

Analysis of Digital Diplomacy and E-Society in the Context of Internet Governance

John J. Tucker Yépez, Benjamín A. Pusay Villarroel, Paulo A. Samaniego Rojas

Abstract: Nowadays, societies are in constant evolution, adapting to changes and constantly learning due to the progress of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Internet, considered as the “public super highway” of information through which millions of terabytes travel every day, contains information of many different sources from Facebook comments to diplomatic cables having delicate information. In the international relations and in diplomacy, the ICT have gained an important space, providing a new paradigm through the new computer tools which link the knowledge society with the diplomats work, establishing a significant space for public opinion which is very important for our communities in the present. This paper aims to analyze the digital diplomacy and the new civil society (also known as e-society) for proving the importance of ICT in the scenario of digital diplomacy.

Index Terms: Digital diplomacy, e-society, ICT, Internet governance, social media .

I. INTRODUCTION

History registers that diplomatic practices are as ancient as the beginning of human civilization, perhaps such practices were not as sophisticated and structured as in the classic Greece. As independent political units were enshrined, the necessity of communicating and relating with other states emerged for common interests of different kind, social and economic aspects, and even for declaring or stopping a war. Obviously, the current practices of democracy are substantially different from the practices in ancient times. For example, until last century the direct communication between a country’s government and the people of another was “forbidden” by the international community, arguing that this is a sovereignty violation. In the present, e-society defined in this study as the people using software tools worldwide and able to give opinions in real time about a political situation of the country they live in or about any event organized in any latitude, brings new active actors to diplomacy, changing the actions taken by the nations and stimulating the praxis evolution in international relations. It must be taken into account that these computer tools represent the revolution of the XX century because they make possible the citizens “beings” movement, but not in a physical way.

Manuscript published on 28 February 2019.

* Correspondence Author (s)

John J. Tucker Yépez*, Engineer specialist in communication networks and switching systems, State University of Belgorod Russia, Master in international sciences and diplomacy, Ecuador, Researcher at the Universidad Nacional de Loja, Department of Telecommunications.

Benjamín A. Pusay Villarroel Electronics and Telecommunications Engineer, Master in Telecommunications, Researcher at the Universidad Técnica de Ambato, Ecuador, Department of Electronics and Telecommunications.

Paulo A. Samaniego Rojas Electronics and Telecommunications Engineer, Master in Telecommunications, Researcher at the Universidad Nacional de Loja, Ecuador, Department of Telecommunications.

© The Authors. Published by Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering and Sciences Publication (BEIESP). This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC-ND license <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

According to the theory proposed by Cervera, R C [1], two main periods are identified for dividing Diplomacy. The first period, known as the mobile diplomacy, consists on the movement of persons to the place chosen by the supreme authority of a political entity for transmitting a requested message. Basically, in modern times these persons can be considered as “messengers with privileges”. The second period or second diplomacy already had a permanent or constant status, where nations conferred a stability and duration rate to their relations through the establishment of permanent diplomatic missions. In the present research, considerations are made about the new age of diplomacy, known as e-Diplomacy, which has as principal feature the use of ICT as the main tool. Nowadays, ICT is a fundamental pillar for diplomatic missions, the same way that it is important for citizens who need to know about the foreign policy of their country and also need to do consular proceedings on line by using virtual platforms (virtual consulates). A very important aspect is that these new technologies, being conceived for an environment with constant feedback among the representatives of a nation in foreign countries and their fellow citizens, are used by leaders around the world to inform and give opinions about relevant issues of their political work, creating relations in the citizen’s psyche, generating a sensation of protection and support even during crisis situations [2]. Graphic 1 shows the worldwide leaders with the highest number of followers on Twitter. An area that is closely linked to the digital diplomacy and the e-society is the Internet governance, a transversal issue related to all the aspects of the World Wide Web which is considered the “public super highway” of information, where data coming from ICT are transported. Besides, dealing with the Internet governance, is dealing with many issues, as its study comprises critical resources, openness and access to the information, security and its regulations, national and international legal framework, among other aspects.



Graphic 1: Leaders with the highest number of followers on Twitter.



II. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK.

A. Methodology

The methodology used in this research has a qualitative approach, based on data collection. In addition, the results interpretation was made and a critical evaluation of the information's behavior was carried out, based on a theoretical framework. For this study, surveys and experts interviews were also conducted, allowing to collect 9 quantitative data about the observed problem. The obtained results will be the basis of the proposal suggested in this paper.

B. Methods

The qualitative approach stipulates the use of the inductive theoretical method through case study. The research is within the epistemological and socio-critical line, due to the recognition of different aspects with impact on the object of the study. Besides, the facts analyzed in the reviewed literature are taken as starting point. The conducted surveys to students and professors. The selected university course was Engineering in Electronics and Telecommunications, because their professional training guarantees that the students are in the center of technology progresses, e-society issues.

C. Hypothesis

The design of an Internet governance observatory, formed by a multi-sectorial committee with members representing the e-society, the enterprises, the government and the academia, will determine better practices in the context of Internet as a platform for the digital diplomacy.

D. Universe and sample

The samples were collected in the city of Loja in the Universidad Nacional de Loja (National University of Loja), specifically in the course of Engineering in Electronics and Telecommunications, as they are really immerse in the technology scenario. The participants in the survey are in the age range from 17 to 28 years old and furthermore, they are more likely to use ICT than in other university courses.[3] In a discretionary way, the survey instrument was applied to 41.66 % of the students of the Engineering in Electronics and Telecommunications course and to 33 % of the professors.

TABLE I. U D. Universe and sample.

UNIVERSE		SAMPLE	
Students	Professors	Students	Professors
120	12	50	4

E. Management of data.

The surveys applied to students and professors had 9 multiple-choice questions, related to their perception of use of ICT in Internet governance. The surveys were conducted during class sessions on October 10th 2016, from 15H00 to 21H00. In table 1 the Universe and Sample is described. Interviews to experts in Internet governance and digital diplomacy were carried out on a work day, from 08H30 to 15H00.

III. DEVELOPMENT

A. General Theories.

The current research is focused on the digital diplomacy and e-society, considering Internet governance as the main linking element. First, the origin of this problem is detailed, next, the term of "diplomacy" is defined and finally the variables involved in the research are specified.

Regarding the definition of diplomacy, one of the first thesis is the definition by Gaëtan de Raxi de Flassan [4], a Parisian philosopher and diplomat, who states that "Diplomacy is the science of foreign relations between States, having as foundation the diplomas or written documents originated in sovereign "

Although the definition by Gaëtan de Raxi de Flassan can be considered as old fashioned, as it was written two centuries ago, it is important to mention some noteworthy contemporary definitions such as the one given by the British diplomat Sir Ernest Satow [5] in 1917, as part of a his book, still consulted in many embassies today and quoted by Sir Harold Nicolson [6], which states that "Diplomacy is the business management between States using pacific means. Also, it is the use of intelligence and tact in the official relations between the governments of independent States".

As it can be seen in these pioneer definitions, diplomacy emerges from international relations, mainly as a war "antidote". Diplomacy meets the requirements for being considered as an art and "negotiation" represents the main characteristic in all of its areas.

As a complement to the previous definitions, a modern concept published in the book "Diplomatic Law and Treaties" ("Derecho diplomático y tratados") [7] by Raúl Valdés and E. Loaeza, which affirms that "Diplomacy is the method for establishing, maintaining and strengthening relations between States through negotiations carried out by Heads of State and Government, Foreign Affairs Ministers and Diplomatic Agents"

As mentioned above, there has been an evolution in the diplomacy concept. Over the years, new elements have been added to the concept and the existent elements have been improved, as a result of meetings held in the different international conventions or by its customary use. For this reason, in the present, the term of relations between International Law subjects is used, in other words, relations between States and International Organizations. This term has enlarged the diplomacy field.

Nowadays, it is important to notice that the diplomatic activity is not only focused on the ambassador or on the traditional diplomatic agent. Thanks to the progress in communications and in the very field of the issues to discuss, the diplomatic activity can be carried out also by Heads of State and Government, ministers, special representatives, and by technical experts accredited to international or regional organizations.

A tangible example is the Cooperation and Foreign Affairs Ministry of Spain with respect to the public diplomacy:

“Every foreign policy in the XXI century demands instruments for being in permanent contact with a growing number of actors in the international scene. Enterprises, cultural and scientific institutions, social and private groups, must be taken into account in a context where the quick and constant changes in communications, including social media, gain in relevance each day” [8]

Within these new strategies, ICT is included as a fundamental factor; countries and organizations aim to be capable of making public their initiatives, projects and positions with other actors. Obtaining with this a higher impact on information dissemination and getting the message across a greater number of persons around the world. In this moment and because of the previously mentioned reasons a new kind of diplomacy is considered: Diplomacy 2.0 or e-Diplomacy.

B. Substantive theories

On December 4, 1963, the Embassy of Ecuador in Washington informed to the Foreign Affairs Ministry about the murder of President John F. Kennedy. Twelve days had to pass since November 22nd of that year, day when the assassination was committed, for receiving the breaking news. Nowadays, it is almost unthinkable that, in such relevant event as the murder of the president of United States, the embassy of Ecuador in Washington takes so long to inform the Foreign Affairs Ministry of our country. Thanks to the Internet, the diplomatic notification can arrive in minutes, but probably for an event like that, the officials of the Foreign Affairs Ministry would be informed in the precise moment of the crime thanks to a post on a social network like *Twitter* or *Facebook*, generated perhaps by civilians, an official recipient government source, or by a national or international information network.

Joseph Nye Jr. warned a few years ago that “the information revolution is drastically changing the world of foreign affairs, making it harder for the officials to organize their work, it is changing the nature of the governments and the sovereignty, increasing the power of non-state actors and the impact of the soft power on foreign policy” [9].

Therefore, the governments must evolve according to the development of the Information Society. For achieving this, it is necessary to create and manage new tools that can build bridges with foreign governments and with the global civil society.

As mentioned above, diplomacy had been available only between States as a means for improving their relations. Now, diplomacy must enlarge its horizons for promotion in areas like economy, international cooperation, tourism and dissemination of the represented country’s ideals. The term promotion, is used for referring to the fact that the spectrum of the potential public not only should include the governments but also the citizens, the companies and the organizations of the recipient State. There is no doubt that the best strategy for attracting the largest audience possible is using the network of networks: Internet.

Summing up, the Internet governance is the development and application of standards, rules, principles, proceedings and programs that sculpt the evolution and use of the Internet.

Approximately 11 years ago, between the years 2003 and 2005, the representatives of the civil society, technicians, academics, the private sector and bureaucrats gathered in Tunisia in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) of United Nations, where for the first time, the definition of Internet governance was introduced. The growing acceptance of this definition at institutional level by organizations like the Cooperation Organization for Economic Development (Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económico - OCDE) and the European Council, has turned the model into official during discussions on many different issues. Since its origin, this definition has faced several obstacles due to power struggles, because the non-centralized, multi-part model or <<Multi-stakeholder>>, is an advantage and a disadvantage at the same time: some interested parties want to take part on the Internet unilaterally, but at the same time, being multidisciplinary and multi-sectorial, the network has had the expected development [10]. This model has become almost official for some organizations like the OCDE when discussing many issues.

Annually, a world conference called Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is held, organized and hosted by the United Nations (UNO). This conference has no power for decision making but it does have the influence for suggesting better practices and promoting valuable opinions which can be adapted in the national, regional or international policies. [11].

With respect to our region, local IGFs have increased, proving its usefulness for creating better practices. In each of the countries of our area, here included the example of our country Ecuador with the participation of the civil society, the academia and the private sector, these forums have taken place in different cities with volunteers coming from multiple sectors.

Its study (Internet Governance) involves different disciplines related to the network as:

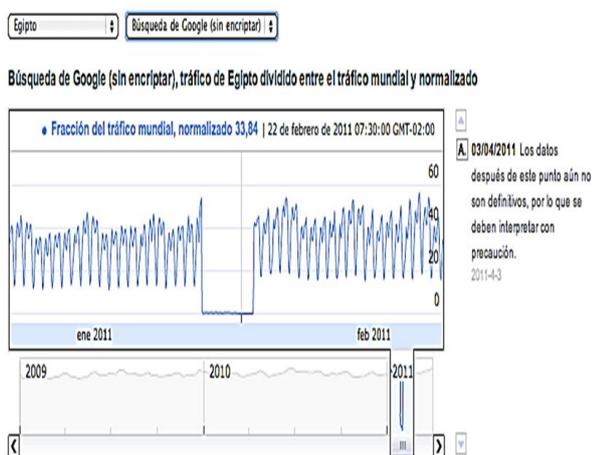
- a. Critical resources in Internet
- b. Security in Internet
- c. Openness and access
- d. Economy
- e. Regulations for Internet and Telecommunications
- f. National and international legal framework
- g. Access
- h. Gender

Obviously, it is not possible to talk about digital diplomacy or about information society without understanding that within this network many disciplines coexist and need to be studied for having good practices in both technical and legal spheres. It is necessary to keep referencing the concept of “Cyberspace” that according to the Spanish Royal Academy (Real Academia de la Lengua Española, RAE) is “an artificial space created by computerized means”, so it is important to highlight the fact that the term e-society or Information Society has many particularities such as:

- a. Modifications in the perception of the space-time.
- b. Exponential growth of the amount of users.

- c. The actions taken in different fields (educational, research, commerce, economy and crime)
- d. Creation of new identities and new citizens. (NETIZEN)
- e. New terms.
- f. New occupations.
- g. New crimes.

Consequently, the existence of e-society or Information Society is very important for citizens participation in socio-economic and politic reality, becoming a true people's power. Citizens can now critically observe the political decisions taken by the people's representatives. Let us analyze the "Arabian spring" example. In this case, according to the information presented by the organizations specialized in the information traffic, as Google, it was proven that the African governments had to stop using or to blacklist some applications that were vital for coordinating the Egyptian protests and represented an alternative to the conventional media which might have interests in the conflict. Graphic 2 shows the behavior of the information traffic in 2011, during the protests in Egypt [12].



Graphic 2: Information Traffic in Egypt during the protests in 2011.

Furthermore, in parallel with the creation of the trends topics (for example in Twitter or Facebook) the whole world was aware of what was happening in those countries and this would consequently bring repercussions in the area of foreign policy. Other examples can be mentioned such as the anti-taxes demonstrations in United States in relation with the "tea parties"; the rejection of the law that allowed marriages between individuals of the same sex; the outraged citizens in Europe, among other civil movements which have been supported or criticized by the international community through comments, opinions and analysis in the different social networks.

C. Empiric references

In February 2014, the Ecuadorian government by means of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, implemented a digital tool that allows citizens living abroad, to do consular procedures more easily. This was possible due to the government principle of bringing the State much closer to the citizens. This technological initiative of the Ecuadorian Foreign Affairs Ministry, strengthens the consulates with the use of ICT, having the WEB 2.0 as the main basis. In other words, this represents a constant approach towards

the fellow citizens that are outside the country and that cannot travel to the consulates because they don't have the time or the economic means.

When using the ICT, as in the example of the Ecuadorian virtual consulate, the distance barrier is which is necessary for the cases where consulates are located hundreds of kilometers away.

It is important to mention that these virtual consulates were not conceived for replacing any physical consulate, but for complementing the consular activity.

The power of dissemination of Internet is a bonus for initiatives like the virtual consulates, because it allows to disseminate the information in real time and without geographic, economic or socio-cultural restrictions which sometimes represent obstacles in the physical world. This is a true example of how the Internet has helped in the democratization of the diplomatic services, representing an advantage for the citizenship in general.

Within the context of the use of ICT in the area of digital diplomacy, there are relevant issues to analyze such as the cybersecurity. In Ecuador, being a developing country, the different groups of the society have not been concerned about building a secure infrastructure for data travelling, with the exception of the military sector.

Unfortunately in Ecuador, there are no defined policies yet for guaranteeing security and the work of the enterprises, the academia and the government in this sense is not well coordinated. The Government does not have an action plan for every entity in the country. Usually, the site owner or administrator is who has to decide what to do for making it secure, so Ecuador may be considered as an easy target for hackers.

IV. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

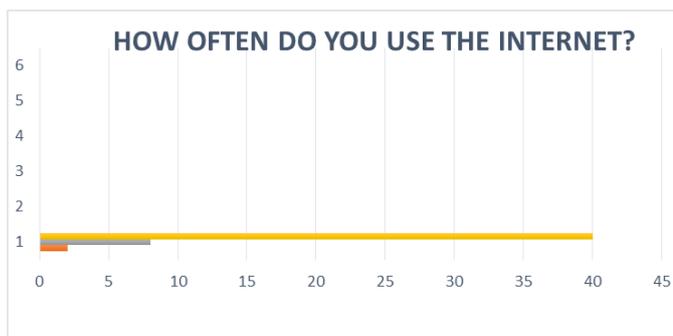
A. Background of the analysis unit or population

The information management process was carried out through different communication channels as emails, text messages via Internet. In addition, many professors were asked to do surveys in the classrooms during lectures and the response was positive from professors and students. The survey was conducted in the facilities of the Universidad Nacional de Loja, specifically in the areas of Energy, Industries and Nonrenewable Natural Resources, in the course of Engineering in Electronics and Telecommunications. This course has a universe of 120 student, ages from 17 to 25 years old; and 12 professors from 27 to 38 years old. The interviews were done using the "Zoom" videoconference platform with the participation of two representatives of the different society components in order to have an impartial approach. Two interviewees were called: The president of an organization reporting for the United Nations and an official of Mexico's Foreign Affairs Ministry.

B. Diagnosis and field survey

Once the surveys were finished, it was proven that there is a widespread use of Internet and that people are taking part, in the political decisions through their opinions, convinced that there is freedom of expression on the network, but concerned about the security provided by the telecommunication networks when sending information. For illustrating this, the main evaluation criteria of the study are presented below.

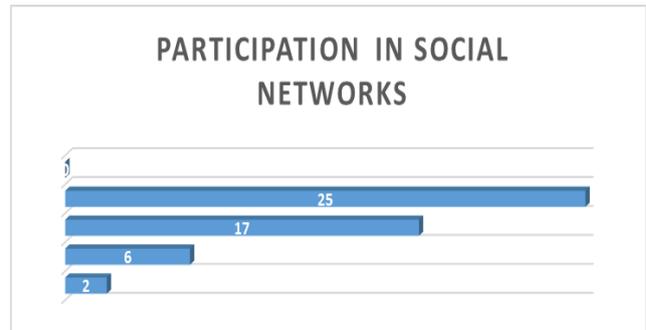
80% of the participants in the survey uses the Internet more than twice a day; 16% uses the network at least once a day and only 4% uses Internet just once a week. It is interesting that all the surveyed persons have used internet in the last 6 months, which indicates, in contrast with the regional statistics, that the digital divide is narrowing. This leads to global technical challenges as the migration of communication protocols like the migration from IPv4 to IPv6 due to the exponential growth of users. For having an idea, only in Ecuador, in 2016, 29,67% of Ecuadorians affirmed having a smartphone, this is almost seven times more than in 2011, according to the Institute of Statistics and Censuses [13], highlighting also that 55.6 % of the Ecuador’s population has used the Internet in the last 12 months.



Graphic 3: Frequency of use of Internet for the participants in the survey.

On the criteria related to the frequency of participation in a social network, 50% of the surveyed persons affirmed that they use more than twice a day a social network, 34% said that they use a social network once a day, this indicates that the number of persons using internet is directly proportional to the number of persons that use at least a social network, such as *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp*, or another. These results show that the individuals of the sample feel each time more the necessity of accessing and producing information at the same time. Here, an important role is played by the Internet governance and the e-society.

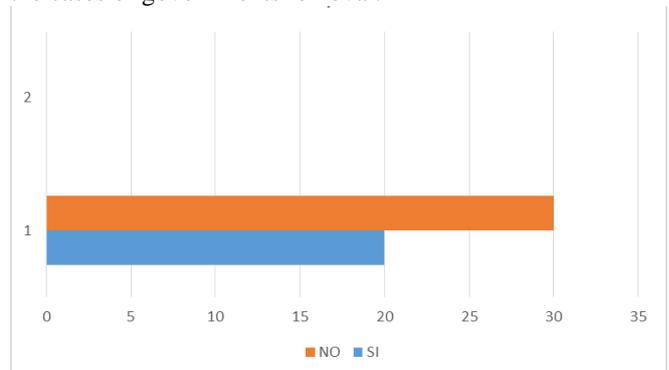
According to the INEC in 2016 in national territory, 70,5% of Ecuadorians accessed the Internet at least once a day, 38% used the Internet as source of information, 31,5% used it for communication purposes and 25,28% used the Internet through social networks. Graphic 4 indicates the frequency of use of social networks for the participants in the survey.



Graphic 4: Participation of the surveyed persons in social networks.

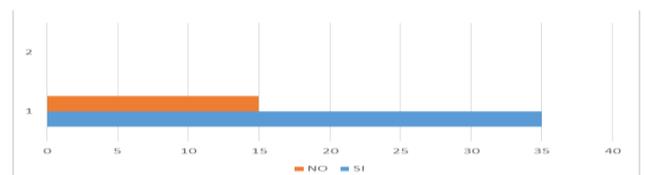
There are two questions in the survey worth mentioning. The first one is for knowing if the person being surveyed has ever commented on foreign or national policy using any social network. 60% answered no, and 40% answered yes. Graphic 5 shows the percentage of participants that have commented on foreign policy.

Perhaps the most balanced result of the survey is the following: it was corroborated that the representative democracy is turning into a participative democracy thanks to the use of ICT, which helps e- society to gain more strength and to become a principal actor in decision making. Paradoxically, the results for the other abovementioned survey question showed that 70% of the participants in the survey think that is feasible that Information Society could be able of removing governments thanks to the use of social networks. Graphic 6 indicates the percentage of survey participants who think that social networks do influence on the cases of governments removal.



Graphic 5 Comments on foreign policy in a social network

This last parameter confirms that there is a notion about the power of using ICT. This is consistent with the previous statistics, which state that these events have already occurred in both Eastern and Western countries.



Graphic 6: Capability of the e-society for removing governments.

With the use of ICT since the '90s, new debate spaces have been developed for every sphere of society, regardless of economic, social, philosophic or politic position. Assuming that the use of these elements in daily life has accelerated the transformation processes in the society, let's take for instance the appearance of Information Society or e-society, which has stimulated the evolution of the Internet into the WEB 2.0, which is focused on user-centered services and on the active participation of these users through content generation. These changes have transformed the role of the user, from data observer and consumer to data producer and data editor.

Concerning the use of Internet as content manager, the survey showed that 84% of the participants uses Internet at least once a day for participating in social networks; this is very far from the concept of digital diplomacy, because 80% of the participants in the study had no idea of what it meant. On the other hand, 40% affirmed that they have posted, at least one comment on an international event.

With respect to the Internet governance, the survey showed that 72% of participants was not aware of this term. Curiously, the surveyed persons confirmed that they think that Internet has two real important parameters of governance: security and freedom of expression on the network. In addition, 72% believed that there is no security on the public networks for a proper transmission of delicate information. In contrast, 70% thought that there is indeed freedom of expression on the Internet.

V. CONCLUSION

1. This research has corroborated the importance of ICT on digital diplomacy.
2. In the last decade, Internet and the social networks have proved that they have the power of bringing people with common interests closer for achieving a specific goal.
3. The e-society has changed its role from spectator to an active element, carrying out actions and making the democracies more participative thanks to the use of ICT.
4. The digital diplomacy has helped in the process of democratizing the actions of officials and has built bridges to bring the State closer to the citizens
5. Internet governance and digital diplomacy are still new issues in our country.
6. Nowadays, Internet is not only an essential tool for communicating, but a fundamental means for taking measures on a specific matter as well.
7. The emerging of new actors having a relative influence on the diplomatic work should not be considered as challenges to the governments, on the contrary, the governments should notice the collaboration potential for a mutual progress, as it is not politically convenient to be in conflict with the Information Society or e-society.
8. ICT should not be seen as a tool for causing popular revolts, but as an element of democratization.
9. All groups of the society should take more seriously the security issue on social networks.

REFERENCES

1. R. C. Cervera, *Dinámica de la sociedad internacional*. Editorial Centro de Estudios Ramón Areces, 1993.
2. C. Vaca, "Crisis Management on Twitter: Detecting Emerging Leaders," pp. 140-147, 2016.

3. M. Jason and M. Felim, "GWI Social," *GWI Soc.*, 2017.
4. G. Flassan, *Historia de la diplomacia francesa*. 1811.
5. E. M. Satow, *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, no. v. 1. Longmans, Green, 1917.
6. H. Nicolson, *Diplomacy*. Oxford University Press, 1939.
7. R. Valdés and E. L. Tovar, *Derecho diplomático y tratados*. Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1993.
8. M. de asuntos exteriores y cooperación España, "Diplomacia del siglo XXI," 2015. [Online]. Available: <http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/PoliticaExteriorCooperacion/DiplomaciasigloXXI/Paginas/Diplomaciapublica.aspx>.
9. J. Tucker, "Análisis de la diplomacia digital y la nueva sociedad civil en el ámbito de la gobernanza del internet," Universidad de Guayaquil, 2016.
10. T. Redlich, P. Krenz, S. Buxbaum-conradi, J. Wulfsberg, and F. Bruhns, "Impact of ICTs on the importance of membership and participation."
11. K. NANDA and A. MOWSHOWITZ, "Increasing Internet Acces and Freedoms with IGF Participation," 2008.
12. I. Álvarez-Ossorio *et al.*, "Informe sobre las revueltas árabes," Ediciones del Oriente y del Mediterraneo, 2012.
13. E. INEC, "Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicaciones (TIC'S) 2016," 2016. [Online]. Available: http://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/documentos/web-inec/Estadisticas_Sociales/TIC/2016/170125.Presentacion_Tics_2016.pdf.

AUTHORS PROFILE



John J. Tucker Yépez Engineer specialist in communication networks and switching systems, State University of Belgorod Russia, Master in international sciences and diplomacy, Ecuador, Researcher at the Universidad Nacional de Loja, Department of Telecommunications.



Benjamin A. Pusay Villarroel Electronics and Telecommunications Engineer, Master in Telecommunications, Researcher at the Universidad Técnica de Ambato, Ecuador, Department of Electronics and Telecommunications.



Paulo A. Samaniego Rojas Electronics and Telecommunications Engineer, Master in Telecommunications, Researcher at the Universidad Nacional de Loja, Ecuador, Department of Telecommunications.