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## Network Diplomacy: Theory

**Лебедева О.**

*МГИМО Университет МИД России  
Российская Федерация, Москва*

**Морозов В.**

*МГИМО Университет МИД России  
Российская Федерация, Москва*

**Шебалина Е. О.**

*МГИМО Университет МИД России  
Российская Федерация, Москва*

### Аннотация

С преобразованиями в мировом порядке и новыми глобальными вызовами характер дипломатии, как механизма представительства, коммуникации и переговоров, также претерпел значительные изменения. Основной целью статьи является представить анализ теоретических аспектов сетевой дипломатии, осуществленный различными учеными. В свою очередь, основные задачи заключаются в следующем: выделить ключевые исследования по сетевой дипломатии; проанализировать выбранные исследования; наметить ключевые теоретические аспекты сетевой дипломатии. Для достижения вышеуказанных целей были рассмотрены и проанализированы работы следующих авторов: К. М. Константину, П. Керр, П. Шарп, Э. Ф. Купер, Х. Гейне, Р. Тхакур, Дж. Ф. Метцль, И. Н. Бурганова, И. В. Колосова, Р. С. Захарна. Все анализируемые исследования предлагают позитивную точку зрения на феномен сетевой дипломатии, причем их авторы высказывают общие содержательные теоретические положения по этому вопросу, несмотря на относительно невысокую степень научной разработанности данного вопроса на сегодняшний день. Таким образом, сетевая дипломатия в целом может быть определена как неиерархический тип взаимодействия между нациями и негосударственными акторами, подразумевающий использование переговоров и методов мягкой силы с целью решения глобальных проблем.

**Ключевые слова:** сетевая дипломатия, теоретические аспекты, традиционная модель

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1 The interpretation of the concept of “network diplomacy” depends on the theoretical and methodological approach that the authors adhere to. So, researchers working in the mainstream of the liberal paradigm of the contemporary history of international relations explain “network diplomacy” through the prism of active involvement of non-governmental actors in transnational activities, building flexible forms of interaction with similar actors operating in another country / region.

2 While the authors that stick to the realism paradigm, pay attention mainly to interstate interaction at various multilateral venues.

3 The phenomenon of network diplomacy can be considered a kind of derivative of all the features that currently characterize contemporary world political order. Still, there’s no common understanding and a unified approach to the study of network diplomacy. Most researchers agree that the formation of network mechanisms of diplomacy is closely connected with the processes of globalization and integration, due to new challenges facing the international community today, and reflects the new requirements to diplomacy as one of the main tools of international interaction.

4 Despite the existing variance of opinions, for Russian studies, as well as for political discourse, it is more typical to associate network diplomacy with multilateral diplomacy, and for foreign studies-with public diplomacy.

5 It is noteworthy that in the western expert community, the emergence of network diplomacy is also associated with the transformation of the world system, the influence of globalization and integration processes, and also the expansion of the range of subjects of international interaction.

6 At the same time, in most studies the emphasis is put on the functional aspect — i. e. on the process of growth of the network of relations, contacts and relations between the participants, which in many respects distinguishes the “Western” approach to the study of network diplomacy from the Russian one. In Western political discourse, the functioning of network diplomacy is viewed more in the context of globalization. Effective diplomacy in the new era, in the opinion of Western researchers, implies the creation of such a foreign policy infrastructure that would allow a greater number of institutions to engage in achieving state goals, as well as a wider influence on the audience in foreign countries, thus creating loyal influence groups. In other words, in the Western vision of the practical aspects of network diplomacy, special attention is given to such system of foreign policy instruments, which in practice could function like a “globally integrated” transnational company. So, the state can strengthen its position on the international arena by managing broad network structures.

7 Thus, it is possible to define common features expressed by all scholars when considering various mechanisms of network diplomacy. Their main goal is to create a multilateral interaction of various structures, both at the level of officials, and among experts and public figures from different spheres in order to solve specific problems and promote national interests. At the same time, a wider

perception of network diplomacy has developed in the Western scientific community through the prism of creating a large network of contacts, mainly with foreign auditors to fulfill the tasks of the country's foreign policy, which, in turn, makes network diplomacy closely related to public.

8 J. Nye, an American researcher who created the concept of “soft power”, expressed the opinion that public diplomacy is absolutely useless in implementing the strategy of “soft power” and promoting the culture and values of a country if they are initially unattractive. In his opinion, by resorting to public diplomacy, states should strive to sharpen strong relations between states through various cultural, scientific, educational exchanges, conferences and seminars. Thus, J. Nye also states the importance of network diplomacy in the implementation of the strategy of “soft power”.

9 Andrew F. Cooper, Professor of Political Science at the University of Waterloo, Jorge Heine, Center for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) Chair in Global Governance at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, Professor of Political Science at Wilfrid Laurier University, and Ramesh Thakur, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, Senior Vice Rector of the United Nations University and Director of the Centre for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament at Australian National University, analyze in *The Oxford Handbook of Diplomacy* the evolution from club to network diplomacy, which represents one of the central shifts in modern diplomacy. Their work combines theoretical and historical aspects with practical insights into the transmuting nature of twenty-first century diplomacy regarded from an international relations point of view. As Thakur suggests, club diplomacy presupposed four main duties of a diplomat: to represent his country’s interests, protect his country’s citizens, inform governments and people, and negotiate with the host country. Network diplomacy implies, in contrast, more actors than club diplomacy and is flat rather than hierarchical. This type of diplomacy is rather transparent than confidential, with its communication taking the form of increased bilateral flows instead of formal signing ceremonies.

10 According to the study, cultural diplomacy has a natural resonance with network diplomacy. By definition, cultural diplomacy is a type of public diplomacy and soft power that includes the “exchange of ideas, information, art, language and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding”<sup>1</sup>. As Thakur argues, “in attempting to navigate the shoals while exploiting the opportunities of a globalized and networked world, the diplomat must cultivate all manner of constituencies in home, host, and sometimes even third countries. That is the key to network diplomacy: cultivating all relevant constituencies”<sup>2</sup>. Cultural diplomacy is considered an efficient way of bringing diplomats together under the club model. At the same time, it can easily develop into the network diplomacy age.

11 Jamie F. Metzl, American writer, partner in the global investment company Cranemere LLC and a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, offers an authoritative study on the network diplomacy phenomenon. In his article called *Network Diplomacy*, Metzl notes that globalization and the information revolution are empowering decentralized networks that challenge state-centered hierarchies. According to Metzl, these networks may be defined loosely as sets of interconnected individuals who occupy analogous positions in institutional or social structures and create new community relationships that build upon, democratize, and magnify existing social frameworks<sup>3</sup>. Networks are always able to reconfigure themselves to face new challenges and develop much faster than traditional hierarchies. Despite the significant role of states in the international arena, networks weaken hierarchical state power. In this regard, traditional hierarchies may seem irrelevant in resolving problems as networks are capable of connecting broader communities to address challenges. Metzl suggests in his study that public diplomacy, defined as the dialogue between governments and foreign populations, perfectly fits a network orientation. “Once championed by the now-defunct U.S. Information Agency (USIA), public diplomacy has sought to explain U.S. government activities to foreign populations and to carry out polling and media analysis to educate

U.S. decision-makers about foreign attitudes and opinions”, cites Metzl noting that this type of engagement contributes to cross-cultural understanding, which is the key component of networks.

<sup>12</sup> Network diplomacy increases the importance for governments of reaching out to foreign audiences. It is no longer sufficient for governments to build relationships with NGOs. Facilitating contacts between such groups is now in governments’ interests.

<sup>13</sup> According to Metzl’s study, network diplomacy by definition is broader-based than traditional diplomacy. Diplomats are to organize events both in their countries and abroad to share information. Those participating in such events should be connected in global electronic dialogue groups to inform follow-up action. This should contribute to a greater transparency in policy development processes. Owing to the network model, government institutional culture should make a shift from secrecy to openness, as Metzl suggests. To do so, technology networks can be built in order to facilitate information exchanges.

<sup>14</sup> Costas M. Constantinou, Professor of International Relations at the University of Cyprus, analyzes the concept of network diplomacy in his SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy. On the example of Russian diplomacy, the author explains that network diplomacy implies flexible cooperation between different groups of countries so as to ensure conformity with the general interests. This kind of diplomacy should therefore compel political establishment of all states to transform their national interests so that they correspond to those of the partners and the various interests of the international community<sup>4</sup>. According to him, network diplomacy can be defined as nations’ need to create temporary coalitions in order to achieve their foreign policy goals. Such coalitions may be viewed as networks, with each member of the coalition serving as a node<sup>5</sup>. Network diplomacy presupposes cooperation between a great number of actors, from governments to national private sector firms, multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regional and international organizations<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Rhonda S. Zaharna, Full Professor and Director of the Global Media program in the School of Communication, American University, Washington, analyzes the network model in her article *The Network Paradigm of Strategic Public Diplomacy*. Zaharna suggests that networking has become the new model of persuasion in the global communication era where effective public diplomacy is about building bridges with foreign publics. In order to build networks, states’ public diplomacies are supposed to operate less as communicators and more as facilitators in an international dialogue. Another tactic is providing assistance in organizing or facilitating conferences. As part of network diplomacy, states should become more flexible and innovative<sup>7</sup>. The author argues that in the global communication era, to effectively maneuver, the political landscape requires networking as the new paradigm of public policy.

<sup>16</sup> The phenomenon of network diplomacy is also outlined in *The Network Diplomacy Phenomenon in International Relations* study conducted by Burganova I. N., PhD in Political Science at Orenburg State Pedagogical University of Russia. In her research, the author explains that the appearance of the network diplomacy phenomenon is linked to globalization and regional integration processes, with interstate cooperation becoming even stronger given new global challenges, threats and crises. Burganova connects the network diplomacy phenomenon with states’ foreign policies. According to the author, this model presupposes the participation of a state in multilateral bodies, a flexible format of cooperation, a great number of members of the international community<sup>8</sup>. Conferences, international events, negotiations are viewed as the main forms of the network model. This is the type of diplomacy, as Burganova notes, that does not put members of the international community under any obligation. Such flexibility is required when it comes to the amelioration of relationships between states as well as decision-making processes. Soft power is regarded as the key instrument of the network approach. However, Burganova also argues that a

vast number of actors making decisions on common issues can lead to bureaucratization, which is considered a disadvantage of network diplomacy.

17 In his book *Diplomatic Theory of International Relations*, Paul Sharp, Professor and Head of political Science at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, covers the issue of network diplomacy mentioning a turn in the conduct of international relations. Today, the reasoned and reasonable relations by which the scope of individual freedom is to be broadened are now said to spill across boundaries in networks involving new and fluctuating centers of power. Within and across these, shifting coalitions strive to influence one another on a wide range of issues by engaging in popular and democratic discourse that has transformed the representative character of traditional politics and diplomacy into direct involvement<sup>9</sup>. Sharp suggests that states are now being replaced by the network of transnational interactions or, conversely, that under this model, the old structures of state power remain unchanged but depreciated as always.

18 Kolosova I. V., PhD in History, Associate Professor of the Political Science and Political Philosophy Department at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, underlines the relevance of the network diplomacy issue in her study “The Network Diplomacy” *Labiryntsh*. According to Kolosova, network diplomacy is a relatively new phenomenon in international relations but is at the same time a model that has a great potential. The author claims that traditional military alliances formed under the Cold War are no longer capable of addressing a wide range of transnational challenges and threats. This is why today’s diplomacy should acquire a new, network form, which requires flexible participation in multilateral processes so that the international community could collectively find solutions to common problems<sup>10</sup>. Burganova notes that the phenomenon of network diplomacy is examined in the 2008 and 2013 Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation. According to the Concepts, the diplomacy of “flexible alliances” or “interest alliances/coalitions”, which can alter depending on the specific challenge, lies at the heart of network diplomacy. This study also indicates that unlike the Russian viewpoint, Western politicians emphasize the role of different networking bodies contributing to the creation of influential interest groups outside state borders. NGOs can be viewed as one of the vivid examples of such bodies. They are capable of forming a better image of a country as well as implementing its various internal and foreign policy projects.

19 So, the very concept of diplomacy can be defined as the mechanism of representation, communication and negotiation through which States and other international actors conduct their affairs and settle differences. The means through which these functions are carried out have been strongly challenged since the late 1980s.

20 In order to refresh the sacred concept of diplomacy, Jamie Metzl developed and suggested the concept of *Network Diplomacy*, suggesting that in our times, public diplomacy was had evolved to the point that it had become more “ideally suited for a network orientation”.

21 In our contemporary world, technological progress and social evolutions, including the dilution of information, values, and ideologies as well as the mass-scale empowerment of individuals, have led to traditional diplomacy becoming a much more fragmented and decentralized field.

22 Indeed, diplomacy has become a field which now requires reaching out to newer and larger groups of people and organizations. A field which has also been expected — and has often failed — to adequately exploit some of the newly-created spaces and grey areas of our international system (social media, public diplomacy, etc.).

23 As such, the concept of network diplomacy is often considered to be a modernized version of yesterday’s traditional — and at times almost mythical — diplomacy. It is modernized in the

sense that it is now expected to provide appropriate mechanisms and answers to face three major developments:

24           1: *The necessity for increased cooperation in a volatile and highly populated globalized international environment:*

25           Nowadays, the world is facing a wide range of issues which are intricately linked to seemingly unrelated issues: from poverty, under-development, food insecurity or environmental concern can now stem radicalization, terrorism, refugee crisis, conflicts and various other potential issues. In short, security threats have become uniquely multidimensional, and what may have required one or two parties in the past may require dozens of actors from various backgrounds today poverty, environment (e. g. military conflicts).

26           More importantly, the issues of our current system transcend physical borders, which have now become the last remains of yesterday's sovereignty. The cyberspace, organized crime, terrorism, and other significant and potentially destabilizing issues can cross borders and spaces quite easily, thus exploiting gaps (physical, material, legal, etc.) before traditional actors can identify and address these issues.

27           2: *The current evolution of technologies, most particularly in the fields of information and communication dissemination:*

28           It is a trite truism, that the emergence of the internet and modern information technologies have significantly altered our social and communicative patterns, and thus our global environment. In this context, its influence on the public diplomacy appears evident. The amount of information is not longer and issue, and the sources have become multiple.

29           Yesterday, diplomatic apparatuses required complex, sometime covert sources and information to adequately address the challenges they faced, often to extract limited information from finite sources, with a significant risk. Today, sources are seemingly infinite, what could be gathered yesterday from a unique source through an intelligence service can now be replaced by a public diplomatic network with local communities and non-State actors. Journalists and other civil society-based networks can sometime provide and disseminate valuable knowledge to and from diplomatic institutions more efficiently.

30           As a particularly accurate prediction formulated by HSBC's (one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisation) marketing team in the late 1990s: data, communication and networks will become the currency of tomorrow. Today, communication is without a doubt one of the central pillars of the network diplomacy. It is the main feature of modern world, that is why, public diplomacy has transformed from a high-risk / high cost information gathering and analysis product into a low-cost / low-risk information gathering and dissemination process. If anything, today's modern network diplomacy has in many ways started to replicate some of the marketing and public relations strategies developed by corporations from the 1980s.

31           3: *The expanding number of relevant international actors and sources of influences:*

32           In the past decades a wide range of non-state actors such as multinational corporations (MNCs), international media outlets, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), armed non-State actors (ANSAs), religious groups and other civil society organizations (CSOs) as well as international and intergovernmental organizations have stepped more profoundly into the multi-layered field of global (geo)politics and therefore global diplomacy.

33           Their influence is at times comparable, even stronger (for short or extended period of times) to that of certain States or groupings of States. A highly contrasting example would be to compare the power of a corporation such as Facebook, Microsoft or Google and their global reach

and influence to that of Lesotho, St. Kitts and Nevis or Suriname. In this context, it seems clear that the formulation of an effective diplomacy in the 21st century needs to devote more attention to the multiplication of “engage-able” actors, their interests, reach, influence, power and strategies, be they a group of small / medium powers such as the group of Landlocked Developing Countries or a set of CSOs such as the Vienna NGO Committee.

34 Most networks, applied in the context of diplomacy would have the following features:

1. Flexibility
2. Effectiveness
3. Act across traditional boundaries
4. Lower the cost of common activity

35 The “networkization” of governmental and institutional actions is a natural part of the globalization, consequently, if a government wants to successfully occupy, seize, retain or develop within newly-created socio-political and ideological spaces, it must embrace the concept of external networks — with the implicit acceptance of reduced sovereignty from national boundaries — thus integrating the major shifts resulting from fast-paced and scarcely regulated globalization as the basis of its diplomatic ideology.

36 *“A shift in conceptual models must also be accompanied by new relationships among government foreign policy actors, as well as between these actors and global constituencies. Governments need to nurture their own internal networks and link them to broader networks outside of government.”* — Jamie Metz<sup>11</sup>.

37 Therefore, network diplomacy is an institution’s diplomatic activity, which transcend traditional frameworks and borders, in order to create networks of actors from varied backgrounds with varying degrees of power, skills and audiences, through the creation or adherence to new channels of communication and cooperation with other international actors on a virtually infinite spectrum of issues. This would be conducted in order to take advantage to the added exponential value which a network possess from the number of nodes / actors it comprises.

### 38 **Conclusion**

All the studies analyzed provide a positive attitude towards the relatively new network diplomacy phenomenon, with their authors making common substantial theoretical points on the network model. The scholars call on to make a shift from the traditional model of diplomatic practice to the network one. However, scientific community does not offer much research on the issue given the fact that the network diplomacy phenomenon is relatively young. Despite the low extent of scientific development of the issue, the studies analyzed are capable of providing the key theoretical aspects of network diplomacy.

39 Network diplomacy is commonly theorized as a set of non-hierarchical and interdependent relationships implying a wide range of stakeholders who share common interests and exchange information and resources. As many scholars put it, the network model presupposes the presence of various international bodies and non-state actors in the international arena. Among the main characteristics of the network approach, we can distinguish international events, negotiations and soft power. With new actors entering the international system and new global challenges appearing, the traditional model of diplomacy seems less relevance in today’s world and gives way to the development of network diplomacy.

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**O. Lebedeva**

*MGIMO University*

*Russian Federation, Moscow*

**V. Morozov**

*MGIMO University*

*Russian Federation, Moscow*

**E. Shebalina**

*MGIMO University*

*Russian Federation, Moscow*

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