NEW TRENDS IN DIPLOMACY AND VACCINE DEVELOPMENT

# Inside Diplomacy during the Pandemic: Change in the Means and Ways of Practice

MUZAFFAR S. ABDUAZIMOV

50-66

Besides its economic aspect, the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the world of diplomacy deserves academic interests. The existing studies have not so far sufficiently covered ongoing tendencies in diplomacy during the pandemic, specifically focusing on possible changes of the means and ways of its conduct. This empirical research considers six major trends in the diplomatic practice caused by the pandemic, namely: (1) *acceleration* of ICTs penetration; (2) *reappraisal* of information security; (3) ensuring the *reliability* of public diplomacy; (4) further *diversification* of responsible duties; (5) the *growing* role of psychology; and, (6) the emergence of the *hybrid* diplomatic etiquette and protocol. This paper will discuss those trends in which the first trend covers the tendencies of ICTs' increased penetration rate, which temporarily made them the leading communication tool. In turn, the second trend is considered in light of the first trend's triggered factor, which calls for a reevaluation of information security in the period of an increased digital set of activities. The third trend captures the need for proper work with information by making public diplomacy more reliable. The growing intensity of diplomatic work during the pandemic is embodied in the fourth trend, which is about increasing diplomats' responsibilities. The growing role of psychology, as the fifth trend, raises the problems of building a common area between negotiators and also its impact on tourism promotion efforts. In its turn, the sixth trend mentions the reevaluation of diplomatic etiquette and protocol for online and offline activities.

***Keywords:*** *COVID-19 Pandemic, Diplomacy, Acceleration, Hybrid, Protocol*

# Inside Diplomacy during the Pandemic: Change in the Means and Ways of Practice

MUZAFFAR S. ABDUAZIMOV

## Introduction

The year 2020 might be recorded in the annals of history as "the corona year." Since the World Health Organization had declared COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March 2020,[1] the world has been living with new realities. Intellectual potentials of state and non-state actors aim to find possible ways to overcome the disease and revive socio-economic life. Based on the development of the situation, the impact of the pandemic on the global economy has been measured differently. For instance, the Centre for Risk Studies at the University of Cambridge Judge Business School "determined that the potential toll could range between what is called an "optimistic loss" of USD 3.3 trillion in case of rapid recovery, and USD 82 trillion in the event of an economic depression."[2]

1 "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic," World Health Organization, accessed 19 March 2021, https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov.

2 Shalini Nagarajan, "$82 trillion over 5 years? Cambridge study counts the cost of coronavirus," 27 May, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/coronavirus-covid19-pandemic-econamy-money-depression-recession/.

***Muzaffar S. Abduazimov*** *is an Independent Researcher (PhD) at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.*

At the same time, besides the economic variable, the coronavirus' impact on the world of diplomacy likewise deserves an academic interest. The existing studies have not so far sufficiently covered ongoing tendencies in diplomacy during the pandemic, which in turn has been "adapting to uncertainty."[3] Considering the fact that diplomacy, first of all, is about contacts and negotiations, the COVID-19 pandemic—which has minimized the frequency of personal contacts—has certainly had a solid impact on it. Many recent studies have focused on a specific dimension of the pandemic's impact on diplomacy, such as the rising role of information and communication technologies (ICTs), information security issues, recall for public diplomacy and others.[4] Among scholars, Alisher Faizullaev[5] has presented ongoing tendencies in diplomatic practice in a broader context. Obviously, diplomacy during the pandemic is a new research topic, and hopefully, more comprehensive studies will be conducted by scholars in nearest future.

In order to contribute to the existing academic knowledge, by focusing on the coronavirus' impact on diplomacy, the present empirical study considers *six major trends* in the diplomatic practice, observed by the author during the diplomatic post to the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the Republic of Indonesia. Namely, major trends are the *acceleration*[6] of ICTs penetration, the *reappraisal* of information security, ensuring the *reliability* of public diplomacy, further *diversification*[7] of responsible duties,

---

3 Dalya Salinas Pérez, Ulises Canchola Gutiérrez, and José-Juan López-Portillo. "Co-evolution of Diplomacy after the Corona Crisis: An Agenda for Practitioners." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15, no 4 (2020): 663.

4 See for example Corneliu Bjola and Ilan Manor, "Digital Diplomacy in the time of the Corona Virus Pandemic," March 31, 2020, https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/digital-diplomacy-time-corona-virus-pandemic; Jorge Heine. "Still Head Waiters Who Are Occasionally Allowed to Sit? Heads of Mission after COVID-19." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15, no.4 (2020): 648-658; Dalya Salinas Pérez, Ulises Canchola Gutiérrez, and José-Juan López-Portillo. "Co-evolution of Diplomacy after the Corona Crisis: An Agenda for Practitioners." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15, no 4 (2020): 659-669; Daniel B. Shapiro and Daniel Rakov, "Will Zoomplomacy Last?," May 18, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/18/will-zoomplomacy-last/; Jian Wang, "Rethinking Public Diplomacy for a Post-Pandemic World. In a Fast-Changing World with Tensions and Needs Exacerbated by the Pandemic, the Practice of Public Diplomacy Demands a Swift Reconfiguration," accessed on 26 March 2021, http://www.afsa.org/rethinking-public-diplomacy-post-pandemic-world.

5 See Alisher Faizullaev, "Blog Post | Diplomacy's Response to the Coronavirus," 18 May, 2020, https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/hjd/news/2020/blog-post---diplomacys-response-to-the-coronavirus; "Blog Post | Diplomacy's Response to the Coronavirus (Part II)," accessed on 28 May, 2020, https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/hjd/news/2020/blog-post---diplomacys-response-to-the-coronavirus-part-ii.

6 The idea of the term "acceleration" is originated from Pérez, "Co-evolution of Diplomacy," 667.

7 The ideas of the terms "diversification" and "reappraisal" have been originated from Muzaffar S. Abduazimov. "Public Diplomacy: Reappraising the South Korean Case through an Evolutionary Approach." *Korea Journal* 57, no.3 (2017): 83-111.

*growing* role of psychology, and the emergence of the *hybrid* diplomatic etiquette and protocol. In reality, the changes of countries' foreign policy interests—as well as contrasting nationalism and multilateralism—are impartial parts of diplomacy during the pandemic. Yet, it is beyond the scope of the current paper. This empirical research is more about contextual changes in the means and ways of conducting diplomatic work.

## Acceleration of ICTs Penetration

British economist Frances Cairncross in the late 1990s and early 2000s argued that the development of modern ICTs had tremendously minimized the factor of geographical distance from being an obstacle in communication between societies and called it "the death of distance."[8] Nowadays, the pandemic has "accelerated" the penetration "rate" of the ICTs into various fields,[9] and diplomacy is not an exception. Certainly, ICTs have already been actively integrated into the world of diplomacy in the pre-pandemic period, in the form of digital diplomacy. Nevertheless, in the pre-pandemic period, ICTs used to be *one of the means* of conducting diplomatic work, while during the pandemic, it has almost become the *leading tool* of communication.

It has become normal to conduct diplomatic events of various levels through video conferences. For instance, on 11 June 2020, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat M. Mirziyoyev, held negotiations with then the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Suma Chakrabarti,[10] on 26 June 2020, the President of the Republic of Indonesia Joko Widodo participated at the 36th Summit of ASEAN;[11] on 23 July 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia held 8th Round of Political Consultations between the two countries;[12] "for the first time in its history" the 75th

8 Frances Cairncross, *The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution Is Changing our Lives* (Harvard Business School Press, 2001).

9 Pérez, Gutiérrez, and López-Portillo, "Co-evolution of Diplomacy," 667.

10 "President of Uzbekistan holds talks with EBRD President," *Uzbekistan National News Agency*, 11 June 2020, https://uza.uz/en/posts/president-of-uzbekistan-holds-talks-with-ebrd-president-11-06-2020.

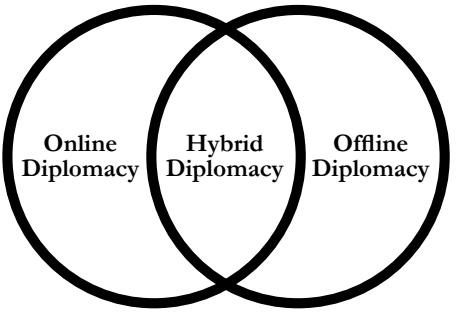
11 "President Jokowi Highlights Importance of ASEAN Countries Cooperation," the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Hanoi, 26 June 2020, https://kemlu.go.id/hanoi/en/news/7386/president-jokowi-highlights-importance-of-asean-countries-cooperation.

12 "Inter-MFA Political Consultations with Indonesia," *Uzbekistan National News Agency*, 27 July 2020, http://old.uza.uz/en/politics/inter-mfa-political-consultations-with-indonesia-23-07-2020.

session of the United Nations General Assembly had been conducted "in a different manner,"[13] i.e., online. Examples can be continued, yet, the core idea of the ongoing tendency is an acceleration of ICTs unprecedented penetration into diplomacy, moving it towards the online set of activities.

To refer to online negotiations' increased role, academicians use the so-called terms "zoomplomacy"[14] and "remote diplomacy."[15] The transition to an online set of activities does not mean replacing traditional "personal diplomacy,"[16] which has always been and will be the founding basis of diplomatic work. "Online diplomacy"[17] will enter a niche, where negotiations' agenda is allowed to be discussed on a digital platform. Certain topics will doubtless stay beyond the online format. For that reason, based on the type of communication, currently, we witness the division of fields of activity between "online" and "offline diplomacies."[18] Henceforth, rising importance has gotten the mixture of the two formats, called "hybrid diplomacy."[19] (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Hybrid Diplomacy**




Diplomats use the online format as an alternative to conducting professional work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stemming from the pandemic scale and implementing quarantine regimes locally

13 "General Debate of the 75th Session of the General Assembly," United Nations, accessed on 19 March 2021, https://www.un.org/en/delegate/general-debate-75th-session-general-assembly.

14 The term is originated from the "Zoom" platform.

15 See Shapiro, and Rakov, "Will Zoomplomacy Last?".

16 Ibid.

17 Ilan Manor, *Are We There Yet: Have MFAs Realized the Potential of Digital Diplomacy? Results from a Cross-National Comparison*. (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

and internationally, online tools' levels of usage differentiate accordingly. Certainly, an online diplomatic event requires less financing, allows avoiding time-consuming programs, and deploys less human resources. However, besides its benefits, the acceleration of ICTs penetration into diplomacy poses significant information security risks.

## Reappraisal of Information Security

The intertwinement of diplomacy and ICTs during the pandemic is a timely measure. International cooperation cannot go into a waiting phase until the situation around the pandemic softens. Instead, it requires more international collaboration. Diplomacy always needs to find non-standard solutions. Nevertheless, while a diplomat participates at an online event, the very first question on mind is information security. This is a certain type of psychological barrier that reminds about itself more than before. Indeed, there is no discussion that diplomat and information security are essential parts of the diplomatic profession's DNA. However, the level of digitalization and acceleration of ICTs penetration requires reappraising information security.

In order to avoid information leakage, diplomats pay more attention to the level of information to be voiced during online meetings. This is due to the simple fact that online events and negotiations call into question compliance with "off-the-record" protocol. On the one hand, some express the opinion about the need to "apply the Chatham House Rule[20] to online settings."[21] On the other hand, still, there is a lot of "skepticism about its applicability online," and there is no guarantee that the event "can be easily recorded by any of the participants."[22]

While information security is at the stake of "online diplomacy," information itself has become hard to manage in a broader context. The ability to work with information has traditionally been essential for diplomats. A better informed, prepared, and equally qualified to work with an information diplomat is even more essential for diplomacy's

20 "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed." See "The Chatham House Rule," The Chatham House, accessed on 25 March 2021, https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule.

21 "The Future of Meetings Conference: Summary Report," DiploFoundation, accessed on 23 March 2021, https://meetings.diplomacy.edu/report/the-future-of-meetings-conference-report/.

22 Ibid.

contemporary digitalized world. Yet, the "corona crisis [which] is also a digital disinformation crisis"[23] revealed existing weaknesses of diplomatic work in proper management of the information flow. Due to the fact that the field where diplomacy interlinks with information is part of public diplomacy, the pandemic has shown one more time that public diplomacy should not be only available but also reliable.

## Ensuring Reliability of Public Diplomacy

Increased digitalization during the pandemic has considerably intensified the scale of social networks' use in diplomatic practice. Along with the official pages of diplomatic missions, there is a tendency among diplomats to integrate their personal accounts into the list of communication tools to convey first-hand information to national and foreign audiences and receive their feedback. The latter has been conditioned by two factors: providing reliable information and maintaining a country's positive image. In other words, diplomats are required to "be little more than elevated messengers,"[24] which means to build closer contact with national and international audiences and stay on top of the information flow. The increased intensity of disinformation becomes the reason for the need to stay on top of the information flow.

For instance, during the pandemic, there is an upsurge of cases of dissemination of false (hoax) information about the planned charter and/or regular flights, the possibility of purchasing tickets (financial fraud), or other illegal actions. For this reason, diplomats actively engage with the information world for "tracking and neutralizing fake social [and] media accounts."[25] In this sense, public diplomacy is addressed to support reliable first-hand information to a wide audience. Thereby, it might be said that diplomats are becoming "like investigative journalists" trying to get "access to … more accurate and up to date" than average information, along with being "strategy consultants" to advise "concrete courses of action to capital."[26]

The support of countries' positive image is the second major factor for active public diplomacy. Naturally, in the massive flow of information,

23 Bjola, and Manor. "Digital Diplomacy."

24 Jorge Heine, "Still Head Waiters Who Are Occasionally Allowed to Sit? Heads of Mission after COVID-19." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15, no 4 (2020): 653.

25 Bjola, and Manor. "Digital Diplomacy."

26 Pérez, Gutiérrez, and López-Portillo, "Co-evolution of Diplomacy," 664.

"citizens are online comparing their nation's handling of the crisis, to that of other nations."[27] Moreover, "as the world is watching, the reputation and credibility of each nation, through its words and deeds, are also put to the test."[28] Consequently, the means and ways of delivering related information to the public have gotten importance. In general, public diplomacy has become "a significant component of every nation's international relations and influence, serving as … a critical, collective linkage between policy and people, domestic and international."[29] With the increased need for effective public diplomacy, the pandemic has called the diplomats to ensure its reliability, which is in time, resistant, more active, and—to put in words of economics—masterly adapted to the equilibrium point of supply and demand of reliable information. Some might note that ideal public diplomacy has always been deployed in this style. However, during the pandemic, consideration over the increased need for that ideal public diplomacy has become more evident.

Ministries of Foreign Affairs are also trying to ensure the availability of first-hand official information. For instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan and its affiliated Information Agency "Dunyo" introduced the COVID-19 section on their websites.[30] Moreover, to facilitate the contact of citizens with diplomatic staff abroad, MFA of Uzbekistan and IA "Dunyo" regularly publish official announcements and statements by including direct contact details of the diplomatic staff in each country.[31] Altogether it has created a mechanism that provides first-hand information and leaves the door open for 24/7 immediate feedback.

---

27 Bjola, and Manor. "Digital Diplomacy."

28 Wang, "Rethinking Public Diplomacy."

29 Ibid.

30 See "COVID-19,"Dunyo Information Agency, accessed on 27 March 2021, https://dunyo.info/en/site/blog/covid-19_en.

31 See for example "Список созданных при посольствах и консульских учреждениях Узбекистана за рубежом оперативных штабов для своевременного реагирования на обращения граждан" [List of operational headquarters created at the embassies and consular offices of Uzbekistan abroad for timely response to citizens' appeals], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, accessed March 27, 2021, http://m.mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2020/03/23818/; "Основные требования для въезда граждан Узбекистана на учебу в зарубежные страны" [Main requirements for the entry of citizens of Uzbekistan to study in foreign countries], Dunyo Information Agency, September 7, 2020, https://dunyo.info/ru/site/inner/osnovnie_trebovaniya_dlya_vaezda_grazhdan_uzbekistana_na_uchebu_v_zarubezhnie_strani-p3v.

## Further Diversification of Responsible Duties

Traditionally, tasks in politics, economics, consular, culture, education, information, and other related areas have been essential for diplomats. Idealistically, diplomats have always expected to be a polymath. Meanwhile, during the pandemic, diplomacy has "become [even] more inclusive, knowledge-based network of professionals and institutions."[32] For instance, the pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 *ipso facto* has increased the relevance of healthcare issues. Verily, the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between countries in healthcare issues has been relevant long before the current pandemic situation. In practice, diplomats have been dealing with this issue in countries with a preferred healthcare system standard. Nevertheless, healthcare topics have not been a top priority for most diplomats. To indicate this ongoing tendency, Ministries of Foreign Affairs have started to list the healthcare topics as one of the tops among the overall plan for 2021.[33]

Healthcare topics have become more preferred as well as in observation and analysis. Naturally, issues of development, the situation around the pandemic, its impact on socio-economic life at national, regional, and international contexts, and the search for non-standard solutions to achieve previously settled goals have become important. To discuss the issue professionally, most foreign Embassies have been assisting in online consultations between ministries of health. An essential part of the ongoing process is the palpably increased role of diplomats at "the interface between disease management and statecraft."[34]

Most diplomats have started to monitor on a daily basis foreign countries' achievement in the development of optimal combinations of treatment for COVID-19 patients and potential vaccines. To denote the ever-growing relevance of activities in this area, the term "vaccine diplomacy" has been widely used.[35] The latter means a set of diplomatic measures taken to ensure access to the best practices in the development of potential vaccines, to enhance bilateral and/or multilateral cooperation between countries in conducting joint R&D, and, in the case of the announcement of production, to ensure the signing of

32 Pérez, Gutiérrez, and López-Portillo, "Co-evolution of Diplomacy," 666.

33 See for example MOFA Indonesia, "Annual Press Statement 2021," YouTube video, 1:29:21, 6 January 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clEpVy54ZHU.

34 Heine, "Still Head Waiters," 652.

35 Faizullaev, "Blog Post | Diplomacy's Response to the Coronavirus (Part II)."

a contract for the purchase of the vaccine at the shortest term.[36] To put it in other words, a peaceful "diplomatic race" is on for potential vaccines. Especially, regarding the vaccines, besides "technical considerations," diplomats also have to consider various other factors, including political, cultural, and so forth, "to evaluate which vaccine candidates might be the most useful" and appropriate.[37]

Consular work should be likewise considered within the framework of the further diversification of responsible duties. Practically, diplomats have deployed more resources into turning consular work into in time, reliable, constantly available physical and psychological protection (3P) of citizens. Measures have been conducted to improve citizens' health conditions within consular districts of diplomatic missions. For instance, all Embassies and General Consulates of Uzbekistan abroad launched Operational Centers 24/7 with hotlines. Additionally, to evacuate the citizens of Uzbekistan, charter flights have been organized. Each charter flight is carried out by the diligent work of diplomats, from solving the problems of expired visas with the host countries' immigration authorities, obtaining permission to transit through closed terminals until monitoring citizens' psychological condition.

As part of such measures, on 23 March 2020, the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Indonesia, in cooperation with related institutions, had also organized the charter flight. The flight included citizens of Uzbekistan from Indonesia, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian countries. Assuredly, in such cases, Uzbekistan's diplomatic missions worked as "one single organism" and took all possible measures to assist all citizens, regardless of their current location. Thus, with the assistance of Uzbekistan's diplomatic missions in foreign countries, additional groups of citizens from Indonesia and Vietnam have been returned through other countries of the Asia Pacific region.

Embassies have started to dispatch more humanitarian and other related assistance. Some diplomatic missions have created special funds to support citizens who find themselves in difficult conditions due to the pandemic. For instance, "diplomatic missions of Uzbekistan in Russia launched a social campaign "Mekhr" [Kindness] aimed at providing financial assistance to the citizens of Uzbekistan who faced challenges

36 Ibid.

37 Pérez, Gutiérrez, and López-Portillo, "Co-evolution of Diplomacy," 664.

due to coronavirus outbreak."[38] There are more examples, the main idea of which is that the consular work has been tremendously strengthened to ensure citizens' safety and protection. It is also not overestimating to mention that in such moments when every citizen feels psychological pressure, diplomats have almost become a personal psychologist for every citizen with strengthening the overall role of diplomatic missions as the place of reliable protection in the broader sense of the word. Naturally, all consular activities are built around this philosophy—reliable protection, yet during the pandemic, special attention has been paid to ensure in time, reliable, constantly available 3P (Physical and Psychological Protection).

## Growing Role of Psychology

Idealistically, a well-qualified diplomat is also a psychologist. It is one of the essentials of the profession. Meanwhile, the role of psychology in diplomatic work during the pandemic has grown further. Particularly, it refers to negotiations. As mentioned, the shift to a more online set of activities is a timely measure of diplomacy during the pandemic. However, online diplomacy has its pitfalls and cannot represent all the benefits of personal diplomacy. Despite the fact that online activities are relatively easier to be conducted than personal meetings, it minimizes the non-verbal part of communication which is also an impartial part of any negotiation. The lack of natural balance between verbal and non-verbal communication, precaution in using ICTs, which altogether might be called artificial limitations, complicates the Building of a Common Area (BCA). In this sense, the initially endogenous factor of the negotiator's psychological condition eventually generates exogenous factors as an overall virtue of an ongoing event.

Stemming from the diplomatic practice during the pandemic, it might be noted that it is impossible to hold backstage conversations during breaks, which sometimes are no less important than the official part of the event. Specifically referring to the "summitry," it removed the "two critical elements," namely, "sublime governance" and "inter-moments."[39] Based on the fact that "inter-moments are the domain of brush-bys,

38 "202 citizens of Uzbekistan in Russia received financial aid since the launch of "Mekhr" campaign," *Dunyo Information Agency*, 18 May 2020, https://dunyo.info/en/site/inner/202_citizens_of_uzbekistan_in_russia_received_financial_aid_since_the_launch_of_mekhr_campaign-BGY.

39 Tristen Naylor, "All That's Lost: The Hollowing of Summit Diplomacy in a Socially Distanced World." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15, no 4 (2020): 585.

pull-asides, and walk-and-talks,"[40] BCA has been equally weakened. It is true not only at the level of state leaders but also those engaged in diplomatic work.

Evidently, "the shift to online meetings eliminates the all-important physicality."[41] Meanwhile, as diplomacy during the pandemic is configured hitherto into a hybrid set, some meetings are conducted offline, though a few. Nevertheless, the initial precaution and the need to conduct an event by observing safety measures still create physical and psychological distance between negotiators. As such, BCA's role has weakened likewise in personal meetings, though comparatively less critical than in an online setting.

A psychological variable is also evident in performing the economic duties of diplomats. Specifically, it is noticeable in the tourism sphere, suspended for the time being. In this field, a marketing approach has faced some adjustments, and attention is paid to promote the country's image as a safe travel place. The highlight of the epidemiological situation, national healthcare system's capabilities, and compliance with the health protocol has become essential. In Uzbekistan's case, this shift of preferences manifested in a new approach labeled "Uzbekistan. Safe travel GUARANTEED."[42] The use of the new approach visually can be seen in social media accounts of diplomatic representatives.[43]

Plainly, in the pre-pandemic period, potential travelers or travel agencies who contacted the diplomatic mission were rarely interested in the issues mentioned above. During negotiations about the revival of cooperation in tourism, participants are more interested in the provision of medical services, quality, and location of quarantine centers, payments for unforeseen hospitalizations, and laboratory facilities for PCR or rapid swab antigen tests. In the case of the availability of direct flights between countries, negotiators even raise the issue of the air

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid, 584.

42 "COVID-19 in Uzbekistan," National PR-centre, 15 March 2021, https://uzbekistan.travel/en/o/covid-19-in-uzbekistan/.

43 See for example, Uzbekistan Embassy in Jakarta, "Is it safe to travel to #Uzbekistan during Pandemic?," Facebook, 23 November 2020, https://www.facebook.com/Uzbekistan.Pearl.of.East/videos/410599996968219; Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Ukraine, "We present to your attention the video "Uzbekistan. Safe travel GUARANTEED ". The video was developed to demonstrate the new operating system of sanitary and epidemiological safety in Uzbekistan for tourists based on world standards," Facebook, 7 December 2020, https://www.facebook.com/uzbekistan.org.ua/posts/3470092303108539; Uzbekistan Embassy in Israel, Welcome to Uzbekistan! "Uzbekistan. Safe travel GUARANTEED," Facebook, 27 March 2021, https://www.facebook.com/Uzbekistan-Embassy-in-Israel-199912747280819.

filter systems in airplanes. Primitive, but it is a fact. Thus, the task of diplomats, responsible for cooperation in the tourism field, provides timely answers to similar questions and creates a sense of complete security among foreign tourists, to put it in other words, to cool down psychologically.

## The Emergence of the Hybrid Diplomatic Etiquette and Protocol

The diplomatic etiquette and protocol have likewise been facing certain adjustments, which call for reconsidering the existing traditional norms in the light of a hybrid set of activities. Besides an online presentation of newly appointed ambassadors' credentials, which had never been practiced in the pre-pandemic period, the change also implies the diplomatic etiquette and protocol of personal meetings. To consider the two dimensions of diplomatic etiquette and protocol, they can also be called online and offline diplomatic etiquette and protocols.[44]

Due to the growing concern, the first part of being considered is online diplomatic etiquette and protocol. Obviously, ICTs are easy to use. However, the easiness of their use also requires participants' permanent concentration. In diplomatic practice, there have been several cases, which cannot be disclosed in this paper due to the diplomatic etiquette in its classical form, when a moderator and a participant of an online event have forgotten to turn off the microphone, eventually causing an unpleasant moment of exposing of internal conversations to the whole audience.

No less importance presents the visuality of participants. Though it happens very few in high-level diplomatic events, the mid-level still experience the cases of temporary switching of the web camera by participants during the event, the reason for which can vary broadly. However, the diplomatic practice shows that switching off the web camera can also be perceived by other parts in a different meaning, especially in certain cultures that are extremely sensitive to symbolism. Basically, symbolism has always mattered in diplomacy, yet, engaging more into an online set of activities has positioned the matter of symbolic also from the digital perspective. Hence, the current state of affairs of

44 The ideas of calling the two dimensions as online and offline, altogether further grouped as hybrid have basically been originated from Ilan Manor, *Are We There Yet*.

online activities calls for "strengthening diplomatic comprehension of technology, not just [as] technological products,"[45] but also within the framework of diplomatic etiquette and protocol.

Offline diplomatic etiquette and protocol have likewise been adjusted with new health protocol requirements, or as it is generally called in Indonesian case, "new normal."[46] New requirements include social distancing, the use of disinfectants before and after the meeting, temperature measurement, ensuring "BYOM—Bring Your Own Mask,"[47] and others. The greeting style has also changed in countries where hands shakings have been allowed in local culture. For example, in Indonesia, many started "elbow shake."[48] There is also a tendency to greet in the form of an Indian "the Namaste or the head-nod greeting."[49] All might sound primitive, yet even these minor details start to require permanent concentration, certainly if any participant of an event does not want to be captured by mass media in the role of health protocol breaker.

Last but not least is organizational moments of online meetings. For instance, while in the pre-pandemic period, initial questions in organizing events had been the dates of visits, venue, and other related parts of the program. Recently, participants first clarify the name of an online platform, reliability of communication, location of the camera, and so forth. In the light of happening, no matter how ironic it sounds, the most used phrases among diplomats have become "can you hear me" and "we can hear you loud and clear."[50] To sum, there is a tendency to adapt to the new "diplomatic code of conduct,"[51] which also can be called hybrid diplomatic etiquette and protocol.

---

45 Pérez, Gutiérrez, and López-Portillo, "Co-evolution of Diplomacy," 667.

46 "Mengenal Konsep New Normal" [Understanding the Concept of New Normal], *Portal Informasi Indonesia*, 31 May 2020, https://indonesia.go.id/kategori/kuliner/1859/mengenal-konsep-new-normal.

47 Jura Koncius, "A former U.S. Chief of Protocol on How You Can be Diplomatic in Covid Times," *The Washington Post,* 21 July 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/home/a-former-us-chief-of-protocol-on-how-you-can-be-diplomatic-in-covid-times/2020/07/20/5cb7d120-c520-11ea-b037-f9711f89ee46_story.html.

48 Lenny Tristia Tambun, "Greetings in the Time of Corona: Indonesia Introduces Elbow-Shake," *Jakarta Globe*, 12 March 2020, https://jakartaglobe.id/lifestyle/greetings-in-the-time-of-corona-indonesia-introduces-elbowshake/.

49 Koncius, "A former U.S. Chief of Protocol."

50 "The Future of Meetings."

51 Shapiro, and Rakov, "Will Zoomplomacy Last?".

## Conclusion

Generally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, diplomacy has experienced six main trends, which are the *acceleration* of ICTs penetration, *reappraisal* of information security, ensuring the *reliability* of public diplomacy, further *diversification* of responsible duties, the *growing* role of psychology, and the emergence of the *hybrid* diplomatic etiquette and protocol.

The acceleration of ICTs penetration considers its increased role in being a *leading communication tool*, moving diplomacy towards a hybrid set of activities. At the same time, a digitalization tendency calls to reappraise information security in diplomatic practice, which has become hard to manage. The need to manage the information flow has likewise increased public diplomacy, particularly ensuring its reliability. Ongoing tendencies show the further diversification of diplomats' responsible duties. The latter has also been enriched by the requirement of being better prepared for healthcare issues.

Additionally, consular work has been strengthened to ensure citizens' safety and protection, providing reliable Physical and Psychological Protection (3P). The move towards a digitalized set of activities raises the question of the growing psychological aspect. The initial precaution and the conduct of the event by observing safety standards create a certain psychological distance between participants, thus relatively weakening a sense of Building Common Area (BCA). Last but not least, observation inside diplomacy during the pandemic is the emergence of the hybrid diplomatic etiquette and protocol, which applies to online and personal diplomacy.

Scholars try to assess the further development of the current pandemic situation. There is a hope that humanity will soon be able to overcome the disease. The start of vaccination programs gives hope, yet again raises the questions about nationalism and commitment to multilateralism. Nevertheless, a real assessment of the current situation shows that the recovery process, including the psychological aspect, has already had and will have a significant impact on diplomatic practice. Will diplomacy be able to return in the form like it was in pre-pandemic period? If yes, how long this process will take? Tough questions.

It can be confidently noted in the current state of affairs that diplomacy during the pandemic has been adjusting to new norms and realities. Diplomats are in the midst of the transformation of diplomatic activity. Diplomats are aware of changes in work methods and

conditions, undertaking efforts to fulfill their duties professionally. This is one of the main components of the diplomatic profession's philosophy, to find out the way from any situation, which is traditionally taught at diplomatic schools, including the Uzbekistan school of diplomacy.

## Bibliography


Abduazimov, Muzaffar S. "Public Diplomacy: Reappraising the South Korean Case through an Evolutionary Approach." *Korea Journal* 57, no.3 (2017): 83-111.

Bjola, Corneliu, and Ilan Manor. "Digital Diplomacy in the time of the Corona Virus Pandemic." March 31, 2020. https://www.uscpublic-diplomacy.org/blog/digital-diplomacy-time-coronavirus-pandemic.

Cairncross, Frances. *The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution Is Changing our Lives*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001.

DiploFoundation. "The Future of Meetings Conference: Summary Report." Accessed March 23, 2021. https://meetings.diplomacy.edu/report/the-future-of-meetings-conference-report/.

Dunyo Information Agency. "COVID-19."Accessed March 27, 2021. https://dunyo.info/en/site/blog/covid-19_en.

_____. "Основные требования для въезда граждан Узбекистана на учебу в зарубежные страны" [Main requirements for the entry of citizens of Uzbekistan to study in foreign countries]. September 7, 2020. https://dunyo.info/ru/site/inner/osnovnie_trebovaniya_dlya_vaezda_grazhdan_uzbekistana_na_uchebu_v_zarubezhnie_strani-p3v.

Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Ukraine. "We present to your attention the video "Uzbekistan. Safe travel GUARANTEED ". The video was developed to demonstrate the new operating system of sanitary and epidemiological safety in Uzbekistan for tourists based on world standards." Facebook, December 7, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/uzbekistan.org.ua/posts/3470092303108539.

Faizullaev, Alisher. "Blog Post | Diplomacy's Response to the Coronavirus." 18 May, 2020. https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/hjd/news/2020/blog-post---diplomacys-response-to-the-coronavirus.

_____. "Blog Post | Diplomacy's Response to the Coronavirus (Part II)." May 28, 2020. https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/hjd/news/2020/blog-post---diplomacys-response-to-the-coronavirus-part-ii.

Heine, Jorge. "Still Head Waiters Who Are Occasionally Allowed to Sit? Heads of Mission after COVID-19." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15, no.4 (2020): 648-658.

"Inter-MFA political consultations with Indonesia." *Uzbekistan National News Agency*, July 27, 2020. http://old.uza.uz/en/politics/inter-mfa-political-consultations-with-indonesia-23-07-2020.

Koncius, Jura. "A former U.S. Chief of Protocol on How You Can be Diplomatic in Covid Times." *The Washington Post*, July 21, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/home/a-former-us-chief-of-protocol-on-how-you-can-be-diplomatic-in-covid-times/2020/07/20/5cb7d120-c520-11ea-b037-f9711f89ee46_story.html.

Manor, Ilan. *Are We There Yet: Have MFAs Realized the Potential of Digital Diplomacy? Results from a Cross-National Comparison*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

"Mengenal Konsep New Normal" [Understanding the Concept of New Normal]. *Portal Informasi Indonesia*, 31 May 2020. https://indonesia.go.id/kategori/kuliner/1859/mengenal-konsep-new-normal.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. "Список созданных при посольствах и консульских учреждениях Узбекистана за рубежом оперативных штабов для своевременного реагирования на обращения граждан" [List of operational headquarters created at the embassies and consular offices of Uzbekistan abroad for timely response to citizens' appeals]. Accessed on 27 March 2021. http://m.mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2020/03/23818/.

Nagarajan, Shalini. "$82 trillion over 5 years? Cambridge study counts the cost of coronavirus." 27 May 2020. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/coronavirus-covid19-pandemic-econamy-money-depression-recession/.

National PR-centre. "COVID-19 in Uzbekistan." Last modified on 15 March 2021. https://uzbekistan.travel/en/o/covid-19-in-uzbekistan/.

Naylor, Tristen. "All That's Lost: The Hollowing of Summit Diplomacy in a Socially Distanced World." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15, no.4 (2020): 583-598.

Pérez, Dalya Salinas, Ulises Canchola Gutiérrez, and José-Juan López-Portillo. "Co-evolution of Diplomacy after the Corona Crisis: An Agenda for Practitioners." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15, no.4 (2020): 659-669.

"President of Uzbekistan holds talks with EBRD President." *Uzbekistan National News Agency*, 11 June 2020. https://uza.uz/en/posts/

president-of-uzbekistan-holds-talks-with-ebrd-president-11-06-2020.
Shapiro, Daniel B., and Daniel Rakov. "Will Zoomplomacy Last?" 18 May 2020. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/18/will-zoomplomacy-last/.
Tambun, Lenny Tristia. "Greetings in the Time of Corona: Indonesia Introduces Elbow-Shake." *Jakarta Globe*, March 12, 2020. https://jakartaglobe.id/lifestyle/greetings-in-the-time-of-corona-indonesia-introduces-elbowshake/.
The Chatham House. "The Chatham House Rule." Accessed on 25 March 2021. https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule.
The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Hanoi. "President Jokowi Highlights Importance of ASEAN Countries Cooperation." 26 June 2020. https://kemlu.go.id/hanoi/en/news/7386/president-joko-wi-highlights-importance-of-asean-countries-cooperation.
United Nations. "General Debate of the 75th Session of the General Assembly." Accessed on 19 March 2021. https://www.un.org/en/delegate/general-debate-75th-session-general-assembly.
Uzbekistan Embassy in Jakarta. "Is it safe to travel to #Uzbekistan during Pandemic?" Facebook, 23 November 2020. https://www.facebook.com/Uzbekistan.Pearl.of.East/videos/410599996968219.
Uzbekistan Embassy in Israel. "Welcome to Uzbekistan! Uzbekistan. Safe travel GUARANTEED." Facebook, 27 March 2021. https://www.facebook.com/Uzbekistan-Embassy-in-Israel-199912747280819.
Wang, Jian. "Rethinking Public Diplomacy for a Post-Pandemic World. In a Fast-Changing World with Tensions and Needs Exacerbated by the Pandemic, the Practice of Public Diplomacy Demands a Swift Reconfiguration." Accessed on 26 March 2021. http://www.afsa.org/rethinking-public-diplomacy-post-pandemic-world.
World Health Organization. "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic." Accessed on 19 March 2021. https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov.
MOFA Indonesia. "Annual Press Statement 2021." YouTube video, 1:29:21, 6 January 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clEpVy54ZHU.
"202 citizens of Uzbekistan in Russia received financial aid since the launch of "Mekhr" campaign." *Dunyo Information Agency*, 18 May 2020. https://dunyo.info/en/site/inner/202_citizens_of_uzbekistan_in_russia_received_financial_aid_since_the_launch_of_mekhr_campaign-BGY.