Analyzing the Location of the Romanian Foreign Ministry in the Social Network of Foreign Ministries

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9/07/2014
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**Introduction:** Over the past years, foreign ministries throughout the world have flocked to Social Networking Sites (e.g., Facebook, twitter) in order to realize the potential of digital diplomacy. While a majority of foreign ministries now practice digital diplomacy at both the ministry and embassy level, each ministry defines this form of diplomacy in a different manner. Moreover, despite the fact that digital diplomacy has attracted much scholarly work in the past few years, scholars have yet to agree upon a definition of digital diplomacy.

Referred to by some as 21st century statecraft, E-diplomacy, Diplomacy 2.0 or digital diplomacy, most scholars and practitioners seem to agree that the potential of diplomacy practiced through Social Networking Sites lies in the ability to interact and engage with foreign publics. While traditional public diplomacy aimed to create a positive climate amongst a foreign population in order to promote a country’s foreign policy, it was based primarily on one way communication between diplomats and foreign populations (e.g., Op Ed article, television interview). Digital diplomacy, on the other hand, enables two way communication between diplomats, MFAs and embassies and foreign populations. Such two way communication represents the transition from monologue (traditional public diplomacy) to dialogue (digital diplomacy practiced through Social Networking Sites).

Continues dialogue between embassies and foreign publics facilitates the creation of long lasting relationships which may, in turn, lead to the acceptance of a country’s foreign policy amongst a foreign population. Scholars maintain that successful digital diplomacy necessitates both engagement with online followers and listening to such followers in order to identify their areas of interest, criticism and the issues shaping the local discourse (e.g., human rights, immigration, peace process).

It is important to note that digital diplomacy is not necessarily a new form of diplomacy but rather a new tool with which to accomplish the goals of traditional diplomacy. Therefore, we find that the most suitable definition of digital diplomacy is “the growing use of social media platforms by a country in order to achieve its foreign policy goals and practice public diplomacy”.
**When Foreign Ministries Follow One Another:** Nowadays, foreign ministries throughout the world routinely follow one another’s digital diplomacy channels (e.g., official twitter channel, official Facebook page). This enables foreign ministries to interact with their peers, gather relevant information on world affairs as they unfold and take part in international multi-lateral diplomatic negotiations.

Given the fact that MFAs (Ministries of Foreign Affairs) follow one another, it is possible to imagine all links between MFAs as a social network. Once this approach is taken, one may analyze the social network of the world’s MFAs.

Our analysis, presented below, includes a sample of the twitter accounts of 75 MFAs spanning the globe (For a detailed list of all countries included see Appendix 1). In order to analyze the social network of the world’s MFAs we calculated three different parameters: in-degree, out-degree and betweenness.

*Image 1: The Social Network of the World’s MFAs*
As can be seen in the image below, Romania (circled in red) is at the very heart of this social network.

Image 2: Romania’s MFA Location in the Social Network
**The In-Degree Parameter:** The in-degree parameter essentially measures an MFAs popularity within the network. For instance, the US State Department has the highest in-degree score as it is followed by 44 of the 75 MFAs in the sample. The MFAs with the highest in degree score (circled in red in the image below) are: USA, UK, Poland, Russia, Israel, Sweden, France, India, Turkey and Norway. Romani’s MFA comes in at 16th place meaning that it surpasses 59 other MFAs. This is a relatively high score.

*Image 3: In-degree parameter*
The Out-Degree Parameter: The out-degree parameter, which indicates the amount of ministries with whom each ministry has contact, is of paramount importance in this network as the higher a ministry’s out-degree score, the greater its ability to disseminate information throughout the network. The country with the highest out-degree is Iceland followed by Sweden, Israel, Norway, Russia, Kosovo, Peru, Brazil and Bulgaria (circled in red in the image below). Romania's MFA comes in at 13th place, a very high score in this parameter. This indicates that the MFA is strategically located in the social network of world MFAs and is able to disseminate foreign policy messages throughout the entire network.

Image 4: Out-degree parameter
The Betweenness Parameter: Calculating the betweenness parameter reveals which ministries serve as important hubs of information as they link together ministries that do not follow one another. For instance, Israel is followed by India and Pakistan yet India and Pakistan do not follow one another. Thus, Israel links them together and is an important hub of information. The countries with the highest betweenness score (circled in the image below) are: Sweden, USA, UK, Israel, Russia, Poland, Norway, Brazil, Romania (which comes in at 9th place) and Iceland.

![Image 5: Betweenness parameter](image)
**Summary:** Romania's MFA seems to be located at the very heart of the social network of the world's MFAs. It scores relatively high on the in-degree and out-degree parameter and extremely high in the betweenness parameter. Thus, the MFA has a large following, is connected to many other MFAs and serves as an important hub of information. However, it should be remembered that these results only illustrate the potential Romania's digital diplomacy. In order to reach this potential, the Romanian MFA must continuously publish content on digital diplomacy channels and actively engage with its followers, be they individuals, reporters or other MFAs.
Appendix 1: MFAs included in the sample

Afghanistan  
Albania  
Argentina  
Armenia  
Australia  
Austria  
Azerbaijan  
Bahrain  
Belarus  
Belgium  
Brazil  
Bulgaria  
Canada  
Chile (Government)  
Colombia  
Croatia  
Cuba  
Dominican Republic  
Ecuador  
Egypt  
Estonia  
Ethiopia  
Finland  
France  
Georgia  
Germany  
Greece  
Hungary  
Iceland  
India  
Indonesia  
Iran (account of President)  
Iraq  
Ireland  
Israel  
Italy  
Japan  
Jordan  
Kazakhstan  
Kenya  
Kosovo  
Kuwait  
Latvia  
Mexico  
Moldova
Monaco
Mongolia
Montenegro
Netherlands
Norway
Pakistan
Peru
Poland
Portugal
Qatar
Romania
Russia
Rwanda
Serbia
Singapore
Slovakia
Slovenia
Somalia
South Africa (Office of President)
South Korea
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Thailand
Trinidad and Tobago
Turkey
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom
USA
Venezuela