The Role of Information and Communication Technologies in Diplomacy and Diplomatic Service

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Contemporary Diplomacy

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Arts in the University of Malta for the degree of

Master in Contemporary Diplomacy

May 2010

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and I have acknowledged any use of published or unpublished works of other people.

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30 May 2010

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Alex Sceberras Trigona for cooperation and understanding, Hannah Slavik and Dr. Jovan Kurbalija for their constant support, and DiploFoundation for bringing me into this amazing world of diplomacy.

DEDICATION

To my patient family

ABSTRACT

Rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT) has lead to significant changes in social, economical and political relations of the modern society. Access to information and control over it contribute to the prevalence of soft power in politics of digital age, and empower the non-state actors in international relations. Contemporary diplomatic service, besides being faced with enhanced roles, requests for extended outreach and accountability, yet shrinking resources, is also challenged with multistakeholder and multidisciplinary international arena. The profoundly planned and well organised use of ICT can empower diplomatic service, especially of small and developing countries, and help it cope with the emerging challenges and deliver its maximum.

The paper provides comprehensive link between trends of the information society and the challenges of contemporary diplomacy. It analyses the potentials of ICT, as well as the related limits and possible risks, in key areas of diplomatic service: bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, consular work, negotiations, public diplomacy and the organisation of MFA. The paper suggests the apprehension of ICT with the implementation of necessary shifts in diplomatic practice, as respond to global challenges in international relations.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CIO – Chief Information Offices

ICT - Information and communication technologies

IGF – Internet Governance Forum

IGO – Inter-governmental organisations

IT – Information technology

MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NGO – non-government organisations

RSS – Rich Site Summary

SEO – search engine optimisation

SMS – Short Message Send, a messaging service of mobile telephony

SNP – Social Networking Platforms

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

USIP – United States Institute of Piece

VIP – Very important person

VoIP – Voice over IP (voice service offered via Internet)

Web2.0 – web 'version 2' that allows user-created content

WSIS – World Summit on the Information Society

WWW – World Wide Web (also referred to as web)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When in May 2007 the first two virtual embassies – those of Maldives and Sweden – have been officially opened in Second Life[1], the three-dimensional Internet fantasy world to that date perceived merely as an advanced social game, many became aware of the raising opportunities of the Internet to the governments. Many, but the states themselves – except for the rare ones, majority of diplomatic services worldwide have not yet understood the full potential of the Internet and the information and communication technologies (ICT), let alone implementing them to improve own performance.

Soon after its emergence two decades ago, the e-mail was conceived as a possible communication break-through; it is now being complemented by the real-time textual and voice-chats, video-conferencing and other advanced communication tools. Online cooperation tools, such as shared documents, calendars and databases, or collaborative document drafting platforms, have enabled fully functional collaboration of globally scattered individuals, organisations and branches. Transition from the 'old-fashion' owner-created web content to

[1] News on Maldives opening the first virtual embassy in Second Life available at: http://www.news.com.au/maldives-enters-second-life/story-e6frfmq9-1111113593623. Speech of the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs opening the embassy in Second Life of On 30 May 2007 available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhR43Yt9Pcs;

the extended user-created web content, with wide variety of communication and expression tools and services such as forums, blogs, multimedia shares and webcasts, has not only networked people and blurred the borders, but also raised the involvement of citizens in global affairs and the respective influence of the public opinion. Not the least, the increasingly powerful gadgets of a decreasing size and price – such as laptops or smartphones – have made the world truly mobile. The potentials of ICT and the emanating substantial changes of the society have been widely accepted by the outreached public. Diplomats have been hesitant, and many still are.

Contemporary diplomacy is facing numerous challenges. In an increasingly complex world the international affairs are being featured by multiplicity of stakeholders involved as well as fields negotiated. Requests for a fast response on countless global events, the need for an extended outreach and enhanced roles of the missions with growing consular loads due to migrations, all are challenged with heavy budget restrictions for diplomatic services imposed by the governments – especially in the small and developing countries. Cutting costs by downsizing of staff seems indispensable, while at the same time the advanced capacities and skills are required from the remaining ones; there comes a need for the intensive, efficient and low-cost trainings. On the top, the performance management is being relentlessly assessed by the enhanced influence of the public opinion. Reforms of the diplomatic service in all the major fields are indispensable; Foreign Service needs the empowerment.

"The Internet and the world wide web has reached the point when nobody can afford to ignore it, at their own loss" (Costea, 2007, p. 171). "The ability to disseminate free information increases the potential for persuasion in world politics" (Keohane and Nye, 2006, p. 193); the ability to control the information – use or abuse – is a way to empowerment.

The work of diplomats is in essence a communication and collaboration with colleagues and partners all over the world. The ICT are a mighty communication and collaboration tool. The profoundly planned and well organised usage of ICT can help states, especially small and developing ones, to cope with the loads of challenges and catch up with the emerging trends of the modern diplomacy.

The paper starts with the overview of emerging trends in communications, collaboration, communities and access to information, aiming at introducing basic concepts and wordings as well as at modelling the impact of these emerging technologies on habits of the global population. Seemingly disconnecting from technology trends yet maintaining the link with changes in the society, it continues with outlining the major challenges of contemporary diplomacy, thereby contrasting the emerging needs with initially outlined potentials and practices. Developing on the rendered contrasts the paper then discusses the possible compounds of the emerging assets of the ICT with challenges faced by contemporary diplomacy by crosscutting through various aspects: bilateral diplomacy and consular affairs, multilateral diplomacy and negotiations, public diplomacy, and finally within Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Such division into six aspects of diplomacy – all of which are mutually interlaced – is only one possible approach for the organisation of the thesis, which appeared to be the most convenient for overlapping with particular aspects of ICT that were analysed. It is certain that some aspects of the relations of ICT and diplomacy will remain unaddressed in this work, since the palette of potentials with limits is already big and growing; may it be an invitation to and a challenge for diplomats to recognise such emerging potentials and limits in their own areas of competence and thereby further add value to this work. In its conclusion the paper reiterates the thesis statement and links it back with the summary of analyses of impacts, then opportunities and limits of the ICT role in assisting with challenges of

diplomacy and its potentials for extending the capacities of Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the missions.

The paper introduces a discussion on the global changes in international relations introduced by the ICT through the growing involvement and influence of empowered citizens in the governance processes. Not only the global communication patterns are being changed and the pool of stakeholders involved in international affairs is widening, but the national boundaries are also being blurred by the Internet, thereby challenging even the concept of diplomatic representation and the roles of the states as the mere basics of diplomacy. The paper suggests the comprehension of ICT as paradigm shift in diplomatic activities and trainings as respond to global challenges in international relations.

To analyse the challenges of contemporary diplomacy, series of online and printed relevant resources, conference papers, publications and books as well as verbal interviews were consulted. The emerging potential of ICT was assessed and challenged through a rich first-hand experience and best practices of harnessing technology and tools by various entities worldwide. Recommendations for the advanced use of ICT in diplomatic service and arguments for benefits and limits were supported by the analytics and reported examples of success stories and lesson learned by experienced diplomats and scholars in their work which was referenced.

The paper is intended for diplomats as well as other stakeholders – especially from developing countries – interested in international affairs to provide a useful link between the growing potentials of ICT and contemporary challenges of diplomacy. It aims at encouraging the introduction of necessary shifts in diplomatic practice, yet suggesting caveats and limits as

well, in order to be able to deliver its maximum in an ever-changing global environment more and more dependant on information and communication technologies.

CHAPTER 2

CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Throughout the history technology has heavily impacted human society, its economic, political relations, social and cultural relations and values. If the invention of the internal-combustion engine and the mass-production of car at the beginning of 20th century have resulted with an impact as big as the urban sprawl and emergence of suburban cultures, it is easy to imagine how the advancement of information and communication technologies have changed and still will change the face of the humankind – on good and on bad.

From its starts – the invention of the telegraph in 1830s – the information and telecommunication era has introduced notable changes in global communications. Diplomatic practice could not have been left unaffected either: the 'direct-dial' concept soon emerged to enable highest officials to communicate directly with each other, without the need for intermediaries (Berridge, 2002).

It is with the emergence of Internet, however, that the ICT have gained a fully different meaning. Internet has not only further facilitated communications but has also enabled almost ubiquitous access to information, allowing people globe-wide to collaborate, create

communities, do business, learn, amuse, and even have ‘virtual lives’. More importantly, the ICT has empowered the citizenry to take active part in local and international policy-shaping processes and thus significantly impact international relations and conduct of diplomacy as well. It has also however raised the dependence of societies on these new technologies asking for a meaningful and well planned utilisation.

2.1 ICT-Powered Society: Emerging Trends

The Internet itself has become a mass social phenomenon rather than a technological one. By the end of 2009 Internet has reached out to over 1.8 billion people – 42.4% of which from Asia, 10.4% from Latin America and 4.8% from Africa (Internet World Stats, 2010) – making this virtual community more populated than any country in the world. Its impacts on everyday life are prodigious: an average user within this army of quarter-and-rising of the whole humanity spends about 13 hours a week online (Whitney, 2009), exchanging e-mails, browsing websites, blogging, tweeting, spending time in social networks or virtual worlds, downloading and uploading movies and documents, sharing photos, taking e-learning programmes or shopping. This heavily changed social behaviour reflects the emergence of a society of digital age – the Information Society.

The society in the digital age is constantly upgrading its personal, political and business bonds, promptly accommodating to new technologies and services: while it took only few years for Internet to outreach to 50 million users, global social network Facebook as a new service reached that number in less than two years. e-Government services that allow citizens to obtain personal documents, access public information or even vote virtually are listed high on national development strategy plans. Digital signatures are gradually replacing

conventional ones allowing for complete digitalisation of paperwork like contracts, certified financial reports or court documents. Financial transactions are largely conducted using ICT, while purchasing goods via Internet results with retail e-commerce spending as high as 900 million US dollars for a single day (Comscore, 2010).

2.1.1 Direct Communications

Direct communications remain one of the main roles of the ICT. The invention of electronic mail (e-mail) service and its wider usage from nineties had already revealed enormous potential of electronic messaging. Long letters could have easily been sent in almost real time to one or more recipients simultaneously. Such a convenience has however also changed the habit of communications through messages, making the users to often downsize the content to few sentences or words even, while raising the common volume and frequency of e-mail message communication to the level of almost 250 billion e-mails exchanged daily around the globe (Royal Pingdom, 2010). Such a load has challenged time management and even the efficiency of e-mail communications to some extent. On the other hand, the ability to promptly communicate is sometimes being replaced by a delayed responsiveness, taking the message loads as a reasonably acceptable excuse.

Unlike the e-mail communication, the use of instant messengers and further voice and video calls over the Internet – such as Skype – has become common low-cost option for real-time communication. Mobile devices that access Internet and allow for voice, video and short messages (SMS) communications – whose number is expected to surpass one billion by 2013 (Resource Shelf, 2010) – are making the world easily and thoroughfully connected. At the same time, the expectance of an immediate response has put additional burden on everyday

communications, making users to occasionally resort to being ‘unavailable’ or ‘invisible’ to avoid stress – often using ‘technical problems’ such as slow Internet connection as an excuse.

2.1.2 Access to Information

Another major benefit of ICT is the ability to easily access information. The World-Wide Web (in this work referred to as web), the most popular Internet service, is a system of interlinked information in text, visual or audible form. Assessing the quantity of information on web is almost impossible, and many recent attempts were widely disputable; yet mere comparison for illustrative purposes reveals the gigantic scale: extremely rough estimation by a CEO of Google, one of the leading Internet corporations, states that in 2005 it was made up of 5 million terabytes (Mills, 2005) i.e. five exabytes which equals $5x10^{18}$ of units of data (byte) – “equivalent in size to the information contained in half a million new libraries the size of the [US] Library of Congress print collections” (University of California, 2003) or “to all words ever spoken by humans since the dawn of time” (Klinkenborg, 2003).

It is clear, however, that within such an amount of data major percent is meaningless for many. More importantly, there is a significant part of meaningful information coming from unreliable sources, whose accuracy is almost impossible to assess – due to the amount as well as due to a global character of Internet. Even in case of a world-famous publicly shaped encyclopaedia ‘Wikipedia’ the reliability of some information, regardless of how strict editing policies are, certainly is disputable and can eventually lead to a disinformation – as in the case of two US Senators claimed dead by their Wikipedia articles in January 2009 (Pershing, 2009).

This giant haystack of information would be largely useless however without an easy way to search through it to find a desirable needle. Searching the Internet for a specific type of information based on key words, source, dates and many other tags is possible by utilizing powerful web search tools such as Yahoo! or Google. The high need for search engines may best be illustrated by the fact that over 70 billion searches are done by users per month (AccuraCast, 2010) (this data was also mined by using a search engine). To index online data search engines follow certain highly complex algorithms; making own web page or piece of information highly visible within public search queries is thus not simple and also requires a user to have significant level of skills for search engine optimisation (SEO) – or funds to request for a preferential commercial treatment by search engine companies.

Common search engines, however, are able to index only a small portion of the web content publicly available. The 'invisible' portion containing dynamic or unlinked content, restricted access content, private and contextual web space – referred to as a 'deep web' – is estimated to be 400-550 times bigger with quality content over 1000 times greater than that of the searchable web (Bergman, 2001). The CEO of Google, major search engine company, confirmed in 2005 that Google "has succeeded to index only 170 terabytes up until now" which is about 0.034‰ (SoftPedia, 2010).

Data visualisation tools are another form of condensing vast amount of online data into usable forms. Through capturing, analysing and presenting data in a convenient visual form the advanced software tools can help exploring large hierarchies, intelligence, financial maters, relationships between institutions or states, or current trends in certain area (ex. business, health, educations). Integrated maps capture geo-localised information – varying from AIDS indices or criminal assaults statistics to five-star hotels or reported shark attacks – and overlap with geographical maps. While a number of such tools are publicly available online, more

advanced commercial systems can be purchased for professional use by institutions, such as geographic information system (GIS) solutions or Enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions.

2.1.3 Sharing Information and Online Communities

Inclusiveness and openness of Internet are among its greatest values. Variety of online services allows 'netizens'[2] to contribute and share information, extending the outreach – and thus the effect it can produce – to a global scale. The emergence of online communities and networks created the possibility to publicly process certain information through open debates and knowledge-exchange, but also to 'intensify' or 'attenuate' its impact by broadcasting it through convenient 'filter' social groups – like-minded or divergent, respectively. The Internet is thus a space that offers enormous potential for open discussions and knowledge sharing and production, but also for multiplied mass-media effects such as spin to sway public opinion.

During the 90s, online community interaction was generally limited to Usenet groups, 'IRC instant messenger' text-based chat rooms and some online forums. The web pages provided easy access to vast variety of information offered by webmasters. The evolution of Internet towards user-created content and rich applications over the last few years – known as Web2.0 – has enabled all the users, not only webmasters, to easily share the information and own views as well as documents like photos or videos through some of the 230 million websites existing in 2009 (Royal Pingdom, 2010).

[2] "Netizen": broadly referring to any Internet user, 'a citizen of the Internet'; narrowly accounting civic responsibility and participation as well and thus referring to person actively involved in online communities, even engaging politically (http://www.encyclo.co.uk/define/Netizen)

Many commercial websites offer users to share own materials – such as video, audio, photos or text documents – making them publicly accessible and searchable across the world. According to the information from 2009, the viewers of YouTube – a leader in online video sharing – are watching some 1.2 billion videos per day worldwide, i.e. each user is watching one YouTube video per day on average (TechCrunch, 2009). More importantly, it is the users who upload almost 20 hours of video every minute (YouTube Blog, 2009) – content of different types: from favourite music or TV clips, personal memories and statements or thoughts, to self-learning courses on how to play a bass but also how to make a bomb. Sharing the interesting excerpts from TV programme have made certain public gaffes to enter the anthology of political and diplomatic skills, such as the case of "Paxman's dozen" BBC interview in which Jeremy Paxman repeats the same question 12 times to Michael Howard. (YouTube, 2010). A smartly planned use of video sharing possibilities, however, is used by many educational institutions for teaching materials (such as DiploFoundation channel at http://www.youtube.com/user/DiploFoundation), non-profit or political organisations for campaigns (such as Barack Obama: http://www.youtube.com/user/BarackObamadotcom), international organisations for information and dialogue (such as Internet Governance Forum of United Nations: http://www.youtube.com/igf), and others.

The term 'blog' was coined back in 1997 as a contraction of the terms 'web log', representing a model of individual expression over the Internet. Similar to the author's column in daily newspaper, it allows the author to post on regular bases any personal reflections on political or social phenomena, making it available for reading – and also for posting feedback comments – to anyone interested. "A blog is your best bet for a voice among the online crowd", claims a popular commercial blog space blog.com on its homepage (Blog.Com, 2010). Indeed, with emergence of commercial platforms that made it easy for anyone to create own blog, blogging has become highly popular resulting with over 126 million blogs by the

end of 2009 (Royal Pingdom, 2010), a number of which are the official blogs of institutions such as the US Department of State (http://blogs.state.gov/) or of Israel (http://www.isrealli.org/). With cameras becoming a standard component of equipment and with growing Internet bandwidths, a 'vlog' – video log – as a multimedia rather than a text-based version of blog has emerged as well.

Discussion forums were among the first advanced online tools allowing end-users to share the information among themselves in an organised way – through structured topics and threads of topic connections between posts. The technological aspect of this innovation has soon appeared to be shaded by its social implications – communities have started emerging over specific online forums, with users sharing same interests. As expected, the first emerging communities – now-a-days still the most widespread ones – were those of 'IT geeks' sharing the interests in specific technologies (computer equipment, mobile phones, software applications, etc); soon, however, the communities have arisen around technology-free topics varying from vine lovers over music or sport fans to those discussing politics and international relations. Forums have soon become mighty sources of information and even of political influence, as is the case with a forum of media house B92 of Serbia (http://forum.b92.net) at which the discussions in focus often shape the interests of the journalists of Balkan region.

One of the most innovative and revolutionary services for building online communities are the social networking platforms (SNP), whose full potentials and threats are being manifested day by day. By creating own personal profile a user can easily get connected to friends and colleagues to receive automatic updates on their lives, browse through their personal posts and photos, share comments and messages among themselves, inform them on personal daily updates through a personal status, join groups of likeminded people or become fans of

celebrities, raise money for public good causes or announce public or personal events... Facebook, a most populated SNP, reveals that, out of 400 million members spending total over 500 billion minutes monthly, an average user has 130 friend connections – acquaintances from real life as well as those known only from virtual space (Facebook, 2010). Some of the celebrities, including politicians, have several hundreds of 'friend connections' and thousands of 'funs' following their updates.

A somewhat different but growingly populated and influential social network – Twitter – allows for a much simpler but highly vibrant 'friend' relations to be created: users are focused on broadcasting instant reflections on the world around them – known as 'tweets' – within messages not longer than 160 characters each. The tweets are used to share personal mood, current activity or thoughts on some topic, links to online materials, interesting quotes, news or rumours, or to 're-tweet' an interesting post of a twitter-friend; it is estimated that 27.3 million of tweets on Twitter are posted per day (Royal Pingdom, 2010). Unlike Facebook-type of SNP, the twitter-friends are commonly not friends in real life, but are rather 'followers' of the like-minded persons and their tweets, which makes the outreach of the important messages fairly global in meter of hours or even minutes. During the post-election protests in Iran in 2009 tweeting appeared to be "of great help in terms of getting information out of the country" and "involving the huge Iranian diaspora and everyone else with a grudge" against the regime (Morozov, 2009). While Twitter as the commercial platform may or may not exist in near future, the concept of tweets it developed will certainly keep its important communication role in the hectic society of today[3].

Tweets are considered as one form of microblogging – which stands for size-reduced but more intensive and frequent blogging. Growing use of mobile devices allows for prompt posts

[3] The verb 'to tweet' has accustomed with 'digital natives' – the generations that have grew up with ICT and Internet.

from almost everywhere, but also extends microblogging from text-based messages to images or short audio and video clips taken by a cell phone for instance and posted instantly online. Microblogging is commonly used for live-coverage and instant mass-reporting on important events, from disaster sites like earthquake or tsunami strikes or terrorist attacks, to public debates, election results and international events and conferences – as was done by youth group at the United Nations forum in Egypt in 2009 through the aggregated web page (http://www.netvibes.com/igf09).

The SNP obviously connected distant (and nearby) communities in an easy and useful manner, while leaving much space for waging campaigns including asking for political support – "36 or 25% of candidates for U.S. Senate have posted their own profiles" on Facebook back in 2006 even, it was reported by Personal Democracy (Levy, 2006). Moreover, social networks can help with raising funds for political campaigns, as was successfully done by the US presidential candidate Barack Obama who leveraged online social networks to raise 55 million USD in February 2008 (Economist, 2010).

Many professional communities are emerging utilizing customised social network platforms that include a combination of diversity of blogging, microblogging, forum and chat discussion and messaging tools. Such communities aim to gather variety of professionals worldwide around certain topic to enhance dialogue, collaboration and personal and institutional networking. The Internet Governance community of DiploFoundation, for instance, numbers over 700 professionals worldwide from governments, regulators, civil society, business and academia gathered around Internet policy discussions in a single online spot (www.diplointernetgovernance.org).

The emergence of virtual spaces, the ‘like-real’ fantasy worlds such as Second Life, has opened a huge space for community interaction as well. By controlling the actions (moves and words) of their virtual representatives known as ‘avatars’ the users browse through visually well presented three-dimensional copy of the real life (nature, buildings, cafes and clubs, theatres, universities...) to interact with others for business and commerce, fun and entertainment, education, or other purposes. In essence the major advantage of virtual worlds to other online services is this graphical representation creating a dummy feeling of presence and proximity, yet much desired by the users as a replacement for a real touch. With further development of virtual reality technologies it is expected this visual component will matter even more, which calls for the attention to wisely planning ones virtual representation via Internet.

Even the visual component of e-communications which is constantly improving is still not sufficient to make up for one of the major shortages of the online communities: physical presence. Body-language during the roundtable talks, ‘small talk’ with a cup of coffee or a quick unofficial corridor talks still make a very important aspect of everyday human relations – private or professional. Whether the improvement of virtual reality would bring decent replacement, it is debatable.

2.1.4 Collaborative Work

ICT, and particularly the Internet, have enabled intensive low-cost collaborative work without much need for physical contact. Online groups, initially evolving from e-mail lists but now being multi-space platforms for collaborative work, are established based on the needs of existing real communities or groups of collaborators. Besides an e-mail distribution list,

online collaborative platforms commonly offer members to share documents among themselves, to leave short messages on a virtual board, but also to share their personal calendars and collaboratively use brainstorming mind-manager toolkits such as mindmaps.

Since all versions of collaboratively edited documents, including the latest ones, are available at any moment to all of them, the members can easily work over multiple time-zones. Moreover, fast development of machine language translation tools which provide instant intelligible – though not (yet) grammatically perfect – translation of web content and even real-time messaging and chat, allows the collaborators to work across many languages comprehensively.

One particular concept that has become widely accepted model of collaborative work is wiki: a type of a website that allows users to easily create pages, edit the content and create link between pages containing related content, thereby introducing non-linear structures. Wikis are commonly used for community websites which require collaborative updates, corporate intranets for structuring and linking information, collaborative research work and knowledge management systems. Wikipedia, a world-wide publicly accessible and editable encyclopaedia, is certainly the most well known example of an edited wiki structure of a mass contribution scale – it is available in over 200 languages and contains about 15 million articles (Wikipedia, 2010). ICANN wiki, an online collaborative space gathering professionals involved with the work of Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is an example of a community-based platform (www.icannwiki.org).

With help of synchronised shared calendars and group meetings appointment tools the collaborators can schedule tasks or meetings. Variety of advanced ICT services exist for remote meetings: instant chat messengers, voice-over-IP (VoIP) voice communications via

Internet, video-calls, webinars (web-based seminars) as customised web platforms combining voice and video with presentation slides, notes or working documents, virtual worlds which add an animated representation of a three-dimensional environment, or telepresence as the most expensive approach but also the most approximate representation of a real meeting involving high quality audio and video but also light and surrounding ambient. On a larger scale these tools can be used for remote participation activities allowing for a number of remote participants of an international meeting to meaningfully participate by following and contributing with interventions in real-time.

Corporate computer networks often referred to as Intranets, whether connected to and through the Internet or not, can enable information sharing with adjustable rights of reading, altering, copying, etc. Access to databases of institutions or groups can also be provided remotely, from geographical locations different from the one where the servers with documents are, by use of distant computers, laptops or mobile gadgets. Using centralised databases can enable joint collaborative work on preparing and drafting documents – such as reports or proposals: many users can simultaneously contribute to the same very document from different locations and in different times. Additional corporate project management tools can be introduced in forms of specialised software applications providing reports search, project management toolkits, brainstorming facilitation and mind-mapping, budget planning and control, calendars and agendas synchronisation, common contact lists, and many others.

In spite of the fact that all these collaborative platforms are either independent yet accessible remotely through Internet (as in case of Intranets), or are password-protected restricted sub-areas of Internet (as in case of online groups and web-based platforms), the weaknesses of the Internet as a global space transfer to risks of these collaborative spaces. Extended dependence on the online tools brings greater functional loss in case of an unexpected obstruction of the

connection. Additionally, the greater the importance of information shared internally is, the bigger the damage could be in case of a security breach due to improper data protection. Building confidence and trust in internal ICT structures requires significant efforts and time investment by institutions – for maintaining security and resilience of services and networks as well as for exploring new opportunities – but pays off manifoldly through harnessing all the potentials.

2.1.5 Mobility and Ubiquitousness

Evolution of small devices and appliances with functionality of computers (popularly known as ‘gadgets’) such as lap-tops, smart phones, palmtops and digital pads, all having integrated camera and microphone and the ability to connect to wireless Internet, has led to increased mobility in work. Development of services and applications for these gadgets are following same trends, like ‘podcasts’ – digital media files bring multimedia versions of updates and even ‘voice-read’ articles and books released episodically, or RSS – feeds which deliver brief previews of regularly changing web content such as news, blogs, recent articles or other updates, allowing users to “easily stay informed by retrieving the latest content from the sites . . . interested in” while saving time by not needing to visit each site individually and retaining privacy “by not needing to join each site's e-mail newsletter” (What is RSS, 2010).

Nearly ubiquitous access to information, enabled by such tools and the increasingly immanent wireless broadband Internet, allows people to stay connected and interact promptly on the events around them, often generating avalanche of reactions of other interested netizens. For example, after a conference participant – using his mobile phone – recorded and posted instantly to YouTube an incident of removing the objectionable poster of Canada-based non-

government organisation campaign upon China intervention during the Internet Governance Forum of United Nations in Egypt in 2009, the video was shared through several other online video spaces and was viewed over 30,000 times within just few days (and especially in US, Canada, China, Indonesia and Australia) (YouTube, 2009a) making the incident be reported by BBC news day latter (Fildes, 2009) and triggering the United Nations (UN) Press Conference to address the incident soon after (YouTube, 2009b).

2.1.6 Learning

The features of the online environment provided by the Internet, namely easy collaboration, communication and documents share, are the excellent set-up for sharing the knowledge as well. In a dynamic world of our age, a concept of 'life-long learning' asks professionals to seek out new knowledge and develop personal skills repeatedly; at the same time, the days are often 'too short' for all the duties from the long daily task list, not leaving much space for travelling to time-consuming trainings worldwide. While various distant learning correspondence models have existed for years, the Internet has introduced innovations in form of online learning (or e-learning): enabling learning anytime and anywhere, self-paced or within groups and direct lecturer-student and student-student interaction, with real-time or delayed communication, easily accessible reading materials and resources, etc. With convenient methodologies and materials adapted for online learning efficient, low-cost and prompt trainings and courses can be implemented to build professional capacities of the staff.

Various learning and training models have been developed using Internet and ICT in general. Conventional trainings are being extended with online materials and discussion spaces. Web2.0 tools are well suited for education: message boards, discussion forums, document-

shares, chat-rooms, online games or hypertext annotation tools that allow trainees to post comments on specific text portions of the learning material and reflect to annotations of course-mates – thereby building layers of focused inputs. Entirely-online programmes often combine these tools within virtual classrooms that gather number of participants and facilitate knowledge-sharing across the world, time-zones and working hours. Short and intensive lectures for a larger number of participants can successfully be delivered using webinars or virtual worlds. Not the least, number of self-paced programmes is available on the web enabling individuals to learn and assess themselves by using linear set of multimedia materials, quizzes and multiple-choice questionnaires. As with the available information, certain publicly accessible programmes can be valueless, yet the proven ones or the internally customised trainings based on e-learning techniques can be of a great value for developing personal capacities within institutions.

2.1.7 Future Society

The emerging online applications as services of the Web2.0 do not reflect on communication means only, but also on social habits and behaviour. Growing number of Internet users is becoming dependant on the information available online: searching for all kinds of information through the online search engines, checking for news and updates, consulting discussion forums for opinions and solutions to problems, learning from Wikipedia and other encyclopaedia created by users, screening the web pages of public institutions and ministries for administrative information, hearing about events through social networking platforms (SNP), etc.

More importantly, there is already a generation which grew up with Internet as we know and does not remember the time before it – referred to as 'digital natives', a term coined by Marc Prensky (2001, p. 1) who states: "Today's average college grads have spent less than 5,000 hours of their lives reading, but over 10,000 hours playing video games . . . Computer games, e-mail, the Internet, cell phones and instant messaging are integral parts of their lives". With years, the population of digital natives is growing while the population of their predecessors – digital immigrants – is dwindling; the society of the digital age is evolving accordingly.

"Information societies . . . are based on technological breakthroughs that risk providing little more than 'a mass of indistinct data' for those who don't have the skills to benefit from it", UNESCO reported in 2005 for the launch of its publication "Towards Knowledge Societies" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005, p. 21-22). A knowledge society, however, "creates, shares, and uses knowledge for the prosperity and well-being of its people" (Mashayekh, 2007). The 'Free and open source software' (FOSS) movement which stands for the freedom to copy and re-use the collaboratively developed software is acknowledged as a successful example by many. With growing consolidating of the two key pillars of the global information society – access to information for all and freedom of expression – it is expected more success stories will emerged, backed by the meaningful use of ICT.

2.2 Challenges of Contemporary Diplomacy

Information flow and global reactions that take place in almost real-time, easy broadcasting of user-created content and flourishing of online communities of growing impact on various developments in the society – from Internet-related issues to human rights or climate change –

have inevitably influenced the international relations as well. Increasingly informed and knowledgeable citizenry requests – and is able – to get involved with decision-shaping process.

Accordingly, contemporary diplomacy faces number of new challenges directly or indirectly influenced by ICT: new actors involved, new thematic area of coverage, changed relations with partners. Moreover, number of challenges burn that is result of other causes, such as the need for extended outreach and advanced skills yet with ever decreasing resources. Factors influencing changes in diplomatic conduct include the involvement of more players such as domestic public in foreign affairs or government departments, heterogeneity of thematic areas, extended roles, outreach and responsibility for coordinating networking efforts and ensuring coherency of diplomatic service, high public expectations (Rana, 2006).

2.2.1 Multistakeholder and Multidisciplinary Factors

Online space allowed for transforming scientific debates to a level of a popular science – comprehensive and accessible to all. Extended and inclusive discussions have raised awareness of general public and set ablaze personal opinions, including rumours and conspiracy theories, finally spinning the potpourri of thoughts through both traditional and contemporary media. Ultimately, this process keeps shaping general public opinion on various global and local policy issues, from environment changes via terrorism to health or even sports, strongly influencing official decision-makers. Actuated by peaks of the public opinion (growingly by those reflected through the online space) empowered stakeholders take direct stakes in international debates: governmental institutions, international organisations, business alliances, non-government organisations, media, professional communities and

academic institutions, and even individuals. Participation of some 2400 representatives – whose networking was facilitated via Internet – at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro was a first milestone of recruitment of non-government institutions and advocacy groups as actors of such international meeting (United Nations, 1992).

Thanks to the Internet, policy debates have easily extended the outreach beyond common thematic turfs, opening up for worldwide contributions and enabling the focus on multidisciplinary relations of politics with technology, economy, law, health, development, culture, education and other. International summits on issues like geothermal energy (2010 World Geothermal Summit, Bali), information society (2003 and 2005 UN World Summit on Information Society, Geneva and Tunis), climate change and environment (2009 UN Summit on Climate Change, New York), terrorism and security (2005 International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security, Madrid) are becoming regular. Millennium Development Goals of United Nations include number of policy issues like food, education, human rights, health and environment (United Nations, 2000a). Multidisciplinary feature is gradually becoming basis of most of the international diplomatic processes.

The ICT thus largely contributed to introducing two contemporary components to international relations and diplomacy thereby: multistakeholder and multidisciplinary factors. The features of these two factors can be illustrated through the ‘what-who-where-how-when’ matrix:

WHAT (Issues)	The topics of the diplomatic agenda are growingly multidisciplinary (e.g. climate change and environment, energy, information society, health), limiting the ability of professional diplomats – especially those of small and developing countries facing limited resources – to take meaningful part without seeking for partnership with the other global or local stakeholders (academia, civil society, business)
WHO (Actors)	While multidisciplinary feature of agenda in international affairs calls for involvement of wide variety of stakeholders to address different perspectives, the ICT empower them and allows to directly take part in decision-shaping process – especially the youth which is typically mastering the new technologies
WHERE (Fora)	Growing complexity of agenda and actors of international processes facilitated by online debates opens up new formal and informal international policy-shaping fora (e.g. World Intellectual Property Organisation, Internet Governance Forum, Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers)
HOW (Tools)	The evolution of ICT tools and the fast growth of broadband Internet have opened great opportunities for wide inclusiveness, but also allowed diplomats and other stakeholders to exchange notes and even negotiate online, to complement conventional in-situ meetings
WHEN (Timing)	If the introduction of a 'direct-dial' concept via telephone has changed international relations notably many decades ago, the ICT-powered instant access to nearly anyone and any information at any point in time asks for the instant reaction and puts additional stress on real-time diplomacy, often allowing no time for much thinking

Table 1. 'What-who-where-how-when' matrix illustrating the features of multistakeholder and multidisciplinary of components to international relations and diplomacy

2.2.2 Empowerment of Citizenry and States

The difference in roles and power is blurring between traditional stakeholders of international relations – the diplomatic representatives of states – and the newcomers constituted of mostly knowledgeable individuals yet with no diplomatic backgrounds and often no formal legitimacy – clear widely acknowledged structures they represent. "Is IT [information technology] being perceived by the powerless as a potential equalizer?", asks Professor Richard Falk (1998) of Princeton University, arguing in his stronger version of the emergent cyberworld hypothesis that:

> . . . in the space of half a century or so, states will not be any longer consistently seen as the defining units of world order, and that geographical boundaries and territorial sovereignty will be only one of several global indicators of how authority is located and exercised in the shaping of human behavior.

Even in his weaker version of the hypothesis he argues that

> . . . cyberworld is an emergent reality that . . . is having waxing, as well as waning political effects on the capabilities of the sovereign state, and that the technological potency of IT is to varying degrees being appropriated by the state in its struggle to remain at the center of the human adventure. (Falk, 1998)

In favour of the former stands the involvement on non-state actors in international affairs and their growing influence on decision-makers. In favour of the latter, however, stands the raising awareness of the states of the potentials for use – but also the abuse – of the Internet. Number of governments, notably the authoritarian ones, use advanced Internet filtering as a tool for severe censorship and control of the flow of information (Marrin, 2001). Others may manage information flow and impact in a more tacit way: by tweaking it, conveniently contextualising or misinterpreting, even forging, spinning it through the online space using its mass-media advantages for manipulating public opinion heavily – in spite of a risk that a growingly informed population might ultimately dig out the truth once. The wisest states might be those that recognise the power of dialogue and inclusiveness, and use the ICT to build trust and confidence in its services.

One way or another, the powerless are not the only one that could possibly be empowered – the powerful ones might do too. Whether the role of states and their representatives will wax or wane will, therefore, depend on their readiness to become early-adopters of ICT applications and the vantages they bring. It is, nevertheless, becoming inevitable that in diplomacy of the digital age the state representatives will have to network and partner with the empowered citizenry and their various representatives that seek for the value the diplomatic service can bring to their concerns. "This requires the MFA to track a wide range of non-political, low diplomacy issues, and to leverage its embassy network to work out the cross-linkages and potential leverages that help these varied actors" (Rana, 2007, p. 23) on their agendas.

2.2.3 Communicating with Partners

The work of diplomats "by definition, means contacts with colleagues all over the world" (Baldi, 1998, p. 2), be them governments or other stakeholders. Information and communication technologies, as the name implies, are also about communications; with the distributed structure, however, they encourage the emergence of bottom-up social structures rather than traditional pyramidical ones of governments. Unlike state representatives, non-state actors and especially civil society, which favour bottom-up approaches, are bonded strongly to Internet from its early days and are feeling comfortable with – if not dependant of – utilising it for contacts, communications and collaboration. To be able to communicate with new partners in contemporary diplomacy, professional diplomats need to become skilful using same services.

Changes in ways diplomats communicate with others do not only refer to adopting new technologies but rather to a paradigm shift caused by them:

- acknowledging citizenry as an actor, thus maintaining two-way communication and interaction, such as individual e-mails and personal blog posts with comments enabled, to complement traditional public statements;
- exchanging great number of condensed and clear messages with partners to complement traditional exchange of notes;
- careful sounding of, but also active participation in discussions led by non-state actors, such as online discussion forums, to complement traditional sounding through media and diplomatic channels only;
- raising awareness of the global feature of all communications and information shared, with much less space for 'deniability';
- accustoming to highly increased frequency of communications and information flow with diversity of actors on number of parallel threads.

In a vibrant world of Internet where millions of e-mails, forum posts and tweets are exchanged daily following up on variety of events worldwide, a diplomat is required to provide fast response with solid knowledge in diversity of thematic areas. While no wise respond can be made without proper thinking – and thinking still asks for time in spite of technology revolution – collecting and analysing related info, discussing it internally and making decisions on the proper reaction can be accelerated by using ICT.

2.2.4 Extended Roles with Limited Resources

Besides the demand for an extended outreach to variety of stakeholders and domestic and foreign public, across geographical meridians and though complexity of subjects, the diplomatic service need to coordinate with other ministries and government itself in order not to be bypassed in their international relations. In his report of 2000, Ambassador Paschke (2000) accounts:

> The fact that political leaders know each other well as well as the volume, ease and speed of communication in the age of information technology have resulted in a situation where communication between governments usually takes place without the intervention and often even the knowledge of the embassies.

In order to establish trust in its service, foreign ministry thus has to "take a holistic view of the sectoral issues that are handled by individual ministries, and mobilise the diplomatic machinery abroad that is at its direct command to bring indispensable value to these domestic partners" (Rana, 2000).

The growing range of expectations is, however, confronted with heavy budget cutbacks that foreign ministries are facing, which reflects largely through downsized staff especially in developing countries. The 2005 survey covering eighty-one country (representing between them 88% of the world's population and 93% of global production) reports that over 70% of Foreign Services had fewer than 1,000 staff (Stein, 2005). Ambassador Rana (2000) states that the Indian foreign affairs service is "manned with remarkably small manpower" and that "a grave personnel shortage at headquarters (i e at the ministry) is at the core of inability to deliver superior professional value". Relegating number of outreach tasks to headquarters through virtual representation tools – including virtual embassies – is one way of bridging the gap between growing requests and shrinking resources. "The economic constraints faced by

most ministries further favour the use of IT, as it means savings in terms of both time and money" (Baldi, 1998, p. 2).

Additional pressure to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) work and finances is put by the requests for detailed performance management and transparent assessment. The French MFA is required to provide "a statement on the concrete results achieved from the use of public funds" which also implies quantification of results, India introduced the system of "output budgeting" which asks for listing 'targets' and 'outcomes', "US Annual Performance Plan Report is especially detailed" (Rana, 2007, p. 39), UK, Australia and New Zealand ask for a three-level narrative report containing strategic goals, the targets, and the performance. Quantifying the results, outputs, outcomes or performance of diplomatic service is a complex and an ingrate process; well structured internal databases of narrative but also automatic statistical reports of communications and initiatives that the Intranet can provide might be one way to go.

2.2.5 Need for Enhanced Skills

"The old notion that skills are accumulated on the job is no longer sufficient; mid-career and senior level training, adapted to the MFA's own requirements, has become the norm" (Rana, 2007, p. 23). Fast changing environment of international affairs requires diplomats to submit themselves to constant trainings and skill improvement.

Diplomats need to get well acquainted with emerging areas of international interest such as consular affairs, crisis management, public diplomacy, energy and environment, and preparation for work in specific multilateral institutions (Hemery, 2007) or cross-cultural

communication, consular work with migration and immigration in focus, security, international humanitarian law, etc. They need to develop skills for inter-professional communications in order to communicate meaningfully with new non-state partners – including communicating efficiently by using ICT, and "learn what is available online and how to access it" (Baldi, 1998, p. 1). With this diplomats need to face conceptual challenges of cyberspace such as the "paradox of plenty" – "situation in which an information glut results in a scarcity of attention" (Scott, 2006); winning the attention of the constituencies and then their trust is a much needed skills of today. More than that, diplomats need training for change: acquiring a mindset which enables them to adjust smoothly to changes of the environment around them.

Severe budgetary constrains combined with extensive load on a dwindling manpower, however, present severe barrier for implementing much-needed training programmes. Emerging intensive and interactive e-learning courses – either organised internally within Foreign Service or outsourced, such as those provided by DiploFoundation (www.diplomacy.edu) – present highly efficient and cost-effective alternatives that enable trainees to exchange knowledge among them without travelling and with ability to work at any convenient time of the day or week.

2.3 Changes Backed by the ICT-Driven Trends

"The need is for a major internal exercise by the ministry to review its system and methods, not because the machine has not functioned well, but because it has a latent capacity to deliver much more" (Rana, 2000). In addressing the fore listed challenges of contemporary diplomacy – both those arising from the influence of ICT on habits and relations of the

society of digital age and those related to other causes such as economics or development – Foreign Service should rely on the ICT-driven trends and adopt the best practices of social communications, collaboration, information sharing and community building that non-state actors have already harnessed.

Number of countries has introduced certain segments of ICT-based reforms within their diplomatic service: US Whitehouse has integrated number of online tools within their website (http://www.whitehouse.gov/) while US Institute of Peace, an influential federally-funded institution, run a "Virtual Diplomacy Initiative" in end nineties already (Waller, 2007); Lithuania has modernised its consular service based on ICT (Rimkunas, 2007); Germany has updated internal communication procedures within service after introducing local area network in 2002 (Rana, 2007); since 2003 Canada is maintaining an interactive web of their Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (www.international.gc.ca) (Garson, 2007) ... Still they have more to go. Developing countries are however the ones that can benefit the most from such reforms, due to their severe financial burdens opposing their huge demands for outreach.

Public, already habituated with ICT and highly aware of its potentials and role in the modern society, expects its state representatives to follow the same pattern. However, these expectations will likely be high, and diplomatic service should be judicious not to fail them with a sham preview only – like a static web page updated once in two months. Instead, thorough substantial upgrades should be introduced within major segments of diplomatic service: bilateral, multilateral and public diplomacy, consular affairs and negotiations, and within core functioning of the Ministry as well.

CHAPTER 3

ICT IN DIPLOMACY:

OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITS

"A diplomatic service that is well resourced and above all well staffed can give a state a significant increment of power and influence" (Berridge, 2001, p. 3). In a fast changing environment of world politics, resources and stuff largely yield from wisely harnessing modern communication technologies and exploring free flow of information.

'Virtual diplomacy' – or rather 'e-diplomacy' which is a more favourable prefix in the international negotiations (Kurbalija, 2007) – can be understood broadly as "the altered diplomacy associated with the emergence of a networked globe" or narrowly as encompassing "the decision-making, coordination, communication, and practice of international relations as they are conducted with the aid of information and communications technologies" (Waller, 2007, p. 479).

In its compound with key areas of diplomatic conduct, the ICT trends of the networked world provide solid base for significant improvements in quality of service delivered. Substantial reforms already induced by contemporary challenges should be amended with seizing the

potentials of ICT and particularly the Internet while being alerted on possible traps that technologies bring along as well.

3.1 Bilateral Diplomacy

In a globalised world of today featuring complex multilateral relations and the abundance of tools for remote interaction, one may be mislead that the importance of bilateral relations and thus the role of the resident diplomatic missions is diminishing. “Far from being undermined by multilateralism, strong bilateral relations are more vital than ever as the key lever for achieving goals at the supra national level” (Lane, 2005). Thanks to ICT the overseas missions are more closely integrated with headquarter and other missions, and are empowered with the ability to easily liaise with number of new actors, giving them principal role in bilateral relationship management.

It is an illusion that, due to ability to meet regularly, the Ministers “come to feel they not only know their opposite numbers intimately . . . but are also good judges of the political nuances behind their stated views as well as the political scene in their home countries”, states Ambassador Paschke (2000) in his Report on German Embassies. He argues that only resident missions can supply “political leaders with reliable information on the political thinking of their . . . colleagues” and deal bilateral problems comprehensively taking all aspects into account and providing follow-up. “The embassy abroad becomes the single best real-time source with a panoramic view of all the issues, particularly in countries where the engagement is multilayered (Rana, 2007, p. 26).

3.1.1 Changing Roles of the Missions

The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (United Nations, 1961) defines the functions of a diplomatic mission in a resident country to be representing, protecting national interests and nationals, negotiating, ascertaining political conditions and reporting back, and promoting friendly relations, as well as consular work if needed. Ambassador Rana (2002a) suggests that contemporary professional diplomacy might be better defined by promotion, outreach, negotiation, feedback, management and servicing. These six functions certainly better reflect the dynamics and highly interactive engagement of the embassies of today; yet even those generally congruent functions of past and present such as negotiations or reporting and feedbacks are undergoing significant changes – embassies no longer need to conduct formal negotiations with host country governments, while scale and format of feedbacks and briefings headquarters has changed (Paschke, 2000).

The role of the ambassador has changed accordingly – instead of expounding and negotiating foreign policy of its country he should be a communicator and mediator of country's position on major public issues with major actors of the resident country. Ambassador Paschke (2007, p. 207-208) explains:

> The main business of the ambassador is no longer focussed on discreet and confidential dealings with the foreign ministry, but rather by continuous efforts to explain and to canvass support and understanding for the foreign-policy goals of his home country in the host country at large, among government circles, the legislative bodies, the political parties, the business community, the social partners, the media and the academic community – in short: the entire political class of his host country.

ICT and particularly Internet play a pivotal role in facilitating the interactive relations of the missions with both the representatives and stakeholders of the host country and with own headquarter and other missions.

3.1.2 Intelligence, Analytics and Reporting

Half century after Vienna Convention, ascertaining political conditions, providing feedbacks and reporting to headquarters remains one of the key roles of the embassy; yet acting this role in the digital era is significantly different. Info on a population of a country, its economy or demographics, international statistics and rankings, updates on political events and many other basic information one may access instantly via numerous Internet services such as country's official site, Wikipedia, "CIA World Fact-book" (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/) or publicly available sources. It is a growing trend that many local media worldwide have their online versions – newspaper dailies or weeklies (many available via www.onlinenewspapers.com), radio-stations and even TV programmes. Information is globally accessible – and affordable when not free – and both missions and headquarter can benefit from this directly.

"Part of the Permanent Missions' job concerned with collecting and sending paper will become less necessary, while the ability to identify items of real interest in the mass of information becomes ever more important", pin-pointed Dr. Chasia (cited in Baldi, 1998), Deputy Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union, in his speech in Geneva. Instead of providing news and general updates to headquarter, the embassy – with its sensitivity to local culture and relations – is best placed to provide analytics of the most important information filtered out from media, but even more importantly from public opinion and partners by following closely online social media tools.

Complexity of relations of global actors and thematic areas put the embassies in forefront of intelligence and analytics, requiring it to provide relevant information to thematic units of headquarter which are growingly being embraced by Foreign Services worldwide (Rana,

2007). A World Bank Institute provides an example of collecting information about industries in which a country has no exports in spite of potentials, and facing a challenge of analysing if the cause is foreign regulatory barriers or lack of competitiveness. Since private stakeholders of such industries might not be reliable sources of information, "what a small developing country in such a situation should do is to look for other developing countries at the same or slightly more advanced stage of economic development that might have developed successful exports in this sector" since "officials and business managers in such countries may well be willing to share their information and insights . . ." (Feketekuty, 2004).

Collecting data from variety of countries in such case would be a demanding task, but would be much facilitated through Internet; anchoring raw data with first-hand experiences collected through networking directly from local business managers and public opinion is, however, the power of the missions. Additionally, the embassies are entitled to keep an overview of and manage the complexity of such relations with local and regional partners and coordinate related activities on local level.

Analytics of a dynamic environment with knotted hank of actors and subjects would no more benefit from comprehensive and literary-stile report conveying available facts. Reports should rather "gauge the political mood in the host country and of its decision makers and elucidate the background reasons for this country taking the position it does" (Paschke, 2000).

"Diplomatic Communications and Reporting, which are the life-blood of any MFA, should and could become digitized", states Dr. Trigona (2007), former Foreign Minister of Malta. With assistance of specialist advisers for thematic areas (e.g. security, energy or trade) integrated in the embassies, thematic-adjusted reports can be shared through a centralised MFA system of structured electronic databases. To enable prompt strategic follow-up by the headquarters

when needed, electronic documents in form of interactive visualised charts and mind-maps should be exchanged through the internal network (Intranet), with hyperlinks to detailed partner profiles and history of relationship stored in a database and updated accordingly.

Two-way communication and information sharing is however of utmost importance – headquarters and Minister cabinet, not only missions, should update such databases of relations and activities in order for embassies to be informed on headquarter actions with their resident country. This is especially relevant in cases when the ambassador or mission staff are not present in bilateral meetings between high-ranking politicians – they can also be briefed by headquarter on the content of the talks via secured Voice-over-IP connection or a video-conferencing sessions.

Reporting through centralised systems would allow both headquarter and the missions to access – based on system of access privileges – most recent information and updated versions of any document of relevance for their work. "If this digitization [of reporting] were to be applied to all diplomatic documents in the Ministry and all Embassies then a simple search would be possible enabling the MFA to track all that was happening" (Trigona, 2007). Moreover the information would be readily available to any diplomat in action via her mobile phone or laptop and a wireless or mobile Internet connection. An example of how a diplomat can benefit from nearly ubiquitous access to information is illustrated well in the imaginary story of Ana Gabel who is exploiting many options enabled by a well-integrated ICT system of her Ministry during her intensive day of negotiations (Kurbalija, 2007).

3.1.3 Networking and Outreach

"The ambassador must build up and cultivate a dense and stable network of contacts in all areas of society" (Paschke, 2007, p. 209). Nourishing conversant and updated relations with key actors of the political elite and all the stakeholders in the host country – but also beyond it – requires frequent contacts. In the modern age professionals, especially of business and civil society, spend majority of their work time connected to Internet, maintaining direct contact with partners via daily or weekly e-mails, but more often through online social networking platforms (SNP). Utilizing SNP smartly can be a great asset to networking to the ambassador and the mission staff.

SNP, whose simple web interfaces are being increasingly present with mobile phones and other mobile gadgets as well making them omnipresent, keep the relations 'warm' even without direct exchanges of substantial messages: having persons in 'friends list' and automatically receiving occasional broadcasted updates from them (on real-life events attended, personal posts, new 'friend' connections established, photos uploaded) makes one feel comfortable with reverting to one-to-one requests when needed at any time. Making new acquaintances, especially via existing connections, does not require a physical encounter. Interestingly therein, SNP 'friendship' does not necessarily coincide with real-life friendship; it is not rare that real-life acquaintance gets more attention as an online friend than in real-life. Reiterating occasional personal encounters – at receptions or meetings – is still of high relevance to ambassadors; the SNP converse however helps also with initiating 'small talk' discussions based on online updates, useful for informal meetings and corridor talks.

Outreach beyond political elite circles and the capital towards major population in partner countries is equally important: to put across the key messages of one's foreign policy and

explain the value it brings to local citizens. Traditional means of public diplomacy such as participation at public events or appearance in media may allow some space only, commonly for the ambassador, while the potential of other mission staff might not get the opportunity. Additionally, security risks often deter such attempts – to get out of "fortress mentality" into which US missions went due to threats of terrorist attacks, they turned to "using technology to get messages out, to rapidly respond to events, to enable others within a country to promote democracy and human rights" and set up virtual presence posts in which "a member of the staff at the embassy establishes personal contact with those of particular city or region, then uses, websites, blogs, e-mails to deepen the contact and create a dialogue" (O'Keefe, 2007, p. 57-58).

Harnessing advanced technologies for diplomatic outreach might still be a challenge in developing world. While the average global penetration of Internet in end 2007 was 20 per cent, only 13 per cents average penetration was reported for developing countries (Africa lagging behind with mere 5 per cent comparing to about 45 per cent in Europe and the Americas) (International Telecommunication Union, 2009). At the same time, however, the penetration of mobile phones is significantly larger and growing: at the end of 2007 Africa's 28 per cent compared to 38 per cent in Asia, 72 per cent in the Americas, 111 per cent in Europe and some 40 per cent mobile penetration on a global level. Non-invasive 'opt-in' SMS and call campaigns might already easily be implemented by Embassies when appropriate (International Telecommunication Union, 2009). Nevertheless, current trends in mobile industry and Internet mobility announce gradual conversion of mobile users into mobile Internet users which will allow for Internet-featured services to reach them shortly as well.

The Internet offers many tools for communicating messages to the public in resident country. Web page of a resident mission is becoming a must; "missions must manage attractive,

constantly updated homepages, which should be set up with professional assistance" (Paschke, 2000) and should offer space for interactions to the visitors – to provide feedbacks and comments, raise concerns, contribute with suggestions and initiatives or simply post questions. While working on a web page missions should have in mind the global feature of the Internet: in spite of focusing on the territory of its diplomatic coverage, web presentation will be visible and accessible to everyone else worldwide; websites of Philippine missions in Washington and in Riyadh, for instance, would target two significantly different geo-cultural groups, yet would still be accessible buy both. Smart sensitivity in selecting the posted content and the way to share it is thus an important skill.

Reaching out to public involves two-way communications; it is equally important – if not more – for the mission to sound the voices of local citizenry, groups and individuals. Web2.0 spaces are featured by end-user contribution; public discussion forums allow the mission staff to listen to relevant discussions as well as to get involved, either formally on behalf of the embassy which may be much welcomed by forum discussants or on personal behalf. Unlike in the world of diplomacy, here diplomats need to adapt to the informality of communications and lack of procedures, often ending with harsh debates and even personal insults. Following variety of twitter posts of institutions or individuals, their personal notes on social networks or their personal or institutional blogs is an important source of information for assessing public state of affairs, even though it requires significant time investment and skills to learn to filter the useful information streams out of the pile.

3.1.4 Promotion and Image Building

It is true that the promotion of trade, which is commonly one of the most important components of a development strategy of any country, is "nowadays generally the task of other actors" rather than the ambassador's (Paschke, 2000). The resident mission, nevertheless, still plays a pivotal role in the overall promotion of the country, its branding and main potentials including business investments or cultural heritage.

An interactive web presentation of a mission should be an information hub, leading visitors further to centralised state-managed thematic portals (on tourism, trade and investments, culture, sports or other). Regular e-newsletters send to number relevant local contacts through e-mail, social networking platforms or RSS feeds can replace or at least complement printed bulletins; moreover since no printing is involved they can be easily customised to address specific interest of certain target groups (e.g. ICT, agriculture or tourist business industry, folklore or sport groups) and even VIP individuals which might then conveniently read them even on their mobile gadgets while travelling to work. Targeted and profiled advertising offered through social networks are being growingly explored by business; diplomats in missions might follow the same pattern. Not the least, as people tend to forget web addresses or simply need to enquire on the issue of their interest using search engines, search engine optimisation which would place web portals of missions high on the list of search results is becoming increasingly important.

Cultural work remains an important factor for country's image. German example is likely a rule: the embassies are rarely involved in cultural events such as concerts, theatre performances or museum exhibitions in a host country, largely due to limited funds for promotion of such projects; "this shortage of funds is all the more keenly felt in those cultural

fields which do not attract a large public, and by events in the provinces, outside the major centres" (Paschke, 2000).

Making snapshots of country's cultural heritage available online is a good way to reach beyond a part of the elite and attract wider public to ask for more – whether purchasing music or movies or even visiting the country ultimately. Announcing visiting cultural events (concerts, movies, exhibitions or performances) or major cultural or educational events back home through the web, e-newsletters and all the public diplomacy and networking activities of the mission is an efficient yet not a costly way of promotion and outreach. Prominent web-placed links to free-of-charge electronic versions of most important pieces of national literature can be accompanied with simple automatic language translator to and from national language, English and language of the resident country, and even a multimedia self-paced course for learning basics of the script, grammar and vocabulary can be provided.

Tourism is commonly promoted centrally by the state through promotion videos distributed through conventional and contemporary media or virtual tours of most relevant historic and artistic places such as the Vatican tour (http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/san_paolo/vr_tour/index-en.html). Missions should use their online campaigns to further extend the visibility of such materials within the territory of their diplomatic coverage.

Image of a state is also being built by raising confidence and trust among partners, which largely depends on the professionalism and quality of service delivered in all aspects of diplomatic work. As ever, the customers are best placed to evaluate one's work; in digital age when a castigation (even a cavil) is spread around the globe almost instantly, it is important

more than ever that diplomats content their customers – their fellow-diplomats but even more so their new partners from non-government structures and wider public.

3.2 Consular Affairs

Consular work has also faced the amplification of responsibilities, to large extent caused by globalisation challenges, huge migrations, terrorism and environmental disasters. Efficient consular work can raise confidence in one's state and advance the business, cultural and political ties between countries. The impression of Lithuanian consular service does not come as a surprise: citizens of either native or partner country, being concerned by own routine issues primarily, "generally evaluate the work of the whole Ministry based on their encounters with consular officers" (Rimkunas, 2007, p. 186).

The consular assistance to own nationals in the partner country has become more demanding due to short- and long-term migrations for business, tourist or family reasons. Dealing with issues like accidents, legal problems of citizens or child care abroad mainly needs manpower. Yet, the intranet of the Ministry and instant access to centralised databases can facilitate paperwork, while the online network of local contacts can be employed in emergency situations for collecting information, seeking assistance or spreading certain message widely.

With rapid worldwide deployment and penetration of ICT – mobile phones at first – consulates have gained mighty tool for rapid reaction with crises management in disaster situations such as political crises, terrorist attacks, earthquakes or tsunami strikes. Timely and holistic information management is centre for success of any reaction in such cases. Having largely resilient basic telecom infrastructure which enables relatively steady access to global

communications and information for the population of the endangered area, consulate can reach out their citizens to inform them what to do and inquire of their condition; alternatively it can reach vast contacts within locally built networks – especially the non-government organisations which are, by rule of thumb, well connected and efficient in such situations and can help with overcoming language barriers. While mobile phones might become jammed due to overload of the network nods (base stations), twitter and SNP services stay operational due to structurally diversified traffic over Internet and their broadcasting networking nature, which makes such posts reach out to targets more certainly. During the London bombings of 7 July 2005 all the communications were down and the "VoIP facility [Voice-over-IP Internet-based service] was the only means for many families to receive any kind of news direct from the [Malta] High Commission in London" (Terribile, 2007). Additionally, a constant ICT-backed hot-line of the resident consulate with highest authority in the home country should be ensured so that even major decisions can be taken promptly.

Citizen services remain a major task whose load has increased as well due to high migrations. Requests for issuing upgraded versions of personal and travel documents such as biometric passports and chip-equipped ID cards, as well as providing official documents and certificates for citizens residing abroad should be addressed with high quality of service and within reasonable processing time. Even with limited staff and resources, processing such requests which needs several cross-checks through headquarter-based public service files can be largely facilitated: by establishing centralised e-government services and national registries of digital signatures citizens could request and even receive the documents entirely online, making consular involvement significantly reduced or even bypassed entirely. Due to centrality such systems would efficiently work even with consular representations with diplomatic missions of other partner countries where there is no resident mission.

Equally, issuing visas for visiting citizens of third countries can, in spite of the growing demands, be handled efficiently by providing all the information, forms and templates at the missions' web portals in multiple languages, and by implementing computerised visa issuance management systems. One such system is the Consular Procedures Management System of Lithuania which "consists of several computer modules used for visa processing and issuance, and the management of documentation flows among the embassies, consulates and the Ministry" (Rimkunas, 2007, p. 186). An example of a fully online efficient and high-quality visa service is the Visa Application Centre of United Kingdom (www.ukvisas.gov.uk).

3.3 Multilateral Diplomacy

"Multilateralism was born in a time of crises" (Costea, 2007, p. 178). Since the League of Nations and latter on the emergence of United Nations, the multilateralism was about security. In the modern era concerns over security in narrow sense – peace – were gradually replaced by the wider sense perspective which includes stability and wellbeing, primarily focused on achieving sustainable global development through economic domain. "9/11" attacks have shifted the pendulum back to the security area somewhat, adding global terrorism to the forefront of list of multilateral challenges next to the spread of weapons of mass destructions, yet not squeezing those such as poverty and disease or democracy in dictatorship-lead countries out of it – as the 2003 US-UK Joint Statement on Multilateralism shows (Embassy of the United States in the United Kingdom, 2003). Number of other 'soft challenges' remains high on the multilateral agenda and is becoming increasingly relevant: international trade relations, energy, environment and climate changes, migrations, pandemics, information society, etc.

Multilateral environment is undergoing significant changes. Multi-polar distribution of power reflects in high inclusiveness of representatives of all states in the international processes and the work of Intergovernmental Organisations (IGO) – OSCE, WTO, Interpol, IMF, Arab League, Council of Europe, African Union, Commonwealth of Nations, OPEC, to name but few – thus far resulting with "the stunning number of 5000 international treaties and conventions" (Costea, 2007, p. 171). Involvement of non-state actors empowered by Internet challenges conventional communications and working methods, asking for creating a common communications culture.

3.3.1 Changes in the Traditional Multilateral System

To pursue most of own interests a country increasingly requires multilateral pushes. "Our power to influence events depended on our ability to orchestrate action in Washington, the UN, the European Union or corporate boards . . . as Iraq in 2003 showed, we circumvent the multilateral system at our peril", confesses Mark Malloch-Brown, former UK Foreign Office minister and ex-deputy secretary-general of the United Nations, and adds with likely resignation: "Diplomacy has been multilateralised, which delays firm action" (Malloch-Brown, 2010). Traditional multilateral system, slow and rigid, is thus forced to upgrade mutual communications and working methods and become more efficient.

Within his report on the work of the UN in 1998 already, Secretary-General Kofi Annan named creating a fully electronic United Nations as one of the organisational priorities, at that time including access via Internet to centralised UN database of documents and video-conferencing to supplement online meetings (United Nations, 1998). Easy access to working documents and even some forms of online negotiations is an asset for efficiency of

multilateral work. Additionally, the interactivity of most websites of the IGO now-a-days open up a 'parallel track' for communications – via video materials, blog or forum discussions – which tacitly puts aside diplomatic formality of statements and allows for a facilitated ongoing dialogue.

With these 'low profile' negotiations – sounding and probing the positions – and even the ongoing collaborative 'early work' on documents, actual multilateral meetings should be more efficient. More so with the ability to provide remote participation: "The fact that participants in an electronic discussion do not need to be in the same city is likely to affect the role of a place like Geneva, where the representatives of more than 140 countries are physically present", notes Dr. Chasia (cited in Baldi, 1998), Deputy Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union in 1995-1999.

The emerging models of remote participation for summitry can bring dozens of delegates remotely to participate in the meeting fully interactively – with text captioning, voice and video, presentations and charts, and even with voting capabilities; alternatively, dozens of physical meetings (remote hubs) scattered around the world can also be linked together making this blended model to bridge the worlds of in-situ meetings through the online space in real time. A very successful pilot project of a kind was implemented during the 2008 and 2009 Internet Governance Forum of United Nations (http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/2009-igf-sharm-el-sheikh/remote-participation) and the 2010 EuroDIG pan-European dialogue with support of the Council of Europe (http://www.eurodig.org/eurodig-2010/programme/information/remote-participation) by the bottom-up-created multistakeholder Remote Participation Working Group (www.igfremote.info; www.igfremote.com). Certainly, 'corridor talks' as an important component is missing in such an approach; in spite of having even more available channels for informal

communications through the online space, a much-needed ‘deniability’ aspect here is less trustful.

Whether these online tools for ongoing dialogue and remote participation will really make multilateral diplomacy more efficient and repel the concerns of Mr. Mark Malloch-Brown and alike, it is too early to say. Number of factors of change of diplomatic arena is challenging such an outcome: additional complexity of relations with the involvement of new actors, ‘clash’ of professional cultures and need for an improved inter-professional communication, and hesitance of diplomats to adopt and adapt to new trends and tools.

3.3.2 New Actors and Inter-Professional Communications

Stimulated by the “ever thinner dividing line between internal policy and international affairs” (Costea, 2007, p. 175) the locally well-networked non-government organisations (NGO) and advocacy groups took advantage of the Internet’s culture of bottom-up structured open dialogue to create strong mutual binds. Understanding that the ICT are the backbone of global communications, they transformed their experience and power to a global scale. As a globe-wide well-coordinated network of activists, the anti-globalisation movement succeeded to interrupt and impact significantly the work of the Ministerial meeting of the WTO in Seattle in 1999, the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001 and Evian in 2003, and the World Economic Forum in Davos, making a well-known success story of an online-facilitated non-governmental “force to be reckoned with” (Kummer, 2007, p. 182). There are many other less-violent success stories of the impact of new actors in international affairs also: Jody Williams, the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for the international campaign to ban landmines, certainly is a powerful one.

Empowerment of new actors is certainly a product of democracy expanding as well; yet it is not a threat to diplomacy but rather a great potential. It is the dialogue and even strong partnerships that the needs to be established among all the actors – official and the wide range of non-official ones (Malloch-Brown, 2010). If for nothing else, they all share some interest in foreign affairs. The new actors need to consult with foreign affairs "not because they accept any pre-eminent 'right' or authority of the MFA, but in terms of the value that the MFA brings to their specific concerns" (Rana, 2007, p. 23). The diplomats, in return, need their knowledge and expertise in the complex multidisciplinary areas of public policy that are emerging; besides, their efficient global networks of organisations and individuals can get significant value to many aspects of diplomatic conduct – multilateral diplomacy included.

Not the least, there are some emerging areas of foreign policy where – unlike most of the international fora where other stakeholders request to be involved – governments are, in fact, the late-comers: The World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) was initiated by the United Nations as a response to governments' attempts to take stocks in the governance of Internet along with – or even to replace – the Internet community which has been managing the Internet since its inception (Kummer, 2007). To open up a governmental-level dialogue on such an issue headed by the non-state actors, while not leaving them excluded, United Nations General Assembly issued an invitation 'to other stakeholders' including non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector to participate in preparations of the Summit and the meeting itself (United Nations, 2002). This resolution was a clear sign towards opening up of the multilateral diplomacy to non-state stakeholders.

The WSIS process brought in a number of new challenges that multistakeholder multilateral diplomacy has to face with – starting with the divergence in understanding if all the

stakeholders should participate on equal footing, mutual animosity due to stereotypes (diplomats being conceived as wasting time with empty talks and needless protocol, while non-government organisations being viewed as a disorganised crowd of dissonant voices with no discipline at all) and lack of understanding why the they need each other. Initially, diplomats felt safe within their professional turfs being comfortable with the internal codes and protocols they understand; so did the other stakeholders – it was easier for all to work with their colleagues from other states then with their compatriots from different professional structures (Kummer, 2007). By the second stage of the Summit two years after, in Tunis in 2005, however, and especially in the continued post-WSIS process titled Internet Governance Forum, significant moves towards greater understanding and better communications were made.

Diplomats are now required to interact with groups and individuals with diversity of professional backgrounds. Most of them are proficient with using Internet for everyday work, including negotiating professional deals; it is a great potential for diplomats to adopt such habits and utilise them to enhance their support and coalition multilateral networks to get more support for their policy priorities. Inter-professional communication can be learned by understanding others, their roots, visions and working mechanisms; it is easy to perform a groundwork research on non-government structures by using their tools – their world is transparent and can be sounded through forums, chat rooms, blogs... "However, diplomats are well equipped for this challenge, as their background, especially the experience acquired in bilateral postings, makes them sensitive to cultural differences" (Kummer, 2007, p. 184). It is not as easy for non-diplomats to acquire deep understanding of diplomacy, though; since two are needed for the dialogue, diplomats also need to become more open and present its specific professional culture transparently to the newcomers. Mutual understanding can be achieved through ongoing collaboration and dialogue, especially in the virtual space.

The evolution of WSIS process proves that with efforts the mutual trust and understanding can be promoted. With time, the involved stakeholders acknowledged the distinction of their own roles and responsibilities, and started learning from each others – diplomats accepted that they need non-government organisations and business groups for their advanced knowledge and understanding of complex emerging issues, as well as for their mighty global networks and the public impact they bring; the non-state actors understood the needs for a structured process and certain protocols, acquired advanced negotiations skills from diplomats and acknowledged (if not yet accepted) the existing legitimacy of states for decision-making and the respective responsibility. Even in an ever-lasting quarrel on the survival of national sovereignty and the international law in globalised times of cyber-space the stakeholders have moved an inch towards "bringing other type of norms (for example non-binding 'soft governance' or self-regulation) to global governance concepts" (Kummer, 2007, p. 184).

To maintain its inclusive nature, multilateral diplomacy will in many cases naturally tend to restrain from bringing decisions – 'soft governance' ones at least – with voting, and incline more towards reaching wider consensus which would consequently reflect variety of views and interests, and thus make the decisions more sustainable due to the diversified ownership of its shaping process. This consensus-building with number of actors will inevitably require even more time. Extending the summits-based discussions to the ongoing debates in the online space will not only step up decision-shaping but will also present a cost-effective inclusive approach to negotiations.

3.3.3 Partnerships in Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution

> We all know that in a borderless world, events in faraway places affect our own security. It is therefore in our interest to be engaged in conflict prevention and crisis management. In this new security environment we must be alert and creative. Above all we need to be united.
> *Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy* (Solana, 2006)

With globalisation, the new security environment has become increasingly complex. National jurisdictions are not sufficient any more to go after the perpetrators; supra-national efforts involving regional or global cooperation are needed. Interpol and its global outreach is an example of it. A way more complicated examples come daily from virtual space: cyber-crime, spams and scams, paedophilia and child abuse and even cyber-warfare can not be dealt with by a single state's jurisdiction (Kurbalija, 2009). Old approaches to security, no meter how successful they might have been in the past, might simply not work for the new challenges – fight against terrorism being only one of them (Costea, 2007).

Creating a common culture of communications between governments, but also the non-state actors, might be the right way to go (Solomon and Brown, 2005). The Internet culture is exactly about that – communications. Additionally, with little or no money Internet can enable much, as the case of successful cooperation of terrorists testifies – in his annual report of 2007, Secretary-General of the United Nations confirms the important role that Internet plays for the terrorists by asking for "countering its use for terrorist purposes" (United Nations, 2007).

To combat such security challenges, but also be able to jointly manage crisis and disaster situations, diplomats should use same tools. Diplomatic service should establish trustful communications with various organisations – bilaterally and multilaterally, local leaders, decision makers, media, and parties in a conflict if that is a case (Solomon and Brown, 2005).

Further, it should improve information sharing through databases of the organisations and institutions, which can allow for exchange of and easy access to relevant documents at any time. “Brahimi Report” of 2000 on the UN Peace Operations calls for the new information management that would involve various entities, including non-governmental ones, in complex emergencies (United Nations, 2000b).

Much earlier, in 1997 already, pivotal role of non-government organisations in crisis management was recognised at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) conference “Managing Chaos: Coping with International Conflict into the Twenty-First Century” (Solomon, 1997). The “Tampere Convention” of 1998, ratified by 40 countries as of March 2009, goes step beyond by determining privileges and immunities to the non-state entities when it comes to the use of ICT in disaster management (International Telecommunication Union, 1998).

The changes that agencies involved with the multilateral diplomacy should undergo, however, are not easy, because they are much more about their internal structures and mentality than about the technology. Besides the need to invest in resilient ICT infrastructure especially in war-torn areas, the USIP conference on managing information in crisis, held back in 1996, suggested that the first step for improvements was loosening the organisational hierarchy within institutions which was a main obstacle for information sharing (Weimann, 2006).

In spite of addressing the issue of importance for everyone – security and crisis management – changes suggested often face the resistance of many agencies. Richard Solomon (Solomon and Brown, 2005), President of the USIP, sums up the reasons that are commonly offered “for not dismantling organizational ‘stovepipes’ that inhibit reaching out to publics and counterparts across the globe” to be protecting ones power from being decreased if sharing

internal information with “competitors” and inertly opposing any changes unless being forced due to ineffective work. Technology is available; it is rather the mental shift that is needed towards establishing a common culture of communications.

In conjunction with new online services, opened inter-communication would allow both the NGO and IGO to act more powerfully in crises. Already there are examples of efficient responds to disasters with use of twitter, such as that of 2010 severe earthquake strike in Haiti: following on the broadcast tweet of the American Cross pledging certain initial sum of money to assist the affected in Haiti, Red Cross organised an SMS-driven collecting of donations (by sending a text message to a certain number a person could donate ten dollars) and tweeted back this information making it easy to search for (through keyword ‘haiti’), access and further distribute for any Twitter user (Pepitone, 2010). Other more important reactions – including timely alerting citizens or reporting on missing and found persons – might follow in future if a broad cooperation on planning and reacting is established. Efficiency and results of multilateral diplomacy, even if only in crisis management, are certainly in interest of diplomats as well.

3.4 Negotiations

It is often disputed if negotiations can be effectively conducted online. It is there, however, sometimes neglected that the very ‘around the table’ talks are only subsequent to thorough preparation and pre-negotiation phase (Berridge, 2002). To that end, the use of ICT in groundwork research and initial ‘talking about the talks’ with counterparties has many advantages. In a narrow sense, negotiations through the virtual space instead of in real-world has its ‘pros’ and ‘cons’, yet one should not forget that also this phase consists of a number of

aspects such as diplomatic signalling and document drafting – to which the virtual space can again offer certain advantages. An excellent illustration of the benefits ICT can bring to all phases of the negotiation process is given in a story of Ana Gabel, an imaginary diplomat, by Dr. Kurbalija and DiploFoundation (Kurbalija, 2007). Not the least, ICT can play important role in conflict resolution with putting the belligerents into a computer-mediated communications.

3.4.1 Preparation and Pre-negotiations

Bargaining and persuasion skills as well as experience of a diplomat do not mean much without through preparations. Understanding the counterparties and their interests is vital. To be able to analyse their strengths and weaknesses, assume their interests and likely negotiation stile, tactics and arguments, and eventually plan the ZOPA ('zone of possible agreement' as the bottom lines of each side) (Rana, 2002) one starts with acquiring vast amounts of information about counterparties (such as political, cultural, economical background and statistical indices, external relations and internal structures), as well as the information about their key negotiators and the team (their personal backgrounds and experiences). Searching through internal MFA databases – if digitalised and well organised – with keywords and tags may promptly bring history of bilateral relations and multilateral activities in the past. Exploring the online space helps sounding internal public opinion and relations in the countering country: public blogs of their VIP, discussion forums of intellectual elite, web presentations, online journals and press clipping. While much of this can be done from the headquarter as well – including using search engines to search public Internet for personal details on counterparty key negotiators – the embassies are the ones to bring more specific

information from their in-country networks, both in-person experiences and their online networking work.

Equally important is to synchronise the positions in one's own negotiating team. Due to multiplicity of negotiating areas, teams are commonly consisted of representatives of various ministries and sectors. Moreover, Ministries often continue leading parallel discussions with counterparties along with formal negotiations, pushing their own interests. The key negotiator thus might have a hard time to synchronise the diversity of parallel tracks and sectoral interests, more so due to multilayered authorities examined – those of the Ministers versus those of the negotiators. Therefore, initially agreeing on a common strategy for negotiations, goals and priority of interests to bargain with, and identifying BATNA (the 'best alternative to a negotiated solution') as the minimum threshold beyond which one would not go (Rana, 2002), is of utmost importance. Connected centralised databases of various sectors and Ministries, collaborative work on shared documents and constant communications among involved professionals through e-mail, chat, online groups and voice and video services is important for this phase. Without such a clear starting point and ongoing tight synchronisation, resolving the eventual impasse of the talks by introducing linkage of issues and deciding on what can be bargained for would not be easy, (Berridge, 2002); speaking with 'one internal voice' has become a must especially when negotiating a deal with complex structures such as the European Union. (Tscharner, 2007)

The pre-negotiations phase asks for a number of meetings of involved parties in order to agree to negotiate and set up the agenda and procedures (Rana, 2002). In traditional diplomacy this is mostly done through sets of face-to-face meetings; these communications can however be much facilitated by introducing more frequent virtual encounters. Opening contacts might be supported with e-mail communication or through social networking contacts; initial 'low

profile' meetings can be conducted through text-based messengers and voice or video call over Internet; more formal 'talks about the talks' would need telepresence to allow for enhanced interaction including body language and 'sharing the atmosphere of the same room'; meeting agendas and notes might be shared through the online space and collaboratively edited.

Certainly, the benefits such as overcoming distances with avoiding travel and working collaboratively regardless of time-zones are coupled with certain shortcomings such as limited deniability due to the nature of digital services – communications might be recorded on a server of either party without knowledge of the other party – and personal physical contact such as handshake or 'sharing the same air'. While these shortfalls are commonly not even noticed by non-government actors who are well equipped for online negotiations, diplomats might need time to find the best way to use the advantages and minimize the disadvantages.

3.4.2 Negotiations 'Around the Table'

When it comes to the negotiations around the table, there is probably no alternative to sitting around the table in the same room and sharing the atmosphere of negotiations including small-talk, hand-shaking corridor talks. The limits of digital communications for this most human-intensive diplomatic activity exist, as well as the advantages outlined above. It is on diplomats to be aware of both and smartly use these tools on case-by-case bases, such as if the real encounters are not possible for any reasons, or if an ongoing document drafting process needs to be facilitated along with negotiations.

The ICT however have a much wider use even in real-life negotiations. As some important decisions are often to be made promptly, the ability to consult various sources of information instantly or consult with associates remotely make the decisions less dependant on one's subsistent knowledge and memorised facts. With many modern meeting facilities having wireless Internet access available – or alternatively with almost ubiquitous access to mobile Internet – diplomats get a chance to double-check certain crucial information by searching the web or internal service databases (with secured encrypted access), and communicate with headquarters through text messengers at any time. They might do so openly through their laptops, or even very discretely via mobile phones and similar handy smart gadgets (Kurbalija, 2007).

One of the most important aspects of negotiations is negotiating the text. The use of secured platforms with authentication of users that include using shared documents and hypertext annotation tools can be even more practical than the in-situ work for articulating new norms: by collaboratively editing the text, posting layers of amendments on a certain word, set of words or paragraphs, request for inserting or deleting parts of the text, posting comments on others' contributions and even voting on the integral text or its parts (Trigona, 2007). Save in situations of heavy time-pressure to reach a deal, such tools give diplomats more space for manoeuvre – to work on the document and submit contributions when she feels convenient, focus more closely on certain parts of own interest and simultaneously work on several spots in the document, going back and forth, instead of analysing it linearly as it commonly has to be done in in-situ meetings. E-negotiations on '3C' co-organised by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and facilitated by DiploFoundation are a successful example (3-C Conference, 2009). Additionally, such tools can be used to complement the in-situ meetings and make them more efficient.

In following-up on treaty compliance, the digital records of negotiations can serve as "track-records of other countries' performance, their alleged 'breach' and respective defence on an article by article approach" (Trigona, 2007). With such firm tracking, the negotiating parties would try better to avoid being accused for non-compliance and diminishing own credibility and bargaining power.

3.4.3 Public Signalling

The growing power of public opinion makes the negotiations become more transparent, whether non-state actors are directly involved as negotiators or not. In spite of the need to keep some segments discrete, if not secret, in order to make it more possible to reach a deal without external pressure, diplomats now need to exert certain extent of public diplomacy during negotiations and keep 'an eye-contact' – interact (and not only communicate) – with citizenry. For, the citizens are the ultimate authority to bring a verdict on the diplomatic conduct (Kummer, 2007, p. 182); more so in countries with direct democracy, such as Switzerland, where everything negotiated can undergo a direct citizens' voting check at referendum (Tscharner, 2007).

Using the public channels to do diplomatic signalling is not new; yet the Internet offers many new creative approaches for social media broadcast, such as official blogs or social network and twitter accounts. One particular case is interesting for analysis: in his daily post of 10 October 2009 within his official blog[4], the Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt (2009) roughly mentioned his unofficial visit to Belgrade and the meeting with Serbian President and Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the midst of the hot 'Butmir' regional negotiations on the

[4] It is interesting to note that Mr. Bildt used to maintain his private blog until 2007, when he was elected for a Minister (http://bildt.blogspot.com/). In one of his lasts posts there he wondered if he should/would continue blogging. And he did – but decided to turn it to an "official" blog.

future of Bosnia, such a visit would be no surprise – if only anyone new about it: it was neither announced nor reported on officially. Within 24 hours, the news agencies across Balkan started buzzing around the visit, being confused with the fact that all sides involved – Serbian and EU (since Sweden was holding a presidency of EU at the time) – were quiet, until two days later when the Swedish ambassador to Serbia confirmed the visit took place. It is obvious such a visit was needed, and could have even been expected; yet Mr. Bildt must have decided to keep the visit 'low profile' for the quality of the meeting. Of course he must have known no such visit would be unofficial or secret; it could have been discrete, however.

Official blog appears to be the convenient tool for providing such a nuance in signalling. The nature of the blog to post regularly (if not daily) gives space for ad-hoc decisions. The informality of communications a blog concept provides, combined with the level of formality an 'official blog' of a diplomat brings, allows for a level of 'public discretion' of the message – available to all as not being a secret; yet reaching only those searching for it.

3.4.4 Conflict Resolution

In war-torn regions it is often impossible to initiate any direct meeting of the belligerents – they commonly refuse any talks with the counter party. Mediation is a way to go, allowing both sides to save their face with 'not talking to the enemy'. Mediation can, however, take long time due to distance and time factors, as the mediator needs to exert 'shuttle diplomacy' which involves travelling back and forth to the war camps. In many cases time is precious and costs lives.

Computer-mediated communication is how ICT can help. Acting as a buffer zone allowing 'face-saving', the Internet can offer an ideal and safe channel for dialogue, with assistance of a mediator. The US Institute of Peace successfully conducted computer-mediated peace initiative in Liberia, trying to put an end to fourteen-year civil war:

> In February 2004, USIP hosted a special Virtual Town Hall Meeting featuring Bryant [Gyude Bryant, interim leader of the National Transitional Government of Liberia]. During the online interactive session, Bryant engaged the Liberian diaspora in an Internet-based discussion on the prospects for peace in their war-weary homeland and what the expatriates could do to support such efforts. (Weimann, 2006, p. 213)

While in some cases even the direct text-chat can be unacceptable for the parties, it is easy to create separated virtual chat rooms between which a mediator could exchange the adjusted messages. Due to the need for a human factor in order to build up initial trust, however, a blended 'shuttle diplomacy' and computer-mediated talks might appear to be the most convenient approach. Having in mind that many war-torn areas would not have infrastructure or other capabilities for such a technologically advanced approach, the war-lords can be brought to a third country – or even to separate countries – where such a tool would be available. Such an initiative not only saves precious time but also the costs, making crisis negotiations more effective.

3.5 Public Diplomacy

In today's environment "in which an educated and empowered citizenry hold new and different views about what they expect from their social contract with government" (Briggs, 2005) diplomacy has to listen to and interact with the public in order to get its support. But, this is nothing new in fact: long before mid-twentieth century when the term 'public diplomacy' was coined the ancient Greeks developed empty rhetoric to reconcile effective negotiations with democracy principles and practiced it at the Athens agora as central public

space (Kurbalija, 2005); Chinese have collected poems to sound the voice of public; Roosevelt has delivered speeches over radio.

With the emergence of ICT, the impact of public on shaping policies and applying foreign policy has multiplied. Diplomacy is forced to become more transparent and inclusive; yet it should also see the vast potentials of that. The appeals are many, such as the one from Jonathan Spalter and Kevin Moran, for Foreign Services to become "networked and technology-driven, and it must be able to react with speed, flexibility, reach, and efficiency" (cited in Weimann, 2006, p. 213).

It is the soft power that prevails in politics of digital age rather than military or economic strength. "Information is power, and modern information technology is spreading information more widely than ever before in history" (Nye, 2004, p. 1). In the endless sea of information easily accessible thanks to the ICT, "the scarce resource is now attention" (Scott, 2006). In order to wield power, shape public opinion and build trust of the constituencies, diplomats and politicians need to attract their attention. Ultimately, such power is also subject to abuse by tweaking the information, tilting its context towards a desired message and spinning it through new media for influencing the public – and even deceiving it. The communication technology plays central role in this new power game – so does it in the emerging approach to public diplomacy (Oates et al., 2006).

By its common definitions, public diplomacy is about reaching out to people and lobbying and networking through communicating interactively with all sectors of the informed public (Paschke, 2000). With the interactive feature of ICT and the growing penetration of Internet among citizens, including in rural areas out of the capitals – which are equally important for diplomatic outreach – radio and television are gradually loosing the primate for public

diplomacy. Certainly, face-to-face encounters will never become absolute, yet the online activities will provide an additional dimension of public expression and sounding its voice.

Citizenry is acknowledging – and increasingly requesting for – the Internet as the channel for communications with government, gradually switching to websites or blogs of institutions as reliable sources of official information; "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). States are acknowledging it as well – besides good number of websites of governments, MFA and embassies around the world, even the secret services has turned to public diplomacy over the Internet: for instance, Shabak Shin Bet, the Israel Security Agency, has opened a website including the Arabic version (http://www.shabak.gov.il/arabic/Pages/default.aspx).

The case of Chinese President Hu Jintao addressing public through a live webcast in June 2008 certifies that politicians are turning to even more advanced tools in their attempt to win public support (Bristow, 2008). For the Shangai Expo 2010, which was expected to attract some 70 million visitors – mainly Chinese but others as well over six months duration, the UK expo team has decided to target the young and middle class visitors to learn about UK business and tourist opportunities; to approach them a marketing campaign has been run though the most popular Chinese social networking platforms and the UK team reported that they could "get . . . softer messages across to segmented audiences most effectively, and directly, by working with specific sites" and were "also able to mediate, and shape, the responses to . . . messages" (Elliot, 2010).

It would be wrong utilizing the Internet for a broadcasting only; culture of communications and dialogue that it nourishes opens many more potentials. While most people would initially

think of a web presentation, even these are becoming very interactive, combining not only statements and updates but also space for visitors' contributories: a modern web should allow visitors' comments on updates, host an internal discussion forum or even a blog space, aggregate official Youtube, Twitter and other social networks channels of the institution, provide RSS feeds and podcasts, and much more. Additionally, communication managers planning the web presentations of Foreign Service should bear in mind the vivid life on Internet – a web whose key content changes every two months is commonly considered dead and useless; one such poor example is the "Major Public Diplomacy Accomplishments 2005-2006" report of the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs of US Department of State in 2006 that states as one of its achievements: "launched a new inter-active web-based discussion on the principles of democracy . . . Every two months a different theme will be featured" (Waller, 2007, p. 421); instead, web should be understood as a 24/7 battlefield of words and images.

The web space of a British Foreign and Commonwealth Office – FCO (www.fco.gov.uk) is a good example of a web space turned to the dialogue with public. Under their mantra "Listen, Publish, Engage, Evaluate" (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2010) the FCO has set up a space aggregating internal collaborative wiki for sharing information, formal Youtube video channel, space for visitors to post their thoughts on Britain, 'VoxEU' managed by professional journalists, live chats with ambassadors, and a formal twitter channel used also by a Minister himself to broadcast short information or positions. A feature, especially well accepted in countries of Far East, is a comprehensive blog fed by over 30 diplomats, many of them being ambassadors, with original contributions in several languages and translation into over 50 languages. A cultural shift allowing convergence of the informal the Web2.0 space and the formal diplomatic service was achieved by a close cooperation within a team of 30 people consisted of non-diplomats – communication specialists including a web administrator

– and diplomats interested in the new tools and public diplomacy. According to the personally expressed view of Richard Morgan, Director of Public Diplomacy at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, willingness of the service to sometimes depart from a rigid diplomatic hierarchy – supported by the Minister himself – and accordingly of diplomats to take a risk not to ask superiors for clearance of every online post is what made this pilot concept work fairly successfully from the beginning.

Official online spaces of institutions are only one segment of public diplomacy; equally important, if not a more relevant one, is a personalised official approach. Diplomats, as individuals of own integrity, are required to interact with public directly in order to network, send signals and scrutinize vox populi. Unlike web pages of their institutions, a personal web page of a diplomat might not be well accepted by the public, and might even look somewhat arrogant. Instead, managing a number of personalised tools is a good way to go: regularly maintaining personal 'political' blog on most debated issues of own competency and responding to eventual comments by readers, broadcasting interesting twitter posts with news and opinions, directly participating within popular discussion forums to bring in own arguments or those of the institution, updating personal status and posting micro-blog posts within personal social network accounts, showing up at major events of virtual worlds – such as cocktails, conferences and lectures or even concerts[5]. On example of blogging, Hampton Stephens, former managing editor of "Inside the Air Force", explains the role of public diplomacy in "building indigenous communities of reform-minded bloggers" by claiming that there is no right or wrong way to share the official policy: "the message of liberty and democracy can be encouraged to spread from the very communities that public diplomacy campaigns are designed to reach in the first place" (Stephens, 2005).

[5] In September 2007, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra delivered a concert to over 80 'avatars' in the virtual world of Second Life (http://www.liverpoolphil.com/1367/second-life/liverpool-phil-in-second-life.html)

Public diplomacy in virtual space requires high interactivity and frequency of 'online presence' but implies less formality. One particular challenge that diplomats face, however, is amplified in the online world: delineating their personal positions from their official ones. While the old media required and expected a diplomat to bring in the formal views only, the dynamic and inclusive online space expects and asks for both. Besides, the evolution of online tools is blurring this difference between personal and professional heavily. A diplomat may be inclined to maintain a personal blog; he may even be able to communicate professional messages through it tacitly. Yet having the fact that most of the online fora is conceptualised to be publicly accessible globe-wide, and that both personal and professional views and actions of a netizen are linked to her single entity as individual, effects of the misspelled messages are largely multiplied and can be tremendous. Jan Pronk, a UN special representative in Khartoum during Darfur crises, felt a consequence: in 2006 he was expelled by Sudanese government for his blog post on two military defeats of the government which they found unacceptable and claimed untrue (Steele, 2006).

Sounding the opinion of the population – foreign as well as domestic – is an important component of foreign policy that is more easily achieved through the online space. Alike the ancient Chinese leaders that were collecting verses and poems all over the country to record the general feelings of people, diplomats should follow blogs, forums, twitter, micro-blogs and other forms of modern public expression. Often, even statistical analysis of public interests online can be useful: quantifying the interest of visitors in certain topic by monitoring the number of visits to related pages on a formal web page is a good pointer to what attracts the public and what does not; a 'tag could' that orbits the currently hottest twitter tags and key words used and followed by netizens can let diplomats know how resonant certain political issues are globally. When sounding the quality of inputs of citizens by following discussions, however, diplomats can and are challenged and expected to reflect

back. Keeping in touch with people on daily bases is an important aspect of today's diplomacy – after his election to White House, the new US President Obama struggled to keep his blackberry phone in order to be able to get through to the variety of information: "because, one of the worst things I think that could happen to a president is losing touch with what people are going through day to day" (Walters, 2008).

Public participation in the conduct of contemporary diplomacy is both inevitable and valuable. Interactivity and inclusiveness in political shaping of the foreign policy, however, encourages citizens to ask for being consulted also about certain diplomatic conduct, to a higher degree than ever before; ignoring their inquiries might possibly lead to a downturn in mutual relations and public support. It is important therefore that diplomats pay attention not to cross the line in communications with public and be sure to send clear messages that each stakeholder has its palpable role and the respective accountability for efficient and responsible conduct of diplomacy and foreign policy. This should by no means be understood as the need for limiting public participation – but only for being unequivocal in calling the things with their names.

CHAPTER 4

EMPOWERMENT OF THE MFA

Intelligent information management is central to the work of contemporary Foreign Service. In time when information has become a commodity, focus of work can shift to “credible, user-specified analysis” (Rana, 2007, p. 36). But to gain value out of that commodity one needs to able to overcome the discussed 'paradox of plenty' - acquire the needed and discard the undesired information: service needs informed, not confused diplomats. It is the smart management of the sources of information by the Ministry, within and outside its walls, that creates advantages. Being in position, however, to control these sources and the flow of information both on a micro level within its structures and possibly on the macro level of a country puts the MFA in position of empowered as well. For a public and its own good; or for bad.

4.1 Information Management in the MFA

In traditional diplomatic service strict internal protocols for delivering confidential messages, instructions and reports – such as cipher links – play important role. Clear inner scheme for

management of information and communication reflects the very structure of the MFA by setting the access privileges to various communication channels and documents. Such articulation of roles and responsibilities in a complex hierarchy allows for the efficient delivery of service, and consequently impacts the intrinsic evaluation of the MFA work and its public assessment. In a digitalised MFA system a clear track of all the instructions, reports, communications and documents can be managed through the intranet making it easier to regularly supervise the accomplishments such as the annual programme plans agreed between missions and headquarters in US and in Singapore (Rana, 2000).

The central part of an MFA intranet should be a well planned centralised database for sharing all the documents and internal communication notes. The major challenge – organisational, not technical – is setting up the access privileges to reflect the hierarchy and internal working procedures on information management. This challenge is bigger and way more important when it comes to sharing the segments of the database – and of the communication procedures – with departments of other ministries in order to synchronise the foreign policy efforts. The internal information management scheme, based on digitalised communications, should also be flexible to occasional re-organisation of departments within the MFA, such as embracing the territorial units as was announced in Malta, or transformation from territorial to thematic units due to integration of embassies as in Germany and UK (Rana, 2006).

Database of documents and submissions is only one segment of the ICT-based reform. Unlike in the past, the internal communications are not based on formal notes any more. Still the general informing of servants can be done through periodical bulletins or circulars, though digital and rapidly broadcasted throughout the internal organisational structure. Direct contact among departments, or rather individuals, though internal messenger systems makes their coordinated work more effective. Permanent online relations of servants through social

networks make the teams more coherent. Intranet message boards can enable easy share of more informal information of lower importance, while forum discussions, shared mindmaps and hypertext annotation tools can bring in the space for ongoing brainstorming and debates on major activities and plans thereby increasing productivity. Collaboratively built wiki pages can help structuring working information a nonlinear multidimensional encyclopaedia-like form. Shared personal and department calendars and task-lists can save time in synchronisation of their work and enable feeding of ones into another work.

As a space for internal evaluation of the work of the Ministry, survey forms or intranet comments can encourage especially junior diplomats to provide personal feedbacks on how their work can be improved – alike what British Foreign Secretary did in 1999 (Dickie, 2004) or the German service did in 2001 (cited in Rana, 2006). Lastly, regular meetings of headquarters with missions or diplomats away, or even meetings among heads of MFA central administration within cross-border or regional dialogue initiatives can be done voice or video conferencing or telepresence. Using all these tools for facilitating the cooperation with other ministries, non-government organisations or business representatives and encouraging public-private initiatives, or for involving external eminent persons – distinguished intellectuals – to generate new ides on multidisciplinary issues, is one step ahead.

All these upgrades *can* be implemented. But should they? How does this impact the core internal relations within the Ministry, its hierarchy and working methods?

Obviously the new internal information management scheme is needed. Defining it includes the question of modifying the submissions rules primarily, with one option in making the cipher link model obsolete: instead of sending copies of incoming and outgoing cipher

messages also to predefined recipients commonly including the heads, today's less formal one-to-one communications may easily avoid copying the superiors and cause miscommunication and unawareness of responsible heads. Ambassador Rana (2006, p. 15) conveys the fear of some diplomats that "such communication takes away one of the features of a good system, the well-distributed cipher telegrams that are read by the top hierarchy, ensuring that at their traditional morning meetings they are all on the same sheet of music".

One may trigger the old debate if technology is good or bad – or neutral but depending on the way how people use it. The truth is here that ICT allows for avoiding copying people when communicating, as well as it allows for copying even more people much more easily than in the past; further more, many written communications – and even digitalised verbal ones – can be stored and thus retrieved easily at any time. The fear does not come from technology but again from the way people use it: setting up proper (possibly updated) communication protocols and requesting diplomats to obey them, if this is if interest.

The German case certifies the importance of upgrading the procedures on submissions: instead of advancing all submissions "up the hierarchy from the divisions . . . to the head of directorate . . . to the director-general . . . and only then to the State Secretary", which was time-consuming, now divisions directly submit them to State Secretary "with copies going to the Director-General . . . and, if relevant, to a Commissioner" (cited in Rana, 2006, p. 9). Malta, on the other hand, has a long history of connecting missions and headquarters through the Internet: from 1995 when the first embassies were connected, to 2009 when missions are firmly linked in their everyday work. Moreover, all government offices in Malta are connected to a centralised 'MAGNET' network. The e-mail is a formally accepted way of exchanging formal documents – yet encrypted; the decryption is done over secured 'air gap' computers which are disconnected from the network after transferring confidential documents

to them via portable storage devices. In defining the access rights to certain types of information, several levels of classified information were introduced according to the practices of European Union: information: limited, restricted, confidential, secret and top secret (Catania, 2009).

Yet the modern communications among professionals in MFA service do not end on exchange of confidential messages and submissions only. ICT enables multiple channels which has not been practice in the past; many of these channels are real-time alike the telephone call – thirty Maltese missions are connected among themselves and with headquarter by a toll-free voice-over-IP secured telephone lines, allowing for missions to consult regularly but also for diplomats, whose dynamics of posts across the globe often separates colleagues for a while, to keep in touch with each other (Catania, 2009). Besides, Maltese Ministry is developing advanced tools such as message boards or shared calendars within its intranet. US State Department is going a step further with working on internal social network titled 'Statebook' that should allow light way of connecting diplomats with each other with possibilities of personal status updates, 'friendships', shared links and announcements, etc.

One major concerns of diplomatic service in introducing new technologies is certainly the security and confidentiality of its work. The intranet as the internal network connecting the headquarter departments and missions has servers and equipment that is centrally managed; all the communications relying in the intranet can be fairly well protected with strong encryption techniques for authentication of users – including the communications with remote spot such as missions which are commonly conducted through 'virtual private network tunnels' relaying data packages securely through the public Internet. Even such a system bears certain security risk as the technologies for mighty encryption and those for breaking it

are ever competing; the role of the department for information technologies and their security officers is highly important.

The usage of mobile devices for accessing the intranet via wireless link is often identified as higher security risk features (Catania, 2009), in spite of their potential in allowing diplomats to connect and use the resources remotely. The access to public Internet, however, is commonly perceived as the greatest security vulnerability; web-based tools such as social networks, blogs, forums or public email services which rely on storing the records on external commercial servers are often restricted for communication within Ministry. According to several personal discussions with the servants of various Ministries, there are different models: German Ministry does not allow servants to use such public web-based services on their computers, but only on the couple of 'unsafe' computers disconnected from the intranet, serving for such purposes; Maltese Ministry follows the same pattern but does consider allowing higher-ranked officials to have access to public services from their computers, counting on their awareness and responsibility; Estonian Ministry, however, does allow access to public services such as Facebook to a number of their servants in order to maintain the official Ministry profile and public diplomacy activities through this network.

Besides security risks, however, internal monitoring of and reporting on communications is also a concern of the top management of the Foreign Service. Many communication channels are real-time alike the telephone call, and are not necessarily in written but in voice or other audio-visual forms, possibly leaving no records behind; some of the text-based communications such as social networks, blogs or forums that are externally hosted on commercial platforms can not be recorded either. For security reasons or for the sake of the internal control thus, such tools might be banned or filtered out by the Ministry. Yet, should they? Are their demerits greater than their merits?

Being aware that information is power, but not being sure if they could harness it properly and not being ready for such principal changes, some states still hesitate to introduce the intranet and ICT heavily within the service (Rana, 2006). Some others, however, may in fact choose to do the opposite: while accepting the benefits of the ICT, they introduce the novelties so to take full control over the information flow in the Ministry. By prescribing dos and don'ts of the internal communications and backing these protocols with adjusting technical aspects so to be able to filter certain content or type of communication and record all the allowed written and verbal communications, and by introducing additional structures such as Chief Information Offices (CIO) to enforce the procedures, Ministry – or ultimately the Government – can express and strengthen its internal power. The challenge is, however, if through such a system they start interfering – even deliberately – with the information that flows between servants or departments: detouring, twisting or altering it? With too strict information management and power, the CIO, heads or political leaders can preclude embodying the full richness of creativity the ICT can bring and even abuse its potential for entrenching own positions. On the other hand, a soft management can result with miscommunications and the asynchronous work instead a synchronous one, or could ultimately lead to loosening the mere hierarchical structures of MFA and deteriorate its efficiency and overall strength.

Changes in internal communications modify the working culture to large extend. Imposing impulsive substantive reforms of the working methods, and thus the disruption of the living culture, is likely to provoke revolt and obstruction by the servants. Instead a profound step-by-step transformation is needed, with introducing only some convenient ICT tools at first, which would easily fit the working methods and only facilitate them. After building confidence in the new technologies and making them interested to further explore the

potentials of new tools, diplomats might be involved in conceptualising the eventual substantive reforms driven by the potentials of ICT – such as the approaches towards public diplomacy – yet still keeping in mind various caveat related to security risks and potential abuse of technologies.

4.2 Virtual Representation

Extending the outreach of MFA must be done in a cost efficient way due to severe budgetary cuts. "The ambassador abroad is a principal cost" (Rana, 2006, p. 4) and even the existing missions face reductions in size. This especially stands for small and developing countries which, in a multipolar political world of today, need to maintain strong relations with many international actors. Non-resident missions might not have the sufficient outreach, while a non-resident envoy would need to travel too often and would be another major cost. Internet offers the option of virtual representation, either in form of an information service merely, or with virtual envoys and even virtual embassies, to replace missions of less priority or complement the work of existing missions with reduced staff and growing tasks. Managing virtual representation can be done from the headquarters or other existing missions, which shifts the back-office function towards headquarter.

Through a SWOT analysis[6] of virtual representation Olesya Grech (2006) identifies, *inter alia*, following features as strengths and weaknesses: cost effective, convenient to use, accessible and informative, yet lacking interpersonal relations (including ability to attend social gatherings or rely on body language in negotiations) and thus identity verification of users, having complex maintenance of service and limited use for citizens without Interne

[6] Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats is a is a strategic planning to evaluate projects or business ventures.

access or knowledge; one might add increased transparency as a weakness of diplomatic conduct since, due to global visibility, virtual posts would not allow for messages customised territorially or per specific target group. The list of identified opportunities - increased representation, global presence and outreach to citizens' homes, increased interactivity with citizens of other countries, and public diplomacy value for promotion and image building - can be extended with sizeable networking abilities; the list of threats includes increased expectations of citizens for own participation in international affairs, but also increased vulnerability due to cyber-attacks by hackers or even as tacit cyber-warfare by other states.

In asserting the resident missions, Ambassador Paschke (2000) reminds that the embassy "is the closest a citizen can get to the actual home country" adding that "the ambassador can help give Germany's image in his host country a human face, his own. For the opening of the Virtual Embassy of Maldives in Second Life, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives Abdulla Shahid claimed that "the Virtual Embassy offers another channel . . . to provide information on the country, to offer our viewpoint on issues of international concern, and to interact with our partners in the international community", while his colleague Stewart Gibbon from the Maldives Mission in Geneva added: "the Maldives is not the wealthiest island in the world . . . this can give people a contact with the Maldives that they might not otherwise have" (O'Mahony, 2007).

One additional challenge of virtual representation is its legality and jurisdiction. Jovan Kurbalija (Kurbalija and Baldi, 2000) of DiploFoundation claims that websites of diplomatic missions can be taken as country's legal representation in virtual space. Virtual representation might not always, however, be the extension of a physical embassy, as its potential is also in replacing them. In such cases virtual posts would represent headquarter as such, as are ultimately responsible for managing the representation of a country. Additionally, unlike the

physical missions that are targeting the citizens of a resident country or the region mainly, virtual representation can be accessed remotely by the individuals located in other jurisdictions (Grech, 2006). It is the MFA to decide on eventual boundaries of the geographical outreach of virtual representation and the respective jurisdictions, yet having in mind that such boundaries would be only procedural and would not impact the worldwide visibility of the virtual posts.

It is important to note the specificities of the virtual embassies comparing to other 'lighter' forms of virtual representation. The websites and other less-interactive models of virtual representation should not be confused with notion of virtual embassies, as they mostly do not imply real diplomatic exchange. The notion of virtual implies the absence of physical premises only: "A virtual embassy still has an ambassador – ambassadors cannot be replaced by computers" (Kurbalija, 2007, p. 329). Since the ambassador of a virtual embassy would communicate via the Internet – through virtual worlds such as Second Life or through other customised platforms aggregating number of online tools that allow for full interactivity – his post would be either in the headquarter itself, or eventually in another physical embassy covering the region, to give an additional touch of cultural familiarity and intimacy.

For economically more powerful countries it might make sense to open several virtual embassies, each targeting specific audience either regionally, thematically or among stakeholders. Developing countries, however, might not need to introduce such level of sensibility and might satisfy with a single virtual post, in which case the managing staff seated at the headquarter would effectively manage an embassy accredited to the whole world. The functionality of such an embassy would be somewhat limited as discussed above; still, "the Virtual Embassy can perform almost any diplomatic function specified in the Vienna Convention

on Diplomatic Relations, from information dissemination, protection of interests of citizens abroad and negotiations, to investment promotion and more" (Trigona, 2007, p. 8).

Virtual embassies can either replace the missions in places of marginal interest or where setting up the physical mission is not possible, or can amend the work of some of the existing resident missions by transferring number of tasks to the online world, to be performed centrally from the headquarter. "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" (Grech, 2006, p. 30)

4.3 Training

"A modern diplomat needs to be an alliance builder and often a social campaigner" (Malloch-Brown, 2010). Such a responsibility requires a diplomat to be able to catch up with the changing environment of international affairs. Multidisciplinary agenda asks for the "officials with skills that are both generalist and specialist" (Rana, 2007, p. 23); Mark Malloch-Brown (Malloch-Brown, 2010) remembers:

> . . . as the Foreign Office minister responsible for London's G20 summit, I saw the need for diplomats with skills in international economics, as commercial interests loom larger. My Chinese friend pointed out the same skill shortages in Beijing where in the past, languages were the main requirement.

The multistakeholder arena requires from the Ministries to be manned with officials who can easily communicate with variety of professional cultures, and not only diplomats (Kummer, 2007). Ultimately, the new diplomat should be capable to capitalise on the potentials the emerging technologies are offering in response to these challenges (Baldi, 1998).

Of course, ongoing personal improvement is becoming a necessity for professionals in today's world, and institutional capacity building is becoming an indispensable component of corporate work – including that of Foreign Service. But constant training implies significant costs for travel and logistics. Conducting e-learning programmes, either solely or as a component of the blended learning approach, is certainly cost-effective; it is thus often the only option the MFA has for conducting trainings: after surveying eighty-one countries, in the final report of his study Ambassador Rolando Stein (Stein, 2005) presented that 29% of them offered courses through e-learning within their diplomatic service, with this percentage rising fast. Moreover they offer an opportunity to gather trainees across the MFA system, and present them with a time-effective course: without minding for travel, time zones or their current working loads as they may be able to contribute to the training whenever they feel most convenient to. The e-learning models, however, often end up being mere distant learning platform with no interaction. Instead, they can be not only cost-effective but also very interactive and efficient, encouraging knowledge sharing, learning-by-doing and community building, as in case of successful online programmes that DiploFoundation delivers (www.diplomacy.edu).

Technology is readily available: many open source[7] platforms exist, that aggregate facilitating Web2.0 tools for e-learning such as webinars for delivering real-time multicast text, audio and video content and exchanging thoughts among participants; hypertext annotation tools that allow for building layers of comments, questions or examples by trainees and their tutors on particular segments of the learning text; micro-blogs serving as virtual classroom message boards; file-sharing and wiki platforms allowing for collaborative research and analytical work during courses, discussion forums as space for open dialogue and discussion on

[7] Open source often refers to "any program whose source code is made available for use or modification as users or other developers see fit" and "is usually developed as a public collaboration and made freely available" (http://it.jhu.edu/glossary/mno.html)

programme topics, etc. It is, however, know-how of the appropriate learning methodology, e-learning pedagogy and didactics that commonly lack in the MFA capacity.

In his review of training needs and organisation and structure approaches for training of diplomats, Dr John Hemery (2007) tackles also the innovations in traditional in-situ training, such as combining the experience of seniors diplomats with facilitation energy of junior diplomats through role-play interactive games, contextualisation of simulations around pre-recorded imaginative TV news coverage, etc, pointing to the potential of the infall of these into the e-learning methodology. It is important to bare in mind that the trainees are not only the junior diplomats but often, and more importantly, senior diplomats as well, all of them possessing remarkable knowledge and experience in their particular field of expertise and service – be it bilateral diplomacy, negotiations, pubic relations, press, or other. While the inputs from the expert lecturers on a topic of the particular online course are always valuable and needed, it is the facilitation of knowledge exchange among the participants themselves – members of the virtual classroom – based on the course materials that produces layers of knowledge and widens the horizon of understanding, knowledge and skills of the trainees (and the expert lecturers as well). Social networks are a potential for a less structured ad-hoc trainings initiated by colleagues among themselves even, as facilitated exchange of knowledge and experience on certain topic such as short language course, culturally-sensitive communication approaches of a certain geographic area, experiences on crises management 'must know' or other. Besides, mobile devices offer many opportunities for ubiquitous self-paced learning through MFA-designed crosswords, quizzes or light interactive scenario-like games that would be intriguing to professionals even in the leisure time.

With such an interactive training not only diplomats would acquire basic understanding of the ICT and grasp the complexity of potentials they offer and limits they impose or get a solid

base in each of the areas of the multidisciplinary agenda, but would be able to cope with conceptual aspect and develop concrete skills such accessing reliable sources of information and overcoming ‘a paradox of plenty’ in the information age, communicating through new tools and the related ‘dos and don’ts’, as writing a blog or a twitter post, adjusting to upgraded submission methods and related caveats, emerging consular affairs, and inter-professional communication. More than that, diplomats may thereby be trained for change – acquiring mindset which enable them to accommodate smoothly to changes and utilise them for the benefit of the service (Baldi, 1998). Besides these trainings diplomats should also “adapt their own structures to benefit more from the Internet”, says Markus Kummer (2007, p. 182) and concludes: “Training diplomats may be easier than adapting structures”.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT) has allowed for a direct communication between nearly any persons on earth in a matter of milliseconds, worldwide information sharing and dissemination, and the emergence of countless vivid online communities. Not the least, it has stimulated mobility, almost filling in the missing part of the old dream: access to any information at any time from anywhere. In a nutshell, ICT – and particularly the Internet – has heavily impacted human relations, including social bonds or business models, building up the Information Society.

In a globally connected world links between politics and society with technology, economy, health, culture, education or other areas are openly analysed and discussed by many. Inclusive multidisciplinary debates, facilitated online, easily reach out to the general public through new media, enabling the involved stakeholders – governments, business alliances, civil society groups or media – to directly shape the public opinion on various global and local issues. Thereby influencing official decision-makers, as several academic sources agree, these stakeholders are becoming actual players in the international affairs, gradually involved directly with the diplomatic fora. Number of recent international events and processes

certifies that the multistakeholder environment for decision-shaping of multidisciplinary agenda of international relations has become a reality of contemporary diplomacy.

At the same time contemporary diplomacy is facing challenges with its enhanced roles and requests for extended outreach and better performance confronted with rapidly shrinking resources. The list of challenges identified by many researchers includes complexity in communication with multiple stakeholders interested, involved in and influencing the international affairs; need for a fast response with a solid knowledge of or management over multiplicity of emerging increasingly relevant international issues; necessity for an extended outreach of diplomatic services confronted with heavy budget restrictions and therefore downsized staff; much needed training and skill-building repressed by the increasing requests for detailed performance management; and other.

One of the major substantial challenges, however, is the changing balance of power in international affairs. Some scholars claim that, rather than rigid hierarchies, the bottom-up driven Internet empowers individuals and the entities structured in the similar, less formal way. They foresee that the empowered citizenry will somewhat erode the power of states, though not entirely shatter. Some authors, however, challenge such evolution with reminders that number of states have snatched at new technologies for own empowerment – through its better use for information management, or through abuse like censorship. One can nevertheless agree with the academic classics that it is the soft power gaining supremacy over the hard power in the world of digital age, and that it draws on the information management – both the free flow of information and its control.

Diplomatic service has a chance to explore potentials of technology for its own empowerment, in order to preserve its pivotal role in the international relations. Through a

profoundly planned and well organised usage of information and communication technologies in the Foreign Service, a state – especially small and developing one – can cope with the loads of challenges and catch up with the emerging trends of the modern diplomacy.

The potentials of the Internet and ICT in diplomacy for communications, collaboration and outreach are manifold, though not often evident. Viewed from the idealistic prism, emerging technology bring benefits to all aspects of diplomatic service.

Diplomats agree that bilateral relations are more than ever one of the key pillars of the diplomatic service. For mediating country's positions and networking with stakeholders, as well as sounding the voice of the public, the embassies may follow and interact with public blogs, discussion forums, social networks, news feeds and online content. As the examples show, outreaching to the resident public with image building, promotion of cultural heritage or opportunities for business investments can be largely achieved through interactive multilingual web presentations, moderated e-newsletters, virtual tours, targeted advertising and positioning within search engines.

Broadcasting necessary information through the online space, enabling e-government services for distant access to personal documents and facilitating real-time e-communications to get in touch with citizens are an asset to the consular work. Introduction of online application and visa issuance system and databases, such as those of the UK or Lithuania, cut the costs, time-investment and complexity of procedures. Increasingly, consular offices are in the forefront of crisis and disaster management – from terrorist attacks to earthquake and tsunami strikes – and are required to provide rapid-reaction assistance to its nationals and others; recent disaster cases and following international agreements certify the importance of harnessing the ICT infrastructure and well maintained contacts through online social networks.

Multilateral diplomacy is challenged with the inclusion of new actors and complexity of communications and working methods among representatives scattered around the globe; technology provides facilitated communication and collaboration at distance; the example is the "Electronic United Nations" plan. As result of the extended information sharing capabilities and reaching out to publics and counterparts across the globe, some authors call for creating a common communications culture to replace the mutual mistrustfulness among diplomatic services and other actors. Global partnerships in crisis management, conflict resolution, or fighting terrorism or organised crime are the first to show how harnessing ICT for information sharing and interoperability is important.

In negotiations, as many diplomats confirm, the preparatory phase is equally important as the talks. Background research on actors involved, their interests, positions and respective powers can be assisted by customised search through headquarters' digital databases, browsing the related public websites, online discussion forums and blogs, and even by using public search engines. During the talks, the negotiators can benefit from the instant access to public or internal databases and communication with headquarters through their mobile devices. Examples show that important nuances in diplomatic signalling during negotiations can be introduced through social media broadcasts, while the online tools for documents drafting can allow for ongoing collaborative work on the negotiated text. When direct in-situ talks are not possible, the computer-mediated talks can be an important asset - especially in the case of conflict resolution, as practice confirms.

Public diplomacy comes in response to growing involvement of empowered citizenry. In extending the outreach to all sections of the public – both foreign and domestic – diplomacy can benefit from turning to the Internet: gathering public around interactive web portals of

aggregated Web2.0 tools, such as the one of Foreign and Commonwealth Office of UK; sounding the voices and concerns of the population through following endless public blogs and forums; communicating and networking with public through social networks and virtual worlds; and even tweaking and spinning desired messages through the mighty new media.

For Ministries, managing a growingly complex spectrum of relations with numerous partners requires the utilisation of the proficient 'intranet' services and smart databases with ensured security and deep search possibilities, allowing for easy instant access at any point, as number of cases certify. Regular contacts with new partners – especially the ICT-skilled non-governmental and business representatives – are inevitably performed over the Internet. The integrated network of embassies and smart use of centralised communication and database systems allow for cutting costs also by reducing number of missions and staff and introducing virtual representation and virtual embassies where applicable. For substantive empowerment, developing internal capacities, knowledge and skills of diplomats and adjusting internal mindset is a necessity, many authors agree. Available cost-effective and timely online learning methodologies and interactive tools, such as virtual classrooms, can enable junior as well as senior professional staff to be trained efficiently, without need to even leave the missions, in not only know-how of the ICT but also the skills of the digital age – such as assessing reliable sources of information or effective blogging, reporting and communications – and the conceptual challenges including inter-professional communication.

A more realistic prism reflecting number of publications highlights also the imperfections in form of limits of the ICT potential and the related risk. Reports on the current penetration rate of the Internet in developing world are not shiny, even though the trends are encouraging.

Most commonly reiterated concern over the use of online tools is the lack of human dimension, especially for negotiations. Even on daily bases, for using the emerging tools for communicating with new partners and even among themselves, diplomats need many new skills of the digital age: effectiveness in work, sometimes even in negotiations, in spite of the lack of human dimension; ability to extract useful information from endless piles of data and proficiency in attracting the attention of partners and public; adaptability to high frequency of interactions with partners and public imposed by vivid Internet culture and almost permanent online availability. Additionally, the multi-track 'direct-dial' communications within the Ministry and with other actors through number of virtual channels – such as e-mail, messenger or social networks – can easily bypass the necessary hierarchy and cause miscommunications, confusion or deliberate manipulation. Even though digitalisation of communications allows for easy back-tracking through records, many digitally-conducted verbal communications, or text-based ones relayed through external commercial servers, may remain unrecorded.

Security of the internal digital network is the most often debated disadvantage in the literature. In spite of strong and fairly affordable encryption technologies, the risks grow with the value the perpetrators can get if breaching the MFA confidentiality and their respective resources invested in eventual cyber-attacks. Moreover, the negligent use of unsecured web-based tools by diplomats bares the risk of disclosing confidential communications to a third party. Case study shows that many Ministries therefore decide for a very limited access to public tools to servants.

Confidential communications with partners, including 'deniability' in negotiations, are becoming less certain with digitalised records. Yet many authors suggest that the increased transparency and inclusiveness, not confidentiality, is a chance for greater efficiency. With

global visibility of web space and virtual embassies, however, unmindfully customised diplomatic messages for different partners bring risks to international credibility. Not the least, transparent interaction with public can induce larger expectations and demands for its role in diplomacy, risking to deteriorate mutual trust and relations; while encouraging various models of e-participation, thus, diplomats should profoundly keep the degree of public involvement and the related expectations at balance with ability to conduct diplomatic activities effectively and responsibly.

One of the greatest challenges is the internal organisation of submission and communication procedures and the information management structures of the Foreign Service. While the technology is readily available with all its opportunities and limits, harnessing the potentials depends largely on conciliating the two cultures: diplomatic, which is structured top-to-bottom, formal and with strict communication protocols, and the Internet culture which is bottom-up, informal and openly interactive. Finding a right balance would leave space for creativity and improvements in performance while retaining needed confidentiality and security, yet would also prevent abuse of information control within the Ministry itself. There is not enough research available on experiences with transformation of professional culture of diplomacy in that direction. A comparative study on eventual new models of information management within Ministries of number of states worldwide would be beneficial as a follow-up of this thesis.

Apprehension of ICT for paradigm shift in diplomatic service, as a respond to global challenges in international relations, requires the understanding of a growing dominance of soft power in digital era and a political will to loosening rigid hierarchies of traditional service. Detailed analysis of particular needs, opportunities and threats of ICT by each Ministry should lay out the appropriate internal organisation of information management.

Learning from the experience of early adopters – non-government organisations and related individuals – through integrating them directly with the service can lead towards gradual profound reforms of the diplomatic conduct and well planned use of ICT within.

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