The Ties that Bind: Front Line Diplomats and Digital Diaspora Diplomacy

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**Introduction**

Recent years have seen the mass migration of MFAs (ministries of foreign affairs) to SNS (social networking sites) in a practice generally referred to as digital diplomacy (Bjola & Holmes, 2015; Hocking & Melissen, 2015; Kampf, Manor & Segev, 2015). Additionally, diplomats and diplomatic institutions now routinely utilize digital technologies in the conduct of diplomacy be it in the use of messaging apps to coordinate consular assistance following terror attacks or the employment of email for intra-organizational communication (Manor, 2016; Riordan, 2016).

A review of the digital diplomacy research corpus suggests that digitalization has had a profound, albeit contradictory, impact on diplomacy. On the one hand, SNS such as Twitter and Facebook enable the formation of trans-national advocacy networks consisting of NGOs, civil society organizations and connected publics (Slaughter, 2009; Clarke, 2015; Firestone & Dong, 2015). At times, such networks may be utilized by MFAs for the promotion of policy objectives. Such was the case with British FCO's (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) global advocacy campaign to #EndSexualViolence in conflicts which was based on a conglomerate of NGOs and activist networks (Pamment, 2015). At other times, advocacy networks may exert external influence on diplomatic actors as was the case with an international ban on the use of landmines initiated by a network of 1,000 NGOs in 60 countries (Sotiriu, 2015).

However, SNS have also seen the formation of a volatile online public that is asserting itself in unpredictable ways (Haynal, 2011). The fear of online backlash and vocal criticism from SNS users has caused MFAs to treat social media was caution
and suspicion given fear of losing control over the communication process (Hayden 2012; Causey & Howard, 2013; Manor, 2016).

Similarly, social media enable diplomats to engage in two way conversations with foreign populations thus creating a receptive climate for their nation's foreign policy and practicing the New Public Diplomacy (Melissen, 2005; Hayden, 2012; Bjola & Jinag, 2015; Hocking & Melissen, 2015). But such ongoing conversation, held across multiple social media platforms, necessitate substantial resources as MFAs must author attractive content that is tailored to both platform and target audiences in terms of language, values and scope of relations between two nations (Metzgar 2012; Seo, 2013; Manor & Segev, 2015). For front-line diplomats, the newfound ability to converse with connected publics is also accompanied by the need to acquire a new set of skills alongside frequent criticism and verbal abuse (Cassidy & Manor, 2016; Manor, 2016).

Digitalization has also increased the MFA's ability to act as a service provider offering an array of consular services through cellular applications, web based platforms and e-government services (Hocking & Melissen, 2015). But such services have yet to counter the erosion in the MFA's status within governments following whole-of-government approaches to diplomacy (Golberg & Kaduk, 2011).

While digital diplomacy studies have focused on MFAs' use of SNS to engage in two-way conversation with their followers (Ociepka, 2012; Kampf, Manor & Segev, 2015), the delivery of consular aid through social media (Hocking & Melissen, 2015), employing digital tools for establishing networks of diplomacy (Hayden 2012; Seo, 2013), countering online narratives of terror organizations and the establishment of virtual embassies (Hallams, 2010; Khatib, Dutton & Thelwall, 2012; Metzgar, 2012; Pamment 2013), few have explored the impact digitalization has had on Diaspora diplomacy (Attias, 2012; Rana, 2013; Clarke, 2015; Zaharna & student).

The lack of scholarly attention to digital Diasporas is puzzling given their increased importance to international relations in the age of networked models of Diplomacy (Rana, 2013; Murti & Zaharna, 2014). According to Rana (2013), a migrant community becomes a Diaspora if it retains a connection to, and a memory of, its country of origin. As such, members of Diasporas may be conceptualized as nodes in trans-national networks. Nations can utilize such networks to increase trade, lobby
foreign governments for aid, narrate their policy among foreign populations and promote their national brand. Moreover, Diasporas may aid their countries of origin by taking part in advocacy campaign and promoting cultural events.

Rana (2013) defines Diaspora diplomacy as "engaging a country's overseas community to contribute to building relationship with foreign countries"(Rana, 2013, P.70). In an attempt to foster closer ties with their Diasporas, MFAs from India, Mexico and Israel have utilized both SNS and internet websites (Rana, 2013; Attias, 2012). Such activities may be regarded as digital Diaspora Diplomacy. Conceptually I view digital Diaspora diplomacy as a research filed occupied with understanding the impact digitalization has had on Diasporas and, subsequently, on Diaspora diplomacy. From a practitioners view, I regard digital Diaspora diplomacy as the employment of digital tools and SNS to engage with a country's overseas communities to contribute to building relationships with foreign countries.

This article explores the impact digital tools have had on Diasporic communities and front-line diplomats seeking to engage with, and service, these communities. It is through such an exploration that the contradictory nature of digital diplomacy is further demonstrated. In light of these contradictions, the article also offers a series of best practices for front-line diplomats seeking to practice digital Diaspora diplomacy. Finally the article identifies avenues of further research on digital Diasporas.

Notably, the article uses the term Diasporas in reference to individuals who have migrated from one country to another by choice. The article therefore does not deal with refugees, asylum seekers or illegal migrants.

The Digitalization of Diasporas

Weaker Diasporas vs. Larger Diasporas

Traditionally, the decision to migrate has been regarded as one of the most difficult decisions an individual can take. This is due to the fact that migration is accompanied with a separation of all spheres of social life including one's family, friends, community and nation (Mohan, 2002; Ullah, 2013). Likewise, migration is often associated with a decline in social status alongside the need to acquire new languages and conform to new norms and values (Lukaszewicz, 2016). Thus, studies have
repeatedly found that migration is associated with psychological and financial difficulties.

But studies have also demonstrated that diasporic communities can help a migrant overcome such difficulties as they constitute support networks that enable one to maintain his sense of national identity (Ding, 2007). Moreover, Diasporic communities can serve as boundary spanners that facilitate a migrant's inclusion into his new society with regard to language, values and norms. Lastly, diasporic communities can elevate financial difficulties as they aid in finding employment opportunities (Henry & Mohan, 2003).

Yet the global proliferation of digital technologies is changing the nature of migration. Digitalization enables migrants to maintain close ties with the spheres of social life they have left behind (Hiller & Franz, 2014). 21st century migrants can use Skype in order to communicate with family members on a daily basis. Such communication is both relatively affordable and emotionally engaging given its real time, face to face, nature. Additionally, migrants now use free messaging applications such as WhatsApp to maintain ties with friends while SNS such as Facebook are utilized for continuous involvement in one's former community and country.

Notably, Skype, messaging apps and SNS are now all accessible from one's smartphone transforming the cellular telephone into a migrant's most prized possession. But most importantly, the ability to maintain close ties with one's family, friends and country of origin suggests that migration is now somewhat easier than it once was as digital tools have mitigated the most profound psychological difficulty associated with migration.

The changing nature of migration may bring about two, contradictory, trends in Diaspora diplomacy. First, by maintaining ties with friends, families and communities, migrants may become less reliant on the local Diaspora. This may weaken the social cohesion of Diasporic communities and, subsequently, diminish their role in bi-lateral diplomacy. For the front-line diplomat, Diasporas often serve as close knit networks which can be utilized to influence government policy and shape public opinion. Such utilization is most evident in Israel's case as global Jewish Diasporas are called upon to lobby on behalf of Israel's interests (Naim, 2002; Rana,
Yet the weaker the ties between members of the Diaspora, the less influence they may exert on policy makers and the general public.

The second, and contradictory trend, relates to the size of Diasporas. If migration is indeed somewhat easier, then the size of diasporic communities may continue to grow in coming years. The globalization of marketplaces coupled with the formation of new political entities that allow free movement (i.e., European Union), political unrest and financial stagnation have brought about unprecedented levels of migration resulting in steady growth of Diasporic communities (Murti & Zaharna, 2014; International Organization of Migration, 2015). From the perspective of a front-line diplomat, additional growth of diasporic communities may actually prove beneficial as the larger a Diaspora, the more votes it has and the more influence it can exert on foreign governments and policy makers (Shain & Barth, 2003).

Balancing out the aforementioned contradictory trend may be achieved, among other, through the utilization of digital tools and SNS to build a vibrant, close knit, online Diasporic community.

Migration of Power to the Embassy vs. Growing Strain on the Embassy

The expected growth of Diasporic communities may facilitate the migration of power from the MFA to the Embassy, a process that has already begun to take place.

Initially, some scholars suggested that digitalization would weaken the Embassy and even render it useless given the ability of world leaders and policy makers to directly communicate with one another (Ociepka, 2012). Indeed since the late 20th century world capitals have been connected through BlackBerrys rather than front-line diplomats. However, while the Embassy's representational capacity has been diminished in the digital age, its communicative capacity has been enhanced. Digital tools and social media enable Embassies and diplomats to converse directly with foreign populations and foreign opinion makers thus managing their nation's image, promoting its policy and advancing awareness of its culture and values. As such, nation branding and public diplomacy activities are now devised at the MFA level but practiced at the Embassy level. Moreover, the adoption of two-way models of communication by MFAs means that Embassies are tasked with listening to foreign
audiences as a means of gauging public opinion, anticipating political crises and informing policy makers.

This migration of power may be further facilitated by the additional growth of Diasporic communities as Embassies will be tasked with maintaining ties with Diasporas, recruiting them to lobby on behalf of national interests and utilizing them for the promotion of national brands and bi-later trade.

However, the growth of Diasporic communities may also prove a burden on Embassies who will be required to service an ever growing number of migrants. Be it in providing consular aid (e.g., registration of birth, passport renewals), enabling expats to vote in national elections or providing security for community events, Embassies may soon find themselves overwhelmed and understaffed given the budgetary limitations in which most MFAs operate. Notably, an Embassy's failure to meet the needs of Diaspora may lessen its faith in the Embassy resulting in a rift between front-line diplomats and members of the Diasporic community.

**Diaspora Support Networks vs. Diaspora Self-Organization**

While digitalization enables Diaspora to communicate online with Embassies and diplomats, it also enables Diasporas to self-organize. Such is the case with SNS profiles that are used by Diasporic communities to organize social and cultural events independently of the Embassy. Similarly, Diaspora members frequently create web-forums in which migrants may share experiences, debate political issues, offer advice to new members of the community and find employment opportunities. For instance both the Nigerian and Irish Diasporas in London have created a network of websites, social media profiles and web forums that are not associated with their respective Embassies (see image below).
Diaspora managed web-forums and SNS profiles may have both positive and negative impacts on front-line diplomats. On the one hand, such forums help maintain a Diasporic community's cohesiveness transforming it from an offline support network to an online one. On the other hand, given that such platforms are independent of the Embassy, front-line diplomats may soon find themselves disconnected or even ostracized from the Diasporic community as they are not invited to partake in community events. It may therefore fall on front-line diplomats to reach out to Diasporas by becoming active members in Diasporic online platforms.

**Virtual Communities vs. Fragmented Communities**

As the previous section suggests, Diasporic communities are now virtual communities brought together through the internet and social media. This transition may be more substantial than it first appears.

Prior to digitalization, one could have regraded Diasporic communities as imagined ones (Anderson, 1991; Henry & Mohan, 2003). This was due to the fact that no one migrant personally interacted with all other members of the Diaspora nor did he ever come in contact with all other members of the Diaspora. However, all members of the Diaspora shared a language, cultural heritage, collective memory and sense of national identity thus constituting an imagined community. The transition from an imagined community to a virtual one suggests that the ties that bind this entire community are stronger than they once were. Using ICTs and SNS, large numbers of
migrants can interact with one another, share experiences and develop a sense of community and belonging. In addition, virtual communities can more easily mobilize their members and exert influence on political processes both in their country of origin and in their adopted country (Smith, 1993).

However, virtual communities are also fragmented ones. Some migrants may be active on web-forums; other may prefer Twitter while still others may find their online home on Facebook. As Hayden (2012) observes, digital diplomacy is characterized by a fragmentation of audiences to networks of selective exposure. Such a state of affairs impairs an MFA’s ability to frame government action as it must be active on multiple platforms and SNS.

The same is true in Diaspora diplomacy. The fragmentation of migrants to networks of selective exposure necessitates that front-line diplomats be active on multiple digital platforms and that they use each platform to engage meaningfully with members of the Diaspora. Meaningful engagement may be understood as an endeavor to meet the needs and desires of online publics through two-way interactions, responding to online comments, answering questions, listening to criticism and integrating such criticism into the policy formulation process. However, the question that soon arises is how can diplomats be active on numerous SNS when faced with limited time and resources?

**Remittances vs. Political Opposition**

For some countries, the importance of Diaspora lies in their financial support rather than their political influence (Desipio, 2000; Shain & Sherman, 2001). African countries, for instance, now rely on personal remittances from migrants to strengthen their economies. In Ethiopia, personal remittances account for 1.2% of the national GDP, while in Kenya they account for 2.4% of the GDP (World Bank, 2015). Such remittances not only stimulate the economy but also enable social mobility of migrants' family members and lessen their reliance on government services.

As part of the digitalization of Diasporas, some countries have made it easier for migrants to send remittances to their country of origin. In Kenya, businesses throughout the country now accept payment in the form of money transfers through cellular phone applications (Kenya MFA, 2016). The same applications can also be
used for international money transfers and thus serve as digital platforms for remittances.

But digital tools also enable Diasporas to voice their opposition to government policy, be it in the realm of finance, security or housing. Through social media and messaging applications, Diasporic communities can openly criticize their former governments and, most importantly, make such criticism heard in their countries of origin. In addition, migrants can use digital tools to counter the narratives of their former governments and call for political change. Diasporas can thus have both a stabilizing and de-stabilizing influence on their country of origin (Weiner & Teitelbaum, 2001; Shain and Wittes 2003).

During the 2011 Social Justice Protests in Israel, connected Israeli migrants openly attacked the Israeli government's financial policies. Israeli expats shared images of their wages on social media thereby attesting to the high cost of living in Israel. These comparisons soon found their way into the mainstream media and shaped the public discourse surrounding Israel's national priorities. Similarly, during the 2011 protests in Egypt, and the Iranian Green Revolution, the online discourse was often managed and shaped by expats living outside these countries (Seib, 2012). As Diaspora criticism of government policy may increase dissatisfaction with governments, some Embassies take extra caution when communicating online with Diasporic communities.

**A Note to Practitioners: Best Practices for Front-Line Diplomats**

*From Targeting to Tailoring*

Unlike the fields of public health and advertising, diplomacy has yet to transition from targeted communication approaches to tailored ones. Targeted communication includes the formulation of content and messages that are relevant to large and diverse audiences (e.g., don't drink and drive). Tailored communication consists of messages that are customized to the unique characteristics of a specific audience. These characteristics may include age, language, culture, values and norms, beliefs and existing knowledge. Tailored communication campaigns are more relevant to members of the target audience and thus have greater influence on the audience's
beliefs and actions (Enwald & Huotari, 2010; Kreuter, Strecher & Glassman, 1999; Noar, Benac & Harris, 2007).

For front-line diplomats tailoring requires matching content to platform and audience (e.g., use of videos on YouTube as opposed to GIFs on Twitter). It also requires an understanding of the audience's traits, needs and desires. Although it necessitates greater resources, tailoring of social media content can increase the willingness of Diasporic communities to interact with the Embassy, partake in its online activities and share Embassy content online. Additionally, tailored communication helps ensure that Diasporas view the Embassy as an important source of valuable and relevant information.

Matching content with platforms may be achieved by analyzing the activities of brands and NGOs who attract large numbers of followers to their SNS accounts. In addition, front-line diplomats may review the online activities of other MFAs and Embassies. As the head of the Polish digital diplomacy unit told the author in an interview, other Embassies can serve as a source of information and inspiration (Manor, 2016). Lastly, follower feedback may also attest to content and platform matching. Embassies can analyze their own accounts in order to understand what sort of content (e.g., video, GIF, humor) attracts the most engagement from followers (i.e., likes, shares, re-tweets).

With regard to identifying Diasporas' needs and desires, Embassies can use online surveys. For instance, the @UKAgaintDeash Twitter channel, which is managed by the UK Foreign Office, regularly uses survey questions on Twitter to understand the interest and existing knowledge of its followers (see Tweet below). Front-line diplomats may use open-ended question, Google questionnaires or Twitter surveys to query their audience and ensure that their online content is tailored to the Diasporas' needs, interests, values and existing knowledge.
Reaching Out to Diasporic Communities

Given that Diasporas have migrated online, and are self-organizing, front-line diplomats will need to reach out to their Diasporas and become active members of these online communities. Participation in online communities rests on information sharing and providing added value (Metzl, 2001). Diplomats may offer value through writing blog posts for web-forums on issues that are of interest to the Diaspora including political processes in their country of origin, development projects, national achievements, cultural events and trade opportunities. Moreover, front-line diplomats may participate in Q&A sessions which are organized by Diasporas and hosted on Diaspora web-forums or social media accounts. During such sessions, diplomats can best address the issues that are of greatest concern to community members.

According to Rana (2013), Diasporas are characterized by a continued interested in events taking place in their country of origin. Given that front-line diplomats are expert analysts, who are trained in narrating government action and interpreting regional events, they may best contribute to Diasporic communities through analysis and insight.

Notably, before joining web-based forums and social media groups, front-line diplomats must ask permission to do so from community administrators and clearly identify themselves as diplomats. Failure to do so may raise concerns among members of the community that their former government is monitoring Diaspora forums. Should a diplomat fail to disclose his identity, and be discovered, a crisis of
confidence and credibility may occur preventing the Embassy from practicing Diaspora diplomacy.

**Virtual & Fragmented Communities**

Digitalization has transformed Diasporas into virtual communities that are characterized by networks of selective exposure. This reality necessitates that front-line diplomats be active on multiple websites, web-forums and SNS. However, in light of an Embassy's limited resources, front-line diplomats may choose to focus their activity on websites and SNS that attract the largest number of followers. Another approach would be to target specific audiences within the Diasporic community such as children of migrants who may be regarded as second generation Diasporas.

Second generation Diasporas may prove an especially valuable target audience for diplomats as they are members of a myriad of networks including other migrants (e.g., family members), other second generation Diasporas and members of the domestic population (i.e., school friends). Second generation Diasporas may therefore be regarded as boundary spanners that enable front-line diplomats to extend the reach of their online content. Even more importantly, second generation Diasporas may facilitate public diplomacy activities. SNS users are more likely to take note of, and evaluate, content that is shared by their "friends". Thus, when sharing an Embassy's social media content, second generation Diasporas may help shape how the domestic population views a foreign country and its policies.

Second generation Diasporas are also less likely to identify with their parent's country of origin. As such, they may be reluctant to lobby on its behalf or promote its financial interests. Front-line diplomats can employ social media and digital tools to strengthen ties with second generation Diasporas. One MFA that has sought to do just that is the Indian MEA (Ministry of External Affairs). The MEA manages the "Know India Program" through which children of migrants can tour India while learning about India's history, culture, art and values. Participants, who are recruited through Embassy websites, can also "share" their visits on social media thus reaching their friends in foreign countries and shaping their view of India. Moreover, the MEA operates the "Know India" website which is a web-based platform that includes a variety of activities and games that parents can download for their children.
The Rules of Engagement

For front-line diplomats, one of the main challenges of digital diplomacy is the need to adopt two-way communication models that are centered on engagement and listening (Metzgar, 2012; Kampf, Manor & Segev, 2015). However, when engaging with online publics front-line diplomats often encounter harsh criticism and verbal abuse. In addition, certain publics attempt to "hijack" conversations between diplomats and connected publics for political purposes. Even more problematic is the fact that when reporting on digital diplomacy events, media outlets tend to focus on the negative rather than the positive.

In 2014 Israel's Ambassador to the US held an online Q&A focusing on Israel's military operation in the Gaza strip. Twitter users were invited to send any questions they had to the Ambassador using a specific hashtag. What followed was a mélange of questions, online criticism and verbal abuse with SNS users Tweeting graphic images portraying Israeli leaders and soldiers as war criminals (see below).
When reporting on the Q&A, Russia Today and Business Insider dubbed it a complete failure and utter disaster focusing on the abuse hurled at the Ambassador rather than the answers he provided to global SNS users, his ability to narrate his government's policies and the solution he outlined to the escalating crisis in the Gaza strip. Indeed through the Q&A, the Ambassador was able to articulate Israel's military goals, narrate its policy with regard to the future of the Gaza strip, comment on the prospect of peace in the region and frame Israel's preferred resolution to the military conflict.

While online engagement with Diasporic communities may be less turbulent than the Israeli Ambassador's experience, front-line diplomats may still encounter hostility and criticism. Maximizing the value of online engagement may be achieved through focusing on answering questions rather than responding to negative expressions of opinion (Cassidy & Manor, 2016). Studies have shown that when asking questions online, social media users effectively open channels of dialogue and persuasion. Moreover, social media users who ask questions online are likely to evaluate the answers they receive (Taylor & Kent, 2001; Efron & Winget, 2010; Morris, Teevan, Panovich, 2010; Theunissen & Noordin 2012). Therefore, online questions should be regarded by front-line diplomats as opportunities for meaningful engagement and influence as opposed to statements of opinion which are one sided and may lead to online clashes (Cassidy & Manor, 2016).

**Adopting Digital Tools**

The Digitalization of Diasporas requires that front-line diplomats adopt an array of digital tools. One important digital resource is network analysis that can be employed by Embassies to identify online influencers (i.e., individuals who take part in shaping online discourse). Once the Embassy has identified Diaspora influencers it may reach out to them thus increasing the Embassy's ability to communicate with, and mobilize, the Diaspora both online and offline.

One Embassy that has taken to identifying and connecting with online influencers is Russia's Embassy to the UK. Each year, the Embassy identifies online influencers across a wide array of platforms and subjects. These are then invited by the Ambassador to a Digital BBQ which helps initiate a relationship between influencers and the Embassy.
In addition, front-line diplomats may adopt messaging applications such as WhatsApp. These may serve as additional tools for network building. For instance, the Press Attaché at an Embassy may open a WhatsApp group that includes journalists from Diaspora papers and Diaspora websites. This group can be used to quickly and effectively disseminate information online regarding political or economic events in the country of origin. Similarly, the Cultural Attaché can manage a group consisting of dedicated Diaspora activists who can help organize, or promote, Embassy cultural events.

However, the adoption of digital tools by Embassy staff requires the development of new skills and competencies. While some MFAs now offer digital training, such training programs focus mainly on communicating with foreign populations and journalists rather than Diasporas. Moreover, such training does not offer the skills necessary practicing digital Diaspora diplomacy. Embassies may therefore need to lobby MFAs to provide diplomats with skill that are pertinent to digital Diaspora diplomacy including online community building, network building, writing attractive social media content (e.g., blog posts), using messaging apps for network management and incorporating connected Diasporas in social media advocacy campaigns.

**Conclusion**

Despite growing interest in digital diplomacy, few studies have investigated the impact of digitalization on Diasporas and diplomats tasked with marinating ties with Diasporic communities. This article attempted to address this substantial gap. The article's main assertion is that digitalization has had a substantial, yet contradictory, impact on diplomacy in general and Diaspora diplomacy in particular. Such contradictions complicate the practice of Diaspora diplomacy as front-line diplomats and Embassies need to counter-balance conflicting trends. Given this assertion, the article also includes a series of best practices that may aid diplomats engaging with Diasporic communities.

Importantly, digital diplomacy must never be evaluated as an island onto itself. Rather, it is the interplay between the online and offline spheres of diplomacy that offers the best insight. This is perhaps most evident in the field of Diaspora diplomacy as Diasporic communities exist, act and exert influence online and offline. Thus,
scholars and practitioners of digital diplomacy may use the field of Diaspora diplomacy to better understand the interplay between actions taken online and results felt offline.

This article began with the claim that migration in the 21st century is somewhat easier than it was in the past. This claim will of course be contested by many scholars and students. However, it should be remembered that this article relates to individuals who have migrated by choice from their country to another in hopes of bettering their lives financially, emotionally or politically. Thus this claim does not extend to Syrian refugees fleeing Assad's brutality or individuals fleeing persecution and seeking asylum.

Secondly, this article argues that increased migration patterns may strengthen the Embassy and expedite the migration of power from the MFA to the Embassy. This process, which has already began, cannot be realized by diplomats who lack digital skills. Nor can an Embassy service large numbers of migrants without digitalizing Embassy services such as visa applications, passport renewals and birth registrations. While digital training and digitalization of Embassy services is the privy of the MFA, Embassies may voice the need for such structural changes.

Third, this article posits that Diasporas are now virtual communities rather than imagined ones (Anderson, 1991). This transition may bring with it benefits to both diplomats and Diasporas as virtual communities can better aid their members, organize events and mobilize. For diplomats participation in these communities will be the key to practicing Diaspora diplomacy. Such access will depend on diplomats' ability to provide an added value to the community. Here it is important to remember that diplomats are expert analysts. In 2016, it may be argued that the legacy of the WikiLeaks scandal was not its damage to US relations but rather its demonstration of the insight diplomats can offer with regard to events in various countries and regions. Such insight is the added value diplomats can offer to virtual Diasporic communities.

Lastly, this article has proposed that like most digital diplomacy audiences, Diasporas too are fragmented across multiple websites and SNS. Given their limited resources, digital diplomats will need to make a value maximizing decision with regard to which SNS should be used by their Embassy. Yet it is important to remember that digitalization refers to a plethora of digital technologies and ICTs. WhatsApp may be
used to complement social media activity and maintain networks of activists. Network analysis can be employed to identify online influencers through which vas audiences can be reached and sentiment analysis can be used to understand the Diaspora's stance on issues and events in their country of origin.

The digital toolkit is varied and should be utilized in a complimentary manner.

From the perspective of diplomacy scholars, the field of digital Diaspora diplomacy remains uncharted territory. Future studies are necessary in order to better understand the impact digital tools have had on the migrants' experience. This is the basis through which one can better understand future changes to Diaspora diplomacy.

Moreover, as Diasporas are networks of influence, scholars may use Diaspora case studies to more fully conceptualize networked diplomacy. Diasporas are also vocal proponents or opponents of their country of origin. Their influence on national images may thus also be worthy of exploration.

Finally, as Diasporas are communities, they may play a role in consular aid. For instance, following the 2016 attacks in Paris, Russian Diaspora organizations were mobilized by the Embassy to house Russian tourists who were stranded in the French capital. Future studies should evaluate the extent to which MFAs and Embassies now rely on Diasporas in their crisis communication models.

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