VIRTUAL DIPLOMACY

DIPLOMACY OF THE DIGITAL AGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this report is my own work and I have acknowledged any use of published or unpublished works of other people.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

*When the first telegram arrived on the desk of British foreign minister Lord Palmerston in the 1840s, he is said to have exclaimed, "My God, this is the end of diplomacy (*Catto, Henry E. Jr, 2003*).*

A century and a half ago, wind-powered sailing vessels served as the means for diplomatic communication, to be later followed by steamships. Communication evolved into the use of telegraph, telephone, and air mail for the transmission of diplomatic messages. Nowadays the great revolution of the computer and the World Wide Web has signified that modern diplomats have electronic mail and the Internet as substitutes at their disposal.

Advanced communications are bringing over big changes in the world of diplomacy. Diplomacy is gradually being reinvented for the information age (Martin, Todd, 2001). Through available technology many things which once required a physical presence are now becoming possible to exist in a virtual fashion. Diplomacy is not an exception.

The goal of my research and hence this report is to investigate the impact of information and communication technologies on the conduct of modern diplomacy. Traditional methods of diplomacy are being substituted by new ones, greatly influenced by the Internet. I will discuss such methods, thus defining virtual diplomacy and the world of around it.

In order to achieve such a goal I first create and discuss the context in which virtual diplomacy has evolved. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the birth of virtual diplomacy and covers the

origins of virtual diplomacy together with an analysis of the main drivers which have contributed to its existence.

The impact of information and communication technologies on modern diplomacy have been various. Three main areas within diplomacy in which technology has had a considerable influence are diplomatic missions, negotiations and learning. A chapter is dedicated to each one of them.

Chapter 3 explores virtual diplomatic missions. The impact of tehnology on diplomatic missions is assessed to the extent of whether it allows virtual representations of diplomatic missions to complement or possibly replace traditional diplomatic missions.

Negotiations is another area which lies in the heart of diplomacy. Through an analysis of the negotiation process and the effect techology has had on it Chapter 4 will discuss the conduct of modern negotiations based on technology: E-Negotiations.

Chapter 5 explores the notion of e-learning. Ways and means of how modern technologies may assist the learning process are explored, together with ways in which e-learning may ultimately positively contribute to virtual diplomacy.

Each of the three above mentioned chapters is structured in a way to provide insight to the traditional diplomatic process and how technology has effected such a process. They highlight the new opportunities virtual diplomacy may have for diplomats and also the government and general public.

The methods I have used in order to carry out the relative research for this project were through extensive searches in online search engines for online publications, articles, opinions, resources, and through the consultation of books when available.

This report is intended for diplomats in order to obtain a better understanding of the nature and implications of virtual diplomacy and its developments. It is meant to serve as a compact reference for diplomats who are seeking to keep abreast with ways and means to use information and communication technologies as tools for today's diplomatic activities.

Virtual diplomacy is a reality and has become a field of study in its own right. This paper seeks to explore this field.

CHAPTER 2 – THE BIRTH OF VIRTUAL DIPLOMACY

"Diplomacy is a way to set and achieve foreign policy goals. In this respect, the basic tasks of diplomats have been to provide information and to negotiate" (Christodoulides, Nikos, 2005).

In order for diplomats to provide information, it must first be collected. Together with negotiation diplomacy therefore lies heavily on various methods of communication, and any advance in communication or any other advance in technology which enhances communications will undoubtedly leave their mark on diplomacy.

When the telegraph was first invented the world of diplomacy went through a revolution in the sense that diplomats could send and get any information in a matter of minutes at a definitely cheaper cost. The appearance of the telephone also revolutionised communication as instant voice dialogue had then become possible. Information could be transmitted and received in seconds.

Steamships replaced sailing ships and trains replaced horse drawn carriages. Later the airplane was invented, drastically reducing travelling time. Such developments have created the possibility to traverse great distances in a very short time, allowing diplomats to engage more in physical meetings by travelling more. This has had a considerable impact on negotiations.

Technology alone has taken great strides during the past couple of decades and the advances in Information and Communication Technologies have lead to the Information

Revolution. Communication is much cheaper and the audience is never ending. Throughout this chapter I will explore any significant impact this has had on diplomacy.

Change has also brought about the need to revise foreign policy in order for countries to keep in line with the evolution of international relations. All this change has largely been brought about by the Internet. The Internet has been the crucial driver for modern diplomacy and its use, advantages and disadvantages in the context of the birth of virtual diplomacy will therefore be discussed.

Throughout the chapter I will attempt to build a coherent argument which will lead to the logical derivation of a new term in the diplomatic world: *virtual diplomacy.*

The Influence of the Information Revolution

During the past decades the world has witnessed what one may say probably the biggest ever man-made invention: the digital computer. As a result we are now living in the Digital Age. The creation of microprocessors have impacted a wide number of areas and nowadays a large number of ubiquitous devices such as mobile phones and MP3 players possess a lot of computing power.

Information is stored in a binary digital format and this property has various advantages. Information may be submitted to various recipients at will and be accessed by virtually anyone with the permission and resources to do so. Networked computers complement the properties of digitally stored information in order to allow the transmission of information at an increasingly rapid pace through private networks (with limited access) or public networks such as the Internet.

Although the conception of the Internet dates back to the 1960s it was only until the 1990s that the Internet gained popularity, and together with other technologies deriving from microprocessors gave rise to what is known as the *information revolution.* The main pillar of

the Information Revolution was the World Wide Web, created by *European Organization for Nuclear Research* (commonly known as CERN). The enabling of text and pictures to be transmitted simultaneously via the Internet was an unprecedented achievement which had the potential to attract the attention of businesses and the broad public. Through its system of hypertext, it also allowed linking of information regardless of its location.

New communication tools have allowed a free flow of content and information. As a result information is no longer limited to privileged government officials but is accessed by the general public. This has led governments losing the monopoly over information they once enjoyed. In such a situation the secrecy characteristic of the diplomacy has largely diminished and a new characteristic has emerged: transparency. Transparency is required in both official foreign relations and when dealing with public and private sectors. Generally speaking the world has never witnessed more transparency than now as the result of the Information Revolution. Information and news is immediately available, and developments in any part of the world have become visible. A situation has been created where the general public can take part in the conduct of diplomacy. The involvement of media and the general public in diplomacy has led to a particular flavour of it, what is hereinafter referred to as *public diplomacy*.

The information revolution is constantly forcing public diplomacy in to the centre of diplomacy. It is being used to gain the support of people and institutions; to share freedoms and values; to exchange ideas and experiences. Diplomats should and to a certain extent are also now required to take into account the public opinion and justify their actions. The public has acquired the freedom to exert pressure on governmental decisions, particularly in decisions involving international commitments or national interests. Governments now exercise due care in ascertaining that the public trusts government to act wisely on its behalf.

On a separate note the information revolution has also allowed existing and new non-state organisations to spread all over the world through transnational networks and gain more influence. Autonomous bodies in different countries are able to unite in sharing ideas on specific issues and engage in inter-state relations. The involvement of non-state actors such as corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), special interest groups, social movements and even private citizens in affairs of the state is constantly on the increase and is making diplomacy less state-centric. The availability of communications technology greatly enhances their ability to reach more people, irrespective of borders. This has made it more difficult for diplomats to manage and control foreign affairs. The say of non-state actors must be considered and diplomats should negotiate as frequently as possible with international and other organizations in the same way that they do with the diplomats of other nations.

The Information Revolution has practically turned information into a source of national power and influence. International power is now gauged in terms of accessibility to the world's communication infrastructure and the dominance of countries with regards to technology. Traditional military and financial powers are being replaced by soft power. "Soft power is the ability to achieve desired outcomes in international affairs through persuasion as opposed to coercion. It works by convincing others to follow, or agree to, norms and institutions that produce a desired behaviour. With its emphasis on information and knowledge, the new communications environment is making soft power more practical. Indeed, the new ICTs hold the key to soft power, making it possible to appeal directly to a multitude of actors" (Martin, Todd, 2001).

In general, the Information Revolution has also allowed the Internet and other information technologies to become a powerful engine in causing change in foreign affairs arena. Global electronic networking is transforming people's values, identities, and social practices. Technology has accelerated trade, migration and capital flows and world's economies have been integrated through trade, finance, transportation and information technology. This

phenomenon is known as globalization and is directly relevant to diplomacy as it effects the nature international relations. Common standards may be created and the exchange of information is facilitated and there is room for more international cooperation. The number of international meetings and summits have increased and become part and parcel of daily diplomatic duties.

An always growing information infrastructure makes it possible for diplomats to interact not only on the official governmental level but on all possible levels. Such interaction is causing the nature of diplomacy to change.

Side Effects of the Information Revolution

The Information Revolution has created a new fundamental characteristic in diplomacy: speed. The world has become more hectic and sometimes diplomatic reactions and decisions must be taken in a matter of seconds. Global media provide news from distant lands more quickly than ever provoking instant diplomatic decisions. Diplomats are under a constant pressure to take swift decisions. However, regardless of whether a decision is taken swiftly or not there may be side effects.

If decisions are taken all too fast then the diplomats may have rushed in the decision process, and may have skipped important information and facts when having taken a judgement. As a result of the information revolution governments cannot exclusively rely on their official sources of information but they also must monitor the news media and various Internet sources. Diplomats must now develop and assess a richer, more dynamic body of information. In order for good decisions to be taken certain ideas must gestate and all sources of information taken into consideration. Diplomatic decisions have a large impact on the future of a country and the consequences are too large to be taken lightly at the cost of speed. In certain occasions governments of other countries must be consulted for their opinion which may turn into a lengthy process.

On the other hand a swift response is many times required due to various reasons. The general public expects a response to an incident or event. Failure to provide such a response through an official statement within a reasonably short amount of time could lead to instability and disappointment from the public and loss of good faith and trust of the government.

Political scientist Eytan Gilboa (2002) sums up such a situation by the following statement: "If foreign policy experts, intelligence officers, and diplomats make a quick analysis based on incomplete information and severe time pressure, they might make bad policy recommendations. Conversely, if they take the necessary time to verify and integrate information and ideas from a variety of sources, and produce in-depth reliable reports and recommendations, they may find that their efforts have been futile if policy makers have had to make immediate decisions in response to challenges and pressure emanating from coverage and global television."

Apart from the speed characteristic, another side effect of the Information Revolution is the increased risk of being misunderstood. With the constant pressure of diplomats into public diplomacy, information which was traditionally intended for diplomatic recipients is now being delivered also to the non-diplomatic community. It may prove rather difficult for an individual not familiar with diplomatic terms or practices to fully grasp the concept and intention of diplomats. Diplomats are required to acquire new skills in adapting their feedback for perusal of the general community, as misinterpretation of information may have more serious effects and conflict may arise as a result. The diplomatic community must also exercise more care when communicating with the public in general as diplomats are now open to much further scrutiny than what was previously the norm. Moreover, besides other diplomatic opponents sources which may scrutinize diplomats are increased to the media and public in general, together with non-government and other organisations.

The information revolution has had its side effects on diplomacy. The nature of diplomacy has been forced to change in order to cater for the removal of speed and distance barriers involved in the general diplomatic process. At times this may disrupt the well established and complex way in which diplomatic parties react with one another.

According to Richard Solomon (2000), President of the United States Institute of Peace and a former US foreign service officer, "Information about breaking international crises that once took hours or days for government officials and media to disseminate is now being relayed real-time to the world not only via radio and television, but over the Internet as well. Ironically though, for policy-makers, instant dissemination of information about events both far and near is proving to be as much a bane as a bounty."

The role of the Internet

The Internet has undoubtedly served as the framework in the dissemination of information in the Information Revolution. It unites various parties in the world by text, audio and video communications through a number of digital technologies.

It has allowed a significant number of diplomatic tasks such as consular or other administrative duties to be effected in an online fashion, yielding many advantages and increased opportunities. This subject will be described in detail in Chapter 3. Apart from carrying out tasks governments can leverage the Internet to advertise their positions on different issues and promote their ideas worldwide. It can help to create a positive image of the country.

An important need of any diplomat need is to be informed at any time about the developments in the home country and about international developments. The Internet provides this possibility for diplomats quickly and at negligible cost. Diplomats have access to online resources such as local and international newspapers, news agencies, international

institutions, policy centres, think tanks, associations and other primary resources such as documents, laws, regulations and archives. The Internet has allowed diplomats to be up to date at any time and effects a better and deeper analysis in a shorter timeframe.

The Internet creates the possibility for diplomats to be in continuous contact both with their colleagues in other countries and the home Ministry of Foreign Affairs and obtain immediate feedback. In so doing it can promote cooperation in decision making. It helps to make quicker action and reaction.

One cannot disregard or treat lightly the endless opportunities the Internet provides through the use of e-mail. E-mail is an extremely powerful tool for communication and has revolutionised the way information is transmitted to a recipient in replacement of the traditional postal system. The importance of e-mail is constantly on the increase to the extent that nowadays an individual in a developed society without access to e-mail is considered to be particularly disadvantaged. E-mail has allowed diplomats to contact each other in a matter of seconds with a multiple number of recipients when required. Most of all it is easy to manage and use. Through e-mail and other tools the Internet has an important role to play in negotiations. E-negotiations will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Apart from the exchange of information through e-mail and other tools the Internet serves as a platform for the transmission of knowledge. Of direct relevance to diplomacy is the fact that diplomats may receive training and perform other academic activities through the use of the Internet, which is further investigated in Chapter 5.

A new term: Virtual Diplomacy

Until this point we have observed how the evolution of the Digital Age has yielded the Information Revolution which has had a considerable effect on diplomacy. The effect has been significant to the extent that a new type of diplomacy has been defined: *virtual*

diplomacy. This term has been coined from the fact that it refers to diplomacy carried out in a virtual fashion through the use of technology and the Internet, other than traditional face-to-face technology.

One must not underestimate the concept of virtual diplomacy. In 1997, Richard H. Solomon (1997), president of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) defined virtual diplomacy as "social, economic, and political interactions that are mediated through electronic means rather than face-to-face communication". He clarifies that although "virtual … implies a lack of reality…, Virtual Diplomacy, however, is real diplomacy - in the sense of authoritative interactions between officials of different governments."

The Virtual Diplomacy Initiative, an initiative run and promoted by the United States Institute of Peace to explore the role of information and communications technologies in the conduct of diplomacy defines virtual diplomacy as follows: "At its broadest, the term 'virtual diplomacy' signifies the altered diplomacy associated with the emergence of a networked globe. At its narrowest, the term encompasses the decision-making, coordination, communication, and practice of international relations as they are conducted with the aid of information and communications technologies" (United States Institute of Peace, 2006).

What the previous definition does not specify is the notion of public diplomacy realising itself through virtual diplomacy. A definition of diplomacy by Gordon S. Smith in his report to the Virtual Diplomacy Initiative refers to this aspect: "Virtual diplomacy can be said to mean the conduct of what in the past has been regarded as classical diplomacy but that is now an activity being practiced in a different way both because of changes in technology and because it is being practiced by a broader range of people, including many who are not professional diplomats" (Smith, Gordon S., 1999).

Diplomacy is facing a major change as the result of the Digital Age. Virtual diplomacy boasts the improvement of traditional diplomatic functions of representation, negotiations,

reporting, facilitation, and coordination. It merges foreign and domestic publics and allows diplomacy to occur through global media and information technology. Despite its many advantages it still appears unlikely that it will phase out traditional diplomacy and gradually render it redundant. However there remains this possibility and the remaining chapters of this report seek to prove or disprove such a hypothesis by exploring various main areas of virtual diplomacy.

CHAPTER 3 – VIRTUAL DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

The Encyclopaedia Brittannica defines a diplomatic mission as "a group of individuals sent to a foreign country to carry out the tasks of diplomacy" (Encyclopaedia Brittanica on-line, 2006). However, according to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London (2006) "a Diplomatic Mission is the office of a country's diplomatic representatives in the capital city of another country".

Diplomatic missions are expected to carry out a number of functions for their home countries in a host country and this chapter will first attempt to classify such functions. During this chapter I refer to the *home* country as the country which is being represented by a diplomatic mission and the *host* country as the receiving country in which the diplomatic mission is physically based.

Various types of diplomatic missions exist and each will be analysed in order to establish the functions they are expected to achieve and what may be done to achieve them. The Digital Age has had a significant impact on diplomatic missions, and by investigating such an impact on each diplomatic mission function this chapter will provide a logical guide to the rise of virtual diplomatic missions. In order to reveal various characteristics of virtual diplomatic missions a SWOT analysis will be carried out.

As virtual diplomatic missions evolve the future of traditional diplomatic missions could possibly be at stake. Will the Digital Age cause virtual and traditional (normal) diplomatic missions to coexist and complement each other or will virtual diplomatic missions override

and eventually replace traditional missions? This chapter attempts to provide an answer to such a question.

Functions of Diplomatic missions

Diplomatic missions represent their home country in a host country. In order for such missions to fulfil their tasks a number of functions must be undertaken. Various authors have generated different classifications of the functions of diplomatic missions. A particularly good classification is available by the eDiplomat web portal (2006), which distinguishes seven different functions as follows:

(i) Represent the home country in the host country

(ii) Protect the interests of the home country and its citizens in the host country

(iii) Negotiate with the government of the host country

(iv) Monitor and report on conditions and developments in the commercial, economic, cultural, and scientific life of the host country

(v) Promote friendly relations between the host country and the home country

(vi) Develop commercial, economic, cultural, and scientific relations between the host country and the home country.

(vii) Issue passports, travel documents, and visas

However, in order to obtain a more simple and concise list of diplomatic mission functions I have felt the need to reclassify the functions of diplomatic missions into six functions as follows:

(a) Official representation
(b) Service to citizens
(c) Protection of interests
(d) Source of information
(e) Negotiation
(f) Bilateral relation development.

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The most important and straightforward function of a diplomatic mission is the *official representation* of its home country in a host country. The Diplomatic mission is the representation of the home country for citizens living in the host country. Another function of diplomatic missions is therefore to provide *services* to citizens or other parties in the host country on behalf of the government of the home country. A range of services such as the issuance of passports, visas, travel documents, grant of citizenship, issuance of work permits for the home country and other state-related services may be provided through a consular arm of the diplomatic mission.

Diplomatic missions are expected to *protect the interests* of the home country. This may be carried out in various ways. Diplomatic missions may exercise vigilance on the many happenings in the host country in order to ensure that no action or situation could possibly have an adverse effect on the home country. They can attempt to retain a constant level of harmony between the home and host country by taking the necessary precautions to avoid any source of conflict between the countries or remedy any uncomfortable situations should they arise. This function goes hand in hand with another function; to act as a *source of information* to the home country. None better than the diplomatic mission may compile relevant information on the host country which may interest the home country. Information may consist of details of the political, commercial, economic or cultural environment of the host country, together with developments and changes. On a separate note a diplomatic mission may serve as a source of information for the general public.

Negotiation is another key function of diplomatic missions. On behalf of the home country Diplomatic missions interact with the government of the host country in order to resolve disputes and acquire individual or collective advantage with the aim of achieving international development. Implementation of foreign policy will assist the diplomatic mission in fulfilling the negotiation function. Tightly coupled is the function of *bilateral relation development* which also seeks to target international development in the form of improved relations in the political, commercial, economic and cultural relations. Diplomatic missions must ensure the

dissemination of information in order to promote the home country and create a sense of awareness and culture amongst the citizens of the host country.

Types of Diplomatic Missions

Diplomatic missions may generally be classified into three main types: embassies, consulates and permanent missions. Each variant is purposely intended to fulfil a subset or full set of functions as outlined in the previous section.

An embassy is "a diplomatic mission located in the capital city of another country which generally offers a full range of services, including consular services" (eDiplomat Web portal, 2006). An embassy where both the host and home country are Commonwealth countries is referred to as a High Commission. Standard nomenclature for the head of such missions is an ambassador or high commissioner respectively. However, for the remainder of this text both an embassy and High Commission will be referred to as an embassy, and ambassador and high commissioner will be referred to as ambassador.

Embassies are set up in host countries of particular importance to the home country and all six functions of diplomatic missions will probably be required.

An embassy is responsible for the official representation of the home country to all effects. It is usually housed in large premises which are able to accommodate all officials of the embassy. Such territory enjoys diplomatic immunity under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 and it is the closest a citizen can get to the actual home country. The embassy is the point of reference for the citizens and government of the host country and citizens of the home country. Services to citizens are usually provided through an autonomous consular section within the embassy, and a number of services as previously discussed are available.

The interests of the home country must be protected. This is implemented by the embassy issuing statements of clarification when required in order to defend the home country and monitoring the situation for any events which might in any way have a harmful impact on the home country. Another function which must be fulfilled by an embassy is to provide information to the home country. Formal information through various local media and other informal information are available to the staff of the embassy. This information must be filtered and adapted to a certain format which will be understandable by the home country.

The ambassador has a key role in fulfilling certain functions of diplomatic missions. Apart from heading the mission an ambassador may particularly fulfil the functions of negotiation and bilateral relation development by attending social gatherings and performing visits to individuals and private or governmental organisations. The embassy in general can also assist the function of bilateral relational development in various ways such as organising activities to promote culture, assisting companies in the setting up of business ventures with the home country and encouraging economic development such as trade agreements.

Apart from embassies, another type of diplomatic mission is a consulate. The main aim of a consulate is also to represent a home country in a host country, however less functions of diplomatic missions are expected from consulates. A Consulate is established primarily to provide a service to citizens and support the bilateral relation development focusing particularly on trade. A consulate mission is less costly than an embassy as fewer resources are required and consulates are established in host countries of secondary importance to the home country. The functions of protection of interests and provision of information are also possible by consulates however they are much more limited in scope than embassies. Negotiation with the host country is not expected from consulates and is largely handled directly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the home country.

Consulates may be further subdivided into three types. The first type of consulate is a consulate general which is "located in a major city, other than the capital city" (eDiplomat web portal, 2006). The second type is a normal consulate which is defined as "the branch of the Embassy that works with foreigners" (Embassy of the United Sates in Uganda, 2006). The third and last type is an honorary consulate, which "are headed by Honorary Consuls who are persons who have volunteered their time and resources to assist with the representation of the trade, investment and tourism interest of *a country* within the area of their jurisdiction" (Trinidad and Tobago High Commission in Canada, 2006). The difference between them is in the range of services they offer, with a consulate general providing the most services and an honorary consulate the least. Moreover, whereas consulates general and consulates are driven by citizens of the home country residing in the host country, honorary consulates consist of a single person who is a citizen of the host country.

The third type of diplomatic mission is a permanent mission. A permanent mission is a diplomatic mission to an international inter-governmental organisation such as the United Nations representing the home country. As other diplomatic missions, a permanent mission is meant to represent the home country in the host country. Unlike embassies and consulates a permanent mission is not meant to give a direct service to citizens; however it is required to be very active in the protection of interests and negotiation.

The permanent mission is meant to negotiate with the international organisation and its members on behalf of the home country government. It will also oversee the activities and developments of the international organisation and make sure that these are in the best interest of the home country, providing information along the way. The function of bilateral relation development does not apply to permanent missions as country in which the mission is based is merely a host to the international organisation. The nature of international organisations would in fact require the permanent mission to work in the area of multilateral relation development through general agreement with other members of the international organisation.

The Impact of the Digital Age on Diplomatic Missions

The previous section has discussed the three main types of diplomatic missions: embassies, consulates and permanent missions. These have been into existence for many years and have always survived the change that was required by adapting themselves to the environment. Diplomacy is now facing the Digital Age and treating the Internet as a main protagonist of modern times the impact of the Digital Age will now be discussed.

The primary function of diplomatic missions is official representation. "If cyberspace is considered a separate entity and "space", then websites of diplomatic services could be considered as a country's representation in that space" (Kurbalija and Badi, 2000, p. 100). The Digital Age has allowed diplomatic missions to extend their representation to the Internet in order to target and service the Internet community. Kurbalija goes on further by stating that "as the pioneering phase of Internet development ends, the Internet is increasingly accepted as a media through which ministries of foreign affairs communicate. Accordingly, information published on the Internet should have the same status as statements given by diplomats or diplomatic notes sent from the ministry" (Kurbalija and Baldi, 2000, p. 100). This suggests that although virtual diplomatic missions may be virtual representations of their physical counterparts, statements issued through virtual diplomatic missions are not legally binding to the same effect as the ones issued from traditional diplomatic missions. Certain virtual diplomatic missions ensure they clarify such a position by posting a warning on their website. As an example, Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Los Angeles (2006) displays the following footer on its website: "All the content of the Internet pages of the Czech Embassy is of informative nature and is not legally binding." Statements and other information posted on the Internet by diplomatic missions should carry the same bearing as real life embassies, consulates and permanent missions in order to ensure greater consistency with functions carried out in the traditional way.

"In real space, representation is physically divided when embassies are assigned authority in particular countries; in cyberspace representation on the Internet overlaps" (Kurbalija and Baldi, 2000, p. 100). Physical embassies and consulates in a country or particular region are given autonomy for that location and may only be reached by individuals residing or temporarily visiting the host country. On the contrary their web equivalents may be reached by everyone including individuals physically located in other jurisdictions. Diplomatic missions must therefore start paying particular attention to target the audience of the host country the online presence is representing by including specific information specific. Prior to the digital age the target audience was assumed.

Physical consulates or consular arms of embassies have also been forced to extend their services online and ensure that sufficient information is available over the Internet for three main reasons. First of all it is in the interest of the diplomatic mission to remain competitive with missions of other countries in terms of serving as a launching pad for citizens of the host country which may become prospective tourists or business partners. The number of Internet users is on the increase and the discovery of diplomatic missions on the Internet is becoming more of a reality. Secondly it must retain the loyalty of its citizens through added convenience provided by services delivered over the Internet. Thirdly, increased efficiency can result in direct cost savings due to cutting down of paperwork and other related costs.

The concept of delivering consular services over the Internet has been taken to various degrees; some countries simply provide a source of information which complements the physical presence. On the other hand the strategy of other countries is to leverage their virtual presence to remove certain tasks from the physical consulate or embassy, such as the scheduling of appointments and interviews. A good example of an appointment service is VisaPoint: visa information services of the US Embassy in Australia (Visa Information Service Website of the U.S. Embassy in Australia, 2005). Applications could also be distributed online and an approved visa could be submitted electronically to the applicant.

This diplomatic mission functions does not apply to online presences from an embassy or permanent mission point of view.

The Digital Age has also demanded that diplomatic missions protect the interests of their country in the online world. Whereas diplomatic missions once had a partial control on the media by issuing official statements, the information revolution has created a situation where so many views and opinions are available in a small amount of time that diplomatic missions simply cannot afford not to respond to conflicting information and in the best interest of the home country must publish its position on various matters in a somewhat efficient timeframe.

Diplomatic missions suffer a constant influx of information and are under pressure to propagate their interpretation of such information to the home country in the shortest possible timeframe, particularly embassies. The Digital Age has not only affected diplomatic missions with regards to timeframes but has diversified the media with which missions communicate with their customers. Contacts may nowadays be made by telephone, e-mail, video conferencing and online messaging.

A myriad of information may be provided as online content, including but not limited to details about the consulate or embassy and its staff, important news from home country and from host country, important contacts and links to useful sites. Travel advisories could be made available to keep citizens informed when travelling abroad which could include warnings about areas experiencing political instability, natural disasters, epidemics and basic health and immunisation information. In the case of permanent diplomatic missions a stronger emphasis is placed on information relating to the role and current work of the mission.

In the case of permanent missions details about the activities of that mission in the organisation can be provided together with its positions and goals. The accent of the information posted online should be on the relationships between the home country and the international organisations. The goal is to allow normal citizens to follow the work of the

mission. This is good example of the positive impact the Digital Age has had on diplomatic missions; prior to the advance in telecommunications it was not possible to share such information with the general public.

Such an impact has also affected the way negotiations are carried out. Forums, chat sessions, whiteboards and other similar tools have emerged as excellent ways to perform certain groundwork in the area of negotiation.

Last but not least the Digital Age has also had an impact on the function of bilateral relation development in its various forms of politics, commerce, economy and cultural relations. It has now become relatively easy to provide online content relating to foreign policy, information that can help business people gain a commercial understanding in the home country and promote trade, tourism or academic opportunities and other information which in any way may assist the development of relations between the host and home country.

The Digital Age has had a direct impact on diplomatic missions, and to a certain extent also an indirect effect through the impact of the digital age on government. Since diplomatic missions are constantly interacting with governments then any impact the digital age may have had on governments would also have been propagated to diplomatic missions. One must now determine how governments have been effected.

Governments have responded to technology through the implementation of E-government. E-government consists of the representation of various ministries over the Internet which may offer both information and services, similar to the concept of diplomatic missions. Certain sectors within E-government, such as culture, economics or foreign affairs may contain content which are similar to the ones provided by diplomatic missions. Once the general public is accustomed to the online presence of government the same is expected from diplomatic mission representations. Such pressure has helped to influence diplomatic missions to extend their presence to the web.

A sector of government directly relevant to diplomatic missions is Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ministries of Foreign Affairs nowadays publish a number of resources pertaining to official statements, papers, views, speeches, press releases, internal correspondence and other information. Some of this information may be accessed by the general public and some which is intended for confidential use and may only be accessed through a restricted area. Availability of such information has made it possible for diplomats in foreign countries to keep abreast of happenings in the home country. Through the same medium they can submit information in order to affect the diplomatic mission function of provision of information to the home country. Internet presences of ministries of foreign affairs complement the presences of diplomatic missions in terms of serving as a supplementary source of information.

Until the present days the impact of the Digital Age on diplomatic missions has been significant. Embassies, consulates and permanent missions may be nowadays be represented on the Internet and may, to be a certain extent considered as virtual analogues of physical diplomatic missions. The impact of the Digital Age on diplomatic missions has resulted in the creation of *virtual diplomatic missions.*

SWOT analysis of Virtual Diplomatic Missions

"A SWOT Analysis is a strategic planning tool used to evaluate the *Strengths*, *Weaknesses*, *Opportunities*, and *Threats* involved in a project or in a business venture or in any other situation requiring a decision. The technique is credited to Albert Humphrey, who led a research project at Stanford University in the 1960s and 70's, using data from the Fortune 500 companies" (Wikipedia – the free encyclopedia online, 2006).

This methodology may be used in order to assess the advantages and disadvantages of Virtual Diplomatic missions. Using the SWOT analysis methodology allows us to review the properties of virtual diplomatic missions from a more detailed perspective. The advantages

will be divided into Strengths and Opportunities. A similar distinction will be done between disadvantages, such that they are divided into Weaknesses and Threats.

We may classify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of virtual diplomatic missions into the characteristics displayed in the below table.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• More cost effective • Added convenience • Informative • Accuracy • Locatable • Availability	• Lack of interpersonal relations • Lack of identity verification • Delicate maintenance required • Added complexity • Restricted
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• International Presence • New market possibilities • Interactivity • Extra medium for publicity	• Increased vulnerability to attacks • Misinterpretation of information • Increased participation expectancy by citizens • Loss of credibility

Strengths

Virtual diplomatic missions are more *cost effective* than physical missions. It is much cheaper to maintain a virtual mission than a physical one and as information technology becomes cheaper and cheaper virtual missions will become even more cost effective. Virtual diplomatic missions do not require premises or staff to man the office, although a web administrator is required, together with support personnel when required.

Needless to say virtual diplomatic missions offer *added convenience* as they are easy to access from the comfort of one's home or office. Convenience is most of all felt when services are delivered over the Internet as in many countries the citizens' residences are

located within a considerable distance from the embassy or consulate and such a convenience saves people time and money by avoiding commuting.

Virtual diplomatic missions are also much more *informative* than their physical counterparts as on a website it is possible to post a lot of information about the mission, goals, principles and policies, or any other relative kind of information. This would be difficult to reproduce in a physical environment without ending up with a load of printed matter.

Another strength is *accuracy* in the sense that the content of a virtual diplomatic mission may be updated instantaneously. It is of utmost importance that the online contact is updated frequently as this strength would then turn into a weakness.

Virtual diplomatic missions are easily *locatable* as by simply inserting the Universal Resource Locator (URL) of the mission a user will be immediately directed to the website oft the mission. Search engines may assist users locate the virtual diplomatic mission for the first time.

Finally another asset of virtual diplomatic missions is their *availability*. Unlike physical missions virtual representations have the ability to provide information on a 24 hour basis, seven days a week basis.

Weaknesses

Many of the strengths of virtual diplomatic missions are types of efficiencies due to their online nature. Such a nature also creates their greatest weakness in that they operate with a *lack of interpersonal relations.* Virtual diplomatic missions cannot replace the culture that is delivered though a physical relationship in an office or over the counter in an embassy or consulate. They deprive diplomats from developing relationships with citizens or other diplomats, which at times could be detrimental to certain diplomatic mission functions such as negotiations and the development of bilateral relations. Lack of interpersonal relations also

bring about another weakness; the *lack of identity verification*. Illegitimate users may attempt to exploit this weakness to avail themselves of services in the names of other people.

On a separate note *delicate maintenance is required* on virtual diplomatic missions in the context of development and maintenance of virtual diplomatic mission websites. The information on a website should be managed by a subject specialist. Ideally this should be "a diplomat as diplomats have the best understanding of the nature of the information presented, the target audience and the context of information in relation to the government's policies and objectives. Moreover, diplomatic websites have legal and political importance, and are used for diplomatic signalling. With regard to international law, although no legal cases exist yet, one can argue that information published through the website could form a basis for the development of international customary law. All of these points make diplomatic websites too important to be left in hands of designers or technical specialists" (Kurbalija, Jovan, 2002a).

Virtual diplomatic missions also bring along with them *added complexity*. Not all Internet users are expected to have the same level of competency and as far as design is concerned, special care must be taken to ensure that site navigation is clear as possible and simple to understand. A visitor browsing the mission homepage must be able to rapidly identify how to achieve the purpose of the visit. "Basic information must be provided in English and possibly additional vehicular languages accessible through corresponding links. The buttons for those languages should be easily identifiable. Navigation on the site and attached links should be made easy by allowing the links to appear on all major pages" (Kappeler, Dietrich, 2002). Failure to comply with all the above items could possibly deter a visitor from progressing further in his online session or even visiting the site again.

As much as virtual diplomatic missions are advantageous in terms of availability through the Internet, such availability also largely restricts access to virtual diplomatic missions to

computer literate citizens in possession of a personal computer and Internet connection or Internet café.

Opportunities

The concept of virtual embassies and virtual consulates is particularly useful for very poor or small countries which cannot afford to have physical representations in many countries. Virtual diplomatic missions can also serve as good alternative in countries which are strategically not so important to the home country or with which there is hardly any relation/cooperation. By creating virtual embassies or virtual consulates countries have an opportunity to extend representations all over the world and create an *international presence*.

Prior to the existence of virtual diplomatic missions, permanent missions were only present through a physical office in the base country of the international organisation. Apart from the diplomats of other permanent missions, the citizens of the home country did not have access to the work and developments of the permanent mission. Virtual permanent missions have created new market opportunities in terms of allowing citizens of the home country access to permanent missions.

Interactivity between the citizen and diplomatic mission through virtual diplomatic missions. Interactivity, through discussion forums, feedback forms and bulletin boards, provides a chance for users to revert back with their feedback and contribute to the mission.

Virtual diplomatic missions are by far an *extra medium for publicity*. Diplomats can reach a larger public and creates an opportunity for influencing directly the audience whilst providing information. The home country could be promoted in order to attempt to create and develop bilateral relations.

Threats

A major threat of virtual diplomatic missions is undoubtedly the *increased vulnerability to attacks* to diplomatic missions from external adversaries and unwanted access to its network, systems, and information assets. Despite effective tools to manage such risks missions should exercise constant vigilance and never should forget to provide a good security measures for its web-sites.

Another significant threat is the *misinterpretation of information* available through the websites of diplomatic missions. Unlike traditional diplomatic missions which include the human element in many of their activities, information available through virtual diplomatic missions is largely text-based and some information or concept might provide to be more of a challenge to grasp and understand than if received though one of the channels of traditional diplomatic missions. This could lead to a higher percentage of misinterpretation of information.

An opportunity of virtual diplomatic missions is that they create the possibility of interactivity between the citizen and the diplomatic missions. However, as a result of this activity a new threat may arise; in that *the citizens might expect to be involved in a higher degree in the conduct of diplomacy* via virtual diplomatic missions than ever before and refuse to cooperate when in their perception, they were not consulted sufficiently prior to a decision being taken by the diplomats in charge of the mission. This undoubtedly may have an adverse effect on the mission in question.

As the Information Revolution has created the need for diplomatic missions to respond as quickly as possible to events taking place in their environment, such missions must be allowed an increase in autonomy by the home government. Certain functions must be decentralized and if such mission liberty is not constantly vigilated for standards and control

by the home government, the general consistency attributed to the home country in question may be seriously compromised, resulting in *reduced credibility.*

Traditional vs. Virtual Diplomatic Missions: Coexistence or replacement?

Throughout this chapter diplomatic missions have been classified into three main types; embassies, consulates and permanent missions. The rise of virtual diplomatic missions has been illustrated and their functions investigated in the light of traditional diplomatic missions. At this stage it must be established whether virtual diplomatic missions have turned into the online version of traditional missions and both should **coexist** in harmony**,** or whether they are becoming the fourth type of diplomatic mission and will gradually **replace** the other three.

From my investigation I can safely conclude that despite the various strengths and opportunities brought about by virtual diplomatic missions, certain limitations do not allow diplomatic missions to be replaced by online representations. Personal relationships will always be required in conducting diplomacy. With the information overload we are constantly being faced with, an important role of diplomatic missions is to filter such information and assist the government of their home country in taking informed decisions. Diplomatic missions will not be in a position to fulfil such responsibilities and others by merely virtual representations. However, virtual representations may complement the work of diplomatic missions by further developing diplomatic relationships through the technology provided to us in the digital age.

Nevertheless virtual diplomatic missions may be employed independently where physical missions are not feasible. Foreign ministries may attempt to fill in on the limitations of virtual missions by integrating a program of regular visits, media outreach, engagement activities (commercial, cultural, and assistance), and remote follow-up via e-mail, phone, fax, and digital video conferencing.

Virtual diplomatic missions, if used properly, can easily integrate into the already established framework of international negotiations and relations. With the inevitable increase of Internet usage in most regions of the world, virtual diplomatic missions can serve as excellent instruments for diplomacy. However they cannot replace physical diplomatic missions and both virtual and physical diplomatic missions must coexist. Virtual diplomatic missions should be leveraged to complement and further enhance the scope of traditional diplomatic missions.

CHAPTER 4 – E-NEGOTIATIONS

"Negotiation is a process of social interaction and communication that involves distribution and redistribution of power, resources, and commitments. It involves two or more people who make decisions and engage in exchange of information in order to determine a compromise. Many important decisions have to be negotiated because people need to share and distribute scarce resources" (Kersten, Gregory E., 2003).

There are various phases in the process of negotiation, all of which in some way or another have been effected by the advances in information and communication technology. Technology has resulted in software systems which are intended to support the process of negotiation.

The result is negotiations which are carried over the Internet. Such negotiations are described with their requirements, the opportunities they create and the limitations they are exposed to.

Sufficient arguments are provided in order to determine whether the notion of E-negotiations is feasible and whether it may directly be employed in the world of diplomacy.

The Process of Negotiation and Technology

The process of negotiation may be categorized in various ways by diplomats and authors. However the most logical categorization of the negotiation process is to divide the process

into three distinct phases: the phase prior to the negotiation, the phase during the negotiation and the phase of after the negotiation.

Each phase consists of various procedures which in turn are now described and the involvement of technology on them is assessed.

The process of negotiation is kicked off from more than one party identifying a problem or area in which collaboration is required and which needs to be addressed. The information revolution in its own right may sometimes serve as the primary reason for which intervention from two or more parties are required. Once such a situation is accepted by the involved parties then an agreement to commence negotiations is reached and commitment from all parties is achieved. Such agreement and commitment is reached through electronic means, amongst which voice conversations and exchange of faxes and e-mails.

At this stage only a high level definition of the area of required collaboration is known and the parties must proceed in expanding on this definition. This is achieved by preparing the necessary groundwork in anticipation of the negotiations. First of all each party should identify its individual objectives and position in the context of the negotiations which are to follow. In order to do this each party must attempt to discover as many facts as possible about the opposing party's situation and objectives. The more knowledge of the other party's views, mentality, religious beliefs and other cultural characteristics that can be acquired will increase the possibility of understanding the opponent's objectives. Such knowledge has various advantages. It will assist a negotiating party to assess whether it is in advantaged or disadvantaged in comparison with the other party. It will help the party understand the objectives which are common and where fast progress may be made. Conflicting objectives will also emerge and this is the area where the parties must dedicate their resources in order to further prepare themselves in advance of the negotiations. The areas in which a party has something with which to bargain, together with the areas on which the party is seeking to

acquire something must be determined prior to progressing further in the preparation of negotiations. The desired outcome and possible alternatives must be agreed upon. The more alternatives a negotiation party is able to demonstrate to its opponent will increase its negotiation power. Such alternatives are also later used to gauge whether the negotiations are yielding a better result than one which could have been achieved without entering the negotiations. Such alternatives are commonly known as Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) and they clearly establish the outcome of events should the negotiation process cease at any point in time. Such preparation is vital for well planned negotiations. It has largely been made possible by the Internet which has immensely contributed towards acquiring knowledge as it serves as an unlimited repository of information and current affairs which is constantly being updated. Virtual Ministries of Foreign affairs of other countries, together with virtual diplomatic missions described in the previous chapter further enhance the investigative power of negotiators in their quest for the search of information.

As the core of the negotiation process approaches the parties will set the specifics of the negotiations in terms of location, time and which protocols are to be used. Once again technology has largely contributed towards the convenience in setting up such an agreement. Finally the agenda of what will be discussed and negotiated will be set.

During the actual negotiation all parties must first endeavour to understand each other party's position in order to establish a starting point. At this stage an exchange of offers between parties may be done and in turn the receiving parties will review such offers. Technology has made such offers to be traded in a non-physical fashion. Face-to-face encounter may be avoided together with the verbal exchange of offers as various forms of technology such as chat sessions, e-mail and other virtual dialogues may be used as the exchange medium. Technology has created the possibility for negotiating parties to consult with the home government, foreign ministry or other concerned organizations in a virtual fashion in order to obtain advice.

All parties will definitely attempt to strike what they believe is the best deal for their country. However many times it is not possible for all parties to agree on all aspects as many issues will probably conflict with one another. The areas in which parties are disagreeing should be identified and diplomatic efforts focused on such areas. The results may be various; parties may agree to accept all propositions if they do not conflict with one another. Alternatively they may meet half way and 'give in' part of their original offer to the benefit of all. They may list alternatives and agree to discuss such issues in further negotiations or ironically they may agree that they are disagreeing and the negotiations are having no success and some conditions must change before they may be resumed. All parties acknowledge that an agreement is reached and at this point the negotiations may be considered concluded although the entire negotiation process is not complete.

Technology has also facilitated the actual negotiation process by enabling documents and other information to be submitted between parties electronically, even if the negotiators are in the same room. This allows the possibility of certain text and other information to be accessed also by diplomats who are not physically present in the negotiations.

The last phase of the negotiation process consists of looking back on the previous phases in a constructive fashion and recording any significant happenings. The purpose of such post-negotiation reviews is to assess the quality and results of the negotiations in order to extract suggestions and improvements which may be used in any future negotiations.

Gregory Kersten (2003), from the School of Management of the University of Ottawa in Canada summarizes that the "decision-making aspect of the negotiation process requires that participants collect and process information to determine feasible alternatives, and to formulate offers and arguments. The communication aspect of negotiations involves information exchange, including offers and arguments, in order to influence and motivate the participants' counterparts. Collecting and processing new information involves learning,

leading to modifications and adjustment of the decision problem, and the interaction and communication." I will go on by adding that the exchange, collection and processing of such information is now dependent on information and communication technology hence rendering the technology aspect the pillar of the modern negotiation process.

A good example of the use of technology in negotiations refers to a case held on the 24th November 2005 when the United Kingdom, Canada and European Union held a summit through a video conference. The conference was held as part of the negotiation process for agreements on policing, crisis management and travel. The British Prime Minister's spokesman said that "a face-to-face meeting was not possible due to diary commitments, and that video conferencing was an effective use of new technology" (British Prime Minister Website, 2005).

The involvement of technology in the negotiation process has been significant. Technology has revolutionized the way communications are carried out, and communications are the base of the negotiation process. Negotiations based on technology are referred to as e-negotiations. "E-negotiation is a social process embedded in technology. The minimal technology-based functions are communication, presentation and interaction in a simple text-based form. At the other end e-negotiation may involve negotiators, decision and negotiation support systems, knowledge based systems and media, all of which are active and creating content. The participants of e-negotiations and the relationships among them comprise an *e-negotiation system* (ENS)" (Kersten, Gregory E., 2003).

E-Negotiation Systems

E-negotiation systems are software systems whose aim is to support the negotiation process through technology and the Internet. Common to all types of such systems is the fact that they attempt to support the decision-making aspect of the negotiation process by allowing the transmission, storage and organisation of information and making it available when required.

E-Negotiation Systems may be classified into two distinct types according to the goal they intend to achieve. The goal of certain systems is to support the diplomat in the various functions of the negotiation process and they are hence known by the name of negotiation support systems. The second type of E-Negotiation system attempts to perform the negotiation process autonomously without the need for human intervention. Systems of the latter type are commonly referred to as negotiation software agents.

Systems which are intended to support the diplomat are generally based on certain functions of the negotiation process described earlier on in this chapter. They do not necessarily attempt to support the entire negotiation process but may focus on supporting only one phase or specific task. For example, negotiation support systems may support the pre-negotiation phase by storing the information generated from performed groundwork in a structured and organised format. They may allow the diplomat to identify and capture discovered relevant issues and classify their importance. Objectives and alternatives may be captured and stored into the system, which may later serve as the basis for building proposals. Provided the diplomat supplies the system with constant feedback during the actual negotiation process they may also assist in assessment of solutions. Through certain methodologies which are inbuilt through the system (based on the negotiation party's policy) they may even suggest the optimum solution for the negotiator. Finally, they may also support the concluding phase of the negotiation in order to assess the outcome of the negotiation process and identify the possibilities of re-negotiations if required.

Such systems are already in existence and are at the disposal of the diplomat. A good example is INSPIRE, a system developed by the InterNeg Group. The InterNeg Group is "a team of researchers from around the World who are interested in studying negotiations and training future negotiators, and in developing materials and systems for decision making and negotiations" (InterNeg Group, 2006). INSPIRE is a powerful tool as it attempts to assist all the phases of the negotiation process. Of particular interest in this system is the way it

attempts to support the diplomat by offering various functionality specifically aimed at which phase of the negotiation process is being conducted. Moreover, the negotiation process is broken down into three main areas; preparation, conduct and post-agreement, which is in essence identical to my proposed approach of dividing the negotiation process into the phases of before, during and after the negotiations.

Negotiation support systems aim at supporting the diplomat in the negotiation process. In contrast, negotiation software agents are systems which attempt to replace, to a certain extent, the human diplomat by a system which is capable of operating independently and autonomously. Such systems are also used in the commercial world in order to negotiate commercial terms or are even extended to the general public when they take the form of automatic bidding systems. In the context of the negotiation process in diplomacy such systems tend to be far more complex as removal of the human element from the negotiation process and sole reliance on technology could at times fail to provide successful results which could have disastrous effects on the surrounding society.

However, as in the case of negotiation support systems, negotiation software agents need not be utilized for automating the entire negotiation process but may be employed for partial automation of certain tasks. In the pre-negotiation process the negotiation software agent may automatically search and compile information from various sources into one coherent repository and display filtered results to the diplomat. This function exceeds the scope of negotiation support systems which only allow the diplomat to organise information which has been search for and found in a manual way. Automation in the creation of profiles of the opposing party is also possible in order to derive hypotheses of the opponent's objectives. During the actual negotiation phase the system may automatically propose offers which may be submitted to the other party without human intervention. Needless to say, such 'decisions' on the part of negotiation software agents are based on preset objectives and goals specified by the diplomats of the negotiating party. Evaluating and extraction of highlights of any

received offers is also possible with a certain degree of autonomy. Put simply, such systems may assist in obtaining the best deal for the diplomat without constant intervention and vigilance on the part of the diplomat and ensure that the party using the system arrives to a situation where it may gain from the negotiation process. Conclusions and interpretations from the result of the negotiation process may be derived and presented to the diplomat in the final stages following the actual negotiations. The power of negotiation software agents rests in their potential of using artificial intelligence to 'learn' new facts and trends by associating events with previously stored ones, resulting in a form of intelligence.

Apart from negotiation support systems and negotiation software agents, e-negotiation systems may also include other technologies which have gained popularity through the widespread use of the World Wide Web, such as e-mail, instant messaging, chat sessions and whiteboards. Such tools are particularly useful in supporting the diplomat in various stages of the negotiation process particularly when communication is required.

E-negotiation systems in general are largely dependent on them being operated in a professional and diligent manner. Information must be fed into the system in a predefined and structured format and ambiguous or poorly structured information could cause the make or break of negotiations. When assessing the performance of e-negotiation systems in the world of virtual diplomacy one must keep in mind that the results of any technology are always based on the input provided to such a technology. Poor information fed into e-negotiation systems and/or improper use will not yield the expected results and may have an adverse effect on the negotiation process.

Regardless of the type of e-negotiation system being used, a significant contribution by E-negotiation systems in the support e-negotiations has been noted. This has increased the possibilities of e-negotiations in serving as a strong alternative to traditional negotiations.

Pre-Requisites and Implications of E-Negotiations

Diplomacy is always on the move. Countries are constantly attempting to join forces for mutual benefit and ensure that as many parties as possible are included in decisions which are taken at an international level especially when global issues such as health and peace are involved.

Certain countries may not be able to afford attending all such negotiation events which is where the need for e-negotiations arises. Countries may use the Internet and other technologies to make their presence thus avoiding travelling. E-negotiations are cost-effective. On a separate note it also allows certain parties to participate in the negotiation process in a virtual manner not only because they cannot not afford it but because they are engaged in some other process or event. A diplomat may therefore participate in multiple negotiations which are occurring simultaneously in geographically different locations.

Apart from allowing participants to extend their presence to certain negotiations which would otherwise have not been possible, e-negotiations are the solution to an ever increasing problem: the opposition to negotiations. Details of certain negotiations which were once held under certain element of secrecy are now known by the general community and open to threats by any opposing party. An increase in terrorism has also contributed into making meetings of a certain nature dangerous. E-negotiations allow the negotiation process to occur in a safe manner. An example of this occurred in June 2001 in the World Bank meeting. The meetings was supposed to be held in Barcelona, however due to the anticipation that mass demonstrations and protests might arise the meeting was held via the Internet through forums and videoconferencing.

The above argument assumed that negotiations and meetings are carried out in a virtual fashion. This does not occur naturally. Technology is constantly changing. Software and hardware systems constantly require upgrading and attention or else their stability is

undermined. Systems must be kept protected from vindictive attacks such as electronic viruses and intrusion attempts from hackers. Third-parties may attempt to personify legitimate parties in order to take part in negotiations or to access confidential information. While diplomats attempt to leverage technology to communicate privately with the home government or other colleagues, malicious third parties may overhear communications or capture any information which is being transmitted without the knowledge of the legitimate party. Discovery of such information by unintended parties, especially if such information is released to the general public could be outrageous. As many opportunities technology creates, corresponding relative threats are constantly emerging. This does not mean that e-negotiations are under threat however the conduct of virtual diplomacy is not a panacea and considerable diligence must be carried out in order to ensure its integrity.

Technology plays a central role in e-negotiations to the extent that the notion of e-negotiations has only been possible through the advances in information and communication technology we have witnessed during the past decades.

In order for e-negotiations to occur participating parties must have a supporting infrastructure in place. This includes Internet access with high bandwidth, high-quality data/voice communications, and the required tools to carry out e-negotiations such as e-negotiation support systems and others mentioned in the previous section. In so far as the popularity of e-negotiations is ever on the increase since it is directly proportional to the advances in technology, third-world countries or under-developed countries from a technology point of view may be limited from participating in e-negotiations due to their technological limitations. Unfortunately a number of countries still have poor quality voice or data lines and limited Internet bandwidth or even no Internet at all. From the outset, the possibility of carrying out e-negotiations through, as an example, video-conferencing is largely reduced or even totally eliminated. There is always an alternative such as audio communications, however apart from the added issue of having to authenticate the voice of

the participant; such participation does not contribute to effective negotiations. Besides the availability of technology, a higher amount of literacy is required in order to effectively employ the use of technological tools. Certain countries might be hindered from entering the world of e-negotiations due to this fact.

The negotiation process may not necessarily take place in its entirety through the use of modern technology but only parts of it, particularly in the pre-negotiation phase. Particularly in multilateral organisations parties may use online forums and other tools originally just for the purpose of to sharing information. Organisations, diplomats, special groups and other interested parties could all form part of a large discussion which could lead to the need for negotiations to commence. Later on during the negotiation process the Internet could be used as a base for exchange of agreements when the conclusion of negotiations is taking more than expected, as an alternative to halting the negotiations and postponing their continuation for the future.

As one may imagine the number of interactions taking place within multilateral negotiations is huge. In order for e-negotiations to be a success such interactions must happen in a structured format. For this purpose a hierarchy of groups and committees is created in order to retain a formal structure for the development of the negotiations. Overall and in each group different rules will be required, including the members who allowed to participate and/or vote, who is allowed to access what information, who will moderate and chair the discussions, who may contribute/modify/approve text resulting from discussions, deadlines for commencement and completion of discussions, the goal of the particular group and other relevant criteria which are bound to be required for the general progress of the negotiations taking place.

Many e-negotiations take place through forums, chat sessions, e-mail and other media which use text as a medium of exchange of information. Text provides many advantages. First

of all it provides clear evidence of what has been discussed without any further intervention. It is clear, may be read again if it is not immediately understood and avoids vagueness. Certain parts of it may be used as the basis for a final agreement, as all negotiations will culminate in a document which is eventually signed by all parties. However one must here mention the importance of ensuring the authenticity of the text in that the contributing source may be identified and is legitimate.

E-Negotiations in the Simulation of Negotiations

As has been demonstrated throughout this chapter the negotiation process is a complex one. Diplomats must be well versed with the procedures of negotiations and must be well prepared for this process. Learning through trial and error is not an option in diplomacy as this may have disastrous effects. A natural option would be to learn the negotiation process by the accompaniment of experienced diplomats and learning through practice.

Alternatively technology may be used to simulate negotiations as a base for learning without the side effects. In so doing such negotiations are carried out in a virtual fashion, thus rendering them e-negotiations in their own right. Put simply, a scenario for e-negotiations would be the virtual simulation of negotiations for academic purposes. Two such cases with different perspectives will help demonstrate this argument and will now be discussed.

The first case refers to a situation where the DiploFoundation, in a quest to discover whether negotiation could be taught through online means, developed an exercise with the intention of teaching the negotiation process. The chosen topic was the "International Declaration on the Internet" (Kurbalija, Jovan, 2002b).

The exercise was divided into three phases. The first phase consisted of traditional negotiations around a table where participants negotiated in face-to-face discussions in a workshop. The second phase consisted of the shift of the negotiation process from a physical

manner to the Internet. Although communication took place electronically the participants where still physically located in the same room. The third phase consisted of the participants negotiating in the same manner however in their respective countries, thereby achieving real e-negotiations.

The result of such an exercise was that the participants found it simpler to negotiate, and through the adherence to certain rules, as outlined in the pre-requisites of e-negotiations in the previous section, a more efficient negotiation process through e-negotiation was achieved.

Another similar exercise was conducted by the University of Wales in order to simulate European Union negotiations. Forty-five students divided into fourteen groups were required to perform negotiations with the goal of enlargening the European Union and, in so doing achieve a political advantage for the countries they were representing.

The exercise was carried out with a mixture of physical meetings (internally between members and bilaterally or multilaterally with other groups) and virtual dialogues in the form of virtual discussion boards or class-rooms. E-negotiations were carried out sometimes to assist the physical negotiations or at times even to replace them when physical encounters were not possible. Finally a two-day summit was organised with the aim of finalising the negotiations.

In this case e-negotiations contributed to the first phases of the negotiation process such that the "number of issues to be decided had been narrowed down and the positions of individual teams clarified, so that a clear, if still substantial agenda presented itself for the 2-day summit" (University of Wales, 2001). Moreover it was generally concluded that such a type of learning yielded more successful results than traditional transfer of knowledge through seminars or lectures.

Common to both the above cases was the fact that technology was inbuilt into the negotiation process. The conduct of e-negotiations yielded positive results, however they did not solely suffice to complete the negotiation process as in different phases of the process, either in the beginning or the end, physical encounter was also present.

One must not underestimate the importance of physical encounter. It establishes trust between parties which is essential for the health of the negotiation process and every now and then the need for renewal of such physical relationships is felt. Physical encounter is also required particularly in conflict resolution where e-negotiations do not suffice to independently provide a solution.

This argument allows us to draw a safe conclusion on the subject of e-negotiations; whereas they undoubtedly assist the negotiation process in a number of ways, "there will always be contexts in which the electronic form of interaction cannot and indeed should not replace traditional negotiation processes" (Schoop, Mareike, 2001). Nevertheless, the importance of e-negotiations will continue to increase as the number of situations where e-negotiations may be leveraged to partly replace conventional negotiations or else to complement them, is always on the increase.

CHAPTER 5 – ENHANCING VIRTUAL DIPLOMACY THROUGH E-LEARNING

In the previous chapters various areas of virtual diplomacy have been discussed. Whilst many events are driven by the continuous change of Information and Communication technologies, the human element is undoubtedly required for the effective conduct of virtual diplomacy. Virtual diplomacy is conducted by diplomats and diplomats must be trained in order to be in a position to conduct effective virtual diplomacy.

Unlike trends present in a couple of decades ago, the digital age has rendered much greater the significance that diplomats keep abreast of developments and constantly update and re-invent themselves particularly in the light of virtual diplomacy. The nature of traditional learning does not provide a framework which is dynamic and flexible enough to cater for such needs, hence the rise of e-learning. Such reasons and the rise of e-learning are discussed together with the impact of e-learning on modern diplomacy.

Various channels have been developed through which technology can be leveraged to provide online learning. One of the most popular channels is the virtual classroom and its mechanics and implications will be investigated.

The University of Bath defines e-learning as "learning facilitated and supported through the use of information and communications technology, e-learning can cover a spectrum of activities from supported learning, to blended learning (the combination of traditional and e-learning practices), to learning that is entirely online" (University of Bath, 2004). E-learning

may internally comprise of different models of which their relevance and adequacy to virtual diplomacy may vary. An investigation as to establish which e-learning model is most adequate to virtual diplomacy will be carried out, partly through the analysis of a case study of a training programme carried by the DiploFoundation.

At a first glance one may easily note that there are various permutations or e-learning, each of which with distinct advantages. However, till which extent, if at all will e-learning enhance virtual diplomacy? The chapter seeks to provide an answer.

Why E-Learning?

The diplomatic community is currently undergoing many challenges. One of the largest challenges is to ensure that the diplomat keeps updating himself in line with the developments in technology, and adjusts the required skills accordingly. The only solution to achieve this is by constant training from professional sources.

However this is easier said than done. One must not forget the environment in which diplomats work. Many diplomats are dispersed geographically across the globe, each representing their home country in a foreign land. Traveling to the home country or other possible venue frequently for training would be very costly, not to mention that such events would be very time-consuming. Putting the cost aside, diplomats simply cannot afford to abandon their place of work for considerable amounts of time to attend training, even if it is for a worthy cause. As a result diplomats are missing out on opportunities for training. This is having an adverse effect on their skills to perform in the diplomatic community.

We are therefore faced with the original problem: training is undoubtedly required however it cannot be delivered due to reasons which render it unfeasible. An ideal solution would provide training without the need to distract diplomats from their duties. Such a solution would need to be available on demand and inbuilt into the daily routine of diplomats. The

only possibility of such a solution rests within technology. Technology may support the training process by alleviating the side effects traditional training causes on diplomacy.

The Digital Age has produced many new technologies which, amongst others, provide the ability to transmit information securely and efficiently with relatively no cost. As a result, technology may be used to support training in order to distribute training materials such as syllabi and notes and provides an unlimited source of information to diplomats who may replace visits to traditional libraries or government departments or ministries. Alternatively it may be used to follow up traditional training in the sense of allowing a medium for feedback prior to the training session being terminated. It may even go further in delivering the learning aspect per se' through electronic means however the various models of online learning will be discussed later in this chapter. Whatever the case e-learning provides flexibility and convenience in terms of the time when the training is required, as it does not always bind the student (diplomat) and the trainer to focus their efforts exactly at the same time. Being able to learn in an asynchronous mode gives the diplomat time to digest and reflect the new knowledge which has been absorbed through e-learning.

There are many other reasons which make e-learning a powerful mechanism in the area of diplomacy; for example by addressing another problem in the area of training; the need for individual attention. Nowadays the need for training is so high that it does not allow for individual coaching and attention to students, in our case diplomats. E-learning recreates such a possibility as it allows direct interaction between the diplomat and his tutor. The nature of e-learning also allows a greater number of interactions to occur between the diplomat students themselves and between the diplomats and tutors. It also creates added accessibility to certain members of the teaching institution or other professional people or diplomats which would otherwise be unavailable in a physical environment.

The nature of e-learning also allows diplomats to research and explore further their own area of interest through the use of hyperlinks on which the World Wide Web is built. Its flexibility also allows institutions to develop a wider range of courses addressed to a wider audience whereby diplomats may actually find an exact area of interest.

E-learning also brings about increased participation. In a physical environment there are noticeable differences between diplomats such as the ability to make oneself heard. Through e-learning all diplomats have an equal opportunity of putting forward their suggestions which results in better participation from all involved.

Despite considerable advantages e-learning cannot be fully beneficial to diplomats the first day it is offered. The change to e-learning is a painful process which requires the diplomat to change his routine and learning patterns. Nevertheless, time spent in adapting to such change is time well spent as e-learning will be a viable option for the diplomat in the long run.

A pitfall to e-learning is the fact that the certain changes are effected simply for the sake of keeping in line with the advances in technology, and not because they add value to the existing learning process which should be the main driver in requiring e -learning to modify itself to adapt to a particular change. The same argument applies for cost; one must exercise due care as cost should not be the main motivator for the use of e-learning.

On a separate note e-learning is only possible through the use of technology. As in other aspects of virtual diplomacy e-learning is therefore when the required technology is available, which limits certain under-developed countries from making full use of e-learning systems in the first place. Moreover, e-learning facilities which require high technology could prove difficult to utilize due to the roaming nature of diplomats, as such technology may not be available from anywhere.

It is evident that e-learning has various contributions to offer to diplomacy in general. However how can e-learning be particularly beneficial to virtual diplomacy?

Let us attempt to answer this question by first analysing the concept of "additional forms of literacy" (Baldi et al, 2003, p. 16). According to Stefano Baldi et al (2003, p. 16), "the inclusion of interactivity and multimedia in online learning, together with the global nature of the Internet, has created the need for additional forms of literacy." They divide such added forms of literacy into three types: visual, evaluative and community literacy. Visual literacy consists of the ability to interpret visual information. Evaluative literacy is the ability to determine the adequacy of the information to the problem at hand. Community literacy deals with both the capability and determination to cooperate with third parties despite an unknown physical identity.

Now let us recall a definition of virtual diplomacy used in Chapter 2: virtual diplomacy "encompasses the decision-making, coordination, communication, and practice of international relations as they are conducted with the aid of information and communications technologies" (Unites States Institute of Peace, 2006).

The foundations of virtual diplomacy and e-learning are the same. The forms of literacy that are required for e-learning are also required for the conduct of virtual diplomacy. It therefore follows that training given to diplomats in the form of e-learning will also deliver skills to the diplomat which is essential for the conduct of virtual diplomacy. The trained diplomat will conduct better virtual diplomacy than the untrained one therefore e-learning may serve to enhance virtual diplomacy in a many ways.

Virtual Classrooms

A concept which has helped promote e-learning is the *virtual classroom*. "On the one hand, this phrase has been useful in attracting attention to the concept itself. On the other hand, it

may be misleading, because integration of IT in education has a much broader potential. This does not refer simply to the computerisation of the traditional classroom, but involves new methods and quantitatively new experiences in the learning process" (DiploFoundation, 1999a).

In other words e-learning does not only consist of virtual classrooms, however they are a powerful tool which may be used to demonstrate the achievements of e-learning through the use of technology and will now be discussed.

An excellent definition of a virtual classroom by the Utah Education Network is "an electronic classroom consisting of off-site students (who could be in several locations), where instruction involves the synchronous or asynchronous use of electronic learning tools such as videoconferencing, online classrooms, whiteboards, chat rooms, document cameras, and so forth" (Utah Education Network, 2004). In our case such students are members of the diplomatic community.

Virtual classrooms benefit from the advantages of e-learning in terms of accessibility, time and convenience. However let us illustrate particular advantages and disadvantages of virtual classrooms by comparing them to traditional classrooms.

First of all a diplomat needs to physically travel to a classroom in a particular place and time in order to attend a lecture. Participating in a virtual classroom lecture does not require the diplomat to commute but requires access to a personal computer with an Internet connection and Internet browser installed is sufficient for the diplomat to particpate from location of his choice. In reality this sounds easier as it actually is as such access might sometimes not be available. However we will progress under the assumption that such resources are easily available to the diplomat who would like to participate in an e-learning programme.

Virtual classrooms offer diplomats the possibility to participate in both synchronous and asynchronous activities. Synchronous activities consist of lectures in the form of online chat where both diplomats and tutor agree to meet online in a virtual classroom at a particular time. Apart from the commuting aspect which is not required as previously mentioned, many similarities exist between traditional and virtual classrooms. Virtual classrooms excel in the fact that all participating diplomats are given an equal opportunity to participate however their real-time property is at a disadvantage when compared to traditional classrooms as since many communications are text-based, messages are often out of sequence and will require an effort from the part of the diplomat in order to sort the messages prior to interpreting them.

On the other hand asynchronous activities include learning functions such as discussion boards and forums in which the participants do not necessarily interact with one another at the same time. Questions and online help may be available on screen upon clicking on text or icons. Certain classrooms also make use of images and video. Whichever items are available the diplomat may post his comments and receive a response at a later stage. This allows tutors to structure a better response to the enquiring diplomat, as unlike traditional classrooms an enquiry may be attended to at a later stage. Moreover, the comments of students are open to the interpretation and scrutiny of other students. A large amount of feedback may arise resulting in a documented history of suggestions and modifications which may be stored as a record.

Regardless of whether participation of diplomats is synchronous or asyonchronous, the virtual classroom provides a framework for learning in which interaction between diplomats of various cultures is possible. As a result the diplomat is open to various opinions of other peer diplomats and more knowledge may be transferred as a result. Moreover, due to its many convenience properties it allows more professional tutors to deliver training as they are not confined to a physical classroom. However this fact also has its counter effect in the sense that on average the tutor will spend more time in preparing for a lecture in a virtual classroom

than a real one. Various reasons exist as to why this is so. First of all the lessons in a virtual classroom many times cover a broader range of subjects therefore more material must be prepared. Second of all the tutor has a more difficult task in rendering an online lecture interesting when compared to a lecture in a physical classroom. Thirdly an online lesson is more complex to prepare due to its technological nature.

The content available in virtual classrooms is more up to date than in traditional classrooms as its electronic nature allows it to be updated much easier. In diplomacy this is particularly relevant as the environment is subject to constant change. Information is available on demand and the diplomat may search through various information in order to find adequate information for the problem at hand. This will assist the diplomat in increasing his *evaluative literacy* as previoulsy described.

Virtual classrooms also provide a cost-effective solution to modern training. The cost of maintenance is significantly less, both in terms of tutor renumeration and physical costs for the classrooms, which in the case of virtual classrooms are confined to hosting a website and its relative software.

The same properties which create advantages in the use of virtual classrooms can also be a paradox and lead to disadvantages. One important such case is the electronic nature of virtual classrooms. Despite derived advantages as detailed above, lack of face-to-face contact diminishes the impact of the learning experience. A remedy to this may be by re-engineering the methods with which information is provided to the student. Breaking tasks into more manageable chunks may contribute to a more user-friendly experience for the student. Another remedy to the lack of physical presence is good use of communication tools and visual representation, which in so doing will increase the *visual literacy* of the diplomat.

The electronic nature of virtual classrooms also forces diplomats into a situation in which it is more difficult to trust fellow student diplomats and establish relationships due to the lack of

physical contact. In order to overcome this barrier the diplomat must acquire a considerable level of *community literacy*.

Virtual classrooms increase the availability of tutors however decreases their availability under a different perspective when compared to traditional classrooms. During an online session the tutor may be performing other duties not particularly related to the session, which does not really happen in a traditional classroom lecture or everyone would immediately notice.

The use of technology in its own right may also intimidate diplomats who are perhaps not technological by nature. Support through alternative means such as voice or fax, particularly in the early stages may be decisive in convincing a diplomat to make full use of the facilities provided by a virtual classroom. Moreover, since virtual classrooms are fully based on the use of technology, e-learning programmes would come to a halt if the underlying technology had to fail or be unavailable. Put simply, an Internet downtime could cause a diplomat to miss an online session. Although certain contingency exists through traditional means of communication such as voice and post, this is not always possible particularly when synchronous sessions are required.

Increased interaction is also another factor which breeds a contradiction. Whereas it succeeds in stimulating interest in virtual classrooms, increased enquiries from diplomatic students require more profession diplomat human resources in order to respond to queries, in particular to asynchronous communications. This may also lead to an increased cost in the employment of academic staff.

Putting the advantages and disadvantages of virtual classrooms aside two major conclusions may be drawn. First of all virtual classrooms undoubtedly provide an alternative mechanism to modern training for diplomats. Secondly, amongst enhancing other skills and

competencies they educate diplomats in increasing their visual, evaluative and community literacy.

Variations of E-Learning

E-learning has not followed one path and has not been cast in stone. Since it is based on technology and ever changing factors its nature is dynamic to the extent of how it is implemented. There is no one particular model of e-learning; however the variations of e-learning may be generally classified into two types.

The first set of variants of e-learning is classified my mode, in the sense of independence of the diplomat in self-teaching himself. E-learning allows diplomats to receive training which is triggered by themselves in the form of self-teaching following automated on-line courses, exercises or other tools which do not require the intervention of a third-party human element. Such courses may even be executed in a totally offline fashion from software based on a compact disc. This is particularly useful to the diplomatic community in the light of the hectic nature of diplomats, which unfortunately are many times unavailable to attend pre-scheduled training. The opposite mode would consist of learning through participation in a virtual classroom, whereby a diplomat is coached by a professional tutor and is taught in the traditional way through electronic means.

The second set of variants of e-learning may be classified by the extent to which e-learning is employed in the learning process. A learning programme for diplomats does not necessarily have to be delivered in its entirety through electronic means via e-learning. Neither does it necessarily have to follow the traditional way in its entirety, but a mixture of both methods of learning may be used which yields a hybrid mode of e-learning. Such a mode has proved to render very successful results, as will be discussed further on in an investigation of the DiploEdu project.

The categorization of variants is important in helping the reader assess in which aspects e-learning may vary. However, regardless of which variant an e-learning programme may belong to, basic fundamentals in the learning process must be adhered to. Stefano Baldi (2003) helps us by identifying four main components which must be present in any e-learning variant: *learning*, *doing*, *referencing* and *collaborating*.

The *learning* component is the mother component which refers to actual process of transmission of information between tutor and student with the sole purpose of acquisition of knowledge by the student. This is possible through relevant learning materials in various forms.

Doing is another component which is vital in the learning process. The learning component may only transfer knowledge to the diplomat, the experience and ability to perform the task for which training has been given is only possible through having a go on actually performing the task. Doing also includes the techniques which allow the student to experience the skill or item being taught. This importance was already identified circa two thousand five hundred years ago in a famous quote of Confucius: "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand" (The Quotation Page, 2005).

The third component is *referencing*. This component refers to the investigation of related material to the subject at hand through extra sources. The nature of e-learning greatly allows such a component to be present as the World Wide Web offers a convenient way of searching additional information through hyperlinks.

The final component is *collaborating* and encompasses the coordination and cooperation between students, tutors, peers and other related parties in order to achieve a higher benefit from the learning process.

Once an e-learning programme features all the above mentioned components then the core learning process within the programme is guaranteed to be robust. Nonetheless the most adequate mode of e-learning should be carefully selected together with other matters which require customization according to the situation of the learning being offered. Any e-learning programme should not be based on technology just for the sake of it, as previously mentioned; however particular requirements for which the programme is being proposed in the first place should serve as the building blocks on which the programme is designed. Moreover any programme should seek to focus as much as possible on real life scenarios for which training is required and be specific, other than maintaining a general approach to the subject which may fail to train the diplomat in a particular skill or area.

The various permutations of e-learning may vary according to the provider or organizer of the e-learning programme and the extent to which technology and student autonomy are implemented will depend on the goals of the particular institution. Generally speaking it is safe to assume that technology factor is partially based on the technology available to the teaching institution and student diplomats; whether through the use of simple text requiring low bandwidth Internet connections or through the use of audio and video streaming which would require a higher amount of bandwidth and computing power. We can also say that the autonomy and independence a student is offered is directly proportional to the desired level of interaction between student and tutor by the institution.

If one had to analyze many variants of e-learning programmes one could easily conclude that two common properties present among all variants are a high use of technology and a lack of face-to-face interaction. In this regard it has been a challenge of researchers and developers in the field of information technology and diplomacy to come up with a solution as how to leverage information technology to provide learning, however without renouncing on the positive aspects of traditional learning. From various experiments that have been carried out in the field the model which has yielded most successful results has been what

may be called as a hybrid model of e-learning; one which encompasses all features of e-learning but includes a hint of traditional learning in the form of physical interaction in order to preserve certain characteristics of traditional learning.

One such organization which has conducted such exploration and experimentation has been the DiploFoundation which happens to be the learning institution for which this report is being compiled. DiploFoundation has set up the DiploEdu project, "a distance learning methodology for teaching Information Technology and Diplomacy" (Conference on Knowledge and Diplomacy, 1999). Experiments have been carried out in the 1990s with the first conclusive experiments in 1998 and the first official course offered by this project was a Postgraduate Diploma in Diplomacy (Information Technology and Diplomacy) offered in 1999. This course is still offered till today and in 2004 I have personally completed this course successfully five years later from its inception in 1999. The key points and phases of this programme will now be discussed as a demonstration of a hybrid e-learning programme.

Prior to describing the phases of the learning programme one must mention the reasoning behind the approach taken by Diplo throughout the course. Diplo have been cautious in preserving two principles throughout the various stages of the programme; attempting to provide tacit knowledge as opposed to only explicit knowledge and ensuring a gradual introduction to e-learning techniques from traditional ones, which forms the basis of the hybrid model.

"Explicit knowledge is relatively easy to capture and store in databases and documents. It is shared with a high degree of accuracy. Explicit knowledge can be either structured or unstructured" (New York State Department of Civil Services). Explicit knowledge is normally the knowledge which is transferred from tutor to student in the learning process of both traditional and e-learning programmes.

On the other hand "tacit knowledge is knowledge that people carry in their minds and is, therefore, difficult to access. Often, people are not aware of the knowledge they possess or how it can be valuable to others. Tacit knowledge is considered more valuable because it provides context for people, places, ideas, and experiences" (New York State Department of Civil Services). Diplo believe that apart from explicit knowledge which serves as the stepping stone for any type of training, tacit knowledge is crucial to the training of diplomats, whose environment constantly requires diplomats to possess skills of improvisation to various situations. Such a skill may only be obtained through experience and advanced preparation, hence tacit knowledge is an area Diplo has attempted to deliver throughout its learning programme.

The New York State Department of Civil Service extends its definition of tacit knowledge by the statement "Effective transfer of tacit knowledge generally requires extensive personal contact and trust" (New York State Department of Civil Services). This concept is fully supported by Diplo in that they state their "main premise was to use traditional methods for transfer of knowledge, predominantly tacit, which requires the richness of direct human communication" (DiploFoundation, 1999). Diplo have demonstrated this by basing a part of their course on physical face-to-face training covering protocol, etiquette and negotiation simulation with professional tutors who are experts in the diplomatic field or ex-diplomats.

The inclusion of physical training in the learning programme has been considered for two reasons. Apart from enabling the transfer of tacit knowledge it also enables a gradual migration of teaching to e-learning techniques. This will avoid certain side effects which may be brought about in the migration to e-learning programmes.

The course is mainly divided into two main phases: a ten day workshop which covers introductory face-to-face training using computer-assisted learning and later on continuation of the course via the Internet.

The first phase commenced with an introductory workshop where diplomatic students where acquainted to each other and to their tutors. A real classroom was set up and students were introduced to the subject by traditional means. Despite a traditional classroom, from the first days learning was facilitated through the use of computers such that the students, despite being physically located to one another were required to interact through electronic means. This concept served to prepare the students for the subsequent phase which was to be carried out solely through electronic means. Students were gradually coached in directing their queries to tutors via electronic means other than direct physical contact. Nonetheless the change was instilled into the students gradually over a period of ten days. Various applications and tools were used according to the subject in focus and their activities included "participation in discussion groups, continuous development of cognitive maps, and development of hypertext presentations about the topics of discussion" (Kurbalija, Jovan, 2002b). Students were also given the opportunity to participate in a negotiation simulation exercise. Such exercises have already been referred to in the previous chapter.

The second phase consisted of teaching via the Internet. In the beginning of this phase students were provided with a list of subjects which would be covered throughout the remainder of the course. Attached to each subject were a number of lessons which were to take place within a virtual classroom hosted by the DiploFoundation, with a minimum of two or three per subject.

Each lesson consisted of three distinct processes. Prior to the lesson the students were required to effect a considerable amount of groundwork which consisted of reading the lecture (whose length varied according to the subject) and annotating it. The annotations could take the form of cross-referencing the text to a hyperlink containing a relevant argument, posting a personal definition of a term or even putting forward a query when required which might be answered by other students. Some tutors also made use of discussion boards and allowed the students to develop the subject according to their selected path by putting forward their

interpretations of the subject and other comments not necessarily directly relevant to the text contained within the lecture. Considering that the students were all diplomatic students, some of which already employed in the diplomatic community, some students could even attempt to describe and interpret the subject according to their real life experiences and share such experiences with others. However, discussion boards were not used in all subjects and were left up to the discretion of the tutor when he/she deemed necessary. The last step in completing the groundwork was to complete a self-assessment questionnaire on the lecture with the purpose of indicating to the student whether he has comprehended the subject material for personal use.

The next step was to attend an online lecture in a virtual classroom at a particular time and day. Students logged into the virtual classroom and the tutor used to instigate and moderate a discussion on certain items which may not have been fully comprehended by all students or on the most important points. Although the online lectures were an important part to the learning process the actual learning took place in a rather independent asynchronous fashion in anticipation of each lecture.

The final process for each lecture was to conduct an exercise comprising of multiple choice or questions and answers, or even a mixture of both, in order to formally assess the student's progress in the particular subject. The results of such tests contributed to the final classifications of the diploma. Upon termination of a subject students were also required to complete a feedback questionnaire in order to assess whether the learning process for the subject was adequate in content, volume and complexity and whether the tutor succeeded in contributing successfully to the learning process with regards to moderation, advice and correct formulation of feedback mechanisms such as questionnaires and discussion boards.

The result of such a course is a hybrid e-learning programme which, despite being based on technology commences using face-to-face interaction to establish relationships which will be

later maintained throughout virtual means. From my personal participation in such a course I must confess that such a model succeeds in delivering a successful e-learning programme for a variety of reasons. Students are given the opportunity to interact with both peer diplomatic students and tutors in alternative ways. Feedback mechanisms are efficiently employed and it is evident that constant upgrade to the learning mechanisms are being effected. Alternative variants of training are available however such a hybrid model has been proved successful in the area of e-learning.

E-Learning: Will it suffice?

During the International Conference on Knowledge and Diplomacy held in Malta in January 1999 the DiploFoundation launched what is referred to as the 'Diplomatic Index' (DiploFoundation, 1999).

This index is a measure of what abilities and competencies are required by diplomats in order to effectively carry out diplomatic functions, and divides all such abilities and competencies into three main groups: diplomatic qualities, diplomatic skill and diplomatic knowledge. With such an index, any form of training for diplomats could be viewed from three different viewpoints in order to address a more comprehensive and exhaustive list of issues which may be required.

"Diplomatic qualities are either physical or mental attributes a person is born with or the result of cultural environment and upbringing. Natural attributes cannot be acquired but they can be developed. Missing qualities resulting from upbringing and cultural environment can be acquired" (Diplomatic Index, 1999). Natural attributes refer to characteristics such as physical good health and a mental natural curiosity. On the other hand an example of a missing quality which may be acquired is courtesy and good manners.

Diplomatic skills are abilities that may be in general acquired through specialised training, and a diplomat is not required to be born with such skills, unlike the natural attributes in Diplomatic qualities. "The main diplomatic skills are language proficiency, interaction with media, IT proficiency, representation, information management, negotiation, diplomatic behaviour and protocol. Language proficiency is an example of a skill that requires a natural predisposition, but is acquired through training" (Kurbalija and Baldi, 2000, p. 144).

The third category of the Diplomatic Index is diplomatic knowledge. It may be further classified into general knowledge, which covers a broad range of diplomacy related facts and information, or specific knowledge which includes the know-how and required information in order to carry out a particular diplomatic task such as representation in a permanent mission.

Out of the three categories in the Diplomatic Index the category of diplomatic qualities cannot be assisted through e-learning. This is because the physical element is crucial to assist the diplomat acquiring missing qualities such as to be a good listener and can clearly not be achieved through electronic means. Nonetheless e-learning may largely contribute to both diplomatic skills and knowledge. For example e-learning may be the ideal mechanism to assist diplomats acquire diplomatic skills such as IT proficiency, information management and interaction with media. Moreover e-learning has much to contribute in diplomatic knowledge as through modern technology e-learning enhances the dissemination of and access to information, and largely increases interaction.

Throughout this chapter it has been demonstrated that e-learning may in various ways contribute to the learning process for diplomats in virtual diplomacy.

However this will not happen overnight and independently. E-learning will require the modern diplomat to change his academic patterns in order to integrate his learning with the daily routine of work, unlike in traditional learning where it the fact that one must abandon his job and dedicate himself to a training session makes such a task all the much easier. In

order for such a culture change to occur a considerable amount of time must elapse. Moreover, "the voice of reality questions how far we can go with online learning given the importance of direct contact and interaction in the learning process" (Diplo@WSIS, 2006).

Not withstanding the above the lack of direct contact in the learning process may be largely softened by including a proportion of direct contact in part of the process, utilising a hybrid model of e-learning. Moreover, the fact that virtual diplomacy does not base itself on the human element largely diminishes the shortfalls e-learning may have on the preparation and training of diplomats for virtual diplomacy.

There are many areas in which e-learning may contribute in the training of diplomats, particularly in skills which are based on communications and information technology. Such areas form a subset of the areas modern diplomats are required to be competent in, in order to conduct successful virtual diplomacy. E-learning allows diplomats to experience virtual diplomacy and practice it with tools which are used in the real world of virtual diplomacy. Diplomats are empowered to simulate different areas of diplomacy described in previous chapters such as virtual diplomatic missions and e-negotiations. E-learning will allow diplomats to learn the boundaries of modern technology and discover the opportunities and possibilities of effecting diplomatic work through virtual diplomacy.

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION

"Well-informed people know it is impossible to transmit the voice over wires and that were it possible to do so, the thing would be of no practical value" (David Mendosa – a writer on the Web, 2001). This statement was issued in the editorial of the Boston Post in 1865 and over the years turned out to be a fallacy. Not only voice has been transmitted over wires but also data, which together with other advances in technology have given rise to the Digital Age.

In Chapter 2 we have observed how the evolution of the Digital Age has given us as a result the Information Revolution, which has had a considerable effect on diplomacy. The effect has been significant to the extent that the notion of virtual diplomacy has been created. When referred to in this way, 'virtual' does not comply with the standard definition of simply being a representation or something unreal. Virtual diplomacy is a real way of conducting diplomacy, only through a different channel: the Internet and other relative technologies.

Diplomacy has many functions and this report has illustrated that many of them may be implemented and conducted with the help of new technology and the Internet. Official representation through embassies, consulates and permanent missions may be extended to the World Wide Web. Negotiations are another function in which a virtual counterpart is possible.

However, the existence of a virtual representation does not signify that it will replace the entity it is representing. I attribute this statement to two main reasons. First of all it might not be possible. Chapter 3 has demonstrated that virtual diplomatic missions are useful in complementing the physical missions however certain processes cannot be performed

electronically, particularly those which required identity verification such as collection and distribution of passports. Secondly, although there are scenarios where certain processes may be performed electronically, it might not be wise to do so. For example in negotiations a complex process is involved. There are various instances where traditional negotiations with a physical presence may have a more positive impact on the general result of the negotiations than e-negotiations may have and it will be in the best interest of the state not to exclude the human element.

Nonetheless I have discovered that many times a degree of compromisation between virtual diplomacy and traditional diplomacy yields the most successful result. In Chapter 5 I have discussed the hybrid model of E-Learning, in which a mix of physical and virtual elements is used to deliver an efficient learning process. It succeeds in being compatible with modern technology without renouncing on certain advantages available in traditional methods; mainly, once again the human element. This concept may also be ported to other areas of diplomacy, such as diplomatic missions and negotiations, in which a similar balance may be achieved.

Such a mix is the result of the convergence of diplomacy and technology. Ex-United States Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering (2005) comments that "the world is becoming more complex, more multilateral, more challenging and more demanding". Diplomacy must hold on to its basic principles and methods while shifting its focus and scope to meet these new challenges. An across-the-board effort is required to make that happen, and changes of many kinds are needed to address new and challenging issues." The future of diplomacy rests in its ability to be flexible enough to adapt to the requirements of modern times, whilst retaining the foundations on which it is built. New skills and knowledge are required in the conduct of diplomacy in the twenty-first century. E-learning may contribute to such skills and knowledge and create the necessary awareness amongst diplomats. A culture change is required in various areas of diplomacy in order to fully utilize the tools that are made available to the

modern diplomatic community. A considerable amount of effort is undoubtedly required from the various parties of diplomatic activities.

Nevertheless such effort will be compensated. Virtual diplomacy will empower diplomacy in general by enhancing its conduct. Together with the phenomenon of globalization a higher amount of interaction is possible between different states, allowing greater progress to be made in areas of international interest such as resolution of international conflict, health and other global issues. Virtual diplomacy goes further in broadening the horizon of diplomacy in allowing new players in the conduct of diplomacy; from non-state actors such as Non-Governmental Organisations to the general public.

Virtual diplomacy may render possible new scenarios where traditional diplomacy is not feasible, such as diplomatic missions in a foreign country by states which cannot afford it. They are given an opportunity to participate in the area of international relations. Even in the area of negotiations virtual diplomacy allows diplomacy to take place where it might not be possible through traditional means, such as instances where a physical meeting might be dangerous or unfeasible due to other priorities of the diplomat, as discussed in Chapter 4.

This report has demonstrated that virtual diplomacy has given rise to a breed of increased opportunities and possibilities. The fact that virtual diplomacy has proven itself signifies the necessity for the present and future diplomat to understand its importance and its positive role in modern diplomacy. This can be largely assisted by e-learning.

The scope of this report was to investigate virtual diplomacy and its impact on traditional Diplomacy, proving or disproving the hypothesis that despite its many advantages it appears unlikely that virtual diplomacy will phase out traditional diplomacy and gradually render it redundant. My conclusion is that such a hypothesis is proved correct. Virtual diplomacy will not take the place of traditional diplomacy but will complement it and make it work better. Virtual diplomacy is not the rival of traditional diplomacy but they will co-exist.

With this argument I cannot but conclude on the note that virtual diplomacy is none more than a relatively new component in the general framework of diplomacy. Summing everything up, I can define Virtual Diplomacy to be the Diplomacy of the Digital age, which by exploiting the advances in information and communication technologies allows the conduct of traditional diplomatic functions through electronic means. Such a conduct enhances the traditional diplomatic experience, broadens the horizon of diplomacy and goes further in rendering possible certain diplomatic activity which otherwise would not have been possible. Diplomacy has been re-invented.

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