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**THE RETREAT OF DIPLOMACY IN A DECLINING  
LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER**

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**Abstract.** The research investigates why diplomacy has decreased in modern world politics. This paper differs with other works that attribute this decline to the Liberal International Order (LIO) by showing that the LIO limited traditional diplomacy and encouraged statecraft and public diplomacy. Populist governments have strengthened these alternative diplomatic approaches by choosing to bypass traditional diplomatic frameworks to perform direct and theatrical foreign policy. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated these trends which resulted in the development of “corona diplomacy” that unites statecraft with public diplomacy. This research aims to identify both systemic and political elements responsible for diplomacy’s decline while exploring potential revival strategies for diplomacy in post-liberal international relations. This article develops a fresh theoretical framework through the introduction of “post-Western diplomacy” which emphasizes hybridity alongside cultural translation and multi-identity as methods to redefine diplomacy. The research uses a qualitative conceptual approach which combines discourse analysis with case studies of current international political events particularly those occurring under populist governments. The article offers a critical rethinking of diplomacy’s position in international relations and offers both theoretical and practical implications. It contributes to diplomatic studies by revealing the changes in the distribution of power and by suggesting an adaptive model of diplomacy that is in line with the new realities of the multipolar and culturally diverse world. These findings may be useful for foreign ministries and international institutions to develop their strategic direction in the face of the challenges of the 21st century.

**Key words:** diplomacy, statecraft, public diplomacy, Liberal International Order (LIO), populism, post-western diplomacy, digital diplomacy, Covid-19, foreign policy

## Introduction

This article aims to scrutinize the key determinants behind diplomacy's retreat in world politics. Diplomacy has been losing its vigour institutionally. Foreign Ministries in numerous countries including Israel, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, amongst others, suffered budget cuts by more than 25% in the last decade. Australia's combined budget for diplomacy, trade and foreign aid declined from AU \$8.3 billion to AU \$6.7 billion over the last couple of years. Israel had to halt all activities in its overseas missions due to lack of funds. The financial hardships in the post-Brexit period have forced the British government to merge Department for International Development with Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The number of staff in the UK's overseas missions has been cut by a third in the last several years. Besides, the FCO lost more than a quarter of its budget during the Brexit process making it significantly challenging for British diplomats to exert influence outside the EU.

On the other hand, the US President Donald Trump has singlehandedly caused serious damages to international diplomacy by paralyzing diplomatic bureaucracy, ignoring diplomatic language and undermining diplomats. He either fired or forced the resignation of one third of the entire State Department. In his second term, Trump has proved even more hostile to the US diplomatic service. By March 2025, he still refuses to appoint ambassadors to more than half of the entire US overseas missions (101/195). 19 pending ambassadors recently nominated by Trump are all political appointees. He aims to radically shrink the Department of State to point of cutting its budget by 20%, firing diplomats, and closing embassies. Besides, 700 State Department employees resigned in the first two months of 2025 including 400 career diplomat.

Trump with his relentless populism at the expense of diplomacy has become a role model for populist leaders across the world. The advent of populist governments in world politics indicates the decline of Liberal International Order (LIO), 'an open, loosely rules-based and progressively oriented international order' under American leadership since the end of the Second World War. Liberal and democratic forces in world politics have been facing serious contestations due to successive economic and political crises in the last couple of decades. This leads to 'a gradual diffusion of power away from the West'. Not only the US supremacy in world politics has been under serious question, but also chief Western forces including Europe and Japan have been weakening. International Organizations such as the UN, the EU and NATO have been losing their credibility along with a global retreat of liberal democracy and the rules-based multilateral system. This facilitates the ascent to power of populist political forces. The electoral victory of Trump is thus a serious repercussion of LIO's decline revealing the fact that even the West can no longer escape the populist takeover of governments in an emerging post-liberal age.

The study makes three main contributions to the extant scholarly literature on diplomacy. First, it brings a fresh perspective on the retreat of diplomacy going beyond the extant arguments in association with the decline of LIO. Second, it offers a critical assessment of the Covid-19 pandemic's impact on diplomacy in

comparison with statecraft and public diplomacy. Finally, it aims for a conceptual innovation by introducing the term “post-Western diplomacy” as a potential remedy for diplomacy’s revival.

The article is organized into four sections. The first two parts discuss how statecraft and public diplomacy have become popular at the expense of diplomatic practice. Accordingly, the first section focuses on statecraft as a strategy of policymakers to formulate and execute foreign policy mostly undermining diplomatic bureaucracy. Once a popular practice of US administrations, statecraft has become a widespread phenomenon with the rise of populist governments in the Global North as well as the Global South. The second section concentrates on how public diplomacy has risen to be a hegemonic trend in politics and academia. It claims that the global rise of populism in world politics further empowers public diplomacy as a primary tool for populist leaders to raise their international profile. The third section discusses how the Covid-19 pandemic has had a multiplier effect on the retreat of diplomacy. The global pandemic further constricts diplomatic practice, while co-constituting statecraft and public diplomacy through a new term called ‘Corona diplomacy’. Finally, the article emphasizes the necessity of reviving diplomacy in the ‘post-liberal age’ through a post-Western outlook. It outlines the three features of post-Western diplomacy; namely, hybrid practices, acculturation and hybrid identities that may help diplomats redefine their role and reassert their value in foreign affairs.

### **Background**

Many consider LIO as a blessing for diplomacy. The introduction of the UN system defending and spreading multilateralism, the codification of the rights and duties of diplomats through the Vienna Conventions and the spread of Embassies throughout the world evidence how diplomacy flourished under LIO. Therefore, the retreat of diplomacy is directly associated with the decline of LIO, particularly, in reference to Trump’s undermining of multilateralism. The rise of populist governments in defiance to LIO and their undermining of diplomatic bureaucracy can be a further evidence for the decline of diplomacy. This article, however, argues that the decline of LIO is not the actual source of diplomacy’s plummeting credibility, since it was the LIO that restricted diplomacy in the first place. The US-led LIO was a double-edged sword since it was both a blessing and a curse for diplomacy. While it provided a universal outlook to diplomatic practice, it also enabled alternative practices to flourish at the expense of diplomacy.

American distaste for the Europe-led diplomatic practice was obvious from the very beginning. The US leaders long considered diplomacy as a hegemonic tool at the hands of European imperialists to colonise nations. Hence, it took the US more than a hundred years to establish its first permanent embassy abroad. American aloofness to diplomacy became much more pronounced with the LIO. After the Second World War, the US and its partners built a ‘multifaceted and sprawling international order’, but this was by no means a blessing for diplomatic practice. Despite being a pioneer of LIO, the US often preferred hard power to diplomacy, and unilateralism to multilateralism, to the point of clashing with

its European allies. Besides, the US popularized two alternative practices, i.e. statecraft and public diplomacy, rival to traditional diplomacy.

Both diplomats and diplomatic bureaucracy as a whole have been sidelined in numerous occasions, while US statesmen increasingly assumed the roles of diplomats being directly involved in international negotiation and mediation. Besides, 'public diplomacy' institutions alternative to Foreign Ministry have been formed and new public figures rose as alternative to diplomatists. Therefore, Trump and other populist leaders are hardly the main reason behind the retreat of diplomacy since the US-led LIO had already prompted its decline. Nevertheless, the retreat of LIO further damaged the credibility of diplomatic practice because the rise of illiberal and populist political forces spread the usage of statecraft and public diplomacy world-wide.

Recent attempts to rejuvenate diplomatic practice through digital diplomacy and cyber diplomacy rather served to strengthen the digitalization of statecraft and public diplomacy. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has proved to be yet another challenge further restricting traditional diplomatic practice while prompting populist regimes to further prioritize and popularize statecraft and public diplomacy under the guise of 'Corona diplomacy'. Therefore, suffice it to say that the US-led LIO had already initiated the retreat of diplomacy by introducing alternative practices which then enjoyed further popularity under populist governments.

### **Description of materials and methods**

The research uses qualitative and conceptual methods to study diplomacy's retreat during the twenty-first century. The research uses critical discourse analysis together with thematic interpretation of secondary sources such as academic literature policy documents and media reports. The research draws from theoretical discussions about the Liberal International Order (LIO) and statecraft and public diplomacy to understand changing power dynamics and international relations practices.

The research investigates three prominent diplomatic cases which include Trump foreign policy and Modi's diplomatic shift in India and Corona Diplomacy during the Covid-19 pandemic to demonstrate larger patterns. The research uses purposeful case selection to demonstrate how populist governance and alternative diplomatic practices contribute to the decline of traditional diplomacy. The research applies international relations theory concepts to develop the concept of "post-Western diplomacy" which explains present-day transformations.

### **Results**

#### *Statecraft undermining Diplomacy*

A strong tool disposable at the hand of political leaders, statecraft is popularly defined in the literature as 'organized actions governments take to change the external environment in general or the policies and actions of other states in particular to achieve the objectives that have been set by policy makers'. It involves the skills of statesmen to make the best out of the available

‘military, diplomatic, intelligence, public, economic, or psychological tool[s]’ [1-2]. Diplomacy is an important component of statecraft establishing official communication channels between governments, gathering information about host government, increasing government’s visibility in foreign courts, and conducting negotiations on behalf of the sovereign [2]. Satow thus prescribes diplomacy as an inseparable instrument of statecraft and dismisses ‘the exclusion of diplomatic agents from foreign policy formulation ... [as] a cardinal sin’. The sovereign always takes credit for diplomatic achievements while blaming diplomats for failures, demonstrating how diplomacy is actually viewed as being extremely subordinate to statecraft [1–3].

Brands points to a misfit between statecraft and diplomacy, since diplomatic bureaucracy can be ‘resistant to change, and hostile to policies that seem detrimental to their organizational interests’. He asserts that leaders might view diplomatic bureaucracy as hindering a successful execution of foreign policy, since ‘what is desired by a policy maker and what is implemented by the bureaucracy can be two different things’. That’s why both US President Richard Nixon and his aide Kissinger believed that foreign policy was too important to be left to a ‘self-interested bureaucracy’ [3].

US presidents frequently choose to handle diplomatic negotiations themselves, demonstrating the US’s hegemonic position in international politics. They adopt “a low-context negotiating style”, which entails straightforward, explicit, and goal-oriented discussions. They frequently position themselves as the primary mediators in bilateral disputes between weaker nations, pressing a speedy settlement through rewarding and coercive tactics. Some US decision-makers even considered the State Department as a rival. For instance, Nixon and Kissinger viewed the State Department almost as an ‘enemy’ dominated by elitist foreign-service officers who believed they had ‘a charter to dominate the conduct of foreign policy’ [3].

Statecraft is known to have restricted diplomatic practice for some time. Therefore, it is not news to diplomats and diplomacy scholars. What is new is the multiplier effect that the decline of LIO has had on statecraft’s restricting grip on diplomacy. The current crisis of the liberal world intriguingly coincides with the ascent to power of populist leaders in the Global North as well as the Global South. To name but a few, Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Narendra Modi in India, Boris Johnson in the UK and Donald Trump in the US are some of the key populist figures who have recently come to power, while others including Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey, Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Vladimir Putin in Russia consolidated their authority during the crisis [1].

The use of statecraft with “anti-diplomatic impulses” is encouraged by populist takeovers of governments around the world. Populists like non-diplomatic language because it appeals to their voters, and they “scorn diplomatic language as exercises in sophistry and hypocrisy”. The goal of populist politicians when they take office is to alter the current political order. Because they are symbols of the very status quo they are challenging, they continue to be “deeply suspicious



of diplomats and diplomatic culture.” They reject diplomats as “elitists” because their political philosophy is centered on the division between the “good” people and the “evil” elites [2].

Under the Premiership of Modi, foreign policy making in India has been virtually taken away from the Ministry of External Affairs and transferred to the Prime Minister’s Office. Modi even declared the Indian diaspora as the true ambassadors of India. Similarly, Hugo Chavez of Venezuela introduced the so-called ‘diplomacy of the peoples’ and ‘diplomacy of microphones’ ‘de-professionalizing’ diplomacy and diplomatic institutions under the pretext of empowering people [1]. In Turkey, Erdoğan often scorns his ambassadors by calling them *mon cher*, a pejorative term deriving from French that denounces elitism and hypocrisy. He even publicly humiliated a Turkish ambassador during his visit to Berlin in 2004 [2].

However, the most notable example is US President Trump, whose populist policies have caused significant controversy in US foreign policy. According to Mead, Trump revitalized the Jacksonian populist nationalism in the US which had lost its glow after the Second World War. Projecting America as ‘under siege, with its values under attack and its future under threat’ by not only external but also internal enemies, Trump’s Jacksonian rhetoric makes US foreign policy highly uncertain and disputable. The undermining of diplomacy in the US has become a trademark of the Trump administration. His understanding of statecraft is primarily based on ‘personalism, the use of bilateral one-on-ones, constant surprises, and direct and highly targeted communication with ‘his’ domestic supporters’ [2]. Trump uses Twitter to criticize foreign countries by threatening economic sanctions, circumventing the State Department and disregarding diplomatic terminology.

In general, statecraft is a tool used by political leaders to stifle and discredit diplomats. The US had already internalized this practice alternative to diplomacy during the advent of LIO. However, following the decline of LIO, the populist takeover of governments in the Global South as well as the Global North, led the practice of statecraft go rampant in foreign policy at the further expense of diplomacy [1;3].

### *Public Diplomacy as Hegemony*

The growing acceptance of public diplomacy, an alternative practice in academics and politics, is another element contributing to the demise of diplomacy. Edmund Gullion first popularized the term “public diplomacy” in 1965 to distinguish the nation-branding efforts of the West from the Soviet propaganda apparatus. Since then, it has gained use in both academia and politics. Public diplomacy, which was first developed in the United States, was later embraced by several governments as a practical means of “telling their story” to audiences around the globe. In order to carry out public diplomacy independently of foreign ministries, governments set up distinct institutions. With its own funds, goals, strategies, and “public diplomats,” these organizations function similarly to “parallel” foreign ministries. However, since their primary focus is on foreign

publics rather than governments, what they do is not necessarily diplomacy per se. As opposed to the current strategies of Foreign Ministries involving negotiation and communication with, information-gathering about, and official representation at foreign countries, this calls for unique strategies like nation-branding and cultural propaganda towards, broadcast for, and communication with foreign publics [4-5]. Furthermore, because its participants are not limited to official representatives, public diplomacy has a “polylateral” character in contrast to diplomacy. Cities, non-governmental organizations, regional or subnational governments, and even individual personalities engage in public diplomacy. This disproves the national Foreign Ministries’ exclusive authority to design and carry out diplomatic initiatives. Furthermore, both terrorist recruitment networks and counterterrorism networks including governments and international organizations may employ public diplomacy. Thus, by using different players, audiences, and tactics, public diplomacy offers a viable substitute for diplomacy [4-5].

Public diplomacy thrives where diplomacy and diplomats are marginalized or hindered. Because of its cumbersome bureaucracy, diplomatic efforts are seen as a barrier to foreign policy decision-making by political leaders who aspire to take a proactive approach. Because foreign policy is viewed as a part of “high politics,” which allows states to wage war or create world order, politicians devote their political careers to winning foreign policy victories in order to maintain their reputation and credibility both domestically and internationally. Leaders who succeed in foreign policy gain a great deal of political legitimacy, while those who fail incur huge legitimacy costs that could lead to the end of their political career. Since they typically want to be on top of swift foreign policy victories to enchant their voters with a rally-around-the-flag effect and deflect attention from domestic political and economic difficulties, they do not want to put up with cumbersome diplomatic bureaucracy. Kissinger publicly declared that “speed, secrecy, unity of purpose, and the ability to act unpredictably when necessary” are the components of successful statecraft and that they are incompatible with “laborious bureaucratic procedures and timely democratic oversight.” Because they fear being eclipsed by the appointed public servants on high-level political issues, some leaders view diplomats as possible competitors. Consequently, there is less diplomacy and more statecraft as a result of the growing number of populist takeovers of governments worldwide [6].

Political leaders, on the other hand, see public diplomacy as low politics, which does not instantly have significant costs in terms of political legitimacy. Additionally, leaders might use public diplomacy as a public relations tool to increase their visibility overseas. Therefore, because they see public diplomacy as a projection of their own (soft) power and influence over foreign publics, leaders typically invest in it [4;6]. For US leaders to showcase American grandeur to a global audience, the US Information Agency (USIA) was essential. Similarly, for a long time, the Voice of America (VOA), a semi-independent broadcasting organization, served as the US government’s public diplomacy apparatus and was occasionally completely controlled by it. During the Kennedy Administration, for example, the USIA had to approve the scripts for all of its broadcasts. The

use of public diplomacy remains unaffected by populist politicians' growing use of statecraft. Conversely, public diplomacy is being used more frequently as populists take control governments around the world [6-7].

### *Diplomacy under the Covid-19*

The Covid-19 outbreak changed the fundamental structure of international politics by causing countries to isolate themselves while also requiring them to seek and give aid to one another in differing amounts. Populist regimes like China, Turkey, and Cuba have positioned themselves as the forerunners of the so-called "Corona Diplomacy," which involves sending medical aid to other nations. Turkey supplied medical supplies to over 55 countries, while Cuba sent a team of doctors to Italy to combat the illness. On the other hand, China aimed to burnish its image as a global health leader by sending medical teams, masks and testing kits all around the world and pledging billions of dollars to the WHO to fund research into a vaccine [8]. China's strong commitment was especially telling when the US fared much worse in fighting the pandemic, and Trump 'stymied any multilateral response at the G-7, G-20, United Nations, and WHO'.

The topic of whether "Corona Diplomacy," a new diplomatic phrase, is just another statecraft weapon used by populist leaders to take advantage of changing international situations is raised by the international assistance activism of populist regimes. To now, populist politicians have primarily exploited it to increase their visibility abroad. For example, Turkish aid packages sent to other nations had the President's insignia and the title "Presidency of the Republic of Turkey," indicating that Erdoğan had personally given them to them. This illustration demonstrates how populist statecraft and Corona Diplomacy work hand in hand [8].

Furthermore, Corona Diplomacy might be regarded as a more widely accessible type of public diplomacy. The actions taken by populist administrations under the guise of Corona Diplomacy are not all that unlike from the nation-branding initiatives that existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Cuba had already been sending doctors overseas before the pandemic hit the world. Their impact on the public is the primary distinction. There was widespread coverage and acclaim for the Cuban doctors' arrival in Italy. Long before COVID-19, this was a well-established public diplomacy strategy for Cuba. However, the global media coverage of the Covid epidemic increased its impact [8-9]. As said earlier, the emergence of populism makes both public diplomacy and statecraft more popular and used, and the Covid epidemic created an environment that was conducive to both [9].

However, during the Covid pandemic, ambassadorial diplomatic practice was limited to three auxiliary functions: providing consular assistance to citizens who were stranded overseas, supervising the acquisition of medical supplies, masks, and testing kits, and promoting international cooperation in the vaccine search. As other actors took up the mantle in their place, diplomats' agency waned. For example, ambassadors mostly managed the flow of medical supplies to and from their nations and addressed the issues of their residents living overseas, but



traveling physicians gained recognition as the true (public) diplomats enhancing their nation's standing overseas. As a result, diplomats are becoming less visible in the public eye while others are becoming more and more well-known [9].

The majority of industries shifted to online platforms as a result of the global lockdown brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic. Diplomacy was no different. The digitization of diplomacy is actually nothing new. A growing body of research on digital diplomacy emphasizes how foreign ministries use information and communication technologies (ICT) to their fullest potential by transforming their operations into digital platforms [9-10]. One could see digital diplomacy as a move made by governments to bring diplomatic practice into the twenty-first century and as an effort by academics to revive diplomatic studies. Especially, social media has a potential to become a key part of negotiating strategy since it helps diplomats develop a level of trust with their counterparts in the absence of face-to-face diplomacy. However, government experiences vary greatly, and there is no standard method for using ICT for diplomatic reasons. Not all governments have reached a level of proficiency in digital diplomacy. For example, Denmark was one of the first countries to use digital diplomacy, even going so far as to send the first digital ambassador in history to Silicon Valley. In contrast, Turkey has only lately become interested in digital diplomacy. Additionally, foreign ministries are attacked for their unappealing and non-interactive use of digital technology on social media and other platforms. The ways that social media can be used for diplomatic reasons are still not completely understood by diplomats. Furthermore, what Foreign Ministries and diplomats claim to be doing in the name of digital diplomacy essentially amounts to the digitization of public diplomacy, as their digital activism primarily occurs on social media to reach foreign publics [9-10].

Governments are now required to use digital platforms for diplomatic purposes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, diplomatic channels grow increasingly insecure as more diplomacy is moved online. Due to reports of hackers constantly attacking online conference platforms like Zoom, cyber-hacking became a significant problem during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over half a million Zoom accounts were compromised and sold on the dark web in April 2020. Additionally, the email addresses and passwords of thousands of people employed by well-known international organizations, including as the Gates Foundation, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, were leaked by hackers on a number of online networks [10;11]. As a result, after the Covid epidemic, internet diplomatic actions became increasingly unsustainable and extremely unsafe. According to Riordan, diplomats can reaffirm their worth by contributing to the establishment of norms and regulations and resolving the chaotic nature of cyberspace through what he refers to as "cyberdiplomacy." They can only accomplish this, though, if they create an international diplomatic community in cyberspace and include diplomats from all over the world. International society is far from reaching a consensus over cyberdiplomacy since its agenda is torn between the competing discourses of the supporters of cyber-sovereignty such as Russia and China aiming to increase state control

over internet, and Western powers defending internet freedoms. This led to the establishment of two parallel forums concerning cyber-norms at the UN General Assembly, and rival multinational initiatives such as Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace, a Western initiative and the World Internet Conference, a Chinese initiative. The persistence of disunity over cyberspace renders it an extremely anarchic environment that restricts diplomats' ability to act online.

### *Necessity for post-Western diplomacy*

International affairs in the emerging post-liberal era proves elusive for diplomats. Diplomacy and diplomats must adjust to these new realities if they want to survive in the post-liberal age.

Although populist governments see diplomacy as a liberal tool at the Western hand, it is not a liberal invention. Diplomacy is debated and dismissed along with LIO [12]. It is necessary to rethink diplomacy as a phenomena that exists outside of the West. Consequently, in order to reposition diplomacy and empower diplomats in a global context, a post-Western perspective is required [13]. The borders between the East and the West should be blurred as a result of the hybridization of diplomatic theory and practice. This entails strengthening non-Western intellectual, political, and cultural aspects in diplomacy without offending the West [14].

Therefore, what diplomats require is a new type of diplomatic style, i.e. 'post-Western diplomacy' to adapt to the emerging post-liberal international environment [12;14]. Some Western diplomats have already attempted to reflect a post-Western outlook in their diplomatic activities. So far, three features come forward. First, diplomats employ 'hybrid practices' mixing up Western and non-Western cultural elements to be more appealing at foreign courts. Harry Harris, the US Ambassador to Seoul, shared in social media a video clip where he mixes up American Whiskey with Korean fruits and spirits to transform traditional Western cocktails into hybrid ones. He also blended Western and Oriental flavours to create a hybrid omelette. However, these hybrid practices failed to have the expected impact, since his Japanese heritage continued to arouse suspicion and contestation in Korea. Hence, employing hybrid practices alone does not guarantee success in diplomacy especially when diplomat's credibility in the eyes of the host society is already under question. Besides, such practices can be interpreted as cheap tricks to gain leverage over the host government. Therefore, diplomats may be required to go into a deeper commitment to 'win hearts and minds' [13].

The second feature of post-Western diplomacy is called 'acculturation' which indicates a deeper commitment to host society. Accordingly, diplomats internalize some of the cultural elements in host country and use them for public interaction. This is more than just mixing up Western and non-Western elements. It entails self-identification with host society's culture triggering a joint sense of belonging and creating a public image that a foreign diplomat can become 'one of us'. Richard Moore, former British Ambassador in Ankara is an outspoken supporter of Beşiktaş Football Club, one of the three Turkish giants. He had a

Beşiktaş flag hanged on the Embassy building in celebration of the club's Turkish premier league title. He then became a board member of the club. Beşiktaş fandom made him a public figure in Turkey. Before his departure, he appeared in a farewell video clip where he shouted Beşiktaş' famous 'Black/White' chant. His legacy lasts even after he moved back to London. His successor Dominick Chilcott picked up where Moore left off and declared on social media his support for Fenerbahçe FC, another Turkish Football giant [13-14].

The final feature of post-Western diplomacy is 'hybrid identities'. A diplomat with diverse ethnic background may serve as an excellent asset for mediation between the government s/he serves and her/his country of origin. Gary Locke, an American diplomat of Chinese origin, played a critical role during his tenure as US Ambassador to Beijing in easing out tensions between the US and China. He used his Chinese heritage as a strong soft power instrument. Shortly after arriving to Beijing, Locke visited his family's ancestral village of Jilong, in southern China becoming a highlight in Chinese media and raising sympathy within Chinese public. He then acted as a mediator between the two governments both in the Wang Lijun crisis in February 2012 and regarding the escape of the activist Chen Guangcheng's to the US embassy in May 2012. He was even praised in media as 'the Best-Ever American Ambassador' to China. However, ethnic heritage may not always be an advantage as observed in the case of Harry Harris. His Japanese heritage became a problem in Korea. He should have been assigned to Japan instead of Korea. Governments should be extra careful in assigning diplomats overseas [14].

Post-Western diplomacy exemplified by, but not limited to, the above features, may help diplomats reassert their importance in the 'post-liberal' age. It may increase diplomats' credibility both at home and at the host country conferring them a mediating role in bilateral issues. It may not solve the problems between populist statesmen and diplomatic bureaucracy, but it can help diplomats escape from being stigmatized as elitist proving that diplomacy is not a mere instrument of Western imperialism [15].

On the other hand, diplomats should address two potential hurdles. First, unless institutionalized, these practices may rather remain as individual cases whose effectiveness depends on individual experience. Therefore, governments should embrace post-Western diplomacy as an official policy line and seek to generate 'post-Western' recipes for establishing diplomatic dialogue with others [15]. Alternatively, post-Western diplomacy can also be embraced by international *corps diplomatique* as a viable code of conduct among diplomats. This may strengthen solidarity among diplomats of various nationalities and encourage peaceful dialogue [12].

Second, embracing a foreign culture may lead to accusations of *localitis*, i.e. going native, in which diplomat 'loses touch with sentiments at home' or even acts as a 'mouthpiece' for the host government. This could compromise diplomat's credibility at home, while trying to raise it abroad. Diplomats should seek a balance between their post-Western initiatives and commitments to their official duties to prevent any false accusations [13].

### **Discussion**

This article demonstrates how traditional diplomacy has been pushed aside by statecraft and public diplomacy as alternative practices which gained momentum under populist leadership and Liberal International Order decline [1-2;6-7]. The research in this study demonstrates that the LIO structure enabled the erosion of diplomatic institutions through its support for parallel non-bureaucratic foreign policy mechanisms.

The research reveals that diplomatic withdrawal results from enduring changes in international politics rather than a sudden collapse. Heads of state and non-traditional actors have gained power to bypass professional diplomats through the combination of populism with digital communication platforms and the requirement for swift performative foreign policy. Populist leaders solidified their international influence through Corona Diplomacy during the Covid-19 pandemic which provided them a new method to enhance their public image and direct statecraft abilities.

Post-Western diplomacy [12-14] presents an attractive solution for future diplomatic approaches. The combination of hybrid practices with cultural acculturation and multi-identity diplomacy [13-14] enables diplomats to demonstrate their continued value and authority in the fragmented post-liberal world. The success of this method depends entirely on its ability to become institutionalized rather than depending on individual achievements. The potential of post-Western diplomacy [12-14] to transform international relations remains uncertain because it lacks sufficient institutional backing from states and international organizations.

The discussion reveals that diplomacy faces an essential identity crisis because it must navigate its conventional bureaucratic functions against the demands of the fast-changing media-driven international environment. Diplomacy needs to transform its form and content to survive by accepting pluralism together with decentralization and cultural intelligence.

### **Conclusion**

This article enquired the key determinants for the decline of diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It focused on two key alternative dynamics; statecraft and public diplomacy [1-2] popularized by the US-led LIO. The ascent to power of populist leaders due to the retreat of LIO, has granted these two practices a hegemonic status in foreign policy. This trend was exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to populist governments creating “Corona Diplomacy,” a hybrid of popular diplomacy and statecraft [1-2;8-9].

As a result, emerging trends like cyber diplomacy and digital diplomacy [10-11] have not yet proven to be a workable solution for diplomatic practice. Digital diplomacy has yet to be properly integrated into the operations of foreign ministries as a global norm, despite the fact that moving diplomatic efforts to digital platforms has become essential, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic. In addition, statecraft and public diplomacy have adapted to digitalization more successfully. Nation-branding initiatives abroad now have

a greater impact and reach thanks to online channels. Similar to Trump, populist politicians today use social media to circumvent diplomatic channels in their pursuit of “digital statecraft.” Furthermore, it is still unsafe for diplomats and diplomatic organizations to move their operations to cyberspace. During the epidemic, cyber-hacking has become a serious problem. Therefore, until nations reach a consensus on how to handle the anarchic structure of cyberspace, cyber diplomacy will only exist in name.

This article offers a way out for diplomats emphasizing the need to embrace a post-Western outlook to survive in the emerging post-liberal age. By blending Western and non-Western elements into diplomatic practice, diplomats can find innovative ways to communicate at foreign courts. Infusing the cultural elements of host society into their own life, diplomats can become principal enactors and carriers of public diplomacy. Finally, diplomats with multiple cultural identities can act as mediators between the government they represent and the country of their origin. A post-Western diplomatic style [12-15] may help diplomats redefine their role in a changing international order and reassert their value in foreign affairs.

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## ЛИБЕРАЛДЫҚ ХАЛЫҚАРАЛЫҚ ТӘРТІПТІҢ ҚҰЛДЫРАУЫНДАҒЫ ДИПЛОМАТИЯНЫҢ ШЕГІНУІ

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**Андатпа.** Зерттеу қазіргі әлемдік саясатта дипломатияның не себепті әлсірегенін қарастырады. Бұл мақала дипломатияның әлсіреуін Либералдық халықаралық тәртіппен (ЛХТ) байланыстыратын басқа еңбектерден ерекшеленеді: мұнда дәстүрлі дипломатияны шектеп, оның орнына мемлекеттік стратегия мен қоғамдық дипломатияны алға тартқан дәл осы ЛХТ екені көрсетіледі. Популистік үкіметтер дәстүрлі дипломатиялық жүйелерді айналып өтіп, сыртқы саясатты тікелей және көрнекі түрде жүргізуді таңдағандықтан, бұл баламалы тәсілдер нығая түсті. COVID-19 пандемиясы осы үрдістерді жеделдетіп, мемлекеттік стратегия мен қоғамдық дипломатияны біріктіретін “корона-дипломатияның” қалыптасуына себеп болды. Зерттеудің мақсаты – дипломатияның әлсіреуіне себеп болған жүйелік және саяси факторларды анықтау және постлибералдық халықаралық қатынастарда дипломатияны қайта жандандыру жолдарын зерттеу. Мақалада «пост-батыстық дипломатия» атты жаңа теориялық тұжырымдама ұсынылады, ол дипломатияны қайта анықтау құралы ретінде мәдени аударма, көпқырлы сәйкестік және аралас формаларды (гибридтілікті) негізге алады. Зерттеу сапалық тұжырымдамалық әдіске сүйеніп, дискурстық талдау мен популистік үкіметтер кезіндегі қазіргі халықаралық саяси оқиғаларға негізделген жағдайлық зерттеулерді (кейс-стадилерді) біріктіреді. Мақала халықаралық қатынастар жүйесіндегі

дипломатияның орнын сыни тұрғыдан қайта қарастырады және теориялық та, практикалық та маңызы бар. Бұл еңбек билік құрылымындағы өзгерістерді ашып көрсетіп, көпполярлы әрі мәдени жағынан сан алуан әлем жағдайына бейімделген дипломатияның жаңа үлгісін ұсына отырып, дипломатиялық зерттеулерге үлес қосады. Зерттеу нәтижелері сыртқы істер министрліктері мен халықаралық ұйымдарға ХХІ ғасырдағы сын-қатерлерге бейімделген стратегиялық бағытты қалыптастыруда пайдалы болуы мүмкін.

**Тірек сөздер:** дипломатия, мемлекеттік басқару, көпшілік дипломатия, Либералдық халықаралық тәртіп (ЛХТ), популизм, пост-батыстық дипломатия, цифрлық дипломатия, Covid-19, сыртқы саясат

## ОТСТУПЛЕНИЕ ДИПЛОМАТИИ В УСЛОВИЯХ УПАДКА ЛИБЕРАЛЬНОГО МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО ПОРЯДКА

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**Аннотация.** Исследование посвящено причинам снижения роли дипломатии в современной мировой политике. В отличие от других работ, объясняющих этот спад кризисом Либерального международного порядка (ЛМП), данная статья показывает, что именно ЛМП ограничил традиционную дипломатию и способствовал развитию государственной стратегии и публичной дипломатии. Популистские правительства усилили эти альтернативные формы дипломатии, предпочитая обходить традиционные дипломатические рамки и проводить внешнюю политику напрямую и театрализованно. Пандемия COVID-19 ускорила эти тенденции, приведя к формированию «корона-дипломатии», объединяющей элементы государственной стратегии и публичной дипломатии. Цель исследования – выявить как системные, так и политические факторы, ответственные за упадок дипломатии, а также изучить возможные стратегии её возрождения в постлиберальной международной системе. В статье предлагается новая теоретическая концепция «постзападной дипломатии», основанная на гибридности, культурном переводе и множественной идентичности как способах переосмысления дипломатической практики. Исследование основано на качественном концептуальном подходе, сочетающем дискурсивный анализ и кейс-стадии актуальных международных политических событий, особенно в странах с популистскими режимами. Статья предлагает критический пересмотр роли дипломатии в международных отношениях и имеет как теоретическое, так и практическое значение. Она вносит вклад в дипломатию как область знания, показывая изменения в распределении власти и предлагая адаптивную модель дипломатии, соответствующую реалиям многополярного и культурно разнообразного мира. Эти выводы могут быть полезны для министерств иностранных дел и международных организаций при формировании стратегического курса в условиях вызовов ХХІ века.

**Ключевые слова:** дипломатия, государственное управление, публичная дипломатия, Либеральный международный порядок (ЛМП), популизм, постзападная дипломатия, цифровая дипломатия, Covid-19, внешняя политика

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