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Negotiation, Speed, Politics: Use of Digital Technologies in International Mediation

Müzakere, Hız, Politika: Uluslararası Arabuluculukta Digital Teknolojilerin Kullanımı

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Abstract
The super-accelerated (high-speed) life experiences and coercive practices of the new world order (Covid and post-Covid periods) have affected and changed the negotiation and conflict resolution skills of international actors. Today, with the pandemic and technological developments, acceleration has become a necessity in many fields. Many international mediators, especially the United Nations (UN), have also benefited greatly from digital technologies that pierce space and time during the most severe times of the Covid-19 pandemic. So, in today's world, where economic, social and technological development continues at high speed, should negotiations and policies keep pace? If so, how should accelerated and virtualised political practices be discussed over conflict resolution? What is the impact of digitalisation on international mediation? This article critically discusses the relationship between digitalisation, speed, politics and conflict resolution through content and discourse analysis of political reports on peacemaking practices of different UN missions, especially during the most traumatic period of the pandemic (March 2020-March 2021). The study concludes that politics and negotiations need speed barriers because they need time, but they cannot be isolated from the developments and space of the high-speed society, so they need to follow the virtual space at all times and get involved when needed. As the analyses of the missions' reports show, the effective use of digital technologies, especially during the pandemic, has led to a rapid transformation in mediation (from traditional to cyber-mediation) and conflict resolution activities have been able to continue uninterrupted, but the dangers of digitalisation have not disappeared

Keywords: Speed, International Mediation, Politics, Digitalization, Cyber-mediation

Öz
Yeni dünya düzeninin (covid ve post-covid dönemler) süper hızlandırılmış (yüksek hızlı) yaşam deneyimleri ve zorlayıcı uygulamaları, uluslararası aktörlerin müzakere ve çatışma çözme becerilerini de etkilemiş ve değiştirmiştir. Günümüzde pandemi ve teknolojik gelişmelerle birlikte hızlanma birçok alanda zorunluluk haline gelmiştir. Başta Birleşmiş Milletler (BM) olmak üzere birçok uluslararası arabulucu da Covid-19 pandemisinde mekanı ve zamanı delen dijital teknolojilerden büyük ölçüde yararlandı. Peki ekonomik, sosyal ve teknolojik gelişimin yüksek hızda devam ettiği günümüz dünyasında müzakereler ve politikalar da bu hıza eşlik etmeli mi? Eğer öyleyse, hızlandırılmış ve sanallaştırılmış siyasi pratikler çatışma çözümünde nasıl ele alınmalıdır? Dijitalleşmenin uluslararası arabuluculuk üzerindeki etkisi nedir? Bu sorular etrafında şekillenecek olan bu makalede, dijitalleşme, hız(lanma), siyaset ve çatışma çözümü arasındaki ilişki, özellikle pandeminin en travmatik döneminde (Mart 2020-Mart 2021) farklı BM misyonlarının barış yapım pratiklerine ilişkin siyasi raporlarının içerik ve söylem analizi yardımıyla eleştirel bir şekilde tartışılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada siyaset ve müzakere, zamana ihtiyaç duyduğu için hız bariyerlerine sahip olması gerektiği ama yüksek hızlı toplumun gelişmelerinden ve alanından da soyutlanamayacağı için sanal alanı her an takip edip ihtiyaç duyulduğu anda dahil olması gerektiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Misyonların rapor analizlerinin de gösterdiği üzere özellikle pandemide dijital teknolojilerin etkin kullanımı arabuluculukta hızlı bir dönüşüme (geleneksel den siber-arabuluculuğa) yol açmış ve çatışma çözümü faaliyetleri kesintisiz bir şekilde sürdürülebilmişse de dijitalleşmenin tehlikeleri ortadan kalkmış değildir.

Anahtar Kavramlar: Hız(lanma), Uluslararası Arabuluculuk, Siyaset, Dijitalleşme, Siber Arabuluculuk

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Introduction

International conflicts[1] as significant disputes determining, obscuring or changing the world politics do not only refer to the conflicts between two independent states but also include intrastate conflicts, the resolution of which entails international actors (Zartman, 2008b, p. 155; Özçelik, 2006; Yılmaz, 2012). With political developments like the demise of the bipolar world beginning from the early 1990s, the number of intrastate disputes increased and the willingness of the disputing parties to reconcile increased in parallel to it. Especially, the second half of the 1990s witnessed the initiation of a large number of peace processes. Many political institutions and figures including the United Nations (UN) began to actively get involved in the transformation of ethnic and sectarian conflicts threatening international security and peace. The mediation mechanism (the intervention of a third party), conducted by international mediators, has been used in most of these processes. Until the 2000s, the UN mostly acted as a peacekeeper force in the conflict areas. However, later on, international mediation evolved into a conflict resolution method becoming significant on different axes (e.g., civil peace delegations) as a result of the efforts by the *Mediation Support Unit* and *The Group of Friends of Meditation*, which are organizations within the UN, and numerous mediating institutions and individuals operating outside the UN.

Mediation, with different aspects before, during and after a conflict, is of great importance for an effective peace-making process. This is so that the parties can come closer to each other, flaming armed conflicts can be cooled down (peace force practice), potential disputes can be prevented (preventive diplomacy) and the security of the society can be ensured when the mediation process in which primary relations, trust and communication are highly important (Bramsen & Hagemann, 2021, p. 544). Therefore, bringing together the disputing parties and making them come to an agreement at the same table is an important practice for international security and world peace, and should be sustained constantly. However, contingencies such as quickly-spreading contagious diseases or wars may impair peace processes, just as in the case of Covid-19. This pandemic, which began to have an impact around the world at the beginning of 2020, created a political and social arena filled with panic. With many countries restricting travel by closing their borders, the sustainability of mediation efforts and peace talks was threatened. At that point in time, the existence of advanced digital technologies, information and communication technologies, was of great importance because these technologies enabled presidents, representatives, diplomats and peacemakers to hold important meetings via video conferences and make their political statements on their social media accounts (especially in the period between March 2020–March 2021). Likewise, politicians and diplomats were able to maintain communication with the public and political arena almost entirely by means of digital technologies, which put digital diplomacy at the centre of international relationships at a faster pace. Similarly, the debate

1 The 1990s, when the Cold War ended, is a period in which major changes were experienced with regard to the nature of conflicts and conflict resolution because, in those years, long and destructive wars between big powers and states were replaced by intrastate conflicts. Following the Cold War, of course, the conflicts between states continued, and are still ongoing today. However, similar intrastate conflicts, in particular the unrest in the Balkans in the early 1990s, began to become widespread around the world. That is why the concept of international conflict today refers to intrastate conflicts in which international actors are involved (Collins, 2017; Özçelik, 2006).

about digitalisation in mediation quickly became a hot topic during the pandemic. The UN 75th General Assembly Meetings were held on 22-29 September 2020 via video conference. Libyan and Myanmar delegations met online with all parties from April to July 2018, and the Yemenis' views on the peace process were gathered through an artificial intelligence-assisted process (Cans & Clarke, 2020; Kaplan, 2020). In other words, mediation activities in the pandemic period continued uninterruptedly thanks to digital technologies. Therefore, this phenomenon, accelerated by necessity, should be treated as a transformation experienced in conflict resolution skills. It is a transformation from mediation, where face-to-face communication is central, to cyber-mediation, where virtual communication prevails.

Digital tools are used in mediation because they are accessible, less costly and facilitate the inclusion of marginalised groups in the process. However, digitalisation can also make the mediation process more difficult, where emotions, body language and face-to-face communication are very important. The success of mediation and the prospects for peace may be jeopardised in situations where the parties to the conflict have easy access to social media and do not pay attention to the posts they share during the peace negotiation process, or where all parties do not have equal access to the internet, or in the case of misinformation and disclosure (Hirblinger, 2020; Westcott, 2008; Kavanagh, 2021; Centre for Humanitarian, 2019). In other words, digitalisation poses some risks and threats, just as it offers some opportunities for conflict resolution (Centre for Humanitarian, 2019, p. 7). Perhaps because of these risks, it was foreseeable that conflict resolution methods such as mediation would make a comeback in the aftermath of the pandemic. But this return could not be a return to the past. Before the end of 2021, UN meetings and other peace processes began to be held face-to-face again, albeit while using masks, but in the halls where the meetings were held, screens were also left on for those who could not attend the meeting at that time.

This paper examines whether policy and negotiation can keep up with the pace of technological, economic or social change in today's high-speed societies in the context of theoretical debates and the UN's peacemaking activities during the most traumatic period (March 2020-March 2021: social lockdowns, curfews, travel restrictions, more than a million deaths worldwide). As qualitative data collection methods such as observation and in-depth interviews were not possible during this period, the data was analysed through content and discourse analysis of the reports of UN missions or other international mediators. By analysing the content and discourse of these policy reports in terms of the debates on speed and politics in political philosophy, this article also attempts to discuss the new form of international conflict resolution (cyber-mediation) that was being reshaped by high-speed digitalisation during the pandemic. Although the study draws attention to the UN's mediation practices during the Covid-19 pandemic, it theorises long-standing situations regarding the use of digital technologies in conflict resolution. The strength of the article is that the relationship between international mediation and digital technology is discussed through the discipline and concepts of political philosophy, rather than through the discipline and theories of international relations. This study also excludes the digital devices used by mediation actors in their personal lives, their social media accounts and their engagement with digitalisation in their private lives. Although

it is accepted that the use of digital technology in the personal lives of mediators affects their tasks, only mediation practices were taken into account, as ethnography could not be carried out during the period covered by this article. This is an important limitation of the study. The theoretical debates on speed, politics, time-space compression and the epistemology of the mediation process are taken as the main axes. Through these axes, we read how the experience of peacebuilding and peacemaking in March 2020 - March 2021, when the social lockdown due to the pandemic was very harsh, was continued by the relevant UN missions in digital environments and the information made possible by this process. In today's world, where economic, social and technological development continues at high speed, should or could negotiation and politics accompany this speed? If so, how should accelerated and virtualised political practices be discussed in terms of conflict resolution, negotiation and reconciliation? Structured around these questions, the article will critically discuss digitalisation, acceleration and conflict resolution, in particular through examples from the world mediated by the UN during the pandemic. It attempts to examine the projections of speed in politics on the axis of conflict resolution by revealing the link between conflict resolution and digitalisation. To this end, it first discusses digital transformation in conflict resolution and then analyses the phenomena of acceleration, deceleration and de-spatialisation in terms of policy and negotiation. Then, it considers the opportunities and challenges of cyber-mediation in conflict resolution. Finally, as the impact of the pandemic wanes, it discusses the return to traditional mediation methods in resolving international conflicts through the possibility of hybrid mediation and opens the door to new research on the subject.

High-Speed Social Change, and Transformation in International Mediation: What has had an impact and how?

If the Covid-19 pandemic period is thought of in the context of a tense and anxious social and political arena accompanied by increased security policies, it will be seen how valuable it is to be able to talk about the possibility of sustaining peacemaking in this process. Indeed, world history is full of major, meso and minor conflicts and efforts to resolve them. Although the disputing parties mostly resort to negotiations conducted by themselves as the first method of resolution, the mediation method is one of the important third-party interventions used to resolve both social and international conflicts. The third-party forms in conflict resolution can be divided into two different categories. Forms (such as arbitration or adjudication) subject to legal-normative procedures are in the first category. The other ones (such as mediation or conciliation) based on voluntary procedures "involve various forms of assistance and facilitation, short of judicial or coercive steps, designed to help the parties reach an acceptable outcome" (Bercovitch, 1991, p.3). Recognised as one of the traditional paradigms of conflict resolution and as a mode of negotiation, mediation is voluntary, less costly, non-use of force, flexible and does not jeopardise or threaten the rights of the parties (Zartman, 2008b, p. 155; Bercovitch, 1991, p.4). Mediators who reconcile the mutual demands of the parties at the most appropriate time and contribute to the formation of a peaceful state also ensure peace in the social environment in which they live. Moreover, this motivation, which allows mediators to be more flexible, is more evident in the resolution of international conflicts. For example, the primary purpose of the UN is to ensure international peace

and security. Therefore, it constructs all its activities, legislation and actions on the axis of this purpose.

International mediation, which has been one of the most effective methods of macro-conflict resolution since the 1990s, is strongly influenced by changes and developments in technology and social life. As social and political life has become virtual and digital technologies have diversified, so have the practices and tools used in international mediation. In fact, diplomacy as a whole has been transformed. With the impact of both external (such as the pandemic) and internal political dynamics, digital diplomacy has ceased to be a form of traditional public diplomacy for almost all state actors and is now accepted as a new type of diplomacy (Nicholas, 2008; Yağmurlu, 2019; Köse, 2017; Bjola & Holmes, 2015; Cooper, Heine, & Thakur, 2013; Snow & Cull, 2020). In parallel with the increased use of the internet in the 1990s and the spread of social media after the 2000s, websites, applications and official social media accounts of states, ministries, embassies and other political actors began to emerge. Today, political parties, institutions, states, etc. compete with the number of followers on their official accounts, political statements are made on social media sites such as X (Twitter), and propaganda is also carried out using digital technologies. Moreover, as the use of these technologies has become more widespread, the actors and demands of diplomacy have changed. For example, an ordinary citizen herding sheep in his village can comment on the ideas of a minister tweeting from parliament, and all he needs is a smartphone and an internet connection. In addition to states and citizens, organisations that are part of the conflict also use digital technologies to propagandise, create political tensions by using disinformation, and thereby politicise and even increase their supporter numbers. Most organisations have websites and social media accounts that are used by their political actors (Esen, 2022, pp. 74-78). Adler-Nissen and Eggeling (2022), based on data from their ethnographic study conducted in the European Union offices in Brussels, argue that digitalisation blurs the boundaries between the personal, private and public spheres, and that the digitalisation in which diplomats are involved in their daily lives cannot be considered free of their duties. Similarly, the boundaries between traditional methods of diplomacy and digitalisation have blurred, and this entanglement has been conceptualised as *blended diplomacy*. What is meant here is the existence of a single mixed and intertwined diplomacy, rather than a hybrid diplomacy, which is a mixture of two types of diplomacy that complement each other (pp. 650-653).

Social and political life, which has been digitised to some extent since the 2000s, has become almost completely virtualised with the Covid-19 pandemic (Eggeling & Adler-Nissen, 2021, p. 2). Out of necessity, all political meetings, diplomatic negotiations and political declarations have been conducted in digital form. In addition, celebrations, family gatherings and personal disputes are largely enabled by digital technologies. This means that the social and political sphere has necessarily been super-accelerated by the pandemic. In particular, the main instrument of communication or non-communication between macro-political actors has been, and to a large extent continues to be, digital technologies throughout the pandemic. Not only in routine diplomatic relations between political representatives but also in negotiations for the resolution of armed conflicts, digitalisation has become mandatory in the pandemic. It allowed the process

to continue, to communicate quickly and to know in advance where to intervene. The extraordinary speed of smartphone technology (e.g., the ability of people living on two different continents to have live video conversations), advances in computing and other communication technologies, increased internet access, widespread use of social media, etc., have made it possible to use digitalisation effectively in mediation. However, the idea that the speed of technology and social life has caught up with the political sphere, including the resolution of international conflicts, is controversial. Indeed, it must be said that some peace negotiations, or steps that should have taken place as a result of negotiations, were delayed or could not take place because of the pandemic. For example, the next step in the peace agreement signed between the Taliban and the United States in Doha in February 2020 was to hold talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in March of that year. However, the talks could not take place due to the increase in cases of the disease in Afghanistan (Huseyni, 2020). Although the parties were unable to meet for some time, they were able to make their views on the process known through social media. Other digital technologies allowed remote meetings to take place and the parties were able to keep each other informed until September. Again, the Covid-19 pandemic had not yet started when the *UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA),* the *UN Special Envoy for Yemen* and their technology partners sought to create a virtual platform where the public could openly express their views through a technology-based system to develop an approach to the Yemen peace process. But soon after, the Covid-19 virus spread worldwide and the Mission's work, both in Yemen and in New York, was almost completely disrupted. Many activities were cancelled or postponed. Despite the pandemic, however, the technology-based work enabled people from almost all walks of life in Yemen to participate in the peace process. On 8-9 June 2020, during this "three-hour live, interactive online discussion, participants expressed their thoughts on the prospects for a nationwide ceasefire, the future of the political peace process, and what is needed to alleviate the humanitarian suffering in Yemen" (Cans and Clarke, 2020, para. 3). Furthermore, through the efforts of the *UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)*, the *Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF)*[2] was established in late 2020 to find a political solution to the on-going conflict in Libya, and its first meeting was held virtually on 7-8 November 2020 (Kenny, 2020; Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, 2021). In short, the sustainability of mediation in the pandemic could be ensured through digital transformation. However, it should be noted that the use of digital technologies in the negotiation processes and discussions on this issue had started earlier. This is because an advanced information system was in place long before the pandemic, and mediators or parties involved in peace-making had begun to benefit from the power of technology. After 2000, a video, tweet or comment produced by any person or organisation could be transmitted around the world in a very short time. In this situation, it became necessary

2 Recognised as part of a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned process and constructed as a mini-version of the intra-Libyan peace talks, the overall objective of the LPDF was announced as follows "to build consensus on a unified governance framework and arrangements that will enable national elections to be held as soon as possible to restore Libya's sovereignty and the democratic legitimacy of Libyan institutions" (UNSMIL Statement, 2020, para. 3). Importantly, this forum has 75 members, equally elected from all regions of the country. In announcing the forum, the head of UNSMIL, Stephanie Williams, stated that participants in the LPDF would include representatives from all ethnic, social, political, geographical and tribal regions of the Libyan people (including women and youth), with an inclusive, fair and rights-based approach (Kenny, 2020).

for politicians to react immediately to certain situations, or more precisely, to speed up its ability to react.

To facilitate reconciliation or peace processes, parties to conflicts have used various digital technologies, sometimes with the support of UN missions and sometimes on their own. In Colombia, for example, during the 2012-2016 negotiations between the FARC and the state, a website was created to provide an easy-to-use platform for the public to submit ideas and proposals. As part of the framework agreement between the parties, anyone could submit a proposal on any topic to the website. In fact, more than 60,000 proposals were received in a short period of time. Due to the volume of submissions and proposals, both the government and the *Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia/FARC)* had to devote time and resources to reading, analysing and incorporating them into the system. A joint project has been developed to maintain all the submissions, although there have been difficulties in updating the website (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2019, p. 26). Also in 2012, Fiji's Constitutional Commission launched a website to draft a constitution with fair and inclusive participation and used mass media and text messaging to engage women in the process. Alongside the efforts of the Constitutional Commission, women's organisations in Fiji actively used digital tools such as Facebook and email to inform women about the process. At the end of the process, a number of provisions were included in the draft constitution as a result of suggestions received through social media and email, particularly those that addressed specific issues advocated by women. In the political dialogue process that began in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2016, WhatsApp was actively used to share information (such as meeting dates and times or meeting schedules) among negotiators. Similarly, in Nicaragua, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, social media and email were used as ancillary elements of negotiations (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2019, pp. 25-30). However, it should be noted that in these global cases, parties or mediators tended to make more limited use of technology to facilitate the process. Since 2018, the impact of technology on conflict resolution has begun to take place on serious platforms and in protracted debates. During the pandemic period, a greater and more holistic use of technology has become imperative.

The first of the UN-led forums and meetings examining the impact of technology on conflict resolution was the 2018 *Cyber-mediation Conference*, organised by Swisspeace in collaboration with DPPA and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD). The main theme of this conference was the shift, or potential shift, in the axis of mediation due to digitalisation. This is because the mediation process, which in its traditional form required real space and time, has now begun to relate to virtual space. In this case, the axis tended to shift from real space to virtual space. Indeed, in the final declaration of the conference, the concept of cyber-mediation was discussed from different angles, linking technology and conflict resolution methods (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2019). Another event related to digitalisation was the Fifth Istanbul Mediation Conference in 2018, organised by the *Group of Friends of Mediation*, chaired by Turkey and Finland and established to promote the use of mediation in international conflict prevention. The third part of the conference, which began with video messages from Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, focused on digital

transformation and mediation. The session, which discussed the positive and negative impacts of digitalisation on mediation, noted that technological developments have drastically changed the practice and environment of mediation, even though its foundations remain the same (Executive Summary, 2018). The emphasis on technology, reflected in the final text of the meeting, was carried over to the 2019 meeting, where discussions continued. The annual ministerial-level meeting of the Friends of Mediation Group was also dedicated to technology in 2019. In particular, the new tools offered to mediators by new technologies (such as artificial intelligence, communication applications and databases) and the benefits and risks of digitalisation for mediation and peace were discussed (10th UN Group of Friends of Mediation, 2019). *The Digital Technologies and Mediation Toolkit 1.0* report prepared by the UN Secretariat was also presented at an expert meeting of the Group of Friends of Mediation (Akçakar, 2021, pp. 39-40; Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2019, p. 2).

Despite all these activities and discussions, the discipline of conflict resolution had not established a strong link with digitalisation. Since the pandemic requires inclusion in the super-fast social change imposed by necessity, it is possible to say that the link between peacemakers and technology began to strengthen after 2020. In fact, it should be noted that the high speed in technology, economy and social life that occurred in parallel with the 2000s has also spread to the political sphere, and digital diplomacy has begun to be accepted as a method that goes beyond public diplomacy. However, even though digitalisation has become a phenomenon that affects all areas of life, it is difficult to say that politics and negotiations accompany or should accompany the high speed in areas such as technology and the economy.

Politics, Speed and Negotiation

When considering the arguments about politics, speed, time and space, it is necessary to mention two different theoretical divisions. The first, based on the ideas of Paul Virilio and Sheldon Wolin, argues that deceleration, not acceleration, is necessary in politics. Virilio admits that there is acceleration in the political system, but he considers it to be evil and argues that there should be deceleration. According to him, with the development of communication and transport technologies, the immediacy of earthly time is becoming more important, but the reality of geographical distances is no longer there. In particular, the widespread use of the Internet has caused the disappearance of temporal distances along with the disappearance of geographical distances (Virilio, 2003, pp. 13-14). In this case, political borders, national, economic and political policies and culture, which require space and the slowness of time, have inevitably disappeared. Now the authorities established by humans are being replaced by machines, and the Internet by the virtual world. Virilio (1998), who praises the Internet as unlimited communication, also demonises it (p.104). It is such a disaster that it casts doubt on reality and manipulates public opinion uncontrollably. Likewise, as a radical democrat, Wolin argues that speed and abrupt change pose significant dangers in practice. Wolin believes that accelerated societies are largely disharmonised, as rapid change in particular both dulls the collective conscience and obscures memories. Furthermore, according to him, politics needs time, so it is necessary to slow down (Wolin, 2016, p. 578). The second theoretical split regarding

the interpretation of politics in terms of time and space is shaped in line with William Connolly's arguments, that acceleration can have a transformative effect on politics. Accordingly, one must keep up with the accelerating world. We should essentially focus on the pluralist potential of social pace (Connolly, 2009). In this way of thinking, if the political field cannot keep up with the new state, it is thrown out of time, that is, it remains perpetually anachronistic. Hartmut Rosa, who interpreted modernity as a process of social acceleration (the pace of technological development, the pace of social change and the pace of the flow of life), developed an analysis that brought together the ideas of both Paul Virilio and William Connolly. According to him, acceleration is driven by the logic of capitalism (time is money and money is a scarce resource). The increasing pace of technological acceleration with the transition to industrial capitalism is a factor leading to social change. There is a cycle here: Technological acceleration necessarily changes the information, practice and communication styles of society, and people necessarily accelerate to keep up with this change. The need to keep up with the times exerts considerable pressure on social life (Rosa, 2005, p. 448; 2009, pp. 82-87; 2022, pp. 19-20). This pressure is quite hard and effective on politics because the production of policies and the control of social development by political actors need to be slowed down.

Hartmut Rosa suggests that democratic politics is only possible if there are "speed barriers" to social change. In other words, on the one hand, societies should keep up with political and social change and therefore be fast and dynamic. On the other hand, "the speed of change and the dynamics of society should be slow enough so that they can effectively influence the formation of deliberative political will and decision-making processes, or politics can effectively control (or direct) social developments" (p.450). Moreover, today there is a significant lack of synchronisation between politics and other social systems (such as the economy and technology). That is, while developments in social systems such as technology are constantly accelerating, democratic and deliberative political developments are slowing down because they take time (Rosa, 2005, p.450) or they preserve time, as Wolin puts it. Political affairs such as the construction of a political argument, legislative processes, and administrative and judicial control all take time. Consequently, Rosa's basic argument is that the formation of deliberative will and decision-making processes of the high-speed and dynamic societies of the global age in which we live are, for many reasons, decelerating rather than accelerating (Rosa, 2005, p. 451). Wolin (1997) also argues that political time cannot be synchronised with the temporalities and rhythms that drive culture and the economy because

> Political time entails an element of idle time. This is because the political action precedes the negotiation and negotiations intrinsically take time. Negotiations develop in environments where disputing, competing but legitimate thoughts are present. Political time is conditioned by the existence of differences and the attempt to negotiate them. The outcomes of negotiations, whether be successful or not, preserves the time [...] Thus, time is 'taken' or moreover preserved for negotiation (Wolin, 1997, p.2).

In short, the logic of negotiation is that it takes time. That is, certain attempts at action should be made and maintained. William Zartman analysed the importance of time in conflict resolution in the context of ripeness. If the parties or mediators do not correctly perceive the timing of resolution efforts, which is called ripeness, the resolution of the dispute becomes significantly more difficult (Zartman, 2008a, 1-2; 1985, p. 237).

The time Zartman refers to is not an easily identifiable and actionable moment, hour or day. It is the point at which the parties can no longer afford the costs of the dispute and understand or feel that the conflict should somehow be transformed, i.e., it can be perceived with a subjective perception. The essential point for the present study, however, is that Zartman, like Wolin, believes that conflict resolution takes, or should take, time. What Zartman means by ripeness is the time in which the dispute lasts. It generally refers to a real-time span of many years. Zartman (1985) says: "Only time can resolve conflicts, but it also needs a little help" (p.237). Conflict resolution is a long-term process that takes place in a tense political arena (in a real geographical space). There are steps in this process that need to be followed and carefully arranged. Therefore, conflict resolution (including mediation) as a whole needs "time", not only in the context of ripeness. The resolution of international conflicts, however, requires a real space as well as time. The main emphasis in political philosophy's discussion of speed and politics is that with the development of transport and information technologies, information spreads faster and affects a wider space. In other words, it is crucial to interpret politics and speed in terms of time and space. Moreover, in today's high-speed societies, time-space compression blurs the truth, trivialises real space and de-spatialises politics and negotiations. However, political issues such as mediation can be more effectively conducted in a real place where face-to-face communication can take place. But what does time-space compression and de-spatialisation mean for politics and negotiation?

The De-spatialization/ Placelessness of Mediation in the Accelerated Political Arena

David Harvey (1993/2003) argues that each new mode of production and social formation employs its own time-space practice. Technological progress, which is gaining momentum with globalisation, eliminates space in the context of time and space. In capitalism, which is characterised by the speed of life, "overcoming spatial barriers as if the earth were collapsing on us" and limiting time to the moment we are in can be expressed as a compression of our temporal and spatial worlds (time-space compression) (Harvey, 2003, p. 270). De-spatialisation, which refers to the elimination of space through time, has been made possible by acceleration, especially in transport and information technologies. Harvey (2003) states that with the developments in transport and telecommunications, space has shrunk to a global village (p.270), what is meant by de-spatialisation here is the constant shrinking of the real space (locality) to go to, or even the elimination of it. Paul Virilio (1998) also points out that "geographical shrinkage" occurs in parallel with the acceleration of movement and vehicles, and that geographical location has definitively lost its strategic value (pp.127-128). This loss corresponds to the situation in which the instantaneity of earthly time virtually eliminates geographical space, which is global placelessness.

We now live in a much faster (high-speed) world (in terms of communication, transport and as a society) than in 1977 when Virilio wrote "Speed and Politics" and in 1995 when Harvey published "The Condition of Postmodernity". Indeed, as a result of such widespread digitisation, the Internet and social media mean a global space, but this global space is itself a de-spatialisation when used in relation to space. Hartmut Rosa (2022) argues that spaces in modern life are narrowing and shrinking in parallel with

time. According to him, space has lost its vastness, resistance and meaning. As a result, social or emotional intimacy now depends not on the distance of spaces, but on the use of modern media communication channels (p.48-49). John Urry, looking at space from a more abstract perspective, argues that changes in the perception of time and space enable new spatialities rather than a de-spatialisation or trivialisation of space (p.40). Similarly, Giddens emphasises that space is no longer confined to 'locality', opening up space for new spaces to become global (p.24). It is striking that both Urry and Giddens refer to the abstraction of space. From this point of view, the internet and social media can be said to be the areas where statements and various virtual practices are spatialised. In conflict resolution, however, real space is crucial, both because it relates to the area of conflict and because it enables face-to-face communication. Therefore, it should be noted that the de-spatialisation in conflict resolution, in parallel with the link that Harvey, Virilio and Rosa make between space and time, amounts to the elimination of real (geographical) space or locality. In this context, the present study expresses placelessness, the elimination of geographical space, when it refers to de-spatialisation.

International disputes take place either in a directly real space (e.g., battlefields) or at a level that can affect a real space or its operations. Therefore, locality or region (even in cyber-mediation based on digitalisation) occupies a critical place in the literature on conflict resolution. At the same time, peacemaking cannot do without (real) space. Even if globalisation and modernisation theoretically allow for the creation of new spaces, the pacification and reconciliation of two groups in armed conflicts requires space. More precisely, it is necessary to get the parties talking, to bring them together and to harmonise their demands. Doing this at a distance, i.e., preferring a spaceless or abstract space to a local one, will undermine the success of reconciliation. This is because the conflicting parties choose a real space in which they feel safe and mediators whose impartiality they are sure of in the reconciliation process. In line with this, Virilio (1998) suggests that the war without space will spread and that this damaging spread will extend over a wide area of time, thus becoming a time war (p.57).

Cyber-Mediation: Reachability, Accessibility, Inclusivity

It is certain that the time-space compression has different effects on the transformation of world politics. Because of the spread of digitalisation, the form of diplomacy has changed, thinking about politics has become different, and political actors have developed new political actions as a result of diversified theoretical arguments. For example, the UN and similar organisations have conducted peace processes between conflicting macro-actors, using digital technologies where necessary, which is referred to in the mediation literature as cyber-mediation. Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, much of the policy-making, propaganda and perception-building was done through digital technologies, specifically, the Internet. However, during this process, the governed, diplomats and policymakers encountered not only the soft and constructive sides of digital diplomacy but also its dark sides (Bjola & Pamment, 2019). When we discuss conflict resolution, politics and digitalisation over acceleration, looking at the opportunities created by virtualisation together with its dark sides makes it clear what challenges (such as information pollution on social media, misinformation, leakage of

private information, virtual attacks and lack of access) conflict resolution can face. It also makes it easy to see the threats that the speed of technology can create in these areas. For this reason, the opportunities offered by cyber-mediation are discussed below, along with the threats they pose.

Those involved in conflict resolution were largely present in the digital environment, especially during the pandemic, and were similar to practitioners of different disciplines (Camino, 2021; Lanz & Aleiba, 2018). In this way, the second stage of the mediation process (the stage of the acquisition of information) becomes easier and its flow accelerates with the development of information and communication technologies. In the process of information gathering, there is a situation with two facets. On the one hand, the parties can easily and actively contact the mediators through social media, websites and other communication channels (e-mail, etc.). On the other hand, the mediators can easily contact the parties' representatives and obtain various information about the issue and the parties. Faster information gathering facilitates the mediators' understanding of conflictual parties and their troubles and speeds up the mediation process.

Reachability, accessibility and inclusivity: Three of the qualities that enable digitisation to transform many areas are reachability, accessibility and inclusivity. These three qualities are largely interrelated and sometimes intertwined. Therefore, all three are discussed together in this study.

The issue of reachability should be discussed in terms of reaching risky regions and meeting the demands of the people living there (10th UN Group of Friends of Mediation, 2019). Communicating with the regions where conflicts are intense and geographical barriers make it difficult to reach them and involve the people living there in the peace and mediation process can be relatively easier when digital technologies are used. This is because it is much easier to communicate with people via telephone, the Internet or social media, and to convince them or obtain their opinions without the need for physical contact (what makes it easier - the absence of violence?). In short, through the use of digital technologies, it is possible to come together independently of time and space. Digital technologies, by enabling wider and more diverse participation and increasing the means of communication, enhance inclusivity in the peace process. However, inclusivity is not limited to broad participation. In the *Digital Technologies and Mediation Tool Set* published by the UN, inclusivity is defined as the extent to which the views and needs of parties and stakeholders are represented and integrated into the mediation process (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2019, s.23). Thus, inclusivity is a quality that simultaneously includes representation and pluralistic participation. However, an inclusive process does not mean that all stakeholders are directly involved in formal negotiations, but rather that communication between the parties to the dispute and other stakeholders is facilitated by including multiple perspectives in the process. Mediators tend to use online tools to bring these different views into the process. Websites (to collect, share, store information or load documents), social media platforms, instant messaging applications, online surveys, video conferencing or other artificial applications are some of these tools (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2019, p. 24). For example, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen organised a two-day online meeting for Yemeni women stakeholders in the context of the peace process. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the meaningful participation of women from different regions and age groups, and indeed the inclusion of.

In a project conducted by the UN Special Envoy for Yemen in July 2020, one person was able to hold real-time, one-on-one meetings with a group of up to 1,000 people using artificial intelligence-assisted technology. Daanish Masood of DPPA emphasised that this method is a new way of doing business that increases inclusivity in the peace process: "Until now, there has been no way to systematically engage in dialogue with peace supporters and get their opinions with a relatively low-cost and real-time opinion analysis. This new artificial intelligence-based approach has changed all that. This approach represents a new way of doing business that can make the ongoing political and peace process much more inclusive" (Cans & Clarke, 2020, para. 4). The then UN Special Representative for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, made a similar point when he said: "While I am aware of the limitations in terms of access to digital negotiations and representation, it has become an important step in reaching out to Yemenis outside our usual circles" (Cans & Clarke, 2020, p. 59). The co-founder of the Women Solidarity Network in Yemen, Muna Lugman, drew attention to the diversity of Yemenis reached and emphasised the importance of the project in terms of both inclusivity and representation, saying: "I also think that the participants in the meetings were multi-representative. There were participants from the south, the north, young people and women, different political parties and independent individuals. For me, the representation was good" (Cans & Clarke, 2020, para. 8). Again, the inclusion of groups considered marginal (such as women, minorities, disabled people) through the use of digital technologies makes peace talks more inclusive. For example, the LPDF, which held online meetings in Libya in 2020, invited participants from different social segments (different geographical regions, ethnic groups, sectarian groups, socially representative groups) based on the principle of inclusivity (Kenny, 2020, para. 8). In addition to this, one of the goals of the UN Libya Action Plan, declared in September 2017, was to hold a national conference and prepare online activities between April and July 2018 to facilitate the participation of the Libyan people. As a result, politically and socially marginalised groups were also able to present their opinions and have them heard without personal participation through the survey on these online platforms (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2019, p. 25).

> One notable innovation was for Libyans to be able to contribute to the process online between April and July 2018. To achieve this, a website in Arabic was specifically designed by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) with parameters set to facilitate user access and navigation. This measure helped make the preparatory process more inclusive and transparent. The website included information about the national conference process as well as the dates and locations of the meetings, visual content from past events, meeting reports, and information about how Libyans could organize their own events. Most importantly, the website included an online questionnaire on the agenda for the consultations through which Libyans could provide their insights and feedback. The online platform offered an opportunity for various groups, including those politically and socially marginalised, to express their opinions and be heard without having to attend meetings in person. In addition, an outreach campaign was organized to ensure the broadest online participation (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2019, p. 24-25).

At this point, the issue of access to the Internet should be elaborated. Accessibility is an integral part of the inclusion and effective use of the digital environment. When individuals, institutions or other entities have access to any information they want, wherever there is an Internet connection, the enabling role of digital technologies comes

into play. However, there are significant inequalities in internet access between continents and countries. According to the 2023 data, approximately 5.3 billion people out of a global population of approximately 7.9 billion, or 67.9% of the world's population, have access to the internet. While 43.2% of Africa's population can access the internet, the figure is 67% in Asia, 89.2% in Europe, 80.5% in Latin America, 93.4% in North America, 77.1% in the Middle East and 70.1% in Australia. Again, within the African continent, while 6.8% of Eritrea's 3.6 million people have access to the internet, 73% of Nigeria's 211 million people have access to the internet (Internet World Statistics, 2023). This inequality, the so-called 'digital divide' (Yağmurlu, 2019, p. 1273), also creates inequality in terms of inclusion in political debates. That is, those who have access to the Internet are in an advantageous position compared to those who do not have access to the Internet and therefore are not aware of political events and decisions, or only become aware of them at a later stage, or cannot respond to them through the necessary channels. David Mclvor (2011) interprets this as the potential (and indeed the danger) of speed-increasing inequalities. This inequality, which develops between those who can keep up with the pace of the new world and those who cannot, causes those living in the same space at the same time to occupy different temporalities (p.60). The concern that arises from associating this desynchronisation with politics is the fact that only certain groups and individuals with access to the Internet can benefit from the advantages of speed. The biggest challenge faced by the artificial intelligence project in Yemen was access to the internet. As the internet was slow in Yemen, those who could access the system had to constantly refresh the page to see and answer the questions (Cans & Clarke, 2020, para 11). Apart from equality of access, the problem of having certain technological tools is another important issue. In other words, it becomes impossible for poor neighbourhoods that do not have technological tools such as computers, tablets or smartphones to be included in the digital environment, even if there is internet access in these neighbourhoods.

Disinformation and leaks: An important issue that cuts across the three main attributes listed above and the issues of reachability, accessibility and inclusivity, and that embodies both the benefits and the dangers of digitalisation, is disinformation and leaks. In fact, they both illustrate why policy cannot keep up with the speed of technology and risk sabotaging peace processes. In times when traditional methods were used and conflict resolution was confined to one place, this sabotage could range from armed attacks to manipulating the information of the masses. Today, however, this can be done much more easily and cheaply through social media. Incorrect or incomplete information posted on social media is quickly disseminated to a wide audience, which can lead to a process that is difficult to correct. Moreover, leaks not only affect negotiations and political processes, but can also undermine trust among diplomats (Adler-Nissen and Eggeling, 2022, 656). Transforming false or incomplete information into truth in public perception is a major challenge for the mediator. However, leaks (disclosure of confidential information) act as powerful agents that sabotage reconciliation efforts, especially in mediation processes. With the digital dissemination of leaks, information travels quickly and becomes widely known. Virilio's (2003) concepts of generalised virtualisation and the *information bomb* are very valuable in this sense. Virilio (2003) states that in the new millennium we are facing a new bomb with a high impact. He states that "it is the information bomb that has the ability to shatter international peace through the interactivity of information" (p.62).

Information disseminated more easily and quickly through the use of technology also plays an important role in the creation or consolidation of hate speech, i.e., polarisation (10th UN Friendship Group, 2019).

In Lieu of a Conclusion: On the Trail of Hybrid Mediation

The acceleration of transport from horse-drawn carts to jet planes and the development of communication technologies that allow people living on opposite sides of the world, experiencing different time zones and different spaces, to simultaneously video chat or comment on a tweet, bring time-space compression into play. What should be emphasised here is that the changing experience of time and space leads to the establishment of new social and political relations, norms and values (Avcı, 2021, p. 3791). More specifically, "the experience of time-space compression provokes, excites, stresses, and sometimes leads to severe anxiety in people, thereby mobilising a wide range of social, cultural and political responses" (Harvey, 2003, p. 270). As a result, the new normalisation or new order that is being discussed today in various aspects is not only related to the conditions created by the pandemics, but also to the new socialities and politicalities created by increasing digitalisation. Since the phenomenon of digitalisation and acceleration of social life predates the pandemic, there will inevitably be criticism that the new "normal" being discussed today is not so new (Karakaş, 2020, p.546). Leaving aside such criticisms, it can also be said that the dramatic increase in the pace of social change along with the pandemic has dictated new norms and relations for politics and conflict resolution, and organisations such as the UN have adopted new policies to keep up with these changing conditions. In this sense, interpreting politics, disputes and conflict resolution in the context of time and space allows for a reinterpretation of the forms of social co-creation accelerated by the new order and an examination of how these norms and relations are contained within political institutions.

With the technological development of information systems in the 21st century, temporality became a focus of social science. However, the passage of time in technology, politics and economics and the effects of temporality vary dramatically (Bear, 2014, p. 8). Time, which is no longer accepted as a moment advancing on a definite and linear axis, is endowed with a social content. In particular, with the widespread use of digital technologies, time corresponds to a compressing, super-accelerating and obscuring phenomenon. The acceleration of today's technologies has brought the world to a different point in terms of social control. It is as if we are all voluntarily and intimately observed and monitored by a universal panoptic control (Virilio, 2003, p. 20; Han, 2020, p. 18). Along with the multitude of eyes spread across the world, time compresses and accelerates, geography shrinks and areas including dispute resolution and negotiation become placeless.

When discussing speed in the context of politics and conflict resolution, two basic practices should be taken into account: a) being active in the digital sphere to accompany high speed and b) following the innovations and actions that speed brings in the fields of technology, etc., and getting involved in the virtual space as needed. In conflict resolution and politics, it is neither preferable (and therefore necessary to slow down) nor necessary to act more quickly than in other fields. However, following and constantly

monitoring fields that have already taken action (technology, social media, business, etc.) allows for timely and on-the-spot action, which sometimes means moving fast. In essence, discussing digitalisation, which differentiates the way we experience time and space, on the axis of reconciliation means talking about two parallel levels that are not in contact with each other. On the first level, we encounter a narrower and more closed space that encompasses the mediation process and in which mediators are present. Here, if the parties and mediators use digital technologies well and effectively, and if they are digitally literate, this will shorten and facilitate the mediation process. Therefore, speed at this level will contribute positively, not negatively, to the negotiation. Indeed, it was observed that the use of various digital platforms and tools in Yemen and Libya during the pandemic made a significant contribution to the mediation process, particularly in the information-gathering phase. On the second level, there are the parties to the conflict, those trying to resolve it and the troublemakers, who are in fact all media users with access to the Internet. Movement on this level (frequently and pejoratively) has the potential to create destructive effects during the negotiation process. Actions such as leaks of information related to the reconciliation process, sharing by parties with negative emotions that can negatively affect the process, and disinformation by mischief makers in an easy way can block the process. As the theoretical arguments on the speed-up society indicate, the speed of social change cannot be ignored and disregarded. In other words, once the process is heard by the public, from then on, maintaining the process skilfully, face to face and in one place will allow for an effective solution. At this point, it can be suggested that hybrid mediation, where digital technologies are used effectively (including improving the technological/digital literacy of mediators) and which is faithful to conventional norms, should be adopted for a sustainable resolution in the 21st century. Kakoma and Marques (2020), writing about their predictions for the future of mediation in the post-pandemic period, also argue that the ground rules for consolidating global peace and security are constantly changing and therefore mediation practices should be adapted to the changing conditions (p.3). As noted above, negotiations are political processes that take time, and cyber-mediation has challenges as well as benefits. In particular, detailed legal statutes should be enacted to mitigate the risks and threats of new technologies.

Looking at mediation activities after the pandemic, one observes an inevitable return to conventional mediation, but it is not, and cannot be, a return to the past. The reference objects of the new world order have changed. Information is now one of the main tools of the new mediation systems. For this reason, mediators have to learn how to use, distribute and control information, as well as how to take an appropriate position between the parties.

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