Digital Revolution and State Dilemma

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Cristopher Meyer raises a question that brings us right to the heart of the diplomacy puzzle. How does digital innovation transform diplomacy while at the same time its core functions remain intact?

To answer that however has led scholars and practitioners to a long-standing debate and continuous researches. Manor for example, sees digital technology as an opportunity that should be exploited by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in order to produce a better foreign policy. Meanwhile, Bjola argues that the impacts that come with technological disruption would make the functions of diplomacy redundant, therefore MFA tends to be resistance to such changes.

However, there is little disagreement on how digital age has changed our society today. The current diplomatic dialog between leaders of South Korea and North Korea for instance. Surely it tells us something about how a state who does not have diplomatic relations with one another could

Figure 1. South Korean government brought K-Pop stars to Pyongyang in marking the opening of diplomatic engagement between the two countries.

engage through assistance from non-state actors. The message that we can take is that states could no longer ignore the effect that Citizen diplomats have in influencing relations between states, nor reject the notion of engaging with them.

"Neumann is right after all! Hybrid diplomacy is already taken place. The collaboration of diplomats and citizens once again shows us how change and continuity as nature of diplomacy exist. "

Figure 2: Korean boyband BTS become first K-pop group to speak at UN General Assembly

Public diplomacy in the need of new strategy, since this new generation of tech-literate citizens (netizen) have ushered their presence into a domain that allows a direct and 'intimate' engagement with diplomatic officials. A US-based think tank CSIS introduces the term of modern public diplomacy that widely features the utilization of digital platform.

Despite of its contested definition, public diplomacy could play greater role in influencing perception of foreign citizens if only governments as Bjola suggested start realizing what digital technologies can and cannot do for diplomacy:

- ✓ **Limited capacity**

  Digital technologies do not make state's power increases. Instead, it provides a platform to help states channel the power that they already have. Therefore, states need a good foreign policy plan to begin with before starting digital diplomacy.

- ✓ **The importance of measurable goals, target audiences, and parameters for evaluation**

  By following the trend of 'going digital' is not enough for states to embrace the benefits of digital platforms. However, states should have a compass consist of goals, target audiences, and evaluation that will guide them in achieving their objectives.

- ✓ **Essential role of diplomats**

  This emphasizes Meyer's point about how diplomats are needed now than ever. The flaw of digital media is that it is run by machine that badly could disguise as troll and bot. Therefore, diplomats are the only agent with human values that fit for negotiation.

- ✓ **Cybersecurity**

  Another downfall of digital platforms is its vulnerability to data protection. States often feel threatened by the potency of hacking, fake news and propaganda. However, Bjola warns that these obstacles should not distract states

from realizing the greater positive impacts of the utilization of digital technologies.

"In conclusion, states should exploit the benefits of innovation technologies to enhance public diplomacy. However, they have to act carefully to not be overwhelmed by the trend of "going digital" since it might backfire due to lack of strategic planning and exaggeration over technological disruptions threatening diplomatic functions. "

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