

Volume: 3  
Number: 3  
Page: 189 - 203

**Article History:**

Received: 2023-06-07  
Revised: 2023-06-20  
Accepted: 2023-07-15

**THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY ON FOREIGN POLICY**

**Ismail Adaramola Abdul AZEEZ<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Head of Department of International Relations and Diplomacy College of International Justice, London

Corresponding author: Ismail Adaramola Abdul Azeez

E-mail: [imamdarams@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:imamdarams@yahoo.co.uk)

**Abstract:**

The Internet revolution has affected all aspects of life, including international relations. This revolution has also transformed diplomacy as a foreign policy tool. This paper examines the concept of digital diplomacy, focusing on the use of digital media in diplomacy and how countries use these tools to pursue their foreign policies. It examines the opportunities and challenges these media offer for diplomatic activities. It argues that countries must be able to afford to be included in this era of digital diplomacy as they can significantly benefit from these emerging diplomatic trends. This research will use an inspiration from the methodological tradition in social sciences of using inductive insights into lived experiences, such insights are accurate for Diplomacy studies that draw on practice approaches, it also carries weight for Studies of digital Diplomacy. Digital diplomacy and Internet activities as a whole can significantly assist in projecting a state's foreign policy positions to domestic and foreign audiences. Digital diplomacy helps to strengthen relations between North and South; it gives several chances to get authentic information, which enhances economic, political, and diplomatic relations in an international arena.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy, Digital Diplomacy, Soft Power Diplomacy, North and South.

Cite this as AZEEZ, I. A. A. (2023). "The Influence of Digital Diplomacy on Foreign Policy." *Journal of Tourism Economics and Policy*, 3 (3), 189 - 203.



**INTRODUCTION**

Digital diplomacy is usually conceptualized as a form of public diplomacy. It involves using digital technologies and social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Weibo to communicate with the foreign public, usually in a non-costly manner. This paper examines the concept of digital diplomacy, focusing on the use of digital media in diplomacy and how countries use these tools to pursue their foreign policies. It examines the opportunities and challenges these media offer for diplomatic activities. It argues that countries must be able to afford to be included in this era of digital diplomacy as they can significantly benefit from these emerging diplomatic trends. Digital diplomacy does not replace traditional face-to-face diplomacy. Traditional and digital diplomacy co-exist and complement, rather than compete with, each other. Digital diplomacy and Internet activities as a whole can significantly assist in projecting a state's foreign policy positions to domestic and foreign audiences. Crabb (1972) stated, "Foreign policy comprises national objectives and the means to achieve them. The interaction between national goals and the resources for attaining them is the perennial subject of statecraft. In its ingredients, the foreign policy of all nations, great and small, is the same." Thus, one of the elements of foreign policy is the means of achieving a country's objectives, and one of the significant instruments of foreign policy is diplomacy. One major

factor that has affected diplomacy in this modern age is the revolution in information and communication technologies (ICTs).

ICTs have revolutionized how people communicate and exchange information, changing global political, social, and economic landscapes. As noted by Faye (2000), ICTs offer even less developed countries a window of opportunities to leapfrog the industrialization stage and transform their economies into high-value-added information economies that can compete with the advanced economies on the global market. Technological innovation has contributed to globalization by supplying infrastructure for trans-world connections, and countries must take advantage of the opportunities these technologies are creating. The Internet, primarily, which has been defined as "a means of communication that enables the publication, exchange, and storage of information" (Westcott, 2008), has become central to public and private communication while contemporary tools, including social media, have brought millions into open conversation spaces. With more than 2 billion people using Facebook, Twitter, Qzone, Snapchat, and other social media platforms daily, digital connectivity has made the world smaller and, in the process, changed the daily lives of billions of people. Now, unmediated dialogue and information exchange between people worldwide is occurring 24 hours a day, all through the year. Social media provide enormous opportunities and challenges for states and international organizations as they seek to engage with new policy spaces developing around the Internet. This revolution in ICTs has also resulted in fundamental changes in diplomacy globally. In countries like Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen, social media has become a platform to distribute uncensored public information among users. Social media aided Arab Spring activists in breaking down "the psychological barrier of fear by helping many to connect and share information" and, in some cases, in helping to organize physical protests (Kassim, 2012). Although the traditional mode of conducting diplomacy, interactions between representatives of sovereign states, remains crucial, in today's interconnected world, individuals and organizations, not just countries, play a more significant role in international affairs. It has given rise to what is referred to as digital diplomacy. However, Bjola (2015) noted that despite digital diplomacy's promises for international relations, little is known, from an analytical perspective, how digital diplomacy works, with what degree of success, and its limitations. This paper explores the concept of digital diplomacy, focusing on the use of digital media in diplomacy and how countries utilize these tools to further their foreign policies. It examines the opportunities and challenges these media offer for diplomatic activities and how digital media affects core diplomatic functions of representation, communication, and relationship management.

**What is Digital Diplomacy?** Diplomacy is international relations's "engine room" (Cohen, 1998). It is the established method by which states articulate their foreign policy objectives and coordinate their efforts to influence the decisions and behavior of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiations, and other such measures, short of war and violence. It is, in other words, the centuries-long means by which states seek to secure particular or broader interests, including the reduction of friction between or among themselves. It is the core instrument through which the goals, strategies, and broad foreign policy tactics are implemented. It strives to preserve peace and aims at developing goodwill towards foreign states and peoples to ensure their cooperation or, failing that, their neutrality. As a recent development, digital diplomacy has been interpreted, defined, and understood in different yet similar ways by researchers and practitioners

alike (Sotiriu, 2015). Hence, no widely accepted definition or framework covers the concept. It is safe to assume that current studies have only begun to scratch the surface of what digital diplomacy means and how it works. It explains the need for a more reliable conceptual framework for assessing the effectiveness of social media for public diplomatic purposes (Bjola & Jiang, 2015). According to Manor and Segev (2015), digital diplomacy refers mainly to the growing use of social media platforms by a country in order to achieve its foreign policy goals and proactively manage its image and reputation. They noted that digital diplomacy exists at two levels: the foreign ministry and embassies worldwide. By operating on these two levels, nations can tailor foreign policy and nation-branding messages to the unique characteristics of local audiences concerning history, culture, values, and traditions, thereby facilitating the acceptance of their foreign policy and the image they aim to promote. Lewis (2014) defines digital diplomacy as the use of digital communication tools (social media) by diplomats to communicate with each other and the general public. According to Potter (2002), digital diplomacy mainly refers to diplomatic practices through digital and networked technologies, including the Internet, mobile devices, and social media channels. Hanson (2012) defines it simply as using the internet and new Information Communications Technologies to help carry out diplomatic objectives. He outlines eight policy goals for digital diplomacy:

1. Knowledge Management: To harness departmental and whole government knowledge to be retained, shared, and optimized to pursue national interests abroad.
2. Public Diplomacy: To maintain contact with audiences as they migrate online, harness new communications tools to listen to and target important audiences with critical messages, and influence major online influencers.
3. Information Management: To help aggregate the overwhelming flow of information and to use this to inform policy-making better and to help anticipate and respond to emerging social and political movements.
4. Consular Communications and response: To create direct, personal communications channels with citizens traveling overseas, with manageable communications in crises.
5. Disaster Response: To harness the power of connective technologies in disaster response situations.
6. Internet Freedom: Creation of technologies to keep the Internet free and open. It has the related objectives of promoting freedom of speech and democracy and undermining authoritarian regimes.
7. External Resources: Creating digital mechanisms to draw on and harness external expertise to advance national goals.
8. Policy Planning: To allow for effective oversight, coordination, and planning of international policy across government in response to the internationalization of the bureaucracy. The United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) defines digital diplomacy on its website.

What is digital diplomacy? Digital diplomacy is solving foreign policy problems using the internet. It is conventional diplomacy through a different medium. We can listen, publish, engage, and evaluate through the web in new and exciting ways. Crucially, we can widen our reach and communicate directly with civil society, governments, and influential individuals ... Why are we doing it? Because we have to ... Those whose ideals and objectives we oppose are active and highly

effective at using the web. We lose our argument by default if we do not take up the digital debate. Many of our partners, particularly those outside the government, have an established digital presence, engaged audiences, and expertise in achieving goals online. We miss a massive opportunity if we do not work with them. Our shift from one-way web publishing into active digital diplomacy reflects the changing way we all use the web as a multi-way social medium and a source of information. We lose credibility and cannot claim to be an open organization if we do not take part. Holmes (2015) defines digital diplomacy as a "strategy of managing change through digital tools and virtual collaborations," emphasizing the inherently collaborative nature of diplomacy both online and offline, which the digital does not affect in any way. One of the salient tasks of diplomacy is gathering information and reporting, by lawful means, on conditions and developments within the host country for the sending government, as well as promoting friendly relations between the two states. Information may be gathered from an array of sources, and the use of experience and expert knowledge is essential in identifying, analyzing, and interpreting emerging key issues and their implications for peace and progress, as well as for the security and other benefits of the sending state. In order to provide both information and policy advice to their governments, foreign ministries have relied on the expertise of their staff, their network of diplomatic missions, the confidentiality of diplomatic communication, and their access to foreign decision-makers. Governments, in turn, have come to rely on their foreign ministries to provide their national viewfinder for events in the world and conduct foreign policy in a way that best advances the national interest (Grant, 2004).

Negotiation is also a key component of diplomacy. Diplomats are constantly negotiating something (both bilaterally and internationally) on a growing number of subjects: from the laws of the sea to immigration, from scientific and cultural cooperation to trade, tourism, and technology transfers, from the environment to food security, from security to police cooperation, from medicine security to improved health services, from research to academic cooperation, from poverty to economic development, from children to women rights, and so on (Ritto, 2014). Often, many of these negotiations take place simultaneously, making it difficult for countries to send people to follow them. Small countries with limited resources can only afford some travel costs. The internet, through Skype and the system of video conferences, allows countries to overcome these problems and to follow conferences and seminars from capitals, making it possible also for the officials of those countries to intervene in them and to make their opinions known. Digital diplomacy evolved from public diplomacy, a form of diplomatic practice, which has been defined as an "instrument used by states to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relationships; and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values" (Melissen, 2013). Sotiriu (2015) argues that "bringing the public at large into the diplomatic equation has also increased the number of stakeholders participating in international diplomacy, from state-to-state interactions to international organizations and international non-governmental organizations. More recently, this has included the everyday people, which diplomats in most cases have relied on for their reinforcing, or diverging, views on several issues". Several relationships between the government and other parts of society are affected by how information of interest to foreign ministries is managed, analyzed, and broadcast. The relationships can be categorized as follows:

1. Citizens and the media;
2. Citizens and the Government;



3. The government and the media;
4. The Government and non-state actors;
5. The civil service adviser and the minister; and
6. The Government-to-Government relationship (i.e., the formal channels of intergovernmental diplomacy) (Grants, 2004).

Digital diplomacy has been used interchangeably with other terms—as digital diplomacy (Bjola, 2015), e-diplomacy (Hocking et al., 2012), cyber-diplomacy (Barston, 2014), diplomacy 2.0 (Harris, 2013), or twiplomacy (Sandre, 2012). The State Department of the United States calls it 21st Century Statecraft; the UK Foreign Office calls it Digital Diplomacy, while the Canadians call it Open Policy. Ben Scott, Innovation Advisor to former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, outlines three components of digital diplomacy:

1. Public diplomacy, including the use of online platforms.
2. Building expertise in technology policy and understanding how the internet impacts international developments such as political movements.
3. Impact on development policy and how ICT can be used more effectively to promote global economic growth (Funnell, 2014).

This study adopts Hanson's (2012) definition of digital diplomacy as using the Internet and new Information Communications Technologies to help carry out diplomatic objectives, including its related goals. Digital diplomacy is essential in furthering a nation's foreign policy as it enables direct interaction and engagement with foreign publics. Ross (2011) argues that the proliferation of communications and information technology was not only transforming the means of social protest but also pointed towards an emerging revolution in diplomacy: Traditionally, diplomatic engagement consisted primarily of government-to-government interactions. Sometimes, it was from government to people, such as international broadcasting in the twentieth century. With the advent of social media and the rapid increase in mobile [technology] penetration, however, this engagement increasingly occurs from people to government and people to people. This direct link from citizens to government allows diplomats to convene and connect with non-traditional audiences and, in turn, allows citizens to influence their governments in ways that were not possible ten years ago. World leaders and diplomats use social media, particularly Twitter, to speak and engage directly with the audience they seek to influence. Also, diplomatic activities are increasingly supported by Internet tools. Christodoulides (2005) noted that "governments can consider the Internet as a unique diplomatic instrument; through its proper use, they can "advertise" not only their positions on different issues but also promote their ideas worldwide. If used correctly, such a function helps the embassy, and as a result, the state it represents, to create a positive image in the host state". Diplomats rely on the Internet to find information, communicate with colleagues via e-mail, and negotiate draft texts in electronic format; diplomats are also increasingly using new social networking platforms such as blogs and Facebook. Social media have added an essential real-time dimension to diplomacy, making communication ultra-fast and, by necessity, often less precise. However, while some diplomats embrace change as an opportunity to reform their profession, to others, it represents a challenge to established conventions. It may simply be "dangerous" to prove and accept forms of conducting international relations or to their self-interest. The impact of the

Internet and the rise of social media platforms, particularly Twitter and Facebook, generated a wealth of reactions (Hocking & Melissen, 2015).

**Theoretical Framework.** This paper examines digital diplomacy through the perspective of soft power, which Joseph Nye defined to mean the ability to set the agenda in world politics through persuasion, enticing and attracting others through the force of one's beliefs, values, and ideas, and not through military or economic coercion (Nye, 1990). Nye differentiates between two types of power: hard and soft power. Hard power is "the ability to get others to act in ways that are contrary to their initial preferences and strategies" (Nye, 2011). It is the ability to coerce through threats and inducements ("sticks" and "carrots").

On the contrary, soft power is the ability to get "others to want the outcomes that you want" (Nye, 2004) and, more particularly, "the ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion" (ibid, p. x). Finally, Nye introduces innovative power as the "balance of hard and soft power" (Nye, 2005). He argues that soft power is as important as hard power, even more so in international politics. Indeed, soft power enables behavior change in others, without competition or conflict, by using persuasion and attraction. As Hallams (2010) argued, "The art of soft power in the twenty-first century is fusing the traditional tools of diplomacy and negotiation and the ability to harness the power and potential inherent in the new and emerging technologies that globalization has wrought."

**Evolution of Digital Diplomacy.** On receiving the first telegraph message in the 1860s, Lord Palmerston, British Foreign Secretary, was noted to have exclaimed, "My God, this is the end of diplomacy." Diplomacy has survived the telegraph and subsequent technological innovations, such as the radio, telephone, television, and faxes. Every new major technological device has prompted reactions similar to Lord Palmerston's. An astute analyst of diplomatic practice, Harold Nicolson, writing in the 1960s, also lamented the impact of the telephone as "a dangerous little instrument through which to convey information or to transmit instructions" (Hocking & Melissen, 2015). Ritto (2014) described the transition in technical innovation. According to him, after the telegraph, the telephone, which was introduced in the later part of the nineteenth century, helped to improve communications between countries and diplomatic envoys further, thus adding to the speed and precision of communications. Then, the fax system followed, especially after 1980. Fax, which means facsimile and can also be called tele copying or telefax, is the telephonic transmission of scanned printed materials (text and images), normally to a telephone number connected to a printer. The receiving fax machine interprets the tones and reconstructs the original image by printing it on a paper copy. He noted extensively the fax system's importance: before the internet arrived, it was a revolution. The fact that it allowed for the transmission of documents and images from one part of the world to the other in minutes helped greatly to strengthen communication in the diplomatic world. For example, it became possible for a French Ambassador in Tokyo to sign a Treaty with the Japanese authorities and for the French Foreign Minister to receive a copy by telefax in Paris less than ten minutes later! Originals of important documents (briefs, minutes of meetings, legislation, speeches, official notes, treaties, protocols, verbal notes, press releases, cabinet memos, letters, reports of all sorts ...) started to circulate by fax everywhere in diplomatic missions. Foreign Ministries in capitals made sure, using fax, that Embassies in the five corners of the world regularly received (daily in many cases) updated information about the Ministries' activities and the

government's main decisions. Indeed, the fax allowed Ambassadors to be informed promptly about any issue of importance for their work and to know the point of view of their governments on all issues of importance for their countries. Consular services also availed themselves of the fax system to receive copies of important documents from their capitals (birth and marriage certificates, passports, and visas ...), thus allowing those diplomatic missions to provide a faster and more reliable service to their citizens abroad. The Internet has become a greater revolution. Friedman (2005) argues that the Internet has played a crucial role in leveling the playing field across the globe, enabling anyone, anywhere, to have access to the same information and to connect to and do business directly with each other. It enables an ever more efficient international division of labor to account for the comparative advantage of different markets. It makes the world, in his terms, increasingly flat. According to Abbasov (2007), "It was a gradual shift from telegrams to mobile phones and more recently to Skype, postal letters to e-mails, short messages (SMS) to Twitter posts, hard-copy invitations to Facebook events, TV announcements to YouTube channels, costly meetings to web-conferences and even from physical embassies to net-based virtual missions." As the primary communications medium, the Internet is edging out newspapers, TV, radio, and conventional telephones. Current applications emphasizing file sharing, social networking, interactivity, and downloadable audio and visual "podcasts," in contrast to the simple presentation of information, promise to accelerate this trend to warp speed. Also, according to Grant (2004), The Internet affects foreign policy as it does in every other area of government policy. The technology now controls how information flows around the globe. It has enabled the "news," which is the base material of foreign policy and how governments interact with each other, to become faster, more readily available, and reach almost every part of the world. These developments significantly affect the interactions of governments, which is the purpose of diplomacy. The prospect for even faster and potentially more far-reaching changes in the future will require foreign ministries to be nimble and informed in their responses. Thus, diplomacy has always had to adapt and change to the particular communication forms of its environment. In a world where everyone is increasingly connected, the ability to gather and share information with wide audiences at unprecedented rates has created new opportunities for policy leaders and government departments to share messages and set political agendas beyond traditional channels. While conventional forms of diplomacy still dominate the domestic and foreign policy landscape, increasing numbers of governments are utilizing technology as a new tool for communication, information gathering, and promoting values at home and abroad (Bradshaw, 2015). Digital diplomacy is designed to promptly provide adequate information, refute incorrect information, and confirm information from official sources.

**Digital Diplomacy Around the World.** Many countries worldwide are seizing the moment and actively pursuing their foreign policy objectives and possibilities for a positive outlook through creating websites, blogs, and social media platforms—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Weibo, Flickr, Google+, and so on. Schwarzenbach (2015) noted that Twitter's most significant change to foreign policy has been greater access to unfiltered information and worldwide engagement regardless of nationality or political status. Additionally, the increasing number of cellphone users in the developing world further democratizes information-sharing. As a result, citizens and civil society can increasingly hold governments accountable for policies and statements made by politicians. The United States Department of State has been described as the vanguard of

digital diplomacy, which it refers to as 21st Century Statecraft, using new technology to engage a growing, changing set of stakeholders across the globe, according to the U.S. State Department.

The twenty-first-century statecraft agenda addresses new forces propelling change in international relations that are pervasive, disruptive, and challenging to predict. The distinctive features of twenty-first-century statecraft point toward more enormous changes that will gradually permeate all foreign policy: expanding its scope, substituting new tools, and changing its values. We are adapting our statecraft by reshaping our development and diplomatic agendas to meet old challenges in new ways and by deploying one of America's significant assets: innovation. It is twenty-first-century statecraft—complementing traditional foreign policy tools with newly innovated and adapted statecraft instruments that fully leverage our interconnected world's technologies. (U.S. Department of State, 2014) Thus, the US State Department was the first foreign ministry to establish a dedicated ediplomacy unit, which created the Taskforce on Diplomacy in 2002. This task force has since been renamed the Office of Diplomacy, with more than 150 full-time social media employees working across 25 different offices, about half of which are dedicated to diplomacy-related work. The Office of eDiplomacy was established to overcome knowledge barriers contributing to the 11 September 2001 attacks and to improve the ability of the State Department to communicate and share knowledge. The State Department also has an internal version of Wikipedia called Diplopedia, which has more than 14,000 entries. There is a Facebook-like platform called Corridor with over 6,500 members to facilitate internal networking. The State Department also uses crowd-sourcing to come up with solutions to problems. For instance, it went online to ask its employees for cost-cutting ideas. A diplomat in China, who suspected that electricity was being stolen from the US embassy compound by nearby residents tapping into a wire, proposed setting up a meter to chart its usage. It showed that neighbors were stealing electricity and the energy company was overcharging. The discovery saved tens of thousands of dollars (Hanson, 2012). Thus, after 9/11, US foreign policy became more proactive and penetrating due to a consistent digital diplomacy agenda.

Other foreign ministries have also begun to embrace e-diplomacy. The UK FCO has an Office of Digital Diplomacy that is involved in a range of ediplomacy activities. Sweden has also promoted digital diplomacy, primarily through the online communication strategy of its foreign minister, Carl Bildt, who soon became the "best connected Twitter leader." According to Lowy Interpreter (2015), France indicated in 2008 that its soft power relied on digital technologies, while Polish and Japanese foreign affairs departments employ extensive social media networks. Furthermore, Germany turned to ICT platforms to crowd-source opinion and new ideas from the public that fed into its 2014 foreign policy review. Israel has matched its aggressive traditional diplomacy with one of the world's most active digital diplomacy units, which has worked hard to influence the outcomes of US-Iran nuclear talks.

Russia is also included in the usage of digital diplomacy. In 2011, Russia overtook Germany as Europe's largest internet market, with over 54 million monthly users, and is rapidly growing. Russia is one of the very few countries where the local search engine (Yandex) and social network (VK) beat foreign rivals in free, unhindered competition (Yakovenko, 2012). Ambassador Alexander Yakovenko said Russia recently joined the "diplomacy great powers" club. In the London ranking of followers, its embassy is third after the US and Israel, who have invested heavily in this instrument



of foreign policy over a more extended period. To describe the new phenomenon, the Russian Foreign Ministry came up with the term “innovative diplomacy” – which it interprets as a “tool of Russian foreign policy to exert influence on public opinion through the use of ICT” (Chernenko, 2013). At a meeting of ambassadors and permanent representatives in June 2012, Russian President Vladimir Putin designated digital diplomacy among the most influential foreign policy tools. The President urged the diplomats to intensively use new technologies across multiple platforms, including social media, to explain the positions of the state (Permyakova, 2012). In 2014, Canada's former Foreign Minister, John Baird, tried getting Canadian policy leaders and practitioners online. In a speech to the Global Commission on Internet Governance in November 2014, Baird noted that since January of that year, over 290 new social media accounts had been created for missions abroad and departmental initiatives, bringing Canada's digital footprint to over 100 missions around the world (Bradshaw, 2015). Many embassies now have interactive websites and Facebook accounts, and a growing number of ambassadors have an active Twitter presence, though some social media accounts are doing better than others. Several embassies have piloted small exercises. For example, Australia's High Commission attempted live topical Q&A sessions in PNG. Hashtags like #NewColomboPlan and #innovation change are used by the generic @dfat Twitter account to promote initiatives and link stakeholders. Recently, a blog was launched authored by Australia's Ambassador in Germany (in German). Leveraging the success of "The Embassy" TV show, online forums were hosted on the Smartraveller Facebook page (there is also a Smartraveller mobile app) (Lowy Interpreter, 2015).

A Twiplomacy study, which is an annual global survey of the presence and activity of heads of state and government, foreign ministers, and their institutions on Twitter, conducted by Burson-Marsteller, a global public relations firm and released in April 2015, analyzed 669 government accounts in 166 countries and revealed that 86% of all 193 United Nations (UN) governments have a presence on Twitter, while only 27 countries, mainly in Africa and Asia-Pacific, do not have any Twitter presence. According to the report, "Twiplomacy 2015 revealed once again that social media is an essential communication tool for governments and that Twitter has become the channel of choice for digital diplomacy. Even real-world differences are playing out on Twitter, sometimes resulting in hashtag wars between embassies and foreign ministries" (Alexandro, 2015). The UK Prime Minister @Number10gov is the most followed EU leader with more than three million followers, ahead of Italy's @MatteoRenzi with 1.7 million followers.

According to the comprehensive Twitter list on @Twiplomacy, more than 4,100 embassies and ambassadors are now active on Twitter, and the list is growing daily. In London, New York, and Washington, DC, foreign diplomatic missions can no longer ignore the diplomatic activity in the Twittersphere. Even the Chinese missions to the EU, Switzerland, and Japan are now actively tweeting. The UK Foreign Office actively encourages personal engagement of its ambassadors on Twitter, and it has become virtually impossible to become a Foreign Office diplomat if you are not using digital tools. The UK @Foreign Office has probably the most extensive "twiplomacy" network and maintains a public Twitter list with a record of 237 ambassadors, embassies, and missions on Twitter. Canada is second with 184 missions and heads of missions on Twitter, followed by the Russian Foreign Ministry (160), the Polish Foreign Ministry (157), and Israel (146). The State

Department and the Foreign Ministries of France, the EU, Sweden, and Ukraine each list more than 100 diplomats and missions on Twitter.

In Asia, India is leading the way in digital. Despite resource constraints, it invests heavily in building up its online reach. Indian diplomacy officially went digital when the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) posted its first tweet in 2010. Initiated and led by Ambassador Navdeep Suri, then joint secretary and head of the newly-created public diplomacy division, the MEA quickly became a digital leader within the Indian government. It used Twitter to the best effect to help facilitate the successful evacuation of more than 18,000 Indian citizens from Libya during the civil war in 2011 (Lewis, 2014). Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently called on his ambassadors to “shed old mindsets” and “remain ahead of the curve on digital diplomacy.” Despite a small foreign ministry and competing development priorities, India is experimenting with different ways to reach and engage local and overseas audiences through mobile apps, live-streaming videos, and a highly responsive social media presence (Cave, 2015). Despite many Africans' apparent embrace of new technologies in Africa, digital diplomacy still needs to catch on. According to an International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Report in 2013, Africa was the fastest-growing region in terms of mobile broadband, including 93 million subscriptions, 11% penetration, and an 82% cumulative annual growth rate (CAGR) between 2010 and 2013. Although, nowadays, more and more African foreign ministries (MFAs) are embracing the internet and social media and using them as tools to achieve foreign policy goals, the percentage of African countries maximizing the potential of digital diplomacy is negligible. Many African leaders do not have Facebook or Twitter accounts. According to the 2015 Twiplomacy study, Rwanda's @PaulKagame is Africa's most followed President, with 842,260 followers, ahead of Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta @Kenyatta (781,929 followers) and South Africa's presidential administration (@Presidency (388,418 followers).

## METHOD

This research will use an inspiration from the methodological tradition in social sciences of using inductive insights into lived experiences, such insights are accurate for Diplomacy studies that draw on practice approaches, it also carries weight for Studies of digital Diplomacy. It is often assumed the analytical process involves tracing the background knowledge and tacit understandings of those who are “doing diplomacy” This includes the intersubjective rules and resources that are considered imperative for the performance of diplomatic practices such as negotiation and representation.

## Results and Discussion for further research:

**Benefits of Digital Diplomacy.** Today, digital diplomacy is a foreign policy essential. The world is such that state and non-state entities compete for influence and power in the same online space. That space now hosts more than 3 billion people, most of whom only access the internet through mobile phones. Digital diplomacy is a persuasive and timely supplement to traditional diplomacy when used correctly. It can help a country advance its foreign policy goals, extend international reach, and influence people who will never enter the world's embassies (Lowy Interpreter, 2015). As noted by Fisher (2013), the advantage of social media is that it provides the opportunity to reach citizens of other countries in near real-time. Social media platforms also

provide spaces for interaction and increased engagement, thus furthering the goals of diplomacy. The potential ease with which social media can be accessed and the low cost compared to other methods make it an attractive tool for many embassies and other government offices facing budget cuts and demands to increase engagement. Numerous platforms allow for more dynamic content, such as videos, photos, and links than traditional methods of giving lectures or passing out pamphlets. In addition, social media are critical channels for reaching youth populations, a primary goal of current public diplomacy efforts. Digital technologies can benefit public diplomacy in information collection and processing, consular activities, and communications during emergencies and disasters. International practice shows that competent use of digital diplomacy tools can bring big dividends to those who invest in it.

Moreover, digital diplomacy only sometimes requires financial investments. On the contrary, it is often aimed at reducing costs. The human factor, the desire of employees to grow, master new technologies, spend part of their work time working with the target Internet audience, processing electronic data, and creating information and reference materials, is essential (Permyakova, 2012). As noted by Grant (2004), much of the work of foreign ministries around the world continues to be managed through the normal processes of diplomacy: instructions to embassies in foreign countries; meetings and negotiations that are not in the public focus; collecting, reporting, and disseminating relevant information; patient and slow building of constituencies of interest; and the resolution of many technical issues through intergovernmental procedures, such as international conferences, international and regional organizations, or technical working groups. Thus, digital diplomacy will be different from classical diplomacy. However, if handled with skill, this tool can strengthen the work of the state in international relations and foreign policy faster and more cost-effectively.

**Risks of Digital Diplomacy.** It is not to suggest that digital diplomacy is immune from criticism. Criticisms of the use of social media in politics have included ineffectiveness and danger. According to Solomon (2000), President of the United States Institute of Peace and a former US Foreign Service officer:

Information about breaking international crises that once took hours or days for government officials and media to disseminate is now being relayed in real-time to the world via radio and television and over the Internet. Ironically, though, for policymakers, instant dissemination of information about far and near events is proving to be as much a bane as a bounty. In other words, digital diplomacy has risks, including information leakage, hacking, and anonymity of Internet users. An excellent example of information leakage is the WikiLeaks episode. According to Manor (2015a), "On the 28th of November 2010, pandemonium spread among foreign ministries worldwide as WikiLeaks began publishing some 250,000 diplomatic cables sent between US missions worldwide and the State Department in Washington. These cables included frank assessments by US diplomats of world leaders, governments, and their host countries." Hacking is another risk that has existed since the advent of the Internet.

A recent example is the case of a hacking attack on the personal website of Yule Edelstein, Israeli Minister for Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs. Commenting on this, the minister said nothing could stop him from performing public diplomacy on behalf of the State of Israel. He intends to continue to defend the state's interests on all fronts, including on the Internet (Permyakova, 2012). Additionally, diplomatic rivals, including both state and non-state actors (such as terrorist

organizations), may try to hack into government systems and extract information of use to themselves (Westcott, 2008).

Another challenge of digital diplomacy is the internet's "culture of anonymity" – anyone can adopt any persona, address, or even attack anyone (Yakovenko, 2012). Anyone can mimic and pretend to be someone else or seek to cause mischief. Interestingly, even digital diplomacy advocates and practitioners sometimes commit blunders in their uses. For example, according to Permyakova (2012), on the eve of the 2012 World Economic Forum in Davos, the Swedish foreign minister, Carl Bildt, posted a very politically incorrect tweet, which caused much criticism from its microblog subscribers: He tweeted, "Leaving Stockholm and heading for Davos. Looking forward to World Food Program dinner tonight. Global hunger is an urgent issue! Davos". Tweeter users immediately condemned the minister and called his tweet a #fail. You would agree that hunger and a sumptuous dinner do not sit happily.

We believe that there is great potential for theoretical, methodological, and empirical advances to be made through further study of the digital transformation of diplomacy, building on various insights from practice approaches, we invite scholars interested in diplomatic practices and the process of digitalization to think in terms of how to contribute to such a research agenda, even though they might not think of themselves as primary involved in practice based research. We are aware that this article is only first step and we welcome fellow scholar in International Relations and beyond.

## CONCLUSION

The Internet (primarily social media) has undoubtedly transformed today's international community. It has become an unquestionable channel for diplomatic communication and has altered the practice of diplomacy. Ross (2011) describes twenty-first-century statecraft or digital diplomacy as an "agenda" that "complements traditional foreign policy tools with newly innovated and adapted instruments that fully leverage the networks, technologies, and demographics of our networked world." Nowadays, foreign ministries (MFAs) and embassies are part of a myriad of online social networks in which information is disseminated, gathered, and analyzed (Manor, 2015b). Diplomats' use of social media has opened communication between policymakers and citizens. These tools, especially Facebook and Twitter, provide diplomatic missions with direct access to citizens inside and outside their countries. This communication often bypasses state and media filters, enabling countries to influence foreign audiences and achieve diplomatic objectives more effectively.

Essentially, digital diplomacy has brought about a transformation of the conduct of traditional diplomacy. It defines changes in the structures and processes of ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs). The ICT revolution resulted in controlling how information flows everywhere, making the dissemination of information fast and wide, enabling people to make their judgments, express their concerns and feelings, and even influence policymakers. Consequently, the way governments interact is faster and reaches more in almost every part of the world. Thus, digital diplomacy brings with it both opportunities and challenges.

On the one hand, social media, especially, is providing countries with more information to solve social problems. For instance, people in conflict areas use social media to garner support, organize protests, communicate, and inform the world of events in their countries, especially where





their media is often subjected to blackouts and censorship. On the other hand, however, several risks are associated with using and relying on social media as a tool of diplomacy. Nonetheless, the opportunities appear to overshadow the challenges. Thus, countries, especially African countries, slow in embracing digital diplomacy, must be included in this tide of digital diplomacy as they can significantly benefit from these emerging diplomatic trends. Digital diplomacy and Internet activities as a whole can significantly assist in projecting a state's foreign policy positions to domestic and foreign audiences.

## REFERENCES

- Abbasov, A. (2007). Digital Diplomacy: Embedding Information and Communication Technologies in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Retrieved from [http://www.academia.edu/1058526/Digital\\_Diplomacy\\_Embedding\\_Information\\_and\\_Communication\\_Technologies\\_in\\_the\\_Department\\_of\\_Foreign\\_Affairs\\_and\\_Trade](http://www.academia.edu/1058526/Digital_Diplomacy_Embedding_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_in_the_Department_of_Foreign_Affairs_and_Trade)
- Alexandro, A. (2015). Twiplomacy 2015 Report: Twitter is the Channel of Choice for Digital Diplomacy. Retrieved from <http://digitaldiplomacy.ro/twiplomacy-2015-report-twitter-is-the-channel-of-choice-for-digital-diplomacy/?lang=en>
- Barston, R. (2014). *Modern diplomacy (4th ed.)*. New York, NY: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315832890>
- Bjola, C. (2015). *Introduction: Making Sense of Digital Diplomacy*. In C. Bjola, C. & M. Holmes (Eds.), *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (pp. 1-9). New York, NY: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315730844>
- Bjola, C., & Jiang, L. (2015). Social Media and Public Diplomacy: A Comparative Analysis of the Digital Diplomatic Strategies of the EU, US and Japan in China. In C. Bjola & M. Holmes (Eds.), *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (pp. 71-88). New York, NY: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315730844>
- Bradshaw, S. (2015). *Digital Diplomacy Not Diplomacy*. Retrieved from <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/digital-diplomacy-notdiplomacy>
- Cave, D. (2015). Failing to Exploit the Net for Foreign Policy Gain Limits Our Global Influence. Retrieved from <http://www.theage.com.au/comment/global-diplomacy-has-gone-digital-and-australia-has-been-left-behind-20150922-gjs6tg.html>
- Chernenko, E. (2013). Digital Diplomacy: Threat or Opportunity? Retrieved from [http://rbth.com/international/2013/03/14/digital\\_diplomacy\\_threat\\_or\\_opportunity\\_2386\\_5.html](http://rbth.com/international/2013/03/14/digital_diplomacy_threat_or_opportunity_2386_5.html)
- Christodoulides, N. (2005). *The Internet & Diplomacy*. *American Diplomacy*, 16 March. Retrieved from [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2005/0103/chri/christo\\_net.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2005/0103/chri/christo_net.html)
- Cohen, R. (1998). Putting Diplomatic Studies on the Map. *Diplomatic Studies Program Newsletter*. Leicester: Centre for the Study of Diplomacy.
- Crabb, J., C. V. (1972). *American Foreign Policy in the Nuclear Age (3rd ed.)*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Faye, M. (2000). Developing National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) Policies and Plans in Africa. Paper Presented at the Nigeria NICI Workshop, Abuja, Nigeria, 28-30 March.

- Fisher, A. (2013). The use of Social-Media in Public Diplomacy: Scanning E-Diplomacy by Embassies in Washington, DC. Retrieved from <https://takefiveblog.org/2013/02/19/the-use-of-social-media-in-public-diplomacy-scanning-e-diplomacy-by-embassies-in-washington-dc/>
- Friedman, T. (2005). *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Funnell, A. (2014). E-diplomacy goes Global. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/futuretense/digital-diplomacy/5344156>
- Grant, R. (2004). *The Democratization of Diplomacy: Negotiating with the Internet* (OII Research Report No. 5). Oxford: Oxford Internet Institute. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1325241>
- Hallams, E. (2010). Digital Diplomacy: The Internet, the Battle for Ideas & US Foreign Policy. *CEU Political Science Journal*, issue, pp. 5, 538–574.
- Hanson, F. (2012, October 25). Baked in and wired: eDiplomacy@State, Foreign Policy Paper Series No. 30, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution (pp. 1–41).
- Harris, B. (2013). Diplomacy 2.0: The Future of Social-Media in Nation Branding. *The Journal of Public Diplomacy*, p. 4, Art. 3.
- Hocking, B., & Melissen, J. (2015). *Diplomacy in the Digital Age*. Clingendael: Netherlands Institute of International Relations.
- Hocking, B., Melissen, J., Riordan, S., & Sharp, P. (2012). *Futures for Diplomacy: Integrative Diplomacy in the 21st century*. Clingendael: Netherlands Institute of International Relations.
- Holmes, M. (2015). The Future of Digital Diplomacy. In C. Bjola & M. Holmes (Eds.), *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (pp. 199–206). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kassim, S. (2012). Twitter Revolution: How Social Media helped the Arab Spring. Retrieved from <http://www.policymic.com/articles/10642/twitter-revolution-how-the-arab-spring-washelped-by-social-media>
- Lewis, D. (2014). Digital Diplomacy. Retrieved from <http://www.gatewayhouse.in/digital-diplomacy-2/>
- Lowy Interpreter. (2015). Does Australia do Digital Diplomacy? Retrieved from <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2015/04/17/Does-Australia-do-digital-diplomacy.aspx>
- Manor, I. (2015a). WikiLeaks Revisited. Retrieved from <http://digdipblog.com/2015/11/09/wikileaks-revisited/>
- Manor, I. (2015b). The Social Network of G20 Leaders. Retrieved from <http://g20live.com/the-social-network-of-g20-leaders.php>
- Manor, I., & Segev, C. (2015). America's Selfie: How the US portrays itself on its social media accounts. In C. Bjola & M. Holmes (Eds.), *Digital diplomacy: Theory and practice* (pp. 89–108). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Melissen, J. (2013). Public Diplomacy. In A. Cooper, J. Heine, & R. Thakur (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (pp. 436–452). Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199588862.013.0025>
- Nye, J. (1990). Soft Power. *Foreign Policy*, p. 80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580>
- Nye, J. (2004). *Soft power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.
- Nye, J. (2005). On The Rise and Fall of American Soft Power. *New Perspectives Quarterly*, pp. 22, 75–77. [https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5842.2005.755\\_1.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5842.2005.755_1.x)

- Nye, J. (2011). *The Future of Power*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.
- Permyakova, L. (2012). Digital Diplomacy: Areas of Work, Risks and Tools. Retrieved from [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id\\_4=864#top-content](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=864#top-content)
- Potter, E. H. (2002). *Cyber-Diplomacy: Managing Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century*. Ontario: McGill-Queen's Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780773570368>
- Ritto, L. (2014). Diplomacy and its Practice vs Digital Diplomacy. Retrieved from <http://www.diplomatmagazine.nl/2014/10/18/diplomacy-practice-vs-digital-diplomacy-2/>
- Ross, A. (2011). Digital diplomacy and US foreign policy. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, pp. 6, 451-455. <https://doi.org/10.1163/187119111X590556>
- Sandre, A. (2012). Twiplomacy is Bringing Diplomacy Back to Relevancy. Retrieved from <http://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/twiplomacy-bringing-diplomacy-back-relevancy>
- Schwarzenbach, B. (2015). Twitter and Diplomacy: How Social Media Revolutionizes Interaction with Foreign Policy. Retrieved from <http://thediplomaticenvoy.com/2015/10/12/twitter-and-diplomacy-how-social-media-revolutionizes-our-interaction-with-foreign-policy/>
- Solomon, R. H. (2000). 'The Internet and the Diffusion of Diplomacy,' US Foreign Policy Agenda, March. Retrieved from [www.usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps](http://www.usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps)
- Sotiriu, S. (2015). Digital Diplomacy: Between Promises and Reality. In C. Bjola & M. Holmes (Eds.), *Digital diplomacy: Theory and practice* (pp. 33-51). New York, NY: Routledge.
- U.S. Department of State. (2014). 21st Century Statecraft: The "Internet Moment" in Foreign Policy. Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/statecraft/overview/index.htm>
- Westcott, N. (2008, July). Digital Diplomacy: The Impact of the Internet on International Relations. Research Report 16. Oxford: Oxford Internet Institute. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1326476>
- Yakovenko, A. (2012). Russian Digital Diplomacy: Clicking through. Retrieved from [http://rbth.com/articles/2012/09/06/russian\\_digital\\_diplomacy\\_clicking\\_through\\_18005.html](http://rbth.com/articles/2012/09/06/russian_digital_diplomacy_clicking_through_18005.html)