Digital Diplomacy Threat or an Opportunity: Donald Trump's Social Media Strategy in International Relation

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Abstract

The concept of digital diplomacy includes the use of digital communication techniques both in interstate diplomacy and in the relationship between a state and foreign public opinion group. The advent of digital platforms has transformed the conduct of diplomacy, offering unprecedented opportunities for direct communication while simultaneously posing new challenges to established diplomatic norms. This study examines Donald Trump's use of social media—particularly Twitter—as a tool of digital diplomacy, analyzing its implications for international relations. This study is qualitative research to determine how the President of the USA, Donald Trump, uses social media in terms of content in the context of digital diplomacy. The social media content of President Trump's statements about Three major events of his 2nd tenure has been selected to be analyzed. These events where digital diplomacy has changed the diplomatic scene are Ukraine-Russia War, Israel' Gaza War and Pakistan- India War in May. Employing a qualitative content analysis of selected official tweets during his presidency, the research explores how Trump's online rhetoric influenced diplomatic discourse, shaped international perceptions, and disrupted traditional diplomatic channels. The study finds that while such engagement enhanced agenda-setting, public outreach, and narrative control, it also heightened risks of misinformation, diplomatic friction, and policy inconsistency. The findings suggest that in the digital era, leaders' personal social media use requires new diplomatic frameworks to balance immediacy with strategic stability. The findings suggest that while Trump's social media strategy enhanced his ability to bypass intermediaries and engage global audiences instantly, it also heightened diplomatic tensions, undermined institutional communication protocols, and introduced unpredictability into foreign policy decision-making. The paper concludes that digital diplomacy, as exemplified by Trump's approach, embodies both opportunities for strategic influence and risks of diplomatic destabilization, underscoring the need for new frameworks to regulate and optimize its role in international relations.

Key Words: *Digital, Diplomacy, Trump, Social Media, Threat and Opportunity*

Introduction

World is experiencing a massive rise in new technologies. These innovative discoveries are wave-like progress impacting all fields of life more specifically International Relations. New technologies such as ChatGTP from OpenAI, PerplexityAI, and AITestKitchen from Google, have revolutionized the view point of average user ensured breakthrough in international politics. Such an easy access at professional level has surged the debates regarding opportunities and challenges of use of new technologies in international relations. As far as states' tool of implementation of state policies across borders is concerned, diplomacy is highly impacted and cannot remain indifferent to such technological advancements. The concept of digital ambassadors is being employed in order to facilitate relationships with mega techs such as Amazon, Google and Microsoft etc. On one hand, bots are being used for citizen communication, on other hand virtual embassies are also established. Resultantly, new technologies have rendered diplomatic services. Traditionally, Diplomacy and its services were considered as slow changing domain as well as conservative. Contemporarily, on account of new technologies such as quantum computing, AI, this sphere is facing challenges and multi-technical realm of cyberspace and machine learning (Rashica, 2018).

U.S. President Donald J. Trump, employed digital diplomacy as part of his social media strategy. Trump's use of twitter for political communication has revolutionized the diplomatic interactions within and beyond borders. Many statesmen followed his suit and used social media as primary source of political communication and addressing both international and domestic channels. Trump's digital diplomacy has raised debates regarding foreign policy discourse in real time. The proponents of digital diplomacy claim that digital diplomacy approach of Trump has democratized the diplomacy as it has enlarged the scope and sphere of diplomacy. However, critics argue that this approach undermines the credibility of institutional diplomacy. Moreover, critics contend that it has destabilized alliance and amplified the conflicts (Maina, 2024).

Literature Review

Writer in his articles claims that the diplomats and world leaders have got an opportunity through these social media platforms to expand their existing diplomatic networks and build new relationships which are strategic and important for the diplomatic arena. Digitalization and availability of information on internet has ended the monopoly of diplomats in this regard. The end of this strength for diplomats has given a place to non –state actors to be more valuable so diplomats have to go beyond their conventional elite based interactions and create new social media-based networks for successful diplomacy. The officials do it not only to interact with each other but also to connect to common people also. Israeli Ambassador to USA, Michel Oren points out that diplomats use social media to connect to new generation which is acknowledgement of the fact that the use of social media is on rise in new generation and it is necessary to be on social media to remain relevant in younger generation. The presence of Digital Outreach Teams of Department of State of USA on popular social media forums of Arabic, Persian and Urdu

languages to get connected with people in Middle East is another example of importance of Social Media forums for people to people diplomacy (Verrekia, 2017).

Writer in his article opines that Twiplomacy is new and unique type of technique which is introduced due to digitalization where individuals are in contact with each other through following each other on Twitter. These developments and changes in diplomatic norms have led researchers to explore their effects on International Relations. An interesting evidence of this change is provided by official Twitter handles of State Departments of USA and Cuba in 2015 when on 26th May, 2015 USA State Department followed State Department of Cuba on Twitter after years of embargo and it was reciprocated by Cuban State Department which followed back and this event happened 2 months before officially two states welcomed each other on online networks. Though the talks about renewal of alliance were already in progress but this example shows the development of relation between sates through social media. The studies on Twiplomacy has reflected that how smaller countries have tried to build relations through digital networks like Peru follows 509 world leaders on Twitter (Verrekia, 2017).

Author claims that Donald Trump, The President of USA shares his routine meetings with different dignitaries and point of discussions to let his followers know about his official engagements. The studies related to this has shown that such kind of personalized posts make positive impact on the audience and they give more attention to what they read and have visualization of such meetings in their minds. It is also reflected in the researches that tweets which are emotionally charged posts get more views and attention when posted online. Tweets of President Trump are shared which spreads the message and this personalization makes it easier for the leaders and diplomats who believe in engagement and transparency in diplomacy at the same time (Maina, 2024) .

Research Methodology

The study uses qualitative research, which refers to research which collects data from secondary sources and it is analyzed qualitatively. This content analysis method has been used in order to analyze the potential threats and opportunities caused by digitalization. The data obtained from various resources including; Policy documents comprising foreign policies as well as digital diplomacy of states, Digital diplomacy strategies issued by government official social media accounts, the official reports and documents, Official Statements and briefings by Donald Trump and the authentic reports from neutral diplomacy journals. The qualitative data is related to the tweets, online briefing, uploaded videos on social media by official accounts has been collected. The impact of the data has been analyzed from the confirmed and neutral sources which included European and American media channels and newspapers. This study also used secondary data from various sources, such as international organization reports, academic studies, and surveys relevant to digital diplomacy.

Theoretical Framework

Liberal theory, presents an optimistic viewpoint of digital diplomacy. It emphasizes the potential of new technologies in order to increase dialogues and international cooperation. Liberalist scholars such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, claim the positive impact of digitalization of diplomacy. They argue that in digital age, technological advancements have facilitated across borders' political communication and institutional and norms barriers are reduced (Bernhard Reinsberg, 2021). The emergence of digital diplomacy has increased the sphere and scope of diplomacy by enabling greater public involvement in diplomacy and foreign policy formulation. Resultantly, diplomacy has been more democratized and strengthens accountability and transparency (Beate Jahn, 2013). This transformation has ensured more interactive approach according to liberalists, as digital diplomacy has shifted state-centric communication and established relationship between diplomats and global citizens (Moravcsik, 2022). Additionally, digital tools have supported the process of political communication, facilitated conflict resolution which is in line with optimistic view of effect of digitalization in international relations. Overall, integration of information technology in diplomatic processes has become a critical component in strengthening strong international relations in contemporary landscape.

Digital Diplomacy: Redefining Statecraft in the Information Age

Digital Diplomacy has become an important topic in International Relations. However, scholarly consensus on one definition is still lacking. Many organizations, institutes and scholars have tried to develop a concrete definition, yet still there is lack of an official definition. Such ambiguity has caused the research of digital diplomacy in different ways extending from cyber security, social media and internet governance. Moreover, the ambiguity is further exacerbated by referring digital diplomacy with different terms. These terms including; "cyber-diplomacy," "net-diplomacy," "e-diplomacy," and "Twiplomacy" interchangeably. Despite of having the relative synonymous meaning, these terms highlight the specific areas. For example, twi is specifically used for twitter, cyber is used for security issues and e for business. The interchanged ability of the term has not doubt broadened the sphere of research, but also caused the inability of the term digital diplomacy to be concretely defined (Verrekia, 2017).

There are definitions offered by scholars and institutes. According to DiploFoundation, digital diplomacy digital diplomacy "describes new methods and modes of conducting diplomacy with the help of the internet and ICTs, and describes their impact on contemporary diplomatic practices". Scholars agree unanimously that the stems of digital diplomacy can be traced back from United States. More specifically, former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, used social media platforms for a number of programs run by the Department of State (DOS). During her tenure, Clinton wanted to run a 21st Century Statecraft Platform that would "reach beyond traditional government-to-government relations and engage directly with people around the world''. Her dedication is quite evident as currently DOS has 25 different nodes. Since US, other countries

started adopting digital platforms for diplomacy such as embassies and consulates began to interact online websites, state departments for official Facebook and Twitter accounts (Owerri, 2020).

Digital Diplomacy as a Tool for Effective International Engagement

The rise of digital diplomacy suggests that it has brought some benefits which makes it significant to analyze the digital diplomacy and its advantages. Digital diplomacy has the ability of two way communications which is the most appealing aspect of this kind of diplomacy. Rudolf Bekink, Ambassador of The Netherlands argues "the digital arena opens new possibilities from one-on-one conversations to dialogues with communities." The advent of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and other sites provided an open space for government officials and audience from public to directly interact with each other and this two-way communication permits individuals to influence state policies which was not possible earlier (Verrekia, 2017).

These public and open interactions give governments a better insight of public opinions and sentiments regarding the foreign policy issues particularly debatable stances of governments on certain issues. Former UK Foreign Secretary William Hague initiated an interaction program with people from his Twitter account and called it "Meet the Foreign Secretary" where people were asked to discuss and suggest the future priorities of Foreign Office and then people would be invited to discuss their proposals if these proposals were good enough to be practically applicable. This initiative showcased how people can be involved through social media in foreign policy making as hundreds of people participated in this initiative. There are other examples of social media interactions of people and government officials like Dutch Government has dedicated every weekday from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. its official twitter handle to answer questions and queries from people and Rwandan President has 81% of his account use as replies to people (Maina, 2023).

Digital diplomacy has given a sense of transparency in foreign relations of different states between each other. In the age of posting everything from personal thoughts to actions online by individuals through their pictures and statuses, a natural urge of public has surfaced which wants states to be transparent in their decision makings and policy development also. Diplomacy is traditionally known for its confidentiality and this digital era has made it difficult for diplomats to maintain a balance in using new technology and maintain secrecy. The diplomats and leaders understand the importance of this forum and to get maximum benefits they keep on posting their activities on social media to show to the public that they are also part of any social media discussion (Mekaj, 2025).

The digital diplomacy has reduced the traditional way of meetings with foreign country leadership in persons and spending public money for these visits which ultimately lessens the financial and environmental costs of diplomacy. The advancement in telecom technologies and applications like Skype, FaceTime and others have made it possible to discuss the issues or conduct interviews remotely just like sitting face to face with someone in the room. This gives an opportunity to foreign offices to relocate their expenditure in other areas instead of transportation and foreign accommodation for their delegates who visit other countries. Diplomacy through modern digital

tools not only decreases financial expenses but it also benefits the environment due to limited traveling. The increase of on line editions of newspapers and books have decreased paper printing and productions which is positive sign for environment. A study in Japan has shown that CO_2 emission can be reduced 7% by using digital technologies instead of physical traveling. Digital diplomacy reduces environmental and financial costs by minimizing the physical movements of the diplomats (Verrekia, 2017).

Digital Diplomacy and Its Limitations

Use of technology in diplomacy has also brought many challenges along with benefits. The foremost challenge is that many of the benefits are not achieved practically like social media provides an opportunity to leaders and government officials to be transparent, personal and interactive but many of the leaders and diplomats do not take advantage from this opportunity. A study which was conducted to analyze the strategies of communications used by Western countries revealed that majority of the diplomats do not use social media to interact outside their own country and use it as a personal platform instead of using it as a diplomatic channel. These findings point to the fact that states and their officials are still not availing the full-scale potential of the social media (Verrekia, 2017).

Some more studies related to social media and its use reflect that many users of Twitter in diplomatic community are generally unaware of its effectiveness like Indonesian Ambassador Djalal has a large number of followers but his tweets are less impactful as compared to others who have less numbers of followers but use it in an effective way. This shows that Ambassador Djlalal is not posting that may increase interactions or influence the public opinion in any way. This is not a rare case of diplomats using twitter without knowing the dynamics of it, there are others also, for example Swedish Foreign Minister, Carl Bildit posted a tweet "Leaving Stockholm and heading for Davos Looking forward to World Food Program dinner tonight. Global hunger is an urgent issue," which was considered as a media mistake (Konovalova, 2023).

Cybersecurity is another mammoth challenge for digital diplomacy. The fast spread of information is an advantage as well as it can be a great disadvantage for digital diplomacy. The threat of information being leaked or accounts being hacked is a constant point of worry for the users who hold any official responsibility. The scandal of WikiLeaks is an example of vulnerability of digital usage for official purposes as the official correspondence between US Embassies and DOS have been made public by Wikileaks it included assessments of different states and their leaders by US Diplomats across the globe. United States believes that they are attacked through these leaks and it made other diplomats to be hesitant in using digital platforms for diplomatic correspondence as it contains confidential info and is liable to be leaked (Sharma, 2021).

In person or face to face interaction is replaced by social media and people interact through words and photos they share to convey their messages. It makes easy for people to pose what they are not and it can create problems for public who depends upon social media and internet to get information about government officials and official policies. The imposter who is running a fake

account may spread false and fake information if people are following that account instead of original account and that can create panic in the public. The anonymity is inherent in online platforms and that encourages negative behaviors as people are convinced that they might not be caught so they are liable to be more mischievous to harm others. It is very easy to hide identity on line and that can lead to cyber-attacks which makes on line environment to be less conducive for diplomacy (Melissen, 2015).

Cybersecurity issues and threats have made diplomats doubtful about using digital forums and some of them believe that digital diplomacy might not be an alternate to traditional diplomacy. Diplomacy demands confidentiality and following the months of WikiLeaks, many diplomats found it hard to perform their job of information gathering as a constant threat of being exposed was hovering over their heads. The necessity of digitalization has taught governments to take pre cautions to prevent cyber-attacks and get benefits of digitalization so training and courses are designed for diplomats to use social media for diplomacy and get maximum benefits and influence the public opinion (Verrekia, 2017).

Diplomats are challenged by ordinary citizens and journalist who can show the world what is actually happening before even the diplomats can verify such situations. This change of dynamics of information gathering has made governments to be independent of relying only on diplomats about something happening in foreign country. International media and officials at headquarters are in contact with each other and officials use their media contacts to align their policy goals with public opinions of the foreign country where they are stationed. This makes limited choice for diplomats to go beyond the framework of country they are working and from where they are coming and stick to policy guidelines due to transparency. This has given foreign ministries more powers to access and get authentic reports of their officials who are working in other countries (Verrekia, 2017). These challenges can be addressed by diplomats if they adjust to new communication systems and their role in changing systems. The diplomats can play vital and valuable role in international affairs if they carry out the analysis of the information they gather (Hocking, 2015).

The Role of Trump's Digital Diplomacy in the Russia–Ukraine Conflict

President Trump took charge for second term in January 2025 while world was going through wars in Europe and Middle East. This term President Trump emerged as a leader who prefers social media diplomacy over traditional way of addressing the international issues and used platform like Truth Social and Twitter to connect to people and share his thoughts about different complicated issues like Russia-Ukraine war. This aim of this study is to explore the significant influences and impacts on Russia-Ukraine war and prospects of peace that are made through digital based diplomacy and strategies in 2nd Tenure of President Trump. A letter of Ukrainian President Zelenskyy was read publicly by President Trump (via Truth Social and during a joint Congressional session), which says: "Ukraine is ready to come to the negotiating table as soon as

possible to bring lasting peace. Nobody wants peace more than the Ukrainians. "It was seen as a signal to be ready to work for peace and economic cooperation linked to natural resources like rare mineral deals (Al Jazeera, 2025).

President Trump and President Putin had a meeting at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richerdson for Alaska Summit (August 15, 2025), which was first meeting of President level in years. President Trump hosted a summit in Washington where European leaders along with President of Ukraine to discuss "coalition of wiling" for security guarantees as well as to plan a meeting of US, Russia and Ukraine and in this summit, President Trump signaled that Ukraine may be required to step back from its claim of territory for a peace deal. There was an open statement of President Trump where he ruled out any ground support with reservation on air support in war to move towards a peace deal. It is interesting that during a press conference President Trump told President Macron that his assumption was that Putin may agree to end war so that it might be seen as Trump's diplomatic success which shows his personal framing in international affairs (Yao, 2022).

President Trump in White House acknowledged hostilities against each other by Russia and Ukraine but he was hopeful for a ceasefire. As he said "a lot of hatred" between Ukraine and Russia, but "I think they both want to make peace, I do believe so We are thinking very strongly that they both want peace, but they have to get to the table – we're waiting a long time, they have to get them to the table, and I think we're going to get peace," To a question on a lunch with Norwegian PM, President Trump stated that Moscow has got what it wanted and now Ukraine should involve its global partners to move forward. He said "The strike objectives were achieved. All targets were hit," Moscow said. "It is extremely important that everyone around the world sees and understands what is really happening" (Picheta & Vlasova, 2025).

The analysts view President Trump's move to appoint untraditional envoys like Steve Witkoff instead of professional envoys as incoherent and less credible to deal the international affairs. It shows that his digital diplomacy reflects an effort to influence the narrative directly as it involves social media and his own personal branding. This approach lacks consistency, credibility and support from institutions and allies as some recent case studies have shown (March 2025 letters, August 2025 summits, media leaks and informal channels). Digital Diplomacy in context of Russia-Ukraine war shows that it can be only used as reinforcement but it cannot be an alternate to consistent, traditional and coherent policy-oriented diplomacy (Mekaj, 2025).

Trump's Digital Diplomacy and Its Implications for Peace in Gaza–Israel Conflict

Gaza Conflict is another example of President Trump's way of dealing the global issues where he has shown his ideas and thoughts on informal platforms like Social Truth and Twitter. This study highlights how President Trump has used different digital ways to express his road map to end the conflict and to reach on a ceasefire. President Trump floated different ideas like 60 days ceasefire

etc on digital forums which set the agenda but these efforts remained inconsistent and fragile due to practical politics and humanitarian constraints on the ground (Konovalova, 2023).

President Trump posted on his social media account that Israel is ready for a 60-day ceasefire to get hostages released and a permanent peace agreement which started a debate on media and Steve Witkoff, the de facto envoy of USA and Israeli Minister Ron Dermer had intensive meetings but it missed the reality of Hamas' response on the proposal and Israeli firmness to "ending the war and bringing the hostages home," and how USA would make possible this plan to be implemented. Hamas stated that it was considering the proposal but demands that were made Israeli withdrawal, no future hostilities while Israel was firm on total disarmament of Hamas which defined the limits of the practicality of this proposal in contrast to optimism of the public opinion (Ashraf, 2023).

Humanitarian crisis in Gaza became the part of diplomacy narrative and EU countries stated in their press talks for two state solution and recognition of Palestinian state which was criticized by US Ambassador in Israel as a move to undermine the peace talks which showed the complications of moving to a peace deal with the consent of Israel, Europe and Hamas with American proposal. It was also related to digitally introduce Pres Trump' s idea of Gaza (February 2025) which showed Gaza under American Administration and was criticized for its feasibility and practicality. The Israeli aggression, humanitarian crisis and Hamas's reaction showed the gap among public claims and ground realities which were shown in digital diplomatic narratives (Budiana, 2024).

President Donald Trump shared on his social media accounts an AI generated video where Gaza was shown in future with reagitated and showed sky scrapers with visuals of "Trump Gaza Hotel" and Trump having food there with money raining from the sky. It was related to President's earlier proposal of relocating Palestinians from Gaza and rebuilding it which faced criticism from the Arab States and World but appreciated by Israeli accounts on social media. This started a debate on options to find a permanent solution of the conflict. The track of negations can be directed through digital diplomacy but the ground realities and hurdles make it difficult to get a solution through digital diplomacy in Gaza Conflict. President Trump' digital diplomacy in context of Gaza clearly indicates the limitations in digital diplomacy as compared to traditional diplomatic efforts but at the same time it shows the opportunities that can be created by directness of the digital diplomatic narrative (Maina, 2024).

Digital Diplomacy and Peace: Assessing Trump's Role in the India–Pakistan War

President Trump's digital diplomacy and its impact witnessed its peak in recent Pakistan-India war in May 2025. The two nuclear states went in a war which was the most worrisome clash for the world in the era of modern warfare. The first reaction of President Trump was just to express this war as a neutral spectator when he told reporters "It's a shame, we just heard it… I guess people knew something was going to happen based on a little bit of past. They have been fighting for a long time" President elaborated by saying maybe they have been fighting for thousands of years.

This shows the directness and informality which is inherent in the digital diplomatic field (Ashraf, 2023).

Later on when things escalated and there was a fear of nuclear war, President Trump shared on his twitter account and Truth Social about the cease fire between Pakistan and India. The interesting fact is there were no press briefings, media talks but announced first on social media platform of President rump which circulated around the globe and then official statement came from Pakistan and India. He wrote "After a long night of talks mediated by the United States, I am pleased to announce that India and Pakistan have agreed to a FULL AND IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE. Congratulations to both countries on using Common Sense and Great Intelligence. Thank you for your attention to this matter" The ceasefire was implemented immediately by both countries. This digital announcement has given both the countries an edge in public as both countries narrated that other party went for ceasefire. The incoherence of digital diplomacy made it possible for both the countries to make their public believe what state narrated. After the ceasefire, Trump offered to mediate on Kashmir Issue which was refused by India and welcomed by Pakistan. This led to a new shift in American policy towards South Asia when US Administration who offered trade as stated by President after ceasefire to Pakistan and India, gave more importance to Pakistani leadership and started to increase tariffs on India due to Indian denial of any involvement of USA in ceasefire or bilateral issues of Pakistan and India (Budiana, 2024).

The analysis of President Trump' s social media posts related to Pakistan and India reflect the digital policy as compared to traditional diplomacy can be ambiguous which led India to be at loss diplomatically by negating or not accepting clearly what President Trump declared while Pakistan took full advantage of this ambiguity and even nominated President Trump for Peace Nobel Prize to get maximum benefits through personal branding of President Trump.

Conclusion

Digital Diplomacy is on rise to deal with international affairs due to advancement of technologies in the world. The use of digital diplomacy has brought many challenges and opportunities for the diplomats and world leaders. The directness and informal way of social media platform give an opportunity to speed up the diplomatic efforts and frame the agenda but at the same time it is in consistent and liable to be leaked which makes it only a reinforcement force instead of replacement of traditional diplomacy. President Trump has used social media platforms to address three conflicts Russia-Ukraine, Gaza Israel and Pakistan-India conflict and it has brought some results. The study showed that it has also highlighted the limitations of the digital diplomacy and the ways different states are dealing to understand the dynamics of social media based diplomacy and training of the diplomats to benefit from the full potential of social media. The content analysis of President Trump's social media posts has shown the advantages and how digital diplomacy worked in certain cases and also how digital diplomacy cannot be a complete replacement of traditional diplomacy.

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