



## **Hashtag Diplomacy: The Influence of Social Media Movements on International Relations**

**Ms. Smriti<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Nandini Sahay<sup>2</sup> & Dr. Reena Marwah<sup>3</sup>**

### **Abstract**

*Social media has revolutionized international relations by facilitating grassroots activism, shaping diplomatic discourse, and influencing foreign policies through digital movements. In the digital age, social media has emerged as a pivotal force in shaping international relations through what is now termed hashtag diplomacy. Hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, and #SaveSheikhJarrah have mobilized global audiences, swayed governmental responses, and pressured international organizations to act. This paper examines the impact of hashtag diplomacy on state and non-state actors, the evolution of digital advocacy, and the geopolitical consequences of social media campaigns.*

*This study explores how online movements influence diplomatic policies, international negotiations, and public diplomacy. The research examines how social media movements like #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, #ArabSpring, and #StopAsianHate, drive governmental responses, shift diplomatic narratives, and impact global governance. Findings suggest that social media activism serves as a powerful diplomatic tool, mobilizing global opinion and holding states accountable. However, the rapid dissemination of misinformation and state-sponsored digital campaigns pose challenges to its effectiveness. The study concludes that while social media movements enhance diplomatic engagement, they also necessitate mechanisms for credibility verification and policy integration.*

### **Methodology:**

This paper adopts a *qualitative descriptive research design* to examine the influence of social media movements on international relations. The research relies exclusively on *secondary sources*, utilizing a comprehensive literature review to gather insights from established scholarly works, government reports, and credible online sources.

---

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Amity Institute of Social Sciences

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor-III, Amity Institute of Social Sciences

<sup>3</sup> Professor, Jesus and Mary College, Delhi University



## **Findings:**

1. Hashtags facilitate digital diplomacy by allowing states and non-state actors to shape global discourse.
2. Social media movements influence governmental policies and international interventions (e.g., #ArabSpring leading to political shifts in the Middle East, #metoo in many countries regarding workplace harassment policies).
3. The spread of misinformation and manipulation by state actors (e.g., both campaigns) undermines the credibility of hashtag diplomacy.
4. Citizens now play a crucial role in shaping foreign policy discourse, holding governments accountable through viral activism.

## **Recommendations:**

- Regulatory Frameworks are required on the international level. Governments and international bodies should establish transparency policies to counter misinformation in digital diplomacy.
- Diplomatic Training in Digital Engagement is a must thing. Foreign ministries should incorporate social media strategies into diplomatic training.
- Social media companies and diplomatic entities should collaborate to enhance authentic diplomatic communication.
- Strengthening independent fact-checking bodies to counteract digital disinformation in global politics.

**Keywords:** Hashtag Diplomacy, Digital Diplomacy, Social Media Movements, International relations, Public Diplomacy

## **Introduction:**

The proliferation of social media platforms, such as Twitter, has undoubtedly transformed the landscape of international relations in recent years, with diplomats and political leaders increasingly relying on these digital tools to communicate with their counterparts and engage with a global audience (Duncombe, 2017)<sup>i</sup>. As a result, social media has become a central component of digital diplomacy strategies, allowing states to signal intentions, frame state identity, and potentially develop trust and dialogue where traditional diplomatic channels are limited. (Duncombe, 2017).<sup>ii</sup> The rise of digital diplomacy has significantly altered



the nature of international relations. Traditionally, diplomacy was the domain of state actors—governments, embassies, and international organizations. However, the emergence of platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok has democratized global dialogue, allowing individuals, activists, and non-state actors to shape narratives and influence international policies.

One of the most powerful tools within digital diplomacy is hashtag activism, which involves the use of hashtags to rally support, mobilize action, and frame geopolitical issues. #ArabSpring (2011), #MeToo (2017), #BlackLivesMatter (2013, 2020), and #FreePalestine (2024-25) demonstrate how social media has amplified political movements and placed pressure on States.

### **Digital Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy:**

An overwhelming proportion of UN member states and individual Ministries of Foreign Affairs now have a presence on Twitter, demonstrating the platform's centrality to contemporary diplomatic practice (Duncombe, 2018)<sup>iii</sup>. Tweets and images posted on Twitter can provoke strong online and offline reactions, potentially inciting or exacerbating political crises, and digital disinformation campaigns have further complicated the role of social media in diplomacy. (Duncombe, 2018)<sup>iv</sup> While Twitter may challenge traditional notions of diplomacy, conducted through formal channels and face-to-face engagement, it also provides an opportunity for diplomats and leaders to communicate directly with a global audience, potentially signalling intentions and framing state identity in new ways. (Duncombe, 2017)<sup>v</sup> (Sevin & Manor, 2019)<sup>vi</sup>

The evolution of social media has given rise to digital diplomacy, transforming how states, non-state actors, and international organizations engage in global affairs. Digital diplomacy refers to the use of digital platform such as Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok to conduct diplomatic activities, influence public opinion, and shape international narratives. Within this framework, public diplomacy plays a crucial role, as it involves governments and organizations directly engaging with foreign publics to promote national interests, cultural exchange, and policy goals (Cull, 2019).<sup>vii</sup>

### **Digital Diplomacy and the Democratization of International Relations:**

Traditionally, diplomacy was the domain of state actors operating within formal institutions. However, social media has decentralized diplomatic engagement, allowing non-state actors including activists, journalists, and the general public to participate in shaping international discourse (Bjola & Holmes, 2015)<sup>viii</sup>. Hashtag diplomacy, a subset of digital diplomacy, enables social movements to influence foreign



policy through viral campaigns. Movements such as #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, and #FreePalestine demonstrate how online activism can pressure governments and international organizations to respond to human rights issues and geopolitical conflicts.

### ***Public Diplomacy and Soft Power***

Public diplomacy aligns with Joseph Nye's (2004)<sup>ix</sup> soft power theory, which suggests that persuasion, culture, and values are crucial tools for global influence. Nations and international bodies use social media to shape perceptions and build alliances. For example, the U.S. State Department and the European Union actively use Twitter to counter disinformation and promote democratic values. However, authoritarian regimes also engage in digital diplomacy, often manipulating hashtags and social media trends to control narratives and suppress dissent (Manor, 2019)<sup>x</sup>.

Overall digital diplomacy and public diplomacy illustrate the shifting landscape of international relations, where social media activism competes with traditional state-led diplomacy to define global narratives and policies. Hashtag diplomacy operates within the broader field of digital diplomacy, which involves using digital platforms for international relations. It is linked to public diplomacy, where non-state actors, including individuals and social movements, engage in international discourse.

### **The Impact of Hashtag Movements on International Relations:**

Hashtag movements have significantly reshaped international relations by mobilizing global awareness, influencing policy decisions, challenging traditional diplomatic channels, and even serving as instruments in geopolitical conflicts. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok have enabled activists, policymakers, and ordinary citizens to engage in *digital diplomacy*, amplifying issues that might otherwise be overlooked by mainstream media or state-controlled narratives. Hashtag activism has proven to be an effective tool for transnational advocacy, as it allows people to rapidly share information, organize protests, and apply pressure on governments and international organizations. The ability to spread messages instantaneously has disrupted traditional power hierarchies, enabling grassroots movements to influence international discourse in ways previously reserved for state actors and major institutions.

One of the most significant impacts of hashtag movements is their role in *mobilizing global awareness and advocacy*. The #ArabSpring protests of 2011 demonstrated how digital activism could spark political uprisings, as citizens in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya used social media to coordinate demonstrations and expose human rights violations. The rapid spread of information forced international actors, including the



United Nations and Western governments, to react, shaping diplomatic relations with the affected regions. Similarly, the #MeToo movement, which began as a social campaign against sexual harassment, led to policy changes in multiple countries and pressured international institutions to address workplace harassment more seriously. By drawing attention to gender-based violence and inequality, the movement influenced foreign relations by making gender rights a key issue in diplomatic discourse.

Hashtag diplomacy also plays a crucial role in *influencing policy decisions and diplomatic responses*. Governments and international organizations often respond to social media-driven pressure by modifying policies or addressing public concerns. For example, the #BlackLivesMatter movement, which gained significant momentum after the killing of George Floyd in 2020, had an international impact. Protests erupted in cities across Europe, Asia, and Latin America, prompting global discussions on systemic racism, police reform, and human rights. International bodies such as the United Nations and the European Parliament condemned racial injustice, while some countries, including Canada and the United Kingdom, reassessed their policies on racial discrimination. Hashtag activism can thus force policymakers to take positions on contentious issues, demonstrating the power of social movements in shaping diplomatic engagements.

Beyond advocacy, hashtag movements have also been instrumental in *challenging traditional diplomatic channels*. In the past, diplomatic discourse was controlled by governments, international organizations, and mainstream media. However, digital activism allows individuals and non-state actors to bypass these traditional channels and speak directly to global audiences. The #FreePalestine and #SaveSheikhJarrah movements illustrate how activists can use social media to shape public opinion and influence diplomatic responses to geopolitical conflicts. By exposing human rights abuses and mobilizing international protests, these movements challenge official state narratives and pressure foreign governments to take a stance.

However, hashtag diplomacy is not always a force for positive change; it can also be *weaponized for propaganda and geopolitical manipulation*. Governments and interest groups often exploit hashtags to spread disinformation, engage in cyber warfare, or manipulate public sentiment. For instance, during the Kashmir conflict, both Indian and Pakistani social media campaigns used hashtags such as #StandWithKashmir and #IndiaAgainstPropaganda to promote their respective national narratives. Similarly, authoritarian regimes in countries like China and Russia use state-sponsored digital campaigns to suppress dissent and control international discourse.



Hashtag movements have redefined international relations by giving non-state actors a powerful platform to influence global events. Whether promoting human rights, pressuring policymakers, or challenging state-controlled narratives, social media activism has become a critical tool in modern diplomacy.

### ***Mobilizing Global Awareness and Advocacy***

Social media platforms enable real-time dissemination of information, allowing movements to reach a global audience. Hashtag activism brings international attention to humanitarian crises, social injustices, and geopolitical conflicts. The Arab Spring began as a series of pro-democracy protests in Tunisia and quickly spread across the Middle East and North Africa, fuelled by Twitter and Facebook. Hashtags like #Jan25 (Egypt), #Libya, and #Bahrain enabled activists to organize protests and expose government crackdowns. Western governments and international organizations took notice, resulting in foreign interventions in Libya and diplomatic pressures on regimes in Egypt and Syria (Howard & Hussain, 2013)<sup>xi</sup>.

### ***Influencing Policy Decisions and Diplomatic Responses***

Hashtag diplomacy often forces governments and international organizations to respond to public outcry. When digital movements gain traction, policymakers may adopt new stances or take action to align with public sentiment. Originally a grassroots movement against sexual harassment, #MeToo became a global force, leading to legal reforms and policy changes in multiple countries. The movement influenced foreign relations by pressuring governments to address gender-based violence. Countries like France and India strengthened workplace harassment laws in response to international pressure (Gill & Orgad, 2018).<sup>xii</sup>

### ***Challenging Traditional Diplomatic Channels***

Hashtag movements can bypass traditional diplomatic frameworks, allowing activists to engage directly with international audiences. This circumvents state-controlled narratives and influences foreign policy debates. Following the killing of George Floyd, the #BlackLivesMatter movement gained global momentum, leading to protests in cities from London to Tokyo. International bodies, including the United Nations, condemned systemic racism, and foreign governments criticized U.S. racial policies. The movement demonstrated the transnational power of social justice activism in shaping diplomatic discourse (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015).<sup>xiii</sup>



### ***Weaponization of Hashtags in Geopolitical Conflicts***

While hashtag diplomacy can promote justice, it can also be manipulated for propaganda and political warfare. Governments and interest groups often exploit social media to shape international narratives. India and Pakistan have engaged in digital warfare over the Kashmir conflict, with competing hashtags like #StandWithKashmir and #IndiaAgainstPropaganda. Similarly, #FreePalestine has sparked global debates, influencing international perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hashtags serve as diplomatic battlegrounds, where states and activists attempt to control the narrative (Zeng & Schäfer, 2021)<sup>xiv</sup>.

### ***The Shifting Dynamics of Diplomatic Networks***

As digital media platforms become more integrated into diplomatic practice, studies have investigated how diplomatic networks are moving into these new digital spaces. Employing the analytical lenses of networked diplomacy and mediatization, researchers have found that the transition to digital platforms can result in countries experiencing different levels of technology adoption, with some enjoying more robust Twitter following-follower relationships among Ministries of Foreign Affairs than their traditional brick-and-mortar embassy networks. This suggests that the digitization of diplomatic networks is a complex process, with implications for how states engage with one another on the international stage.

### **Criticism and Limitations of Hashtag Diplomacy:**

While hashtag diplomacy has emerged as a powerful tool in shaping international relations, it is not without its criticisms and limitations. Despite its potential to mobilize global awareness, influence policymaking, and challenge state-controlled narratives, social media activism often faces challenges related to "clicktivism," misinformation, state censorship, digital polarization, and lack of tangible impact. The reliance on digital platforms for advocacy can sometimes create a false sense of achievement without leading to real-world policy changes. Additionally, governments and interest groups frequently exploit hashtag movements for political and ideological gain.

### ***Clicktivism and the Illusion of Impact***

One of the most significant criticisms of hashtag diplomacy is that it often promotes "clicktivism" (or slacktivism), where users engage with social movements through likes, shares, and retweets without taking meaningful action. While hashtags such as #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, and #FreePalestine have raised awareness, critics argue that online engagement does not always translate into concrete policy changes or



real-world activism. Many users feel that by sharing a post, they have contributed to a cause when in reality, sustainable change requires continuous effort, lobbying, and legislative action (Morozov, 2011)<sup>xv</sup>. The rapid vitality of hashtag movements can also make them short-lived, leading to fleeting engagement rather than long-term advocacy. For example, the #Kony2012 campaign by Invisible Children aimed to bring international attention to the atrocities committed by Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony. The campaign generated millions of views and global discussions but failed to result in his capture or long-term policy initiatives. This example highlights how social media-driven activism can generate immense initial momentum but struggle to sustain real-world impact.

### ***Misinformation and the Spread of False Narratives:***

Another major limitation of hashtag diplomacy is its vulnerability to misinformation and manipulation. Because social media allows for unverified content to spread rapidly, false narratives can influence public opinion and foreign policy decisions. Misinformation campaigns often exploit trending hashtags to spread propaganda, influence elections, or discredit political opponents. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, competing narratives emerged through hashtags such as #ChinaVirus, #Plandemic, and #COVIDHoax, which spread conspiracy theories and disinformation. Similarly, during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, state-backed disinformation campaigns flooded social media with manipulated hashtags like #UkraineNazis and #IStandWithPutin, illustrating how digital activism can be used to distort reality and promote geopolitical agendas (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017)<sup>xvi</sup>.

Additionally, hashtags often oversimplify complex geopolitical issues. For example, conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian dispute or the Kashmir crisis involve deep historical, political, and cultural factors that cannot be adequately addressed through 280-character tweets. The reductionist nature of hashtag diplomacy can lead to misinformed global audiences taking sides without fully understanding the underlying context.

### ***State Censorship and Government Control:***

While social media has democratized diplomatic engagement, authoritarian governments, and state actors often suppress or manipulate online activism to maintain control over political discourse. Many governments impose internet blackouts, content restrictions, and social media bans to counteract digital movements that challenge their authority. For example, during the Hong Kong pro-democracy protests (2019-2020), China implemented heavy censorship by blocking hashtags such as #HongKongProtests on Weibo and deploying state-backed trolls to flood social media with counter-narratives. Similarly, during



the 2020 Belarus protests, the government cut off internet access to curb the spread of opposition hashtags like #FreeBelarus. These instances highlight how state censorship can undermine the effectiveness of hashtag diplomacy in authoritarian regimes (Manor, 2019)<sup>xvii</sup>.

Conversely, governments also weaponize hashtag diplomacy to advance their agendas. Countries such as Russia, China, and Iran have been accused of using bot networks and fake accounts to spread state propaganda through strategically designed hashtags. This manipulation raises ethical concerns about the authenticity of social media activism in international relations.

### ***Polarization and Digital Echo Chambers:***

Another critical limitation of hashtag diplomacy is that it often fosters digital echo chambers, where individuals are exposed only to information that reinforces their existing beliefs. Algorithm-driven social media feeds amplify divisive content, leading to increased political polarization and ideological extremism. The #BlackLivesMatter and #AllLivesMatter hashtags became highly politicized, creating an online battleground of competing narratives rather than fostering constructive dialogue on racial justice. Similarly, hashtags related to climate change, such as #ClimateCrisis and #ClimateHoax, have contributed to increased division between environmental activists and climate change sceptics. Rather than facilitating diplomatic engagement, hashtag movements can entrench ideological divisions, making compromise and policy consensus more difficult (Sunstein, 2018)<sup>xviii</sup>.

Moreover, digital activism often excludes marginalized voices from global discussions. Social media algorithms prioritize trending topics, favouring movements that generate high engagement rather than those that represent underserved or underreported crises. As a result, many humanitarian issues—such as conflicts in Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Myanmar—receive significantly less global attention than movements in Western societies.

### ***The Challenge of Sustained Policy Change:***

Finally, while hashtag diplomacy can pressure policymakers into action, sustaining long-term policy change remains a challenge. Governments often make symbolic gestures in response to viral movements but fail to implement systemic reforms. #MeToo movement led to increased discussions on workplace harassment, but critics argue that many legal and institutional changes have been superficial. Similarly, while #SaveTheAmazon generated global outrage over deforestation, large-scale corporate and governmental policies regarding environmental conservation remain unchanged. The challenge lies in



translating digital momentum into lasting political and legal reforms, which require institutional cooperation, financial resources, and political will—factors that social media alone cannot always influence.

### **Future of Hashtag Diplomacy in International Relations:**

As digital diplomacy continues to evolve, *hashtag diplomacy* is expected to play an increasingly significant role in shaping international relations. With the growing influence of *artificial intelligence (AI)*, *big data analytics*, and *algorithm-driven social media*, the future of online activism will be marked by *greater strategic coordination, increased government involvement, and enhanced regulatory measures*.

One key trend is the *institutionalization of digital diplomacy* by governments and international organizations. Countries will increasingly use social media not only for *public engagement* but also as a *tool for geopolitical influence, soft power, and crisis communication*. For instance, the *U.S. State Department, European Union, and United Nations* have already begun integrating hashtag movements into diplomatic strategies. However, *state-sponsored disinformation campaigns* and the rise of *deepfake technologies* may complicate the authenticity of digital activism.

Additionally, there will likely be *greater scrutiny and regulation* of social media activism to combat *misinformation, cyber warfare, and digital polarization*. *Tech companies and policymakers* will need to balance *freedom of expression with safeguards against propaganda and fake news*.

Despite these challenges, *hashtag diplomacy will remain a powerful force*, continuing to *mobilize global awareness, pressure governments, and redefine the way diplomacy is conducted in the digital age*. As digital diplomacy evolves, new trends are likely to emerge like *artificial Intelligence and Diplomacy* where AI-driven bots and algorithms will shape online political discourse. *Government-Led Hashtag Diplomacy* can also increasingly use social media for strategic communication for government-led campaigns. But at the same time, greater scrutiny over misinformation and online activism will reshape digital diplomacy in the coming future. And for sure the future of international relations will be deeply intertwined with digital movements, requiring policymakers to adapt to this evolving landscape.

### **Conclusion:**

The rise of social media movements, particularly on platforms like Twitter, has had a significant impact on the field of international relations, challenging traditional diplomatic practices and introducing new



dynamics to diplomatic networks. Hashtag diplomacy has redefined how international relations are conducted, empowering activists, influencing policies, and challenging traditional diplomatic norms. While it presents both opportunities and risks, its role in shaping global discourse is undeniable. As social media continues to evolve, hashtag activism will remain a powerful force in international politics.

Hashtag diplomacy has emerged as a transformative force in international relations, enabling grassroots movements, activists, and non-state actors to influence global discourse, mobilize support, and pressure governments into action. Through *social media-driven activism*, issues such as *human rights violations, social justice, and geopolitical conflicts* have gained unprecedented international attention. Case studies such as *#ArabSpring, #MeToo, and #BlackLivesMatter* demonstrate how digital movements can shape diplomatic engagements and policy responses. However, while hashtag diplomacy has redefined the way diplomacy is conducted, it is not without limitations.

Despite its potential, hashtag activism often suffers from *clicktivism*, where digital engagement fails to translate into concrete policy changes. Additionally, the *spread of misinformation, government censorship, and digital echo chambers* raise concerns about the authenticity and effectiveness of social media movements. Some governments have even weaponized hashtags to *manipulate public opinion and control narratives* in geopolitical conflicts, further complicating the role of digital diplomacy. Looking ahead, *the future of hashtag diplomacy* will likely involve *greater strategic coordination by governments, increased regulation of digital activism, and the rise of AI-driven information campaigns*. While these developments pose challenges, *hashtag diplomacy will continue to serve as a powerful tool for advocacy, awareness, and diplomatic engagement* in the evolving digital age.

Despite its power to amplify voices, challenge state narratives, and influence policy, hashtag diplomacy has several critical limitations. The phenomenon of clicktivism often creates a false sense of engagement, where social media users believe, they have contributed to a cause without taking real-world action. Additionally, misinformation, state censorship, digital polarization, and the difficulty of sustaining policy change hinder the effectiveness of hashtag movements in international relations. Governments and political entities frequently manipulate social media activism, either by suppressing dissent or by spreading propaganda through digital campaigns.

Ultimately, while hashtag diplomacy remains a transformative force in modern geopolitics, its effectiveness depends on how well activists, policymakers, and international organizations navigate its challenges. Addressing the limitations of digital diplomacy requires critical media literacy, regulatory frameworks



against misinformation, and deeper engagement beyond online activism to achieve meaningful global change. The analysis reveals that tweets and images posted on Twitter can provoke strong reactions, both online and offline, potentially inciting or exacerbating political crises.

## References

- <sup>i</sup> Constance Duncombe, Twitter and transformative diplomacy: social media and Iran–US relations, *International Affairs*, Volume 93, Issue 3, May 2017, Pages 545–562
- <sup>ii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>iii</sup> Duncombe DC. A multi-institutional study of the perceived barriers and facilitators to implementing evidence-based practice. *J Clin Nurs*. 2018 Mar; 27(5-6):1216-1226. doi: 10.1111/jocn.14168. Epub 2018 Jan 15. PMID: 29149462.
- <sup>iv</sup> Ibid
- <sup>v</sup> Constance Duncombe, Twitter and transformative diplomacy: social media and Iran–US relations, *International Affairs*, Volume 93, Issue 3, May 2017, Pages 545–562
- <sup>vi</sup> Efe Sevin, Ilan Manor, From Embassy Ties to Twitter Links: Comparing Offline and Online Diplomatic Networks, Policy and Internet, February 2019, Volume 11, Issue 3 September 2019, Pages 324-343
- <sup>vii</sup> NJ Cull, Public Diplomacy: Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age – 2019
- <sup>viii</sup> Bjola, C., & Jiang, L. (2015). "Social media and public diplomacy: A comparative analysis of the digital diplomatic strategies of the EU, US, and China." *Global Media Journal*, 13(24), 1-12.
- <sup>ix</sup> Joseph S. Nye JR., Soft Power and American Foreign Policy, *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 119, Issue 2 Summer 2004, Pages 255-270
- <sup>x</sup> Manor, I. (2019). *The Digitalization of Public Diplomacy*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- <sup>xi</sup> Howard, P. N., & Hussain, M. M. (2013). *Democracy's Fourth Wave? Digital Media and the Arab Spring*. Oxford University Press.
- <sup>xii</sup> Gill, R., & Orgad, S. (2018). The shifting terrain of sex and power: From the 'sexualization of culture' to #MeToo. *Sexualities*, 21(8), 1313-1324.



- xiii Bonilla, Y., & Rosa, J. (2015). #Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States. *American Ethnologist*, 42(1), 4-17.
- xiv Zeng, J., & Schäfer, M. S. (2021). Conceptualizing “dark platforms”: COVID-19-related conspiracy theories on 8kun and Gab. *Digital Journalism*, 9(9), 1221-1243.
- xv Morozov, E. (2011). *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*. PublicAffairs.
- xvi Bradshaw, S., & Howard, P. (2017). The global disinformation order: 2017 global inventory of organized social media manipulation. *Computational Propaganda Research Project*.
- xvii Manor, I. (2019). *The Digitalization of Public Diplomacy*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- xviii Sunstein, C. R. (2018). *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*. Princeton University Press.

**Publisher’s Note:** *The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the publisher or editorial board. The publisher assumes no responsibility for any consequences arising from the use of information contained herein.*