

## New Media and Peacemaking Diplomacy

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### Abstract

A life full of peace has always been a dream for human societies. Peace is still considered as one of the main modern world concerns, because each nation deals with its own kind of violence and war. Therefore, peacemaking has turned into one of the governments' objectives. Peace has been affected by various factors in all over history. Media and communication technologies are two of the factors that influenced the peacemaking process in the past five decades. They play an important role in the efforts made towards peacemaking because they act as mediators amongst nations, governments, civilizations, organizations, and people. New media have turned into an important factor in the peacemaking process in terms of its widespread effects and extensive capacities. The new media's importance is on a rise considering its presence in and effects on various aspects of our lives, like political, economic, and social dimensions at sub-national, national and international levels. It has also turned into an important instrument for performing the countries' foreign policies due to its features, along with earning a critical role in peacemaking diplomacy. The media could both be the harbinger of peace and the underlying cause of war with respect to its diverse functions. It could preach peace by sending peace messages inside and outside of the borders, and also by creating a peaceful notion in the people's minds.

**Keywords:** media, new media, peace diplomacy, peacebuilding, peacemaking.

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## Introduction

Much of the history has gone through wars. Therefore, the people who have experienced the harmful effects of the war, have always sought to find a way out of the conflict, and establish peace in their relationships. The oldest way to end the war and achieve peace is diplomacy. Peace diplomacy is a series of activities and dialogues aimed at turning conflict and war into friendship and cooperation. Peace diplomacy can sometimes end a war, sometimes try to prevent a war, and sometimes try to eliminate the conflict.

Various instruments are used to make peace diplomacy successful. With regard to widespread communications which form an important part of the reality of human life, the media has become increasingly important today. New media, in particular, have played an important role in the daily lives of human beings. Therefore, in the efforts to achieve peace, new media are also being sought. The question is, how will the new media affect peace diplomacy? Can they help this diplomacy succeed in turning wars and conflicts into peace? This paper attempts to answer these questions.

## Theoretical framework

Different theories have been proposed about the impacts of the media on social developments. According to these theories, three different models of the relationship between media and society, and the impacts of media on social changes, have been proposed. These three models are:

- A) The Active Community-Passive Media Model. According to this model, the media have a passive role and cannot create changes in the community as active actors. Media are instruments which are used by actors.
- B) Active Media-Passive Community Model. According to this model, the media are active actors and have enormous power to influence, and create social changes in the community. So the media can drive social changes in any way they want.
- C) Interactive pattern. According to this model, the media are both actors and instruments and there is an interrelationship between media and the community. So the media with regard to social conditions can create changes in the community. The media is influenced by society, but can effect on society (Ghassemi, 2014).

According to the interactive model, this article assumes that the media is influenced by the condition of war or peace in society, but

also affects it. So the media are not passive actors in society, but can act actively and influence political and social changes, and lead societies to peace.

### **New media**

Before the invention of the internet and satellite channels, the media has three types: written, auidial and visual, which oversaw the publishing quality, the message mechanisms and the level of users' interaction. The Internet availability for everyone, and also its technical facilities expansion presented a new phenomenon to the media, which was also distinct from traditional media, in terms of the publishing mechanisms format, the dissemination of content, and how the audience participated in the process of producing and publishing of the message content. Sometimes it is called either "new media" or "digital media" that includes social objectives and paradigms. Manovich (2001) considers the new media special feature to be "interactive" and "hypermedia". Interactivity is a term used for those new media, which could enable a bilateral or multilateral feedback connection.

Generally, new media or to be specific digital media, has given access to users at any time, any place and any format, in which they experience the mass media in a smaller and personalized scale (Baehr & Schaller, 2010). This type of media, with its special features, and with advanced communication technologies, has removed the chronological and geographical limitations of the traditional media, and also extending the cultural and geographical borders by attracting more users. It also creates specific messages for specific users by selecting and separating suitable items. Consequently, users have obtained the freedom to choose the media and the content they find most appropriate, Since the communication medium with media has turned into a mutual interaction and given a role to the users as well, in comparison with being one-directional.

Another important feature of new media is creating its specific culture by reflecting the truth through the use of other ways. The content of a message created in an analog media environment, is distinctively different from the content that was made as a message from the truth in the digital media, and delivered to the audience. The semantics created in the message delivery process of digital media could affect the message origin, itself. In digital media, not only the form, but also the message content faces alterations, as human interaction interferes with the message reflection (Babaei, 2013).

In order to mention some of the easy and free access results, and also information sharing in such media, we can consider the removal possibility of media monopolies from the state and its private property, the information accessibility and reduction in its manipulation and in the cheating possibility by the governments, which “in fact, with unlimited access to information, a united democracy obtains strength while people, as overseers, are preventing from corruption and misconducts (of governments). It would also lead to the creation of a public place for expressing various beliefs and tending to problems, for the purpose of affecting the policies (Hayden et al., 2002).

With the growth of new technologies in the “information and communication highways” era, and the dawn of new media, significant changes have been made in media role and function. Some examples of the difference between traditional and new media are as followings:

Geographic constraints; which are most noticeable in the traditional media, because these media exclusively adapt themselves into geographic markets or specific regional audience, and create a proprietary market in a specific area for their consumers, however, the new media surpass the geographical boundaries and meet the consumers’ requirements and demands regardless of their residence place.

Considering general interest; in traditional media, the roles and functions of media were defined as reaching a large audience, consequently, this kind of media tends more to popular programs, and also is struggling in order to keep a large audience satisfied. However, On the contrary, the new media take personalized interests in the local and temporal constraint absence and attempt to offer their own specific programs for each of the audiences.

Financial resources; in order to earn more money, the traditional media require more audiences; consequently, they were dependent on advertising, but new media along with high revenues were generated throughout ads, and in order to earn more income, provide many financing instruments including private equity investors, etc.

Interactivity; Traditional media was not interactive, and audiences could not interact with media in content provision and react to the receiving content. However, new media have interactive structure and audiences can play a role in content provision and media programs, and they can actively react to the media. Although, the media and audience were two separate parts in the traditional media in a way that the media was active and audiences were passive; but in new media, the media and the audience are linked and integrated, and the audience role has

changed from passive and content receptive mode to an active player in the media content and media programs production and provision.

### **The functions of new media**

Mass media (traditional or new) like press, radio, television, the Internet, satellite, etc., play a very important role in the political-security programs presentation and implementation, and also in the establishment of public opinion along with public security. With respect to the quantitative and qualitative development that they have established, the media can also provide opportunities and threats to social security durability and consistency (national, transnational and international). Due to the fact that the media from the beginning of human life to the end of life, plays the role of a companion, and humans are always confronting an ocean of information.

It is noteworthy to state that the media have an important and an undeniable influence in attracting public participation, uniting and gaining trust in security in a variety of areas, especially moral, social and cultural security in today's world. By creating programs, informing and using various family movie formats, cinema, serials, documentaries, etc., and by inducing a negative attitude and insecurity manifestations in society, along with revealing the negative consequences, are investigating the insecurity manifestations in the individuals, families, and the society.

There is no doubt that the media play a significant role in public opinion forming; however, since public opinion reflects the pure demands of human nature in some cases, inverse phenomena may occur. It means that public opinion is in opposition to the mass media's procedure, and they will inevitably make them clear by their influence. This phenomenon occurred during the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Therefore, one should not unilaterally judge the media function in public opinion (Rouhani, 2008).

Nowadays, Public media is one of the key factors in public opinion forming. Public media can manipulate people, make competent leaders and managers ineffective, and, conversely, inefficient officials as capable one instead of upgrading awareness and culture (Rouhani, 2008).

During the last decades, the media have undergone fundamental changes-in quantitative and qualitative terms. Some of these fundamental changes basic characteristics can be categorized as followings:

- Increasing the access to information for citizens, politicians, and bureaucrats.

- Accelerating the information collection, storage, and distribution.
- Removing time and space constraints.
- Providing more control over information to their recipients.
- Providing the receiver with the ability to narrowing down and expanding the information.
- Enable the interaction between the information sender and receiver (Soltanifar, 2005).

With respect to the different functions of new media with traditional one, the question is what role can these media play in peacemaking?

### **Peace Diplomacy**

Throughout history, the human has noted on peace. From the time that the humankind recognized war, so found out the peace importance in the light of its detrimental effects and has sought to support it by social institutions establishing and the drafting of laws and treaties. These efforts include the international organizations' establishment such as the United Nations and the signing of numerous international treaties and conventions.

In the great divine religions, peace and friendship have always been emphasized, and their followers have been advised to strive to build a life based on peace and friendship. Therefore, the divine prophets have been sent in order to guide the humankind and making peace and coexistence.

With respect to the perpetual human attention to the peace importance and the emphasis on religions in recent centuries, several thinkers have sought to assist in the peace building process by presenting the practical solutions. Kant, for example, in the small volume, but very important epistle of "Perpetual peace", is recommending a durable plan for the nation's unification in order to create and safeguard world peace and, consequently, drive the international community towards a global republic (Mirmohammadi, 2011). Peace and peacemaking are complex issues, and they have many definitions in this regard from the viewpoint of different philosophers and cultures. There is an agreement on peace being synonymous with the lack of violence and conflict.

Peacemaking as a process that can play a decisive and important role in preventing from controversy, conflict recursion and conflict resolution, and the domestic, regional and international peace continuation, was carried out by the international institutions specially United Nations.

Peacekeeping is an important part of the peace building process, in the sense that when the conditions for signing the agreement were

reached, and the situation returned to normal after the ceasefire, the Peacekeepers were deployed to supervise the ceasefire agreement implementation, and they also help to normalize past critical situations. All of these issues were accomplished during the second phase of peacemaking (after signing the agreement).

With the formation of globalization, peace has lost the national and local concept and has taken into account as an international issue. In the globalization debate, threats and insecurities at one point in the world may spread and convey to a wider level; therefore, peace has been taken into account as an international concept. Nowadays, the United Nations throughout its function and experience, specifically in the late 20th century, has demonstrated that it seeks to gradually restrict mere national qualifications for the international interests benefit; it is because of some violence cases within national communities, and even against a small section of a country's population may be identified as a threat to international peace and security. In this case, international peace is not only an observer on peace within relationships amongst states, but also is a guarantor of affairs optimal state within relationships amongst states and nations and, of course, within the relationships amongst human beings. Therefore, the efforts in order to participate in the international peace process and in relationships with other countries have become an integral part of countries' foreign policy, and peace diplomacy has increasingly become important.

### **Peace diplomacy and efforts for peacemaking**

Peace diplomacy seeks to create community and peace-based relationships, and to avoid from violence and conflict, by those efforts for creating peace. These efforts can be classified into three categories as followings:

- A) Attempting to end the active conflicts and ongoing wars, and also in order to transform war-based relationships into peace-and-cooperation relationships. In addition, these activities are meaningful in those places and areas where there is ongoing conflict. Peace diplomacy seeks to end the conflict and turn the situation into a non-combat situation.
- B) Peace keeping and striving to maintain peace.
- C) These efforts come at a time when active conflict and ongoing war have ended, but tense conditions are in place for the war return. In a situation that doing any action may increase tensions and lead to the return of war, peace diplomacy attempts to protect

the peace that was created, and also to block the conflict and war return.

- D) Structural reform efforts (reducing and eliminating the conflict and war violence and productive structures, and also creating and strengthening peacebuilding structures). In fact, these efforts are an attempt for eliminating the conflict and war areas, and attempting to prevent from war and help to bring about a lasting peace. In this case, peace diplomacy seeks to identify the conflict and war structural elements, on the one hand, in order to eliminate violent and conflict-building structures, and on the other hand in order to build and strengthen the existing peace building structures, and help to create new peace building structures and replacing them with violent and contentious structures.

Former UN Secretary-General Peter Ghali in 1992, in his proposal for a peace agenda, identified those efforts for building peace as part of a series of broader measures that included preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and ultimately peacebuilding after war. Therefore, both of the activities for limiting violence and the effort in order to rebuild and rehabilitate different levels of a post-war society include the following items:

- Peace building can be understood as a complement to preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding processes, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping operations.
- Peace building covers an extensive range of enforcement measures in the emergencies, during or after the war. It directs and stimulates these efforts with the primary commitment in order to prevent from violent conflict and promote lasting peace.
- Peace building has three reinforcement and mutual reinforcement dimensions: 1. security; 2. government and political; 3. social, economic, cultural, and environmental.
- In all peace building interventions, special emphasis should be placed on coordinating the international community efforts and on coordinating and adapting executive methods and procedures.
- The strategic framework for international community peace building efforts should be accomplished based on the shared conflicts and needs assessment analysis (Shahramnia & Nazifi Naeini, 2013).

Peace diplomacy seeks to end the existing conflicts while preserving existing peace and preventing from new conflicts and wars by the structures reforming. The responsibility for this important issue not



only due to governments and is not limited to foreign policy, but also to civil society, international organizations, religious organizations, spiritual leaders, the press, etc. It therefore covers an extensive range of actors and activities. Therefore, the media, especially the new media, can play an effective role in advancing peace diplomacy, with its diverse and profound functions and the profound effects that it has on many individual, organizational, and social levels, both nationally and internationally. Therefore, the concept of media diplomacy was born with the great use of media in diplomacy. Media diplomacy includes various uses of the media by officials and mediators to promote negotiation and conflict resolution (Gilboa, 2001, p. 15).

### **The Media function in peace diplomacy**

The media with all its means and types can play a significant role, and can influence the conflict area positively, by applying its influence towards ending the conflict, or at least enhancing the peace environment and driving public towards peace (Gaur, 2019). There are various views about the media role in advancing diplomacy and foreign policy. Theories that could explain that the relationship between the media and diplomacy is as followings:

With respect to the role of mass media in diplomacy and foreign policy, various perspectives have been investigated, which can be applied to various works like controlling, limiting, intervening, instrumental or complex, regarding the relationship between diplomacy and the media. Some of them are mentioned in the following for their specific relationship with diplomacy.

Media as an intervening actor in diplomacy: in this part, the media play a mediating role in international politics. In fact, this theory indicates us how and under what conditions media lose their informing shape, and enter to the diplomacy. The journalist or reporter does not just transmit events under these circumstances,, rather tries to appear in a diplomat role based on a calculated plan and a specific analyzes series, along with familiarity with the relevant behavior patterns.

Media as diplomacy Instrument: Accordingly, governments use the media as an efficient tool for the purpose of achieving progress and success in their diplomatic negotiations, and also regulating their relationships with others. In this case, governments are using the media in order to declare positions, explain their views, and legitimize their policies for affecting public and specific audiences, and also to shape public opinion in diplomacy support. In this situation, media are not the guiding foreign policy, and they do not control the diplomacy, but they

are instrumental themselves. In addition, in those cases with obstacles and problems in implementing the foreign policy or in a situation that the governments want to inform their audience indirectly, media are considered as proper tools for this purpose (Qavam, 2005).

**The Mixed Role of the Media as an Instrument and Intervention:** In this case, the media has a combined role. They could act as both an intervening actor, and a controlling and limiting tool. In this regard, while the media are creative and innovative in diplomacy, and restricting policymaking; they are simultaneously acting as mediator for international disputes resolving, and in some cases, they effectively operate along with major foreign policy and government diplomacy in order to achieve advance negotiations, agreements, and resolution of conflicts (Geliboa quoted by Qavam, 2005).

With respect to the media characteristics and functions, especially new media, and the peace building process and its contributing factors, it can be stated that, nowadays, new media have played an influential role in peace making. Peace requires the joint efforts of many people. Accordingly, human beings must accept the common rules of conduct, and must also believe in the human rights fundamental principle. On the other hand, Collective action requires social communication that mass media made it possible. Without media, no collective action would be possible in modern societies. There were also many wars caused by the lack of awareness and understanding of each other's communities, which clearly requires to be acknowledged using the media. Hans J. Morgenthau (1965) attributes the Vietnam War to the lack of information and misunderstanding about South East Asian history.

New media, along with enjoying from the traditional media functions and its unique functions, could be considered as very effective in creating, maintaining and promoting peace at the national and international levels not only as a tool but also as an intervening actor in diplomacy. Research on the role of the media in peacebuilding in Nigeria has revealed that new media have strengths and capacities that can be effective in peacebuilding and conflict resolution (Uzuegbunam & Omenugha, 2018). Thus, they can be effectively applied to advance peace diplomacy and to achieve goals like peace building, peacekeeping, and peacemaking. New media can play a significant role in promoting peace with various ways. They also can:

- Reduce the nations and governments' negative perspectives from recognizing one another, and directing them towards peaceful policies and decisions by informing,

- Enable the messages and indirect dialogue exchange not only amongst governments, but also amongst people and nations as a means of conveying the message,
- Reduce the cost of striving for peace, exclude the peace activity from government activities, and enable all society members and Defenders of peace to peacefully defend from peace and diplomacy, in terms of the low cost and ease of new media usage,
- Create and promote a culture of peace, with the media educational function and the possibility of using it by all ages,
- Promote the belief in peace in societies by generating and promoting the peace discourse in society,
- Generate the peace discourse structure and reach to the public opinion support about peace and diplomacy by enlighten the awareness about the war devastating consequences, and also the positive effects of peace,
- Flow in support of peace; provide public mobilization in support of peace diplomacy, and along with that acting as an actor in peacebuilding, according to interactivity,
- Limit and render the ineffective efforts of groups and actors of conflict and militancy, with respect to public interests and by the support of public for peace,
- Internationalized and widespread peace, with respect to that geographical constraints have transpired, thereby helped to making peace by creating international structures and institutions at micro and micro levels.

## Conclusion

The growing development and high level of new media presence in all human life aspects, especially in governmental and diplomatic interactions, has led us to investigate the role of the new media in conflicts and peace resolving, and also on its usage as an important instrument in diplomacy. The importance of this issue begins when the media have managed to pass strict boundaries of the state system and penetrate all transformations and changes within societies and governments, with a significant change from the traditional to the modern. The rapid process of diplomatic exchanges throughout new media has made the foreign policy decision-making process different. Hence, fundamental changes in the diplomacy methods have created new interaction modes between media and diplomacy: some concepts like media diplomacy, Tele diplomacy, photo diplomacy, immediate

diplomacy, and time-based diplomacy are considered as new subjects in this area. In the meantime, the possibility of the media with the ability to play a role in violent disputes eliminating is still the place of major controversy and challenges amongst the elite of diplomatic and foreign policy system, because many official leaders and policy makers were not still adapted with recent global media discourse and streaming realities in global arena and they are not aware of these media capacities and capabilities in diplomatic affairs, the spread of peace and the national, regional and international conflicts resolution. Therefore, in order to resolve the conflicts and establish lasting peace, it is essential to change the individuals' and communities' attitudes involved in conflict and build confidence to the conflict between the parties. By the use of the vocabulary, images and symbols of the peace movement, and the creation of peaceful discourses, etc., the media has become an integral part of capabilities and abilities along with the peaceful culture realization. The ability to establish emotional links and strengthen empathy amongst public opinion allows societies to consider each other as an expanded family. In fact, in the field of media diplomacy, the media are attempting to gain more benefits using dialogue and the opposing party persuasion, along with imagery techniques in a way that media inform public opinion as one of the main actors of diplomacy or mobilize them for a specific purpose, in addition to the rapid transfer of dialogue to decision-makers.

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