# Digital Diplomacy: Challenges and Opportunities

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**Abstract.** Digital diplomacy has transformed the way states and international actors engage with the public, build relationships, and contribute to conflict resolution across multiple dimensions and challenges. With the advancement of technology and the increasing use of the internet, diplomacy has entered a new phase, where digital platforms play a significant role in diplomatic processes without disregarding traditional diplomacy.

This paper aims to analyse the concept of digital diplomacy, the opportunities and challenges it presents, and its impact on international relations. The methodology applied is based on the analysis of various materials and sources related to digital diplomacy, employing descriptive, analytical, historical, and observational methods to explore its importance, function, role, and associated challenges.

Through this study, we argue for the significance and positive role of digital diplomacy, particularly in the context of rapid technological advancement. As technology continues to expand, diplomacy is evolving toward a more open and transparent form. This paper examines the concept, opportunities, and challenges of digital diplomacy, along with practical examples of its application on the international stage, emphasising its growing importance and influence.

**Keywords:** Digital diplomacy; technology; challenges; opportunities; international communication.

## INTRODUCTION

The era of technology and information is developing and advancing at an unstoppable and increasingly uncontrollable pace, affecting all spheres and conditions of life in general. These developments and innovations have also impacted the field of diplomacy, leading to the emergence and evolution of digital diplomacy.

Defined as the use of information technology and various online communication platforms by state and non-state actors to influence various fields and international relations, digital diplomacy has significantly transformed the way states communicate, interact, and represent their interests in the global international arena. Digital diplomacy represents a timely development that integrates technology and its benefits into diplomatic practice. It provides a rapid and effective means of addressing specific issues and responding to emerging situations.

This paper explores the concept of digital diplomacy, along with its opportunities and challenges. Digital diplomacy is increasingly gaining relevance and importance in today's interconnected world. However, alongside its advantages, it also brings with it certain risks and limitations that are inevitable in the digital realm.

The study addresses digital diplomacy in an interconnected manner, beginning with a general definition supported by references to various scholars. Furthermore, the paper highlights the importance of both technology and diplomacy, emphasising the relationship and mutual interaction between the two. Technology and diplomacy are deeply interrelated and continuously interact with one another, generating benefits and global connections across the international stage.

This paper further elaborates on the opportunities offered by digital diplomacy, outlining a series of benefits gained through its use. It discusses the potential available to both state and non-

state actors through digital diplomacy. Rapid access and dissemination of information, efficient interactions, and dynamic information flow are among the key advantages of this new form of diplomacy.

A significant benefit is the coordination and mobilisation of the diaspora, which digital diplomacy facilitates more effectively than traditional means. Additionally, it allows for faster and more efficient communication with both domestic and international audiences. Another important aspect is the improvement of a country's international image. Moreover, digital diplomacy enhances the ability to manage various crises quickly and efficiently. Thus, digital diplomacy brings forth numerous opportunities and advantages in the global diplomatic landscape.

The paper also addresses the challenges associated with the use of digital diplomacy. While the potential is vast, the risks brought about by the increasing reliance on technology, particularly in the digital diplomatic space, must also be considered.

Digital diplomacy faces multiple challenges, several of which are identified in this study. One of the main issues is the spread of propaganda, which is extremely difficult to monitor or control completely in the digital sphere. Disinformation and unverified or false content represent another serious challenge, as they can significantly damage a country's international image and strain inter-state relations. Furthermore, cybersecurity remains a major threat to digital diplomacy.

Digital diplomacy is increasingly vulnerable to risks such as disinformation, data manipulation, cyberattacks, lack of regulatory frameworks, and insufficient human capacity. These factors can substantially diminish its effectiveness. Additionally, striking a delicate balance between freedom of communication and institutional oversight is essential. All these risks and many other challenges pose serious obstacles to the successful implementation and credibility of digital diplomacy.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Digital Diplomacy*. Digital diplomacy encompasses a wide range of definitions provided by various scholars and authors. However, due to its broad scope and the diverse ways in which technology is applied in multiple dimensions, it isn't easy to provide a singular, concrete, and concise definition. The evolving nature of technological tools and platforms makes digital diplomacy a dynamic and multifaceted concept.

From a scientific perspective, digital diplomacy can be understood as the intersection of international relations, intercultural communication, and modern technology, primarily shaped and driven by the latter. In practice, it is reflected in the ways diplomats, institutions, and non-state actors communicate and interact within the international arena.

Digital diplomacy (often referred to as *e-diplomacy* or *cyber diplomacy*) refers to the use of digital technologies to conduct diplomatic activities. It is commonly considered a subcategory of public diplomacy and aims to foster dialogue and cooperation through digital tools [1]. With increasing openness and transparency, states and their representatives, especially those in the diplomatic field, are increasingly turning to the use of technology. Through various digital platforms and tools, the transmission of information and messaging has never been faster or more accessible.

Public diplomacy is the foundation of digital diplomacy, empowering international dialogue through transparency and public engagement [2]. The internet has transformed the practice of diplomacy – from one-way dissemination of information to a more transparent and interactive form of communication [3]. The power of the internet and modern technology has significantly benefited diplomacy and all its actors. The development, strengthening, and utilisation of digital diplomacy has broken many traditional barriers in the international arena, involving the public directly and transparently. Therefore, digital diplomacy is no longer an option but a necessity for states that seek to maintain an active presence on the global stage.

"Digital diplomacy is not merely the use of social media, but a strategic approach to influence perceptions, build relationships, and manage international reputation" [4]. In practice, digital diplomacy represents one of the most effective tools for communication and relationship-building in the digital era. Through its use, countries can construct and manage international relations and national reputations more efficiently than ever before.

*Technology and Diplomacy*. Technology is a powerful segment of the era we live in, bringing both numerous benefits and certain negative aspects. Thanks to technological development, life and daily activities have become easier and more accessible for humanity.

Technology has fundamentally transformed the practice and strategies of diplomacy in the modern era. It has introduced a new level of transparency, interaction, and access to information, facilitating communication and cooperation among international actors [5].

Due to technological advancements, significant improvements have been made in communication and transparency globally. The development of technology has eased cooperation and increased it worldwide, especially among international actors.

According to Manor, technology has created a "communication transformation" that enables diplomats to express their positions directly to the global public through social media and digital channels, thereby reducing the role of traditional intermediaries such as mainstream media or official government channels [4].

Like all fields that have benefited from technology, diplomacy has also gained and continues to gain from technological developments. Thus, based on technology, digital diplomacy has emerged and evolved.

According to [6], digital diplomacy is a key tool for exercising soft power, as "in the information age, soft power depends more on being present and credible in digital spaces than on the number of embassies". Based on this citation, we can observe the concept, importance, and value of soft power, with an emphasis on digital diplomacy in the current era of technological evolution and power. The interconnection between digital diplomacy and technology is substantial and evident.

Many major states place particular importance on digital diplomacy, continuously using it and benefiting from it. A concrete example is the United States, which uses its social media accounts to respond to conflicts, promote democracy, and explain its policies. Similarly, during the war with Russia, Ukraine has employed digital diplomacy to influence international public opinion and seek global assistance.

There are various other concrete examples from different countries that continuously use digital diplomacy to serve their interests and advantages.

Moreover, many institutions also use digital diplomacy for their interests, favours, and objectives. Below are some of the institutions that utilise digital diplomacy: Ministries of Foreign Affairs; Embassies and Consulates; Individual Diplomats (ambassadors on Twitter); International Organisations (UN, EU, NATO).

*Opportunities and Digital Diplomacy*. Given that we are increasingly influenced by technology and information every day, we can say that the use of digital diplomacy presents a valuable and highly profitable opportunity.

Digital diplomacy has been studied and utilised by many scholars and states across various aspects, aiming to maximise the benefits it offers.

According to [7], digital diplomacy is characterised by:

Interactivity – enabling direct dialogue between diplomacy and the public.

Speed and efficiency – information is transmitted in real-time.

Global reach – messages transcend national borders and reach international audiences.

Transparency and trust-building – enhancing public accountability.

Thus, digital diplomacy continuously and rapidly influences the entire world. Many countries that lack sufficient or accurate information about another country can be influenced and informed through digital diplomacy.

Through digital diplomacy, communication with the public is conducted swiftly and in real-time, delivering clear messages and concrete objectives. Many individuals with limited knowledge of a country or those who have never visited can easily access relevant information and establish contact regarding common interests and goals. Additionally, digital diplomacy enhances accountability in public diplomacy, ensuring that the public remains coherently informed about ongoing developments.

The use of digital diplomacy is an instrument of the times, characterised by globalisation, advanced technology, and speed, that cohesively connects global developments, breaks down barriers, and yields results for those who use it cor-

rectly in pursuit of specific national and international interests.

According to Nye's soft power theory, digital diplomacy is a strategic tool for: Promoting the international image of the state (nation branding); Spreading democratic and cultural values; Influencing global public opinion; Managing diplomatic crises in real-time; Mobilising the diaspora and engaging with non-state actors.

As the author [6] emphasises, "in the information age, soft power depends more on being present and credible in digital spaces than on the number of embassies".

Nye highlights the importance of the information age and the impact of digitalisation. He goes so far as to prioritise digital presence over the number of embassies that states maintain in various parts of the world.

Thus, digitalisation breaks down every barrier and keeps pace with the times in all aspects and conditions of global advancement. States, foreign policy actors, as well as all internal and external stakeholders, can leverage digital diplomacy and technology to generate significant benefits for their countries and foster fruitful relationships.

Through digital diplomacy, a country's international image can be enhanced and promoted worldwide swiftly and efficiently. States can effectively showcase democracy and cultural values on the global stage.

Digital diplomacy enables countries to manage crises quickly and effectively in real time across all fields, including diplomatic and foreign affairs. It also plays a crucial role in combating international disinformation and propaganda, protecting the national image, and countering false information.

Mobilising the diaspora, harnessing its benefits, and coordinating with it through digital diplomacy occurs rapidly and adequately, keeping all parties consistently informed of relevant developments and changes. Digital diplomacy can attract investments from the diaspora and maintain continuous communication and connection between diaspora communities and their countries of origin.

Coordination with non-state actors, attracting investments, promoting cultural influence, and advancing developments in education, sports, and other sectors can all be facilitated through digital diplomacy.

Therefore, digital diplomacy represents a powerful segment of diplomacy that covers multiple fields, providing numerous benefits for states. Its use, based on strategic interests, often surpasses traditional methods and the mere presence of numerous embassies across different countries.

*Challenges And Digital Diplomacy.* While digital diplomacy has brought numerous benefits and advantages in international communication and interaction, it also faces a range of serious challenges and issues that affect its effectiveness and credibility as a foreign policy tool.

It is important to recognise that the process of technological development and digitisation, in general, is not secure against cyber risks. Consequently, the internet and social media are often misused for various purposes, particularly by state and non-state actors who employ technology across all facets and general needs.

Every innovation or tool that offers advantages and benefits also carries disadvantages, risks, and potential harms. Digital diplomacy is no exception; it, too, has its strengths and weaknesses. Below, we outline several challenges faced by digital diplomacy, many of which undermine its credibility in various instances.

*Disinformation and propaganda:* "Disinformation in the digital space is not only a risk to public opinion but also a threat to the international reputation of states" [8]. One of the greatest challenges facing digital diplomacy today is disinformation and propaganda propagated in online internet spaces, which are extremely difficult to control and manage.

*Credibility of Online Sources:* In the era of technological advancement and information overload, it is very difficult to distinguish and accurately identify true versus false sources. This issue poses a significant challenge for digital diplomacy and requires continuous vigilance in the dissemination of diplomatic messages and signals, as well as broader communication efforts.

*Technological Inequality:* Today, the world consists of both highly developed and less developed countries. The world has never been equal in all respects, and technology is no exception. This inequality contributes to the differences in power and advancement among various states. Not all states have equal access to technological resources, creating a digital divide that affects their ability to compete in the realm of digital diplomacy. Countries with weaker digital infrastruc-

ture remain less capable of influencing the international discourse [9].

*Surveillance and Lack of Ethics:* The use of technological tools for mass surveillance or illegal monitoring through social networks can create ethical and diplomatic conflicts between states, undermining human rights and eroding international trust [5]. The uncontrolled use of technology in certain areas can cause significant damage, especially in international relations. Accessing unauthorised information and using leaked or illegal documents and data can result in severe consequences.

*Cybersecurity:* Diplomats and state institutions are continuously targeted by cyberattacks, which can have serious repercussions for international relations, including the leakage of confidential information or sabotage of diplomatic campaigns [10]. States must invest in cyber defence and digital education for diplomats and embassies, enhancing technological security and data protection. Cyberattacks and various hackers represent one of the most pressing threats in an era characterised by rapid technological development.

Therefore, the role, importance, and use of digital diplomacy are indispensable in the modern age of globalisation. The challenges above represent only a portion of the technological issues facing digital diplomacy. The key problem is that as technology develops and advances, so do the challenges for digital diplomacy.

The significance and application of digital diplomacy primarily rely on information and communication technologies (ICT), the internet, and social media in various ways. Together, these elements play a crucial role in promoting, strengthening, and sustaining international relations and interests.

## CONCLUSIONS

By combining the power of information technology with the strategic objectives of traditional diplomacy, digital diplomacy has opened new horizons for communication, influence, and representation on the global stage. As a product of the technological development era and a tool for strengthening foreign policy, digital diplomacy is no longer merely an advanced option reserved for states with significant technological capabilities; it has become a necessity even for small and developing countries that lack the resources and power of technologically advanced states.

However, the use and development of digital diplomacy are not without challenges. Considering the risks on one hand and the benefits on the other, it can be affirmed that digital diplomacy is worthwhile and highly beneficial.

The opportunities arising from digital diplomacy are numerous and strategically important: from strengthening public diplomacy and building a sustainable national narrative, to empowering engagement with the diaspora, promoting international image, and increasing participation in the global arena. These values are especially crucial for states with limited economic, strategic, or geopolitical capacities, for whom traditional diplomatic tools are often insufficient to influence international discourse.

The opportunities and advantages of digital diplomacy are substantial. Yet, their effective use requires an integrated inter-institutional approach, specialised technical capacities, and a communication culture that balances transparency, professionalism, and strategic consistency.

Additionally, risks associated with cybersecurity, media polarisation, information manipulation, misinformation, cyberattacks, and the lack of clear legal frameworks remain significant obstacles. These challenges demand careful attention, well-prepared responses, and well-structured laws and regulations.

Major concerns for digital diplomacy also include external interference, the spread of disinformation, and the lack of institutional capacities and trained human resources, which often result in stagnation in the development and implementation of digital diplomacy strategies.

Throughout this paper, we have argued the benefits and advantages that both state and non-state actors can derive from the opportunities offered by digital diplomacy, illustrating its application in both specific and general contexts.

In conclusion, digital diplomacy should not be understood as a replacement for traditional diplomacy, nor should it undermine its value and significance. Instead, it should be seen as a substantial complement, offering new levers and tools for building trust, promoting democratic values, and strengthening the international position of states in an increasingly complex and digitalised global order that continues to evolve rapidly in the era of globalisation.

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