

Small States in a New Era of Public Diplomacy: New Zealand and Digital Diplomacy

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Chapter

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Abstract

The power of digital technology to shape the world in the twenty-first century is undeniable. States and non-state actors use digital tools in order to compete for international attention, attract partners, gain legitimacy and secure influence. In the quest to project an image of an attractive, credible and capable actor on the global stage, diplomats are increasingly utilising digital diplomacy. Digital diplomacy has a potential to reach sizeable audiences in a rapid and cost-effective manner, making it very attractive for small states with limited resources to project their voice and influence internationally. The growth of digital diplomacy is intertwined with globalization, technological and informational change. This chapter explores New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (MFAT) approach to digital diplomacy through the use of social media. We define digital diplomacy as a form of public diplomacy that involves the use of digital technologies and social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Wechat by states to enter into communication with foreign publics in a low cost manner. Digital diplomacy covers with a wide range of issues including foreign affairs, consular matters, security, trade and tourism.

This chapter draws on interviews with MFAT's communications team and observation of MFAT social media feeds. The analysis and views expressed in the chapter are the authors' own.

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