La diplomacia española ante el reto digital

Spanish Diplomacy and the Digital Challenge (Summary)

This book is a compendium of the learning of the first Spanish diplomats to embrace the digital world and provides reflections on the challenges of the diplomatic career. Digital society, the demand by citizens for transparency and good governance, the professionalisation of public diplomacy and the boom in multilateral diplomacy have all led to a change in the practice and forms of consular diplomatic activity.

Prologue

José Manuel García-Margallo
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION

Since I came to office I have acted with the conviction that Spanish public diplomacy had to be strengthened. The set of perceptions that identify us to both ourselves and to others have a force – which is a source of power – that we are learning to recognise, to manage and even to quantify. But the impacts of this new digital era in activity abroad go beyond reflections about our "soft power". They are also related to our capacity to adapt quickly to the future, to modernise our methods and mentalities, to make ourselves more flexible so that we can continue to be relevant drivers of foreign activity that is increasingly democratised, sensitive to events and transversal in nature. Only international negotiations and management of global responses can address the new challenges: where everything is in the present, where borders are blurred thanks to the immediacy and interconnection between individuals, there is no doubt that diplomacy also has to be rethought. We are only at the beginning of this reflection and in barely two years digital diplomacy has already created a role for itself.

It has for me been an ever-present point of reference that our representatives abroad should have greater presence in communication, more proximity and interaction. First, we have to administer our citizens' trust in their government and assume growing social participation; and then there is no one better than our diplomatic representatives to address the publics of third countries, with both of these new technologies being fundamental for both aspects.

Starting in 2015, we started to work faster on the project of transferring what we are in the real world to the virtual world. As a policy of the Ministry, digital diplomacy must transcend ideological or personal considerations, and also those of the short-term agenda, to become a cutting edge for the improvement and modernisation of the public administration. This digital diplomacy has been managed through the support provided by civil servants themselves, who have seen in it a source of increased openness and proximity.

Thank you 1,800 times

Ignacio Ybáñez,
STATE SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Shortly after taking office as State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the Diplomatic Information Office (Oficina de Información Diplomática) proposed I should open a Twitter account as part of the modernisation process of the Ministry's communication strategy, one of whose main elements was to increase our presence in the social media. Despite initially feeling lost as I began to use a tool that until then was unknown to me, I very soon understood its enormous worth because of the capacity it has to reach a new public directly, and also because it allows two-way communication. From the start I conceived my Twitter account as a working instrument. Without doubt managing an account requires an extra effort from me and my team. That is not forgetting my constant retweets of those tweets I consider interesting. In most cases they are related to foreign policy, but among them I sometimes also include cultural, sporting and promotional themes related to Spain. This is an element I consider crucial, as a large proportion of my followers are foreigners.

Not participating in the social networks means trailing behind on the information front. We must not lose sight of the fact that an increasing number of people, particularly young people, no longer make use of newspapers or the traditional media to follow current events, but rather use the social networks as a means not only to receive occasional information but to access content of all kinds through them.

Over time, I have noticed that there are issues that receive general approval, but there are others that trigger heated reactions in the form of answers on the social networks. This happens particularly whenever I send a tweet on Gibraltar and receive dozens of responses, some in favour and others against, or on the conflict between Israel and Palestine, in which the positions are also extremely polarised. My perception is that the social networks allow you to present foreign policy to citizens in a responsive and simple way, and allow me to discover their opinion of it.

The model of Spanish digital diplomacy

Consuelo Femenía.
AMBASSADOR, DIGITAL DIPLOMACY ADVISOR, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION

Diplomacy looks to defend the national interests and the welfare of its citizens, and this defence can be projected through mechanisms of negotiation, transaction or imposition; or it may be exercised through influence and persuasion of public opinion as a player with an increasingly important role. From this perspective, digital diplomacy would simply be no more than a part of diplomacy made public through digital means, which has acquired a significant dimension and field of action. But the development of both has led to a greater separation. Spanish practice identifies public diplomacy with the network of "houses" (Casa America, Casa Asia...), the Institutos Cervantes, the Spain Brand, foundations (such as Fundación Carolina) and companies that are dedicated to promoting the knowledge and image of our country.

Meanwhile, digital diplomacy today also has components of "service modernisation" and of "profound change". The digitalisation of diplomacy may be understood either in a broad or more specific sense. In the broad sense, it includes applications developed by e-government and the new international digital agenda. In the strict sense, what we understand as digital diplomacy, or digital diplomatic communication, are those communication activities through the new technologies and platforms, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its offices abroad, and consular and diplomatic matters, as well as others derived from the functions of the Department. Digital communication is the spearhead of themes and approaches that within a few years will cut across and could affect other units of Foreign Affairs.

It is not difficult to move from the reflection that the future work of diplomats and consuls around the world is increasingly computerised, to the conclusion that greater doses of extroversion and decentralisation are required. If before diplomats were discreet negotiators, today the need to explain in all directions is more than ever present, given that if you do not explain you lose your social legitimacy. Practically no Western foreign service aims to centralise one hundred per cent of its communication work, because it would be ineffective; even for private business, there is no alternative to empowering the main representatives of the organisation in the areas of communication and message, and they must ensure coherence between its fundamental message and values. The faster pace of life and the need

for immediate responses may make any long-term or centralised strategy obsolete.

The Spanish model of digital diplomacy was created in 2014 and 2015. After studying the examples offered by other countries, it became clear that Spain could become a model of digital diplomacy in Spanish, projecting its weight as a medium-sized power. Appropriate e-diplomacy needs minimum material and human means, even in a context of cost restrictions. With a global reach, this general deployment has to be combined with a landing on firm ground through prioritisation of regions and issues. There are various success stories in Europe of consular services, so our digital diplomacy had to include this aspect. In addition, the general trend indicates that the field of action of digital diplomacies in our environment continues to grow.

The development of a digital diplomacy is already an unquestionable need, and without it, certain objectives are difficult to achieve. The weight of digital communication has fallen on the diplomatic and consular officials themselves, with a great deal of emphasis in these initial years on training and the drafting of manuals and style guides to help minimise the risks in practice, speed up learning and ensure there is no fear of mistakes. There are many diplomatic services that have had to look for a balance between personal profiles, which are more attractive, and the accounts of embassies or consulates. For our scheme it was essential to develop these institutional profiles first and as a service to the citizens; but I see the possibility of changing that trend.

A set of accounts has been identified that ensure consistency and cover of all the regions, main languages, and most important cross-cutting themes. Thus 28 embassies were defined as digital communication hubs, and were granted greater capacity for proposing regional or cross-cutting visions, or were asked to act as the main source of information on Spain in a certain language. Together with those managed directly from the central services, these hub accounts form the system of nodes that sustains the rest of the system.

On the internal front, work has begun on a solution to the main problems of Internet access by all official users, each with a specific complexity, such as for example for the embassies in Africa with deficient Internet services. Another of the shortcomings that will have to be resolved in the future is the lack of an internal unit in central services that is sufficient to sustain growing digital diplomacy.

Many colleagues, true "civil servant entrepreneurs" took the lead when there was still no departmental policy on which to base their actions, and it is right to recognise their courage when we still did not have "a community practice" or a plan. This is the leap we have taken over the last year.

From communication strategy to digital diplomacy. The first steps

Alberto Antón.
FORMER AMBASSADOR AT THE SPECIAL MISSION FOR DIGITAL DIPLOMACY.
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION

Some three years ago, when we the economic crisis was upon us and there was a distorted and partial perception of Spanish reality abroad, it was particularly necessary to boost one of the basic functions of diplomatic work, which is communication and promotion of our image as a country. A "Communication Guide for Spanish Diplomatic Missions, Permanent Representatives and Consular Offices" was prepared at the Diplomatic Information Office. The guide included the "Communication Plan for Spanish Representations Abroad." This initiative consisted basically of a series of instructions so that under the coordination of the Chief of Mission, each embassy could prepare its own strategy or communication plan designed to boost Spain's image in the country of accreditation. The wealth of ideas and proposals contained in the document in which our representations contributed their reflections on communication led to the preparation in December 2012 of a second working document called "Review Report on the Communication Plan".

One of the conclusions referred to using the social networks to convey more effectively and quickly messages aimed at strengthening our image as a country. Second, there was a section on good practices: around sixty good practices were collected and systematised in the area of communication. They had been proposed by the different embassies, distinguishing between those that it was possible to apply in all the countries and those that were limited only to a specific group of them, taking into account the cultural, economic or political context of the country and its relations with Spain. Finally, the Diplomatic Information Office proposed a working plan for the following months. To put into practice the objectives set out in the digital area there was a need to overcome an initial obstacle that was technical in nature, related to the need to maintain the security of diplomatic communications.

The structure of the second Review Report was modified with the aim of normalising the new priorities. Among the conclusions was the impor-

tance of training Foreign Service officials in the matter of communication. In addition, it was indicated that systematic use of the Internet and social media was becoming essential in order to develop a communication policy adapted to the new circumstances. At an initial stage it was decided to work on regulations for the use of Twitter, as it was considered to be a more professional social network. Note was taken that more than thirty representations had already opened Twitter accounts and around twenty more managed Facebook accounts, even though the Diplomatic Information Office had not yet prepared rules for the use of this social network. A desire was also expressed to set this strategy within the future law on Foreign Action and Foreign State Service.

Two courses were organised in the first half of 2014, in which more than two hundred diplomatic officials took part. A total of 108 students, most of them (44) Chiefs of Mission, enrolled onto the first course, one from each embassy. In the second course a further hundred diplomats took part, most of whom were posted in consulates, some in embassies and the rest in Central Services. At the end of the first three online courses and other classroom courses, there were abundant elements that, duly systematised and translated into specific proposals for action, would allow us not only to work on our open model of digital diplomacy in better conditions from the perspective of communication, but also to modernise procedures and working methods in the Ministry itself, taking into account the growing importance of the principles of transversality and horizontality linked to ICT.

Digital communication and digital hubs: the practical perspective from abroad

José Pedro Torrubia Asenjo.
COUNCILLOR FOR CULTURAL AND CONSULAR AFFAIRS. SPANISH EMBASSY IN SWEDEN.

"Diplomacy is a long-distance race". The phrase is from a tweet by @javiersolana, and was retweeted on 27 July 2015 by @carlbildt. It expresses a reality that characterises diplomatic practice: that of constructing a continuum, a "long-distance race" that has achieved a multitude of moving targets and experienced numerous transformations.

The Ministry's website includes "taking advantage of the opportunities provided by new technologies for the promotion of our interests abroad" as one of the principles of "efficiency, transparency, connection and dialogue". Clear objectives of "clarity, credibility and ownership of information" have been established, as well as the commitment to offer updates of information in real time. In other words, it includes the key elements of good digital communication.

This willingness has in recent years been reflected in the development of instruments for digital action such as specific information campaigns. All these campaigns have a digital aspect summed up in hashtags such as #TuConsuladoPuedeAyudarte #ElConsuladoInforma, #Elecciones2015 and #ViajaSeguroMAEC. The latest example is the recent "EspañaContigo" campaign, in which a mobile app provides the emergency phone number of embassies abroad.

The challenge is however even greater for units overseas. First, because embassies are no longer the core element of communication in the diplomatic area. On many occasions, we are on the periphery; and on others, we are the object of communication rather than the subject, an element about which people talk but with which there will be no dialogue in the digital area if we have not managed to achieve a conversational exchange.

Second, it means a challenge due to the difficulty in identifying key contacts in this global conversation that is digital communication. And third, because of the difficulty in articulating our own differentiated content so that we can be seen as a useful contact that contributes more than an official statement. Only with our own content will interacting with an embassy not represent an opportunity cost.

The decentralisation of the presence of the Ministry in the world also allows a presence in all the digital spaces in the world. What is even better, it allows an analysis on site, in other words close to the source, of digital communication and the digital networks in which this communication takes place. It also facilitates presence not only in Spanish but in the languages in which local digital discussions are generated, when this is more effective.

This whole exercise involves the development of a much more horizontal communication in the sense that embassies and consulates and their chiefs acquire greater responsibility and greater capacity to generate content. Just as we can in the classical format express our thanks in a card or through a phone message, we can express the same courtesy and recognition through a tweet or a post on the social networks, or we can express our condolences in a message written in a digital condolence book. But beyond courtesy or public relations, the presence of embassies and consulates in the digital media should aim to renew relations with citizens and with local opposite numbers. The digital media do not involve anything less than the challenge of improving the quality of the Spanish administration abroad and promoting innovation, as well as laying the foundations for a more fluid and more efficient dialogue between government and the governed. Digital communication must now move on to a second phase in which the aim is not simply to "tweet a photo of two ministers greeting each other with the classic handshake and a 19th-century portrait in the background."

One of these new elements and strategies is the initiative to start up a network of digital hubs, i.e. a series of embassies responsible for coordinating digital content for all the embassies and consulates associated to each specific node. The idea responds to the need to work more on common content, to create networks and synergies where there is a community of objectives or a shared working language, developing the work of "facilitators". For this exercise the aim has been for each node to develop its own voice and contents, for which they have been given ample room for action by Central Services. What is true is that at the "Nordic hub" that we created at the embassy in Stockholm this dynamic has already begun, having laid the foundations of a new working method with greater coordination between the embassies involved.

Digital diplomacy, political diplomacy

Juan José Escobar Stemmann.
SPANISH CONSUL-GENERAL IN JERUSALEM. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND COOPERATION

In the current changing and uncertain context, diplomacy plays an increasingly relevant role. Classic diplomacy, which is carried out between States, is still relevant, but it is assuming more complex forms. Some people talk about an integrating diplomacy, in which the diplomats are no longer guardians of the frontiers with the world outside and have become facilitators who integrate the different actors and environments that make up the new diplomatic environment. Others prefer to talk of network diplomacy. The emergence of new actors with the capacity to influence the agenda of international relations obliges the creation of networks between states and non-State actors to manage issues that require common resources. The role of diplomats is precisely to serve as a bridge between the State and civil society.

Digital diplomacy is something more than a simple use of digital tools to achieve our diplomatic objectives.

The generation, management and use of knowledge has traditionally been one of the basic functions of diplomacy. Diplomats continue to play an essential role in the analysis on the ground of the causes and consequences of international events. Social networks have increased the informational resources available to analysts to draft policies. But they have also created a much denser and more fragmented information context that it is not easy to manage.

Some authors think they can see a contradiction between transparency and confidentiality in the day-to-day work of diplomats in the modern world. In my opinion, this contradiction does not exist. What do exist are different models of diplomacy with different communication needs. Confidentiality will always be needed in the political arena, and in certain questions.

Digitalisation also raises new challenges for the administration of knowledge in public and private organisations. The main value is the knowledge stored in the brains of its workers and in the millions of documents that have been written and stored. The US Department of State has

been a pioneer in the creation of a series of digital platforms to achieve these objectives.

The public context in which international negotiations take place is increasingly important and digital technology has created opportunities for external actors to influence inter-State negotiations. The negotiations of the EU3+3 with Iran have been an example of what we could class as classic diplomacy, which is focused on the military agenda and security. During the talks confidentiality took precedence over transparency. A very different case was the initiative to end sexual violence in conflicts, in which social networks played a key role.

We all compete for the attention of a global audience, offering our own narrative and with the new media and digital platforms becoming the new political battleground. There are examples in which embassies of a particular country try to combat the narrative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to which they are accredited, as is the case of the account of the Israeli embassy in Washington, which during the negotiations for the agreement with Iran defended the points of view of the Israeli government with respect to the narrative of the State Department.

In other cases, the editorial content of a certain account is not understood by some of its followers. This is what happens with the account of the Spanish Consulate in Jerusalem. In such a polarised political context, there are some readers that do not understand why an office that is in Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, publishes information on Palestine, and others do not understand why the office that represents the interests of Spain before the Palestinian Authority has to publish news related to Judaism.

Tweeting has its risks. My experience tells me that Twitter is a space where everything tends to be black or white, which does not allow shades of meaning in debate and that at times obliges simplification of very complex questions.

The consular function: modernity and tradition in the digital era

Xavier Martí Martí.
SPANISH VICE-CONSUL IN SAO PAOLO. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Consular Offices act under permanent scrutiny of increasingly demanding citizens. It should also not be forgotten that among the different areas of action it is the consular office in which most interaction is registered with the public through the social networks. We will examine the main tools for digital diplomacy that are used in the consular area: the websites, social network accounts and blogs.

You can now consult general information about consular services on the Ministry's website. The section that receives most visits is "Travel Recommendations". In addition, the websites of the Consular Offices offer access to specific information on the services for citizens that are within its consular responsibility. At the present time, the website of a Consulate General such as that in Sao Paolo, which serves a Spanish community of nearly 83,000 registered people in a region of 58 million, receives an average of 14,000 visits per month.

There are many challenges for managing websites. It is worth making an effort to find out what the requirements of citizens are and try to satisfy their information needs. The passage of time has proved the use of recommendations on travel or the appropriateness of including a section with practical data on life in each of the regions, at a time when many Spanish people are moving abroad. However, there are still some challenges pending, among which are the optimisation of the pages for the different mobile devices.

As important as making it easier for citizens to enter into contact with government is to listen to them and answer them within a reasonable time. Often this work of listening allows faults and shortcomings to be detected. There is also room for improvement in this. Thus the possibility could be explored of extending remote consular procedures that can be carried out online or implementing a modular system of online appointments. In addition, the incorporation of web pages could be studied for a section for comments and suggestions or to create virtual thematic question and answer sessions.

The main obstacle for the extension of the social networks is scepticism and the fears with which they are still seen by some diplomats. But is such an attitude justified? Experience demonstrates that it is not. If for example citizens repeatedly ask for a specific consular procedure, we should assess whether it is appropriate to create a specific section on the website if it did does exist, or to share regular posts on this issue. Remember, without going further, the emergency situation created by the earthquake registered in April 2015 in Nepal, which led the Spanish embassy in New Delhi to double its presence in the social networks. Many authors consider that Twitter is the most useful social network for managing crisis situations.

It is also a myth that it is necessary to invest substantial resources to maintain the social network accounts up to date and active, as it is only necessary to follow some simple routines and use the tools offered by the networks themselves.

We should not be afraid of the anarchic nature of the networks. Those who supported the idea that the government should be maintained at some distance from the social networks to protect it from possible negative comments were wrong. The added value of being present consists precisely in being able to listen and answer better.

Facebook and Twitter are the social networks most strongly established in nearly all the countries that allow their free use. Facebook is the most appropriate for giving information about services, activities and news. In addition, as it is the most personal social network, it allows users to be in direct contact with the government. In contrast, Twitter is the most appropriate platform for spreading content in the most immediate way and for collecting information from institutions and public figures with which there is not necessarily any direct relationship. Besides these two social networks, we should not forget other platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, or in countries like China, social networks such as Weibo.

At the start of 2013 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation created a section on blogs. Currently around twenty Spanish diplomats regularly publish their contributions, including seven consuls and those responsible for consular affairs. It would be advisable to increase the number of Spanish diplomats involved, including those who exercise consular functions. We should also try to make the posts more attractive for search engines, and readers should be able to post their comments.

Multilateral digital diplomacy

María Victoria González Román.
AMBASSADOR. PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE BEFORE THE OSCE

International and regional organisations constitute an excellent platform in which the image of each country on the international arena is constructed every day. A fundamental role in this construction is played by Permanent Representatives or multilateral embassies, which protect and convey policies, values, positions or national interests, contributing to create the image of the country and its sovereign value on international stock markets. Communication activities play an essential role for this purpose and digital tools have been incorporated into them as a decisive element.

Spain's Permanent Mission in New York belongs to the group of permanent representations with the greatest digital diplomatic activity, above all after the quantitative and qualitative leap that took place during the election campaign to the United Nations Security Council in the autumn of 2014. The aims of that time can be extrapolated to most of the multilateral embassies, despite the fact that there was a specific goal involved (positively influencing how people vote).

In preparing our campaign strategies, the websites of the embassies are converted into an extremely useful instrument to obtain information and personalised treatment for each country that requires it. The website has become the new business card for embassies.

In 2013 the Mission of Spain had an account open in Twitter but with minimal activity. It was decided to reactivate it, and within a year it was already among the five busiest. The use of the personal accounts of ambassadors is an alternative that is not to be disdained, but it is difficult to generalise, as they tend to be linked to the personality and experience of the chief of mission. In the last two years, Twitter has become the trending social network in multilateral diplomacy. An experiment was carried out with an unofficial account in Facebook ("winning the vote in eighty days"), which corroborated the initial hypothesis with respect to the predominantly "social" nature of Facebook as not adequate to the needs of multilateral diplomacy.

From a formal point of view, multilateral negotiations have experienced few changes in the last 50 years. Apart from the extension to the thematic agenda, the changes experienced have basically referred to working methods. Work on the Net has become general above all in Western countries, with the EU being a clear exponent. It is a consolidated practice that

has simplified and sped up the always complex procedures of negotiation among 28.

Although decision-making has become more participative, this does not mean that multilateral diplomacy has completely lost the hierarchical or vertical structure that has traditionally characterised it.

At a recent OSCE meeting, at which NGOs and actors in civil society participated together with the States, Twitter walls were installed for the first time in the conference hall. The successive entries on the screen produced a parallel conversation. Soon it was determined that the attendees were as interested or more in the virtual debate as the real debate. In contrast to the supporters of digital democracy, many of those attending considered that recourse to the social networks represented dangerous interference, a way of simplifying the debate (limited to 140 characters) and of leaving it at the mercy of aggressive negotiation strategies.

The multilateral agenda linked to the new information and telecommunication technologies includes aspects related to security and the exercise of rights and freedoms associated with their use. In 2014 Spain organised the first seminar on cybersecurity with the participation of the Permanent Representatives of the United Nations in Madrid. It is significant that a large number of ambassadors who attended the seminar noted that it was their first opportunity to learn the contents of the digital agenda.

We are at a time of transition, in which traditional practices are being combined with other new ones that are the result of incorporating digital technologies with diplomatic activity. Some of these new practices have decisively transformed multilateral working methods and may be considered revolutionary. Others can be presumed to be of a temporary nature. Today we use Twitter but it cannot be ruled out that it could be replaced by other supports in the medium term. Multilateral diplomatic activity has before it the challenge of adapting to the new technologies in a context of a constantly accelerating world, characterised by growing interaction and demands for transparency. Despite the growing trend to favour the virtual world, traditional diplomacy based on personal interaction continues to be essential for achieving multilateral diplomacy objectives.

Towards a new European public diplomacy

Miguel Ángel Benedicto.
PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, UNIVERSIDAD EUROPEA DE MADRID.

The European Union is a complex supranational organisation. The sui generis nature of the great European institution makes its institutional operation difficult to understand by citizens who are more accustomed to dealing with the conventional separation of the powers of the Nation State. The project of European construction is a dynamic, uncertain and constantly evolving process that may end up disorienting the average citizen.

The distance between the European institutions and their citizens, recognised since the 1970s, has been attributed to a communication gap. If this is so within the European Union itself, it is no surprise that outside it the task of making contact with the foreign public with the aim of creating an external environment favourable for foreign policy is even more complex.

The problem of the EU comes from lack of definition of the image that it wants to project abroad. The EU's institutional complexity, lack of a clear roadmap, and what is still the predominant inter-governability with respect to the shifting of the responsibility for policies to the European Community, harm its image and make communication confusing. What the European Union needs is the skill to articulate an external message that is both comprehensible and attractive; and if it is to develop a powerful strategy, the European project must first have a stronger external policy.

The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) gives the EU the opportunity to develop public diplomacy in a better way. This new architecture of external policy is an opportunity to improve European diplomacy through the definition of political objectives abroad and through the support of the EU's public diplomacy.

The EU's challenges of in the 21st century require a new public diplomacy. A strategy is needed that connects the main message of the EU in foreign policy with what is conveyed by the EEAS and the EU delegations. The Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions urges the delegations to concentrate on promoting the EU as a partners in democratic transitions, as a global economic power, as a promoter of human rights and as a provider of security.

Journalists and communication specialists will be needed who can go beyond the EU's bureaucratic culture. One of the main obstacles facing the delegations is the disparity of human resources and capacities between the different offices. They all have a Press and Information Officer, many hired at local level with the advantage that they know the country, the language and can adapt communication to the local environment.

The media have been used as a tool for digital diplomacy. The production of programmes in local languages, with the assistance of local personnel from the delegations, may have significant effects in boosting public diplomacy in the EU, without involving major costs.

Digital diplomacy is increasingly important. Until recently it was enough to maintain the websites, but now there must be a common corporate image, they must be more interactive and less impersonal. The new digital diplomacy is increasingly important for reaching publics beyond the government involved, and thus it is important to contact opinion leaders, influential bloggers, journalists and civil society.

At the same time it is necessary to coordinate all the aspects of external action at institutional level, above all with those general directorates not included in foreign relations, such as Trade and some aspects of Development and Neighbourhood Policy.

A consistent public diplomacy has to be presented for the EU as a whole, but taking into account the local aspects of the country to which it is directed and identifying the appropriate contacts at both an official level and in civil society.

The Europe brand helps create an image of public diplomacy, simplify complex messages, integrate communication in foreign audiences, reach citizens directly, improve training of diplomats, unite European citizens behind the brand and construct new narratives and stories about the EU.

European public diplomacy needs a professional communication structure to reach all the stakeholders and public opinion in foreign countries.

The digital diplomacy of multilateral organisations: Russia and the Cold War in the Internet era

Rafael Estrella.
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ELCANO INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

The Paris Conference on Climate Change has been a paradigmatic exercise of the power of the networks. Although part of the traffic in the social networks comes from areas directly linked to governments, the bulk comes from the media and press agencies, organisations and above all individuals around the world.

The main organisations of a multinational nature are in a very good position with respect to the Internet revolution and the transformation represented in all the areas. They have known how to strengthen their position and credibility through a process of opening up and transforming the way in which they handle and provide information. This strategic commitment has its recompense in terms of reputation. The organisations are present in the networks in an intelligent and attractive way, generating a sense of participation, and have well defined public diplomatic strategies.

And what about the European Union? Let's begin by saying that there is no European strategy for public diplomacy. The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty offers an opportunity to organise a potential of consistency, effectiveness and visibility in external actions. But except for isolated actions, "united in diversity" is becoming a reality in the networks in terms of fragmentation of discourses, messages and voices without common driving ideas. The grandly named EU Digital Diplomacy appears to be more of an attempt to provide a touch of modernity than a determined drive for strategic communication by the EU in the digital world.

The European Union and NATO observe with concern and perplexity the immense deployment of Russian propaganda. Russia has never accepted as final the geopolitical status quo that arose after the Cold War. Its attempts to return to it are already shaking the balance of power and changing the dynamics of international politics. The actions of Russia in recent years will support this thesis.

On the foreign front, Russia has in recent years been constructing a powerful and modern propaganda machine with multimedia platforms, of which RT (formerly Russia Today) is the most important. One study of the reality of RT concludes that its impact is substantially greater than that corresponding to the number of followers. The influence of RT in the social media is gradually approaching the group of the major benchmarks of the international community.

The RT formula combines news with deformed reality, pure propaganda or conspiracy theories and an open advocacy of Russia and Russian power (particularly military), with Putin as the central figure.

There must be a dual response: geostrategic and communicational. Everything indicates that relations with Russia may normalise and reconstruct, but they will not do so on the status quo that we knew: Russia will for a long time keep the idea of a reborn empire, using the notion of external enemy for unifying its internal leadership.

Both the EU and NATO are working on a response that may be coherent and effective, but so far they appear far from doing so. Without doubt, the initiatives are moving in the correct direction, but the communication in Russian is only one dimension of the challenge we are faced with. The reality is that Russia communicates globally in languages of the countries of our citizens, or that are familiar to them.

The EU aims to identify itself and be recognised as a global player, but it lacks a strategy and the capability for action and public diplomacy. It is urgent to work on a project for a European platform of digital communication that integrates and at the same time segments information, supported by the experience of European media that have discovered how to make communication on the Net attractive. The obstacle may not be economic.

The professional transformation of network diplomacy

Juan Luis Manfredi Sánchez.

PROFESSOR OF JOURNALISM. UNIVERSIDAD DE CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

Diplomacy is in the process of change and now appears more as a network than a club. Jorge Heine, the current Chilean ambassador in China, describes the change as a transformation of a model of club diplomacy, made up of diplomats, journalists and other officials, towards an open model that obliges diplomats to increase and maintain relations with other actors who lack this official character but are equally influential.

The Web allows political actions designed by the Ministry to execute with a greater level of autonomy in each of the antennas abroad. This network diplomacy is organised around three principles: transparency, instantaneousness and interaction in real time. Diplomacy must respond to civil society, it must act consistently, bring everyday activity to its citizens, show what diplomats do and what their work serves.

The phenomenon of the Web is not innocent. Diplomats are exposed to international public opinion and to their own citizens. In addition, they face the dictatorship of the immediate. To sum up, old and new problems appear in the new environment of international relations and, in particular, of diplomacy. The old dilemma between freedom and security, the balance between transparency and confidentiality or the limits to freedom of expression is what we have come to call the trilemma of contemporary diplomacy.

This profession is at the eye of the storm. Diplomats will be professionals who are needed in the 21st century, but their nature and activity will change substantially. The diplomacy of the future will not be divided between an "old" and "new" diplomacy, but between a diplomacy that has known how to adapt and take advantage of the opportunities to generate new competitive advantages and another that has been anchored in the Westphalian model of international relations.

Innovation will come from the use of the Internet and new means for the creation of new competitive advantages. Technologies support and boost the diplomatic function, so we have to learn to use technology to do more with less. We must use the advantages of technologies to reduce shortcomings in investment.

Diplomatic innovation represents an enormous challenge. On the consular front, you have to combine protection of personal data, the application of administrative law, respect for deadlines and many other limitations. It is therefore a case of discovering the opportunities offered by technologies to do work better. The drafting of protocols or guides of good practices that link the consistency and standards of practice of the Spanish public administration with the needs of diplomacy appears correct. It is preferable to have a minimum strategy that generates a framework of behaviour and provides consistency between the platforms in terms of objectives and messages.

There has to be an attempt to order the flow of transformations occurring in diplomacy in the Web and guide it towards the creation of specific competitive advantages of service to citizens. The three core elements on which this transformation has to be constructed are proximity, trust and transparency. Diplomacy in the Web is not a question of technological fashion, but of improving the quality of service to citizens using the networks and technologies available.

Diplomacy on the Web includes public institutions, the international dimension and business interests, thus creating a network that defends their interests. This type of public–private network is difficult to manage, but it is the world in which we live. In particular, it is a case of searching for a balance between Madrid and the missions, so that centralisation of policies is compatible with the autonomy of embassies and consulates.

Innovation tends to focus on identifying new opportunities and the selection of two or three segmented initiatives that contribute to improving service to citizens. The heart of the mission has not changed: diplomats are a pivot between the State and the citizen, so they perform an essential public service.

Reputation and influence in foreign policy

Jorge Cachinero.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME OF IE BUSINESS SCHOOL.

The first challenge faced by diplomacy in today's world is the crisis of trust that weighs on institutions and, at the same time, the emerging challenge to credibility. The solution to these challenges lies in a commitment to transparency and establishment of control mechanisms in the exercise of the diplomatic functions, making possible citizen participation and their collaboration in the establishment of the diplomatic agenda. The use of argument and cultural and ideological values are tools that can be of use to convince and generate lasting and stable relations with foreign governments and their populations, and as a result to exercise soft power within and beyond a nation's borders, managing to influence the decision-making process.

In an increasingly global scenario, networks of interdependence are generated between the countries that affect the traditional concept of foreign policy. As a result, new indications necessarily arise to measure influence and status, based not only on economic and military indicators, but also include elements of this so-called soft power.

Worth noting here is the Elcano Global Presence Indicator, which establishes a ranking of 80 countries according to their projection abroad and their participation in the process of globalisation. It defines three areas of presence, economic, military and soft, and assigns various indicators to each of the areas. Country Reptrak® is also worthy of consideration. It puts the focus on reputation as a strategic lever for generating value. A country that has a high level of reputation will be seen as a country that inspires trust, which in turn will generate a positive return with tangible implications for the country and all its political, economic and social agents.

Taking into account that reputation has consolidated its position as an element that builds up the competitive advantage of nations, we have to go beyond the concept of country-brand and adopt that of country-reputation. Not only does the State have to participate in constructing country-reputation, but other agents in civil society also have to be involved, together with non-profit organisations and companies, through their actions and through their own activities abroad.

This trend occurs in parallel to the revolution in information and communication technologies, and represents radical changes in the way in which international relations are practiced at global level. The strategies of digital diplomacy must take into account the new channels of communication, and above all freedom of expression. In addition, in these times of tedium and mistrust, we have to listen to the demands of the citizens and exercise a responsive approach. Therefore, diplomats must acquire new skills and competences that contribute to generating value and reputation for the nations that serve them.

The spread of information and the reduction of technology costs have meant that it is easier for individuals and private groups to make demands on and supervise States. They have empowered private actors, markets and private individuals and have made it more difficult for States to control their political narratives or act with impunity. The key to determining the strategy is to focus attention on the challenges, threats and risks faced by a nation and to identify its assets and specific advantages as an international actor.

A Decalogue of ideas for a changing world must take into account factors such as: the training of diplomats in new technological areas; active presence in the social networks; adaptation of communication according to the publics; active listening; diplomacy in the Web; a proactive attitude; transparency; the application of strategies for managing reputation and measuring results; and the social licence to operate.

The new digital leadership

Rafa Rubio.
PROFESSOR OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAW. UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID

Today the exercise of international relations involves the capacity to be involved through informal channels with an increasingly numerous and diverse number of actors. Today, more than ever, the exercise of the public function is an exercise of leadership; a "digital" leadership that has more in common with understanding the dynamics of social change than with the use of new communication tools.

The first key element that has to be understood by the digital leader is the place that organisations, particularly public institutions, have in society. In this adaptation to the new social framework a key role is played by relations with citizen movements. In the face of this more horizontal citizen movement, the challenge lies in reorienting the role of institutions within a social structure; understanding what is horizontal and what is transparent; giving up the role of leadership in order to relate with the rest of the organisations in conditions of equality, constructing "authority" in accordance with good work, merit and capacity, and not simply from having received a constitutional mandate.

Membership and identification with formal organisations is declining as a general trend. This is manifest, for example, in the scope of politics, where we are living a crisis in the model of militant party–based activism (which can be extended to organisations such as trade unions) and its replacement by very diverse forms of involvement, of a more specific and episodic nature, in multiple fields.

We have to work to generate a new social fabric that has to do with "organisation without organisations"; a type of organisation in which connection replaces identification. To do so, it is important to promote citizen participation and belong to communities of shared interests, to give them a voice and a mission in our everyday work and to recognise and promote initiatives arising from informal environments.

Political participation is no longer a question of adhering to organised political structures, but of necessity it involves a commitment to society. Citizens are not going to participate in politics if they are not actively involved. That is where the need arises to claim the "pyramid of social responsibility" as the best school for politicians.

Corporate individualism has to be the core element on which political organisations are built, strengthening the social nature of the challenges of politics through systems of collaboration and democratic participation. The possibilities of personalisation offered us by the networks, and the need for customisation that exists in digital natives lead us to forget unilateral communication, en masse, and to favour individualised and dialogued communication that aims to construct common projects.

A new style of managing people and projects is required, a reformulation of leadership. This is not based on control under strict rules, but must be able to seduce others based on work, creativity, on presenting new alternatives in a more attractive way than the rest. For this to be possible, leadership must be subject to a humanistic vision of reality.

The concept of leadership cannot be effective without developing the capacity to influence, creativity and initiative, organised around spaces for joint creation and collaboration. A change in the focus of training of future public administrators is needed, in order to develop skills that allow them to understand, participate and influence these new scenarios.

Mission accomplished!

Cecilia Yuste.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL DIPLOMATIC INFORMATION OFFICE. MINISTRY OF FO-REIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION

We can say that at the end of 2015 we finally managed to move beyond the first phase in which digital diplomacy had been operating since 2013. This has been a process of gradual maturity whose start was based on the conviction that this qualitative step had to be taken. There have been many exchanges of ideas in the Diplomatic Information Office to decide how to undertake this challenge. Successive teams of collaborators have been contributing ideas, enthusiasm, creativity, organisational guidelines and courage.

We could not have arrived at this position without the support of Minister García-Margallo, who has always supported us in this modernisation process. I should also thank for their support the state secretaries, directors-general and other civil servants that have made possible particularly valuable steps forward. The development of a policy of digital communication, the preparation of user manuals, the provision of minimum working tools, raising awareness of their importance, the inventory and deployment of accounts, and other necessary elements, have been developed "from within", but in constant contact with what was happening around us. The coordination by Jane Remesal and Consuelo Femenía has been exceptional. Also key was the support from the Subsecretariat and Directorate-General for the Foreign Service with its Sub-directorate for IT as a key element.

The practical implementation of digital diplomacy by the Ministry is now general. I think there is no turning back. There is now a lot in front of us. Thank you to all for your support.