of State's official blog *DipNote*, the former US Secretary of State, John Kerry, somewhat criticised the popular tendency among diplomacy practitioners, scholars and critics to make the term "digital diplomacy" the talk of the town. He claimed that this term ("digital diplomacy") "is almost redundant - it's just diplomacy, period". Kerry further stressed that, although the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) do tremendously contribute to the advancement of countries' foreign policy objectives as well as to bridging the gap between people across the globe, they (the ICTs) fulfil the same core diplomatic functions as the traditional/analogue tools of public diplomacy. For instance, they enable diplomats to create dialogue among the broadest possible audience as well as to find common ground, which, after all, are what diplomacy is all about (Kerry 2013).

For many observers, Kerry's pronouncement came to mean that it is futile to always stress the digitalised nature of ICT-driven diplomacy given the fact that a plurality of factors or indicators suggest that, in a near future, the use of digital technologies in diplomacy will become too banal that professionals and scholars in the discipline will no longer see the need to stress the "digital nature" of digital diplomacy. In spite of its pertinence, the above futuristic statement seems not to take into account a number of new developments in the domains of artificial intelligence, robotics, smart cultures and diplomacy itself, among others. In effect, digital diplomacy itself has over the years been extremely dynamic, so much so that it is becoming more and more complex to define players in the diplomatic game. For instance, technological innovations in AI and robotics have caused governments to fantasise over using robots as diplomats or using artificial intelligence in the conduct of consular affairs, crisis communication, public diplomacy and international negotiations. China is a good example of countries who, in recent times, have ardently resorted to AI in international negotiations and crisis communications (Daxue Consulting 2020).

In view of new developments in digital diplomacy, Bjola (2018) observes that digitalisation may not have changed the main targets of diplomacy but the truth remains that it has so transformed the diplomacy game that it will not be out of place to talk of a revolution in the conduct of diplomacy. Bjola actually contends that although "the core mission of diplomacy in the Digital Age is still about finding the middle ground", a lot of emergent digitally driven trend have

brought significant changes in the way the diplomatic game is now conducted. What has concretely changed is “the context in which the core mission of diplomacy is supposed to be accomplished”. In effect, “new digital technologies significantly broaden the spectrum of actors that can take part and influence the diplomatic conversation, reshape the ‘grammar rules’ and institutional norms to guide online diplomatic engagement, and opens the door to the use of digital tools for disrupting the middle ground via disinformation and propaganda” (p.8).

Besides broadening the spectrum of actors that can participate in, and shape the diplomacy game, new technological innovations (notably AI and robots) have given birth to such paradigms as robotisation, increased and advanced mechanisation and dehumanisation of public diplomacy in the world. Other related developments have been the acceleration and growing popularisation of the smart city concept as well as the COVID-19 pandemic which have all combined to compel almost all major human industries – including diplomacy – to mainly shift online and to be revolutionised day by day.

The dynamics of digital diplomacy suggested in the foregoing have not yet attracted the scholarly attention they deserve. The majority of studies devoted to the use of ICTs in the conduct of public diplomacy have not actually touched issues such as AI, smart technologies as well as the influence of the COVID-19 on the evolution or revolution of digital diplomacy in the world. Previous works have also not sought to address emerging issues related to the implication of the above mentioned emerging trends for teaching and research in public diplomacy. This book ultimately seeks to fill this apparent gap in knowledge.

Objectives of the Book

The objectives of this book are therefore to 1. Explore the influences of the new ICTs, AI and smart cultures on the conduct of public diplomacy, 2. examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the conduct of digital diplomacy in the world, and 3. analyse the implications of the dynamics of ICTs and AI for teaching and research in digital diplomacy.

Target Audience

Academic community, students, diplomats, research institutions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ICTs developers and policy makers.

Topics Recommended

- Theories and practices of digital diplomacy
- Digital divide and the practice of digital diplomacy
- Smart cultures, globalization and digital diplomacy

- Digitalisation and the mechanisation and de-humanisation of public diplomacy
- COVID-19 pandemic and the practice of digital diplomacy in the world
- COVID-19 pandemic and the future of digital diplomacy
- COVID-19 pandemic and teaching and research in digital diplomacy
- Conferences, symposia and governments' application of digital diplomacy
- Post truth, disinformation/misinformation and the dark side of digital diplomacy
- Social media and the evolution/future of digital diplomacy
- Digitalisation, citizen diplomacy and internet censorship
- Digital diplomacy and nation branding
- The civil society, social media and digital diplomacy
- Non-State actors and digital diplomacy

References

Bjola, C. (2018). *Diplomacy in the digital age*. Amsterdam: El Cano Institutes.

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Daxue Consulting (2020). *The AI ecosystem in China*, Beijing: Daxue Consulting.

Kerry J. (2013), 'Digital Diplomacy: Adapting Our Diplomatic Engagement', *DipNote* U.S Department of State Official Blog, 6/V/2013, Retrieved November 24, 2020, from, <http://2007-2017-blogs.state.gov/stories/2013/05/06/digital-diplomacyadapting-our-diplomatic-engagement.html>.

Submission Procedure

Researchers and practitioners are invited to submit on or before **September 27, 2022**, a chapter proposal of 1,000 to 2,000 words clearly explaining the mission and concerns of his or her proposed chapter. Authors will be notified by **September 29, 2022** about the status of their proposals and sent chapter guidelines. Full chapters are expected to be submitted by **November 10, 2022**, and all interested authors must consult the guidelines for manuscript submissions at <https://www.igi-global.com/publish/contributor-resources/before-you-write/> prior to submission. All submitted chapters will be reviewed on a double-blind review basis. Contributors may also be requested to serve as reviewers for this project.

Note: There are no submission or acceptance fees for manuscripts submitted to this book publication, *The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Digitalization of Diplomacy*. All manuscripts are accepted based on a double-blind peer review editorial process.

All proposals should be submitted through the eEditorial Discovery® online submission manager.

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Publisher

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Important Dates

September 27, 2022: Proposal Submission Deadline

September 29, 2022: Notification of Acceptance

November 10, 2022: Full Chapter Submission

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