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**Digital Diplomatic Crisis
Communication:
Reconceptualising Diplomatic
Signalling in an age of Real Time
Governance**

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I. Introduction

On December 22, 2016, President Donald Trump (@realdonaldtrump) tweeted “The United States must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nuke”. The Tweet was shared over 20,340 times and became a subject of intense scrutiny amongst policy makers and the international community at large, in seeking to determine whether Trump was in fact signalling a change in America's nuclear posture after decades.

On December 9, 2013, the Swedish Ambassador to Ukraine (@vBeckerath) tweeted his views relating to the countries protests for democratic reform. The Tweet read: “impossible not be impressed by the people on the cold streets of Kiev showing their support for a European future for Ukraine. #Євромайдан”. The Tweet was shared to over 3,000 followers, and signalled, if only indirectly, where Sweden's loyalty on this issue may lie.

On July 15, 2014, the U.S. Ambassador to Israel (@AmbShapiro) retweeted the words of then Secretary of State (@JohnKerry). These words denounced the militant group Hamas, whilst expressing sympathy towards the Israeli state during their time of crises. The tweet read: “I condemn Hamas for shooting rockets at a time Israel and Egypt are working in good faith to get a ceasefire”. The Tweet was shared to over 19,000 followers and became a symbol of the United States position during the 2014 conflict.

Sculpted by the forces of globalisation and its consequence on communicative capabilities, diplomacy headed into the 21st century facing a surplus of challenges. *Inter alia*, these challenges saw the confrontation of old ideals versus new practices. Paradigms which had previously governed the workings of diplomacy for centuries, quickly began to shift. Foreign policy proved particularly vulnerable to these winds of change, with Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA) experiencing seismic permutations concerning how their policies were created, the actors which created it, and the space surrounding the institutions national and international accountability. Under the changing dynamics of globalisation, it seemed that no aspect of the diplomatic craft proved immune to the forces of global change.

However, not all the factors which brought about these shifts in diplomatic practice, weighed in with equal measure. Although many of them were diverse and interlocking in nature, to grant them equal credit could

perhaps be regarded as unjust play. Standing firm as one of the key forces of change within the practice of 21st century diplomacy, was the digital revolution, and its near instant impact on every aspect of diplomatic affairs.

While gaining an understanding of this new environment is a necessary task in seeking to understand all aspects of current diplomatic practice, it is particularly pertinent during a time of crisis. Why? Because during a crisis, the role of the diplomat becomes heightened, acting as the vocal gatekeeper of their state's foreign policy, and increasingly serves as a messenger who projects and carries out their Ministries message in a bid to achieve their institution's goals and objectives. Crises periods have always shown to increase the pressure on MFAs, to craft, and project their policies in a time-sensitive manner, and to have their decisions backed by information, which is cognisant, relevant, and appropriate to the crisis at play. While much of these historical pressures and heightened roles continue in the 21st century environment, the manner in which they are now presented and understood stands in remarked difference to that of the past. The altered environment in which foreign policy now operates, creates ripple effects across all corners of diplomatic crisis management and strategy, now forcing or pushing more MFAs to question and re-evaluate how they 'do' and carry out policy communicative practices during these contexts.

Set against the changing background of crisis communication in the digital age, this working paper focuses its attention on the communicative capability of digital diplomatic signalling (DDS) during times of political turmoil. It centres its discussion around the key question: *How has the process of diplomatic signalling evolved during the digital age, and through what mechanisms are diplomatic signals now generated online?* This question allows us to explore how technological advancements in the 21st century have altered diplomatic communicative practices during times of crisis, how information technologies, in particular how social media platforms, are increasingly incorporated into the daily practice of diplomatic communication and how this change has transformed diplomatic activities in general. And more specifically, how this change has altered the historic practice of diplomatic signalling. In particular, this question allows us to examine and explore the increasing role that DDS has come to play within a diplomat's crisis communication strategy, or at very least, the extent to which it has come to be regarded as a component of a diplomat's crisis communication toolbox. This working paper and the continued research which will accompany it¹, begins to explore, how, when used effectively the digital signalling process can work as a worthy component of a state's foreign policy strategy, but when used ineffectively may emerge as nothing more than a communication practice which simply adds to the vast amount of data online. Concurrently, this papers discussion sheds light on the changing nature of crises in the 21st century and how a MFA may successfully navigate its communication practices to ensure

¹ This working paper is part of an upcoming series which seeks to highlight individual online communicative capabilities, their changing impact on diplomatic practice, and how when combined these online communicative capabilities can work towards a process of virtual state enlargement. The next work paper will highlight and reconceptualise the online communicative capabilities of online strategic narratives, contextualized in a framework of political crisis.

that their foreign policy goals and objectives are met, while continuously working towards effective crisis management on behalf its actors, state and the international community at large.

Now, it should be noted, that while this paper seeks to provide a core focus on the unique and increasing process of DDS, assessing how it emerges, what mechanisms it consists of, and what *possible* influence the digital capability may possess through the power of its projection and audience reception online, it should be made explicitly clear, that at this time, the core goal of this paper, is not to assist with speculative musing on why sending states are acting in a certain way, but rather assess what their actual behaviour looks like. As although the possible influence and impact of DDS can be assessed through the reception of the online messages sent during a crisis – this research is of the conceptual stance that to make substantial claims regarding how messages *directly* affected the crisis (without taking into account an insurmountable host of indirect variables, which would be close to methodologically impossible) would be anything short of tenuous.

With that said, the discussion of this working paper, and the informed research which shall follow it², aims to have substantial implications for both theory and practice, seeking to change the way we conceptualise diplomatic signalling in the digital age. Theoretically, it seeks to expand the way researchers view and understand signalling during a time of crises, a concept which has to date been studied in an offline context. Furthermore, through the construction of a unique conceptual and methodological framework, researchers can begin to dissect and explore further the new practice of DDS in a structured and replicable way, as executed through a number of distinct and varied social media platforms. Practically, this study will enable researchers and practitioners to detect the presence and use of diplomatic signalling in real-time, as, at present, the process and outcomes of diplomatic signalling have only been discovered and studied retrospectively. Detection in real-time may therefore serve as a useful tool for diplomats on the ground, allowing diplomatic agents to better recognise and interpret online signals from all actors during a times of conflict. Knowing how the ‘other side’ sends signals and how a diplomat may interpret these, is a vital aspect for the implementation and execution of a successful crisis communication strategy, and through this unique research, practitioners may seek to implement the strategies to do just that.

This working paper, the first of an interlinking series on crisis communicative capabilities, will therefore work towards highlighting, and have seek to have acknowledged, the central thesis that diplomatic communicative power, when exercised through digital mediums, are becoming strategic tools of advantage for an MFA to project and expand their foreign policy reach and presence in the global information age.³

² See previous footnote for further explanation.

³ By advancing a conceptual framework for understanding how digital signalling takes place during times of crisis, this first working paper (of a set of working papers on online communicative capabilities) works towards assessing why certain forms of digital signalling are more effective than others (effectiveness measured in terms

II. Changing Nature of Crises and Crisis Communication Capabilities

Crises, and how they are communicated, have become characteristic features of our society. No continent or country in the world is free from hazards and risks, disasters and calamities, and with the existence of a complex array of communicative capabilities, nor are they offered the luxury to avoid commentary on these ever-pervasive events. The tweets illustrated above represent a snapshot of this rapidly changing landscape, and illustrate the altered practice of diplomatic communication, between serving diplomats and their digital followers. They embody through their message and medium, the rustling beginnings of a new era for diplomatic communication, and diplomatic crisis communication in particular.

For a long period of time, social scientists have felt a bit uncomfortable about the study of crises. Crises were seen as antithetical to the strenuous efforts of mainstream social science, to the study of safe and sound objects, to quantifiable trends, patterns, and regularities. The traditional preoccupation with questions of social and political order, and the longing for a reflection of natural science's rigor all nurtured a preference for predictability, regularity, and periodicity. Crises were viewed in functional terms, as facilitators of long-awaited change, and crisis management was therefore interpreted as a mechanism towards the restoration of normalcy. The world of crisis research, in turn, became dominated by natural agents, foreign enemies, and sudden disasters (Rosenthal, 1998), and developed as studies of the manifestation of 'unness' and unpredictability (Hewitt, 1983).

In today's world of receding borders, spectacular technological advancements, and increased pace, our historical conception of crisis has become too narrow. Crises can no longer be seen as external features of everyday life, as threatening events, awaiting us 'somewhere out there'. They have become part of our world, and part of the way we live. Today's crises are viewed not as discrete events, but are processes unfolding as

of outputs) and how the outcomes of signalling (crisis narratives) may help virtually enlarge the power of the state. Ultimately, this discussion and the subsequent research to follow, will serve to cement the thesis that digital mediums are now essential ingredients to how diplomatic communication and diplomatic crisis communication in particular, is now conducted. And that novel and unique communicative capabilities should be acknowledged and incorporated as strategic tools in which MFAs and their agents can continue to exercise and project their diplomatic power during a time of crisis.

manifold forces interact in unforeseen and disturbing ways. Modern crises are therefore increasingly characterised by complexity, interdependence, and politicisation. Tomorrow's crises, in turn, will look different from today's, as yesterday's stand in distinction from the present climate.⁴ As social scientists we therefore share an urge to understand the nature of the modern crisis. As diplomatic practitioners tasked with managing crises on behalf of the state or the international community, we must seek to uncover how to effectively manage and communicate state policies, once in them.

Therefore, to begin this understanding of the 21st century crisis, we first take a look at the primary changes that have emerged within them. First, and perhaps chief amongst them, is that the 21st century crisis has been sculpted and framed by the global information age. By this we mean that 'information' itself has become a principal 'commodity' by which one measures levels, not only of education, skills and knowledge, but also levels of well-being, prosperity, wealth, and development on a personal, local, and national scale. Indeed, the ability to acquire and efficiently employ knowledge and information is a critical consideration for success in an information-based society with 'knowledge workers' and 'information workers' becoming an ever-increasing fraction of the work force in all countries – and the diplomatic craft has proved no different (Amir Dhia 2015). Second is that the global information space has shown to have had a direct impact on the creation and formation of crises, with conflicts now bypassing traditional state borders, and the interdependence of global society producing powerful forces of social fragmentation, opening critical vulnerabilities, and the breeding of extremist organisations (Chong, 2010). The increasing interdependence of the global society, leads to the third core change: the evolution of foreign policy; its creation, projection and reception. This change is of particularly relevance to a crisis period, where the creation and projection of foreign policy is at (or should be at) the forefront of all MFAs engaged or commenting on the crisis at play. Despite its impact for diplomatic institutions at large, MFAs are yet to fully understand this change, and how it is altering their foreign policy engagement during a crisis. Indeed, foreign policy creation is now tending more towards that which cuts across governments departments and focuses on networks and issues rather than just geography, with departments in MFAs needing to blend their internal departments and work together, in order to tackle common issues and themes.⁵

⁴ One needs only to look at the unfolding crisis of 2017, to see the changing nature of crises in the 21st century. They are distinct in their communicative capabilities, their interdependence, and the blurring of territorial jurisdictions, when compared to even a decade ago. Take for example, President Trump taunting tweets almost reading like an invitation to war to North Korea, with foreign policy analysts explicitly commenting on the substantive nature of the President's tweets in escalating tensions in the Far East (Foreign Policy 2017).

⁵ For the purpose our research, globalisation is characterised by a proliferation in the number of, and kinds, of agents that are pertinent to the making of foreign policy (Neumann 2013). If transcendence of boundaries is an effect of globalisation, then the states system must increasingly be seen as only one part of the global

Examining foreign policy evolution within the global information space, also exposes to us the changing nature of agency within the diplomatic corps. With increasing time pressure to craft and project foreign policy (particularly during a crisis), diplomatic agents are today being granted more power and authority within the foreign policy process (Manor 2016). Agency and power, are therefore perhaps by default, becoming increasingly delineated within a Ministerial bureaucratic structure. Such a joined-up approach is arguably creating a flatter, more flexible and entrepreneurial structure within the diplomatic hierarchy, one which draws on the best ideas and information sources available, rather than a strict adherence to ranking and structure. Indeed, during a crisis, diplomatic staff abroad, are now expected to engage in real-time communicative activities, and in some instances, act without direct authority on subjects they would have previously had to wait hours (if not days) on, before Headquarter (HQ) would have sanctioned their offline statements. As a consequence, the diplomat on the ground has had to quickly become a master of communication. And, if they do not? They face the consequences of being left out of the online political dialogue completely, missing the opportunity to sculpt the narrative in their favour.

The delineation of authority from HQ to Embassy level, also places an increasing burden (or onus) on the Embassy to engage in effective crisis management. While this has always been an utmost priority for an Embassy, to draw on some clichéd rhetoric - with greater power comes greater responsibility. As it is widely recognised, the quality of crisis management has the possibility to make the difference between life and death, chaos and order, breakdown and resilience. Therefore, when Embassies and their agents respond well to a crisis, the damage is limited. And when emerging vulnerabilities and threats are adequately assessed and addressed, potentially devastating contingencies simply do not happen. Thus, recognising the power and context of the information age, and the communicative procedures which now consume and form its environment, the evolution of diplomatic authority and the increasing pressures Embassies on the ground face regarding their crisis communication practices, should now be regarded as a vital component of any diplomatic crisis management strategy and must be assessed with due regard during every stage of the crisis, if damage is to remain limited.

The evolution of foreign policy in the global information space, then, links to the fourth key change: evolved communicative capabilities. This evolution is particularly notable in terms of the capabilities' speed, tone, and

political system. It follows that the state's personnel must sooner or later take cognisance of the other kinds of polities that exist within the system. If negotiation and, more widely, mediation, is a key to foreign policy, then the work of the state's diplomats increasingly involves mediating between a wider slate of agents than states. We have seen that diplomats used to mediate across state boundaries, but today are now increasingly mediating across a plethora of different social and political boundaries.

structure, as well as the ways these new methods directly challenge how diplomats and MFAs use communication tools to promote and project their foreign policy goals during a crisis. At the most basic level, we have seen that today, digital communicative capabilities play an enhanced role in the execution of a state's foreign policy efforts, coming to be regarded as vital tools of engagement for those actors tasked with diplomatic crisis communication activities. Indeed, the range of communicative capabilities available to diplomats to engage in these activities has also evolved exponentially in the digital age. With that said, two mediums in particular - Facebook and Twitter – have emerged as substantially more triumphant than the others, in terms of their use and integration within current diplomatic crisis communication strategies, and with that, provide firm justification for this research to centre upon them for its own data collection and analysis.

Drawing from this change, we can see the evolution of the inner workings of diplomatic communicative practices themselves, and in the case of this study: the processes of diplomatic signalling, which we shall now address⁶.

2.1 Diplomatic Signalling: A Historical Lookback

Diplomatic signalling is not a novel practice to diplomacy, but *digital* diplomatic signalling is. Historically, we have seen the process of diplomatic signalling play a key and heightened role, in diplomatic affairs during times of crises. Diplomats, for example, have been shown to regularly incorporate this practice as a core component within their crisis communication strategies, sending signals through Collective Representations, Demarches, Minister State visits or in the most recent past, pre-recorded news broadcasts. Here, the tone of the signals was usually formal in both its structure and language, with diplomats of high standing (Ambassadors, Heads of Mission Ministers of Foreign Affairs) nearly always delivering it.

⁶ It should be noted that while, the central focus of this working paper is the process of DDS, this research (which includes the working paper to follow) is not simply about uncovering the processes of diplomatic signalling in the digital age, but about the potential outcome and effect of this very process. As previously noted, one of the primary effects of this novel communicative capability, an effect to be explored as this series of papers continues, is that of, 'virtual state enlargement'; that is the art of states to enlarge their importance to the international community through a variety of methods and means (Vukadinovic 1971; Commonwealth Secretariat 1985; 1997; Cooper and Shaw 2009). It is seen as an emerging concept developed to provide intellectual purchase on the complexities of diplomatic communication today, particularly in regard to how influence works in a new media environment, and for the purpose of this study within a political crisis scenario.

However, what the opening tweets of this paper illustrate (of which there are countless derivatives of) is an evolved process of diplomatic signalling in the digital age; a new and distinct way to publicise and disperse a nation's foreign policy in 140 characters or less. At the core, what they demonstrate, is that diplomatic messages are now being carried out through digital means, crafted in linguistically short and informal tones, constructed by diplomatic agents of all standing, and sent directly to an audience never before matched in terms of its numerical size. Gone is the day where we see diplomatic signals confined solely to a Minister's state visit or a pre-recorded 9pm news broadcast – instead, now, having the power and possibility to be played out in real-time, with an audience and visibility never before seen. Therefore, while the historic practice of diplomatic signalling still takes its rightful place within a diplomat's crisis communication arsenal, the process by which it is now carried out in today's digital setting, has irrevocably changed and that needs to be understood by those who use it and study it.

This process has been altered and sculpted by the digital age, and carry with them unexplored potential to assess the power of diplomatic communication in the 21st century. In the case of the signalling process, we have seen the once formal, well crafted, and to some degree secretive practice, partially lose its relevance for those who practice and study it. Substituted instead with a communication process which sees signals sent through public forums, created by agents of all standing and directed towards an audience group which is high in number, reactive and delineated. Set against the backdrop of the global information space, the practice further holds the potential to act as an increasing tool for MFAs to form, project and have received their crisis state narratives, narratives which can prove essential communicative assets for a state and its agents during a period of intense conflict⁷.

It should be noted however, that there is a fine line in conceptually distinguishing between a diplomatic message and a diplomatic signal, with this distinction lying in the argument that a signal can be used to reinforce a message or to contradict it. In short, it is way of packing a diplomatic message. It is not simply the message itself. For example, compare an invitation to dinner mentioned at the beginning of a conversation with a smile and a welcoming tone of voice with an invitation mentioned at the end of a conversation as an afterthought, in a hesitant tone. In the first case the signals reinforce the message, in the second, the listener may feel that her presence is not really desired. Raymond Cohen (1987: 3) writes “States have become adept at extra-linguistic forms of communication... [these] do not replace language, rather they complement, illuminate and supplement it.” In diplomatic communication, as in communication between individuals, signals are frequently used to transmit messages. Actors of diplomacy often choose to use signals rather than direct communication for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is inappropriate for one actor to make too direct a suggestion or demand of

⁷ Concepts of online strategic narratives and how they are linked and build the online signalling process will be the subject of the next working paper.

another, or to transmit a message in person. A message passed through signals rather than directly also saves face for the receiving party, which can comply without seeming weak or refuse to comply without creating confrontation by simply ignoring the signals.

Signalling, in short, can therefore be seen as essential to diplomacy as to a busy airport (Jonsson & Hall 2002). One crucial difference however, is that there is much more scope for ambiguity in diplomatic signalling. Ambiguous signalling between pilots and air traffic controllers may be a prelude to disaster, but in diplomatic communication ambiguity is considered constructive and creative (cf. Bell, 1971:74). Jonsson et al. present the claim that there are several reasons why 'constructive ambiguity' characterises - and probably always has characterised - diplomatic signalling. While needing to communicate, polities want to conceal vital information from each other. Moreover, ambiguity may be a deliberate means to retain flexibility and to make signals disclaimable, allowing the sender to later argue, 'I never said that', or 'this is not what I meant', if the situation calls for it. This technique is particularly efficient when diplomats may wish to fly a 'trial balloon' – if during a crisis, for example, they do not have the time to present a clear position of where they may stand on the issue at play, or the situation is rapidly changing leaving them to be wary of presenting publicly a strong position. By using this technique, diplomats can avoid embarrassment and disassociate themselves from the message, if it turns out not to be a popular one, or receives a particularly negative response.

The possibility of duplicity and deception also contributes to the ambiguity of diplomatic signals. Sir Henry Wotton's 1604 characterisation of a diplomat as 'an honest man sent abroad to lie for his country' has gained notoriety. The association of diplomacy with deception can be traced back to Ancient Greece. The Greeks identified Hermes with charm, trickery, cunning, and deception and subsequently transferred those traits to envoys; ever since they have continued to be associated with diplomacy in varying degrees (Frey and Frey, 1999:14–15; cf. Brown, 1947). The fact that there is no way of knowing for sure which signals are false and which are true makes for a diplomatic penchant for mistrusting messages and always reading between the lines. 'The fact that states send and pay attention to signals indicates that statesmen feel they are more apt to give true than false information' (Jervis, 1970:70). Thus, there are obvious restraints on lying in diplomatic communication, the most important of which is the loss of reputation should the deception fail.

Ambiguity is often prompted by the need to take multiple audiences into account. Explicit and unambiguous signalling, while desirable *Vis-a`-Vis* one category of receivers, might have disastrous effects on the sender's relations with another category of receivers. In diplomatic signalling, the potential audiences may be international and domestic. Another factor, contributing to the ambiguity of diplomatic signals, is the prevalence of non-verbal messages and 'body language' in communication between states. Digital diplomacy, in the spirit

of hybridity, doesn't completely solve the problem of ambiguity. Videos and their derivatives, continue to display body language, and digital diplomacy is arguably just reshaping ambiguity through other means. Through the power of the retweet and reshare, or the signal that is sent in relation to how frequently an actor engages in the discussion online.

In sum, the tension between the need for clarity and the incentives for ambiguity, may at times impel diplomats to spend a large amount of effort on the formulation and interpretation of signals (Jönsson and Hall 2002). Jönsson and Hall write;

signalling does not necessarily imply intentionality. Even unconscious, unintended behaviour and non-behaviour may convey messages in a diplomatic setting, something which is exploited in the digital age through the power of retweets, or following or not following certain actors. Hence, we may refer to signalling whenever one actor displays behaviour that is perceived and interpreted by another, whether or not it is spoken or intended or even within the actor's conscious awareness (2002: 6).

Perhaps one of the most seminal works on this subject matter is Robert Jervis (2009) work, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, which demonstrates that although decision-makers' perceptions of the world and of other actors may diverge from reality, this does not stop them acting on these perceptions. For Jervis, there are three main factors involved in perception; beliefs, images, and intentions. Perception involves a process of inference in which actors develop understandings (beliefs) about other actors (images) and what the others will do in given circumstances (intentions (ibid)). From this perspective, intentions are the actions the observer expects the actor will take under given circumstances—as opposed to the actions the actor himself plans or hopes to take. For an observer to predict an actor's intentions, he first must distinguish between internal and external influences on the actor's behaviour—that is, the degrees to which his behaviour is driven by situational constraints and by internal decision processes; and second, must try to understand the actor's internal decision process. Applied to states' intentions, Jervis hints at a framework much like prospect theory in arguing that states may be willing to pay higher costs and take greater risks depending on how they value the status quo or value changing the status quo. Applied to individual decision-makers, various factors can alter an actor's intended actions, including unexpected events, incorrect assessments of cause and effect, revised goals or values, and contexts for events that differ from those expected.

In a contemporary application of Jervis's ideas, it is argued that Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990 in part because he misread the signals of American leaders with regard to the independence of Kuwait (Jervis, 1996).

Leaders of the United States and Iraq in the run-up to the most recent Gulf War might have been operating under cognitive biases that made them value certain kinds of information more than others, whether or not the information was true. Jervis proved that, once a leader believed something, that perception would influence the way the leader perceived all other relevant information. ‘Since all actors know (or quickly learn) that all public acts, except those self-evidently accidental or inadvertent, may be considered significant, the assumption tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy’ (R. Cohen, 1987:20). Nevertheless, the tendency among diplomats and statesmen to look for message value in most behaviour and non-behaviour seems to rest on an implicit assumption of intentionality.

We may think of diplomats as ‘intuitive semioticians,’ that is as conscious producers and interpreters of signs. Although semiotics is rarely part of their formal education, diplomats are by training and experience experts at weighing words and gestures with a view to their effect on potential receivers (Jonsson, 1990:31). We may also be reminded that hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, is explicitly associated with Hermes, the Ancient Greek deity of diplomacy (cf. Constantinou, 1996: 35). Academic semioticians emphasise the arbitrary nature of signs. Meaning does not reside in the message itself, but is produced through social interaction. Successful communication, according to semioticians, presupposes a common code, a certain (often unconscious) pre-knowledge that is necessary for understanding a message. A common code establishes what German hermeneutic philosophers call *Interpretations gemeinschaft*, initial commonality with respect to interpretation (Rommetveit, 1974:88). Professional diplomacy rests on such a shared code. On the other hand, diplomatic agents are members of separate national cultures with their specific codes. The code and conventions of the diplomatic culture do not necessarily take precedence over the code and conventions of national cultures. When interpreted by members of different national cultures who bring different codes to them, even verbal signs may produce different meanings. Conversely, national cultural conditioning does not represent ‘a cognitive straight jacket’ (Fisher, 1980:46). Both types of codes and conventions usually apply, in a varying mix.

Diplomats today therefore have to be content with saying both less and more than they mean: less, because their verbal and nonverbal signalling will never immediately convey their meaning; more, because their signalling will always convey messages and involve them in consequences other than those intended (Jönsson and Hall 2002). The interpretation of signals, in other words, includes both ‘selective’ and ‘constructive’ elements. Whereas the reasoning thus far primarily refers to contemporary diplomacy, there is reason to believe that these observations concerning diplomatic signalling tend to be timeless, with the examples of the Amarna Letters, recording diplomatic correspondence in the Ancient Near East more than 3,000 years earlier.

Let us illustrate this with a number of examples of skilful uses of signal ambiguity taken from different eras and various parts of the globe. We start with a late example, taken from the Amarna Letters, recording diplomatic correspondence in the Ancient Near East more than 3,000 years earlier.⁸

With that said, whether the practice is contemporary or historic, it is certain that diplomatic signalling is nowhere more essential than during *a time of crises*. The power of signalling has always been a key tool of diplomatic communication during times of crises, with the media invariably being used for this purpose (Jonsson, 1996). Using the media without attribution to sources is particularly efficient when diplomats wish to fly a ‘trial balloon’. By using this technique, diplomats can then avoid embarrassment and disassociate themselves from the message if it turns out not to be a popular one, or receives a particularly negative response. During grave international crises, or when all diplomatic channels are severed, the media sometimes provide the only channels for communication and negotiation between rival actors. Take for example, the first phase of the 1979-1981 Iranian Hostage crisis where the United States communicated with the hostage holders using the media (Larson, 1986). During the 1991 Gulf War, George Bush and Saddam Hussein hurled messages back and forth via the global news networks, forming a ‘de facto hotline’ between Washington and Baghdad (Newsom, 1996). Sparre (2001) and Spencer (2004) argue that the parties to the conflict in Northern Ireland conducted dialogues and exchanged messages through the media as formal negotiations among them were neither possible nor desirable. It was believed that the media dialogue in this case, helped both sides keep the peace process alive and while also exchanging significant messages.

⁸ These tablets reflect a keen and jealous preoccupation with status and reciprocity. In one such tablet, the Babylonian king recounts an incident that would seem to put him in an unfavourable light (cf. Jonsson, 2000:197–198). His initial bid for the pharaoh’s daughter had been refused with reference to a marriage taboo (‘from time immemorial no daughter of the king of Egypt is given to anyone’). Subsequently, the Babylonian king then requested the daughter of a commoner instead: ‘Someone’s grown daughters, beautiful women, must be available. Send me a beautiful woman as if she were your daughter.’ The pharaoh again refused. Why should the Babylonian king recall a seemingly humiliating episode like this in his dispatch?

A possible answer may arrive in the latter part of the letter, where the Babylonian king offers his daughter to the pharaoh in marriage: ‘Should I, perhaps, since you did not send me a woman, refuse you a woman, just as you did to me, and not send her? But my daughters being available, I will not refuse one to you’ (cf. Jonsson, 2000:198). He goes on to demand a heavy bride price in gold and establish a deadline for payment. If the main purpose of the Babylonian king’s letter was to bargain for the highest possible bride price in return for his daughter, the references to the pharaoh’s dual snubs make sense. The king probably knew that his request for the pharaoh’s daughter would be refused. And the following ruse might have been a tactic to expose the pharaoh’s hypocrisy (the second refusal to provide a bride could not be accounted for by religious taboos) and gain the moral upper hand (Ibid). The Babylonian king, in short, made cunning use of the convention of strict reciprocity between Great Kings. By reminding the pharaoh of his failure to maintain the customary reciprocity, he hoped to increase the compensation for offering his daughter in marriage. While the architects of diplomatic signalling in the Amarna period did not have to worry about multiple audiences, we can discern similarities with the previous example in the subtle manipulation of a common code to send messages beyond the manifest ones. Knowledge of prevalent conventions makes the signals perceptible and understandable by ‘insiders’.

In recent years, leaders have been using global communication more frequently than traditional diplomatic channels to deliver messages intended to alter an image or to open a new avenue of negotiation. As early as 1996, U.S. State Department spokesperson Nicholas Burns admitted;

we use the briefings to send messages to foreign governments about our foreign policy. For example, I sometimes read carefully calibrated statements to communicate with the governments with which we have no diplomatic relation; Iraq, Iran, Libya and North Korea. Indeed, given the concentration of journalists in Washington and our position in the world, the United States is uniquely situated to use television to our best advantage, with our friends, as well as our adversaries.

Leaders in other parts of the world soon began to employ the same technique. In January 1998, for example, the newly elected Iranian President Mohammed Khatami chose CNN to send a conciliatory message to the United States. CNN and the print media around the world alerted global audiences to the interview well in advance of the broadcast and the interview was extensively discussed afterwards. These cases mentioned are just but a fleeting reference to the historic use of signalling, particularly in relation to long standing security issues between states, or what we can call a 'short-term' crises. But it is the aim of this research to build on these previous examples, and with that, to explore the new world of diplomatic signalling in the digital age. Whether is carried out digitally or not, however, communication's importance and relevance (as discussed above) to the inner workings of diplomacy still stands. It is exactly this continued relevance to diplomatic practice, moreover, that motivates this research towards understanding and conceptualising it for the modern day. Our upcoming section '*Digital Diplomatic Signalling: A Conceptual Framework*' will seek to do just that.

III. Reconceptualising Digital Diplomatic Signalling: A Conceptual Framework

The core aim of this working paper is to create a unique conceptual and methodological framework in which to understand the process and impact of diplomatic signalling in the digital age. The framework seeks to guide both academic and practitioner's efforts to define, understand, and explore, this new practice of DDS, and how it will ultimately contribute to the projection of foreign policy narratives and expansion of virtual state power during moments of turmoil. This framework itself is threefold; a) the

presentation of a definitional framework for the constructed communicative concept; b) a discussion of the set of five core mechanisms unique to the online signalling process, and c) the construction of a set of digital signalling typologies and the visualisation of this types on a digital signalling spectrum.⁹

3.1 Definitional Framework

The first fold, the *definitional framework* breaks down the communicative capabilities of DDS and discusses how it can be framed and discovered for the purpose of our research and otherwise. Here, we deconstruct, and reconstruct, what the communicative capability consists of - in all its forms, providing a mutually comprehensive starting-point, acting as an evaluative reference-point for a rigorous and analytically useful concept analysis.¹⁰

Digital diplomatic signalling is hereby defined as:

⁹ One problem to emerge from this conceptual approach, relates to some of the fundamentals of the kind of knowledge it is possible to possess about these communicative processes. For instance, who legitimately contributes to both the signalling process and the narrative creation, and what status do the differing interests of those contributing to these communicative processes hold in relation to the supposed whole, particularly in terms of the crisis itself? how can signals and narratives be expressed across multiple social media channels and multiple narrators? and perhaps the ultimate question of concern, how can reception and eventual effects be determined, particularly in light of polysemy, multiple narrators and channels, and negotiated meanings? In short, what is the object of knowledge and for whom can this object be said to exist? ([Antoniades et al., 2010](#); [Dittmer, 2010](#); [Andén-Papadopoulos, 2009](#); Wall, M. A. 2005; [Bogost, 2006](#)).

A means of resolving some of these theoretical issues is to therefore orient these communicative practices within the broader concept of discourse. While diplomatic signalling is an important factor in crafting and achieving certain foreign policy aims during a time of crisis, it is also important to investigate how they are *practiced*, particularly if this investigation has not been carried out in the digital age. We can then shift the focus from signalling as ‘things-in-themselves’ to their position within a context of production and consumption; in short, the relationship between DDS and diplomatic crisis communication, and indeed diplomatic culture more generally. Thus, drawing on the premise that communicative representations of international affairs can influence the conduct of those affairs, we position these novel communicative practices within a mature body of theory on information globalisation, media and communication, and power relations.

¹⁰ The definitional framework was created through inductive reasoning, where through detailed observation of digital diplomatic communications online, and in particular, digital communication by diplomatic agents during a time of crisis, the process of DDS creation was first discovered. After discovery, the communicative process was then deconstructed (and subsequently reconstructed) in a bid to create a framework, which was seen as concrete, appropriate and explanatory for these novel practices of diplomatic communication. It is therefore anticipated that this framework will not only act as a grounding tool for this research, but also for future research undertaken in the fields of diplomacy, communication, and crisis management.

a message or process carried out through a digital medium, by state officials or entities of one state, and acts – whether intended or not – as a symbolic representation of the state’s position on the issue at play.

Expanded further, we can say that the process is;

created and enhanced through a number of distinct, but interlocking online mechanisms; which are illustrated through five core categories; message content and structure, status of the sender, audience reception, frequency, and network power, with each serving both individual and cumulative functions for the creation of diplomatic signals online. Through the formation, projection and reception of online messaging, the process can therefore serve to craft online crisis narratives, hereby acting as powerful instruments for ‘virtual state enlargement’; a manner where states can exert and extend their foreign policy reach and presence through digital means.

This definitional framework is the one which best encompasses and works towards explaining this new process of diplomatic signalling, and is therefore the key point of reference regarding it.¹¹ At this point, it is perhaps

¹¹ If we truly wish to understand this new technique of diplomatic signalling, further dissection of this definition is required. First, it is necessary to examine what we mean by the term *digital medium*. Here, digital medium refers to all online platforms currently in use within diplomatic communication strategies, and for this research in particular, within diplomatic crisis communication strategies. It also refers to a host of digital platforms that diplomatic agents currently use for communicative purposes, diplomatic agents for communicative purposes, including information gathering, information dissemination and public engagement. It is clear that these platforms work as both lone tools for diplomatic communication and as complementary assets for existing offline strategies. When looking at the digital medium in practice, through data discovery and analysis, we find that during times of crisis, Foreign Ministries have been shown to use a variety of platforms to meet their crisis communication needs, namely the online platforms of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Foursquare, Flickr, Storify, and BuzzFeed (Burson - Marsteller 2016). Although bonded through the shared characterises of information sharing, visual displays, and public and real-time interaction, each platform brings with it a set of unique characteristics and diplomats consequently use them in a variety of ways, all in a bid to achieve a variety of communication aims.

Finally, to draw on some cliché rhetoric, it is worth noting that ‘not all platforms are created equal, given that the level of integration into diplomatic communication strategies and actual communicative success when in practice varies from platform to platform (ibid)¹¹. Two mediums in particular - Facebook and Twitter – have emerged as substantially more triumphant than the others in terms of their use and integration within current diplomatic crisis communication strategies. However, whether used either in isolation or in tandem, both platforms create a number of positive consequences for all institutions and actors who use them. At the broadest level, both Twitter and Facebook lower a Ministry’s costs of

worth restating that even in a digital setting there is still a fine line in distinguishing conceptually between a diplomatic message and a diplomatic signal, with this distinction lying in the argument that a signal can be used to reinforce a message or to contradict it. In short, a signal (digital or otherwise) can be seen as a way to package a diplomatic message. It is not simply the message itself.

3.2 Central Mechanisms

The second fold of the framework is the presentation of *five key mechanisms* for the process of DDS to occur. This allows for an in-depth exploration of the workings of the communicative process, and provides a set of unique analytical lens in which to test and measure the diplomatic crisis communication performance of online diplomatic agents overall. The point of analysing the DDS process through these five-unique mechanism is that they provide a more precise grasp of how communication, persuasion and influence operate in international affairs, which shall be addressed in the upcoming working papers.

Turning then to the online mechanisms, of which there are five: *content making, status of the sender, audience reception, frequency* and *online network power*. Stemming from an in-depth analysis of the current literature and data available, these five mechanisms were created through deductive reasoning, and it is believed they best encapsulate each stage of the signalling process, from who sends the signal, to how consistently they send it, how it is structured, and who may pick it up, with each mechanism therefore serving a unique purpose. When analysed individually, each mechanism acts as analytic spotlight in which to view how diplomatic signalling has evolved as a direct result of social media use, while also serving as a valuable comparative tool in assessing how online actors now use social media platforms during times of crisis. When analysed cumulatively, the mechanisms and their practice serve as a method to create a standardisation tool reflecting what style of diplomatic signalling possesses the greatest capability for an MFA projecting their crisis message and having official and unofficial entities in the digital age accurately receive it.

communication during the crisis, increase exponentially their messages potential to be heard and create impact, and acts as a tool for the Ministries direct engagement with its citizens around the globe. More specifically, they serve as a communication gateway between diplomats and the international sphere, allowing for the rapid transmission of information relating to consular assistance. Furthermore, in certain instances, especially in the context of political violence, humanitarian crises, and environmental disasters, these platforms can help discover, code, and track which areas suffered the most. Thus, while it seems that both platforms have their limitations, they also have their shared positives. The increased usage of these two assets provides strong justification for this research to centre upon them for its own data collection and analysis.¹¹

When analysing these mechanisms cumulatively, we will assess various combinations that best contribute to the process of virtual state enlargement. For example, high frequency of online messaging from an Ambassador or official of equivalent standing on topics directly related to the crisis at play create high engagement amongst peers and wider audience. While each mechanism is valid in its own right, it is the interrelationship and overall interaction between all five which ultimately allow for a rounded interpretation of the signalling and narrative process online during a time of crisis. A standardisation tool will also aid in creating a replicable method in which both communicative capabilities can subsequently be evaluated and explored. Finally, this research argues that while these communicative capabilities now play a central role within the practice of modern day diplomatic communication, their use among online diplomatic actors is not as uniform as one may think. In fact, these methods are used to varying degrees among relevant actors and are subject to a variety of restraints, namely the continued role and power of the offline political context.

i. Content & Structure of the Message

The first online mechanism is the content and structure of the online message. This mechanism deals specifically with the content an online account creates and can be further divided into two distinct parts: those who form it and what they form. At the broadest level, it relates to how the message was formed prior to its projection and how a diplomatic agent uses both when communicating during times of crisis. This mechanism looks not only at *how* the message is formed but *what* exactly it is framing. During a time of crisis, specifically within the online signalling process, this mechanism matters because how a message or policy is created and subsequently packaged and projected is incredibly important.

Examining first the content of the message itself, we must assess how it was formed and who formed it. In order to reach conclusions regarding the content of these messages, we must utilise careful process tracing, textual analysis of online messages, and elite interviews. These methodologies will allow us to better understand the 'who' and the 'how' of acts of online crisis messaging and the domestic and institutional pressures that influence their creation and projection.

In regard to the more technical aspects of this 'content of the message' mechanism, we can begin with the basic assumption that the more posts an online diplomatic actor makes during the time of crisis (posts where the content of the message specifically relates to the conflict itself), the more times an online diplomatic engages in crisis discussion, will send a message or narrative to their online audience regarding how they view the crisis.

Through active discussion of the conflict online, an agent can achieve a number of key aims; namely highlight their Ministry's position on the crisis, engage actively with the relevant actors surrounding it, and create an online discourse which is frequently projected to a vast number of online actors, to ultimately support their overall foreign policy agenda.

Now this discussion type relates not only to the amount of individual posts made concerning the crisis, but also *how* this discussion and attention compares to other topics the account focuses on during the crisis period. For example, an account may post 100 times about the crisis, but if these posts are lost within a sea of 1,000 posts within a time period, the noise of the other posts may dilute the core message, or create a situation where it may get lost within a mass of information sent. Additionally, an account may choose to dedicate 80% of their discussion time to the crisis, but if this discussion is indirect, impartial and non-descript, the 'usefulness' of these posts to highlight the Ministry's position and support its foreign policy position is arguably questionable. This process of engagement arguably creates a diminished set of signals for other actors to interpret, and carries with them less potential for impact, online and off. In short, a lack of discussion, or lack of comparative discussion, arguably does not harness the power of these tools efficiently and works to create a weaker discourse online for the Ministry utilising it. This message is further diluted if an account is compared to one that uses its communicative capabilities efficiently. In short, these actors are not winning in the battle for crisis narratives.

It is also worth highlighting the *structure* of a message, specifically how it is framed. In short, how a message discusses its subject matters just as much as the subject itself. Historically, the style and structure surrounding the context of a message was formal in tone, in keeping with its intended target audience and the status of the diplomat who sent it. This communication usually emerged as well constructed, well styled, and intended for its purpose. Today, however, a different picture is painted. Social media platforms by their very nature do not allow for such formality. Rather, their style of communication is informal in tone, short in length, and relaxed in structure.

Within social media, the framing of the message is extremely important in order to provide us with an understanding of how the message was sent, how the account engaged with other actors, and to what extent it did so. Within the Twitter and Facebook platforms, there emerges two clear structures of message: direct and indirect. Direct messages come in varied forms, namely official-to-official communication, which sees a diplomatic agent sending or aiming communication directly to official members of either the receiving state or other diplomatic agents online, or official-to-citizen communication, which refers to communication between a diplomatic agent and unofficial members of the receiving state or diplomatic realm, namely the citizenry. This

style of message arguably creates the most potential for impact in how peers and wider audiences receive this message online.

An indirect message, although a 'diluted' one, can still be viewed as a signal of significance, particularly when the online agents who send it choose to do so on a frequent basis, thereby constructing a frequent crisis discourse within their account online. State officials using Twitter to 'retweet' or 'favorite' information another party posts, or 'liking' or joining certain groups or 'causes' on Facebook, can illustrate indirect digital messages. As compared to direct messages, these methods may be used to create doubt or ambiguity in whether or not the diplomat wishes to actually engage with an issue, or simply wishes to present the image of being involved in the conversation and dialogue taking place. For instance, many official diplomatic accounts use the phrase 'retweet does not equal endorsement (RT \neq endorsement)' as a method to prevent possible claims of interference. However, in many instances, although not a direct statement, it can be argued that a 'retweet', 'favourite' or 'like' does in fact equal endorsement, or at least to support or agreement some degree. As stated previously, ambiguity may be a deliberate means to retain flexibility and make signals disclaimable. Again, ambiguous signals allow the sender to argue, 'I never said that,' or 'this is not what I meant' if the situation calls for it. This method or avenue of signalling may be preferential to some agents, as it allows them to be seen as active on certain issues with a low risk of legal or political reprimand for saying something they shouldn't have.

ii. Status of the Sender

The next mechanism, the status of the sender, requires us to transition from the content of the message and how it was formed, to examining who actually sent it. This mechanism refers to the ranking of the diplomat who creates and sends the online posts, or to whom the online account is accredited. It consists of a hierarchical spectrum, ranging from a Third Secretary or junior diplomat at one end to an Ambassador or Head of Mission at the other (Hocking 1999). In the context of this research, the status of the diplomat refers specifically to all diplomatic agents who possess a Twitter and/or Facebook account during a period of crisis and what the perceived diplomatic status attached to those accounts is. This mechanism has emerged as highly significant within the arena of crisis communication, based on the assumption that ministries seeking to send messages regarding their position in times of crisis will utilise the status of a Head of Mission or Ambassador to garner greater attention or create more effective signals working towards virtual enlargement.

Figure 1.1 Status of the Sender



Historically, an MFA has been structured around a strict hierarchical structure, ranging from, ranging from an entry-level member of the diplomatic corps at one end, to a Head of Mission at the other (Hocking 1999). While each Ministry has their own unique grading system, the average number of positions observed across the diplomatic corps was five, starting with the junior diplomat regularly referred to across Ministries as a *Third Secretary*, rising finally to the position of *Ambassador* or *Head of Mission*. Traditionally, diplomacy is well known for its adherence to this hierarchical structure, with an agent's roles, tasks, institutional attitudes, perceptions, and sentiments changing significantly as they advance through the ranks (Ibid).

The importance and power of a diplomat's status historically, only increased within a time of crisis. During such moments, rigid diplomatic internal power structures held fast, with acts of public diplomatic communication being seen as unique and reserved primarily for Heads of Mission, Foreign Ministers or Deputy Ambassadors of high standing. Junior diplomats rarely, if ever, carried out and delivered public messaging. During conflict, the diplomatic corps carefully crafted these messages, seeking the approval of the Foreign Ministry before making any publication and oral presentation, and delivered them in a setting appropriate to the message and

sender and the approval of the Foreign Ministry was necessary before making any publication or oral presentation. This hierarchical structure was particularly adhered to if the crisis message had the potential to reach numbers and actors on a grand scale; a scale which we today would see as minute compared to the modern global audience online (Hocking 1999). Moreover, the fact that high-level officials primarily carried out these acts combined with the cost, effort, and organisation required to generate them meant that such messages were rare.

This strict adherence to hierarchy, arose following the rise of sovereignty as the constitutive logic of the political order in Europe, diplomats representing a sovereign as his or her direct impersonations were bestowed with the same divine authority as the sovereign, and ranked hence hierarchically above all other officials in the service of the sovereign (Anderson 1993, Hamilton and Langhorne 1995). According to Båtora (2016: 23), “this shift entailed that the status of the ambassador increasingly became an object of interest of the aristocratic circles and a diplomatic career gradually become the domain of aristocracy...[thus] status differences in diplomatic hierarchy became commonplace in diplomatic dealings throughout European capitals”. Fast – forward to the 20th century, where through official written diplomatic communication we see the continued importance and homage paid to hierarchy within the diplomatic institutions. As Harold Nicolson ([1939] 1988: 106) instructs his readers:

Figure 1.2 Harold Nicolson instructing his readers on the importance of diplomatic hierarchy

The words used in termination [of a letter] vary according to the rank of the person addressed. To an ambassador, the Secretary of state signs as follows:

I am, with great truth and respect,
Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[...] To a minister, the termination is identical except that the word ‘regard’ is submitted for the word ‘respect’. To a chargé d affaires, both the respect and the regard are omitted and the line ends (somewhat curtly perhaps) with the word ‘truth’.

The hierarchical composition of diplomatic services was also bolstered by the processes of bureaucratisation at the end of the 19th Century. This involved implementation of elements of bureaucracy of offices, including but not limited to; clearly defined sphere of officials' competence; impersonal official obligations; fixed salaries, and not least promotion dependent upon judgment of superiors (Bàtora 2016). As the late 19th Century German contemporary observed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

the strictest order prevails from top to bottom, unconditioned obedience is the rule, and as is right and proper, everyone obeys without protest or contradiction, whether his opinion may be Acquiescence is the first and highest law' (Busch 1897, quoted in Lauren 1976: 31).

Hierarchy hence no longer was just a professional norm inherent in the foreign service, but through bureaucratization it became embedded in the structure, rules and standard operating procedures of foreign Ministries. According to Bàtora (2016), lines of authority and communication were standardized and foreign ministers could to a greater extent than before act as unified organisational actors. Moreover, the growing complexity and volume of relations that had to be handled meant also that an increasing number of decisions were made by various officials in the bureaucratic line, even middle – ranking ones, because “it was no longer possible for almost every question to go the minister himself for the final decision, as had hitherto been normal” (Anderson 1993: 118). With the introduction of the telegraph, embassies were to a greater extent integrated to the overall bureaucratic machinery of foreign ministries (Jones 1983: 116 – 138). Thus, the once fairly extensive and infringed and foreign policy decision – making became more centralised (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995: 132). However, the digital age, and in particular a political crisis carried out during a digital age, we are beginning to see some possible signs that Embassies are become more decentralised once more, simply as a direct result of ‘real-time’ pressures to respond and reactive instantaneously, leading to a possible weakening of diplomacy’s historic allegiance to hierarchy, something we shall now explore in detail.

Moving forward to the present, we see that, while diplomatic practice is still structured around an existing hierarchy, a number of diplomatic scholars are making arguments that the world of digital diplomacy, particularly social media, is opening up and tearing down these historic hierarchies. In turn, they contend that this allows for a restructuring and dispersal of power within the diplomatic realm at large. (Wolfe 2008; Hanson 2012; Ross 2014). Now while this argument may possess a certain element of truth in the sense that a, junior diplomat can today craft and send tweets, or write on a Facebook wall on behalf of their Embassy, we would

argue that the existing hierarchy still stands, because a) as previously mentioned, a diplomatic message is rarely posted without the previous sanctioning from a higher authority and b) interpretation and symbolism plays a leading role within the practice of online communication, allowing us to conclude that the perceived status of the online diplomatic account is an extremely important aspect within the digital signalling process at large. This means that there is still a very obvious correlation between status and the strength of the message within the practice of diplomatic communication and that novel techniques such as mass communication and social media platforms have not fundamentally altered this belief.

Within the online signalling process itself, this mechanism matters because *who* sends the messages matters. Although today's online posts are created for and received by a large audience following, a following that are not shown to possess any official ranking of status, these posts arguably *receive* greater attention based on the status of actor sending them. In fact, this research posits that if anything, the new techniques of social media have only made it easier for actors to manipulate and alter this status within the signalling process. Using the status and online 'prestige' or clout of their Ambassador or Head of Mission on the ground, Central Ministries can harness social platforms to craft and send strong, direct signals concerning the crisis at play and ultimately have their national position heard. They can recognise that today, an Ambassador online holds a beacon of relative communicative strength and that their influence and prestige is useful for furthering foreign policy positions, having their Ministries voice heard, and ultimately creating frequent, strong, and direct crisis diplomatic discourse heard by many. Indeed, this very ease of online communication has allowed for Ambassadors to quickly and conveniently construct successful online discourses that achieve those aims.

iii. Frequency

The frequency mechanism is an interesting one to explore and one which many of today's analyses of digital diplomacy and crisis communication strategies tend to overlook. In the context of this research, frequency refers to the proportion of time a diplomatic agent spends online during a time of crisis, and what type of signal this sends to their online audience about the situation. Specifically, it refers to the average amount of posts an agent makes on their platform per day, and how this time is used to discuss the crisis and project their policies.

Within the online signalling process itself, this mechanism matters because how important the diplomatic agent deems the crisis, or is perceived to deem the crisis, matters. Specifically, if a diplomat chooses to post frequently during a crisis, they arguably signal to their online audience that they deem the crisis worthy of discussion and

that they wish to be viewed as an active actor within public discourse surrounding it. Thus, what seems to be the conscious choice of an online actors – actively engaging in the crisis communication dialogue as a whole and on terms which are frequent – creates signals which are better able to contribute towards a process of virtual enlargement. Additionally, if the online actor is not alone in their frequency of activity - backed by other diplomatic agents online through with their own active online discussions - this arguably signals that not only does the diplomat view the crisis worthy of discussion, but so do other actors around them. Put quite simply, people do not choose to discuss things online that they do not deem in some way important or relevant to their account. Diplomats in this instance prove no different.

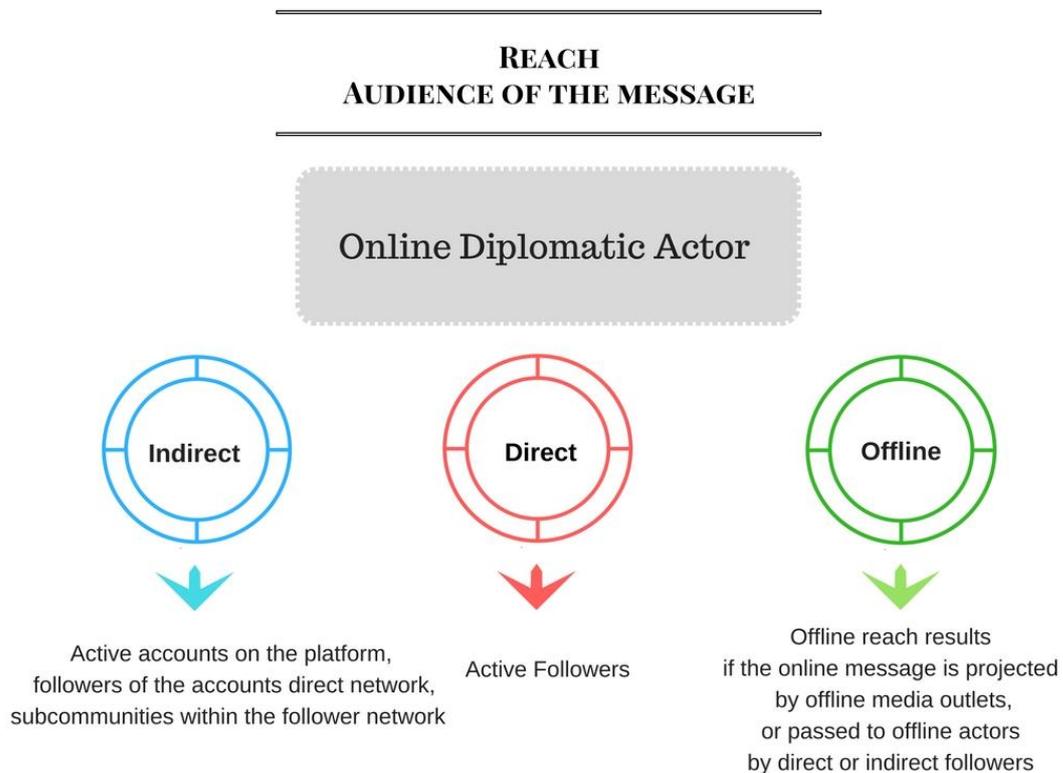
In contrast, the diplomatic agent (and their counterparts) actively choosing to stay silent or post irregularly within the crisis also sends a signal, albeit a different one: that the diplomatic agent does not deem the crisis worthy of discussion, or is a topic they do not wish to engage with publicly for a host of reasons, including domestic political pressures and international crisis contexts. Indeed, according to Bell, in diplomatic communication, ambiguity even in the form of silence, can be considered constructive and creative, as polities attempt to conceal vital information from each other or simply see silence as deliberate means to retain flexibility and make signals disclaimable (Bell, 1971: 74). Either way, silence continues to act as a signal and a tool for diplomatic communication.

Today, we also see that the increasing place of ‘*real-time*’ diplomacy and the subsequent pressure on agents to not only receive information within this constructed notion of real-time, but also respond to it, has created a substantial conceptual shift in how we, as both academics and practitioners, choose to or are now perhaps forced to view the idea of time. Today diplomatic agents have the power to update their audience on current events rapidly, issue Ministry statements instantly, and engage in real - time dialogue with their online partners. However, such power comes at a price, with the pressure of a real-time response beginning to cause tension between a required rapid response and the need to have most diplomatic communication sanctioned before it is made publicly, something which invariably slows down the speed of response. Indeed, there is increasing validity and strength in the argument that we should not view the opportunity to engage in frequent crisis communication dialogue purely as a positive development, but also acknowledge its negative traits; one example being that today, diplomats not having enough time to deliberate on issues or official stances before publicly speaking, or no longer having an ‘excuse’ to remove themselves from the diplomatic dialogue (in this case crisis dialogue) if they do not wish to, in some instances creating communication errors as a result. This is an interesting area to explore and one that we shall address as we begin to analyse our data in relation to these claims.

iv. Reach of the Message (Audience)

The next mechanism moves from the content of the message and its sender to who may possibly receive it online. At its core, reach relates to the audience of the online diplomatic account and the role they now play within the online signalling process. It refers to Twitter followers, Facebook friends and subscribers, and those actors who are seen as active and engaged on social media platforms today. In the context of this research, it refers specifically to the cohort of online actors who during the crisis possessed a Twitter and/or Facebook account and thus had the possibility of directly and indirectly receiving digital signals sent by diplomatic actors online.

Figure 1.3 Reach of the Message



Within the online signalling process, this mechanism matters because how many actors receive diplomatic agents' online posts matters. Today, online posts are primarily created for, and received by, a group of directed followers and have increasingly become the foundation for nearly all strategies of online communication. Within the arena of crisis communication, this mechanism has emerged as a highly significant one, due to the primary assumption that during a time of crisis, diplomatic agents do not send nor craft online posts with the thought that they will be ignored, but rather craft and send posts with the very intention that they will be read. This intention is of course assumed to have substantially more impact if the actor is shown to possess a high numerical following, and less so if the number is lower. For example, if the target audience of the agent's online posts was less than 100, its potential for creating a set of strong signals concerning the crisis at play is arguably less than if the target audience figure was that of 10,000¹². Online diplomatic actors are therefore aware that when they post a message during a time of crisis, their followers (and possibly these followers' followers) will more than likely receive and read it (or they must assume this to be so), therein acting as a signal regarding their position and policies on the crisis at play. During a period of conflict, diplomatic agents must therefore regard their social media use as a key method in which to craft, through a series of online posts, an overall discourse relating to their Ministry's official position on the crisis itself and to subsequently use their online platforms as an avenue in which to highlight this position to both official and nonofficial actors. Additionally, unlike language which is an explicit form of communication, signalling usually involves subtlety, therefore placing a high role of dependence on the signal-receiver or observer's receptivity. Thus, numerical audience analysis and comparison between online accounts is vital if we wish to fully understand the new role and power of the audience within the evolved process of diplomatic signalling.

Additionally, diplomatic actors are increasingly viewing online posts during a time of crisis, not only in terms of who they may reach directly, but also the potential they have to reach others. So while direct followers, friends, and subscribers play a core role in how the message is received and consequently act as the nexus of our analysis, indirect receivers of the message also matter in terms of how the overall reception of crisis discourse and signals.¹³ Today, social media opens up the possibility for the message of the diplomatic agent on the ground to gain an indirect audience at an exponential rate, and therefore both those who seek to craft crisis communications policy and those who choose to analyse it must acknowledge its importance.

¹² This is unless the 100 followers in question makeup a large percentage of top connected diplomats online. Through their own sub networks, these followers then have the potential to expand the messages reach and impact at a much greater rate than compared to 100 unofficial actors/followers.

¹³ Indirect followers refer to those who may receive the message through a retweet or reshare, or through an offline media outlet, which may have picked up the online message and reconstructed into the offline space.

Historically, we have seen that the audience plays a key role within diplomatic signalling. During a time of crisis in particular, both sending and receiving states alike considered the process and power of diplomatic signalling a highly important communication tool, and therefore was regularly used as means for communication. As official channels were the only sanctioned method of communication during a crisis, nearly all diplomatic communication during this time was limited to high-level officials of a state. If agents therefore wished to engage in the signalling process, the communicative method was primarily seen in the form of Demarches, Collective Representations, and Note Verbal, with these methods delivering the diplomatic message straight to official members of government and, as a result, having little contact with an audience outside of the official remit. For example, only the intended addressee, not anyone else, read the diplomatic tablets contained in the Amarna Letters. Similarly, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, diplomats were still, by and large, seen as members of an 'aristocratic international', having a sophisticated communication system which was restricted to their own official network, and having little contact with other sections of society (EA, 27, 28). Of course, there were obvious drawbacks to the exclusively bilateral communication system of the Amarna Letter. For one thing, the lack of a wider audience made it more difficult to incur commitments¹⁴. While making communication simpler in many respects, a strictly delimited audience also narrowed the register one could play upon in employing various commitment tactic.

For arguments sake, we can say that in some cases the intended target audience of the signal was indeed the public themselves, but, due to the methods of delivery available to the diplomat, this intention was rarely achieved; with officials of the receiving message mostly choosing to keep it to themselves, especially if this message contained criticisms of their state. Take for example the first phase of the 1979-1981 Iranian Hostage crisis, where the United States used traditional media sources to communicate and send diplomatic signals to a very specific audience: the terrorists themselves holding the hostages. Additionally, during the 1991 Gulf War, George Bush and Saddam Hussein also hurled messages back and forth via the global news networks, thus forming a 'de facto hotline' between Washington and Baghdad (Newsom 1996). In their work *Megaphone diplomacy in the Northern Irish Peace Process*, Sparre and Spencer (2004) also wrote on the process of diplomatic signalling, presenting the case of parties in the conflict in Northern Ireland conducting dialogues and exchanged messages through the media because formal negotiations were neither possible nor desirable. In this case, it is argued that the media dialogue in this case helped both sides keep the peace process alive and exchange significant messages.

¹⁴ For instance, Tushratta's problems in convincing Akhenaten that his father had indeed made a vow to send gold and establish good relations stemmed in part, from the commitment (EA, 26, 27, 28).

Although these cases differ substantially in terms of their political leaders and the diplomatic actors who sent signals, they both reflect situations in which the audience for signals were usually known or had concentrated demographics to some degree. In the Iranian Hostage crisis, we saw the United States communicate with the terrorists through the traditional media, and during the Gulf War, we saw communication directed at official state members (Larson 1986). In both cases, the U.S. was aware that the audience was primarily made up of those who were interested or engaged directly in the crisis itself, or were actively tuning in to the existing media broadcasts already. These are but a few examples, but can be replicated time and time again through further historical cases, showing us succinctly that target audiences for diplomatic signals recipients have historically played a key role within the process of offline diplomatic signalling, although their numbers and demographics were usually known, even if this information was in some instances extremely limited. Overall these cases demonstrate that the potential for the signals impact was arguably much less than what the diplomatic realm experiences today, purely due to the limitations of the communication medium itself.

However, in the modern day the advent of electronic media has made the differentiation among audiences has become more difficult, and diplomats have been forced to discuss their policies publicly and to a wide range of audiences. This represents a problem for the finely calibrated signalling of classic diplomacy, which was characterised by constructive ambiguity to allow for varying interpretations among strictly delimited audiences. We see diplomatic agents now operating within a system of diplomacy which is vastly more diverse and complicated than say 50 or even ten years ago, forcing practitioners to conform less and less to a single, structured template within their daily role. We also see social media, with its power of international attraction, greatly expanding the role and power of audience's online, audiences who now have the power to receive, interpret, and respond to any process or individual act of diplomatic signalling. Today's diplomat must therefore craft their message with the knowledge that not only will an increased number of audience members see it, but that this audience itself will be varied and distinct. They must be aware that, when they are communicating online, they are communicating not only to their national audience, but a plethora of international ones too. Whereas we have seen diplomatic signalling traditionally addressed to exclusive and clearly delineated audiences with a diplomat afforded a high degree of control to vary their message accordingly, social media has made the differentiation among audiences substantially more difficult and complex. Additionally, this new role of multiple audiences has increased ambiguity within diplomatic messages, as although explicit and unambiguous signalling is desirable Vis-a`-vis one category of receivers, it may end up having disastrous effects on the sender's relations with another category of receivers; something which the online diplomat must now take into account.

With that said, this research acknowledges that the role of the audience within the process of reception is not just about numerics – that is the onscreen figure of how many people follow you – but also about *engagement*

and *interaction*, an aspect of diplomacy which the unique tools and mechanisms social media creates amplify and push forth. Today, diplomatic agents find themselves with the power to not only directly send signals to their domestic citizens and international followers, but also to engage with them, speak to them, and interact with them on a real-time basis. Diplomats are no longer only required to speak *at* their audience. Rather, through direct messaging, public retweets, and public replies, they must now actively listen, engage and interact with them on a regular and real-time basis. The consequence of this for diplomatic crisis communication is that diplomats now face a growing pressure to actively listen to their audience and engage with them in order to create online communication accounts which aid them in their foreign policy aims and work towards crafting strong and effective diplomatic discourse online. Therefore, social media amplified what we already knew: engagement within diplomacy matters. However, with the increasingly pervasive nature of social media platforms, diplomats can no longer sweep this acknowledgment under the rug. If they are to remain a relevant and powerful actor both on and offline, they must take advantage of it in all its forms.

v. Online Diplomatic Network

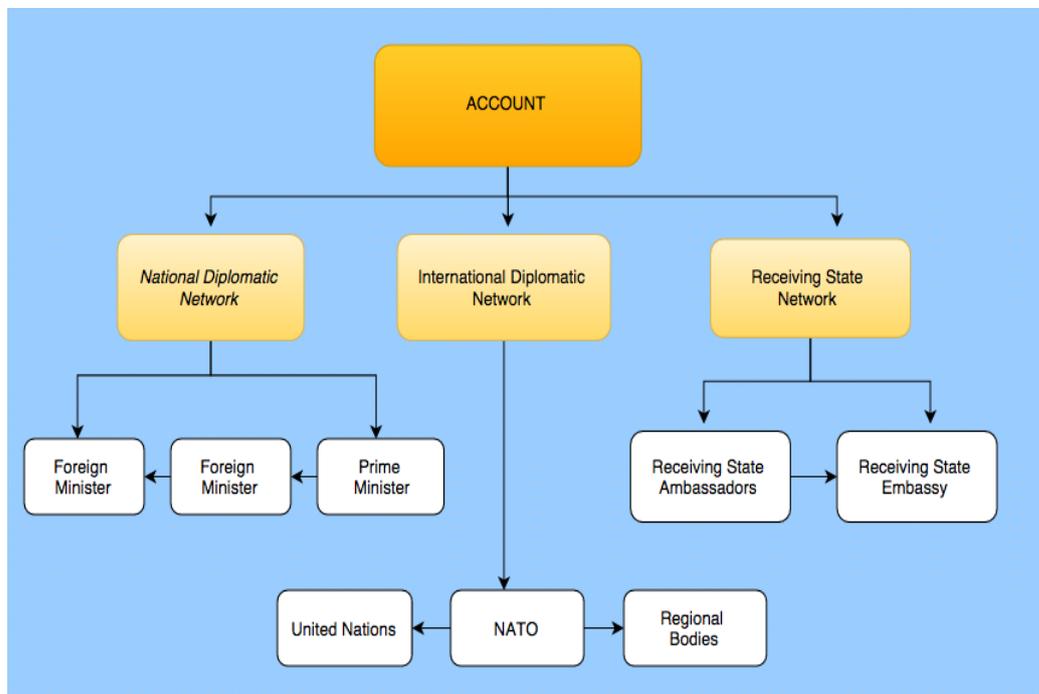
After focusing our attention on who sends the signal, to how frequently they send it, what it is about, and who receives it, the final mechanism deals with is how other diplomatic actors online receive and respond to these signals. It relates to online diplomatic network power and the role it plays within digital crisis communication today. Although a novel mechanism online, its premise is not entirely new, based as it is on the existing assumption that networks are a fundamental unit of social organisation underneath and above the nation-states and are social structures which can readily carry out the business of the diplomatic craft. Within the signalling process itself, diplomats have long deemed networks a useful communication tool, working not only as methods of message diffusion and dissemination amongst actors, but also as an arena in which qualities reflective of the effect of those relations are imbedded – shared norms, ideas and values. Today they allow the sharing of enhanced and reinforced messages online and have emerged as a tool of significance within the realm of 21st century diplomatic communication.

Historically, network power played a role within the practice of the diplomatic craft both in and outside a crisis framework. One of the first examples of network diplomacy came in the form of collective representations – which were seen as statements of support or joint *dé marches* (particularly during times of crisis), and offered advantages over those of an individual diplomat's comment (Davis 1943; Zhou 1996). For one, these collective representations redressed the balance between the diplomatic agent and their host, which tended to be skewed in favour of the receiving State in bilateral diplomatic relations. The logic behind such collective representations

arguably lay in the belief that the receiving state and international stage could view a lone diplomat speaking out on certain crises as a possible embarrassment, but would view a group of embassies together as a force that was dangerous to ignore. The use of the diplomatic network therefore strengthened the diplomatic signal itself, whilst providing additional support for those who decided to send it.

However fast forward to today and what do we see? At present, we see the motivation behind the use of diplomatic networks arguably remaining the same, but with social media and the unique mechanism it now affords expanding this motivation and potential for impact at a rate never before seen. Ambassadors now can easily retweet the words of their fellow colleagues on the ground, reshare the posts of their Foreign Ministries or international organisations, or at the push of a button provide online support to any actor in the world. Thus, through the tools of online media, diplomatic agents now possess the opportunity to connect and engage with each other far beyond the once confined realms of a Joint de'Marché or a Collective representation.

Figure 1.4 Online Diplomatic Networks



To focus on the power of the online network within our research specifically, we will first turn to the anatomy of the online diplomatic network as illustrated above. By this we refer to all the diplomatic actors who possess a Facebook and/or Twitter account during a time of crisis and the online network they created. Our analysis will divide this online diplomatic network into three distinct networks: national, international, and receiving state, all of which are shown to play various communicative roles and contribute to varying degrees of the virtual enlargement process for an account during crises.

We will first examine the *national diplomatic network*, which consists of all online diplomatic actors accredited to the Foreign Ministry account, namely their respective Foreign Minister, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, National Parliament etc. While use of this online network is particularly effective for an individual account to *inter alia* quickly share information from their Ministry, link to a national press report or highlight the words of their Foreign Minister during this time, it is arguably not a novel mechanism in diplomatic crisis communication. Obviously, a diplomatic agent on the ground acting as a mouthpiece for their Ministry is an innate practice of crisis communication dating to the very beginning of diplomacy. However, the direct result of this online network should not be dismissed as it does ensure that the agent's message can be sent at a faster rate, to an increased audience, and on a much more frequent basis. In turn, this all serves (as illustrated above) to project and signal the diplomat's crisis messages with varying degrees of communicative effect. That being said, it does not fully utilise this new strength of online network power within the signalling process today. For this we turn to the second component of the online diplomatic network, the *International Diplomatic Network*, which refers to all online diplomatic accounts accredited to international bodies: United Nations, World Trade Organisation, Organisation of the Security and Co-Operation in Europe etc. We can argue that, compared to national diplomatic networks, online diplomatic actors retweeting and re-sharing within international online networks can work towards creating a set of stronger signals on a crisis and illustrate through new means their loyalty to and position on certain international opinions. For example, if the Ambassador of Ireland utilises their account to regularly retweet, quote and/or share the online posts of international bodies such as the United Nations, NATO or the OSCE, this arguably sends a signal to their online audience that they stand behind official international opinion on the crisis, that they wish to have their name attached to this stance, and that they deem this opinion worthy of sharing with their followers.

Finally, the last online network comes in the form of the *receiving state diplomatic network*, which is made up of all diplomatic actors who are accredited to the receiving state in which the crisis is operating; Embassy accounts, United Nations Missions etc. The effect of using this network is similar to using that of the international one illustrated above, in that it demonstrates a unified message from all Ambassadors or Embassies

who choose to retweet or share it, helping to create a shared discourse amongst all actors on the ground, and in turn sends a stronger signal for all actors who engage in the network regarding the state's position on the crisis.

The proposed power of this mechanism arises from the assumption that actors sharing and publicly supporting each other's views grants the potential to reinforce and fortify certain messages within a crisis. Thus, it seems that, through a host of new avenues afforded to them on the platforms of Twitter and Facebook, online agents can today use online networks as a tool to craft both effective crisis communication strategies online and diplomatic signals of varying degrees of impact regarding the crisis itself. Diplomatic actors now have the ability to connect, interact, and engage with their online networks on a regular and real-time basis, and through resharing, and retweeting posts within their diplomatic networks, can seek to enhance the reach potential of the message whilst also publicly demonstrating their support for it. This working paper therefore argues that network power can therefore be regarded as a powerful signalling tool during a time of political crisis, and that diplomatic actors should recognise its potential accordingly.

3.3 Digital Signalling Typologies

With the definitional frameworks and core mechanisms firmly in place, the final piece of the conceptual puzzle, digital signalling typologies, can be created. These typologies emerge from the core mechanisms of the signalling process illustrated above and provide an avenue for us to empirically categorise their use. When constructed, they allow us to group together diplomatic agents' use of these online mechanisms and to put labels on this new practice of diplomatic communication and how it varies amongst actors today. Once the typologies are created, we will have standard categories which can be used to describe who is using this new practice best and who is not. Finally, the creation of these digital signalling typologies emerges from the core belief that diplomatic agents use digital technologies and communicative capabilities in very distinct manners. If one is to truly go about understanding how diplomatic signals and crisis narratives are evolving in the technological age, we require not only acknowledgement of this belief, but also the tools with which to illustrate and explain these practices in a tangible manner.

As with many qualitative studies, this research builds on the premise that types are constructed as a way to comprehend, understand, and explain complex social realities on the ground. Indeed, their usage in this research proves no different. Here, the construction of a set of typologies act as a methodological tool which allow us to view and categorise this process of online signalling in a manner which is standardised, structured, and

replicable. However, there currently exists very different steps for analysis carried out in single studies, and few general approaches for type construction exist within the current literature. Furthermore, those who engage in type creation frequently use different concepts of types (e.g. ideal types, empirical types, structure types, prototypes etc.), without the concept of a 'type' remaining explicitly defined (Hauptert 1991; Juettemann 1981, 1989; Mayring 1990, 1993).

With that said, this research does pick a conceptual path, choosing to create our typologies within an empirical type framework. Justification for this choice emerges from the work of Becker (1968/1950), McKinney (1969, 1970), and Bailey (1973), who, in addition to Weber's work on ideal types, point to the argument that both the empirical regularities and correlations (Kausaladaequanz) and the existing meaningful relationships (Sinnadaequanz) must be analysed in order to achieve a suitable interpretation of typical social action (eine 'richtige kausale Deutung typischen Handelns') and to develop understandable ('verstaendliche') types of social action, therefore: sociological rules (Weber 1921; 5). This argument is further expanded to show that, on the one hand, empirical investigations always need theoretical knowledge, because investigations cannot be carried out in a purely inductive fashion (Kelle 1998; Kluge 1999). On the other hand, empirical investigations must also form the basis for qualitative social research if meaningful statements about social reality, not just empirically remote constructs, are to be made. It is therefore only when empirical analyses are combined with theoretical knowledge that 'empirically grounded types'; may be developed. Types can therefore nearly always be viewed as constructions, which are dependent on the attributes that should form the basis for the typology. This argument forms the foundation for this research's typology creation and seeks to justify its very use.

Table 1.1 Digital Diplomatic Signalling Typologies

	High (3)	Medium (2)	Low (1)
Content & Structure	Heightened Online Discussion of Conflict (over 2 posts per day), Direct Structure	Regular Online Discussion of Conflict (1 post per day), Combination of Direct and Indirect Structure	Rare Online Discussion of Conflict (less than 1 post per day), Indirect Structure
Status	Ambassador or Head of Mission	Embassy	Embassy or Junior Diplomat
Audience	High Numerical Audience (over 1,000), Active Engagement with Audience	Average Numerical Audience (Between 500-1,000), Average Engagement with Audience	Low Numerical Audience (Less than 500), Weak Account Engagement with Audience
Frequency	High Use of Online Account (over 2 posts per day)	Average Online Activity (1 post per day)	Inactive or Irregular Use of Online Account (less than 1 post per day)

Network	High Connection, and Engagement with National and International Diplomatic Networks Online	Any Connection, and Engagement with National and International Diplomatic Networks Online	Non-Engagement with National and International Diplomatic Networks Online
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For the online diplomatic signalling process, we can create three distinct typologies: *High Performance*, *Medium Performance* and *Low Performance*. While distinct, these typologies are based on an attribute space resulting from the combination of selected attributes and their dimensions - in our case the mechanisms of *content & structure*, *audience recipient*, *status of the sender*, *frequency*, and *network power*. Here every typology emerges from the result of a grouping process in which an object field is divided in some groups or types with the help of one or more attributes. This grouping process draws on the work of Lazarsfeld (1937), and Barton (1951) who present the claim that when constructing a type, elements within it have to be as similar as possible, in this case of our core mechanisms (intern heterogeneity on the ‘level of the type’) and the differences between these types have to be as strong as possible, seen here through high, medium and low performance (external heterogeneity on the ‘level of the typology’). Lazarsfeld and Barton espoused the claim that every type—in spite of all the differences, which can exist with regard to formal qualities like the degree of abstraction and complexity or the time-space links etc.—can therefore be defined as a combination of its attributes. Furthermore, since all possible combinations often do not exist in reality and/or the differences between individual combinations of attributes are not relevant for the research question, single fields of the attribute space can be summarised in a typological process called reduction (ibid). It is very effective in order to concentrate on the existing variety and to reduce it to a few relevant types, which we shall now illustrate.

3.3.1 Performance Types

i. High Performers

The High-Performance typology represents a combination of mechanisms which best illustrate how a diplomatic actor may use the online mechanisms to contribute most effectively towards a process of virtual state enlargement. Here, each mechanism is used to its greatest potential to enhance the state's foreign policy message, extend its reach, and create a coherent and appealing message to officials and non-officials alike. We therefore call this category high performance and its users high performers. Below, we propose a number of possible scope conditions for an account to fall within this type:

H_a: Frequency of Posting:	$X \geq$ Once a Day
Content of the Message:	Heightened Online Discussion of Conflict
Status of Diplomat:	Head of Mission
Target Audience:	High Numerical
Structure of Message:	Direct
Network Power:	Increased use of National/Regional Diplomatic Networks Online

ii. Mid-range (Medium) Performers

The Medium Performance typology represents the combination of mechanisms, illustrating how an actor uses these capabilities during times of crisis. Within this typology, we see actors engaging with these capabilities to various degrees, but only taking full advantage of one or two online mechanism in a bid to project and extend their crisis messages online. Additionally, an actor may engage with all mechanisms but to a very limited and average extent. Thus, what this typology illustrates is a mixture of both high and low performers with a number of possible scope conditions proposed:

H_b: Frequency of Posting:	$X \leq$ Once a Day
Content of the Message:	Regular Online Discussion of Conflict
Status of Diplomat:	Head of Mission
Target Audience:	High Numerical
Structure of Message:	Indirect
Network Power:	None or limited use of National/Regional Diplomatic Networks Online

H_c: Frequency of Posting:	$X \geq$ Once a Day
Content of the Message:	Regular Online Discussion of Conflict
Status of Diplomat:	Embassy
Target Audience:	Low Numerical
Structure of Message:	Direct
Network Power:	None or limited use of National/Regional Diplomatic Networks Online

iii. Low Performers

The final typology is that of Low Performers, which represents a combination of mechanisms illustrating how an online diplomatic account uses the process of digital diplomatic signalling with the least effect during times of crisis. We can call this category low performance and its users low performers. Here we propose a number of possible scope conditions for an account to fall within this type:

H_d: Frequency of Posting:	$X \leq$ Once a Day
Content of the Message:	Rare Online Discussion of Conflict
Status of Diplomat:	Junior Diplomat
Target Audience:	Low Numerical
Structure of Message:	Indirect
Network Power:	No use of National/Regional Diplomatic Networks Online

At its core, this set of typologies allows us to illustrate where certain accounts fall regarding their use of the online signalling process and where these accounts may stand compared to their contemporaries during the time of crisis. By constructing a unique typology categorisation for each crisis, we also have an opportunity to compare the crises themselves, which shall be done in the next working paper. Illustration of these hypotheses will be undertaken once they have been tested empirically.

IV. Conclusion

Posing the central question *How has the process of diplomatic signalling evolved during the digital age, and through what mechanisms are diplomatic signals now generated online?* this research sets out to unpack the changing nature of diplomatic crisis communicative capabilities during the digital age. Through the construction of a unique conceptual and methodological framework, this paper has illustrated the hypothesis that, through DDS has developed as a powerful tool for engagement and foreign policy power projection, ultimately allowing states to enlarge their importance to the international community through a variety of methods and means. Overall, through the creation of this framework, this chapter has crafted an understanding of how these this process of DDS has the potential to act as modern crisis communication tools, and how a Foreign Ministry can incorporate them into a new online communication strategy during times of crisis or otherwise.

While the primary focus of this working paper was conceptual in nature, by deconstructing the historic communication processes of diplomatic signalling, through its discussion, this research has sought to provide a blueprint to practitioners on how to use this new communicative capability, to illustrate to MFAs the emerging and increasing power of these novel communicative process and the benefits they can provide to the institution, if included within a crisis communication strategy. Linked to this aim, is to highlight how digital communicative practices are becoming increasingly transformative for crisis communication in the 21st century, and with that, decidedly necessary for diplomats to engage in, if they wish to carry out, implement, and achieve effective communication strategies and crisis management. By reconceptualising practices in the digital age, the next set of working papers, will begin applying and testing this conceptual framework within distinct crises case studies, tapping into the unexplored process of DDS, and their potential to expand and project state power in the digital age.

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