THE ROLE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN STRENGTHENING SOUTH AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE.

BY

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Addendum A: ABSTRACT

This study will depart from the primary research assumption that contemporary developments and innovations in information and communications technology (ICT) impact substantially on the work of diplomats and the functioning of the foreign ministries. The practice of diplomacy – including its legal framework as codified by the Vienna Convention of 1961 – has always hinged on the importance of both communication and information in the global arena. Over the past decades, however, the medium, speed and frequency of communication have changed as a result of an unprecedented explosion in the use of technology. Global communication and the flow of information are no longer limited by vast distances and geo-political borders, and the ability to control and disseminate information no longer exclusively belongs to the state. The developmental schism between the industrialised global North and the developing global South is also impacted, as economic and political power increasingly depends on access to and management of information and knowledge. The challenge to their pre-eminence in the diplomatic domain, on the one hand, and on the other hand the realisation that ICT can add value to the core work of foreign ministries, have prompted various states to utilise new technologies to strategic effect in their diplomatic practice. The innovations applied by the foreign ministries of inter alia Canada, Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, and in the non-Western World, India and China, offer valuable benchmarking opportunities for South Africa. The nexus between ICT and diplomacy is an area of investigation that is under-researched within the field of IR and specifically within the realm of South African diplomacy, hence the foreseen contribution of this study. By applying selected international best practice examples, it will be argued that South African diplomacy can be capacitated to a more comparative advantage if the opportunities offered by ICT are utilised in areas such as diplomatic training, consular work and public diplomacy.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
CV	Curriculum Vitae
BI	Business Intelligence
BPM	Business Process Management
BU	Business Unit
CARRICOM	Caribbean Community
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs (South Africa)
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada)
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation (South Africa)
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (United Kingdom)
HTML	HyperText Markup Language
IBSA	India Brazil South Africa Dialogue Forum
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDI	ICT Development Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITAA	Information Technology Association of America
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
IR	International Relations
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LRP	Locally Recruited Personnel
MP	Member of Parliament
MSP	Master Systems Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant

PDF	Portable Document Format
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
VCCR	Vienna Convention on Consular Relations
VCDR	Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations
VoIP	Voice-over Internet Protocol
WAN	Wide Area Network
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Identification of research theme

An unprecedented explosion in the use of technology over the past few decades has forced a change in 'traditional' diplomacy, particularly in terms of how states react to and interact with other states and non-state actors. Information, opinion and academic research are freely and readily available to masses of people around the world at the click of a button. Geo-political borders and vast distances no longer limit interaction, association and communication, and the ability to control and disseminate information no longer exclusively belongs to the state.

The new communications technologies have allowed non-state actors to become much more significant players in the foreign policy arena, further challenging the primary role of the state as custodian of diplomatic practice. Information technology is all around us, impacting all aspects of contemporary society, including diplomacy to the extent that its development can be termed a 'revolution'. According to Wriston (1997), *the "Information Age"* can be considered the "*third great revolution in history" and follows the "Agricultural Revolution and the Industrial Revolution"*. This view is supported by Martin (2001) who notes that "*the internet is the fastest growing tool of communication ever*".

The practice of diplomacy has always hinged on the importance of both communication and information. The question that immediately arises, in light of the contemporary challenge to the state's ability to embrace and respond to the vast volume of readily available information, is whether traditional diplomacy is at a crossroads.

The following comment by Jovan Kurbalija, the Director of the Swiss-based DiploFoundation, to the 2009 Summer Institute in Public Diplomacy, puts to

rest any argument regarding the demise of diplomacy as a result of sweeping changes in ICT and serves as both an opening to and an inspiration for this dissertation:

"Probably the best starting point for a discussion on diplomacy and technology is the famous quote which says: "My God, this is the end of diplomacy". This is reported to have been the reaction of Lord Palmerston when he received the first telegraph message, in the 1850s, with the report from his negotiators at the Paris conference that discussed the peace settlement of the Crimean war. As we know, diplomacy survived the telegraph. Diplomacy also survived the emergence of the radio, it survived the telephone, and, so far, it has survived the Internet. There is a certain robustness in diplomacy which can explain the reasons it has managed to bypass all of those challenges and not to disappear. So, despite his distinguished diplomatic reputation, one can be sceptical about Zbigniew Bzezinski's suggestion that the Internet will bring about the end of diplomacy. Diplomacy is here to stay."

Berridge *et al's* (2001:2) definition of diplomacy indicates that foreign policy has throughout history been largely the "*guarded preserve of governments and diplomats in foreign ministries."* Voicu (2003:3) states that in traditional diplomacy "*foreign ministries relied on the expertise of staff, the network of diplomatic and consular missions, the confidentiality of diplomatic communication, and their access to foreign decision-makers in order to provide both information and policy advice to their governments*". Governments thus relied heavily on their foreign ministries for providing analysis, interpretation and opinion of events beyond national borders. The foreign ministry was therefore central in providing government with foreign policy advice to advance the national interest. However, technological advances and globalisation have changed the foreign ministry's role and influence in contemporary diplomacy, with growing competition in this domain by other state and non-state actors including politicians, other government departments, the academic community, think tanks, the media and citizens themselves.

Grant (2004:4-13) notes that advances in technology bring both benefits and dissonance, and present both challenges and benefits for foreign ministries. The openness and the speed of information flows can create a deluge so quickly that diplomats are unprepared for emerging issues. On the other hand, when properly utilised, ICT can assist with the challenges of time and distance associated with diplomatic practice experienced in the global arena by utilising innovations such as video conferencing, distance learning and social networking tools.

Voicu (2003:3) in his writing about the impact of ICT on multilateral diplomacy notes the necessity for a shift in the way diplomats relate to their *"changing"* environment. He makes the point that globalisation is irreversible and its impact on diplomacy, permanent. Diplomats will therefore have to deal more effectively with challenges as they arise, by dealing with events as they unfold, brought on by the *"fast moving technology"*, but then using the same *"fast moving technology"* to respond.

From the above we can deduce that there is an impact on diplomats in managing their growing ICT impacted domain, specifically the wider usage of the internet. In this regard, both the diplomat and the foreign ministry must respond to the challenges of ICT capacity, innovation and change effectively, otherwise the opportunities presented by technology will be lost.

The potential of utilising ICT technologies to enhance South African diplomatic practice has received very little attention as a strategic diplomatic issue. This study will therefore aim to make a contribution in documenting how South African diplomatic practice can be strengthened by a more proactive, refined and strategically conceived approach to ICT.

1.2. Literature Review

In perusing the available literature on the matter, it is evident that communication remains, as it has for centuries, the pivot for diplomacy. What has changed is the medium, speed and frequency of that

communication. However, Martin (2001) observes that "*Communication is rarely studied as a distinct element of international relations. Moreover, to the limited extent that international relations theorists have considered communications, their focus has primarily been on the content of information*."

In light of this, the preliminary literature review has focused on the following key areas that will constitute the broad framework for research into this topic: the evolving IR perspectives on the use of information and communication in diplomacy, contemporary ICT based innovation in global diplomatic practice, and areas in South African diplomatic practice that are directly affected by ICT.

1.2.1 IR perspectives on the use of information and communication in diplomacy

What has been termed as the 'classic definition of diplomacy' is taken from Sir Harold Nicolson's work *Diplomacy*, in which diplomacy is defined as *"the organised system of negotiation between sovereign states"* (Berridge, Keens-Soper and Otte 2001:156). Since Nicolson's state-centric definition was penned in the 1930s there have been numerous global changes that have impacted on diplomacy.

In subsequent interpretations of diplomacy, the emphasis remains on communication and information, but the state-centric notion becomes less rigid. Gordon Smith (as quoted by Martin: 2001) has redefined diplomacy as "*the art of advancing national interests through the sustained exchange of information among governments, nations, and other groups. Its purpose is to change attitudes and behaviour as a way of reaching agreements and solving problems*". In this definition by Smith, we note the distinct provision for the inclusion of other actors and a prominence that is being given to communication and information in diplomacy. This view is shared by former US Secretary of State, George Shultz, who observes that "*the raw material of*

diplomacy is information: getting it, assessing it, and putting it into the system for the benefit and puzzlement of others" (Martin: 2001).

The international legal framework of diplomatic practice supports the central notion of communication and information in diplomatic practice. Article 3 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) (1961) regulates the functions of (diplomatic) relations between states, especially with regard to a diplomatic mission's 'freedom' to carry out information gathering, liaise without hindrance with both citizens of the receiving as well as from the sending state by: *"(a) representing the sending State in the receiving State*; *(b) protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law; (c) negotiating with the Government of the receiving State; (d) Ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State, and reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State; (e) promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, and developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations".* An effective and efficient ICT infrastructure is required to ensure, foster and develop each of these various roles.

The literature therefore reveals a fundamental growing importance of information to diplomacy. It is not inappropriate to infer that a fundamental change in the mode of communication will consequently have a profound impact on the way diplomacy will have to be conducted. Martin (2001) indicates this most appropriately when he observes that "… *the information age has and will continue to undercut the conditions for (classic) diplomacy based on realpolitik and hard power, instead favouring a new kind of diplomacy based on cyberpolitik and its preference for soft power*." He adds, however, that cyberpolitik does not provide a definitive answer as to how diplomacy is adapting to fit the new communications environment.

The opening paragraph of the Declaration of Principles from the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS Geneva: 2006) declares the participants' *"common desire and commitment to build a people-centred,*

inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life". Given the development and unprecedented expansion of ICT, especially as concerns the use of the internet, many states especially in the Global North have applied and adopted these new technologies to their diplomatic practice. The implication of innovation means *inter alia* that the diplomats of the 21st century need to become 'masters of the internet' and that foreign ministries should add 'digital diplomacy' to the existing tools employed to advance international relations.

There however appears to be a stagnated response by developing countries which threatens to marginalise them, both in terms of access to and the actual use of the evolving technology, and which means that their diplomacy also becomes a victim of the so-called 'digital divide'. The challenge for the developing world and for the purpose of this study, South Africa in particular, is how to utilise the innovations offered by ICT to foster and enhance diplomacy. The unequal distribution of ICT resources, such as telecommunications, technical skills and software application, causes concern about the ability of developing countries to participate in the emerging world economy. Debates on the impact of technology have centered on 'information gaps' between developed and developing countries. Rapid developments in ICT highlight the complexities associated with this (technological) disparity that may even involve accessibility to other more elementary forms of ICT such as fixed or land line telephones. Nevertheless, to the extent that efforts to secure investment on new technologies are made, despite financial difficulties in most countries, the pace of technology diffusion is significant.

In his address to the African Union (AU) summit on 31 January 2010, South African President Zuma confirmed that technology is fundamental to the developing world when he said *"Technology is shaping the future of the world, challenging geographical boundaries and revolutionising economic,*

social and political activity. It has fundamentally changed the way we live, communicate and conduct business. Information technology has the capacity to improve living standards for millions of people on the continent. At the same time, it has the potential to reverse existing inequality and marginalisation. For Africa, information and communication technology is not simply about science."

Communication is *a "vital aspect of human existence"* (Martin: 2001) and any 'dramatic' or 'drastic' change in the way we communicate is certainly going to have a significant impact on the manner in which we interact and respond.

1.2.2 Contemporary ICT-based innovation in global diplomatic practice

The issue of ICT has received the attention of the United Nations (UN), through its Second (Economic and Financial) Committee which is tasked with the responsibility of matters relating to ICT policy and governance. In response to *"emerging imperatives"*, the UN established an ICT-Task Force in November 2001. The objective of the Task Force was to *"provide leadership and coordination in ICT for development"* (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: 2001) by working through multi-stakeholder partnerships, attempting to establish and provide a global forum for integrating ICT into development programmes, working on issues such as strategy, infrastructure, enterprise, human capacity, content, application, partnerships, policy and governance issues related to the digital revolution at the regional and international levels, and most importantly, facilitating effective participation of all, i.e. countries, business, civil society and individuals.

A UN *Aide Memoire* entitled *Capacity Building Programme for Diplomats: Strengthening Capacity on E-government and ICT Policy* released in 2003 deals with the UN effort not only addressing matters of capacity building, but indeed setting a scenario and background for ICT, its implications, and its use by both governments and individuals. The report was prepared in response to a request by the Economic and Social Council, in its various

resolutions, especially that of 2006/46 to the Secretary-General to *"inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society"* as part of its annual reporting to the Commission. It reviewed the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit at the international and regional levels, and identified obstacles and constraints encountered.

There is considerable progress being made in innovation in global diplomatic practice through ICT. This is a dynamic and fast evolving arena. Commentators such as Bronk, Burt and Robinson, Cull, Grant, Hocking, Manheim, Melissen, Rana, Riordan and Schultz moot innovations and improvements to be used by both diplomats and foreign ministries to improve and cope with the current challenges facing diplomacy. As indicated by the various authors, certain technologies have already been successfully implemented *inter alia* by the Canadian, Australian, United States (US) and British foreign ministries and can serve as important examples for the South African foreign ministry. In the non-Western World, emerging powers such as India and China offer valuable benchmarking opportunities for South Africa.

One area in which innovation is particularly emphasised is that of so-called digital diplomacy, i.e. internet supported Web 2.0 – the world of wiki, blogs, social networking – which introduces a radically different way of communicating for the diplomat and foreign ministry. Kurbalija (2009) writes about the benefits of *"computer supported cooperative work*" that include software technologies such as calendaring, e-mail, text, chat, wiki and book-marking. He further indicates that the technological implication for the conduct of a diplomat is the internet-induced change in communication.

Schultz (1977) states that an implication arising from an improvement of technology concerns the organisation of diplomatic services for this new method of communication. The traditional hierarchical organisation of

diplomatic services will need to be adjusted in order to cater for decentralised flow of information and knowledge.

1.2.3 South African diplomatic practice and ICT

It is evident that there is a fair amount of literature available on the evolving use of technology in 'traditional' diplomacy. Scholars and authors are however still divided on whether 'traditional' diplomacy will survive the technology challenge, or more importantly: how they can utilise the technology for the benefit of diplomatic practice. An issue that this paper will attempt to broach is how South Africa can enhance its diplomacy (and diplomatic standing) by embracing innovations in ICT.

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) which implements foreign policy on behalf of the South African Government through its diplomatic structures and processes, listed nine strategic objectives in its 2009-2012 Strategic Plan, however, neither the maximisation of information communication technology (ICT) nor its related diplomatic instrument, namely public diplomacy, appears as a strategic objective in its own right (DIRCO Strategic Plan 2009-2012).

Three of DIRCO's nine overarching strategic objectives do however provide an operational framework for ICT (DIRCO Strategic Plan 2009-2012). These three strategic objectives are: *"conduct and co-ordinate South Africa's international relations and promote its foreign policy objectives; monitor international developments and advise government on foreign policy and related domestic matters; and maintain a modern, effective and excellence driven department."*

The strategic plan goes on to describe ICT as representing *"one of the key business drivers of the Department,"* and observes that *"ICT remains one of the fundamental structures necessary for the Department to perform optimally."* It concludes by stating that the department *"will continue to*

automate Business Processes and to create a centralised data repository for Business Intelligence."

Former South African President Thabo Mbeki has written and spoken extensively of the advantages of technology for South African and the continent in terms of improving the lives of its people in his capacity as President of South Africa and of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party. His writings also inform the broad innovations and interventions that can be considered for improving South African diplomacy.

From this preliminary literature review, the impact, role and influence of ICT on contemporary South African diplomacy has been broached in broad terms, but has not been subjected to rigorous analysis. In fact, the impact of ICT in contemporary South African diplomacy has not been investigated at all at the academic level.

1.3. Identification and demarcation of the research problem

The research problem that drives this study can be contextualised by the following primary research question: How do contemporary developments in ICT provide opportunities for strengthening South African diplomatic practice?

The study will interrogate this question by examining the following secondary research questions:

a) What are the prevailing perspectives, both from a normative and functional perspective, on the use of ICT in the domain of diplomatic practice?
b) What notable contemporary international examples are there of ICT that have enhanced diplomacy?
c) Which areas of South African diplomatic practice are affected by ICT, and how can these areas be strengthened?

The primary research assumption is that contemporary developments and innovations in ICT impact substantially on diplomacy, the role of diplomats and the functioning of the foreign ministries and therefore South African diplomacy can be capacitated to a more comparative advantage if ICT is applied more strategically.

The following preliminary secondary research assumptions are offered:

a) There is a developmental impact of not having access to information on economic and political power, on South Africa. The future geopolitical position of a country may be determined by a new set of values related to the management of information and knowledge; that there is a growing importance for the contextualisation and analysis of information, and the management (and accessibility) of data;
b) The realisation that information is a key resource that must be well managed and easily accessible and that it adds value to the core work of the foreign ministry has prompted various states such as those of the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, the US, India and China amongst others to utilise ICT strategically within the realm of diplomatic practice;
c) In South African diplomatic practice, consideration can be given to the enhanced utilisation of ICT in various areas such as on-line training initiatives, internet supported Public and Consular Diplomacy and restructuring diplomatic initiatives from that territory orientation to task orientation.

1.4. Methodological approach

The study will be a literature-based analysis of the impact of ICT on diplomacy, and South African diplomatic practice in particular. The study will primarily be employing a qualitative and analytical approach.
The research will utilise empirical data collected from available and verifiable sources in the public domain. The researcher will aim to utilise open-source primary and secondary documentation data. As revealed in the initial

literature survey and references, a copious amount of literature exists on the subject matter in a general sense, but there is not a significant amount of primary literature on strategic ICT support for South African diplomatic practice.

Secondary sources dealing with implications of technological innovation on diplomacy and process engineering include academic chapters and journal articles written on the subject of implementation by other foreign ministries. These selected benchmarking examples will be applied to the case study of the research, namely DIRCO.

The research methodology will be inductive and will therefore open the opportunity for additional research on the theme, especially in light of the absence of research from a South African perspective, on the topic. The use of fieldwork is not foreseen in this study. This research will not involve individuals as units of analysis; hence no ethical implications are foreseen.

1.5. Structure of the research

The mini-dissertation will be structured as follows:

Chapter 1 will provide the aim and scope of the study by introducing the research theme, demarcating the research problem and explaining the selected research methodology.

Chapter 2 will deal with the theoretical framework related to ICT within the context of International Relations (IR) theory broadly and Diplomatic Theory, specifically. From an IR perspective, ICT can act as an enabling mechanism for the developing world to narrow the current development gap. Where this is applied to diplomacy, it strengthens one of the most viable instruments of foreign policy available to developing countries such as South Africa. From a diplomatic theory perspective, Article 3 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) will be used for the

legal theoretical framework of diplomatic practice and thus the functions that can be enhanced through ICT.

Chapter 3 will examine key innovations taking place internationally (best practice) with regard to ICT innovation, implementation and utilisation within the realm of diplomatic practice. Examples from *inter alia* Canada, the US, and the UK in the developed world and India and China in the developing world will be used. This chapter will also reflect on the downside of technology on diplomatic practice, namely the implications for diplomats and decision makers of the speed at which information is made available and the vast volumes that must be analysed and processed.

Chapter 4 will be concerned with an analysis of ICT application to diplomatic practice in South Africa. Areas of South Africa's diplomatic practice that can be enhanced by ICT will be identified and will include diplomatic training, public and consular diplomacy. The focus will be on the technologies, work-style and innovations available world-wide and how these can be assimilated at a strategic level into current South African diplomatic practice.

Chapter 5 will summarise the findings of the study in the form of an evaluation and recommendations, as concerns the lessons that South Africa can learn from best practice elsewhere. The outcome of the study can become an instrument for assisting South Africa's foreign policy implementation.

Chapter 2

Information Communication Technology and Diplomacy: Theoretical Perspectives

2.1 Introduction

In the contemporary global arena, the ability to control, and disseminate information no longer belongs exclusively to the state. Globalisation, fuelled *inter alia* by an unprecedented explosion in the use of technology, is challenging the traditional practice of diplomacy, and is forcing change in how states react to, and interact with, other states and non-state actors. The significant impact of technology-induced changes in the international arena has prompted many countries to use enhanced technological methods in the conduct of their bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, public diplomacy, diplomatic training, consular functions and other related diplomatic initiatives.

Before these practical developments can be explored, it is necessary to provide a theoretical framework to identify both the normative and functional nexus between ICT and diplomacy. This chapter will start off by providing a conceptual clarification of diplomacy, and explain its existential foundation in the two pivotal domains of information and communication. Thereafter, the international legal framework for information gathering and communication – two integral components of diplomatic practice – will be contextualised. Finally, the chapter will analyse the impact of the ICT revolution on contemporary diplomacy, including the implications of the so-called digital divide between developed and developing countries.

2.2 Conceptual clarification of diplomacy and its foundation in information and communication

A 'classic definition of diplomacy' is found in Sir Harold Nicolson's work *Diplomacy*, in which he defines it as *'the organised system of negotiation between sovereign states"* (quoted in Berridge *et al* 2001:156). The central

notion of 'negotiation' in this definition implies an ongoing process of structured communication; of providing and receiving information. However, since Nicolson's definition was penned in the 1930s, numerous global changes have impacted on the theory and practice of diplomacy. In subsequent interpretations of diplomacy, the emphasis remains on communication and information, but the state-centric notion becomes less rigid. Gordon Smith redefines diplomacy as *"the art of advancing national interests through the sustained exchange of information among governments, nations, and other groups. Its purpose is to change attitudes and behaviour as a way of reaching agreements and solving problems"* (quoted in Martin: 2001:3). In this definition by Smith, we note a provision for the inclusion of other actors and emphatic prioritisation of communication and information in diplomacy. This view is shared by former US Secretary of State George Shultz, who observes that *"the raw material of diplomacy is information: getting it, assessing it, and putting it into the system for the benefit and puzzlement of others"* (quoted in Martin: 2001:3).

Voicu (2003:3) notes that in traditional diplomacy *"foreign ministries relied on the expertise of staff, the network of diplomatic and consular missions, the confidentiality of diplomatic communication, and their access to foreign decision-makers in order to provide both information and policy advice to their governments."* Indeed, diplomacy, as an instrument of foreign policy, has traditionally been an exclusive and elitist domain, the *"guarded preserve of governments and diplomats in foreign ministries."* (Berridge *et al* 2001:2). This placed a heavy reliance on the foreign ministry for providing analysis, interpretation and opinion of events as they unfolded. The foreign ministry was therefore central in communicating information and providing government with foreign policy advice to advance the national interest

The dominance of foreign ministries has been challenged in an era of greater public access to information and communication mechanisms. Ronal Deibert (as quoted by Zahrana 2007:2) has employed 'medium theory' to investigate the societal impact of communication technology, specifically in the context of international politics. In this regard, he concludes that *"mediums of*

communication are not neutral vessels or simple agents, but create communication environments." According to this thesis, new technologies within digital electronic telecommunications, which he terms *"hypermedia",* will not cause the demise of sovereign states, but are impacting on world order. He observes that *'single mass identities, linear political boundaries, and exclusive jurisdictions centred on territorial spaces',* are being overtaken by the phenomena of *'multiple identities and non-territorial communities, overlapping boundaries, and nonexclusive jurisdictions."* Medium theory therefore suggests that a new communication dynamic, involving multiple new stakeholders, has been created in the field of international relations, and by implication also within the institution of diplomacy.

In recognition of this phenomenon, governments increasingly resort to so-called 'public diplomacy'. This new specialisation within diplomatic practice differs from traditional/official diplomacy, according to Saddiki (2006:96) in that the former is *"transparent, open and widely disseminated",* whereas 'official diplomacy' is opaque or secret, transmitted by government to other governments and is concerned with issues related to the behaviours and policy of governments. Public diplomacy, on the other hand, is concerned with issues related to the *"attitudes and behaviours of the public."* Saddiki (2006:97) points out that the role of public diplomacy is defined as *"a government's process of communicating with foreign public in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and practices."*

Leguey-Feilleux (2009:1-3) observes that contemporary diplomatic practitioners engage in much more communication and public diplomacy than in the past. In defining diplomacy, he identifies the core concept as the *"idea of communicating, interacting, maintaining contact, and negotiating with states and other international actors."* Moreover, he makes the point that mass communication and public diplomacy have transformed diplomacy from high politics and strategic interests – questions of international security, war and peace – to include matters of low politics such as economy, scientific developments, education, the arts, law, technology and the environment. In

this regard, Martin (2001:3) indicates that *"… the information age has and will continue to undercut the conditions for 'classic' diplomacy based on realpolitik and hard power, instead favouring a new kind of diplomacy based on cyberpolitik and its preference for soft power."*

At a conceptual level, diplomacy has thus evolved from a purely state-centric activity to a more inclusive venture. What has remained unchanged, perhaps even more pronounced, is the centrality to the concept information and communication.

2.3 The Vienna Conventions: providing a legal framework for information gathering and communication within diplomatic practice

Despite the impact of globalisation and the growing role and influence of non-state actors in diplomacy, professional diplomacy still reflects the state-centric, Westphalian system and is practiced within the parameters of International Law.

The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) as well as the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR) (1963) regulates the functions of diplomatic and consular relations between states, especially with regard to a mission's 'freedom' to carry out information gathering, and to liaise without hindrance with citizens of both the receiving and the sending states (VCDR 1961). This codification ensures that an essential principle of inter-state relations is maintained, namely that states are able to communicate with each other and with each other's citizens. While globalisation and non-state actors are having a greater influence and impact on outcomes of such communication, the fundamental principle of the right to communication is enshrined in Articles 3 and 27 of the 1961 Convention and Article 35 of the 1963 Convention.

In diplomatic practice, the 1961 Convention is the principal legal instrument that governs diplomatic relations between states. Article 3 of the VCDR

(1961) regulates the functions of (diplomatic) relations between states, by mandating diplomatic missions to engage in the following activities: *"(a) Representing the sending State in the receiving State; (b) Protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law; (c) Negotiating with the Government of the receiving State; (d) Ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State, and reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State; (e) Promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, and developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations".* While only function (d) explicitly addresses the notions of communication and information, it is clear that each of the functions implicitly relies on one or both of these concepts. As a corollary, it can be deduced that an effective and efficient ICT infrastructure is therefore required to ensure, foster and develop these various diplomatic activities.

The ICT implications of Article 3 are supported by the provisions of Article 27 (1), which place an obligation on the receiving state to *"permit and protect free communication on the part of the mission for all official purposes."*

In the VCCR (1963), Article 35 (1) deals with the matter of communication in that it states *"The receiving State shall permit and protect freedom of communication on the part of the consular post for all official purposes. In communicating with the Government, the diplomatic missions and other consular posts, wherever situated, of the sending State, the consular post may employ all appropriate means, including diplomatic or consular couriers, diplomatic or consular bags and messages in code or cipher."*

In this regard, governments already manage part of their relations with other governments electronically, for example when conducting international negotiations. The spread of influence, the presentation of values and partnerships are an increasing part of international diplomacy; as is competition to be heard and to influence. The attention given to public diplomacy by many foreign ministries shows this to be the case.

Diplomacy has, since the adoption of the Vienna conventions, seen an increasing tendency to elevate government-to-government communication to a level involving the direct intervention of heads of state and government and ministers. Ease of travel, the growth of intergovernmental meetings, and the ability of heads of state and government and members of their cabinets to talk directly to their counterparts has already changed the role of diplomatic missions abroad. They no longer have exclusivity in presenting the views of the sending state, nor of communicating to their capital the views of the receiving state. Foreign ministries have also changed the ways in which diplomatic and consular missions operate, particularly in the focus on what sort of information is reported to their head offices (quoted in Leguey-Feilleux 2009:85-87).

More and more areas of state-to-state business appear to be moving away from the traditional diplomatic pattern. This appears to be happening in various ways: first, more and more issues are being dealt with in regional and international organisations, or between these organisations and individual countries. Globalisation has also increased the number of issues that cannot be solved in any other way. The second way is a response from governments to this trend: namely, for them to seek regional or international partnerships to increase their negotiating leverage in the pursuit of national objectives (a reaction to the increasing influence that interest groups and individuals exercise on the international agenda). This is increasingly happening through the effects of globalisation as a result of the easy movement of people around the world and the impact of the information revolution. Finally, governments appear to be turning to the use of non-traditional actors in the pursuit of their foreign policy objectives, such as special envoys (as is the case with South Africa). This does not mean that they neglect diplomacy in the traditional sense (i.e. the use of their foreign ministries and their professional diplomats), but that they use individuals and groups to pursue aspects of their foreign policy and national interest (quoted in Grant 2004; 23-26).

Having considered the centrality of information and communication within the legal framework of diplomacy, the following section considers, from a

theoretical perspective, the impact of associated technological development on the institution of diplomacy.

2.4 Diplomacy and information communication technology

Martin (2001:4) explains that *"Communication is rarely studied as a distinct element of international relations. Moreover, to the limited extent that international relations theorists have considered communications, their focus has primarily been on the content of information."* By the same token, in the past, ICT (which includes electronic media, mobile communication devices and the internet), did not feature as an area of study within the realm of diplomatic studies. ICT was not a focus of 'traditional diplomacy' which was comprised of so-called high political issues, matters pertaining to military and security matters. These high political issues resulted from the state-centric view of international relations and diplomacy, with ICT being considered a merely technical, and therefore low political issue.

The term 'information technology' evolved in the 1970s. Its basic concept, however, can be traced to the Second World War, where the military industrial complexes embraced the development of electronics, computers, and information technology (quoted in Sucharipa 2003). A contemporary definition is offended by the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) (2009) which defines Information Technology as "*the study, design, development, implementation, support or management of computer-based information systems, particularly software applications and computer hardware. Encompassing the computer and information systems industries, information technology is the capability to electronically input, process, store, output, transmit, and receive data and information, including text, graphics, sound, and video, as well as the ability to control machines of all kinds electronically."*

The ITAA definition goes on to state that information technology is constituted of various components of technology that include computers, networks, satellite communications, robotics, videotext, cable television, electronic mail

('e-mail'), electronic games, and automated office equipment. The 'information industry' therefore consists of all computer, communications, and electronics-related organizations, including hardware, software, and services related to the use of technology in processing information.

As previously mentioned, globalisation and the end of the Cold War transformed diplomacy and international relations. Riordan (2003:3) attributes the influence of globalisation to the *"modern interconnected world"* which has rendered problems global. The ease of modern travel, the electronic media and instant modern communication have all helped revolutionise international relations and diplomacy. As a result of this technological revolution, international relations now occur at a multitude of levels, such as the supra-national or intergovernmental level (such as the UN, EU, WTO or NATO), transnational, sub-national or regional level. The spectrum has also been widened to include *inter alia* multinational corporations, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) (such as Greenpeace, Amnesty International or *Médecins sans Frontières*), interest groups, educational institutions and finally the ordinary citizen.

Voicu (2003:3) in his writing about the impact of ICT on contemporary society, as well as its impact on diplomacy, notes that it will necessitate a shift in the way diplomats relate to their changing environment. He makes the point that globalisation is irreversible and its impact on diplomacy, permanent. Diplomats will therefore have to deal more effectively with challenges as they arise, by dealing with events as they unfold, brought on by the *"fast moving technology"*, but then using the same *"fast moving technology"* to respond. Modern communications allow government's direct access to information without needing to rely on their diplomatic missions abroad. The internet further opens up both the information and communication potential for diplomats at the foreign ministry. Information is now readily available and diplomats at head office are able to communicate with a vast network of contacts around the world, making the need for face-to-face contact almost obsolete. The challenge however is for the diplomat at the embassy to convert the information into useful data for the foreign

ministry. This process, where value is added, requires sifting, contextualising, analysing and channelling information to the appropriate recipients.

This introduces the concept of the 'digital or technology divide' which is becoming more and more complex as access to computers and the use of computers change. When the concept first emerged, it referred mainly to the issue of access to computers and its related technologies, and was more about the vast difference between the more developed global North and the poorer developing global South. The cost and access of both computers and the related technologies by the developing South has created a massive division between those who can afford them; (the global North) and those who cannot afford them which is the developing South (Martin 2005:3-7).

The cheaper cost of computers and technology, mainly due to the entry of India and China into the technology market, has meant that more and more people are gaining access to computers and technology. The term 'digital' or 'technology divide' has thus grown to encompass issues such as technological literacy as well as the cost of running a computer, to make full use of the technology available. The 'digital' or 'technology' divide encompasses access to the internet, as well. (International Telecommunication Union: 2010)

This view is shared by Juma, *et al* (2005) who remark that the *"technology divide"* undermines the capacity of developing countries to meet their basic needs and their ability to participate in the global economy. The *"new digital"* diplomacy is seen as part of a larger effort by the developing countries to play a greater role in the global economy which is characterised by enhanced communication, intensified connectivity and a growing interdependence among developing countries. Instead of waiting for technology to be made available from developed nations, developing countries have begun cooperating with each other, and have started to work together to meet their technology needs through South-South co-operation, inter-alia through new multilateral formations such as India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA).

Martin (2005) refers to the UN Digital Solidarity Fund (2005) proposal in which mention is made of the emergence of an *"Information Society"* that is transforming public and private spheres and is creating new social, political, economic and cultural opportunities throughout the world. Martin is of the opinion *"that a single all embracing theory is neither practicable nor desirable and that pluralism, for example in the emergence of different models of Information Society development is to be welcomed."* He further states that the digital divide has been described by the UN *"as a factor of exclusion from global exchange processes, restricting the development of intellectual capital, slowing down economic growth and dangerously increasing the lack of understanding between cultures and civilisations."*

The issue of ICT has received the attention of the UN, through its Second (Economic and Financial) Committee which is tasked with the responsibility of matters relating to ICT policy and governance. In response to *"emerging imperatives"*, the UN established an ICT-Task Force in November 2001. The objective of the Task Force was to *"provide leadership and coordination in ICT for development"* (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: 2003) by working through multi-stakeholder partnerships, attempting to establish and provide a global forum for integrating ICT into development programmes, working on issues such as strategy, infrastructure, enterprise, human capacity, content, application, partnerships, policy and governance issues related to the digital revolution at the regional and international levels, and most importantly, facilitating effective participation of all stakeholders: countries, companies, civil society groups and individuals.

A UN *Aide Memoire* entitled *Capacity Building Programme for Diplomats: Strengthening Capacity on E-government and ICT Policy,* released in 2003, deals with the UN effort not only addressing matters of capacity building, but indeed setting a scenario and background for ICT, its implications, and its use by both governments and private individuals. The report was prepared in response to a request by the Economic and Social Council, in its various resolutions, especially that of 2006/46 to the Secretary-General to *"inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the*

implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society" as part of its annual reporting to the Commission. It reviewed the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the 2002 World Summit at the international and regional levels, and identified obstacles and constraints encountered.

Given the development and unprecedented expansion of ICT, especially the internet, there is a discernable trend to utilise these new technologies to the benefit of diplomacy. There have been numerous improvements and enhancements of the technology available that have been made by governments in the global North such as the UK, Canada, Austria, the Netherlands and the US. The implication of innovation means that the diplomats of the 21st century *inter alia* need to become 'masters of the internet'. For the foreign ministry the development of 'digital diplomacy' provides an opportunity for advancing international relations and diplomacy and for engaging directly with the public. Public diplomacy is therefore, to a large extent, based on using ICT to support and serve official diplomatic goals.

However, technology brings both benefits and dissonance. The convergence between traditional government practice of diplomacy and the openness and the speed of information flows is happening so quickly diplomats are not sufficiently prepared for it. Saddiki (2006 8-9) notes that the internet, world-wide-web, telephones, digital imagery, and other information and communication technologies have changed the environment in which diplomacy operates. He cites three factors as driving this transformation *"speed of application; increasing capacity; and shrinking costs"* and observes that in combination these factors have led to *"the global reach of the technologies; to rapidly increasing numbers of players; and to the rapidly changing nature of the play."*

At a symposium on the role of technology in diplomacy organised by the Oxford Internet Institute and the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office

during 2004, the following main challenges of technology to diplomacy were identified:

1. New and rapidly-developing ICT, from the internet to mobile video phone, have become an integral part of the foreign policy process;
2. The strategic use of ICT is reconfiguring access to information and new communication channels in ways that are driving Governments to greater openness and transparency in managing foreign policy issues;
3. As a result, the number of participants in the discussion and management of foreign policy questions has increased substantially, including new online and other forms of targeted and mass communication – from individuals supplying their own news sources as Web logs (blogs) to terrorists producing and Web-publishing graphic videos of killings;
4. A substantial challenge is posed in exploring how to integrate these developments into a system of governance which reflects democratic traditions of openness, freedom of speech, and the sharing of information; and
5. There is a need for well-focused empirical and other research, including from a historical perspective, to assist policy-making in this arena.

The symposium endorsed the view that Government-to-Government negotiation will continue to require the services of state agencies, thereby endorsing the central role of foreign ministries in communication and information management. (Grant 2005:3-10)

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has confirmed the essential link between the concept of diplomacy and the notions of information and communication. It has also shown that contemporary diplomatic practitioners handle a much larger amount of information, and engage in much more communication, notably

through public diplomacy, than in the past. It in this regard emerged that mass communication and public diplomacy have added to diplomacy's traditional agenda of high politics and strategic interests (questions of international security, war and peace) matters of low politics such as the economy, scientific developments, education, the arts, law, technology and the environment.

Professional diplomacy is still essentially state-centric, practiced within the parameters of International Law. The Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations and Consular Relations respectively ensure that diplomatic and consular missions have the freedom to carry out their functions as defined in Article 3 of the VCDR and Article 35 of the VCCR. This codification ensures that states are able to communicate freely and exchange information with each other and with each other's citizens. Both Conventions provide wide scope for diplomats to utilise technology firstly as part of their vocation and secondly to perform public diplomacy functions, supported by an obligation on the receiving state to allow free communication and information to be transmitted by a mission for all official purposes and engagements.

As a result of the manner in which technology and globalisation have changed the foreign ministry's role and influence in contemporary diplomacy, the state, especially through its foreign policy mechanisms, is adopting ICT strategies to pursue its diplomatic agenda. In this regard the exponential growth of information and communication in the various modes of diplomacy – bilateral, multilateral, polylateral, summitry and mediation – can be observed. ICT is therefore facilitating the work of diplomats and the foreign ministry, especially the internet which allows diplomats the opportunity to harness information and to communicate with a vast network of contacts around the world.

ICT has not only impacted on the form of diplomacy, but has also found its way on to the global diplomatic agenda in terms of the 'digital divide' which undermines the capacity of developing countries to participate in the global political economy. However, developing countries have commenced working with each other in order that they are able to meet their growing technology

needs. The UN too has recognised the importance of technology and its importance to the developing world, and through its Second Committee, is working with and through multi-stakeholders in an attempt provides a global forum that is able integrate ICT into development programmes. The issues that the UN is attempting to develop all area related to ICT which includes; strategy, infrastructure, enterprise, human capacity, content, application, partnership, policy and governance issues.

At a 2004 symposium on the role of technology in diplomacy organised by the Oxford Internet Institute and the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, challenges of technology to diplomacy were identified; including internet to mobile video phone; the use of ICT is reconfiguring access to information and new communication channels to manage foreign policy issues; new online and other forms of targeted and mass communication such as web logs (blogs); systems of governance which reflect democratic traditions of openness, freedom of speech, and the sharing of information; and well-focused empirical and other research to assist policy-making in this arena.

An important milestone in this regard is the progress towards a global information society which aims to enable a vast number of the world's population to reach some level of communication connectivity. This explosion of information and the means to communicate that information quickly and effectively to a world-wide audience offers both an opportunity and a challenge to diplomatic practitioners.

The next chapter will examine key innovations and best practice taking place internationally with regard to ICT innovation, implementation and utilisation within the realm of diplomatic practice.

Chapter 3

Information Communication Technology and Global Diplomatic Practice

3.1 Introduction

ICT has provided opportunities and created a platform for diplomats and their governments for unprecedented access to information, networks, opinion makers, citizens, databases and knowledge. The consequence for the diplomat is that it provides *inter alia* educational opportunities (such as e-learning and on-line courses), access to commercial and trade information, the views of opinion makers and critics, breaking world news stories and, not least, a platform for networking with other diplomats. ICT can therefore play a formidable role in facilitating a diplomat's daily work as it allows foreign ministries a ready and distinguishable link between domestic priorities and their international mandate.

This chapter will consider the impact of information, communication and technology on diplomacy in a broad sense, where after the innovations in technology that have a direct impact on diplomacy will be identified. The chapter will then proceed to reflect on the impact of ICT on selected developing countries diplomatic practice before reflecting on technology's role in diplomatic practice of developed countries (*inter alia* Canada, the UK, Austria, the Netherlands and the US). Finally, the chapter will also explore the negative impact of ICT on the practice of diplomacy, so as to provide a holistic appraisal of ICT and its impact on contemporary diplomacy.

3.2 ICT and its impact on contemporary diplomacy

As states increasingly become members of international organisations and regional groupings, they delegate or cede to varying degrees the administration of matters for which they were previously responsible. These include, but are not limited to, foreign policy, economic, social, environmental and humanitarian issues, including matters that were traditionally considered

to be of a domestic political nature. The obligations placed on the foreign ministry and diplomat with these additional responsibilities and obligations affirm the need for ever increasing access to world-class technology.

Matters under consideration by the UN confirm the complex relations between states and the increased interaction between states, both in bilateral and multilateral fora. However, a result of globalisation is an ever growing number of non-state actors involved in international issues. States are therefore no longer the sole role-players in international relations (Sucharipa 2003) and it is clear that states must, as a matter of necessity, be aware of information and issues receiving the attention of all these other role players. Harnessing technology within the realm of diplomatic practice is one of the primary ways to doing this.

Modern electronic communication impacts the environment in which diplomats operate. It is clear that the barrage of information will never allow diplomats to be *au fait* with of every issue and breaking news event, nor is it expected of them. It is however imperative that diplomats and their foreign ministries adapt and embrace the new and evolving technological developments in order to be effective in the changing environment in which they conduct their activities. Technological developments are thus prompting states to reform their foreign services to deal with both the changing environment and the opportunities provided by technology. As Riordan (2007:161) observed when he indicated that foreign ministries that were effective took into consideration the importance of social and economic security issues. As a result, many foreign ministries were reforming their foreign services to meet this challenge and the issues arising in respect of their national interest.

The revolution in ICT has transformed the practice of diplomacy, the management of the foreign ministry, and the nature of foreign service by *"blurring the formerly rigid lines between the domestic and international news spheres."* (Cull 2009:13). This is as a result of the ability to transmit data quickly as well as the availability of vast volumes of information on the internet. Information on any subject or breaking news event is only a 'mouse

click' away. In this modern age of mass travel and communications, and the phenomenal growth of internet usage, more people are able to exchange more data (information) and ideas across political barriers – and this applies to diplomats specifically, by virtue of their primary mandate to collect, interpret and communicate information. This link between information, technology and diplomacy is pointed out by Copeland (2009:2) who observes that *"network connections permit retrieved information to be applied internationally in the pursuit of specified goals and interests..."*

The new ICT innovations include *inter alia* electronic media, mobile communication devices and the internet. These new media differ from older generation media in terms of their *"channels of distribution, modes of composition and the relationship between media and consumer"* (Zaharna 2007:216). A new and central concept that has arisen in media research is interactive. Interactivity can be referred to as *"the user's ability to dynamically select, manipulate, integrate and format the information to suit particular and changing needs"*, and has been described *"as the greatest point of contrast between traditional media and new media"* (Zaharna 2007:216). This certainly opens up new opportunities, not only for diplomats in how they react and interact with the media, but also with the domestic and international citizen who is increasingly becoming an observer and commentator of foreign policy matters.

ICT-enabled digital transmission does not just involve the world-wide-web and e-mail. Today, cellular phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), interactive television, and other devices provide platforms for information to be transmitted or broadcast throughout the world and their usage is ever growing and expanding. Moreover, new technological innovations are constantly being developed and allow diverse technologies to come together to create new and different capabilities all the time, especially as costs continue to drop. As Pat Gelsinger, Chief Technology Officer of Intel Corporation remarked; *"Soon every communication device will contain compute functionality. And every computing device will communicate."* (Grant 2004).

In order to be considered 'world class', modern diplomats must have access to accurate, reliable, and speedy information. In this regard, Schultz (1997) professes that diplomacy that is considered to be good makes use of information that is reliable and accurate, making it imperative for diplomats to carefully weed out crucial information. He observes that the task of compiling well-written reports has always been *"a key diplomatic skill"* and that while ICT *"cannot replace solid diplomatic reporting"* it can ensure reliable transmission of reports to key decision makers to allow for informed decisions to be made.

Before moving on to considering the impact of ICT innovation on diplomacy, it is prudent to consider South Africa's position in terms of ICT development in the IDI rankings. South Africa ranks a lowly 92 out of 159 countries in the 2007/2008 survey. All but one (Korea) of the top-ranked countries are from Europe, the world's leading region in ICT infrastructure and services uptake. The report demonstrates that those countries that ranked towards the top of the IDI were in the main from the developed world while countries at the bottom were those classified as least developed countries (International Telecommunication Union 2010:2-3).

South Africa, particularly South African diplomacy, can therefore benefit vastly from lessons and innovations from these developed countries if correctly and prudently implemented.

3.3 ICT innovation in diplomacy

In a paper presented to a UN Conference titled 'Challenges for Foreign Ministries: Managing Diplomatic Networks and Optimising Value' (Geneva May/June 2006), Ron Garson a Canadian diplomat, and at the time Director General, DFAIT, informed delegates that *"Information technology has significantly re-shaped international relations, including the practice of diplomacy. The rise of the internet and electronic communications has also opened new possibilities for the exchange of information and perspectives between governments and domestic and international publics."* According to Garson, the Canadian foreign ministry *"launched an innovative website"* that

sought to involve Canadians in discussions of international policy issues, thus widening the interaction and involvement, and going well beyond the realms of traditional communication *to* include netcast interviews with experts as well as video features as they happened.

Kurbalija, a leading exponent on the use of technology in diplomacy, speaking at the same Conference emphasised that both knowledge as well as information was the basis on which diplomatic activities were based, warning that diplomats had to work and act, *"through statements, decisions, or initiatives, under constant pressure"* – a particular challenge, in light of the fact that the modern media operates *"24 hours a day."*

Kurbalija's paper, aptly titled *'A day in the life of an E-Diplomat',* reflects on the benefits of technology to advance diplomacy and the routine activities so many diplomats take for granted. He focuses on the benefits of an effective ICT infrastructure to achieve this goal, and identifies three types of information that requires management in diplomacy: structured, semi-structured, and non-structured information.

"Structured information", according to Kurbalija, has a clear logical structure, which in diplomatic practice is found in consular activities, administrative support for diplomatic activities, and reference works. Applications that involve *"structured data"* are *inter alia*, address databases, mailing databases and library databases. *"Semi-structured"* refers to both information and documents that are primarily utilised in the normal diplomatic work and which contain few descriptors, (such as title, date, type). These are keywords that could be *"stored within a database as a tool for structured information and text"*. He finds that international treaties are a good example of semi structured data that allows for their texts to be simplified and in smaller structures. Lastly, *"non-structured information"* is described as *"free narrative-based texts or long descriptions."*

Kurbalija also raises a number of interesting concepts that have been applied successfully in various foreign ministries. Those include:

- the use of e-learning;
- the development of on-line meetings;
- the use of the on-line environment to help a diplomat through a problem case, (an example is where diplomats at a mission abroad could fix a diplomatic note on-line with the help of their head office colleagues);
- the use of Blog sites for diplomats to exchange views on a subject or issue, or share experiences and stories;
- the development of alternative 'data mining' or unique 'Google' type tools to facilitate research in the foreign ministry database.

At the same conference, Ernst Sucharipa (2003) also made recommendations on how 'intranet-systems' can be utilised in the diplomatic service. In a presentation based on his experiences as an Austrian diplomat, he proposed ideas on the integration of intranet systems and information technology. His views, which are utilised in many foreign ministries, do not appear to include the important aspect of formalising the approach through utilising technology to formalise the approach and make it accessible to other officers. \his idea was therefore to utilise the foreign ministries intranet to:

- direct contacts between all officers, in order to process enquiries and information requests which results in *"a greater sense of responsibility among younger colleagues"* and efficient use of time;
- develop an informal reporting style;
- develop teamwork where officers can independently from any place work together on a report, a draft statement or a position paper allowing the delineation between the foreign ministry and missions abroad to disappear;
- develop flatter levels of authority and delegation;

- develop *"task-oriented structures"* that are not dependent on the physical location which leads to a pooling of ideas and resources,
- develop *"integrated resource management"* which helps in allocating scarce resources, but which also combines knowledge and expertise to the benefit of the foreign ministry.

Another area of ICT innovation and an important instrument for most foreign ministries is the matter of official web sites as the latter contain important information of a foreign ministry's top diplomats, including their photographs and Curriculum Vitae's (CVs); lists of a country's embassies and consular guidelines (Sucharipa 2003). Sucharipa finds that web sites can be used as 'policy oriented tools' which provide important statements and position papers, make more information such as statistics and archival sources available to web visitors; help visitors through indicating useful links and which also utilise innovative interactive programmes that contribute to generating interest in foreign policy issues and that also assist with determining public opinion on foreign policy and foreign ministry issues. Further innovations include Facebook, web-chats, blogs and video footage of newsworthy matters. This is confirmed by Rammell (2004) who observes that web-sites play an important function and role in the in the 'representation' of a country, a traditional responsibility of diplomacy.

Kurbalija (1998) and Sucharipa (2003) both observe that the further ICT advances have encouraged the technique of using *"hyperlinks"* in reports and that this innovation of technology, where information notes are provided as additional reading or explanation, allows additional detail to be included in reports as 'hidden' data and does not add to a summarised report. This allows additional opportunities for diplomats to exploit the available technology available. *"Hyperlinks"* can lead the reader towards specific paragraphs of a document, background material or other related reports. This technique, once accepted, has the potential of reforming substantially the format of reporting and information sharing.

Saddiki (2006:96) contends that incorporation of ICT in diplomatic practice *"has shaped new trends and forms of diplomacy"* and that public diplomacy and virtual diplomacy *"are the two most exciting aspects of this interaction."* The field of public diplomacy appears to be benefiting from the innovations in ICT as it is the public face of the foreign ministry. Coupled with this is the public interest in the value of work undertaken by the foreign ministry. In addition, there is also considerable investment by the media in technology, especially delivering breaking news.

Saddiki (2006:97-98) observes that traditional diplomacy refers to the *"relationships between the representatives of states or international actors"* while public diplomacy is *"directed at foreign public in foreign societies as a principal target, in order to influence their attitudes."* Today, public diplomacy remains a key instrument of foreign policy that is used by most states to promote and support their foreign policy objectives. He then explains that virtual diplomacy is defined as the integration of new ICTs, especially the internet into diplomatic practice in order to facilitate the achievement of diplomatic goals and the performance of the functions of diplomacy which are representation, information, negotiation, and communication.

Having considered some aspects of innovation in ICT that are relevant to diplomacy, the chapter will now move on to describing how the ideas and innovations have actually been implemented by various foreign ministries, commencing with the role of China and India in the developing world and then moving onto selected foreign ministries in the developed world.

3.3.1 ICT innovation in the diplomatic practice of developing countries

China and India are two of the fastest growing economies in the world. China's growth projected at 10.5% in 2010 and at 9.6% in 2011. India's growth on the other hand is projected at 9.7% in 2010 and 8.4% in 2011. Whereas China's growth is *"driven by domestic demand,"* India's growth is *"driven by robust industrial production and macro-economic performance"*

*(*Times of India 2010). This is compared to advanced economies whose growth rates are projected at 2.7% in 2010 and 2.2% in 2011. (Figures courtesy of the IMF, quoted in the Times of India 2010). In order to achieve this level of growth and development, it is reported that both countries are investing heavily in infrastructure, including ICT.

While statistics on India and China's massive telecommunications usage are available, there is little literature available on ICT usage in Indian and Chinese diplomacy. Both countries are secretive about their ICT, and traditional communications are steeped in security because they determine how messages and dispatches are transmitted and received. (Until the transition to democracy in 1994, South African ICT usage in the then Department of Foreign Affairs was also determined by security considerations, hence there was no room to utilise technology except on stand-alone computers that were not linked to the Department's WAN) (DIRCO. 2007)

However, both India and China are utilising their membership of multilateral diplomatic clubs, such as IBSA and BRICS, to bridge the growing technology and science gap between developed and developing countries. This digital divide undermines the developing countries' capacity and participation in the global economy. Diplomatic efforts to close the gap have not been very successful so far, prompting countries to adopt new strategies and *"new patterns of international cooperation, including many activities that involve the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in development"* (Juma *et al* 2005: 59-60). Juma *et al* then go on to state that instead of waiting for technology *"to trickle down from the developed nations"*, these countries have begun to cooperate with each other in order, to meet their technology needs through regional and other international co-operation mechanisms that show their growing clout. The authors then indicate that the emergence of countries such as Brazil, China, India and South Africa as important regional actors who are attempting assert their diplomatic influence through their growing technological prowess.

ICT innovations in the domain of diplomacy of selected foreign ministries of the developed world will now be considered.

3.3.2 ICT innovation in selected foreign ministries of the global North

Following upon the UN Conference; 'Challenges for Foreign Ministries: Managing Diplomatic Networks and Optimising Value' (Geneva May/June 2006), Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT - Canada) made tremendous strides in developing its e-learning environment. Diplomats and locally recruited personnel (LRP's) are encouraged to take on-line courses facilitated by the Canadian Diplomatic Academy. Courses that are offered by the academy are on line e-learning through self study, where officials have access to course material and then take tests and formal class room type training facilitated by a 'teacher' in Canada, through webcam (Naidoo D. – study tour DFAIT 2005).

E-learning laboratories have been set up and are an integral part of both the Canadian Diplomatic Academy and Canadian diplomatic missions. Learning during officials' private time as well as during working hours is encouraged, as it does not interfere with official day to day diplomatic duties. The benefits are immediate and problem areas at particular missions attended to with a mixture of training and expert fixes to the identified issue/s. Canada is a leader in e-learning in the diplomatic arena (Naidoo D. – study tour DFAIT 2005).

With its early emphasis on public diplomacy, e-policy discussions and the development of an extensive and secure communications platform helped the, DFAIT get a head start on *"virtuality."* As part of its ongoing transformation a variety of e-collaboration facilities were developed and launched, including a web-based encyclopaedia or 'wiki' (similar to the American diplopedia concept mentioned below) for use on the departmental intranet (Copeland 2009:5).

Innovation has also come about as a result of prudence. Scandinavian countries are, as a result of budget constraints, increasingly making use of on-line meetings. Multiple users register on-line using the internet and webcams to discuss issues in a quick and convenient manner, cutting costs on travel and extensive reporting. Meetings are held either during, or immediately following, an important debate, especially at the UN. E-meetings save on costs and ensure that decisions are quickly implemented – reports are mainly used for building a database of knowledge and documenting events (Copeland 2009:10-11). This approach to the greater utilisation of on-line meetings is supported by Sucharipa (2003) when he contends that there is a fairly well established usage of email within the EU and that *"EU foreign policy co-operation occurs through working groups"* and that *"techniques for group editing of texts make it possible to integrate IT even more in the negotiating process."*

Copeland (2009:11) professes that diplomats can use the so-called 'new media' to directly connect with people, thus providing more creative ways to communicate and interact. The internet will most certainly play an increasingly crucial role in assisting diplomats to overcome the severe constraints on personal contact in certain parts of the world that are imposed by security, geography, lack of infrastructure and natural disaster considerations.

However, there can be no success in creating a world-class IT unit within a foreign ministry without the basic structure and vision in place for such an entity. While this may appear to be a basic matter, it is fundamental to a successfully managed and forward looking IT unit that is able to reflect the overall needs and operations of the foreign ministry. In this regard, the Dutch foreign ministry reformed its IT unit to meet its futuristic thinking. The structure that the Dutch implemented comprises of a Chief Information Officer; Technical Management Section which supports both head office and mission technical operations such as hardware and peripheral requirements including telephony; a Policy and Customer Management Section, which manages ICT

Policy and procedures as well as customer relations, including user support, Service Level Agreements, Helpdesk and Switchboard; an Application Management Section, which manages applications that have been custom developed for the foreign ministry, as well as other specifically developed in-house systems and other applications maintained on the system; Project Management Division, which manages all new projects, including hardware, software, applications, the Quality Assurance environment as well as monitor user trends and conduct user needs analysis; Operational Services Section, which manages day-to-day operational issues (such as back-ups, updates, security patches, managing the internet, intranet, and stand-by to departmental operations); and finally the Support Services Section which supports the e-learning environment, electronic library, website, message database, Wikipedia, diplopedia, and electronic records (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Support Departments: 2009) .

Moving onto the US State Department, it must be noted that the State Department created an Office of e-Diplomacy at the close of the decade, which is responsible for knowledge management, e-collaboration, and IT decision making and for hosting a wiki-like intranet application called 'diplopedia.' Diplopedia is similar to the internet facility 'Wikipedia', but the primary difference is that it is only open to the contributions of all those who work in the State Department. The advantages in the use of this medium are efficiency and saving paper. Instead of diplomats having to carry large volumes of paper, articles can be read via the intranet, or downloaded on a BlackBerry device. The State Department estimates that within a year after its introduction in 2006, there were approximately 1000 registered users, a total of 650 000 page views and up to 20 000 page views per week. Although the information is not classified, it is not available to the general public – there are no anonymous contributions and contributors to diplopedia are all known and registered contributors which assist to ensure the integrity of information that has been posted (US State Department: 2009).

The impetus for the massive upgrading of the State Department's ICT infrastructure and internet came from the highest level in 2001 the form of

former Secretary Colin Powell who *"recognized that foreign affairs would have to go digital'*, and *'ordered that the infrastructure for making that transition be constructed at breakneck speed."* It was as a result of this *"executive interest"* that the infrastructure was rolled out across the State Department and missions within 18 months allowing the State Department the opportunity to *"build novel applications"* in support of its diplomatic initiatives, allowing transmission processing and dissemination of information. ICT is thereby facilitating political and economic reporting. Among its other advantages, it is fundamental in the visa adjudication process thereby contributing to enhanced service for consular diplomacy practitioners (Bronk 2010:43).

At the start of the 21st Century, the internet home-page is the flag-ship for any organisation that is to be taken seriously and as such, the leading media houses, regional and international organisations, financial institutions and foreign ministries invest in the construction and maintenance of their web-sites. In this regard, Sucharipa (2003) declares that it has become the norm for the modern diplomat to have a "*tailor made"* selection of web sites and home pages of various organisations, institutions and news agencies that are relevant to their portfolios on their computers and to refer to them as part of their daily work. In addition, modern-day diplomats are electronically connected with colleagues all over the world and are able to, informally and very quickly gather the information they require.

He asserts that there has been a shift in the way that diplomatic work occurs in that there is no *"more factual reporting and no tele-copying of documents"* which is as a result of information being almost readily and easily accessible on the internet. Almost all information, reports, news articles, papers comments and blogs (among the multitude of sources) are available at a click of a mouse. Internet access has therefore increased the volume of information that is both easily and readily available. The function for the diplomat, he concludes, is to filter and contextualise the information and to concentrate on analysing the available information with a focus on

recommendations that will require action and reaction by their foreign ministries.

He points out that in the Austrian Foreign Service, every officer up to the highest level, as well as the majority of officers posted abroad, are linked and have easy electronic access to each other as a matter of course. In addition to the usual e-mail, electronic files have been implemented in the ministry which has had the impact of speeding up decision making without the need for paper that is the current hallmark of any foreign ministry.

In his contribution regarding the benefits of ICT in diplomacy, Martin (2001: 15) confirms that *"several diplomatic agencies appear to be successfully adapting to the cyberpolitik paradigm of state-craft."* He observes that Australia and the Nordic countries are using and adapting new technologies in their diplomatic work and that Canada *"is arguably at the leading edge of cyberpolitik"* through DFAIT. In this regard, DFAIT through its *"new communications environment"* connects up to 97% of its knowledge workers around the world by utilising *"leading edge technology"* which can support almost any software application. The value of this technology was demonstrated when Canada lead a diplomatic and military intervention force into Eastern Zaire during 1996 following the ethnic conflict in that country where civilians were victims. DFAIT was able to assemble a virtual task force and DFAIT officers were able to *"contribute to the effort worldwide, while keeping up on their day-to-day work."* DFAIT further benefitted utilising cutting edge technology by the way it has set up its web-site and the fact it is considered so open that it enjoys both internal and external usage, including the general public and civil-society groups.

Writing in the Public Service Review: European Union (Autumn 2004), British Parliamentary under Secretary Bill Rammell indicated that the Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO – UK) FCO would implement six *"ICT-enabled change programmes, plus the e-business programme of UK trade and*

investment." The programmes he wrote would deliver the following benefits to British diplomacy:

- A flexible infrastructure
- Effective communications management
- Better resource management
- Better FCO web presence
- ICT-enabled entry clearance programme
- Consular services through ICT
- Web-based trade and investment services

Since Rammell wrote this piece in 2004, the FCO have implemented the *"mobile staff and mobile IT"* concept through the Rapid Response Teams (RRT) where in the event that a bomb goes off and there is no permanent resident mission, a consular team, with full access to FCO consular databases can be immediately deployed. This has been possible because the FCO has managed to ensure *"good, secure remote access."* The FCO also successfully implemented *"mobile working"* allowing FCO staff to work flexibly, including the opportunity to work from home as well as to share documents and expertise without having to report to the office. The advantage of the RRT concept has been in the consular realm of the foreign ministry, where consular officers are deployed to the site of any man-made or natural disaster and where, using technology, access an array of databases remotely from the site of the incident. Additionally, there is optimal use of human resources and diplomats are able to coordinate their efforts across different time-zones. The evolving technology makes use of twitter, Facebook, and blogs to both transmit and receive information during these events, making effective and efficient use of technology by the foreign ministry.

The most telling ICT for the FCO impact has been in the implementation of ICT in its consular services through the introduction of *'GeNIE'*, a machine readable passport system, and the new global consular database,

'COMPASS', which allows the FCO the ability to manage consular cases more effectively and in real time across all missions from the same common database.

It is clear that ICT innovation, development and utilisation, coupled with growing internet usage are overcoming vast distances enhancing contact between and among a variety of role players, including NGOs, members of the public, the media and international institutions. Information, breaking news events and opinions are shared within a wide diverse audience within minutes and place diplomats in an ever increasing position where they must respond to issues. Technology is therefore fundamentally changing the nature of diplomacy, as it allows diplomats at missions abroad and at head office contact with each other and the ability to harness extensive databases, promoting effective knowledge management.

Schultz (1997) sums up the role of technology in diplomacy when he observes that *"Fact and commentary must be ruthlessly segregated. It is important to distinguish between excellent means of communication and excellent communication. Computers offer the former, and educated men and women can manage the latter."* Technology therefore only provides the medium for the diplomat to operate. Analysis, judgment and recommendations for action come from the diplomat and his/her experience.

Technology offers renewed opportunities to diplomats to engage with and manage the daunting international environment that they must operate in. Grant (2004:4-13) notes that advances in technology bring both benefits and dissonance, and present both challenges and benefits for foreign ministries. The vast strides in technological innovation as well as the vast amounts of *"knowledge and information"* as stated by Kurbalija (1998) brings with it a certain risk where the openness and the speed of information flows can create a deluge so quickly that diplomats are unprepared for emerging issues.

It is this risk that ICT poses to diplomacy that will now be considered.

3.4 ICT challenges to diplomatic practice

Technology, in the form of the internet and individuals' enhanced ability to utilise that technology to communicate and transmit information rapidly in real time, has transformed contemporary society and diplomatic practice in particular. The new communications technologies have also allowed non-state actors to become much more significant players in the foreign policy arena, further challenging the primary role of the state as custodian of diplomatic practice. *"The estimate of 945 million people online in April 2004 is substantial. In terms of growth of usage, another, possibly more revealing, comparison is the growth in the number of Internet hosts from 12 million in January 1996, to 93 million in January 2000, and then to 233 million in January 2004"* (Grant 2004).

The authority with which experts have spoken in the past is being reduced, because the time for application of his/her expertise – *"the intellectual judgements we make – is constantly challenged"* (Grant 2004: 14). 'Experts' are readily available to provide opinion and commentary, and non-governmental experts and commentators are not bound by sets of protocols, hierarchy and responsibility to the electorateIt is a challenge when dealing with this aspect for every foreign service, the ability to immediately being able to respond to an issue when it arises, either in terms of breaking news, or alternatively when explaining a vote at the UN.

Open, 'unedited' and often unverified information raises the crucial and critical questions of the information's reliability and accuracy. Information that is being generated in such vast volumes as is currently the case and as quickly is not an indication that the information itself is authentic. The issue of either verifying or refuting this information has a greater impact on governments' credibility especially that of foreign services due to the scrutiny that they receive from international audiences. *"A foreign ministry tends to rely for the accuracy of its information on the skill of its members, who in turn are used to judge the veracity of the information they manage"* (Grant 2004: 14). Therefore the public's judgment of the relevance and the accuracy of what is

experienced every day, especially with regard to an international or foreign audience, has a bearing on the perception of the quality of a country's diplomacy, and by implication on the government and people of that country.

The immense volume of information that is available on the world wide web, and the multitude of social networking applications in which information is shared, places diplomats at a disadvantage. Diplomats do not have the time to browse the entire internet no matter the level of technology that is available. Furthermore, there is no certainty about either the accuracy or the reliability of the information posted on the internet. It is often not worth the effort and resources that are required to verify the accuracy of material that just continues to grow. Therefore diplomats and their foreign ministries can only depend on information and advice that they have obtained through verified sources and accurate information, obtained and verified through the diplomat's primary arsenal of networking and building up contacts in the capitals where they are posted (Copeland 2009).

It is abundantly clear that current ICT development offers diplomats easy and fast access to diverse areas of information that is speedy. The available technology enhances and facilitates the speed at which information is gathered, however, its management is more difficult. The problem is not restricted to diplomacy alone but to the various other disciplines and that is: *"how to filter out from the bottomless resources of the world-wide-web the information that is reliable and useful; how to connect different streams of information* (Sucharipa 2003). Therefore, the emphasis for modern foreign ministries is that of information and knowledge management, storage and retrieval. It is no longer about obtaining information but the processing of that information to the benefit of the country. This is best summarised by Sucharipa (2003) as: *"The fact that information is so much the centre of diplomatic activity makes this a primary challenge for the diplomat."*

Schultz (1997) confirms that *"the Information Age brings us an overwhelming flood of material"*, and while it has its advantages, it is becoming increasingly difficult to *"sorting it out and making sense of it" thereby* challenging the

diplomat even further. The availability *"of instant communication"*, brings with it a very significant disadvantage and risk to the foreign ministry and that is the issue of record keeping. Diplomacy is dependent on accurate record keeping as decisions are arrived at from studying the available facts and archive records of events. The risk for foreign ministries is that they do not create effective, efficient and reliable databases that are uniform across geographic and specialised business units. Schultz raises another, more disturbing issue and that is a risk of modern technology, where it is now, more than ever much easier *"to erase memories and purge records -- or not keep records at all."*

Media, especially 24 hour news channels, are not only utilising the new technology, they are actively driving its current usage, innovation, and its future. Media owners are investing vast sums of money in acquiring the most advanced technologies available as they are dependent on 'getting the story' out to the public as quickly as possible as their revenue and reputation depend on this cutting-edge technology. Media networks are not dependent on terrestrial lines, they have their own satellites and widely utilise this technology to broadcast.

Cross (2006) states that there are legal e-frameworks (concerning data protection, electronic transactions, digital signatures, intellectual property, and computer misuse) that are necessary for ICT utilisation to succeed, especially at a regional level and for the success of *"global connectivity and interoperability."* In considering *'Public Diplomacy Endeavours'* within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Cross proposes that *"states must engage in multi-stakeholder diplomacy"* to ensure that all participants are fully aware of the initiative and actively take part. Cross also raises the fact that the benefits of ICT are not utilised equally across the region. She concludes that in CARICOM, technology challenges include *"the physical infrastructure required; financial costs of hardware, networks, and software, the volume of information dealt with, electronic documentation and security, legality, protection, and confidentiality concerns, physical and effective access, and variance in user capacity and expertise."*

Voicu (2003:5) mentions that problems of international law raised by the coordination of the internet (including privacy, copyright, freedom of expression, and security issues) still need to be addressed, while acknowledging the need and responsibility of UN organisations such as the International Telecommunications Union, UNESCO and the World Intellectual Property Organization.

Is wikileaks a threat to diplomacy? Much has been written and spoken about wikileaks, the leak of almost 260 000 documents of the US State Department by (US) army Private Bradley Manning while on duty in Iraq. This, according to Bellovin, a Professor of Computer Science, showed a weakness, both of systems as well as people. The system lacked adequate control to note that a single person had downloaded more than a quarter million documents, while the person in question had the requisite security clearance. (The Record: 2011).

The question then arises, is technology to blame and will technology no longer have a role in diplomacy? Manning, the US Private obtained the documents in question as a result of an integration of resources between the State Department and Department of Defence in Iraq. This was a result of a single individual's action, rather than a failure of technology.

In a Digest of the Debate: 'Wikileaks and the Future of Diplomacy', that was hosted by the DIPLO Foundation and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy on 11 January 2011 in Geneva, the matter of the widely reported leaks of vast volumes of US State Department documents and cables were discussed by an eminent panel of academics. Each of the four panelists had their own views of the impact of the leaked documents on diplomacy and that a common thread that ran through their presentations was that wikileaks did have an impact on national security, albeit that it may be minimal at this stage due to the minimal release of the documents at hand. Kurbalija also participated in the conference describing wikileaks as *"a mirror of modern society."* He went on to state that *"for some it represents a major threat, while*

for others it is a major improvement in diplomacy." (Access through ISSU: 2011)

The leaked cables reportedly *"evidence the high professionalism of US diplomats. They write good policy analysis, clearly distinguishing facts and judgments. The reports are concise with good humour. The early criticism that the cables covered too many 'trivial' matters is not valid: these matters reflect reality in many countries."* This is the positive side of the wikileaks debacle – the essence of good, analytical reporting. (Kurbalija: 2011). Kurbalija goes on to state that rather than overreacting to wikileaks, such as investing vast sums in cyber-security, creating *"digital fortresses"*, or blocking user access, it is imperative to note that the leaks resulted in a breach from the inside. The possible solution he stated was to invest more in developing *"smart procedures and increasing the cybersecurity culture of diplomats and other officials"*, where they should be empowered by the *"necessary skills and understanding."*

It is clear that much more will be written about wikileaks and its impact on diplomacy in the short to medium term. The initial opinions are varied from serious implications to more measured responses that the information would have been released anyway in terms of the US statutes that govern the release of information. There will therefore have to be a balance between the publics' right to know and the diplomats need to preserve certain discretion in diplomatic action. (Kurbalija: 2011)

In concluding this section on the downside of technology on diplomacy, it is necessary to reflect on the fact that many countries, including South Africa have invested heavily in technology hardware, purchasing state-of-the-art servers and computers. This heavy investment in technology counts for nought unless infrastructure is adapting and harnessing the technology *"to distill a more useful information picture or manage relationships"* (Bronk: 2010: 44). In this regard, technology requires a key strategic vision on its utilisation.

3.5 Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is clear that developed countries are making great strides in harnessing technology innovations into their diplomatic practice which yet again creates a chasm between the developed and developing worlds. In addition to the implications of ICT innovation on developing states' diplomacy, all states are challenged by the fact that there are a growing number of non-state actors that are involved in diplomacy, including ordinary citizens. The state is no longer the dependent factor in transmitting messages; the media are now playing an even greater role including that of influencing public opinion.

States will delegate or cede to varying degrees the administration of matters for which they were formally responsible for such as foreign policy, economic, social, environmental and humanitarian, issues and other matters considered to be of a domestic political nature, resulting in the foreign ministry and diplomat having to deal with these additional responsibilities and obligations, affirming the need for ever increasing access to world-class technology.

As indicated, modern electronic communication impacts the environment in which diplomats operate. The new and evolving technology will therefore continue to challenge diplomats to the extent that they must adapt and embrace the evolving developments in order to be effective in the changing environment in which they conduct their activities. In addition, the opportunities provided by technology will necessitate reform of the structure and the way in which foreign services work.

Information on any subject or breaking news event is available in an instant through the phenomenal growth of internet which allows more people to access information and exchange ideas. As people can increasingly do this so too must the diplomat be able to follow the dialogue, or risk becoming a mere spectator. Therefore accurate, reliable and speedy information is required by the diplomat as is reliable transmission of reports, and other related diplomatic correspondence to key decision makers to allow for

informed decisions to be made, confirming the link between diplomacy and technology. It is therefore apparent that ICT is reshaping international relations, including the practice of diplomacy, with electronic communications opening new possibilities for the exchange of information and views between governments and the public.

A number of concepts that have been applied successfully in many foreign ministries were detailed that could be considered for implementation by South Africa's DIRCO. These include the use of e-learning; the development of on-line meetings; the use of the on-line environment to help a diplomat through a problem case; the use of blog sites for diplomats to exchange views; the development of alternative 'data mining' or unique 'Google' type tools to facilitate research. An ICT innovation that can be implemented by all foreign ministries is the web site as it provides: important statements and position papers, information such as statistics and archival sources, position-papers, and helps visitors through indicating useful links and a platform for dialogue and engagement through innovations such as Facebook, web-chats, blogs and video footage of newsworthy matters.

ICT innovation has had the most impact on diplomacy in the field of Public Diplomacy as it is the public face of the foreign ministry and is most seen by the public in terms of its interaction with it as well as the fact that there has been considerable investment by the media in technology. Public diplomacy remains a key instrument of foreign policy that is used to promote and support a government's objectives.

While China and India are two of the fastest growing economies investing heavily in infrastructure, including communication infrastructure, there is scant literature available on ICT usage in Indian and Chinese diplomacy, with the two countries remaining secretive about their ICT as traditional communications is steeped in security. Notwithstanding, both countries are utilising their membership of multilateral economic formations to bridge the growing technology and science gap between developed and developing countries.

There have been numerous innovations to diplomatic practice since the implementation of technology in diplomacy by foreign ministries in especially the developed world. Certain of these innovations have been in the sphere of training and development, with the introduction of e-learning environments, where staff are encouraged to take on line courses such as those facilitated by the Canadian Diplomatic Academy. DFAIT, therefore, with its emphasis on public diplomacy, e-policy discussions and the development of an extensive and secure communications platform got a head start in technology usage.

Scandinavian countries on the other hand, as a result of budget constraints, increasingly make use of on-line meetings, where multiple users register on-line using the internet and webcams to discuss issues in a quick and convenient manner, cutting costs on travel and extensive reporting. E-meetings therefore save on costs and ensure that decisions are quickly implemented with the reports generated mainly being used for building a database of knowledge and documenting events.

The US State Department, through its Office of e-Diplomacy, manages ICT innovation, knowledge management and e-collaboration. An innovation of note was a wiki-like intranet application called 'diplopedia' open to the contributions of all those who work in the State Department, increasing efficiency and saving paper. The impetus for the upgrading of the State Department's ICT infrastructure and internet came from former Secretary Powell, confirming the fact that innovation supported by political executives has a better chance of success for its implementation, as were the changes at the FCO that were driven by Bill Rammell MP, Parliamentary under Secretary.

The FCO has implemented the concept of Rapid Response Teams, where in the event of a catastrophe, and in the absence of a permanent resident mission, a consular team can be deployed immediately. The most telling ICT impact has been in the FCO's consular services through the introduction of *'GeNIE'*, a machine readable passport system, and the new global consular database, *'COMPASS',* which allows the FCO the ability to manage consular cases more effectively and in real time across all missions.

The authority with which experts have spoken in the past is being reduced, as a result of the internet and modern communication technologies. 'Experts' are readily available to provide opinion and commentary, and non-governmental experts and commentators are not bound by sets of protocols, hierarchy and responsibility to the electorate and this creates a challenge for every foreign service, the ability to immediately being able to respond to an issue when it arises in terms of breaking news.

A further challenge of ICT to diplomacy that this chapter considered is the open, 'unedited' and often unverified information in the public domain, raising questions about the information's reliability and accuracy. Information generated in such vast volumes and with such speed does not necessarily make it factual. The issue of either verifying or refuting this information has a greater impact on governments' credibility, especially which of foreign services due to the scrutiny received from international audiences. The immense volume of information available on the world wide web as well as the multitude of social networking applications in which information is shared, place diplomats at a disadvantage.

While current ICT development offers diplomats easy and fast access to diverse areas of information that is both speedy and reliable, its management is more difficult. The challenge for modern foreign ministries is that of information and knowledge management: storage and retrieval must be to the benefit of the country. Diplomacy is thus dependent on accurate record keeping as decisions are arrived at from studying the available facts and archived records of events.

Media, especially 24 hour news channels, are utilising the new technology to actively drive usage and innovation, where media owners are investing vast sums of money in acquiring the most advanced technologies available in order to get the story out to the public as quickly as possible. Media networks are not dependent on terrestrial lines as they have their own satellites widely utilising this technology to broadcast.

Problems of international law raised by the coordination of the internet (including privacy, copyright, freedom of expression, and security issues) remain an ongoing problem, also for diplomats. The impact of the 'wikileaks' issue is still to be realised, though the initial reaction of a number of foreign ministries has been varied from blocking user access to creating high-tech *"digital fortresses"* (Kurbalija: 2011).

In conclusion, the fact that many countries, including South Africa, have invested heavily in technology hardware by purchasing state-of-the-art infrastructure shows the downside of technology on diplomacy Costly investments in technology alone count for nought if the infrastructure is not harnessed with the key strategic vision on its utilisation.

The next chapter will deal with an analysis of ICT application to South African diplomatic practice, drawing on technologies, work-style and innovations available world-wide and assessing how these can be assimilated at a strategic level.

Chapter 4

Information Communication Technology and South African Diplomatic Practice

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, the impact of ICT on contemporary South African diplomacy was broached in broad terms, but not subjected to rigorous analysis. In fact, the impact of ICT in contemporary South African diplomacy has not been investigated at all at the academic level. This also applies at a global level. As Martin (2001) observes *"Communication is rarely studied as a distinct element of international relations. Moreover, to the limited extent that international relations theorists have considered communications, their focus has primarily been on the content of information."*

Following an analysis of available literature and commentary of experts in the field of technology and diplomacy, it is clear that there is a correlation between the evolving use of technology and how diplomacy is practised. Scholars and other commentators are however still divided on whether 'traditional' diplomacy will survive the technology challenge, or more importantly, how diplomats and their foreign ministries can benefit from the innovations afforded by technology.

This chapter will now broach the issue of how South Africa can enhance its diplomatic practise, and subsequently its diplomatic standing, by embracing innovations in ICT, generally, and certain innovations that have been specifically used in the selected case studies of best practise. The chapter will start off by exploring the issue of the current usage of ICT in South African diplomatic practice; it will then go on to outline how contemporary ICT innovation could be incorporated into practices that are adopted by DIRCO; the matter of the structure of the ICT section will then be considered, where after issues of database management; on-line help applications; the website; the utilisation of diplopedia, and finally the chapter will consider issues related to e-learning and on-line training.

4.2 An overview and analysis of current ICT usage in South African diplomatic practice

Former President Thabo Mbeki, in his dual capacity as President of South Africa and of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) has written and spoken extensively of the advantages of technology for South Africa and the continent in terms of improving the lives of its people. Mbeki's writings broadly inform the innovations and interventions that can be considered as a basis of a fundamental strategy to improve South African diplomacy, not only because the developed world is using technology in its diplomacy and diplomatic practice, but because the South African Government has a vision of utilising technology to be world class, to uplift the poor and to help develop the continent (ANC Today 2001). Although not clearly defined, this continental role for South African diplomacy through the utilisation of technology, can, in the medium to long term, prove be an important building block for the South African Government in developing a future role of influence on the African continent.

In a weekly column (October 2001), titled '(ANC) Letter from the President,' Mbeki addressed the issue of 'Bridging the digital -- and development – divide' and declared that it was necessary to *"close the digital gap that already exists between the developed world and ourselves."* He noted the imperative of investment in technology to prevent a widening of the digital gap as ICT was *"a major factor in the process of global integration",* and added that even though there was much debate about the impact of globalisation on mankind, including the concern that globalisation created a divide, mankind could not *"walk away from all this technology."* Mbeki confirmed that ICT had important implications in terms of its applications, especially for the developing world. He emphasised that the technology available would bring benefit to South Africa, in terms of education, (especially distance learning) and that it was necessary for the country to invest in infrastructure to *"rapidly to establish the necessary infrastructure on which to base the ICT"* (ANC Today 2001).

In Mbeki's words the initiatives needed to be taken *"so that we succeed to close the digital gap and transform ourselves into an information society".* Importantly, Mbeki reflected on the importance of the internet and noted that along with technology investment, there must be an investment in applications (software) *"It is vital that as we transform ours into an information society, we keep pace with the inevitable technology and applications advances."* He described South Africa as a country where there is both an *"economic and digital divide"* and warned that any policy that is developed must take note of this reality and must include ICT potential (ANC Today 2001).

This pivotal role of ICT, in developing a world class, technological society is confirmed by current South African President Zuma, who informed an AU summit during January 2010 that: *"Technology is shaping the future of the world, challenging geographical boundaries and revolutionising economic, social and political activity. It has fundamentally changed the way we live, communicate and conduct business. Information technology has the capacity to improve living standards for millions of people on the continent. At the same time, it has the potential to reverse existing inequality and marginalisation. For Africa, information and communication technology is not simply about science."* (Zuma 2010).

Having created the platform for the vision of technology in South Africa, particularly that of Government, an analysis follows of the initiatives that the DIRCO has undertaken in order to give impetus to this vision of ICT to overcome Mbeki's concerns about the *"economic and digital divide."*

DIRCO implements foreign policy on behalf of the South African Government through its diplomatic structures and processes. In this regard, its 2009 – 2012 strategic plan list nine strategic objectives. However, neither the maximisation of information communication technology (ICT) nor its related diplomatic instrument, namely public diplomacy, appears as a strategic objective in its own right in the plan (DIRCO 2009).

Three of DIRCO's nine overarching strategic objectives do however provide an operational framework for ICT. These objectives are to "c*onduct and co-ordinate South Africa's international relations and promote its foreign policy objectives; monitor international developments and advise government on foreign policy and related domestic matters; and maintain a modern, effective and excellence driven Department*." Elsewhere in the strategic plan, ICT is credited with representing *"one of the key business drivers of the Department,"* and "*one of the fundamental structures necessary for the Department to perform optimally".* It concludes by stating that the Department *"will continue to automate Business Processes and to create a centralised data repository for Business Intelligence"* (DIRCO 2009).

DIRCO commenced with a comprehensive plan to over-haul its outdated ICT infrastructure as far back as February 2005, details of which were contained in a strategy titled the 'Master Systems Plan' (MSP). The MSP highlighted the recommendations that warranted the establishment of several projects: Voice over the Internet Protocol (VoIP) Network, Windows Advanced Server 2003, Business Process Management (BPM) and Business Intelligence (BI). The implementation of these four strategic priorities were then defined and following analysis of the processes involved, two priorities, VoIP and Windows 2003 Advanced Server, were combined into one major project called *"UKUSA"* due to the dependency of the projects on each other, as well as for better management of its implementation (DIRCO 2009).

The aim of the MSP was to provide DIRCO with *"an integrated, effective and efficient communication infrastructure"* that would provide connectivity between all missions abroad and the head office in Pretoria; to *"improve collaboration"* and thereby create the platform for improved service delivery throughout the Department *"through converged global network data and voice media."* The VoIP would allow the Department to integrate its telephone, e-mail and other applications (not defined) to take advantage of the benefits of *"unified messaging"* and also assist to reduce costs. The VoIP project received an innovation award for the *"best unified communications*

project of the year 2007", for a *"strategic converged communication network deployed in South Africa"* (DIRCO 2007).

In order to provide the basis for recommending 'contemporary innovations' in diplomacy for DIRCO, it is necessary to complete a brief analysis of DIRCO's MSP implementation since 2005, as reported in the Department's Annual Reports and Financial Statements from 2006/7 until 2009/10 (DIRCO 2007, 2008 and 2009). It appears as if DIRCO was able to implement the *'UKUSA'* project in at least the majority of its diplomatic and consular missions abroad, as well as its head office. However, progress with regards to BI, Data Warehousing, and BPM appear not to have been fully achieved/implemented and is still outstanding. This raises the fundamental question of whether the intended applications are still relevant or applicable to a foreign ministry that wishes to be considered to be a leading role player in both the Southern African region and African continent, especially in view of its aspirations to assume a permanent United Nations Security Council seat.

This then leads to two other priorities of the MSP (as reported in the 2006/7 Financial Statements), which were that of Data Warehousing and Business Intelligence, projects undertaken to provide the Human Resources and Finance sections with *"an executive business analysis and reporting tools, to provide: executive business decision and analysis; building and accessing information by topic (data-marts); collaborative information building; sharing information; development of central repository for all DFA data; introduction of work-flow; common search engine and a split repository for secure and open information"* (DIRCO 2007).

The last strategic priority listed (as reported in the 2006/7 Financial Statements) was the BPM project, whose aim was the *"automation of business process, providing optimised work flow with built in business rules for the Consular Services and Diplomatic Immunity and Privileges"*. The aim of the BPM was to allow for automation of business processes*, "by accessing repositories, applications, knowledge, workers, and/or databases at the appropriate point in the business process."*

Saddiki (2006: 96) contends that incorporation of ICT in diplomatic practice *"has shaped new trends and forms of diplomacy*" and that Public Diplomacy and virtual diplomacy *"are the two most exciting aspects of this interaction."* As previously mentioned, the field of Public Diplomacy appears to be benefiting most from the innovation in ICT. This is mainly due to the fact that it (a foreign ministry's web-site) is its most widely accessed the public face. Coupled with this is the public interest in the value of work undertaken by the foreign ministry and the fact that there is also considerable investment by the media in technology, especially delivering breaking news. This is captured by the Department of State's definition of public diplomacy as *"government-sponsored programs intended to inform or influence public opinion in other countries; its chief instruments are publications, motions pictures, cultural exchange, radio and television."* US Department of State.

Saddiki (2006: 97) further observes that traditional diplomacy refers to the *"relationships between the representatives of states or international actors'* while public diplomacy is *'directed at foreign public in foreign societies as a principal target, in order to influence their attitudes."* Today, public diplomacy remains a key instrument of foreign policy that is used by most foreign ministries to promote and support its objectives. He then explains that virtual diplomacy is defined as the integration of new ICTs, especially the internet into diplomatic practice in order to facilitate the *"achievement of diplomacy goals"* and the performance of the *"functions of diplomacy"* which are presentation, information, negotiation, and communication.

In DIRCO's 2009/10 Annual Report, the update for the *'UKUSA'* project was not clear with respect to the number of missions that were actually commissioned. However, it was reported that: *"The UKUSA Project is drawing to a close, except for Internet Protocol Telephone (IPT) Voice Cut over and the commissioning of Portable Facilities Cabinets (PFC) at certain identified missions that were in the original scope of works."* The BPM projects that were reported on since 2006/7 still appear to be unfinished or not fully implemented. In addition, it would appear that the project identified (in 2005) to integrate the DIRCO missions and head office web-sites has still not

been implemented as the report states: *"The development has been completed and is currently busy with the testing and documentation. As part of the requirement for Phase 2 (Video), a feasibility study needs to be done based on obtaining a separate network to host the WEB Portal."*

From the reports and evidence available, it appears that project *'UKUSA',* as implemented by DIRCO as part of its MSP, meets the Department's needs only in so far as infrastructure (VoIP) and equipment are concerned. (The Department reported massive capitalisation in terms of equipment, servers and other related infrastructure as part of the *'UKUSA'* project.) However, it appears that DIRCO does not fully utilise all aspects of the infrastructure that it has available to assist the Department's own human resources and its wider diplomatic standing on the continent. It further appears that there is no comprehensive strategy regarding application management and the provision of cutting-edge applications to its users.

Finally, it also appears that the potential of utilising ICT and its related technologies to enhance South African diplomatic practice has clearly received very little attention as a strategic (diplomatic) issue by DIRCO and its leadership, unlike that of the US State Department where the impetus for utilising technology came from the highest level in the form of former Secretary of State Powell who *"recognized that foreign affairs would have to go digital'*, and *'ordered that the infrastructure for making that transition be constructed at breakneck speed"* (Bronk 2010). There is no doubt that DIRCO has been investing in infrastructure, but it appears to be too slow, too laboured and not seen as a strategic tool to enhance South African diplomacy.

The next section will consider how South African diplomatic practice can be strengthened by incorporating aspects of developed countries' successful use of ICT in diplomacy.

4.3 Incorporating contemporary ICT innovation into DIRCO practice

Having undertaken an analysis of the utilisation of innovation in other foreign ministries, especially with regard to the use of software applications, and then comparing the extent of the use of software and application to that within DIRCO, there is clearly a need for DIRCO to exploit these new applications that are available in order to bridge the gap (in how computer software is applied and utilised) between its head office and its missions abroad.

In as far as incorporating contemporary software applications into technology platforms is concerned, it is relevant to refer to Kurbalija's (2009) comment that: *"The Internet and ICT can integrate the elements of diplomatic services, blurring traditional strict distinctions between Ministry and missions. Talents, knowledge and skills located in different places can be activated, especially in a crisis situation."* There is an imperative for DIRCO to find novel ways to inform, consult with, train, and keep both diplomats and LRP's up-to-date in all aspects of diplomatic, administrative, financial and personnel processes. The current political upheavals in the Middle East, North and West Africa, show how seriously the advice given by Kurbalija (above) should be taken by foreign ministries today, in order to be effective as organisations and to render consular assistance to its citizens in crisis areas of the world.

It is opportune at this point to reflect upon Kurbalija's (2009) outline of the benefits of technology to advance diplomatic practice and general day to day activities to achieve diplomatic goals. In this regard, DIRCO can consider utilising the *"structured information"*, *"structured data,"* and *"semi-structured data"* in its consular activities, as well as in its administrative support areas, such as human resources, property management, financial management and supply chain management; areas that support its diplomatic activities, as well as in assisting the area of reference works. Reference work applications can assist DIRCO with streamlining and consolidating, across the organisation; address databases, mailing databases, library databases, and other such related applications, bringing all of this into one consolidated database accessible to the entire department. Additionally, innovative ways of filing

information and documents primarily utilised in the normal diplomatic work which contain few descriptors, (such as title, date, type) keywords, could be *"stored within a database as a tool for structured information and text."* This would contribute to making the search of documents much easier as there would be a common filing descriptor.

In this regard, DIRCO's ICT infrastructure must provide the opportunities offered by the information age to allow the department to self organise across traditional geographic and political boundaries. This will allow South African diplomats the opportunity to exert their influence, not only as far as their diplomacy is concerned but to create training opportunities for both South African and African diplomats through e-learning, common data-bases of documents and information that have implications also for Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the AU. DIRCO should utilise its infrastructure capability to set up these common data-bases that it (DIRCO) can make accessible on an open server to other foreign ministries and even research institutions.

DIRCO can further utilise this infrastructure to create opportunities through its web-site for civil society and academia to interact with officials. Discussion and consultation fora on subjects of strategic importance to DIRCO, such as *inter alia* the reform of the UN Security Council, growth in Africa through the New Partnership for Africa's Development programmes, and sustainable development and can thereby be facilitated. This would tie in with the Ministers sated intention to '*enable us to improve on our capacity to respond rapidly and effectively when required to do so. We will be communicating more, better and faster with our people, every step of the way, especially regarding positions we will take on debates within the Security Council'* (Nkoana-Mashabane .

Martin (2001) in his contribution regarding the benefits of ICT in diplomacy confirms that Australia and the Nordic countries are using and adapting new technologies in their diplomatic work and that Canada *"is arguably at the leading edge of cyberpolitik"* through DFAIT, which was able through its

communications environment to connect up to 97% of its diplomats around the world by utilising technology which can support almost any software application. The technology's value was demonstrated when Canada lead a diplomatic and military intervention force into Eastern Zaire, and during which time, Canadian diplomats were able to, using the technology *'contribute to the effort worldwide, while keeping up on their day-to-day work."* DFAIT further benefitted from utilising cutting edge technology by the way it set up its web site and the fact it is considered so open, enjoying both internal and external usage, including the general public and civil-society groups. This example of the successful utilisation of technology by Canada is of particular importance to a country such as South Africa, which is widely involved in peace-keeping and post conflict reconstruction all over Africa.

This brings us to various concepts related to the ICT-diplomacy nexus that have been raised by Kurbalija (1998). Ideas that have since not only received the attention of a number of foreign ministries, but have actually been successfully implemented, and which DIRCO could consider as part of its wider ICT strategy includes:

- utilising e-learning technology;
- utilising on-line meeting concept;
- the use of the on-line assistance function available on Windows to help a diplomat through a problem case;
- the use of Blog sites for diplomats to exchange views and advice on professional issues;
- the development and utilisation of alternative data solutions to facilitate research in the foreign ministry database.

This chapter will now consider innovations, interventions and applications that could be utilised by DIRCO in its diplomatic practice.

4.3.1 Structure of the ICT Unit

Having reflected on the relatively minimal achievements of DIRCO's ICT component since 2006 as well as the length of time that it has taken for it to

deliver on its commitments, it is apparent that there is a need for a review and a change in the way DIRCO approaches its strategy in terms of ICT utilisation. There can be no success in creating a world-class IT Unit without the basic structure and vision in place for such a unit. While this may appear to be a basic matter, it is fundamental to a successfully managed and forward looking IT unit that is able to reflect the overall needs and operations of DIRCO.

In this regard, DIRCO could consider the approach of the Dutch Foreign Ministry when it reformed its IT unit to meet its future vision for the ministry. The Dutch implemented a structure that was pragmatic and orientated to delivery, by reorganising in such a manner that the component was able to focus on the strategic areas of the foreign ministry such as e-learning, custom software applications, project management and quality assurance, operational issues and policy and procedures. These are all areas that DIRCO must focus on in order to turn around its relatively minimal achievements in ICT so far.

The structure the Dutch implemented included a Chief Information Officer; a Technical Management Section; supporting the head office and mission technical operations; Policy and Customer Management Section, managing ICT Policy and procedures and customer relations; Application Management Section, managing custom developed applications and other specifically developed in-house systems; Project Management Division, managing all new projects, including hardware, software, applications, the QA environment as well as user trends and needs analysis; Operational Services Section, managing day-to-day operational issues; and finally the Support Services Section which supports the e-learning environment, electronic library, website, message database, Wikipedia, diplopedia, and electronic records. (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Support Departments)

4.3.2 Database Management

From the available information and research, it is clear that developments in ICT have offered diplomats fast and easy access to diverse areas of

information. The technology that is available enhances and facilitates the speed at which information is gathered, however, its management is more difficult. The problem is not restricted to diplomacy alone but to the various other disciplines in how to filter out reliable and useful information and thereby connect different streams of information (Sucharipa 2003). This challenge of information and knowledge management, storage and retrieval is also one that is being faced by DIRCO, where vast amounts of information are produced, but not managed effectively to the benefit of the country. (DIRCO. 2007)

The current DIRCO database is orientated to searching for 'telexes' which are essentially official communication sent to and from missions, and which exclude the growing e-mail communication. Telexes have been the traditional way in which DIRCO head office and missions communicated. However, the current DIRCO telex format does not support *inter alia* Portable Document Format (PDF), HyperText Markup Language (html), photo attachments and Excel spreadsheets formats resulting in vital data not being archived appropriately and which could subsequently be lost to DIRCO.

This challenge to DIRCO can be overcome by creating a number of very relevant databases to reflect DIRCO's current business model and structure (DIRCO) where users are mandated to file documents in an approved format (e.g. PDF or html), and where cheap, innovative technology platforms, *inter alia* SharePoint can be utilised:

- Departmental Budget, including Sub folders with each mission and Business Unit own budget;
- An Expenditure folder per Business Unit and Mission. Monthly expenditure reports can be posted here for use by the Business Unit and Mission, thereby reducing the need for the report to be copied and circulated;
- Legal Opinions;
- Business Plans of the Department. Sub folders for Branch and

Mission and Business Unit plans can be created;

- Audit Committee Reports;
- Midterm and Annual Reports;
- Audit Findings;
- Research papers and opinion pieces;
- Bi-National Commissions;
- Speeches of the Minister and Deputy Ministers;
- Other speeches and papers presented by departmental officials;
- Parliamentary Questions;
- Speeches and papers delivered at Multilateral Organisations;
- Country Reports and Profiles;
- Profiles of South Africa's as well as foreign heads of state and government and ministers;
- Speeches of the President and Deputy President;
- Consular Matters;
- Supply Chain (Procurement) Management;
- Asset Management;
- Human Resources Matters – there can be a multiple of relevant subject matter sub-folders;
- Training Opportunities;
- Training Manuals– there can be a multiple of relevant subject matter sub-folders;
- Finance Matters – there can be a multiple of relevant subject matter sub-folders;
- Submissions (internal memoranda)
- UN Resolutions;
- AU Resolutions;
- SADC Resolutions;
- Daily News Bulletin's, and reports by various branches of DIRCO.
- Diplopedia (or similar online encyclopaedia)
- Department of Home Affairs Directives and Circulars regarding Immigration and Civic Services

DIRCO must also relook how it files and stores data. The current storage format for DIRCO documents is usually in the "word" format, which is not considered to be technologically user friendly and does not generally facilitate either easy search ability, or hyper-linking within text. Data is usually stored in either PDF or html format. The storage in this format allows users to easily download information, even on mobile telephones. Most research is stored on PDF and allows the users the opportunity to search text for key words speeding up their research. PDF allows for text to be hyperlinked to other documents and many more features that the current word format allows which is in line with the recommendations of both Kurbalija (1998) and Sucharipa (2003).

DIRCO could easily convert its current word document files to either PDF or html format, and through change management processes encourage the technique of using '*hyperlinks'* in reports and that information notes to provide additional opportunities for diplomats to exploit the available technology available, to lead the reader towards specific paragraphs of a document, background material or other related reports. This technique, once accepted has the potential of reforming substantially the format of reporting and information sharing, and is similar to the data mining concept that Kurbalija (1998) proposed, where a *'Google'* type data base and search engine can facilitate a more effective utilisation of the DIRCO's databases, by mobile phone allowing for data to be easily received and transmitted through e-mail technology, thus making it possible for South African diplomats to receive and access information while still in meetings.

4.3.3 The on-line help and meetings application

Kurbalija (1998) proposed the use of the on-line environment to help a diplomat through a problem case. In this regard, a practical example that DIRCO could utilise is where a diplomat at a mission could fix a diplomatic note on-line with the help of their head office colleagues. This facility is available as a feature on the current system utilised by DIRCO, but is not

utilised for improving/adding value to its diplomacy. At a technical level, this application is already used effectively. The DIRCO Helpdesk is able to "take-over" a user, done with the official's permission, and allows the procedure for remote maintenance or the technician to fix a computer problem. This is a cost effective way of doing business, where time, money and effort are saved.

The remote maintenance tool could be utilised more extensively in day to day diplomatic work, where users (not just technical staff) can assist each other on-line to edit letters, compile diplomatic notes, draft speeches, write position papers, complete forms and perform a multitude of other tasks, thereby reducing the need to either fax or e-mail drafts for consideration or approval. In addition, with the simple use of the web-cam, consular staff can also conduct on-line interviews with citizens who are in distress. This facility can also be used for training purposes, where a user can be taken through an application, on-line. This feature was utilised during the pilot of the Consular Management Software in Washington during 2007. Diplomats at the Embassy in Washington were able to follow a class conducted from head office in Pretoria projected on the screen. The challenge was being able to see the lecturer, but voice and the technical aspects of the lecture were not a problem. (DIRCO. 2007)

4.3.4 Website

DIRCO's 2009/10 Annual Report indicates that a project identified (in 2005) to integrate the DIRCO missions' and head office web-sites had still not been implemented although the development had been reportedly completed. This recalls Zaharna's (2007) declaration that incorporation of ICT in diplomatic practice *"has shaped new trends and forms of diplomacy"* and that public diplomacy is central in *"this interaction."* He went on to profess that the public diplomacy remains a key instrument of foreign policy that is used by most foreign ministries to promote and support its objectives. In this regard an indispensible ICT facilitated asset is, a foreign ministry's web-site.

This is confirmed by Sucharipa (2003) who indicated that an important instrument for most foreign ministries is the web site since it presents an important of the ministry's top diplomats, photographs and CVs, lists of embassies and, more importantly consular advice and citizens, since consular work is the public face of the foreign ministry. In addition, websites provide important statements and position papers; make more information available to web visitors such as statistics and archival sources; publicise position-papers; help visitors through indicating useful links, making it imperative that DIRCO complete its work in this regard as a matter of urgency.

A further application linked to the website is the 'blog'. Dictionary.com defines a blog as *"a web site containing the writer's or group of writers' own experiences, observations, opinions, etc., and often having images and links to other Websites."* A further definition of the term 'blog' is that which is attributed to Encyclopaedia Britannica wherein blog is broadly defined as an *"online journal where an individual, group, or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts, or beliefs."* Encyclopaedia Britannica goes on to indicate that certain blogs may operate *"as news filters"*, where various online sources are collected and comments and internet links are then added. Many blogs provide a forum which allows visitors to leave comments and interact with the publisher. Blogs are a popular tool employed by senior functionaries to comment on issues. However, blogs are not as yet employed within the DIRCO technology and diplomacy interface.

According to Cull (2009:50) a series of blogs were created during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, which resulted in the blog becoming a place where conference participants and the *"outside world"* could interact and engage with each other on the central issues of the conference. Blogs are thus proving to be a forum in which the foreign ministry can engage NGOs, academics and key decision makers on matters of mutual interest in order to consult and caucus on positions relating to an issue before a major conference or discussion, thus supporting a key principle of DIRCO's public diplomacy strategy.

4.3.5 Diplopedia

The wiki-like intranet application developed by the US State Department is a cost effective innovation that can be easily implemented in DIRCO, and which will accommodate contributions of all those who work in DIRCO. Apart from the advantages of the use of this medium of efficiency and saving paper, it would encourage diplomats on postings to write more, thereby encouraging a documentation of events and issues that may not be currently reported upon. It would also encourage issues to be archived for future generations and experiences to be documented, something that is not covered in the present reporting format. It would be no longer necessary for carrying large volumes of paper as articles can be read via the internet, or downloaded on a BlackBerry device, further reducing costs. Though the information is not classified, it will not available to the general public, as it is intranet driven. As with the US State Department concept, contributors to diplopedia would all be known and registered, therefore avoiding anonymous contributions, assisting to ensure the integrity of information that has been posted.

4.3.6 E-learning

Technology has created many possibilities, especially for the medium to be used in education and training. As described in Chapter 3, the Canadian DFAIT has made tremendous strides in developing its e-learning environment, where diplomats and LRP's are encouraged to take on-line courses facilitated by the Canadian Diplomatic Academy. E-learning laboratories play an integral part of both the Canadian Diplomatic Academy and officials on postings abroad where learning is encouraged.

E-Learning can be defined as *"the delivery of individualized, comprehensive, dynamic learning content in real time, aiding the development of communities of knowledge, linking learners and practitioners with experts."* (Ali 2010). Ali explains that the content for e-learning is usually in an *"electronic form"* and that learner's access the contents of the learning programmes directly from either standalone computers or through the networked computers and that the

contents of e-learning courses are developed to be engaging and interactive to the on-line student.

According to WorldWideLearn (2010), a leading E- Learning institution, the features of E-Learning are; learning is self-paced and gives students a chance to speed up or slow down as necessary; learning is self-directed, allowing students to choose content and tools appropriate to their differing interests, needs, and skill level; it accommodates multiple learning styles using a variety of delivery methods geared to different learners; it is designed around the learner; geographical barriers are eliminated, opening up broader education options; 24/7 accessibility makes scheduling easy and allows a greater number of people to attend classes; on-demand access means learning can happen precisely when needed; travel time and associated costs (parking, fuel, vehicle maintenance) are reduced or eliminated.

DIRCO began consolidating its strategic approach to training and development when the Branch Diplomatic Academy was constituted into a single entity resulting from the merger of the Foreign Service Institute and the Policy, Research and Analysis Unit to address the training and developmental needs of DIRCO. It also simultaneously served as a think-tank for the Ministry through the provision of timely policy advice and quality research and analysis for South African decision- and policy-makers. The intention to create a Branch: Diplomatic Academy was o create an institution to provide *"cutting-edge services and a well-coordinated policy reflection and training of South Africa's diplomats."* (DIRCO 2008).

It is clear that learning and training is a DIRCO priority with an Academy at branch level being created to address it training needs. However, neither the Academy's strategic plans nor that of ICT gives any indication of addressing utilising E-learning at DIRCO. It is imperative that e-learning be considered across DIRCO's head office and its 129 missions' world-wide as continuous training is a DIRCO policy objective. (DIRCO 2008)

DIRCO will not need to develop all the learning material itself. It can partner with institutions such as UNITAR, the DIPLO Foundation, the Canadian DFAIT, or any other like-minded diplomatic academy with e-learning capability. Through its extensive representation on the African continent, DIRCO can also provide an E-Learning platform for African foreign ministries thereby opening up its potential to become a learning centre for African diplomats. This would be in line with its stated objectives of furthering an African Agenda.

It is thus clear that there is endless potential for South African diplomacy from the investment that it has made in ICT hardware. The challenge is to utilise this to embrace developments in software application and advance South Africa's diplomatic standing.

4.4 Conclusion

As indicated earlier in this chapter, former South African President Mbeki wrote and spoke extensively of the advantages of technology for South Africa and the wider African continent. Mbeki's leadership in this regard informed the ICT innovations and interventions projected by DIRCO to improve South Africa's diplomacy, in line with the Government's strategic vision of utilising world class technology to uplift the poor and to help develop the continent. The envisaged continental role for South African diplomacy was the building block for this prioritisation of ICT within DIRCIO. Mbeki further detailed the important implications of ICT, especially in terms of its applications for the developing world and South Africa itself in terms of education, especially distance learning and the necessity for South Africa to invest in infrastructure to support ICT.

Mbeki therefore appreciated the importance of the internet coupled with an investment in technology as well as the important investment in applications (software) as a means to overcome the economic and digital divide that would assist South Africa transform into an information society in order to keep pace with technology and applications advances, a position confirmed by Zuma,

who noted the fact that technology shapes economic, social and political activities, impacting the way in which South Africans live, communicate and conduct business.

As the implementation arm to implement foreign policy on behalf of the Government, DIRCO did not list the maximisation of ICT nor its related diplomatic instrument, public diplomacy, as a strategic objective in their own right in the (DIRCO) strategic plan, thereby not following upon the vision outlined by both Mbeki and Zuma. Nonetheless, three of the nine of DIRCO's strategic objectives provide an operational framework for ICT as a key business driver that which was necessary for the Department to perform optimally. These are; conduct and co-ordinate South Africa's international relations and promote its foreign policy objectives; monitor international developments and advise government on foreign policy and related domestic matters; and maintain a modern, effective and excellence driven department.

DIRCO attempted to over-haul its outdated ICT as far back as February 2005 in terms of the 'Master Systems Plan' strategy, which highlighted the establishment of several projects: VoIP Network, Windows Advanced Server 2003, Business Process Management and Business Intelligence, which were rationalised into two main priorities, namely the VoIP and Windows 2003 Advanced Server project. The main aim of the two projects was to provide an integrated, effective and efficient communication infrastructure that would allow for connectivity between all missions abroad and the head office in Pretoria. While the *'UKUSA'* project was implemented in the majority of DIRCO's diplomatic and consular missions abroad, as well as its head office, the project did not deliver with regards to Business Intelligence, Data Warehousing, and BPM which are all still outstanding.

The Public Diplomacy Branch of DIRCO appears to have benefited most from the innovations in ICT, mainly due to the fact that a foreign ministry's web-site is the public face of the foreign Ministry, coupled with the public interest in the work undertaken by the foreign ministry and the fact that there is such substantial investment by the media in technology, especially delivering

breaking news. Project *'UKUSA',* as was implemented by DIRCO as part of its MSP therefore "appears" to meet the Department's needs in so far as infrastructure (VoIP) and equipment are concerned. However, DIRCO does not fully utilise all aspects of the infrastructure that it has available to benefit the Department.

Following an analysis of the utilisation of innovation, especially software and their related applications in other foreign ministries to that within DIRCO, there is clearly a need for DIRCO to exploit these new applications, especially using advances in technology to benefit the Diplomatic Academy to make it a leading diplomatic institution on the continent. An imperative for DIRCO is to find novel ways to inform, consult with, train, and keep both diplomats and LRP's up-to-date in all aspects of diplomatic, administrative, financial and personnel processes. Further, crises show that in order to be both effective as organisations as well as to be able to render consular services to its citizens, foreign ministries must utilise technology and software that enhances the delivery.

DIRCO's ICT infrastructure must therefore use of the opportunities offered by the information age to allow the department to self organise across traditional geographic and political boundaries in order to provide its diplomats the opportunity to exert their influence in areas of diplomacy, training through e-learning, providing other foreign ministries with common data-bases of documents and information that have African implications, and in particular, SADC and AU implications. In addition, the technology platforms would allow civil society and academia to interact with diplomats so as to achieve other related outcomes which are relevant to DIRCO, such as discussion and consultation fora on subjects of relevance.

Australia and the Nordic countries are using and adapting new technologies in their diplomatic work with Canada leading this drive through its new communications environment allowing up to 97% of (Canadian) knowledge workers around the world to be connected. DFAIT further benefited utilising cutting edge technology by the way it has set up its web site and the fact it

was considered so open that it enjoyed internal and external usage, especially that of the general public and civil-society groups.

Kurbalija (1998) detailed applications which were successfully applied in many foreign ministries, such as; e-learning; on-line meetings; the on-line environment to help a diplomat through a problem case; use of Blog sites for diplomats to exchange views or share experiences and stories; and the development of alternative 'data mining' or unique 'Google' type tools to facilitate research.

Innovations, interventions and applications that DIRCO could utilise in its diplomatic practice can be summed up as follows:

- restructuring the ICT component within DIRCO to achieve a change in the way DIRCO approaches ICT utilisation allowing for a forward looking IT unit that is able to reflect the overall needs and operations of DIRCO;

- creating and developing world-class database management as users must be able to readily access data, similar to the Google data mining concept that Kurbalija (1998) proposed, facilitating a more effective utilisation of the DIRCO's databases;

- the use of the on-line environment, a tool that could utilised in day to day work, where users assist each other on-line to: edit letters, diplomatic notes, speeches, position papers, complete forms and a multitude of other tasks, thereby reducing the need to either fax or e-mail drafts for consideration or approval;

- using the important instrument for most foreign ministries, the web site to make available information of the ministry's top diplomats, photographs and CVs, lists of embassies and what to do if a citizen is about to become a 'consular case, providing

important statements and position papers; statistics and archival sources; position-papers; useful links, making it imperative that DIRCO complete its work in this regard as a matter of urgency;

- developing the blog application which is linked to the website and which would allow a forum in which the foreign ministry could engage NGOs, academics and key decision makers on matters of mutual interest in order to consult and caucus;

- investing in the 'wiki-like' intranet application developed by the US State Department which will be able to open up contributions of all those who work in DIRCO encouraging diplomats on postings to write more, documenting events and issues that may not be currently reported upon;

- technology to be used in education and training, by means of the e-learning environment where diplomats and LRP's can be encouraged to take on line courses. Through its extensive representation on the African continent, DIRCO can also provide an E-Learning platform for African foreign ministries, opening up its potential to become a learning centre for African diplomats.

There are numerous possibilities to enhance South African diplomatic practice should DIRCO fully utilise its existing infrastructure and then enhance it with applications and software that is readily available. Sufficient best practise examples; namely practises that which have been tried and tested by many foreign ministries in the developed North, exist in order to guide DIRCO. However, the catalyst for such implementation is the recognition, at the executive management level, that ICT utilisation should be prioritised at a strategic, not just technical level.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The article by Jovan Kurbalija regarding the possible demise of diplomacy resulting from the influence and changes in ICT served as an inspiration for this dissertation, since it raised the questions whether diplomacy would change, or, whether it would no longer be relevant as a profession and practice, as a consequence of innovations and advances made by technology. There is no doubt that technology has impacted so-called 'traditional' diplomacy, particularly in terms of how states react to and interact with other states, non-state actors and the general public.

Information, opinion and academic research are freely and easily available and accessible to vast numbers of people around the world through the internet and mobile communication devices, resulting in geo-political borders and great distances having little to no impact. There are no limitations to interaction, association and communication through the internet, resulting in the state not being able to control and disseminate information, thereby allowing non-state actors to become much more significant players in the foreign policy arena, challenging the primary role of the state as custodian of diplomatic practice.

This study took into consideration the basic premise that the practice of diplomacy hinges on the dual pillars of communication and information. However, the question that arose in light of the challenge to the state's ability to embrace and respond to the vast volume of readily available information, was whether traditional diplomacy was at a crossroads, leading to the consideration in an academic sense, within a South African context, (how) the impact of contemporary developments in ICT provided opportunities for strengthening South African diplomatic practice.

This led to the secondary research questions; what are the prevailing perspectives, both from a normative and functional perspective, on the use of

ICT in the domain of diplomatic practice?; what notable contemporary international examples are there of ICT that have enhanced diplomacy?; which areas of South African diplomatic practice are affected by ICT?; and how can these areas be strengthened?

The study considered the developmental impact on South Africa as a result of not having access to information on economic and political power, and whether South Africa's future geopolitical position may be determined by a new set of values related to the management of information and knowledge, especially the importance for the contextualisation and analysis of information, as well as the management (and accessibility) of data. States such as those as the UK, Canada, the US, Austria and the Netherlands (amongst others), came to the realisation that information was a key resource that must be well managed, and made easily accessible to add value to the core work of the foreign ministry, which prompted these foreign ministries to, within the realm of diplomatic practice, utilise ICT to their benefit. This then raised the further question whether South African diplomatic practice could give consideration to the enhanced utilisation of ICT in specific areas, such as on-line training initiatives, internet supported Public and Consular Diplomacy and restructuring its own diplomatic initiatives from that of territory orientation to task orientation.

In Chapter 2 we observed how the theoretical framework related to ICT within the context of International Relations (IR) theory broadly and Diplomatic Theory, confirming the essential link between the concept of diplomacy, and the notions of information and communication, to provide a theoretical framework, to identify both the normative and functional nexus between ICT and diplomacy. This chapter then went on to provide a conceptual clarification of diplomacy in order to attempt to explain its existential foundation in the pivotal domains of information and communication.

From an IR perspective, ICT was able to act as an enabling mechanism for the developing world, in order to narrow the gap between the global North and developing South. The traditional practice of diplomacy was challenged by

the global explosion of technology, which forced a change in the manner how states reacted to, and interacted with other states and non-state actors. This significant impact of technology-induced changes prompted countries in the Global North to enhance technology, in order to conduct their bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, public diplomacy, diplomatic training, consular functions and other related diplomatic initiatives. This was in light of the fact that contemporary diplomatic practitioners handled a much larger amount of information, and engaged in much more communication, notably through public diplomacy, than their predecessors.

The international legal framework for information gathering and communication – two integral components of diplomatic practice was contextualised. In this regard, it emerged that mass communication and public diplomacy added to diplomacy's traditional agenda of high politics, and strategic interests, (questions of international security, war and peace) and matters of low politics, such as the economy, scientific developments, education, the arts, law, technology and the environment. When applied to diplomacy, this was able to strengthen one of the most viable instruments of foreign policy available to a developing country such as South Africa.

However, there was a growing recognition of the so-called 'digital divide', which undermined the capacity of developing countries to participate in the global political economy. In order to address this divide, developing countries, such as India, Brazil and South Africa began working with each other in order that they were able to meet their growing technology needs. Additionally, the UN, recognising the importance of technology on the developing world, was and is working with and through multi-stakeholders in an attempt to provide a global forum that is able to help integrate ICT into development programmes, including; strategy, infrastructure, enterprise, human capacity, content, application, partnership, policy and governance issues.

The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in addressing the challenge of technology on diplomacy, identified the following areas that required enhancement; internet to mobile video phone; ICT in reconfiguring access to

information, new communication channels to manage foreign policy issues; new online and other forms of targeted and mass communication such as web logs (blogs); systems of governance which reflect democratic traditions of openness, freedom of speech, and the sharing of information; and well-focused empirical and other research to assist policy-making in this arena.

Finally, the chapter analysed the impact of the ICT revolution on contemporary diplomacy, including the implications of the so-called digital divide between developed and developing countries, considering that from a diplomatic theory perspective, Article 3 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) provided the legal theoretical framework for diplomatic practice, and thus the functions that could be enhanced through ICT. This confirmed the position that professional diplomacy was by and large a state-centric activity, practiced within the parameters of International Law.

The Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations and Consular Relations ensured that diplomatic and consular missions were able to carry out their functions as defined in Article 3 of the VCDR and Article 35 of the VCCR. This codification ensured that states were able to communicate freely and exchange information with each other and with each other's citizens, as well as providing the basis for diplomats to utilise technology as part of their vocation to perform public diplomacy functions. This resulted in a change in the manner in which foreign ministries by and large approached contemporary diplomacy, with ICT facilitating the work of diplomats and the foreign ministry, especially the use of the internet which allowed diplomats the opportunity to harness information, and to communicate with a vast network of contacts around the world, in the pursuit of the various modes of diplomacy – bilateral, multilateral, polylateral, summitry and mediation.

Chapter 3 examined key innovations taking place internationally with regard to ICT innovation, implementation and utilisation within the realm of diplomatic practice, considering innovations from countries such as Canada, the UK, Austria, the Netherlands and the US in the developed world, on the one hand,

and India and China in the developing world, on the other. ICT innovation provided opportunities and created a platform for diplomats and their governments to access information, networks, opinion makers, citizens, databases and knowledge. Modern electronic communication has impacted the environment in which diplomats operate, with new and evolving technology, continuing to challenge diplomats to the extent that, they must adapt and embrace the evolving innovations, in order to be effective in the changing environment in which they conduct their activities, while at the same time necessitating reform of the structure and the way in which foreign services work. The result was that innovations in ICT provided various opportunities for the diplomat such as, education (e-learning and on-line courses), access to commercial and trade information, the views of opinion makers and critics, breaking world news stories, and a platform for networking with other diplomats. ICT therefore played a formidable role in facilitating a diplomat's daily work, also allowing the foreign ministry a ready and distinguishable link between domestic priorities and their international mandate.

These innovations allowed foreign ministries in the developed world the ability to utilise the evolving technology to be applied in diplomatic practice, in the spheres of training and development, (such as those facilitated by the Canadian Diplomatic Academy) and in the field of e-learning with DFAIT emphasising public diplomacy, e-policy, and the development and utilisation of an extensive and secure communications platform. Scandinavian countries on the other hand, made use of on-line meetings (where multiple users register on-line using the internet and webcams) to discuss issues in a quick and convenient manner, thereby cutting costs on travel and extensive reporting, saving costs, thus ensuring decisions were quickly implemented with reports being used for building databases and for documenting events.

The (US) State Department contributed the innovative wiki-like intranet application called 'diplopedia' opening up the opportunity for contributions from all those who worked in the State Department, increasing efficiency and saving paper. The impetus for the upgrading of the State Department's ICT

infrastructure and internet came from former Secretary Powell, which highlighted the fact that innovations supported by political executives had a far better chance of success for implementation. This point was confirmed with the changes at the FCO that were driven by Rammell former Parliamentary under Secretary, when the FCO implemented the concept of Rapid Response Teams (where in the event of a catastrophe, a consular team could immediately deployed); *'GeNIE'* (a machine readable passport system); and *'COMPASS'* (a global consular database).

Public Diplomacy, the public face of the foreign ministry and is most seen by in terms of its public interactions, has seen the most of ICT innovation and investment, resulting in the greatest impact on diplomacy. As key instrument of foreign policy, it (Public Diplomacy) is used to promote and support a government's objectives. This emphasis in using technology was a response to the Media, especially 24 hour news channels, which were utilising new technology, as well as mediums of usage (such as their own satellites) to get the breaking news events to the public as quickly as possible. In this regard, an ICT innovation that should be implemented by all foreign ministries is the web site since it not only responds to the media, but also provides: important statements and position papers, information such as statistics and archival sources, position-papers, helps visitors through indicating useful links and is a platform for dialogue and engagement through technology mediums such as Facebook, web-chats and blogs.

Developed countries have not only made great strides in harnessing technology innovations, but also incorporating these into their diplomatic practice, thus furthering the chasm between the developed and developing worlds. As a result, numerous innovative concepts which have been successfully applied in many foreign ministries could be considered for implementation by DIRCO, including the use of e-learning; the development of on-line meetings; on-line environment; blog sites for diplomats to exchange views; 'data mining' or unique 'Google' type tools that facilitate research.

It was not possible to compare China and India's, (two of the fastest growing economies investing heavily in infrastructure, including communication infrastructure), ICT usage as the two countries remain secretive about their ICT, confirming the notion that traditional communications is still steeped in security. Notwithstanding, both countries were utilising their membership of multilateral economic formations to bridge the growing technology and science gap between developed and developing countries.

Another implication of ICT innovation that was considered was that of the challenge to a state's diplomacy by the growing number of non-state actors involved in diplomacy, including ordinary citizens. The state is no longer the sole transmitter of messages; the media is playing an even greater role, (including that of influencing public opinion), where information that is made available through the internet allowed more people access to information and ideas. The diplomat requires accurate, reliable and speedy information, as well as a reliable means of transmitting reports, and other related diplomatic correspondence to key decision makers, thus ensuring informed decisions were made, confirming the link between diplomacy and technology.

ICT is therefore reshaping international relations, including the practice of diplomacy, with electronic communications opening new possibilities for the exchange of information and views between governments and the public. States will delegate or cede to varying degrees the administration of matters for which they were formally responsible, such as foreign policy, economic, social, environmental and humanitarian, issues and other matters considered to be of a domestic political nature, resulting in the foreign ministry and diplomat having to deal with these additional responsibilities and obligations, affirming the need for ever increasing access to world-class technology.

Finally, the chapter explored the negative impact of ICT on diplomacy, reflecting the downside of technology on diplomatic practice, the implications for diplomats and decision makers such as the speed at which information was made available, that their vast volumes (of information) had to be analysed and processed. Information generated in such vast volumes and

with great speed did not necessarily make them factual, accurate or reliable, further adding to the pressure on diplomats, to either verify or refute unreliable information, since it had a greater impact on the credibility of the foreign services, due to the scrutiny received from international audiences. These immense volumes of information available on the internet as well as the various social networking applications, (on which information was shared), placed diplomats at a disadvantage.

While developments in ICT offered diplomats fast and easy access to diverse areas of information, its management was much more difficult. The challenge for contemporary foreign ministries was that of information and knowledge management, both its storage and retrieval, which had to be managed in a manner that was to benefit the country. Diplomacy was, and is dependent on accurate record keeping, since decisions are made after studying available facts and archived records. Problems of international law raised by the coordination of the internet (including privacy, copyright, freedom of expression, and security issues) remains an ongoing problem, also for diplomats. The impact of the 'wikileaks' issue is still to be realised, though the initial reaction of a number of foreign ministries has been varied, from blocking user access, to creating high-tech 'digital fortresses'.

In concluding this chapter, it was noted that many countries, including South Africa, invested heavily in technology hardware by purchasing state-of-the-art infrastructure showing the downside of technology on diplomacy, when costly investments in technology are not harnessed in conjunction with the key strategic vision for its utilisation.

Chapter 4 considered an analysis of ICT applications that could be utilised by DIRCO to enhance South Africa's diplomatic practice and subsequently its diplomatic standing. The chapter started off by exploring the issue of the current usage of ICT in South African diplomatic practice; going on to outline how contemporary ICT innovation could be incorporated into practices that are adopted by DIRCO; the structure of the ICT section, issues of database

management; on-line help applications; the website; the utilisation of diplopedia, and finally issues related to e-learning and on-line training.

Former President Mbeki's envisaged continental role for South African diplomacy was the building block for DIRCO's prioritisation of ICT, which informed innovations and interventions by DIRCO to improve South African diplomacy, in line with Government's strategic vision of utilising world class technology to uplift the poor, and thereby help develop the continent. This was in terms of applications for education, especially distance learning and the necessity for South Africa to invest in infrastructure to support ICT usage. Mbeki's appreciation for the importance of the internet, supported by an investment in technology as well in applications (software), was a means to overcome the economic and digital divide, in order to assist South Africa transform into an information society, to keep pace with technology and applications advances which impacted the way in which South Africans live, communicate and conduct business.

From the available information, DIRCO did not list the maximisation of ICT nor public diplomacy as a strategic objective in their own right in DIRCO strategic plans (since 2005), thus not following upon the vision outlined by both Mbeki and his successor Zuma. Nonetheless, three of DIRCO's nine strategic objectives provided an operational framework for ICT to perform optimally. DIRCO's attempt to over-haul its outdated ICT began as far back as February 2005, which were then rationalised into two main priorities, namely the VoIP and Windows 2003 Advanced Server projects, with their main aim being the provision of an integrated, effective and efficient communication infrastructure, allowing for connectivity between all missions abroad and the head office in Pretoria. The project called *'UKUSA'* was implemented in so far as connectivity and infrastructure were concerned at the majority of DIRCO's diplomatic and consular missions abroad, as well as its head office. However, it did not deliver with regards to Business Intelligence, Data Warehousing, and BPM, which are all still outstanding.

The Public Diplomacy Branch of DIRCO appears to have benefited most from the innovations in ICT, mainly due to the fact that the foreign ministry's web-site is the public face of the foreign Ministry, coupled with the public interest in the work undertaken by the foreign ministry. Project *'UKUSA',* therefore "appears" to have met the Department's needs in so far as infrastructure (VoIP) and equipment are concerned. However, DIRCO does not fully utilise all aspects of the infrastructure that it has available to benefit the Department.

Following an analysis of the utilisation of innovation, especially software and their related applications in other foreign ministries to that within DIRCO, there is a clear need for DIRCO to exploit these new applications, especially using available advances in technology, to benefit particularly the Diplomatic Academy, in order to make it a leading diplomatic institution on the continent. An imperative for DIRCO is to find ways to inform, consult with, train, and keep diplomats and LRP's up-to-date in all aspects of diplomatic, administrative, financial and personnel processes, as well as being able to be able to render consular services to its citizens.

DIRCO's must therefore use its ICT infrastructure to take advantage of the opportunities offered by technology developments and innovation to allow the department to self organise across traditional geographic and political boundaries in order to exert its influence, especially on the continent in areas of diplomacy, such as, training through e-learning, providing other foreign ministries with common data-bases of documents and information that have African implications, and in particular, SADC and AU implications. In addition, the technology platforms would allow civil society and academia to interact with diplomats so as to achieve other related outcomes which are relevant to DIRCO, such as discussion and consultation fora on subjects of strategic importance.

The envisaged continental role for South African diplomacy was the building block for the prioritisation of ICT within DIRCIO, confirming the fact that South African diplomatic practice could be further enhanced should DIRCO fully utilise its existing infrastructure, complemented with applications and software

that is readily available. There are documented examples of best practise examples which have been tried and tested by many foreign ministries in the developed North that could guide DIRCO particularly, as well as other foreign ministries in the developing world. As with both the State Department and the FCO, the catalyst for such implementation was the recognition, at the executive management, or political level, that ICT utilisation should be prioritised.

Australia and the Nordic countries are using and adapting new technologies in their diplomatic work, with Canada leading this drive through its new communications environment allowing up to 97% of (Canadian) knowledge workers around the world to be connected. DFAIT further benefited utilising cutting edge technology by the way it set up its web site and the fact it was considered so open that it enjoyed internal and external usage, especially that of the general public and civil-society groups.

Kurbalija (1998) detailed applications which were successfully applied in many foreign ministries, such as; e-learning; on-line meetings; the on-line environment to help a diplomat through a problem case; use of Blog sites for diplomats to exchange views or share experiences and stories; and the development of alternative 'data mining' or unique 'Google' type tools to facilitate research. Other innovations, interventions and applications that DIRCO could utilise in its diplomatic practice include; restructuring the ICT component (within DIRCO); creating and developing a world-class database; the use of the on-line environment; using the web site to its optimum; developing the blog application; investing in the 'wiki-like' intranet; and finally, technology to be used in education and training.

This final analysis leads to the issues that may be considered as a critique of and limitation to this study, and what other further academic research may be undertaken in this regard. This study was based, in the main on examples and lessons from the developed North, as data, writing and studies are well documented by writers and academics from that region. The study could therefore be considered to be too 'Euro-centric' in its approach and in their

primary recommendations for DIRCO to consider in reshaping its own technology direction. However, in conducting this research, there was very limited documentation available that, either detailed successes or evidence of technology usage in the developing world, and in Africa in particular. Malaysia may be a notable exception as that country's foreign ministry holds an ISO accreditation – ISO 9001-2008 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia: 2011), however there were no case studies on ICT and its utilisation from Malaysia that was available for purposes of this study. Both China and India, considered to be technology leaders in the developing world, do not share ICT innovations in diplomacy.

The practical limitation in executing the recommendations contained in this study, especially in so far as DIRCO in particular is concerned, requires an executive commitment to the use of software applications, and then to hold management accountable for its implementation with requisite consequences for non-implementation. It is clear that DIRCO has the requisite infrastructure, however; both executive commitment and a restructuring of the ICT section are in the writer's view a prerequisite that will yield results, making DIRCO far more competitive and an African leader in the field of ICT usage in diplomacy, fulfilling the vision of both Mbeki and Zuma.

It was not possible in the course of this study to delve into the full implications and impact of wikileaks on diplomacy, especially that of ICT. The wikileaks crisis broke a short while ago and the full implications are still to be determined. The question of whether it was a failure of technology or the weakness of man will still be a point of contention. Technology is here to stay, and that it impacts and will continue to found on diplomacy.

This initial study on the possible impact of ICT on South African diplomacy, opens up future research possibilities for other scholars, especially in the areas of ICT and peacekeeping, ICT and humanitarian assistance and ICT and e-learning in a diplomatic environment, in South Africa, in particular and then on African diplomacy in general. It is hoped that other scholars will be

provoked into academic research into this ‘non-traditional’ area of diplomacy and technology.

In conclusion, the writer cannot but conclude that ICT will continue to impact diplomacy and diplomats, but that ICT will not replace diplomats for any time to come in the foreseeable future. It is the responsibility, if not obligation of diplomats and their foreign ministries to enhance and utilise ICT, to both, their country and people’s benefit by exploiting the advances in information and communication. Such utilisation will enhance the traditional diplomatic experience, broaden the horizon of diplomacy and go further in making diplomatic activity, which would otherwise not have been possible, possible.

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