

Chapter 2

Digital Public Diplomacy in Crisis Management: A Conceptual Review

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ABSTRACT

Internet technologies and digitalization have led to obvious changes in all areas of life. The main issues of international politics have started to transform around these concepts. Crisis management is one of them. In this study, it will be examined how crisis management actors keep up with new trends depending on the transformations in the crises and the expectations of the masses affected by the crisis due to international policy. In this context, the main claim of the study is that digital public diplomacy is included in the crisis management processes and this leads to differences in traditional methods. It has been tried to explain how the relationship between the motivations of the states and the expectations of the public, which are accepted as the basic characteristics of this process, is constructed. In this context, it is analyzed that social media has a transformative effect, and therefore, it is used in crisis management. In addition, the study will be completed with the determination that this transformation provides both advantages and disadvantages in crisis management.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The phenomenon of the age we live in is undoubtedly globalization, which has increased its impact with the development of internet technologies and digitalization in all areas of life. These new developments and transformations cause humanity to change its memorization in many areas from daily life routines to production relations, from scientific development to increased communication opportunities. In this context, international relations could not be exempt from this process. In particular, the unique positions of the states in foreign policy decision-making face a serious challenge, and public opinion increases

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its influence every day in this process. Such a challenge requires adding digitalization to the decision-making processes, and this innovation requires the “traditional” to give way to the “new”.

States are now responsible for taking into account the expectations of ordinary people and explaining their decisions to these people in their foreign policy decision-making processes, which they think are not in the public’s interest. Such a responsibility necessitates the digitalization of “public diplomacy”, which is a relatively new concept, in other words, keeping up with the requirements of the digital age. Public diplomacy is a tool that states use to communicate and mobilize these resources not only towards other states but also towards people. It is tried to draw attention to these potential resources by publishing various publications, engaging in cultural interaction, organizing exchange programs, and so on. “Digital” public diplomacy, in addition to these qualities of public diplomacy, has added the ability to produce policy and discourse instantly, especially with the inclusion of active use of social media networks and internet technologies. It should be noted that this transformation has both positive and negative aspects.

On the other hand, the digitalization of the age has not only necessitated a transformation in the relations of states with people, but also led to differences in the characteristics of international and national issues. Increasingly and at different levels, crises have begun to be observed in many regions of the world, and this period has even begun to be called the “age of crises”. Therefore, the necessity for states and especially decision-makers to create policies for all these crises has emerged. Moreover, the differences between the crises of the 21st century and the previous ones have turned this responsibility into a difficult task. Accordingly, contemporary crises stem from the structure of the global information age. This structure gives crises transboundary qualities. In addition, increasing communication opportunities create a global society and interdependent relations. This situation makes critical security gaps for states and causes extremist organizations motivated to take advantage of these gaps. All these elements present new tasks for states and especially decision-makers to consider in crisis management processes. On the one hand, while foreign policy actions are being changed, on the other hand, these changes should be conveyed to the interlocutors and the whole public correctly. For this, digital public diplomacy activities organized in an appropriate format must be performed.

Starting from the crisis management and digitalized public diplomacy, this study is designed to answer the following research questions: How did the changing expectations and needs as a result of digitalization change the public diplomacy activities of states in the context of crisis management? Does the use of digital public diplomacy in crisis management mean the same for all states today? Does the rapid transformation in diplomacy lead to a radical change in traditional diplomacy principles and practitioners?

There are various studies in the literature to find answers to these questions or similar ones. In a study edited by Surowiec and Manor (2021), the authors drew attention to the role of public diplomacy in coping with uncertainties by examining public diplomacy practices for crises, which they call uncertainty policy, through crisis and country examples. Bjola and Holmes (2015) focused on the transformative effect of digital diplomacy on international politics, which they call a transformation that must be experienced already. Pamment (2016) examined the digital transformation of British public diplomacy in practice with the claim that it is a soft power instrument. Budak (2022), with the suggestion that public diplomacy should be digitalized, claimed that institutions should develop, especially with the use of social media, their digital public diplomacy capacities. In the study, which was prepared under the editorship of Karatzogianni, Nguyen, and Serafinelli (2016), with the presupposition that the public sphere has become digital, the authors discussed the reflections of this on crises. Boin (2009) discussed the change in crisis management in the new period and the transformation this created in decision-making mechanisms. Cassidy (2018) examined social media, which is the main tool used by today’s diplomacy,

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