

**Research article**

# Intensification Cycle in Digital Diplomacy

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**Abstract.** The path of the international system is driven by political, economic, and social developments. COVID-19 has been an influential and transformative crisis which has had a huge impact on the world order. It has highly affected international affairs, is capable of transforming the system and is one of the world's major occurrences since the Second World War. The first impact has been that the crisis has forced all areas of public and private life into a rapid digitization process. In fact, the process had started before the pandemic, but the COVID-19 crisis triggered the transition process at an extraordinary intensity. As in a variety of other sectors, digital diplomacy has been highly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, which has brought momentum to the digitalization process of diplomacy. This paper analyzes digital diplomacy in the digital age, with a focus on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The research uses a theoretical framework that clarifies the distinctions between traditional and new public diplomacy. The article addresses the process of diplomacy responding to the new normal requirements in terms of technical impact. It provides an overview of the digitalization process of diplomacy, which was intensified by the pandemic, and examines the post-coronavirus global trends in terms of potential assumptions.

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**Dates**

4 February 2022

Publishing services provided by  
**Knowledge E**

**Keywords:** public diplomacy, digitalization of diplomacy, new world order, coronavirus

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the Culture, Personality, Society Conference Committee.

## 1. Introduction

New communication technologies have changed diplomacy, as well as its social, economic, and cultural impact, in particular with the 21st century, and have extended the diplomacy repertoire of states. Changes in public diplomacy parallel to the developments in communication technologies have been expressed in various terms such as "digital diplomacy", "e-diplomacy", "public diplomacy 2.0", etc. With the introduction of the Internet and social media in the socio-political framework, no matter what it may be called, states were unable to remain spectators in this transition and started to use modern communication networks as an important instrument in their diplomacy operations. The advantages of emerging communication technologies are the ability to respond to international agendas quickly, to communicate directly with foreign states and their citizens, and to develop a dialogue that supports and strengthens the reputation of the country in the virtual environment. Basically, one may effectively


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claim that digital diplomacy is an extended form of public diplomacy. Digital diplomacy essentially means using the Internet and ICTs, mostly social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, by states in order to reach diplomatic consequences. States enter into interaction with international audiences, in a non-costly way, through these digital platforms. As a matter of fact, traditional and digital diplomacy complement one another, and traditional diplomacy cannot be totally replaced by digital diplomacy. Digital diplomacy does not in fact substitute traditional face-to-face diplomacy but, in an age of information technology, no country could afford to leave the digital platforms of diplomacy behind.

However, the diplomatic communication networks have totally moved further to digital platforms with the COVID-19 pandemic. The coronavirus pandemic has affected diplomacy, much like many public and private sectors. Like other sectors, diplomacy had to cope with new smart devices and long-distance conversations beginning with the outbreak. Actually, the process has started before the pandemic, but the COVID-19 crisis has triggered the transformation of the digitalization process at an unprecedented rate. Diplomatic activities around the world have been tremendously impacted by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has had a transformational effect on the way multimedia platforms are used by global leaders, government officials, and foreign actors. When governments were attempting to contact the public on how to slow the spread of the virus from all social media accounts, particularly Twitter and Facebook, social media users expected advice from their leaders online. Diplomatic practitioners have started to look at emerging types of technology, such as digitized alternatives to regulatory mechanisms, the introduction of innovative digital technologies, and the mobilization of digital resources, as effective instruments of diplomacy. Digital media almost certainly meant social media prior to the spread of COVID-19. However, COVID-19 has generated a situation for countries around the world to take the opportunity to conduct foreign policy through websites, blogs, and a number of social media outlets and beyond.

All in all, one can say that the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that technological adaptation is essential not only for diplomatic activities also in many areas from education to health, from economy to agriculture, emphasizing once again the existing problems of globalization. Instead of system-changing breaks such as the First and Second World Wars and the end of the Cold War, the COVID-19 pandemic can be expected to trigger paradigm changes such as the September 11 attacks and the 2008/2009 global financial crisis. In this process, diplomacy and especially public diplomacy is a method used by national and international organizations in times of global crisis from

historical experience. In order to counterbalance the clash of civilizations in times of rising nationalism, one can practically conclude that digital diplomacy applications are required. Considering the aforesaid facts, the current paper will focus on the adaptation process of diplomacy with new normal requirements in terms of technological influence, analysis of the digitalization process in diplomacy triggered tremendously by the pandemic, and also post-coronavirus global trends in terms of future anticipation.

### 1.1. Traditional public diplomacy and new public diplomacy

Public diplomacy is known as the practices of states or power structures to communicate and influence foreign nations alongside their diplomatic relations with other states. To summarize briefly, it is defined as “the efforts of states to influence the opinions of the international public or elites in the interests of the country” [1]. These international initiatives are meant to offer incentives such as setting the agenda, changing the agenda, generating public awareness, and offering support or attracting the international audience’s attention [2]. Tools such as traditional media (radio, newspapers, television, etc.) and cultural promotion are used for this purpose mostly. Starting with the technological revolution, in the background of public diplomacy activities, the Internet has started to be instrumentalized by states together with emerging communication technologies. The value and cultural characteristics that the USA has put into international circulation through Hollywood movies can be evaluated within this framework. According to this approach, which is also known as “soft power” [3], governments by media and cultural products present their values to the peoples of foreign countries and to the international public without resorting to any form of pressure. Basically, soft power is a combination of the country’s culture, political values, and foreign policy. States aim to influence and persuade the people of foreign countries through the use of soft power by generating consent within the framework of their foreign policy objectives. Practically, the way to establish a global hegemony from the perspective of superpowers is to create global influence or dominance and establish hegemony in terms of culture.

Public diplomacy is not only seen in today’s political perception as building reputation and image by maintaining relations with foreign states. Public diplomacy is an interaction that targets not only foreign states but also non-governmental organizations and civilians, often as diverse views alongside state views [3]. In this sense, public diplomacy is usually characterized in terms of public relations in the literature, and these interpretations emphasize factors that have a favorable impact on people’s perceptions or views. According to Melissen, public diplomacy has “to understand cultures, attitudes

TABLE 1

<b>Traditional Diplomacy</b>	<b>New Public Diplomacy</b>
<i>Government</i>	Non- governmental
<i>Foreign affairs experts</i>	Practitioners
<i>Official, careful, scientific</i>	Unofficial
<i>Passive public or audience</i>	Active public
<i>Comprehension</i>	Mutual understanding
<i>One-way informational</i>	Dialogic, exchange
<i>To-way asymmetric</i>	Two-way symmetric
<i>No change in behavior</i>	Change in behavior

and behaviors; it is a tool used by states to promote their interests and values” [4]. Public diplomacy, according to another definition, is “the method used by states, organizations, state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes and behaviours, to establish and manage relationships, to manipulate opinions and to direct behaviours in order to realize their own interests and values” [5]. Looking at the definitions, it is emphasized that in the modern technological environment, the identity of diplomacy has shifted, and communication and interaction with international communities are essential in the light of the modern understanding of diplomacy, and public diplomacy is also the most appropriate instrument for achieving the objectives of foreign policy. In this context, public diplomacy can be described as a chain of international public relations activities carried out by states to create public opinion before foreign peoples.

The differences between traditional diplomacy and modern public diplomacy are outlined by Snow as follow [6, pp. 8]:

The new public diplomacy no longer involves the unidirectional and centralistic understanding of governments, as seen in the table above, but social activities representing the public remain at the forefront. In the new public diplomacy, diplomatic interactions or activities performed in the chambers of embassies or government centers are not carried out independently of public opinion. The public is in a neutral role in conventional public diplomacy and takes part in a one-way communication process, while the public is still involved in new public diplomacy and takes part in a two-way communication process. While traditional public diplomacy is not concerned about whether the behavior of the public changes, with new public diplomacy, this is the primary goal.

The new understanding of public diplomacy is more than a standard component of general diplomatic practice and a form of propaganda. The new public diplomacy is concerned with how an international actor influences the perceptions of various media and other international actors in interactive, persuasive, and impressive ways. In seeking

to understand these influential efforts in the context of the United States, the political scientist Joseph Nye explains public diplomacy as one of the tools of soft power and defines soft power as the capacity to achieve what one wants through attraction rather than coercion or compensation [2]. Nye states that there are three dimensions of public diplomacy: The first and closest dimension is the daily communication that includes the explanation of the scope of domestic and foreign policy decisions. Government officials in modern democracies attach great importance to what they have to say to the press and how they have to say after making a decision. The second dimension is strategic communications in which a series of simple themes are created, such as in a political campaign or an advertising campaign. The third dimension is the establishment of long-term relationships with key people over the years through scholarships, exchange programs, internships, seminars, conferences, and media channels [2]. The first of these dimensions provides an essential basis for today's political relations. In general, states focus on communication in the national press, but the international press is more critical in terms of public diplomacy.

In today's world, it is now quite easy and inexpensive to access information "in the network community gathered around networks driven by digitally processed information and communication technologies". This situation, which can be defined as a paradigm of abundance, has also carried about transformations in the field of public diplomacy. In order to avoid speculative circumstances that could emerge as a result of a growth in knowledge and information accumulation as a result of the globalization process, states have begun to perform public diplomacy activities using digital technologies. Starting with the second decade of the 21st century, the Internet and social media platforms have begun to play a more influential role among the tools of strategic action in a truly interconnected global environment.

Although traditional public diplomacy expresses a one-sided and ideological process, targeted audiences are now involved in the new process of public diplomacy known as digital diplomacy. Due to the interaction of modern communication technologies, users can easily distribute their thoughts to the diplomatic channels of the state. So much so that the advancement of modern communication technology has grabbed the Interest of foreign ministries and diplomatic institutions. In today's world, the Internet and smartphones become essential political contact instruments, and performance is measured not only in the ministry of foreign affairs meeting rooms but also on computer monitors and smartphone screens [7].

In general, the concept of digital diplomacy has been defined in several ways. In today's mode of communication, digital diplomacy is defined as "a strategy to manage

change through digital tools and virtual collaborations” [8]. Kampf, Manor, and Segev express digital diplomacy as an expansion in the usage of social media platforms to accomplish foreign policy objectives and proactively manage the image and reputation of the country [9]. According to Westcott, digital diplomacy has had four distinct impacts on foreign policy-making processes [10]. The first of these is the digitization of the service and communication styles offered by diplomats and foreign ministers. In this process, diplomats have begun to make more use of the Internet, both among themselves and in their contact with the public, and have had the ability to integrate and apply their services in the digital environment, and also quick decision-making processes have intensified by digital networking. Second, digital communication networks have opened up a space where it is possible to openly circulate and exchange thoughts and arguments. In this way, the repertoire provided by the Internet has often begun to be used not only by diplomats and various state actors but also by anyone who wishes to influence global public opinion. In terms of public diplomacy, the Internet has created new means to communicate all kinds of ideas, initiatives, and arguments to the world’s public opinion, to spread the official discourse through this mediation, and to persuade the public in a virtual environment. Another point that should be underlined is the functional use of virtual networks formed with digitalization. Foreign policymakers have embarked on a struggle to establish a superiority based on information and reliability in the virtual environment, by participating in the discussion/information network in the virtual environment and actively using the Internet networks on the basis of interaction. Finally, the problem of processing and analyzing the huge quantity of information on the Internet arises. As the sources of information that diplomats and foreign ministers will use in policymaking have grown in the age of modern communication technology, the responsibility and necessity of extracting and identifying the correct information from the information pile has risen in direct proportion to this.

Hanson outlined the policy goals of digital diplomacy in eight points [11]:

1. *Knowledge management* — Categorizing and controlling the information produced by the state for use in the international arena within the framework of national interests and sharing/using efficiently when necessary
2. *Public diplomacy* — Reaching digital citizens on virtual platforms using new communication technologies and influencing them in line with foreign policy objectives
3. *Information management* — Ensuring the flow of information and providing better information in social or political movements

4. *Consular communication* — Establishing direct personal communication channels to be in contact with citizens traveling abroad in crisis situations
5. *Disaster response* — Using technological networks as an intervention in disaster situations
6. *Internet freedom* — Establishing technologies that will enable access to the Internet and thus supporting freedom of expression and democracy by interrupting authoritarianism
7. *Foreign affairs resources* — Leveraging foreign affairs expertise and establishing digital mechanisms to develop national objectives
8. *Policy planning* — International coordination and planning to ensure effective oversight

The concept of digital diplomacy includes the practical usage of Internet networks, as can be seen by the meanings and purposes. The content of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website is now a common procedure and is used mainly to clarify the national foreign policy. Diplomats or diplomatic channels make their foreign policy moves through social networks and adopt a model based on interaction. The multimedia feature, which is one of the advantages of new communication technologies, as well as sharing information through social networks, brings many elements such as graphics, photographs, tables, and videos. In this sense, social media constitutes the center of communication for target audiences and does not require any conditions. In addition, these channels created a wave of transparency and openness.

In diplomatic communication, social media, which has the role of influencing international politics, has broken the canonical structure, enabling diplomats or embassies to communicate with their citizens and people abroad. However, a few negatives stand out at this point. "With the presence of the state and diplomatic channels as hierarchical structures in social media networks, two main issues in terms of communication emerge: The first of these is the flattening of hierarchies, the second is the lack of interaction and dialogue" [12]. Although states find digital diplomacy relevant, they prefer a one-way and non-interactive form of communication on social media networks. Thus, tensions may increase in communities that are included in a hierarchy set in which there is no dialogue or interaction [12]. As it is not effective to carry out diplomatic activities in this manner and also it has the potential to shake the image of states in the world.

According to Manor and Segev, digital diplomacy marks a process in which countries increasingly benefit from social media platforms for the purposes of achieving

their foreign policy goals and managing their reputation and image before the world public with proactive methods [13]. In the meantime, Collins and Bekenova explain that diplomats have had to proactively use social media to create public opinion instead of waiting for media attention passively or being buried in absolute secrecy [14]. Tam also claimed that there are parallels between public relations and public diplomacy and stated that diplomats can use public diplomacy more effectively as a result of personal relationships and social networks they establish online and offline. Thus, in a limited period, digital tools made it possible to respond to international events and reach a wide audience, mainly young people, who use social media extensively.

Another issue that some researchers draw attention to is the data security vulnerabilities in the digital environment and the risks of digital leaks in terms of digital diplomacy processes and national security. Recently, terrorist organizations have begun to make extensive use of new communication technologies for the purpose of gaining new supporters, making propaganda, and obtaining information that would damage national security by infiltrating the digital networks of states. The facts such as the circulation of state secrets in the virtual environment caused the necessity of digital diplomacy to be carried out by states with the awareness of the risks in question and taking the necessary precautions. All in all, the proper and reliable use of digital media in the context of digital diplomacy has become a matter of executing an action plan, mindful of the risks.

## 1.2. Digital diplomacy: the new normal

Important events occurring around the globe can cause major breaking points in the history of the world and even impact the order and functioning of the international system. Diseases that are considered pandemics, such as political events, civil wars or regional wars, economic turmoil, and various reforms, can affect the whole world and determine the agenda. COVID-19, which is the closest example, is one of them. The disease has been the only common point of the international agenda since the first months of 2020. In a short period, from economy to health, politics to culture, it has made its presence felt at all points of the individual and society. This disease, which has a significant effect on the welfare of individuals and society, quickly found itself at the forefront of state and supra-state organizations' policies and decisions. For this reason, with the announcement of the pandemic, it has seriously affected the world, which has frequent and intense connections globally, through these connection points.



Indeed, in the international system, the walls demolished by the wave of globalization are actually unveiled as a new political spirit and system in a distinct manner with the pandemic. Concepts such as global peace, freedom, and integration feed the idea of nationalism that increases with the gravity of global problems. The pandemic process, together with technological walls against cyber-attacks, as well as walls on borders with migrant and refugee problems, has spread the isolation and introverting of people, states, and even the whole world physically and socially. Moreover, even though risks disappear, it would be an optimistic approach to expect the effects which it has caused on individuals and society to fade away in the short term.

Now on, it is assumed that in the new world, macro-wars would be transformed into microbial attacks. The unique struggle of states in combating the pandemic has reinforced the process in which the concept of a strong state regains reputation. In addition to military power, economic power, population, and other such indicators, which the realist approach frequently uses, the global pandemic period has also made it necessary to take into account more specific topics such as the infrastructure of the health system, supply chain, crisis-fighting power, and emergency capacity. States will exist in the near future with the identity of internal protectors defending their own citizens besides their external protective identity against threats originating from terrorism, immigration, and rising powers.

Basically, one might conclude that the “post/pre COVID-19” distinction already tends to overshadow the “post-pre 9/11” concept. In fact, in international affairs, the pandemic itself offers a preference between the idealist approach and the realist approach. In this process, analyzing non-zero-sum games won by all, such as international cooperation and economic integration, is seen as an optimistic approach. As can be seen by the trade tensions between the USA and China, the fact that by saying “me first” international actors are now starting to return to zero-sum games shows that there are shifts in terms of the system. As a matter of fact, despite the financial crisis of 2008–2009 directly impacting and destabilizing the center of world economies, coordinated measures have resolved this crisis. However, due to the polarization and political dispute left over from the crisis period, the same struggle could not be demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic process, especially in European countries [15].

In addition, the absence of a global actor taking the initiative to address regional or global problems, or the dysfunction of existing actors creates a state of global leaderlessness. At the same time, as the health sector is becoming an important component of the security sector strategically and the strict immigration policy is followed by the

states in harmonization with own societies' will, one may say that will trigger a new increase in xenophobia.

Furthermore, a new dimension will be added to the traditional art of state administration by transferring complex elements, such as friendships, partnerships, and hostilities between states, to the virtual world. This would bring new perspectives in several aspects to the theories of classical international relations [16]. For example, the digitalization of foreign aid can be considered within this scope. In addition to classical infrastructure development and perhaps more intensively, the view of technological infrastructure as a way of investment and assistance shows that diplomatic relations will serve strategic objectives in this direction [16]. Likewise, in the current period, the concentration of foreign aid on health equipment and the announcement of crises to the world public opinion in the digital environment opened the door to the compulsory correlation of the virtual world with global crises in international relations. Basically, after this process, infrastructure, and capacity building with early warning systems regarding diseases, information sharing, strict border controls, mobility monitoring-recording systems, and similar issues will constitute the concrete facts of the new world system.

It is also assumed that this shift, as in the international system and states, has created changes in social life. Actually, new habits that states and societies have to adapt prove that a new order will be created in political, economic, and social terms. In the near future, the winners and losers of this process will become more apparent.

### **1.3. COVID-19 and the digitalization of diplomacy**

The modern habits created by the revolution in information technology have a significant influence on the people and culture, as well as on the functioning of states. State imbalances in the international system expand the diversity of global threats and require serious action to be taken against these threats by both states and international organizations. Diplomacy, which has transformed into a different structure with the phenomenon of globalization to prevent global threats, gains special importance in this sense. As a matter of fact, the COVID-19 pandemic is pushing to transform the behavior and habits of groups such as users, customers, citizens, viewers, and participants into digital. In this respect, the future of diplomacy and digital diplomacy concepts in the new normal period becomes important with technological development.

At this point, diplomatic communication is a similar term that stresses the unity between diplomacy and communication. Diplomatic communication is one of the country's key activities to communicate itself to the international audience and to raise its reputation. Propaganda, lobbying, and public relations play an important role in this respect. States express themselves, defend their interests, and even resolve conflicts in physical or virtual environments by these approaches. In particular, it serves certain purposes in the communication that states have recently carried out in the digital environment. One of the methods used to serve this purpose is digital diplomacy activities. Generally speaking, digital diplomacy is the use of the Internet and new information and communication technologies for diplomatic purposes [11]. In another definition, digital diplomacy is characterized as state and non-state actors handling international change by video conferencing and social media over information communication technologies [10]. Hence, it is essential to benefit from online methods and digital diplomacy in order to successfully manage decision-making processes by influencing not only state actors but also the world public opinion. The way to be a good diplomat now is to use digital applications effectively [11]. So much so that it is seen that during and after the pandemic process, digital diplomacy will have a much more influential and prominent position.

In the current period, social media accounts are commonly chosen as a popular and effective form in the digital environment in order to reinforce the identities of leaders in political terms and to give a new identification to their images [17]. In this respect, digital diplomacy requires reconsidering the concepts such as international relations and system sovereignty and geopolitics with new algorithms in the modern era. While it can be seen that the use of social media platforms is common in digital diplomacy, it is possible to carry out diplomatic operations between countries using web or information communication technologies [18].

COVID-19 basically compelled people to concentrate on current patterns and issues, as well as intensified emerging geopolitical trends. In the midst of rising US-China tensions, the pandemic was also followed by an "infodemic", in which both sides employed social media to threaten each other. In the western world, the pandemic and Chinese obligations were used to diminish the dominance of China and curtail its growth as a global power. China has also used "mask diplomacy" to regain its power by exporting medicinal supplies around the world.

Diplomats used emerging technology in an inexperienced and half-hearted manner before the crisis and it did not go outside the strange tweets or Facebook posts for most diplomats. When the possibility of contagion unexpectedly meant that diplomats

and statesmen could not interact face to face, COVID-19 changed all that. Video conferencing had to be held for summits and conferences, but commercial applications such as Zoom were considered to be unsafe for official engagements. Yet more secure government structures have also become clunky and have made it impossible for fluid conversation. Most became persuaded of the limitations to the digitalization of diplomacy in this process and waited confidently for the restoration of normality. As soon as it became apparent that COVID-19 was not a one-off occurrence, it turned out that this optimism was unfounded, and that the possibility of viral pandemics would be a constant aspect of life in the 21st century. Generally, the pandemic has forced a new emphasis on the digitalization of diplomacy in two directions: first of all, diplomacy can be changed to work more efficiently by digital means and, second, digital technology can be tailored to diplomats' unique needs.

All in all, with the exponential expansion of Internet use across society and, in particular, the rise in social media use, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and many other personal blogs have become valuable resources for digital diplomacy. Although this process reached its peak with COVID-19, in fact, concentration had started since the beginning of the last decade. The first example that the digital environment is indispensable for diplomacy was the fact that Obama's success in the election campaign was realized with effective use of Twitter.

Lastly, it is known that digital diplomacy affects the international system. The fact that the door has been opened to a post-human period with robotization after artificial intelligence brings along many risks and problems. The question of whether systems should regulate societies or societies should govern systems must also be considered. While even the concept of digital within digital diplomacy is in a constant transformation, the accelerating effect of COVID-19 will make the broad definition of digital diplomacy a more and more mainstream stance in international relations. The rise of new digital diplomacy will continue with its ever-expanding definition based on the computational-algorithmic order.

#### **1.4. Post-coronavirus global trends**

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic will slip through history books as one of the most significant disasters of the 21st century. The first reaction to this pandemic that forces all humanity to socially distancing is that it will "permanently change our lives". As a matter of fact, from now on the label "before/after corona" is already in place of the definition of "before/after September 11"[14].

The fundamental dynamics of the international system and international relations were influenced by coronavirus, which impacted all humanity and is one of the greatest events witnessed since the Second World War. In fact, the world order that has dominated since the end of the Second World War has been under severe pressure for several years. In recent years, the challenges to the dominance of the US as the sole superpower, the growth of China on the world stage, and the emergence of several power centers have affected world geopolitics irreversibly. Moreover, the rise of nationalism, which has a narrow perspective mixed with xenophobia, anti-immigration, and islamophobia, has triggered strategic shifts in the global governance system. In general, impunity for failure to comply with the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations has caused political tensions in the world order in recent years. While economic pressure instead of cooperation has become an interstate behavior, protectionist tendencies have begun to prevent free international trade. The challenge of COVID-19, which emerged over the time frame of these changes, has put global governance under unprecedented strain in months [19]. This pandemic has become a threat everywhere because of its effect on all areas of human activity, from politics to economics and sociology.

In order to better comprehend the direction the world will take in the post-COVID-19 period, the changes in all areas impacted by this deadly virus must first be carefully analyzed. The world economy is the most prominent and also the first victim of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it also was not in a good shape before the virus. Unemployment rates are increasing with anxiety and uncertainty in approximately every country. Rising poverty and malnutrition are negating decades of meticulous attempts to minimize poverty in developing countries. The World Bank estimates that about 27 million people could be driven into poverty, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia [25]. Global demand for petroleum has declined, dragging the world economy into another major global recession with the stagnation in production. Data in the US, the world's largest economy, are particularly worrying. The recession is also striking in Europe, Japan, and other leading economies. It is obvious that a greater economic depression awaits the world than that experienced in history [21].

Geopolitical complexity and uncertainty are also increasing. With the USA and China at the height of the Cold War, new opportunities for cooperation are taking shape around the world. For example, in Asia, the US is deepening its strategic partnership with India to balance China and is working with other allies in the region to contain China's rise [22]. The United Nations, World Health Organization, and other international organizations struggle to stay meaningful in a rapidly changing world.

In view of the above-mentioned shifts, the “post-COVID-19 world order” has become the most common discussion in the world today. “From now on, nothing will be the same” is the most common expression. However, what is going to happen next is quite controversial. Although some authors agree that with COVID-19, global markets will not be the same as before, some authors say that all human habits will change. The Irish economist and journalist David McWilliams mentioned the following about this process in a statement showing upcoming uncertainty, which he gave to the *Guardian* with Yanis Varoufakis, Greece’s former finance minister:

“I think it is fair to say that capitalism — in the course of this unprecedented crisis — has been suspended. We are not going back to where we were, to business as usual. The state has come back, and this episode will not be forgotten by the electorate. I don’t know where we are going, but one thing seems clear: we are not going back” [23].

As McWilliams said, not only capitalism but also gigantic international structures such as the UN and the EU were questioned in this process, and it was seen that centralized state systems rather than the international structure could act more effectively in this crisis. This situation raises the debate to what extent the state should be effective in the economy. Undoubtedly, discussions regarding this period will be a trending issue at least until the next global crisis.

While predicting the future is not easy, there are clear trends that will shape global governance in the post-COVID-19 era. The first is the singular importance of technology’s impact on all fields that affect people’s lives significantly. Basically, innovation will determine the status of each state in the international environment through knowledge economies and its main pillar of R&D activities. Considering that every country is dependent on technology use, those who create advanced technological infrastructure will have an advantage. As each country will be on its own, competition will emerge for the latest technologies. It will be in every country’s interest to develop a self-sufficient and confident technological infrastructure.

## 2. Conclusion

Digital diplomacy has become a popular concept for the last decade. The effects of digitalization and digital transformation are felt on diplomacy, international relations, global balances, geopolitics, and power concepts, just like every business line. This change and transformation have now entered an irreversible path. Today, the world is faced with a serious situation that has not shaken the world for such a long time,

which has increased the level of global alert to one of its highest ever. Almost every business is carried out remotely, digitally, and electronically. In this case, when talking about diplomacy, “digital diplomacy” draws more attention than ever before as explained previously. One may conclude that the digitalization process speed has been in harmony with the virus spread volume.

The COVID-19 pandemic brings along approaches that require thoroughly reviewing all the conditions, policies, ways of doing business, procedures, protocols, relationships, orders, and norms that constitute the modern society and world order. The founding, transformative and defining power of this period, known as the “New Normal” has taken the world into a new era. The coronavirus pandemic emerged as a health problem but has become a global phenomenon affecting almost every industry.

With COVID-19, social distance has converted public spaces into no men areas and has become a social norm or a modern social contract. In other words, globalization, socialization, and capitalism, which are the main achievements of modernity, have been interrupted and physical contact has been significantly reduced. People’s distancing and isolating themselves from the virus threat brought social mobility, trade, politics, entertainment, and diplomacy to a standstill. In general, life is greatly reduced to debates on science (health data, combating the pandemic) and fiction (the new normal).

Presently, one may certainly assume that this phase has produced two separate worlds that can be called pre-coronavirus and post-coronavirus. Ultimately, the globalized world has been converted from an idealist-based system where business and economic operations can be carried out smoothly, borders are insignificant to a restricted capacity. As a result of the pandemic process, the dominance of skepticism rather than trust, and fear in international affairs with the turbulence effect are causing uncertainty in the world. Therefore, this process makes the international system fragile and unpredictable.

From another perspective, the most important unpredictable positive effect of this crisis is that it slows down global warming and environmental pollution more than in recent years. Although the pandemic affects world trade and production negatively, a new lifestyle, production-consumption models, and new economic activity create initiative areas. In general, this period has been triggered the digitalization process not only in diplomacy but, as it is mentioned previously, in all the fields. In other words, the COVID-19 outbreak largely digitizes behavior in the categories of user, customer, citizen, audience, and participant. The concept of power, which forms the basis of diplomacy, is spreading to the masses with the advances in technology. All in all, the

new normal will be decisive regarding the concepts of diplomacy and digital diplomacy, and as well as about the future of defining digital diplomacy.

In conclusion, almost everyone repeats that the founding and transformative consequences of COVID-19 will be more related to digital topics. While even the concept of digital within digital diplomacy is in a continuous transformation, the accelerating effect of COVID-19 will make the broad definition of digital diplomacy a more mainstream stance in international relations. The rise of new digital diplomacy will continue with its ever-expanding definition based on the computational-algorithmic order.

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