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DIGITAL DIPLOMACY IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: TOOLS, RISKS, AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract. ***The article provides a comprehensive overview of digital diplomacy as a new paradigm of international communication, shaped by the evolution of information technologies. It traces the development of digital diplomacy from its institutionalization during the Obama administration to its transformation under Donald Trump, highlighting the growing role of social media, online communication, and digital tools in shaping the image and influence of states on the global stage. The study further examines the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into diplomatic practice, emphasizing how AI enhances information analysis, forecasting, and strategic communication, while simultaneously generating ethical, legal, and security challenges. The research argues that in the age of AI, digital diplomacy evolves from a communicative mechanism into a complex system of data-driven decision-making and international interaction, requiring new principles of transparency, accountability, and human oversight.***

Keywords: *digital diplomacy, artificial intelligence, international relations, communication technologies.*

The late twentieth century marked a pivotal stage in the evolution of the global system. During this period, humanity faced two interrelated processes that shaped the subsequent dynamics of international relations: the collapse of bipolar world order and the rapid development of information and communication technologies. The information revolution remodel not only the nature of data dissemination but also the structure of interaction between the state and society, as well as among individuals on a global scale.

The extensive expansion of digital communication technologies fundamentally reconfigured the political landscape, intensifying the processes of globalization and transforming information flows into powerful tools of influence and public opinion formation. By the late 2000s, political and diplomatic elites encountered a new challenge—the rapid expansion of social networks. The emergence of smartphones and mobile applications made information almost instantaneously accessible to wide audiences, enabling users to receive and disseminate news in real time; this development essentially redefined the sphere of political communication and heightened the influence of public opinion on foreign policy processes.

Under these specific circumstances emerged the need to reconceptualize approaches to international communication and development of a new domain—digital diplomacy. The term digital diplomacy (also referred to as Internet diplomacy, social media diplo-

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macy, or Web 2.0 diplomacy) first entered academic and political discourse in the context of analyzing the foreign policy of the United States. It denotes a contemporary form of diplomatic activity grounded in the use of the Internet and information and communication technologies to achieve foreign policy objectives and strengthen international relations (Hocking, Melissen, 2015). Digital diplomacy entails the introduction of innovative modes of interaction between governmental institutions and foreign audiences through online communication, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of foreign policy dialogue and expanding the instruments of public diplomacy.

In scientific literature, digital diplomacy is also defined as "the use of the Internet, information and communication technologies, and social media as instruments for engaging in diplomatic activities and achieving foreign policy objectives". It is conducted through digital platforms and online tools, including official websites, blogs, social media networks, and mobile applications. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter play a particularly significant role, providing politicians and diplomats with a unique opportunity for direct interaction with citizens, shaping public opinion, and promoting a positive image of the state on the international stage.

Digital diplomacy is primarily characterized by the application of contemporary digital technologies to promote state interests, active interaction with audiences via social media platforms, increased transparency in the s of diplomatic institutions, and the safeguarding of national interests in cyberspace.

Digital diplomacy is primarily characterized by the application of contemporary digital technologies to advance state interests, proactive engagement with audiences via social media platforms, increased transparency of diplomatic institutions' operation, and the protection of national interests in cyberspace (Bjola, Holmes, 2015). By integrating conventional diplomatic practices with the affordances of digital channels—which allow for the rapid dissemination of messages to wide audiences at relatively low cost—digital diplomacy establishes new spheres of interaction, both among state actors and between states and non-state stakeholders in international communication (Hocking, Melissen, 2015: 55).

A key aspect in understanding the essence of digital diplomacy refers to the functional nature: at its core, it serves as a technologically oriented instrument designed to facilitate the implementation of foreign policy objectives through digital communication tools. The foreign policy agenda and digital diplomacy of the United States are grounded in a set of values and ideological principles that reflect democratic traditions and liberal freedoms. These principles are largely operationalized through the activities of leading American IT companies—such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter, etc., whose business models and communication strategies have become integral components of the information infrastructure of the contemporary world (Zinovieva, 2015).

William Dizard, Senior Fellow in the International Communications Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington, D.C.), is considered one of the earliest scholars to introduce the term "digital diplomacy." In the study *Digital Diplomacy: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Information Age*, he examines the capacity of the U.S. diplomatic system to respond and adapt to the challenges and requirements posed by the digital era (Dizard, 2001). According to Dizard, digital diplomacy represents a process of transforming traditional diplomatic methods, including public diplomacy,

under the influence of the new information and communication environment. The researcher places particular emphasis on the technological dimension—the adoption of digital instruments to replace analog ones, analogous to how the telegraph and telephone supplanted written correspondence. Nevertheless, the usage of the proposed term remained limited until 2009, and by the early 2010s, it had been partially supplanted by the term "*eDiplomacy*".

The philosophical foundations of the American approach to digital diplomacy were systematized in the works of Anne-Marie Slaughter, who served as Director of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State from 2009 to 2011. Slaughter argues that states with the most advanced and robust information exchange and communication systems gain the ability to shape the global agenda and exert influence over developments in the international arena (Slaughter, 2011).

Fergus Hanson, an Australian scholar in the fields of international relations and digital diplomacy and Director of the International Cyber Policy Centre at the Lowy Institute for International Policy (Australia), provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of digital tools in diplomatic practice and the activities of U.S. Department of State in the domain of eDiplomacy in his study *Revolution @State: The Spread of eDiplomacy* (2012). According to Hanson, the primary objective of digital diplomacy is to establish and maintain continuous engagement with both domestic and foreign audiences in the digital sphere, to utilize analytical instruments for studying public trends, and to collaborate with influential actors in the online environment—such as social media influencers capable of shaping public opinion and social trends. In this way, digital diplomacy becomes an integral component of contemporary foreign policy, enabling the adaptation of traditional diplomatic practices to the demands of the information age and enhancing a state's international influence (Hanson, 2012: 3-4).

Over time, the conceptual foundations of digital diplomacy, developed in the works of the aforementioned scholars, were translated into practical implementation within the institutional policies of the United States. The U.S. was among the first countries where the ideas of digital diplomacy evolved from theoretical frameworks into concrete organizational structures and programs.

In 2001, the United States announced the emergence of network diplomacy—Net Diplomacy, and by 2002, the first working group addressing digital diplomacy issues, the Digital Outreach Team, was established within the Department of State. In the same year, the eDiplomacy Task Force (later renamed the Office of eDiplomacy) was created to focus on internal digital modernization, and in 2006, the Digital Outreach Team (DOT) was established to concentrate on external digital engagement and participation in blog communities.

By the beginning of the 21st century, the United States had become one of the first countries to recognize the strategic potential of digital technologies in the sphere of foreign policy communication. U.S. digital diplomacy programs began to develop in 2002–2003, when the administration of President George W. Bush initiated the transition of traditional international broadcasting—radio and television, into the online environment. In 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice established the Digital Outreach Team, composed of specialists responsible for monitoring information and disinforma-

tion about the United States disseminated by social media users. During the same period, the Secretary announced the launch of the State Department's first official blog, as well as the creation of a government web portal and several electronic journals (Zinovieva, 2015). By 2008, more than fifteen specialized units operating within the U.S. Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Department of Defense, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) were engaged in communication with foreign online audiences. Their activities included the analysis of international and national social networks, and the dissemination of information aimed at shaping a positive image of the United States within the global information space.

A significant contribution to the institutionalization of digital diplomacy was made by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who held office from 2009 to 2013. During her tenure, a large-scale reform of the Department of State was launched with the objective of modernizing foreign policy instruments in accordance with the demands of the information age. The reform was grounded in the idea of integrating new technologies into diplomatic practice and actively utilizing the potential of the Internet. By 2010, Clinton had succeeded in establishing partnerships with the leaders of major private Internet companies such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter, etc., thereby transforming digital platforms into essential tools of diplomatic communication.

Under President Barack Obama, digital diplomacy was advanced to a qualitatively new stage, becoming one of the central instruments of U.S. foreign policy. In 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton unveiled a renewed U.S. foreign policy framework that identified digital diplomacy as a core strategic direction. The principal aim of this initiative was to foster the consolidation of global online audiences around the values and initiatives underpinning American foreign policy (Cull, 2013:252).

As part of this strategy implementation, the U.S. Department of State developed an extensive digital infrastructure that included approximately 230 Facebook pages, 80 Twitter accounts, 55 YouTube channels, and 40 Flickr pages. The platforms were employed to promote U.S. foreign policy positions, disseminate official statements, and facilitate dialogue with international audiences.

Particular significance was attached to the active use of digital technologies by the President himself. Barack Obama became the first head of state to systematically employ the capabilities of the World Wide Web for direct communication with citizens. He maintained an official presence on more than sixteen online platforms, and his Twitter microblog became one of the most popular globally, with over 43 million followers. It was largely due to his active involvement that U.S. digital diplomacy acquired a mass and personalized character, while communication between government officials and Internet users became an inherent and natural component of public policy.

The first presidency of Donald Trump (2017–2021) marked a new stage in the evolution of digital diplomacy. Unlike his predecessors, Trump viewed social media—particularly Twitter—not merely as a communication tool but as a means of direct political influence. His personal posts frequently substituted for official White House statements, generating instant informational agendas and shaping international perceptions of the United States. Consequently, diplomacy during the Trump era assumed the features of "personalized public diplomacy," and the boundaries between personal and institutional

communication were effectively blurred. However, this highly direct style often provoked diplomatic crises and reduced the predictability of foreign policy signals.

With the election of Joseph Biden, U.S. digital diplomacy underwent another phase of reconfiguration. The Biden administration placed emphasis on restoring trust in traditional institutions, combating disinformation, and enhancing the transparency of governmental communication. In contrast to Trump, Biden employed digital platforms primarily as instruments of institutional engagement, thereby restoring to digital diplomacy the characteristics of a coordinated and professional activity. Special attention has been devoted to cybersecurity, personal data protection, and the development of international cooperation in regulating the digital domain.

The second presidency of Donald Trump (beginning in 2025) has been accompanied by attempts to redefine the role of digital instruments within the framework of "America First 2.0." The Trump administration – 2 has continued to employ social media actively for the promotion of foreign policy messages; however, the focus has now shifted toward stricter control over information flows and the strengthening of national cybersecurity.

Thus, the American model of digital diplomacy has demonstrated the effectiveness of network technologies as instruments of foreign policy influence, transforming the Internet into a key arena for shaping the state's global image and advancing national interests.

The evolution of digital diplomacy practice in the United States, from early experiments with communication platforms to the large-scale use of social media as an instrument of public diplomacy, has stimulated the development of theoretical approaches. Gradually, concepts emerged that framed digital diplomacy not merely as a technological phenomenon but as a distinct form of political communication, integrating elements of public diplomacy, strategic communication, and networked interaction. The use of social media became one of the central directions in the development of digital public diplomacy. Contemporary politicians and diplomats actively employ media spaces as instruments to expand their influence and establish direct contact with international audiences, avoiding traditional communication channels.

Social media assumed particular significance in the mid-2010s, functioning as powerful instrument for shaping foreign policy agendas. For instance, during 2016–2017, the Twitter platform emerged as one of the most influential tools of digital diplomacy. The posts of U.S. President Donald Trump on this platform attracted extensive international attention and often became focal points of both public and diplomatic discussion. Through brief messages on Twitter, the head of state addressed the global community directly, commented on current political events, and announced key foreign policy decisions, a feature that became characteristic of a new stage in the evolution of diplomatic communication.

In this context, it appears that the evolution of digital diplomacy was not chaotic, but proceeded according to a discernible logic of institutional and technological development. An examination of its developmental trajectory reveals three principal stages, each representing a distinct phase in the evolving relationship between diplomacy and information and communication technologies.

The first stage—Web 1.0 – was characterized by the emergence of static websites primarily designed for the dissemination of official information. During this phase, digi-

tal diplomacy served predominantly an informational function: press releases, speeches, documents, and international agreements were published, while audience feedback was virtually nonexistent.

The second stage—Web 2.0 - marked a transition to interactive forms of communication. Diplomatic institutions started to actively utilize social media platforms, blogs, and forums, enabling not only the dissemination of information but also the establishment of two-way dialogue with the public. During this period, digital diplomacy evolved into a tool for public engagement, shaping public opinion, and enhancing the state's image.

The third stage—Web 3.0 - is characterized by the integration of artificial intelligence, blockchain technologies, and decentralized data exchange systems. These innovations have provided enhanced security, transparency, and efficiency in communications, thereby strengthening the operational capacity of diplomacy within the context of global digitalization. Within this framework, artificial intelligence assumes particular significance, functioning not merely as a technological tool but as a strategic resource with the potential to transform the mechanisms of communication, analysis, and decision-making in the realm of foreign policy (Ordovskiy, Kojemyakin, 2025: 159).

Comprehending the role of artificial intelligence (AI) requires an analysis of its essential nature. AI can be defined both as a framework of principles governing the computational simulation of human cognition and intelligent behavior, and as an academic discipline devoted to their systematic investigation (Grishanina, 2021). In recent years, artificial intelligence has assumed increasing significance across numerous domains of human activity. Its potential is actively used in the analysis of large datasets, image and speech recognition, automatic text translation, content generation, management of financial and business processes, automation of production and transportation, medical diagnostics, educational technologies, also in the entertainment and creative industries. The growing prevalence and functional capabilities of AI inevitably impact the international security system, as its application has the potential to alter existing balances of power among states and generate new challenges in global governance and diplomacy.

However, despite the widespread use of the term, no universally accepted definition of AI exists; its meaning varies depending on the conceptual approach and field of application. In the scholarly literature and analytical reports (notably IBM Think, 2024), three primary types of artificial intelligence are distinguished, differing in terms of autonomy, cognitive complexity, and scope of application: narrow AI, general AI, and superintelligence.

Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) represents systems designed to perform specific tasks within strictly defined parameters. Such technologies are used for image recognition, natural language processing, translation, data analytics, and automated communication. Narrow AI lacks self-awareness and the capacity for autonomous learning beyond pre-programmed algorithms. However, this type of artificial intelligence is the most widespread and is actively utilized in diplomatic practice: for information processing, analysis of public sentiment, management of online communications, and forecasting of international events.

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) refers to a hypothetical form of intelligence characterized by the ability of machines to learn, reason, and make decisions at a level

comparable to humans. AGI would be capable of adapting to new environments, understanding context, developing strategies, and generating new knowledge. At present, such systems remain at the theoretical stage of development; however, they attract considerable interest among scholars of international relations, as the emergence of AGI could fundamentally transform the balance of power, the nature of diplomacy, and the principles of international interaction.

Artificial Superintelligence (ASI) denotes a conceptual stage of technological advancement in which artificial systems not only equal but surpass the human mind in information processing speed, analytical depth, and decision-making capacity. From a theoretical standpoint, ASI could possess strategic reasoning abilities, emotional modeling, and even elements of creativity. Yet, this form of AI presents the greatest challenge to global security and international law, as its autonomy and analytical power could potentially exceed the limits of human control.

The classification of artificial intelligence into three levels holds fundamental importance for the analysis of digital diplomacy. At the present stage, states primarily employ Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) - in data analytics, information flow monitoring, document processing, and the optimization of foreign policy communications. Nevertheless, the gradual advancement toward systems incorporating elements of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) opens new prospects, from providing intelligent support for negotiation processes to forecasting crises and developing scenarios of international interaction.

Empirical evidence demonstrates the progressive integration of artificial intelligence into diplomatic practice. The contemporary deployment of digital technologies in diplomacy is accompanied by intensive discussions on the potential applications of artificial intelligence within diplomatic practice. It should be emphasized that artificial intelligence is already utilized by numerous states, particularly in the sphere of international cooperation. Notably, in China, intelligent systems are actively used by diplomats to model and analyze potential developments in international affairs. Artificial intelligence is increasingly applied not only in the realm of national security, such as through the use of autonomous weapon systems, but also within the domains of economic diplomacy and trade negotiations. For example, leading IT companies are developing cognitive assistants and advisory systems capable of analyzing large datasets related to complex technical aspects of trade, thereby significantly accelerating the formulation of optimal trade strategies in a competitive environment (Lisovolik, 2023).

According to M. Vacarelu, a researcher at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (Bucharest, Romania), artificial intelligence exerts its influence on diplomacy along two principal dimensions: it reconfigures the operational context in which diplomats and consular officials function, and simultaneously introduces innovative instruments that enhance the performance of their professional duties. Vacarelu underscores that AI possesses the capacity to streamline and expedite various bureaucratic procedures, thereby increasing institutional efficiency. For example, advanced data analysis technologies can be utilized for the retrospective assessment of negotiation processes and the projection of their potential trajectories, while machine learning algorithms may assist in formulating and optimizing negotiation strategies (Vacarelu, 2021).

Moreover, artificial intelligence opens prospects to overcoming linguistic barriers. Contemporary AI-based solutions can enhance simultaneous translation through a more sophisticated understanding of contextual meaning, thereby making communication between representatives of different states more accurate and natural. Finally, AI contributes to strengthening the security of diplomatic missions and improving the reliability of information by means of automated data verification, image recognition, and other computational processing techniques.

In contemporary research literature examining the relationship between artificial intelligence and diplomacy, three key dimensions of AI application in diplomatic practice are identified: AI as a subject of diplomatic negotiation; AI as an instrument of diplomatic activity; and AI as a factor transforming the diplomatic environment (Höne, 2019: 9-10).

Artificial intelligence as a subject of diplomatic negotiation is becoming an increasingly significant domain of international engagement. Issues such as the regulation of AI use, the establishment of ethical standards, the protection of personal data, and the prevention of the militarization of AI technologies have entered the agendas of global fora, including the United Nations, UNESCO, the European Union, and the G7. At the level of intergovernmental negotiations, a new field—technological diplomacy (tech diplomacy)—is emerging, wherein states seek to develop coordinated approaches to the governance of digital innovations and the mitigation of associated risks.

Artificial intelligence as an instrument of diplomacy is already being actively employed to optimize the functioning of foreign policy institutions. Advanced AI algorithms are utilized for the analysis of large datasets, monitoring of international media and social networks, forecasting of political and humanitarian crises, and the automation of documentation and communication processes. Such tools enable diplomats to accelerate decision-making, improve the quality of analytical reporting, and personalize foreign policy messaging. Moreover, machine learning technologies are increasingly applied in the preparation of negotiation strategies, scenario modeling, and risk assessment, thus integrating AI into the practical infrastructure of diplomatic activity.

Artificial intelligence as a factor transforming the diplomatic context exerts a systemic influence on the international environment. The proliferation of AI technologies is reshaping not only the modalities of interaction among states but also the very nature of power, influence, and information in international relations. The automation of communication processes, the growing role of digital corporations, and the unequal access to advanced technologies generate new forms of asymmetry between states. This dynamic gives rise to a new type of digital inequality, wherein the capacity to deploy AI effectively becomes an indicator of foreign policy competitiveness.

In the context of the evolution of digital diplomacy, the expanding role of AI as a crucial instrument of global governance is becoming increasingly evident. Despite numerous arguments in favor of the active integration of AI into international affairs, current neural systems are not yet authorized or capable of substituting human decision-making at the highest political level. This limitation underscores the necessity of developing international ethical and legal frameworks to regulate the use of artificial intelligence in the interests of peace, security, and sustainable development.

Artificial intelligence is thus emerging as an integral component of contemporary digital diplomacy, creating new opportunities for analysis, communication, and decision-making in the sphere of foreign policy. At the same time, its advancement gives rise to ethical, legal, and political challenges that necessitate the establishment of international norms and regulatory mechanisms. The effective utilization of AI in diplomacy can only be achieved through the preservation of human oversight and accountability, ensuring that technological progress serves the objectives of peace, security, and cooperation among states.

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