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E-DIPLOMACY AND CYBERSPACE, BOON OR BANE?

“As a product of globalization and as fruit of new public diplomacy, digital diplomacy is considered one of the major trends of the 21st century in diplomatic communication”.

ABSTRACT

Cyber Diplomacy is slowly advancing in the leaps and bounds worldwide in an attempt to define and to summarize the efforts constantly made to solve a new type of conflict, namely those taking place in cyberspace. The foremost role of cyber diplomacy would be to generate advantage through dialogue on cyber security issues. Issues such as Internet governance, enforcement of law against cyber-crime, response to malicious attacks arising in cyberspace, which are just a few of lots, are very important and requires a dedicated agenda and a concrete action. The last decade has seen emerging technologies impact national economic systems in cyberspace. Cyber

diplomacy is one of the emerging practices on an international basis which in future would attempt to create a cyber-international society which would further bridge the national interests of sovereignty with the world. Whereas, in this article the author aims to discuss the roles of diplomats and diplomacy in addressing cyber issues, and analyse the advantages and disadvantages of e-diplomacy in cyberspace.

KEYWORDS

Cyberspace, Diplomats, Diplomacy, National Interests, Technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Cyber Diplomacy is characterized by the great influence on the realization of diplomatic practices which provides an influential space for Information and Communication Technology, internet and social media platform, which the author personally think are the core element of the discussion. If I talk about the Cyber Diplomacy in India per se first of all there should be an Act say, Cyber Diplomacy Act, which is very important for India in the coming years. Now, if someday the Cyber Diplomacy Act is enacted the major goal of this Act should be the strategy relating to the Indian International policies which would be in regards to cyberspace, whereas the strategy should focus to address the norms, deterrence and related policy tools, and the applicability of existing International Laws to cyberspace. Next, the responsibility should be held with the Minister for cyber-security who would lead all Indian influences on issues relating to cyber-security strategies, standards and practices. Whereas, the role of high-ranking cyber diplomat would be to prioritize the efforts towards cyber-defence and response and also to work with foreign governments. The objective for the Indian Cyber Diplomacy

should be based on the identification of five key priorities which are promotion and protection of human rights in cyberspace, international security, internet governance, enhancing competitiveness and prosperity and lastly capacity-building and development¹.

E-D IPLOMACY AND CYBER DIPLOMACY: THE DEFINITION

Now, moving on to the two important terms which looks quite similar and at the same time confuses the reader. The concept of e-diplomacy or digital diplomacy is sometimes associated with cyber diplomacy. Due to the overlapping use of the words laid down only creates confusion between the two terms. Thus, to clear out the confusion between the two terms the interpretation of the two terms are as follows:

Digital Diplomacy relates to using of digital tools and various techniques to facilitate diplomatic objectives. To avoid confusions, it is very important to define digital diplomacy, “...it is more of a tool than an end in itself. This tool can be used by state and non-state actors. The development of a diplomatic strategy includes a range of tools and techniques that also includes digital ones enhancing analysis, influencing key policies or policymaking, as well as supporting consular diplomacy. There is always a challenge, namely to develop dedicated digital tools to implement diplomatic strategies since there is a different approach to this issue than the one used to promote commerce and trade² ”

Whereas, “...Cyber diplomacy is the use of diplomatic tools and diplomatic thinking to solve the problems from the cyberspace. The use of digital tools

¹ *The Benefits and Risks of Digital Diplomacy*, Published in SEEU Review Journal, Volume 13 Issue 1, Available at: <https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/seeur/13/1/article-p75.xml?language=en> [Last accessed on June 21, 2020].

² Available at: <http://www.themarketforideas.com/cyber-diplomacy-addressing-the-gap-in-strategic-cyber-policy-a388/> [Last accessed on June 21, 2020].

to promote broader diplomatic agendas and the use of diplomatic techniques and mentalities (or mental modes) to analyse and manage cyberspace problems are separate but linked activities. Cyberspace provides digital tools towards a more effective implementation of diplomatic strategies, generating at the same time a whole range of government-level measures and other issues that can benefit from the diplomat's techniques and mentality³ ”

OBJECTIVES OF CYBER DIPLOMACY

There are various objectives and goals that can be determined by the adoption of cyber diplomacy and based on several objectives, many more objectives are also derived which can give a clear understanding of the discussion. The objectives are as follows:

- Knowledge Management is very important factor as because harnessing departmental and whole of government knowledge would be a major step towards this new challenge.
- Addressing Public at Large, where maintaining contact with audiences at large is important because when people migrates to online perspective of something new tools of communication is very important which will enable the audience to operate those new tools without any hassle.
- After the public is addressed about the new tools and the various technologies, information management would be the next important goal which can help to aggregate the overwhelming flow of information which can also help to respond to emerging social and political movements.

³ Supra Note 1.

- Disaster Response: Now what happens is that when there is a new system or a policy which is implemented, it has to go through a lot of system failure and disaster is the initial stage of implementation, so to response to such disaster is very important as it is the test as to how the policy can be handled if misused, so being prepared with all the probable disasters will lead to the effective working of the system.
- Internet freedom would be an important aspect in regards to Constitution of India as when this Cyber Diplomacy Act if framed someday in India, the internet should be kept free from filters and contents should be kept open which would fulfil the fundamental right of promoting freedom of speech and democracy.
- The final objective would aim to create a perfect policy. Thus, policy planning should be effectively implemented which would allow effective oversight, co-ordination and planning of international policy across governments in response to the internationalisation of bureaucracy.

E-DIPLOMACY AND CYBERSPACE: Boon or Bane?

To derive the conclusion whether the idea would be a boon or bane, the author would rely on to the both aspects of the research and then interpret as to which aspect weighs more than the other.

So, considering the various benefits of Cyber Diplomacy, there are various advantages which are mentioned below:

- Effective mode of Communication: In this era, the Technology has been updated so much that it is extremely useful for gathering and processing information regarding diplomatic activities along with the speedy communication in emergency situations. Looking at the

international perspective of emergency situations, obstacles can arise at any time and when the international policies or agreements are considered which may be confidential in nature and it can easily be communicated as because in cyberspace communication between the sovereignty's are very important if the national security is in question. Thus, the use of digital tools can add to one sided positive impact towards the communication process in the cyberspace.

- **More Strength towards International Relations:** There are various corporates operating on an international basis having branches in different Nations. Now the data of the companies are very important and confidential at the same time. When it comes to protect the data of the companies from getting attacked, the role of digital diplomacy in cyberspace comes into play which helps in advancing foreign policy goals, expanding international alignment and affecting people who never set foot in any of the embassies of the world. Now the direct communication among the diplomats through various digital modes helps in maintaining legitimacy and developing international relations.
- **Relationship with Public:** There has been a conceptual shift in which digital and social media tools are seen as the effective mode of communication, which can create awareness among the public about the cyberspace and how an individual can save themselves from various offences. Keeping aside the international perspective of the cyber diplomacy, it is also important to create awareness among the public, where the government can also initiate the awareness programmes through social media platform.
- **Cost:** Due to regular advancement in technologies, the costs are regularly falling. So, with this a strict surveillant security software, huge investments can be attracted and less chance of hacking would

be there and the investments would be safe, which would be an added advantage to the economy of the country⁴.

After the advantages, let us consider some disadvantages that the cyber diplomacy has. The disadvantages are as follows:

- Freedom in social media and internet can lead to offences such as cyber terrorism. When there is a positive impact of technology, it does have a profound impact on negative sides as well. Terrorists and xenophobic groups also mobilize and employ supporters through the technology itself.
- When there is a lack of knowledge about the usage of internet and social media, it can result in terrible consequences. If we look into the amendments in the Information Technology Act, 2000 earlier the police superintendent holding a higher rank was given the role of investigation procedures but later in 2008 the police with lower rank was given the responsibility of investigation process. The problem here is that the police might not have the complete knowledge as to the operation of internet and other things which will not solve the case. Thus, when we talk about cyber diplomacy, the diplomats who would be given the responsibility should have the complete knowledge of different tools of technology and communication.
- Hacking: Growing pervasiveness of the digital world, alongside the fear of future attacks of sensitive institutions has turned many cyber optimists into cyber pessimists. The risk associated with hacking has been evolved since the evolution of the Internet, thus hacking and internet goes hand to hand. Hacking is one of the most severe

⁴ Supra Note 1.

problems which can happen at any time. So, with the increase in digitalization the risk of hacking also increases.

After, interpreting the advantages and disadvantages associated with Cyber Diplomacy, it is evident that there are more advantages than disadvantages. Whereas, the disadvantages that are laid down can be eradicated if the Law is framed in an appropriate manner. If there is benefit of something, couple of issues is very common, but that does not mean that policy should not be carried forward. There are solutions to each and everything. Thus, according to me E-Diplomacy and Cyberspace is a boon and it would lead to a lot of development in coming years. The only recommendation to this would be enactment of a Cyber Diplomacy Act by the government of India, which would have a positive impact if framed nicely and efficiently without any confusions.

CONCLUSION

If the government of India aims to make India the Digital India, Digital Diplomacy in cyberspace as a product of the soft power in the era of 21st century should of course be combined with extra-ordinary power where India can maximize the utilization of the advantages and empower protection policies, which can be done in the form of enacting a Law, which can eradicate the threat that are associated with Information Communication and Technology, internet and social media as there are no boundaries of escape from digitalization. The Indian position has generated a lot of debate within the country and also in the international community, where it is seen as a ploy to challenge the current mechanism, where the internet is managed by the US-based non-profit Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). ICANN has been managing the critical resources of the internet

efficiently with a governing council of government representatives. Some Western critics have gone to the extent of likening the Indian cyber position to that of countries like China, which interfere with internet freedom. Also, there are concerns that such a position actually doesn't comprehensively address the growth and stability of the internet and rather bureaucratizes the control of internet.

