**Tenets of Digital Diplomacy**

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Hello, welcome to our session. This is Associate Professor Uğur Yasin Asal from Istanbul Ticaret University. Today, I'm going to talk about the conceptual tenets of digital diplomacy.

Before doing this, let me start with the philosophical background of conceptual tenets of diplomacy because, as we can understand, digital diplomacy did not start just yesterday. It has a historical and philosophical background.

When we look at the philosophical background of this digital diplomacy, here we have three main questions:

* How has diplomacy changed from the classical age to the modern?
* What are the main philosophical roots of these changes?
* Why do executive actors need to change from classical ways to modern diplomacy?

When we look at the changes in diplomacy from classical to modern, it was recommended during the Imperial age. In the meantime of the Imperial age, states did not want to be in contact frequently. At that time, it was in their own manner that they were trying to be involved in world affairs, but only from their own perspective. If they needed to interact with others, they could send their official representatives to send their demands or communicate what they would like to be in touch with the others.

In the time of the modern age, which we can call the 19th century, it started with sitting at the same table and discussing their diplomatic affairs. This was known as the Congress of Vienna, which took place in 1815. A new era began for modern diplomacy, where they discussed how Napoleonic France affected European affairs and attempted to secure stabilization in contemporary European affairs. These efforts were led by Metternich and Great Britain.

Here we have some philosophical roots to these changes because the world is changing, and diplomacy must adapt because other states must get in touch. The imperial age was coming to an end, and the nation-state era began, which was partly influenced by the French Revolution. Modern diplomacy started to evolve because states needed to adapt to contemporary world politics. Collaboration became essential, as in the modern age, you could no longer do whatever you wanted, as in the imperial age.

Diplomacy now required alliances and cooperation, as reflected in the Congress of Vienna, where the concept of a "balance of power" emerged. Diplomacy had to become more collaborative, otherwise the system would collapse. This philosophical background helps states adapt to changing diplomatic actions.

Modern diplomacy began in 1815 with the Congress of Vienna and continued into the 20th century. In the time of the First World War, the system had already collapsed, then it will start a new era of integration. The efforts of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, known as liberal democracy’s attempts, were followed by the establishment of the League of Nations. This reflected the way modern diplomacy is conducted, with states needing to talk to each other, trying to decrease the effects of fragmentation and increase their integration into world politics.

Despite the attempts of a group of states the League of Nations was unsuccessful, and fragmentation followed at the beginning of World War II. Following this large fragmentation, a new era began, with international institutions that are still in place today, like the United Nations and its sub-bodies like the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank and some related international institutions, that are also trying to make diplomacy collaborative and multilateral.

The 21st century marked the era of globalization, in the spheres of communication and international diplomacy attempts, which were part of technological changes. Diplomacy moved toward a more digital form. From the end of the 2010’s until now we are in a period of diplomacy with more technological affairs that pulls "Tech Diplomacy" or “Digital Diplomacy”, and other related diplomacy actions into them. Today, we are living in this era.

We can refer to these different eras in diplomacy as track records. In the literature we are titling classical diplomacy as track one, where state-to-state relations were conducted with official embassies having a very significant role. States sent official representatives to each other and these embassies conducted the relations without involving the public or other actors.

Track two diplomacy is called “State-to-Human” diplomacy, where states are not only aiming at state-to-state relations, with an effective role for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in how they can affect the relations between states. It is also called “Public Diplomacy” because states have different kinds of policy objectives that involve other parts of their society, such as the diaspora, which can be used to help achieve foreign policy objectives.

Today, I will discuss the conceptual background of track three, which is called “Digital Diplomacy”. This is more inclusive than the other tracks because it is cheaper, and the world is increasingly using digital platforms so states need to be using them. Digital diplomacy allows states to send their demands and foreign policy objectives worldwide via digital platforms.

Here we can look at the concepts and definitions of digital diplomacy. It refers to the rising use of social media platforms by countries to reach foreign policy objectives. This is the main pillar of digital diplomacy, with states striving to be effective on various social media platforms.

The second key aspect is governing nation branding and diplomatic effectiveness. When you analyze the use of these social media platforms you can see states use these platforms to promote their nation's image. Successful examples include Estonia, which focuses on e-executions, and the United Kingdom, the United States, Belgium, the Netherlands, and others each using their own branding and digital tools effectively. Turkey has its own initiative, the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, which brings together multilateral efforts to address world problems, which also has its own social media platforms.

The third pillar is adapting technological infrastructure to diplomatic missions. This is very important as digital diplomacy mostly refers to the services of the diplomatic missions, how they can adapt themselves to these diplomatic and technological changes. If they can use software created by their own engineers, it can have a comparative advantage for their own diplomatic and technological skills. This is also how they can collect the data from around the world which is essential to inform their foreign policy so they can analyze it with their own objectives in mind, trying to adapt how the public and diaspora can be part of the foreign policy objectives. This is why the third pillar is so important for the concepts of digital diplomacy.

When we look at the executive manners and levels of digital diplomacy we can see different parts of executive actions.

The first is the foreign ministry and embassies located worldwide, which I mentioned previously. These institutions contain the most significant effects for how digital diplomacy can be comprehensive and inclusive for these countries. This is a culture, if you can adapt your technology and digital diplomacy more, the culture of foreign policy would be more inclusive. The public and the other parts of this society, like the private sector representatives would like to be involved there, and then the effectiveness of your foreign policy becomes stronger. This is a process, it cannot be done day by day, but if you have an agenda on that and if you have foreign policy objectives, that can be easily continued with these steps. This all requires governance, if you have governance for this model and your country believes that and your citizens are involved then the foreign policy objectives can be easily done.

The second aspect is public diplomacy. When we refer to public diplomacy, it mostly refers to an aim to involve your citizens with your foreign policy objectives, and also to execute your foreign policies overseas and to impact on foreign policy needs with nation branding. If you can combine your public diplomacy and digital diplomacy together that will be more effective. This is one of the most important parts of digital diplomacy and it needs to be executed in a manner which is part of this public diplomacy.

The third aspect is image and reputation, because all digital diplomacy affects your country's image. When your foreign policy is perceived there can be a direct connection between how you use digital technologies and how your foreign policy becomes a part of digital diplomacy actions. This impacts your country's reputation, because here we are living in a very digital age, and a very interactive one. All citizens can easily see what you’re doing during your daily life, and they can directly and easily understand the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of what you have done in your foreign policy. They can form criticisms and get feedback on it, and this can become an internal part of their society as we are living in the international communication period, the international agencies are very effective and some global ones collect their data from different parts of society. Part of this means that sometimes they receive fake news, without reacting, it is a pattern of this international society. If you want to avoid this fake news, you have to do your job very well, otherwise it can be a counter-argument for other states against your foreign policy. This is why digital diplomacy mostly focuses on your images and reputations.

When we look at the difference in execution of digital diplomacy between developed and developing countries, we have some differences. We can divide it between G7 versus G20 countries. For example, with G7 countries like Japan, the United States, and Germany, it comes from their economic strength and societal development, their digital diplomacy and foreign policy executions differ from other parts of the world. These wealthier states can use different methods of argumentation and their nation branding. For example Japan is leading with technology and their technological devices, even Germany has some specific sectors where it maintains a comparative advantage. The United States has some physical and e-commerce market prices and market magnitude, the biggest markets of e-commerce and they are trying to use these comparative advantages in their fields.

Also we have some developing countries, the last 13 countries among the G20 like Singapore, India, China, Turkey, Mexico, and South Africa are trying to manage their nation branding and reputations in digital diplomacy affairs. As I mentioned, Turkey has their own national brand, the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, which makes, on the coastal side of Turkey, different groups of countries get together to discuss key issues. It has been effective during the Russia-Ukraine war, trying to decrease the negative effects of this war. Additionally, we are living in an era of Western and Eastern technology competition, China and the US have a war on trade, this we know. This has an effect on the different brands and their competition, like Google and Huawei, or Xiaomi and Microsoft, or Apple and the other Eastern companies who are having a very strict competition. This is also part of digital diplomacy because these brands are also part of foreign policy objectives and during the time of this global trade war China and the US avoids effects and property rights of these firms, even having some sanctions on it. These all show how digital diplomacy can be part of the commercial and economic side of diplomacy, this shows why it is not easy to divide between the economic and commercial side to the digital side, because they are very combined.

This political sanctions mechanism is going to become very famous because we are living through some geopolitical shifts which all affect each other as countries try to use these sanctions towards others. This mostly refers to think tanks, the technologies which are related to finance and economics, which are related to society, these also try to show how the digital life and digital diplomacy become a direct part of the foreign policy objective. Then the following years will also focus on these attempts day by day.

At the end of today's course, I suggest you follow up on the contemporary implementations of digital diplomacy by successful countries mentioned in this lecture. You can also look at Twitter diplomacy, where world leaders use their accounts for effective foreign policy and diplomatic actions, known as leader diplomacy. You can take some specific leaders and see how they use their correspondences, forming part of a discourse analysis, which is a methodological pattern I also suggest you follow.

I recommend downloading reports from think tanks, universities; mostly the Nordic countries are focusing on those reports and policy brief recommendations. Also you can follow up on some books from international sources as well as reading up-to-date articles from 2019 to 2022. The COVID-19 era provided more access to online resources, making it easier to follow the developments in digital diplomacy.

Thank you very much. See you next time.

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