

How Globalization Has Disrupted the Actors, the Place, and the Timeline of Diplomacy

Indah Diantiara Nurul Marifat

*BA in International Relations, Department of International Relations,
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia*

***Correspondence: Indah Diantiara Nuruf Marifat. E-mail: 4raitaufiq@gmail.com**

RECEIVED 19 February 2024; **ACCEPTED** 17 March 2024; **PUBLISHED** 31 March 2024

Abstract: The article examines how diplomacy has changed in the globalization age, investigating the flexibility of diplomatic actors, places, and timing of diplomacy. This article suggested that non-state actors now wield increased influence in shaping international discourse due to globalization. This highlights that active diplomatic engagement is not confined solely to traditional foreign ministries and embassies. These actors, through their participation in contemporary diplomacy, compel foreign ministries and embassies to respond rapidly to international events. This pace, while diverging from the traditional cautious approach of governments, allows for public observation and participation in shaping policy responses. This underscores the necessity for diplomacy to adapt to time-sensitive situations. Moreover, the emergence of new arenas, such as digital platforms, presents a challenge as it blurs the line between state and non-state actors. States must recognize the presence of non-state actors and acknowledge that diplomacy is no longer exclusively conducted in private settings.

Keywords: Globalization, diplomacy, state actors, non-state actors

1. Introduction

Globalization and modernization of both tools and values have changed the way conducts of business are done, including but not limited to the conduct of diplomacy. The spheres for discussion and power of influence that were once only limited to official diplomatic community of a state government have now been shared with non-state actors whose scope of works move the tidal of international affairs more eruptive than the reactionary condition of any state governments.

While the aim of diplomacy remains just as the same, the achievement of it may not necessarily only credit the foreign ministries and embassies, but also the commitments of non-state actors who are able to communicate and advocate for changes by maximizing the use of digital infrastructures which allow them to enhance their influence and galvanize support in making changes in international norm dynamics. The significance of the involvement of non-state actors in the current context of modern diplomacy also changes the conventional timeline and avenue for diplomacy. The speed of information means that diplomatic eloquence is not only needed in times of scheduled diplomatic meetings, but it is now also as needed in times of arising issues and conflicts that are broadcasted the minute they arise. Owing to the fact that the digital sphere has also become the place where the public and non-state actors are free to both scrutinize and engage in the outcomes of foreign policy, it calls for the improvisation by official diplomatic community to adapt to the use of the digital sphere to acknowledge the assistance of non-state actors in producing satisfactory solution a reality. Hence, referring to the title of this review, the paper will further discuss how dynamic the actors, the place and the time of diplomacy have become in the modern era.

2. Review Discussion

In practice, diplomacy is a measure taken by a state to ensure that any application of interaction between states is to find solvency on behalf of their own publics' interests (Koch, 2002). According to Otto von Bismarck, the way to reach this solvency is through negotiating whichever interest a state needs to concede in exchange for another reciprocated concession by another state (Stanzel, 2018). Not only has the current wave of modernization challenged the conventional practice of diplomacy, it has also shifted the positions of non-state actors in which they influence their periphery almost as impactful as what a diplomatic mission by an official may achieve. What this means is that those considered as diplomatically active actors are not necessarily defined by those working in foreign ministries and embassies, but also those who have influence and certain degree of power in finding solvency for global problems, especially in the context of erosion of state sovereignty in being the only acting actor who gets to decide on important matter. These very actors range from civil societies, non-governmental organizations, multinational companies, global media companies, and individuals whose works have transnational implications (Stanzel, 2018).

As an extension of a government, diplomats are officials who communicate in accordance to the line of foreign policy a state government has already set. Through training and initial recruitment, a diplomat is trained to understand the current circumstances of state affairs, and must conduct engagements in a condition that favors the government the diplomat represents. In the context of modern diplomacy, where digitalization provides forms of infrastructure for diplomacy to be enhanced by the acting sovereign state while at the same time amplifying the voices of the publics, who in this sense are observers, wishing to take a more active approach in the decision-making of foreign policy, a diplomat is expected to not freely express views that do not represent their country on their own personal digital space (Stanzel, 2018). In addition to that, diplomats are expected to adapt and improvise from the current traditional diplomacy practice in order for diplomacy to deliver satisfactory solvencies to the publics' demand. Given the scenario mentioned above where it is now becoming common for observers, namely non-state actors, to take matters into their own hand seeing how impactful the dissemination of information is through globalization, it is safe to say that now diplomats must acknowledge the benefit of diplomatically active non-state actors in assisting the solvency of global problems (Stanzel, 2018). One of the examples for this is the Paris Agreement. Through framing of climate justice and elaborative work on persuasion and coercion, the unified environmental movement was able to galvanize support from state governments to realize the Paris Agreement (Allan & Hadden, 2017).

Acknowledging the modernization of diplomacy means acknowledging the side effect of it. Through digital infrastructure which champions speed, any international events are made known as soon as something happens. The problem is that speed can serve as a double-edged sword in how traditional diplomacy reacts to a recent development on international realm. While the immediate delivery of an international event allows a government to assess the implication of such event to their own territory and other parts of the world, and can tailor their reaction and, if required, foreign policy in accordance to the learning of the development (Grant, 2005), it also serves as a hindrance since the nature of speed means that diplomacy is no longer only taking place in scheduled meetings and avenues where researches have been thorough and meticulously curated, but rather in an instance where a reaction is as time-sensitive as it will ever be (Solomon, 2000). However, in the book of diplomacy, the reason why discretion and prudence are part of the practice is because international events are complicated. The implication of a certain event to a certain country may not surge as speedy as the information, thus suggesting that many like-minded governments of states usually communicate with each other prior reacting to an event to ensure that their response is as diplomatically sound as others' (Grant, 2005). Given the shared grievance international community shares upon a tragedy, it is essential for a government to have comprehension of the tragedy which is not always enabled by the speed of information, to align their reaction through policy. This is a crucial thing that the public may not understand, seeing that the delay of an official response from a government can inflict distrust as the public become invested in the development of an event, thus making them resort to other parties that are not necessarily from government or foreign ministry, but rather such field experts related to the event or anyone willing to serve as commentator for them to seek comprehension (Potter, 2002). In the case of Rohingya crisis, although the situation is imminently subject to condemnation by moral standard of international community, neighboring ASEAN countries who are expected to possess certain degree of influence upon Myanmar could not immediately

respond simply on the basis of information availability but instead had to observe the development of the crisis in order to curate their response that will move Myanmar into conciliatory mode (Lee, 2018).

By the time the public space is saturated with information released beyond the government's control, governments and ministries will see this an urgency to release a response. As a result, it is not only the public that relies on external information to have their own reaction, but so is also the government. As the public perspective has already preceded the government's, and given the time sensitivity that disables diplomatic officials from screening through the entire accuracy of information, the government will then tune into many sources of advice, including non-governmental ones, to find the suitable ground that will both represent the stance of the government as well as the perspective of the public. Again, this practice challenges the conventional diplomacy from being used to round up their decisions behind the walls of ivory tower to confronting the rising dominance of public domain that puts the conduct of diplomacy as a subject of scrutiny (Potter, 2002).

Seeing that non-governmental actors seem to be in possession of influence to change the direction of international discourse, it has also then affirmed that there is not a fixed place where foreign policy stands since it has been part of the public's consumption and no longer exclusively the government's. The participation of ordinary citizens and globally active organizations in international politics has removed the time partition where the conduct of diplomacy is only required when there are crisis and war induced disruptions (Voigt, 2018). The dissemination of information through speed has allowed citizens on all parts of the world to unify against the same grass-root level problems they are facing. As those problems are engrained within the societal system and require recognition of diversity but also uniformity in the approach of addressing them, their active citizenry in international politics has forced the conduct of diplomacy to provide room for constituency. The creation of this room slowly ascertains the erosion of conventional diplomacy, and demands for public diplomacy (Hemery, 2005).

Thus, regardless of the challenge governments and ministries face to swim out of the oversaturated media information that precedes their official statements, it is actually important for them to maintain their degree of both prudence and promptness in reacting to both monumental international events and grass-root level problems. Amidst the dissolve of boundaries and roles between information providers and recipients, the diplomatic community can actually benefit from this circumstance by maintaining its meticulousness and integrity through well-thought-out response regardless the external sway (Livingston, 2002).

3. Conclusion

As explained in the discussion, it is to suggest that the influence of non-state actors in affecting the direction of international discourse has been amplified by the existence of globalization and serves as an example that diplomatically active actors are not exclusively those working in the foreign ministries and embassies. Through their active involvement in modern diplomacy, they also demand foreign ministries and embassies to correspond to any international development of an event in a speed that, although not in favor of the upheld trait for governments to be prudent in assessing facts and curating reactions, allows the public domain to both observe and participate in influencing certain degree of the policy line that responds to such event. Thus, showcasing how diplomacy must carefully be dealt in time-sensitive matter. The addition of new sphere, in this case digital commons, where diplomatic mission may achieve what it aims also produces a grey area where states must acknowledge both the presence of non-state actors, and how their presence reduces the possibility of diplomacy to only be exclusively executed somewhere private.

References

Allan, J. I. & Hadden, J., 2017. Exploring the framing power of NGOs in global climate politics. *Environmental Politics*, Issue 2017, pp. 1-22.

Grant, R., 2005. The Democratisation of Diplomacy: Negotiating with the Internet. *Discussion Papers in Diplomacy*, pp. 1-40.

Hemery, J., 2005. Training for Public Diplomacy: an Evolutionary Perspective. In: J. Melissen, ed. *The New Public Diplomacy - Soft Power in International Relations*. Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-246.

Koch, M., 2002. Wozu noch Diplomaten?. In: E. Brandt & C. Buck, eds. Auswärtiges Amt: Diplomatie als Beruf. Opladen: Leske und Budrich, pp. 350-59.

Lee, H. Y., 2018. The Diplomat. [Online] Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/aseans-limited-role-in-solving-the-rohingya-crisis/> [Accessed 12 09 2020].

Livingston, S., 2002. The New Media and Transparency: What are the Consequences for Diplomacy?. In: E. Potter, ed. Cyber-Diplomacy: Managing Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, pp. 110-27.

Potter, E., 2002. Cyber-diplomacy: Managing Foreign Policy in the Twenty First Century. Montreal : McGill-Queens University Press.

Solomon, R., 2000. The Internet and the Diffusion of Diplomacy. US Foreign Policy Agenda.

Stanzel, V., 2018. Introduction: Following the Wrong Track or Walking on Stepping Stones - Which Way for Diplomacy?. New Realities in Foreign Affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st Century - SWP Research Paper 11, November, pp. 7-11.

Voigt, K. D., 2018. Perpetual Change: Remarks on Diplomacy Today in the European Union. New Realities in Foreign Affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st Century - SWP Research Paper 11, November, pp. 39-41.