

# *Changes in Crisis Diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

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**Abstract:** This article explores the transformation of crisis diplomacy in the 21st century and reflects on the evolution of crisis diplomacy from primarily focusing on national and international conflicts to encompassing broader global crises such as climate change, public health, and technological interference. The discussion revolves around three main themes: the increasingly complex global crisis that transcends borders, the increasing influence of non-governmental actors in shaping diplomatic participation, and the impact of the rapid development of information technology on diplomatic practice. The paper emphasizes how traditional diplomatic methods can be adjusted to address the interdependence and multifaceted nature of modern crises, which require international cooperation efforts and innovative diplomatic strategies. Analyze and draw on historical examples, compare past diplomatic methods with contemporary approaches that integrate non-state actors and digital platforms, and emphasize the need to expand diplomatic scope in today's interdependent global environment.

**Keywords:** Crisis Diplomacy, Global Complexity, Non-Governmental Actors, International Relations, Climate Change

## 1. Introduction

Crisis diplomacy has always been a key focus of attention for all countries in international relations. In the early days, the monarch represented the country and diplomats served the monarch. With the rise, development, and maturity of nation states, diplomats represent the nation and the country. But in reality, the crisis is dealing with is also a crisis of national relations. Nowadays, the extension of the concept of crisis diplomacy has greatly expanded. It no longer only refers to crises in national relations, but also includes major domestic emergencies and major domestic crises related to the national economy and people's livelihood in the scope of diplomacy. The fundamental reason for this change is that times have changed. The crisis experienced in the 21st century is vastly different from previous experiences. The biggest characteristic of this era is globalization, where many issues transcend national borders, and the boundaries of national interests are greatly extended. As Edward Avenell and David Hastings Dunn pointed out [1], the definition of international crisis is evolving from a traditional and national centric perspective to include domestic conflicts and non-military global threats. This article will discuss and reflect the changes in crisis diplomacy in the 21st century from three aspects: global complexity, the influence of non-government actors, and rapid development of information technology.

## 2. Early Crisis Diplomacy

Throughout history, countries have faced various types of crises. But before the 21st century, it mainly included war, conflict, and political turmoil. The diplomatic efforts during these periods aim to manage, control, and resolve crises, with the goal of preventing further escalation or achieving peace.

For a long time, diplomacy during wars has been negotiated to resolve conflicts and end wars. Usually, diplomats and envoys are sent to other countries for negotiations, mediating between warring parties, and facilitating peace treaties. For instance, after the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles was produced through diplomatic negotiations in 1919 [2]. This treaty not only resolved the consequences of the conflict but also outlined the peace conditions between Germany and the victorious Allied powers led by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom. Additionally, it imposed significant political, economic, and territorial conditions in Germany.

Another example is the Cuban Missile Crisis that occurred during the Cold War in 1962 [3], which put the United States and the Soviet Union on the brink of nuclear war. Finally, diplomatic negotiations conducted through secret channels helped and resolved the crisis. US President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev sought peaceful resolution through a series of letters and discussions, ultimately resulting in the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba.

Previous crises of political turmoil can be reflected in the death of a monarch in a country who may not have a clear heir, which often leads to political instability and potential conflicts. For this reason, people rearrange the use of power through diplomatic negotiations or establish a new ruler. A representative example is the death of Austrian Emperor Charles VI, which led to diplomatic exercises during the 1740-1748 Austrian Succession War [4]. This further paved the way for the European diplomatic revolution of 1756, which involved the readjustment of the alliance.

## 3. Crisis Diplomacy in the 21st Century

Diplomacy is increasingly moving away from its traditional "foam," with dialogue and exchanges becoming more limited. The core elements of diplomacy, namely government and power, are undergoing significant changes. Consequently, crisis diplomacy in the 21st century will differ from previous approaches. The vision should extend beyond national and cross-border perspectives to embrace a global outlook.

### 3.1. Global Complexity Crisis

Nowadays, the world is facing a series of complex and interrelated crises, such as climate change, terrorism, and epidemics. These crisis issues transcend national borders and are global. Therefore, international cooperation and coordination are needed to effectively solve the problem.

The climate crisis is one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century. The large amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced by humanity has led to a continuous increase in temperature, which in turn has caused water sources to dry up and sea levels to rise. Superficially, the climate crisis threatens people's livelihoods and development. On a deeper level, it has triggered important geopolitical issues at the core of international politics [5], such as human rights, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, as well as access to water, food, and resources. It is not an exaggeration to say that the climate crisis of the 21st century may have already had significant and uncertain impacts on contemporary society, disrupting human security and increasing the risks of conflict and instability.

In the past decade, the emergence of climate diplomacy and measures taken by foreign policy institutions to better understand climate risks and provide information for action have been notable. However, these efforts are insufficient. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the inadequate global

response to crises and underscored the urgency of taking action. Therefore, it is imperative for all countries to set aside mutual animosities and collaborate to address the climate crisis.

The relationship between the United States and China has always been tense. Senior Alaskan diplomats held a dramatic bilateral summit in 2021, when American and Chinese diplomats fiercely criticized each other on topics such as intellectual property theft and human rights violations [6]. However, Kerry met with Chinese climate change representatives at a summit [7], a few weeks later. After the meeting, a joint statement on China US cooperation in addressing climate challenges was finally released. Due to the cold relationship between the two countries, the much-anticipated summit between US President Biden and Russian President Putin in June of that year did not establish a specific solution. But a month later, John Kerry, the US President's climate envoy, went to Russia for constructive exchanges with Putin to explore common goals for mitigating climate change [8]. These two comparable examples represent a pattern that is becoming increasingly common as governments around the world begin to recognize the political reality and necessity of addressing climate change. Almost anything can be discussed in national debates, but climate change is different. This is because there is no connection between the barrier and carbon accumulation, temperature rise, or extreme weather in the atmosphere. It is useless for other countries on the other end of the Earth to continue burning fossil fuels and emitting greenhouse gases, even if a country successfully reduces its own emissions.

Just as Putin once misunderstood climate change. When asked in 2003 about his views on the Kyoto Protocol and the global call for action to address climate change [9], he believed that in a cold country like Russia, climate change was not as severe. 2-3 degrees will not do any harm, as long as the Russian people reduce the cost of purchasing fur coats, the grain harvest will also increase. However, soon he was smitten by reality. Due to the massive Siberian wildfire, infrastructure damage caused by permafrost melting, and thousands of deaths from heatwaves, climate change has become an undeniable fact. Due to the reality of the impact of climate change on the local area, Putin was reluctantly forced to ratify the Paris Agreement in 2019

All in all, crisis diplomacy in the 21st century has become different from the past. All countries must raise their climate ambitions, shape the necessary transformative institutional changes, and promote and promote new models of multilateral cooperation.

### **3.2. The Influence of Non- Government Actors**

Non-governmental organizations appear as folk, covering all organizations, institutions and associations outside of countries and markets. It includes all organizations that are traditionally called interest groups by political scientist. In recent years, the field of civil society has grown and become an important force influencing national policies and public opinion. According to data from 2000, the identities of over 5000 multinational non-governmental organizations have been confirmed [10]. These non-governmental organizations establish bases in one country and carry out various activities in other countries. This also means that non-governmental organizations cannot be underestimated.

NGOs are of great significance to public diplomacy. Due to the growth of non-governmental organizations, a country's national image in the eyes of the public in other countries has truly gained publicity and autonomy. In both developed and developing countries, social factors play an increasingly important role in influencing policies by exerting pressure on the government and providing professional technical knowledge to decision-makers. Due to the rising status of social factors in the political process, many governments in countries have found it impossible to avoid voices and reflections from the public sphere in their decision-making process [11]. In addition to the political power centers of the government, numerous new social power centers have emerged. This development environment is due to the flow of information and misleading information, and the acceptance of narratives is not always based on credible facts and objective knowledge. The

competitive landscape of each state is altered by this environment, creating space for anyone who can construct competitive narratives.

For a long time, people have been predicting that globalization will weaken the role of countries in global politics. Obviously, this is becoming a reality. Non-state actors and individuals challenge traditional democratic politics and social systems from multiple perspectives, both internally and externally, particularly in response to terrorism and violent extremism. This issue extends beyond security concerns, reflecting a shift in how these issues are addressed, moving from the national level to the civil society level. Identifying the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism requires examining the social context in which they arise. Counter terrorism scholars have determined that if these efforts come from non-state actors [12], they are usually more effective, because national driven movements sometimes lack the necessary trust from the beginning. Use individuals from civil society and less traditional voices, such as victims and former radicalism young people. This not only provides a credible messenger for the opposition, but also provides legitimacy for the overall policy of the government. Thus, in the face of such crises, governments should utilize grassroots driven measures and reconsider their top-down approach, shifting towards a bottom-up approach. The country should also begin to attach absolute importance to diplomatic work in the field of civil society in other countries, hoping to establish a good foundation for national image through communication and dialogue with the social sector.

### 3.3. The Rapid Development of Information Technology

With the development of the times, information technology is also rapidly advancing and flowing, filling every corner of people's lives. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made efforts to establish virtual embassies since 2008, as well as foreigner-interacting social media channels, smartphone applications, new digital workgroups, big data units, improved multilateral organization communication programs, and writing its own algorithms [13]. Moreover, digital diplomacy has a significant role in the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as seen by the frequent use of social media, websites, and smartphone applications by diplomats to comment on and attempt to influence public perceptions of crises. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the dangers and crises that come with digital diplomacy. Additionally, unpleasant occurrences have been significantly impacted by new communication technology. Through them, xenophobic and terrorist organizations also mobilize and find adherents [14]. The dissemination of terrorism, extremism, and the imposition of foreign ideologies are all perceived as occurring over the Internet. Then, anyone can become a part of social networks, from international governments to diverse extremist organizations, where the latter disseminate their standards, ideals, and objectives.

Diplomats were required to adopt virtual platforms and learn how to blend virtual and in-person meetings in their work during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and international organisations have shut their doors since March 2020 to socially isolate the staff of foreign envoys. Zoom diplomacy, which is used to hold high-level talks with world leaders. It is currently establishing itself as a regular extension of face-to-face diplomacy. From being used to coordinate meetings of the United Nations General Assembly to being utilised for internal gatherings inside their own nations. But is there a possibility that this supposedly confidential conference content may have been leaked through network or other digital vulnerabilities. Or are there hackers from other countries who invade computers and networks to obtain national secrets?

In fact, there are no longer any secrets on the internet. The social media revolution is altering how individuals interact with one another and perceive the world. Governments and embassies will find it simpler to communicate with the public thanks to this, and everyone will be more aware of the possible effects of a tweet, Facebook comment, video, or photo in a relatively short period of time. Whether it is a good or bad thing. However, a lack of awareness about how to use modern

communication tools, the Internet, and social media can have disastrous results, cause major disputes, and even result in the removal of leaders. By training ambassadors in the proper and prudent use of digital communication technologies, as well as by enhancing their own cyber information protection measures like firewalls, foreign ministries may address the threats of the digital era and prevent future harm.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, compared to the past, diplomacy in the 21st century is no longer solely about crises caused by wars or conflicts. As the current era develops, the nature of crises will also evolve and diversify. The crises caused by global warming, non-governmental organizations, and advances in information technology mentioned in the article represent only a fraction of the challenges faced. It is essential to identify and address these crises from a global perspective. Hence, the ordinary diplomatic negotiation methods used in the past may not have a significant effect. Resolving the scale and complexity of these crises also requires different diplomatic methods.

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