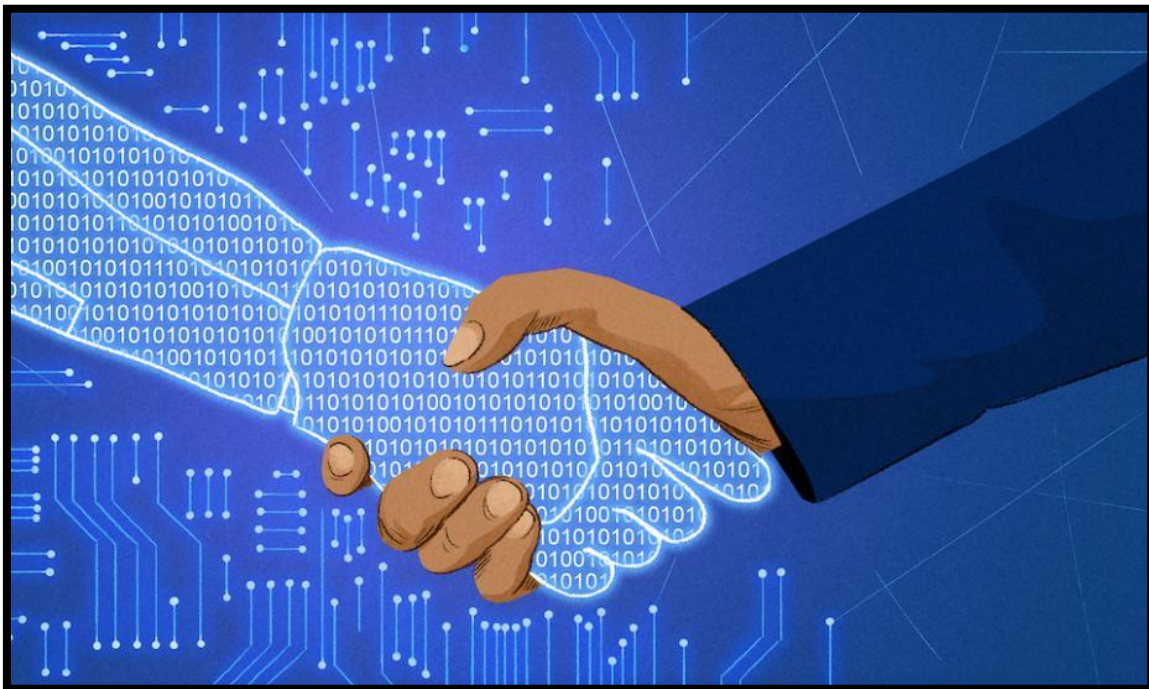# Negotiating New Realities: Navigating the Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Diplomacy

Fatima Binte Zahid[1]

Source: Internationale Politik Quarterly

The race for Artificial Intelligence (AI) development is in full swing worldwide, with emphasis on military, governmental surveillance, and economic utilization. Researchers are delving into AI's potential for addressing daunting social issues, sparking optimism that it can enhance conditions across various domains such as education, health, and hunger.[2] As is the norm with technological revolutions, AI's impact is poised to reverberate across all aspects of society, leaving no corner

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[1] Fatima Binte Zahid is currently working Research Assistant at Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS). Previously, she was a Teaching Assistant at the Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP). She completed her MSS and BSS (honors) from the Department of International Relations, BUP.
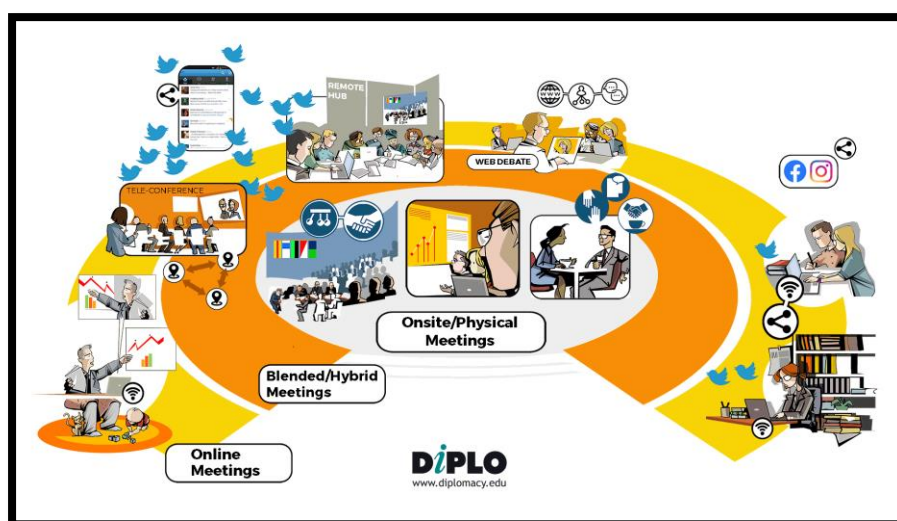[2] Dr. Corneliu Bjola, "Diplomacy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence", Emirates Diplomatic Academy (2020), https://www.geopolitic.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/EDAWorkingPaper_ArtificialIntelligence_ENcopy.pdf.

untouched. Diplomacy inevitably finds itself drawn into AI's transformative force, unable to avoid its pervasive influence. Exploring AI's potential applications in politics is a relatively nascent domain.

This commentary focuses on the transformative impact of AI on the realm of digital diplomacy. It navigates through the evolution of digital diplomacy and the integration of AI into diplomatic processes. The commentary emphasizes AI's pivotal role in enhancing decision-making, communication, and crisis management, backed by real-world examples. It also delves into the challenges entailed in adopting AI in digital diplomacy.

Digital Diplomacy: Altering Engagement Paradigms & Creating New Opportunities

Throughout history, diplomacy, characterized by interpersonal exchanges, negotiations, and established communication channels, has thrived on in-person interactions. Nonetheless, the digital revolution has heralded a transformative phase termed 'Digital Diplomacy', altering engagement paradigms. The utilization of digital platforms for diplomatic processes, encompassing negotiations, networking, and information exchange, has given rise to a burgeoning field of digital diplomacy in academic discourse.
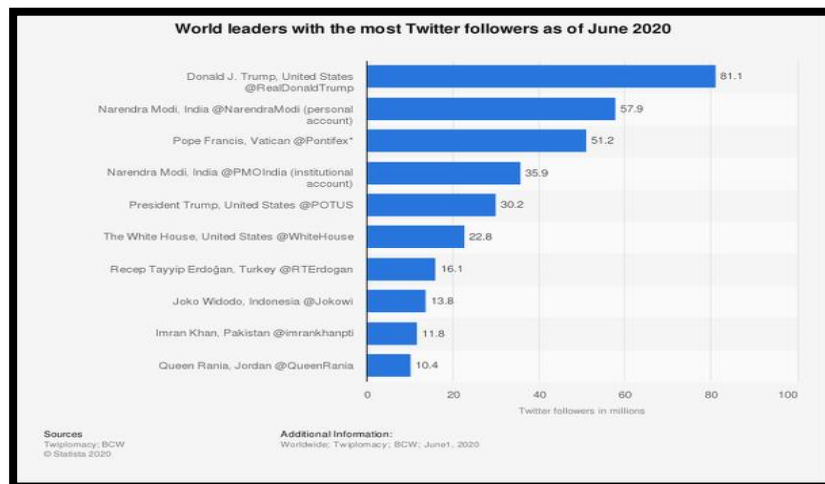

Source: Diplo.edu

Digital diplomacy, also termed 'E-Diplomacy' or 'Cyber Diplomacy' uses digital platforms and technologies in diplomatic practice. It includes the deployment of information and communication

technologies (ICTs) to expedite diplomatic procedures, interact with global audiences, and advance national objectives within the digital domain. Evolving in tandem with the swift progress of technology, digital diplomacy has remodelled the conventional contours of diplomatic activities.

The integration of diplomacy into digital realms transpires across various tiers. Ministries and public figures establish their presence on social media, voicing opinions on pertinent matters. This circumvents the traditional wait for formal Foreign Ministry briefings. Diplomats often convey their stances online, constituting a quasi-official stance.

The permeation of digital technologies through politics and diplomacy became particularly evident during the global lockdowns of 2020 and 2021.[3] Ministerial gatherings and Head-of-state meetings transitioned to online platforms due to pandemic restrictions. Notably, international entities like the United Nations (UN) adopted hybrid event models, enabling leaders to address audiences through online platforms.

In digital diplomacy, digital platforms and social media have assumed pivotal roles in connecting diplomats with international audiences, disseminating messages, and fostering relationships. Channels like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn facilitate direct communication among diplomats and citizens, and engagement with civil society groups and other relevant stakeholders. This avenue serves as a conduit for public diplomacy, empowering diplomats to showcase their nation's image, champion policies, and engage with public inquiries.

Source: Statista, author: J. Clement, licence

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[3] Lala Jafarova, "Artificial Intelligence and Digital Diplomacy", E-International Relations, August 1, 2023, https://www.e-ir.info/2023/08/01/artificial-intelligence-and-digital-diplomacy/.

Social media platforms are dynamic sources of real-time information and catalysts for cross-cultural discourse.[4] Diplomats can actively observe ongoing conversations, extract valuable perspectives on public sentiment, and provide swift responses to emerging concerns. Moreover, online communication avenues encompassing video conferences, emails, and messaging applications have ushered in a paradigm shift in diplomatic engagements. These tools facilitate immediate correspondence and virtual meetings, transcending geographical limitations.

Digital diplomacy has reshaped conventional diplomatic strategies by harnessing digital platforms, social media, and online communication channels. This paradigm shift has brought about transformative dynamics and opportunities:[5]

1. **Information Access:** Diplomats now enjoy unprecedented access to extensive information through digital channels, augmenting their capacity for well-informed decision-making, policy analysis, and situational awareness.

2. **Public Engagement:** Digital platforms empower diplomats to directly engage with citizens, non-governmental organizations, and non-state entities, fostering transparency, inclusivity, and wider public participation in diplomatic processes.

3. **Crisis Management:** In crisis response, digital tools are pivotal. Real-time information dissemination, coordination, and resource mobilization during emergencies are facilitated by platforms like social media.

4. **Advocacy:** Digital diplomacy provides diplomats a platform to advocate for their country's policies and values, enabling engagement with foreign governments, international organizations, and the public to build support and influence decisions.

5. **Cultural Exchange and Soft Power:** Digital platforms facilitate cross-cultural exchange by promoting artistic expression, heritage preservation, and intercultural dialogue, amplifying a nation's soft power and shaping international perceptions.

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[4] Sakhri Mohamed, "The Intersection of Digital Diplomacy and Artificial Intelligence: Unlocking New Opportunities", Algerian Encyclopedia of Political and Strategic Studies, June 9, 2023, https://www.politics-dz.com/the-intersection-of-digital-diplomacy-and-artificial-intelligence-unlocking-new-opportunities/.
[5] Sakhri Mohamed, "The Intersection of Digital Diplomacy and Artificial Intelligence: Unlocking New Opportunities".

The Rise of Artificial Intelligence in Diplomacy

The swift evolution of AI technologies has further amplified the horizons of diplomacy. AI, endowed with data analysis prowess, human-like intelligence simulation, and task automation, stands poised to redefine diplomatic endeavours, enhancing diplomats' capabilities and reshaping their approach. AI has emerged as a game changer. Its multidimensional role goes beyond mere automation, including data analysis, predictive analytics, and enhanced decision-making.

By swiftly processing vast volumes of information, AI equips diplomats with valuable insights, enabling informed and strategic choices in the following ways:

1. Predictive analytics, a notable feature of AI, empowers diplomats to anticipate potential outcomes based on historical trends, a capability pivotal in crisis management and policy formulation. Machine Learning (ML) algorithms enable computers to acquire knowledge from data and autonomously make predictions or decisions without explicit programming.[6] In diplomacy, ML proves valuable by analyzing diplomatic data, recognizing patterns, and forecasting trends, thus contributing to informed decision-making processes.

2. AI-driven language translation tools facilitate seamless communication across linguistic divides, fostering understanding and collaboration in international negotiations.

3. AI enables diplomats to analyze complex global crises by rapidly sifting through vast information, identifying patterns, and predicting potential outcomes. Natural Language Processing (NLP) empowers computers to comprehend and interpret human language, facilitating the analysis of extensive diplomatic documents like treaties, agreements, and diplomatic cables.[7] It does so by extracting essential information and identifying patterns within the text.

4. AI-powered sentiment analysis helps diplomats gauge public sentiment and reactions to diplomatic initiatives, allowing for targeted communication strategies that resonate with diverse populations.

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[6] Sakhri Mohamed, "The Intersection of Digital Diplomacy and Artificial Intelligence: Unlocking New Opportunities".
[7] Sakhri Mohamed, "The Intersection of Digital Diplomacy and Artificial Intelligence: Unlocking New Opportunities".

5. AI's data analysis capabilities help diplomats understand global economic trends, trade patterns, and market fluctuations, aiding in negotiation strategies and trade agreements.

6. AI can assist in identifying and countering cyber threats, safeguarding diplomatic communication and critical infrastructure from cyberattacks.

7. AI's data analysis can help diplomats understand the cultural nuances, preferences, and sensitivities of foreign populations, leading to more effective cross-cultural interactions.

8. AI aids in analyzing humanitarian crises, predicting their evolution, and strategizing diplomatic responses to provide timely and effective humanitarian assistance.

9. AI's ability to process large datasets is used in monitoring environmental changes facilitating international collaboration on climate change agreements and sustainable development goals.

10. Robotic Process Automation (RPA) entails automating repetitive and rule-based tasks via software robots.[8] In the diplomatic sphere, RPA finds utility in optimizing administrative procedures, including visa processing, document handling, and routine data input, thereby liberating diplomats to allocate their time toward more strategic pursuits.

Intersection: AI Transforming Digital Diplomacy

The convergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital diplomacy represents a transformative shift in international relations. AI's advanced capabilities have found fertile ground in diplomatic processes, reshaping the landscape of digital diplomacy. The convergence of diplomatic principles with digital platforms is reshaping and restructuring how digital intelligence is assimilated into traditional diplomacy. This integration has fostered closer connections between governments, civil society, and technology enterprises. For instance, India's foreign missions and embassies in other nations employ AI to enhance their operational efficiency, demonstrating a bridge between diplomacy and advanced technology adoption.[9]

AI technology is deployed for handling routine and straightforward tasks integral to the diplomatic missions' objectives. Diplomatic missions are often responsible for issuing essential travel

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[8] Sakhri Mohamed, "The Intersection of Digital Diplomacy and Artificial Intelligence: Unlocking New Opportunities".

[9] Deep Dighe and Adithya Anil Variath, "Future Of Artificial Intelligence In Digital Diplomacy And Geopolitics", The Daily Guardian, November 15, 2021, https://thedailyguardian.com/future-of-artificial-intelligence-in-digital-diplomacy-and-geopolitics/.

documents, like passports and visas, prerequisites for international travel. Leveraging AI has streamlined these processes, simplifying the experience for applicants and those tasked with document issuance.

AI plays a pivotal role in digital communication. Chatbots and automated response systems are employed to engage with the public, answer inquiries, and provide information swiftly, bolstering transparency and accessibility. Moreover, AI-driven sentiment analysis tools monitor public opinion, enabling diplomats to gauge reactions to policies and adapt strategies accordingly.

The Cyber Diplomacy Center at ICI Bucharest developed a blockchain-based communication application designed for secure interactions within diplomatic networks.[10] The application, in its initial state, offers secure communication for entities within networks like Ministries of Foreign Affairs. This application is an example of digital diplomacy, which we define as using novel digital technologies and means to support traditional diplomatic activities.

In security and crisis management, AI is indispensable. It can process vast datasets to identify emerging threats, assess geopolitical risks, and offer predictive analytics for crisis prevention. Additionally, AI assists in cybersecurity by identifying and countering cyber threats to safeguard diplomatic communication and national interests.

In light of ChatGPT's introduction, media outlets have been abuzz with discussions about its potential impact on the 'diplomacy of tomorrow.' Diplomats can leverage AI to automate tasks like drafting press releases. Another prospect is the simultaneous dissemination of prepared content to diverse information platforms through a single click, streamlining and accelerating the procedure. This is especially relevant given that today's populace predominantly receives information via the Internet, often directly to their smartphones.

Challenges Remain

While the potential of the Internet and digital technologies isn't novel, their integration into the political sphere, characterized by diplomatic protocols and confidentiality, raises apprehensions. Notably, using "Deepfake" technology to manipulate individuals' appearances has become a

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[10] Carmen Elena Cîrnu, Paul-Cristian Vasile, "A Blockchain-Based Application as Part Of A Digital Diplomacy Approach To Facilitate And Advance Cyber Diplomacy", *International Journal of Cyber Diplomacy* (2022), https://ijcd.ici.ro/documents/7/2022_article_6.pdf.

prominent concern. Advanced AI capabilities now extend to mimicking voices, accentuating the potential for digital deception.

While AI can generate ideas, there exists a degree of anxiety surrounding the confidentiality of information processing. An existing concern pertains to potential data leaks that have found their way into ChatGPT.[11] The safety of this aspect raises questions regarding the security of classified diplomatic documents or the personal data of diplomats utilizing the platform. Furthermore, diplomatic language is nuanced and sensitive, encompassing precise wording and expressions. While the program-generated text might exhibit grammatical excellence, its diplomatic suitability could be contentious.

Diplomatic pathways often face scrutiny from foreign intelligence agencies and potential criminal entities, which might exploit accessible technologies like wiretapping. Frequently, the media circulates both "classified" materials like photos, videos, and audio recordings and "fake news," whose authenticity is challenging for the average person to verify. Such manipulations jeopardize societal stability and sway public sentiment. Furthermore, contemporary technologies are wielded in political rivalries against opposition forces. Hence, a re-evaluation of the conventional political process is imperative, involving the consideration of novel realities and potentially devising fresh "digital or electronic" diplomatic protocols.

Conclusion

AI ushers in a novel chapter in politics, accompanied by challenges. Diplomacy, inherently requiring diplomats to be adaptable, must now align itself with the digital landscape. Politicians and diplomats must brace themselves for the potential of data leaks online, necessitating vigilance and verification of incoming information. The imperative for the legal oversight of AI deployment is paramount. Furthermore, subjecting its algorithms to ethical and political scrutiny before execution is essential.

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[11] Lala Jafarova, "Artificial Intelligence and Digital Diplomacy".