

**SOCIAL MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: PROSPECTS AND
CHALLENGES (2000-2021)**

BY

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
THE BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
AND DIPLOMACY.**

SEPTEMBER, 2023

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **Patricia Scholastica Oshomha**, Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, under my supervision.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Almighty God for all his guidance and protection over my life since I got admitted into this school till now. I say may his name forever be praised. And also, my parent, James Oshomha, my dad and Gloria Oshomha, my mum, who has been there for me as long as I can remember and saw me throughout my schooling.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound gratitude goes to Almighty God for his grace, protection, and infinite mercy that have been seeing me through my course of study till now. I am very grateful to my Father and lecturer Prof. Eddy Erhagbe, whose teaching style was instrumental towards ensuring that this work is a success. And to my project supervisor, Mr. Williams E. Orukpe for his guidance towards ensuring that this work comes out perfect and its aim and objectives are achieved.

I want to sincerely appreciate my Parents, James Oshomha and Gloria Oshomha for their financial, moral and spiritual support all through this study in Uniben. To my John, Rhoda, Fidelia, Justus, Theresa, Anthony, I would not have done this with them, I am grateful.

Also, to my wonderful Lecturers, Prof. Eddy Erhagbe, Prof. O. Benson Osadolor, Prof. E.A. Ifidon, Dr. Iweze, Dr. Frank Ikponwonsa, my esteemed course Adviser, Dr. Charles Osarumwense, for their direct and indirect influence on me throughout the course of my study and stay in Uniben. To the other staff of department who impacted in me positively I say God bless them. And to my friends; Mercy, Peace, Theresa, Paulette, Maureen.

Patricia Scholastica Oshomha

2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	I
CERTIFICATION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	II
DEDICATION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	IV
TABLE OF CONTENT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	V

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Aim and Objectives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Scope of Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Methodology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Literature Review	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Endnotes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL MEDIA DIPLOMACY

Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16
Diplomacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17
Public Diplomacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19
Social Media	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21

Defining Social Media Diplomacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
Evolution of Social Media Diplomacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
Experimentation and Adoption (Mid-2000s)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
Recognition of Diplomatic Value (Late 2000s)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29
Digital Diplomacy as a Formal Practice (Early 2010s)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
Crisis Communication and Real-Time Engagement (Mid-2010s)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
Personalization and Informal Engagement (Late 2010s)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36
The Rise of Hashtag Diplomacy and Digital Campaigns (Late 2010s – Early 2020s)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	38
Significance of Social Media Diplomacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	41
Challenges of Social Media Diplomacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43
Opportunities for Social Media Diplomacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45
Endnotes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49

CHAPTER THREE: DONALD TRUMP, COVID-19 AND E-DIPLOMACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52
Social Media Diplomacy and the US Politics	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52
Diplomatic Outreach via Facebook and Instagram	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60
Covid-19 and Trump's Social Media Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64
Endnotes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	67

**CHAPTER FOUR: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA
DIPLOMACY IN 21ST CENTURY STATE RELATIONS**

Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71
Identifiable Challenges of Social Media Diplomacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	72
Misinformation and Disinformation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	72
Diplomatic Tensions and Missteps	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75
Erosion of Diplomatic Privacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	77
Lack of Context and Nuance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	78
Amplification of Nationalism and Populism	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	81
Prospects of Social Media Diplomacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	83
Direct and Transparent Communication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	84
Real-Time Crisis Communication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	86
Engaging Global Audiences	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	89
Digital Diplomacy and Soft Power Projection	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	91
Endnotes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	94
CHAPTER FIVE									
Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	97
BIBLIOGRAPHY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	102

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has had a significant impact on diplomacy in the modern era (ICTs). Global political, social, and economic landscapes have changed as a result of the revolutionary changes brought about by ICTs in human communication and information exchange. Faye pointed out that ICTs are giving even less developed nations a chance to skip the industrialization phase and build high-value information economies that can compete with sophisticated economies on the global market.¹ The provision of infrastructure for cross-border connections through technological innovation has aided globalization, and nations cannot afford to pass up the opportunities these technologies are presenting.

Particularly, the Internet, which Westcott describes as "a means of communication that enables the publication, exchange, and storage of information"², has become crucial for both public and private communication, while modern tools, like social media, have drawn millions of people into public conversation spaces. Digital connectivity has shrunk the world and, in the process, impacted the everyday lives of billions of people. More than 2 billion people use Facebook, Twitter, Qzone, Snapchat,

and other social media platforms on a regular basis. Now, people from all over the world may communicate and share information without any intermediaries, 24 hours a day, and 365 days a year. In their efforts to participate in the emerging policy arenas around the Internet, nations and international organizations face significant potential and problems from social media. The Internet revolution has really affected all aspects of life, including International relations. Diplomacy as a tool of foreign policy has also being transformed by this revolution. And this has resulted in the popularized concept of digital diplomacy. Digital diplomacy is usually conceptualized as a form of public diplomacy. It involves the use of digital technologies and social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Weibo by states to enter into communication with foreign publics usually in a non-costly manner. Essentially, this revolution in ICTs has also resulted in fundamental changes in the conduct of diplomacy globally. In countries like Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen, the social media has become a platform to distribute uncensored public information among users. The 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.³

Although, the traditional mode of conducting diplomacy, that is, interactions between representatives of sovereign states remains crucial, in today’s interconnected

world, individuals and organizations—not just countries—play a larger role in international affairs. This has given rise to what is referred to as digital diplomacy. However, as noted by Bjola, despite the promises that digital diplomacy offers for the conduct of international relations, little is known, from an analytical perspective, how digital diplomacy works, with what degree of success and what its limitations are.⁴ This research work seeks therefore to explore the concept of digital/social diplomacy, focusing on the use of social media in the field of diplomacy and how countries are utilizing these tools in the furtherance of their foreign policies. It examines the opportunities and challenges these media offer for diplomatic activities and how the digital media affects core diplomatic practices within the international system.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the research work is to examine social media diplomacy and its prospects and challenges on international relations 2000-2021. While the specific objectives of this work include;

1. To examine the concept of diplomacy.
2. To examine the concept of social media diplomacy.
3. To examine advent of social diplomacy in international relations.

4. To examine the challenges and prospects of social media diplomacy on 21st century State relations.
5. To interrogate the changes and continuities in modern diplomatic practice.

Scope of Study

The scope of this study is focused on the period from 2000 to 2021 and its examination of social media diplomacy's prospects and challenges on international relations. Within this timeframe, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the development and evolution of social media diplomacy, taking into account its impact on diplomatic communication, public engagement, and the formulation of foreign policy. This study will analyze various social media platforms, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, to assess their influence on international relations during the specified time frame. It will explore how diplomats and government officials have utilized these platforms to engage with foreign counterparts, shape public opinion, and project their nation's image on the global stage.

Methodology

To achieve the research objectives of analyzing the prospects and challenges of social media diplomacy on international relations between 2001 and 2021, this work will adopt the historical research method in its data collection and data analysis. This

methodology will involve a combination of literature review and qualitative interviews to gather data and insights, followed by thematic analysis. For data collection, although this research work will rely on primary and secondary sources of data. For primary sources, qualitative interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders to gain firsthand insights into their experiences and perspectives on social media diplomacy. The sample for interviews will include diplomats, government officials, social media experts, and other relevant professionals who have direct involvement or expertise in the field of international relations and social media diplomacy. Secondary sources like books, newspapers, journals, articles, online publications and unpublished works will be employed. In the aspect of data analysis, this work shall employ both the quantitative and qualitative method of data analysis. In order to source for materials, places like the University of Benin Library and its subsidiaries, internet, public and private libraries will be visited. The work will also employ the MLA method of citation and referencing.

Literature Review

According to R Cohen, “Putting Diplomatic Studies on the Map. Diplomatic Studies Program Newsletter”, diplomacy is the “engine room” of international relations. So by implications, diplomacy is the heart of international relations.⁵ Diplomacy according to Olubukola S. Adesina, “Foreign Policy in an Era of Digital Diplomacy”, is

the established method by which states articulate their foreign policy objectives and coordinate their efforts to influence the decisions and behaviour of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiations and other such measures, short of war and violence.⁶ It is, in other words, the centuries-long means by which states seek to secure particular or wider interests, including the reduction of frictions between or among themselves. It is the core instrument through which the goals, strategies and broad tactics of foreign policy are implemented. It strives to preserve peace and aims at developing goodwill towards foreign states and peoples with a view to ensuring their cooperation or, failing that, their neutrality.

Lester R. Kurtz, “*Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*,” defines diplomacy as the conduct of international relations by negotiation and dialog or by any other means to promote peaceful relations among states. He also added that, diplomacy is also a set of practices, institutions, and discourses which is crucial for the basic understanding of the historical evolution of the international system and its evolving functional and normative needs.⁷ Kaplan and Haenlein, *Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media*, sees Social Media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.”⁸

Pouliot & Cornut, “Practice Theory and the Study of Diplomacy: A Research Agenda”, diplomacy is both “a category of practice and a category of analysis.”⁹ Magalhaes cited in Dan Har & Asaf Siniver “the Meaning of Diplomacy”, sees diplomacy as commonly defined through four prisms: foreign policy, an instrument of foreign policy, international negotiations, and the activity of diplomats.¹⁰ Sharp Paul, “Diplomatic Theory of International Relations”, defines diplomacy as a synonym for statecraft, foreign policy, and international relations, as well as the making of foreign policy by practitioners.¹¹ Plischke Elmer, “Diplomacy: Search for its Meaning”, presents perhaps the most comprehensive definition of diplomacy. It is:

...the political process by which political entities, generally states, conduct official relations with one another within an international environment. With the proliferation of the institutionalization of international affairs by other than classical diplomatic processes, and with the engagement in interrelations by political institutions other than states – such as international and supranational organizations, emergent political entities – diplomacy can no longer be said to be confined solely to the conduct of the international affairs or foreign relations of established national states.¹²

Ajayi, in “Challenges to Nigeria of Globalization and the Information Age” cited in L. A. Ogunsola, “Information and Communication Technologies and the Effects of

Globalization: T Globalization: Twenty-First Century wenty-First Century “Digital Slavery” for Developing Countries—Myth or Reality?” the revolution taking place in information and communication technologies have been the central and driving force for the globalization process. Both developed and less-developed countries cannot afford to miss out on the opportunities these technologies are creating.¹³

According to Manor and Segev, *America’s selfie: How the US Portrays itself on its Social Media Accounts*, 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.¹³ They noted that digital diplomacy exists at two levels: that of the foreign ministry and that of embassies located around the world. By operating on these two levels, nations can tailor foreign-policy and nation-branding messages to the unique characteristics of local audiences with regard to history, culture, values and traditions, thereby facilitating the acceptance of their foreign policy and the image they aim to promote.¹⁴ Lewis, *Digital diplomacy*, defines digital diplomacy as the use of digital tools of communication (social media) by diplomats to communicate with each other and with the general public.¹⁵ To Potter *Cyber-diplomacy: Managing foreign policy in the twenty-first century*, digital diplomacy mainly refers to the diplomatic practices

through digital and networked technologies, including the Internet, mobile devices, and social media channels.¹⁶

Fox Zoe in “Nine Social Media Uprisings That Sought to Change the World in 2011” asserted that, the 2011 uprisings in the Middle East served as an unprecedented use of new technology for organizing and expressing political participation outside of the more traditional routes.¹⁷ Men and women across the Middle East began expressing opinions through social media that challenged social and political norms, and the perceptions commonly held about themselves and their efficacy in the political system, eventually leading to the ousting of a number of leaders in the region including in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. The social media according to Kassim “S, Twitter Revolution: How the Arab Spring was helped by 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.¹⁸

Ren J & Meister H.P, “Drawing Lessons from Obama for the European Context”, asserted that, Obama used fifteen Social Media sites to run his campaign. And this according to them was because he understood the power of complementing offline work with an online campaign. And by so doing, he systematically linked the online community to offline activities such as fundraising. Obama’s use of Social Media was an

important aspect of his overall campaign strategy.¹⁹ Another positive case of which the use of social media played a determining factor according to Montero M.D, “Political e-mobilisation and participation in the election campaigns of Ségolène Royal 2007 and Barack Obama 2008”, was the campaign of Ségolène Royal during the French elections in 2007. She managed to connect with a massive online crowd. Due to her online campaign, party membership increased from 120,000 to 200,000 members.²⁰ He added that, 90% of increase had not been a member of a political party before. With examples of mass mobilizations such as civilian protests in Iran and other Middle-Eastern countries, it is safe to argue that Social Media are changing the game of politics.²¹

According to Forrester Research cited in Andreas M. Kaplan & Michael Haenlein, “Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media”, 75% of Internet surfers used “Social Media” in the second quarter of 2008 by joining social networks, reading blogs, or contributing reviews to shopping sites; this represents a significant rise from 56% in 2007. The growth is not limited to teenagers, either; members of Generation X, now 35—44 years old, increasingly populate the ranks of joiners, spectators, and critics. It is therefore reasonable to say that Social Media represent a revolutionary new trend that should be of interest to companies operating in online space—or any space, for that matter.²²

It is on the backdrop of this review that, this work seeks to examine the challenges and prospect of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., in 21st century international relations.

Chapter Outline

This work will be subdivided into five chapters, so as to aid clarity.

Chapter One: Background to the Study

Here, the goal is to give a background understanding of the entire research work. It will include introduction, aim and objectives, scope of study, methodology, etc.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Understanding of Social Media Diplomacy

This chapter aims to provide a conceptual understanding of social media diplomacy, laying the groundwork for the analysis of its prospects and challenges on international relations from 2001 to 2021. It begins by defining social media diplomacy and exploring its historical development. Subsequently, key concepts and theories related to social media diplomacy are discussed to provide a theoretical framework for the analysis.

Chapter Three: Donald Trump, Covid-19 and E-Diplomacy in the 21st Century

This chapter focuses on the intersection of social media diplomacy, the presidency of Donald Trump, and the global COVID-19 pandemic. It examines the impact of these factors on e-diplomacy in the 21st century. The chapter begins by discussing the role of

Donald Trump as a unique political figure known for his unfiltered use of social media. It then delves into the challenges and opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the increasing reliance on digital platforms for diplomatic communication.

Chapter Four: **Challenges and Prospects of Social Media Diplomacy in 21st Century State Relations**

This chapter investigates the challenges and prospects of social media diplomacy in 21st-century state relations. It examines the impact of social media on diplomatic communication, public engagement, and the formulation of foreign policy. The chapter begins by discussing the challenges posed by social media diplomacy, including issues of misinformation, cyber threats, and privacy concerns. It then explores the prospects and opportunities offered by social media diplomacy in enhancing transparency, accessibility, and citizen participation in state relations.

Chapter Five: **Conclusion**

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22. See Andreas M. Kaplan & Michael Haenlein, *Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media*, p.59.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL MEDIA DIPLOMACY

Introduction

In today's interconnected world, social media has transformed the landscape of diplomacy and international relations. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and others have become powerful tools for communication, information dissemination, and interaction between governments, diplomats, and citizens. The popularity of social media platforms as means of communication at a cost friendly role, and as an effective instrument for measuring public opinion, receiving feedback for domestic and foreign policy formulation explain their increasing usage by state and non-state actors in the international system. Thus, social media has brought mankind and the state closer than ever before. In the twenty first century, social media ensured that humanity was not completely disconnected from one another during the covid-19 pandemic. When international lockdown was enforced in 2020 to contain the spread of the coronavirus disease, social media platforms such as zoom ensured that through E-diplomacy the wheels of international relations kept spinning. This chapter delves into the conceptual understanding of social media diplomacy, exploring its definition, evolution, significance, challenges, and opportunities. It is against this backdrop that it

will provide solid academic framework for understanding the phenomenon of E-governance, E-diplomacy and the emergence of Hybrid format of international relations.

Diplomacy

Diplomacy, which historically focused on war, peace, and conflict, has undergone significant changes and now serves as the fundamental means of communication between states.¹ In modern times, its scope has expanded to include economic cooperation and cultural exchange. The traditional form of diplomacy has predominantly been political, emphasizing negotiation, openness, and cooperation across various domains such as economics, society, and politics. With the advent of the digital revolution, traditional diplomacy has undergone significant transformation. Diplomatic relations have evolved to embrace new methods of communication between states, taking advantage of the globalization facilitated by the internet. The borderless nature of online connectivity allows people from different regions to be aware of events happening across the world. Furthermore, the widespread use of gadgets and technology has influenced the ideas and social groups that people associate with.²

The extensive adoption of new media, such as smartphones, social networks, and internet-based tools, has brought about a transformation in diplomacy, leading to a new realm of digital affairs.³ This modernized approach to diplomacy is considered the

product of a transition, where leaders and diplomats of states are encouraged to acquire new skills in information technology. With over two billion people using these new media platforms daily, such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and other applications, interpersonal interactions have undergone a revolutionary shift.⁴ This innovative landscape has expanded the communication opportunities for state leaders and diplomats, allowing them to reach a wider audience and potentially altering the perspective on public diplomacy matters. Embracing social media to its full potential, public diplomacy enables governments and international organizations to directly interact with the public and other countries without relying on traditional governmental intermediaries.

This digital approach encompasses various aspects, including digital citizenship, digital government, and the digital economy.⁵ It is essential to understand the target audiences and know how to engage with them, not only within local communities but also on the international stage. Diplomatic actors who recognize the importance of data gathering and adeptly utilize digital applications in diplomacy will reap significant benefits, as exchanging information with broader audiences has become a necessity. Today's practice of digital diplomacy is vastly different from the public diplomacy of a few decades ago. Failing to adapt to the advancements in digital technology could leave a country's diplomatic relations lagging behind. Diplomats must effectively adapt to digital

technology while still upholding the core functions of representation, consultation, and communication. Digital diplomacy serves as a valuable tool in foreign affairs, offering the means to conduct public diplomacy and engage in integrated diplomatic efforts.

Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy refers to the efforts made by states to influence the public or elite opinion of other nations in order to steer their policies in favor of their own interests.⁶ Hans Tuch provides a comprehensive definition, stating that it involves a government's communication process with foreign publics to foster understanding of its nation's ideas, ideals, institutions, culture, as well as its national goals and current policies.⁷ This encompasses both short-term actions such as media relations and long-term endeavors like cultural programs conducted by official state bodies. In contemporary diplomacy, the scope is no longer limited to state-to-state interactions; instead, the public is now targeted to bring about transformative change within other states. Public diplomacy sets itself apart from the regular role played by Foreign Ministries concerning their national public. While both engage in similar activities, the focus for the Foreign Ministry is on their own citizens, helping them interpret the outside world from a national perspective and raising awareness about their country's international role.

"Winning Others on Our Side!" is the motto adopted by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland in relation to their approach to public diplomacy.⁸ According to the Ministry's definition, public diplomacy involves a comprehensive, systematic, and persistent effort to influence carefully selected foreign non-governmental target groups, with the aim of achieving Finland's political, economic, and other objectives. This approach relies on harnessing the strengths of Finland's society, often referred to as "soft power," utilizing communication, culture, and promotion. Public diplomacy is seen as an integral part of all other diplomatic activities and is underpinned by a strong national brand. Copeland provides a different perspective on public diplomacy, defining it as a set of outwardly directed activities carried out by national representatives.⁹ These activities aim to identify shared objectives and potential areas of collaboration with foreign publics, which can include the general population, special interest groups, the media, civil society, and business and opinion leaders. Under the umbrella of public diplomacy, concepts like branding, advocacy, lobbying, and partnership building also play crucial roles.¹⁰ While similar in some aspects, propaganda differs from public diplomacy in that it not only seeks to persuade people's thinking but also takes into account their responses.¹¹ Unlike traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy primarily relies on digital tools to influence the actions of both states and non-state actors in the international arena.

Social Media

Social media was originally defined as a website service that enables users to create personal profiles within a limited system, where they can selectively share information with a preferred list of other users¹². Blogs, for instance, contribute to individual identity websites that can be active, reflective, or even multidimensional. Through social media, people can freely express their perceptions on various topics, including current issues, leaders, and governments. Although the terms "social media" and "social networking" have often been used interchangeably, there are noticeable differences between the two¹³. Social media serves as a medium of communication, allowing users to create spaces for sharing information, personal opinions, and messages. On the other hand, social networking refers to the act of creating and maintaining personal and business relationships, both through virtual communications and real-life interactions.¹⁴ Despite these distinctions, both social media and social networking employ web-based platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, among others. For the purposes of this study, the term "social media" is used to encompass these sites.

Regarding media usage, mobile messaging apps represent the utilization of instant messaging accessible through handheld devices such as iPhones, Androids, and iPads. Common apps in this category include WhatsApp, Telegram, and Messenger. While some of these applications can also be accessed through webpages, users tend to prefer

accessing them on handheld devices. The widespread use of social media, whether through webpage platforms or mobile apps, has significantly transformed global communication landscapes, and technological advancements have greatly reduced the digital divide.

Defining Social Media Diplomacy

Social media diplomacy can be defined as the strategic use of social media platforms by diplomats, government officials, and international organizations to conduct diplomatic activities, engage with foreign audiences, and influence the global narrative.¹⁵ It involves the application of diplomatic principles and practices through digital communication channels to achieve foreign policy goals, foster mutual understanding, and enhance international relations. In essence, social media diplomacy goes beyond traditional diplomatic approaches by leveraging the power of social media to connect with a diverse range of stakeholders, including citizens, civil society, businesses, media, and foreign governments. It embraces the opportunities offered by digital platforms to disseminate information, engage in public diplomacy, and facilitate direct dialogue with the global community in real-time. Social media diplomacy encompasses various activities, such as posting official statements, conducting virtual town halls, live-streaming diplomatic events, sharing cultural exchanges, addressing international issues,

and promoting bilateral or multilateral cooperation.¹⁶ The ultimate aim is to harness the potential of social media to shape perceptions, build relationships, and advance national interests on the global stage.

In situations where traditional face-to-face diplomacy is limited, social media can play a crucial role in initiating dialogue and building trust between states. According to Constance Duncombe, an international relations theorist, social media reflects and shapes a state's identity as it wishes to be perceived on the global stage.¹⁷ Changes in how states represent themselves through social media during high-level negotiations can lead to new political possibilities for positive change. An excellent example of this phenomenon was seen during the Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. After the diplomatic ties between the United States and Iran were severed in 1980, opportunities for reconciliation and meaningful diplomatic engagement were rare. Previous attempts to address Iran's nuclear program with threats of military action and economic sanctions had little success.¹⁸ However, in 2015, the success of the Iran nuclear deal was surprising and partly attributed to the role of Twitter.

Duncombe suggests that Twitter usage by Iranian state representatives allowed for a more positive recognition of both Iran and the United States.¹⁹ This shift in representation-recognition dynamics indicated the potential for political change even

before the deal was implemented, despite ongoing tensions during negotiations. Through Twitter, representatives from both sides were able to shape narratives of state identity in a positive light, shifting the focus of negotiations from a zero-sum game to a mutually beneficial outcome. The key lesson here is that social media serves as a platform for state recognition, allowing states to present themselves in persuasive ways to cultivate their identity while seeking affirmation and recognition from others. This inter-subjective and fluid process facilitated by social media can either legitimize or rule out foreign policy possibilities. By leveraging social media's transcendent nature, which goes beyond the spatial and temporal limitations of traditional diplomacy, new opportunities for dialogue, mutual recognition, and unprecedented cooperation can be created by being receptive to dynamic representations of state identity.

Evolution of Social Media Diplomacy

The evolution of social media diplomacy can be traced through various stages, each marked by significant developments and changes in how diplomats and governments utilize digital communication tools to conduct diplomatic activities. The emergence of social media platforms in the 2000s marked a significant shift in how people interacted and communicated online. Friendster is considered one of the first modern social media platforms, founded in 2002. It allowed users to create profiles,

connect with friends, and expand their network by adding other users as "friends." Friendster introduced the concept of online social networking, which became a foundational idea for subsequent platforms.²⁰ MySpace, launched in 2003, quickly gained popularity and became a leading social media platform. It allowed users to customize their profiles with music, backgrounds, and layouts, creating a personalized online presence. MySpace was particularly popular among musicians and artists who used the platform to showcase their work. LinkedIn was founded in 2003 and focused on professional networking and career development. Unlike other social media platforms, LinkedIn targeted business professionals, providing them with a platform to connect with colleagues, industry peers, and potential employers.²¹

Facebook was launched in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and his college roommates. Initially limited to Harvard University students, it quickly expanded to other universities and eventually became available to the general public in 2006. Facebook's user-friendly interface, news feed, and photo-sharing capabilities contributed to its rapid growth, making it one of the most influential social media platforms globally. YouTube, founded in 2005, revolutionized how people consumed and shared video content online. It allowed users to upload, share, and view videos on a wide range of topics, from entertainment to education. The platform became a hub for user-generated content and viral videos.

Twitter, launched in 2006, introduced the concept of microblogging, where users could share short messages (tweets) of up to 140 characters. This limited format encouraged concise and real-time communication, making Twitter a powerful platform for breaking news, public discussions, and engagement with public figures. Instagram, founded in 2010, focused on photo and video sharing. Its user-friendly interface and visual appeal made it immensely popular, particularly among younger demographics. Instagram's emphasis on visual content encouraged creativity and storytelling through images and short videos. The emergence of these social media platforms in the 2000s transformed the way people connected, communicated, and shared information online. These platforms laid the groundwork for the social media revolution, leading to the proliferation of new platforms and the integration of social media into various aspects of daily life, including diplomacy and international relations.²²

Experimentation and Adoption (Mid-2000s)

During the mid-2000s, there was a phase of experimentation and adoption of social media platforms by various entities, including governments, diplomats, businesses, and individuals.²³ This period marked a growing recognition of the potential of social media as a communication tool and a platform for engaging with audiences. In the mid-2000s, tech-savvy individuals, including bloggers, tech enthusiasts, and early adopters of

internet trends, were among the first to explore and experiment with social media platforms. They recognized the value of these platforms for building online communities, sharing content, and interacting with like-minded individuals. Government agencies and diplomats began to take notice of the growing popularity of social media and the potential it held for public outreach and communication. Some diplomatic missions and foreign ministries set up initial social media accounts to test the waters and gauge audience response. These early efforts were often experimental and informal.

As social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn gained momentum, more governments and diplomatic missions started establishing official accounts and profiles on these platforms. They used these accounts to share information about their country's policies, cultural events, and diplomatic activities. Governments also began to use social media as an additional channel for crisis communication and public diplomacy. During this phase, diplomats and government officials began experimenting with a more informal and personal tone on social media.²⁴ They used these platforms to showcase their personalities, share behind-the-scenes insights, and give the public a glimpse into the human side of diplomacy. This approach aimed to humanize diplomats and make diplomatic communication more approachable to a broader audience. The mid-2000s saw a growing emphasis on visual content in social media communication.

Platforms like YouTube and Flickr allowed diplomats and governments to share videos, photos, and infographics to engage with audiences in a more visually compelling way. This shift towards visual content enabled effective storytelling and enhanced the impact of diplomatic messages. As social media evolved, diplomats and governments began to explore additional channels and technologies to extend their reach. Some diplomats experimented with blogging to share in-depth insights into diplomatic issues, while others explored emerging platforms like Google+ and Pinterest.

Experimentation also came with challenges. Diplomats and government officials had to navigate the fast-paced and public nature of social media, balancing the need for transparency and engagement with the necessity of maintaining diplomatic decorum. Learning curves existed as diplomats adapted their communication styles to suit the unique characteristics of each platform. The mid-2000s marked a period of experimentation and early adoption of social media platforms by governments and diplomats. This phase laid the groundwork for the later evolution of social media diplomacy, as diplomats learned to harness the power of these platforms for public outreach, crisis communication, and building stronger connections with global audiences.

Recognition of Diplomatic Value (Late 2000s)

In the late 2000s, there was a growing recognition of the diplomatic value and strategic importance of social media platforms. Governments, diplomats, and international organizations increasingly acknowledged that social media could be utilized as an essential tool for conducting diplomatic activities, engaging with foreign audiences, and shaping international relations. Many factors caused the rise of social media. Social media platforms had witnessed significant growth by the late 2000s, with millions of active users around the world. Governments and diplomats realized that these platforms provided an unparalleled opportunity to engage with diverse and global audiences instantaneously, breaking down geographical barriers and reaching individuals beyond traditional diplomatic channels. Through social media, diplomats found a powerful medium to disseminate their country's policies, positions, and diplomatic initiatives directly to a wide range of stakeholders. The ability to share official statements, press releases, and real-time updates on social media allowed for the rapid dissemination of information and amplified the impact of diplomatic messages.²⁵

Social media emerged as a vital tool for public diplomacy, enabling governments to showcase their nation's cultural heritage, values, and achievements to international audiences. By leveraging soft power through social media platforms, countries sought to

foster mutual understanding, improve their global image, and build positive perceptions abroad. The late 2000s saw the rise of a generation of "digital natives," individuals who grew up with the internet and were accustomed to social media usage.²⁶ Governments recognized the importance of engaging with this digitally savvy audience, who often relied on social media as a primary source of information and communication. During times of crises or emergencies, social media platforms became crucial channels for governments and diplomats to provide timely and accurate information. The real-time nature of social media allowed for rapid response to unfolding situations and facilitated better crisis communication.

Social media offered a direct line of communication between diplomats and foreign audiences, allowing for immediate feedback, dialogue, and engagement. This direct interaction promoted a more inclusive and transparent approach to diplomacy. Social media provided diplomats with valuable insights into public sentiment and emerging trends on a global scale. Diplomats could monitor discussions, track reactions to policy decisions, and gauge the impact of diplomatic efforts more effectively. As the diplomatic community recognized the significance of social media, training programs and workshops on digital diplomacy and social media usage became more prevalent. Diplomats were encouraged to develop digital competence and best practices to enhance

their social media engagement. Overall, the late 2000s marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of social media diplomacy. Governments and diplomats began to embrace social media as an integral part of their diplomatic toolkit, leveraging its diplomatic value to engage with diverse audiences, promote national interests, and navigate the complex landscape of international relations in the digital age.

Digital Diplomacy as a Formal Practice (Early 2010s)

In the early 2010s, digital diplomacy, including social media diplomacy, evolved from an experimental approach to a more formalized and strategic practice within the field of international relations. Governments and diplomatic institutions recognized the increasing importance of digital communication tools and social media platforms as essential components of their diplomatic activities. Many governments and foreign ministries established dedicated digital diplomacy units to manage their online presence and social media activities. These units were responsible for formulating digital strategies, coordinating diplomatic efforts on social media platforms, and ensuring consistent messaging across various digital channels. By the early 2010s, governments and diplomatic missions around the world officially adopted social media accounts as part of their diplomatic communication.²⁷ Embassies, foreign ministries, and diplomats began

using platforms like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram to engage with foreign audiences, share official statements, and promote public diplomacy initiatives.

Some governments and diplomatic missions appointed social media ambassadors or influencers to help expand their reach and amplify diplomatic messages. These individuals, often well-known figures in various fields, acted as cultural ambassadors, sharing insights about the country's culture, values, and achievements on social media. As digital diplomacy gained prominence, governments and diplomatic institutions developed formal guidelines and best practices for diplomats and officials engaging on social media. These guidelines aimed to ensure diplomatic decorum, enhance professionalism, and avoid potential pitfalls related to online communication. The early 2010s witnessed the integration of social media into crisis communication strategies. Diplomats and governments utilized social media platforms to provide real-time updates during emergencies, natural disasters, or geopolitical crises. Social media became a crucial tool for reassuring citizens and the international community and countering misinformation.

Governments increasingly employed strategic social media campaigns to raise awareness about international issues, advocate for specific policies, and promote cultural exchanges. These campaigns leveraged hashtags, visuals, and multimedia content to rally support, engage audiences, and shape public opinion. The formalization of digital

diplomacy practices also brought about a focus on data analysis and metrics. Governments and diplomats used analytics tools to measure the impact of their social media efforts, track engagement metrics, and adjust their strategies accordingly. With the global reach of social media, diplomats recognized the importance of multilingual communication and cross-cultural sensitivity. Many diplomatic missions and foreign ministries began offering content in multiple languages to reach diverse audiences and avoid misunderstandings due to cultural nuances. The early 2010s saw the formalization of digital diplomacy as a strategic practice within the field of diplomacy. The establishment of dedicated digital diplomacy units, the official adoption of social media accounts, and the development of guidelines and best practices reflected a growing understanding of the long-term impact and potential of digital communication in shaping international relations. Diplomats embraced social media as a powerful tool to engage with global audiences, promote their nation's interests, and navigate the complexities of diplomacy in the digital era.

Crisis Communication and Real-Time Engagement (Mid-2010s)

In the mid-2010s, crisis communication and real-time engagement became prominent aspects of digital diplomacy and social media diplomacy. Diplomats and governments increasingly recognized the value of social media platforms as rapid-

response tools during times of crises, emergencies, and geopolitical events. Social media platforms, especially Twitter, emerged as primary channels for providing real-time updates during crises and emergency situations. Governments and diplomatic missions used Twitter to share verified information, issue safety advisories, and update citizens and the international community about unfolding events. Crisis situations often led to the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation. Social media became a battleground for countering false narratives and correcting inaccuracies. Diplomats and government officials actively engaged on social media to provide accurate information and combat rumors.

Social media allowed for two-way communication, enabling diplomats and government officials to directly interact with concerned citizens, journalists, and foreign counterparts. This direct engagement increased transparency, built trust, and addressed queries and concerns in real-time. During humanitarian crises, social media was used to coordinate relief efforts, call for donations, and provide information about aid distribution centers. Governments leveraged their social media presence to appeal for international assistance and support for affected populations.²⁸ In cases of geopolitical tensions or international crises, social media became a platform for crisis diplomacy. Diplomats engaged in online dialogues, expressed their country's stance, and attempted to de-

escalate tensions through diplomatic channels on social media. Diplomats and government officials organized virtual town hall meetings and Q&A sessions on social media platforms to directly engage with citizens and foreign audiences. These interactive sessions provided a platform for open dialogue and feedback from the public. Social media platforms were utilized to provide consular assistance to citizens abroad during emergencies, such as natural disasters or political upheavals. Diplomatic missions shared contact information and provided guidance to citizens in distress. Social media facilitated rapid coordination and information-sharing among diplomats from different countries during crises. Governments collaborated with international partners to pool resources and provide assistance in affected regions.

After major crisis events, diplomats and governments conducted after-action reviews to assess their crisis communication strategies on social media. This process helped identify strengths and weaknesses and refine future crisis communication approaches. The mid-2010s witnessed the increased recognition of social media as an indispensable tool for crisis communication and real-time engagement in the field of diplomacy. The ability to provide real-time updates, counter misinformation, engage directly with audiences, and coordinate responses with international partners made social media platforms invaluable in managing crises and emergencies. Diplomats and

governments leveraged these capabilities to enhance transparency, build trust, and efficiently communicate during challenging times, solidifying the role of social media as a critical component of crisis diplomacy.

Personalization and Informal Engagement (Late 2010s)

In the late 2010s, personalization and informal engagement became prominent trends in social media diplomacy. Diplomats and governments began to embrace a more approachable and humanized approach on social media platforms, recognizing the significance of connecting with audiences on a personal level. Diplomats started sharing personal insights, experiences, and behind-the-scenes moments on social media to humanize their diplomatic efforts. By presenting a more relatable and authentic image, diplomats aimed to bridge the gap between official diplomacy and public perception. While official government and diplomatic mission accounts continued to share policy-related information, diplomats themselves began to create personal social media profiles. These profiles allowed diplomats to engage more informally with their followers, discussing interests beyond their diplomatic roles. Diplomats and governments leveraged storytelling techniques to craft narratives that resonated with audiences. Through engaging stories and anecdotes, diplomats could connect emotionally with followers, making diplomatic communication more compelling and memorable.

Diplomats utilized social media platforms to share their achievements, milestones, and activities, both inside and outside of their diplomatic roles. This approach showcased their commitment to public service and helped build a positive and relatable public image. Diplomats participated in social media trends, memes, and challenges to demonstrate their familiarity with popular culture and stay relevant to younger audiences. These lighthearted engagements helped diplomats break away from traditional diplomatic rhetoric and fostered a sense of approachability. Influencers and celebrities with significant social media followings became essential partners in digital diplomacy efforts. Diplomats collaborated with these influencers to extend their reach and promote diplomatic campaigns to new and diverse audiences. The late 2010s saw diplomats adopting a more conversational tone on social media, engaging in direct interactions with followers, and responding to comments and queries. This approach facilitated meaningful conversations and built stronger connections with the public.

Diplomats used social media to promote public diplomacy through cultural exchanges, such as showcasing traditional cuisine, art, music, and festivals. These initiatives fostered mutual understanding and appreciation between nations. Diplomats shared educational content on social media, including explainers on diplomatic processes, foreign policy issues, and international relations. This effort to demystify diplomacy

allowed followers to gain a deeper understanding of the field.²⁹ The late 2010s witnessed a shift towards personalization and informal engagement in social media diplomacy. Diplomats and governments recognized the significance of presenting a human face of diplomacy and connecting with audiences on a personal level. By adopting a more approachable and authentic approach, diplomats were able to build stronger relationships with global audiences, effectively promoting their country's interests and fostering mutual understanding in the digital age.

The Rise of Hashtag Diplomacy and Digital Campaigns (Late 2010s - Early 2020s)

In the late 2010s and early 2020s, the rise of hashtag diplomacy and digital campaigns became a prominent aspect of social media diplomacy. Governments and diplomats recognized the power of hashtags as a tool to raise awareness, drive engagement, and advocate for specific diplomatic initiatives. Hashtags became an essential element of diplomatic communication on social media.³⁰ Governments and diplomats strategically used hashtags to categorize and aggregate content related to specific diplomatic campaigns, issues, events, or policy initiatives. Hashtag diplomacy was often employed to raise awareness about pressing international issues, such as climate change, human rights, and global health crises. By creating dedicated hashtags, diplomats sought to mobilize public support and draw attention to critical matters.

Governments used hashtags to advocate for their foreign policy goals and initiatives. Diplomats employed hashtags as rallying points for online activism, encouraging citizens and the international community to join their diplomatic efforts. Hashtags served as a unifying force, bringing together individuals, organizations, and governments from around the world to express solidarity on diplomatic issues. This convergence of global voices helped amplify diplomatic messages and create a sense of shared purpose. Through the use of hashtags, diplomats aimed to unite global voices around shared values, humanitarian causes, and common goals. Hashtag diplomacy allowed for a collective response to global challenges, fostering a sense of global solidarity and collective action. Hashtags provided an effective way to amplify diplomatic messages and increase their visibility beyond traditional diplomatic channels. Diplomats used hashtags in their tweets, posts, and other social media content to ensure that their messages reached a broader audience. During high-level diplomatic summits and international conferences, hashtags played a significant role in facilitating digital engagement. Diplomats, attendees, and observers used event-specific hashtags to share updates, insights, and discussions in real-time. Governments collaborated with social media influencers, celebrities, and thought leaders to promote diplomatic campaigns and

initiatives using specific hashtags. Influencers' broad reach and engaged audiences helped amplify the diplomatic messages effectively.

Diplomats and governments used social media analytics to track the reach and impact of their hashtag campaigns. By analyzing the data, diplomats could measure the success of their digital efforts and gain insights into public sentiment and engagement. Hashtag diplomacy allowed diplomats to respond quickly to emerging global trends and crises. By leveraging trending hashtags, they could participate in ongoing discussions, provide official responses, and address misinformation effectively. Diplomatic hashtag campaigns often encouraged public participation, inviting citizens to share their thoughts, experiences, and solutions on specific international issues. This citizen engagement contributed to a more inclusive and people-centric diplomatic approach. The late 2010s and early 2020s witnessed the rise of hashtag diplomacy and digital campaigns as essential elements of social media diplomacy. Hashtags became powerful tools for advocacy, uniting global voices, and amplifying diplomatic messages. By leveraging social media's reach and engagement capabilities, diplomats and governments effectively utilized hashtags to promote their nation's interests, shape public opinion, and address critical global challenges. Hashtag diplomacy marked a significant evolution in

diplomatic communication and demonstrated the increasing importance of social media as a diplomatic tool in the digital age.

Significance of Social Media Diplomacy

The significance of social media diplomacy lies in its transformative impact on the practice of diplomacy and international relations. Social media platforms have become essential tools for governments, diplomats, and international organizations to engage with global audiences, shape narratives, and advance their foreign policy objectives. Social media provides an unparalleled global reach, allowing diplomats to communicate directly with audiences worldwide. It breaks down geographical barriers and offers accessibility to diverse populations, including those in remote or marginalized areas. Social media enables diplomats to engage in real-time with citizens, journalists, businesses, and foreign counterparts. This immediacy allows for swift responses to emerging issues, crisis communication, and dynamic interactions with stakeholders.

Social media serves as a powerful tool for public diplomacy, enabling governments to showcase their nation's culture, values, and achievements to an international audience. It enhances a country's soft power by building positive perceptions and goodwill abroad. During emergencies and crises, social media provides diplomats with a rapid response platform to disseminate accurate information, counter

misinformation, and provide consular assistance to citizens abroad. Social media platforms offer valuable data insights and metrics that diplomats can use to track diplomatic trends, monitor public sentiment, and analyze public reactions to policy decisions. Social media diplomacy fosters direct and interactive engagement between diplomats and citizens. Citizens can ask questions, offer feedback, and participate in diplomatic conversations, creating a more inclusive and transparent diplomatic process.

Diplomats can connect with diaspora communities worldwide through social media, leveraging their cultural ties and potential as ambassadors to enhance cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. Social media allows diplomats to amplify their diplomatic messages and initiatives by sharing them on multiple platforms and encouraging audiences to share content, creating a multiplier effect. Social media platforms provide a cost-effective means of communication, reducing the need for traditional media outreach. It offers diplomats the flexibility to use various formats like text, images, videos, and live streams to engage with audiences.

Social media diplomacy requires diplomats to be innovative and adaptive to evolving digital trends and technologies. It encourages diplomats to embrace digital communication tools and incorporate them into their diplomatic strategies effectively. Social media diplomacy has become an integral and transformative aspect of modern

diplomacy. Its significance lies in its ability to connect diplomats directly with global audiences, foster mutual understanding, and shape international relations in an interconnected world.³¹ Social media has revolutionized diplomatic communication, opening new avenues for engagement, transparency, and cooperation, while presenting diplomats with unique opportunities and challenges in navigating the digital landscape.

Challenges of Social Media Diplomacy

Social media diplomacy comes with several challenges that diplomats and governments must navigate to effectively leverage these platforms for diplomatic purposes. Social media platforms are prone to the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation, which can harm diplomatic efforts and create confusion among audiences. Diplomats must be vigilant in verifying information before engaging with it publicly. The openness and accessibility of social media can pose security risks for diplomats and governments. There is a potential for cyberattacks, social engineering, and the misuse of personal data, necessitating robust security measures to protect sensitive information. Social media platforms operate independently, and diplomats may have limited control over content and user engagement. This lack of control raises concerns about security, data privacy, and the potential for hacking or impersonation of official accounts.

Maintaining diplomatic decorum and adherence to established diplomatic protocols can be challenging in the more informal and fast-paced environment of social media. Diplomats need to strike a balance between approachability and professionalism in their online interactions. Not all countries or populations have equal access to social media platforms, creating a digital divide that may exclude certain segments of the population from diplomatic engagement. This inequity can pose challenges to inclusive diplomatic outreach. Social media diplomacy can backfire if diplomatic messages or initiatives receive viral backlash or negative public opinion. Diplomats must carefully craft their communication to avoid unintended negative consequences. Diplomats may encounter online trolls and harassment on social media, particularly when discussing sensitive or controversial topics. Managing such interactions requires a diplomatic approach to avoid escalating conflicts.

Navigating language and cultural differences on social media can be challenging. Diplomats must ensure that their messages are appropriately translated and culturally sensitive to resonate with global audiences. While social media can be a powerful tool for crisis communication, mismanagement of information during emergencies can lead to confusion and panic. Diplomats must exercise caution and accuracy when disseminating crisis-related updates. Not all diplomats may be familiar with social media platforms or

digital communication strategies. Diplomatic institutions need to invest in training their personnel to effectively use social media and digital tools in diplomatic practice. With multiple diplomats and government officials using social media, maintaining consistent messaging can be challenging. Coordination is crucial to ensure that diplomatic communications align with national policies and objectives. Social media diplomacy introduces several challenges that require careful consideration and management. Diplomats and governments must navigate the potential pitfalls of misinformation, security risks, and diplomatic decorum while leveraging the opportunities for global engagement and public diplomacy offered by social media platforms. Striking the right balance between openness and responsibility is essential to make the most of social media's transformative potential in modern diplomatic practice.

Opportunities for Social Media Diplomacy

Social media diplomacy offers a wide range of opportunities for diplomats and governments to enhance their diplomatic efforts and advance their foreign policy objectives. Leveraging social media platforms strategically can lead to numerous benefits and opportunities in the field of diplomacy. Social media provides a vast and global audience, allowing diplomats to engage directly with citizens, stakeholders, and foreign counterparts from around the world. This direct engagement fosters mutual understanding

and builds bridges between nations. Social media platforms serve as powerful tools for public diplomacy, enabling governments to showcase their nation's culture, values, and achievements to international audiences. By sharing positive narratives, governments can enhance their soft power and build favorable perceptions abroad.

During emergencies and crises, social media enables diplomats to provide real-time updates, dispel rumors, and offer consular assistance to citizens. Rapid response capabilities can improve crisis management and reassure concerned individuals. Social media campaigns and hashtags facilitate advocacy efforts on international issues, human rights, climate change, and other policy priorities. Diplomats can rally global support and mobilize online communities to address global challenges collectively. Social media analytics help diplomats track public sentiment, monitor discussions on diplomatic issues, and gauge reactions to policy decisions. This data-driven approach informs diplomatic strategies and enhances understanding of public perceptions. Social media enables diplomats to connect and collaborate with their counterparts from other countries, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations. These digital diplomacy networks facilitate cooperation on shared challenges. Diplomats can promote cultural exchanges, art, music, and heritage through social media, fostering people-to-people connections and cross-cultural understanding between nations. Collaborating with

social media influencers, celebrities, and thought leaders allows diplomats to amplify their messages and reach diverse audiences. These influencer partnerships can generate broader public engagement.

Social media platforms offer a channel for crisis diplomacy, enabling diplomats to communicate directly and privately with counterparts during periods of heightened tensions or conflicts. Social media promotes transparency in diplomatic communications, allowing citizens to follow and understand the activities of their diplomats. It makes diplomacy more accessible to the public, enhancing democratic accountability. Social media diplomacy presents numerous opportunities to enhance diplomatic engagement, public diplomacy efforts, crisis communication, and policy promotion. By strategically leveraging social media platforms, diplomats and governments can amplify their messages, build international partnerships, and foster a more inclusive and transparent approach to diplomacy. Embracing these opportunities allows for more effective and impactful diplomatic practices in the digital age.³²

In conclusion, social media diplomacy has become an indispensable component of modern diplomatic practice. It complements traditional diplomatic efforts by leveraging the power of digital communication to enhance global engagement, promote public diplomacy, and shape international relations in an interconnected world. However,

diplomats must navigate the unique challenges posed by social media while capitalizing on its opportunities to effectively advance their country's foreign policy objectives.

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CHAPTER THREE

DONALD TRUMP, COVID-19 AND E-DIPLOMACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed a significant transformation in global diplomacy due to the advent of social media. Leaders around the world have turned to platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to communicate directly with their citizens and the international community. One of the most prominent figures to leverage social media in diplomacy was former President Donald Trump of the United States. The chapter analyzes how Trump's use of social media shaped his diplomatic approach, influenced public opinion, and impacted international relations during a time of crisis.

Social Media Diplomacy and the US Politics

The advent of social media has revolutionized the landscape of political communication in the United States. Political entities, including politicians, parties, foundations, institutions, and think tanks, have embraced platforms like Facebook and Twitter to engage with and connect to voters. This shift extends not only to regular individuals but also to politicians, pundits, and thought leaders who now have the means to voice their opinions and interact with a vast network of like-minded individuals. According to Wael Ghonim, social media tends to reinforce existing beliefs rather than

fostering new ones.¹ Its primary function lies in affirming political convictions and strengthening the support base. Nevertheless, it remains a valuable tool for gathering volunteers and financial resources.

Politicians have found in social media a distinct communication platform separate from traditional mainstream media. Its potential for fundraising has been demonstrated by President Barack Obama's 2012 campaign, which broke fundraising records with over a billion dollars raised, including substantial contributions from online platforms like social media, email, and websites, drawing more contributions from small donors than ever before.²

The 2008 US presidential election marked a significant turning point, as candidates began using the Internet and social media as integral parts of their campaigns. Barack Obama, in particular, was the first to harness the power of the Internet to mobilize supporters, advertise, and connect with people on an unprecedented scale. He utilized platforms such as YouTube to disseminate videos that collectively garnered 14.5 million hours of views. Subsequently, more candidates embraced various social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and mobile apps, with some announcing their candidacies through these channels. For instance, Barack Obama's re-election announcement reached 13 million people via email and Mitt Romney made his

announcement on Twitter.³ By 2011, “@BarackObama” had amassed 7.4 million followers, including twenty-eight world leaders, making it the third account to reach 10 million followers by September 2011.⁴ Donald Trump was not left out of the equation, as his use of Twitter as a tool of diplomatic engagement before and during his presidency led to the popularization of the term “Twiplomacy” or simply put, “Twitter Diplomacy”.

“TwiDiplomacy”

The use of Twitter by politicians and diplomats has enacted the term “twiplomacy” having managed to influence the image and reputation of the nation according to the way its representatives announce, promote and comment on political issues.⁵ Twitter, in particular, has changed not only the way news are transmitted but also reformulated diplomatic practices. Diplomats devote considerable time in conducting their statecraft on Twitter which is being characterized as a platform of political discourse that offers politicians the opportunity to establish a network with their counterparts and also a tool for real-time response in crises. President Trump during his political campaign back in 2015 made extensive and daily use of Twitter to inform his fanbase on his decisions, post his criticisms towards his counterparts, and threaten them and mostly praise himself.

Donald Trump's presence on social media garnered significant global attention after he joined Twitter in May 2009. Donald Trump before his account was banned according to the “twiplomacy” rankings, was the most followed leader.⁶ Over the course of almost twelve years, he tweeted approximately 57,000 times, with a particularly active period of around 8,000 tweets during the 2016 election campaign and over 25,000 tweets during his presidency.⁷ The White House officially recognized his tweets as statements from the President. Twitter banned Trump from the platform in January 2021, during the final days of his term, when his account @realDonaldTrump had over 88.9 million followers.⁸ After this ban, Twitter's new owner, Elon Musk, reinstated his account on November 19, 2022, although Trump announced that he would not be using it and would instead focus on his own social media platform, Truth Social.⁹

As the 45th President of the United States, Trump was a prolific user of Twitter, and his tweets became a central element of his communication strategy, both domestically and internationally. His approach to Twitter diplomacy was characterized by direct, unfiltered, and often controversial communication with the public and world leaders.¹⁰ Trump used Twitter as a direct line of communication with his base and the American people. By bypassing traditional media, he could convey his messages and policy positions without any filter, presenting himself as an authentic and unvarnished

leader. Twitter became a platform for announcing policy decisions and executive orders, making it one of the primary channels for disseminating important information from the White House. These tweets often had an immediate impact on the news cycle and public discourse.

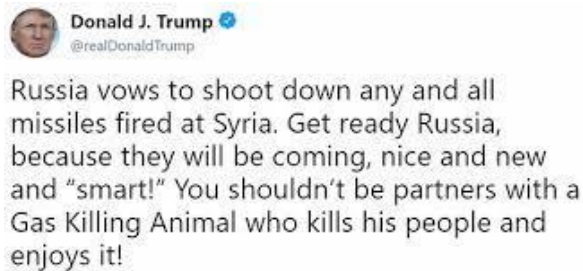
Figure 1: Twitter and US-Mexico Relations¹¹



(Trump's Twiplomacy: A

New Diplomatic Norm?)

Figure 2: Donald Trump using Twitter to manage US-Russia Relations in Syria.¹¹



(Trump's Twiplomacy:

A New Diplomatic Norm?)

Through the two above sample tweets from Donald Trump, it goes a long way to reflect how deep and solid Twitter diplomacy was in the Donald Trump's administration.

As Trump's Twitter account was not limited to only domestic affairs; he frequently used the platform for diplomatic communications with foreign leaders. He engaged in public exchanges, both positive and negative, with world leaders, which sometimes shaped international relations and sparked debates. Trump's use of Twitter in diplomacy had mixed consequences for international relations. On one hand, it allowed for direct, real-time engagement with foreign leaders, which could facilitate communication and crisis management. On the other hand, some of his tweets were perceived as impulsive and created diplomatic tensions with traditional allies. Trump's tweets sometimes appeared to reflect shifts in policy positions or reversals of earlier statements. For example, On November 29, 2017, President Trump retweeted three inflammatory and unverified anti-Muslim videos from Britain First, a British far-right and ultranationalist group known for posting misleading content.¹² One of the videos falsely portrayed a Muslim immigrant involved in an assault. The incident received widespread condemnation from politicians, commentators, religious leaders, civil rights groups, and organizations both in the US and abroad.

Many called for Trump to be banned from the UK, although his invitation to visit was not withdrawn. Trump's actions were praised by far-right circles and led to increased Islamophobic comments on social media, giving elevated visibility to Britain First.¹³ The

White House press secretary defended Trump's tweets, emphasizing that the threat of violence and terrorism was real, regardless of the veracity of the videos. Trump publicly rebuked UK Prime Minister Theresa May on Twitter in response to her criticism of the retweets, causing a rare rift between the UK and the US. Three weeks after the retweets, Twitter suspended the accounts of Britain First, its leader, and deputy leader.¹⁴ In a subsequent interview, Trump claimed he was not familiar with Britain First when he retweeted their content and expressed a willingness to apologize if they were indeed a racist group.¹⁵ This led to confusion and uncertainty among both domestic and foreign audiences regarding the administration's stance on various issues.

Trump's Twitter diplomacy was marked by his unique communication style, including the use of capital letters for emphasis and frequent exclamation marks. Some of his tweets sparked controversies and accusations of misinformation or promoting divisive rhetoric. Trump's use of Twitter provided a level of transparency that was previously unseen in presidential communications. However, it also raised concerns about the dissemination of accurate information and the role of social media in shaping public opinion. After his election loss, Trump continued to undermine the election results leading up to Joe Biden's inauguration, and his tweets were cited as contributing to the incitement of the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol during the electoral vote

counting.¹⁶ Following this event, social media companies swiftly banned him. Facebook and Instagram banned him for two years, while Twitter permanently suspended his @realDonaldTrump handle and other affiliated accounts. Research analytics firm Zignal Labs reported a significant decline in election-related misinformation during the first week after Trump's bans.¹⁷ Despite the bans, Trump continued to issue statements, which were shared on social media by his spokesperson, Liz Harrington, under the Save America logo. However, Harrington's own Twitter account has been infrequently used since then, with plans to move to the Trump-affiliated social media application, Truth Social, launched in February 2022. On April 4, 2023, during his arraignment hearing, Acting New York Supreme Court Justice Juan Merchan cautioned Trump against using social media to incite violence.¹⁸

Overall, Twitter diplomacy became a defining feature of Donald Trump's presidency. While it allowed him to communicate directly with his supporters and engage in real-time diplomatic exchanges, it also generated controversies and highlighted the challenges of using social media as a primary communication tool in high-stakes international relations. Throughout most of his presidency, Trump's Twitter account remained unmoderated under the rationale of "public interest," despite his frequent posts of controversial and false statements. Congress occasionally censured him for some of his

tweets, but this did not deter his tweeting behavior. Investigations revealed that he had retweeted numerous accounts promoting conspiracy or fringe content, even after some were suspended. Additionally, during his 2020 reelection campaign, he spread misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic and raised doubts about the legitimacy of postal voting, leading Twitter to either remove or label such tweets as disputed.

Diplomatic Outreach via Facebook and Instagram

During his presidency, Donald Trump's administration also utilized Facebook and Instagram as platforms for diplomatic outreach and communication. These social media platforms provided additional channels for the administration to engage with both domestic and international audiences. Facebook and Instagram are among the most widely used social media platforms globally, with billions of active users. By leveraging these platforms, the Trump administration could reach a diverse and vast audience, including citizens, policymakers, and leaders from around the world. Unlike Twitter's text-based nature, Facebook and Instagram allowed the administration to share multimedia content, including photos, videos, and infographics. This enhanced the ability to convey messages and engage with followers through visually appealing and informative content. The Trump administration occasionally conducted live sessions on Facebook and Instagram, allowing the president and other officials to directly interact

with the public and address questions and concerns in real-time. These live events provided a more intimate and interactive form of communication. Similar to Twitter, the administration used Facebook and Instagram to announce policy decisions, executive orders, and updates on various issues.¹⁹ The platforms served as important channels for disseminating official information and engaging citizens in discussions around these policies.

The administration posted updates about diplomatic engagements, such as meetings with foreign leaders, summits, and international events. These posts provided insights into the president's foreign policy agenda and his interactions with other world leaders. Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram allowed the Trump administration to engage in public diplomacy efforts. By sharing stories of U.S. achievements, culture, and values, they aimed to shape public perceptions and influence international opinions about the United States.²⁰ Facebook and Instagram also enabled the administration to engage in digital diplomacy with both traditional allies and adversarial countries. By directly communicating with foreign leaders and their governments, the administration could convey messages and potentially influence policy positions. Social media platforms provided a means for the administration to gauge international reactions to their policies and statements. Analyzing comments and engagement metrics allowed

them to understand public sentiment and potentially adapt their approaches. It is important to note that the use of Facebook and Instagram for diplomatic outreach was not unique to the Trump administration. Social media has become an essential tool for many world leaders to communicate with citizens, engage in diplomacy, and project their agendas on the global stage. However, Trump's administration was particularly notable for its active and unorthodox use of social media as a central element of its communication and diplomatic strategy.

A classic example of the influence of Donald Trump's use of Facebook was in 2016. During his 2016 campaign, Trump posted ads on his Facebook page attacking Hillary Clinton, including parodies of Pokémon Go and Ms. Pac-Man portraying her as a Pokémon and Ms. Pac-Man.²⁰ There were claims that Trump was charged less per ad than Clinton, but Facebook countered by saying he was charged more. As president, Trump used Facebook to issue an apology for the Access Hollywood tape.²¹ He also faced criticism for posting a news story about a purported Kuwaiti travel ban similar to Executive Order 13769, which turned out to be false.²² In 2017, Facebook revealed that accounts linked to the Russian government had purchased around \$100,000 of Facebook advertisements during the election campaign as part of Russian interference in the US election.²³ Trump criticized Facebook for being "anti-Trump" in response to this

disclosure. Facebook's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, defended the platform, stating that both sides were upset about ideas and content they don't like.²⁴ In November 2020, Facebook banned a large group called "Stop the Steal," dedicated to the idea that the election was "stolen" from Trump due to fraud.²⁵

During his initial use of Instagram, Trump primarily shared personal pictures, including images with his grandchildren. However, in September 2015, with approximately 377 thousand followers, he released a political advertisement attacking primary opponent Jeb Bush on immigration, showcasing Instagram's potential as a political tool.²⁶ As his presidency approached, Trump's personal account had over 5 million followers. He also took control of the official White House account (@whitehouse), where he posted pictures from his inauguration.²⁷ While it was expected that the official account would mainly feature the work of the Chief Official White House Photographer, Shealah Craighead's contributions were relatively limited compared to Pete Souza's work during the Obama administration. Additionally, Trump used Instagram to engage in the controversy surrounding the 2016 film *Ghostbusters*, posting a video criticizing the all-female cast, leading to claims that "Trump supporters" were responsible for some of the online backlash against the film.²⁸

Covid-19 and Trump's Social Media Response

The Coronavirus started from China at the end of 2019 and spread into year 2020, this mean that the year began with an outbreak of a new virus, named COVID-19²⁹, which led to the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaring it a global pandemic on the 12th of March.³⁰ It has brought many challenges to both society and governments, putting the world at a halt. Not only did the pandemic affect the world's economy, society, and many political factors, but it has also evoked different forms of communication. Donald Trump's social media response to the Covid-19 pandemic was a significant aspect of his presidency. As the virus spread globally in early 2020, Trump used Twitter extensively to address the crisis, communicate policy decisions, and express his opinions on various aspects of the pandemic. In the early stages of the pandemic, Trump's social media posts downplayed the severity of Covid-19. He initially referred to it as the "Chinese virus" and suggested that the virus would miraculously disappear.³¹ Some of his tweets promoted unproven treatments, which led to concerns about the spread of misinformation. Trump's social media communications at times conflicted with the guidance and advice of health experts, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).³² This discord created confusion among the public about the best practices for containing the virus.

During the pandemic, Trump used social media to advocate for controversial measures, such as the use of hydroxychloroquine as a potential treatment for Covid-19.³³ However, these positions were not supported by scientific evidence and were met with criticism from health experts. Trump's social media accounts were a major platform for sharing public health messaging related to the pandemic. However, his communication style and occasional contradictions with official health advice raised concerns about the effectiveness and consistency of the messaging.³⁴ Trump's social media response to Covid-19 also had implications for international relations. His use of terms like "China virus" led to diplomatic tensions with China, and his criticism of the WHO resulted in the U.S. withdrawing from the organization.³⁵ Trump's tweets and social media presence had a notable influence on public behavior. His remarks on topics such as mask-wearing and lockdown measures contributed to a divisive public discourse, with some people adhering to guidelines while others rejected them.

When Trump himself tested positive for Covid-19 in October 2020, his social media accounts became an essential source of updates on his health and treatment.³⁶ However, the handling of this situation also raised questions about transparency and accurate information sharing. Trump used social media to promote the rapid development and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines under his administration's Operation Warp Speed

initiative.³⁷ His tweets aimed to boost public confidence in the vaccines' safety and efficacy. Donald Trump's social media response to the Covid-19 pandemic had both positive and negative consequences. While it provided a direct channel for public health communication and policy announcements, it also led to concerns about the spread of misinformation, conflicts with health experts, and diplomatic tensions. The pandemic highlighted the need for responsible and evidence-based communication on social media platforms, especially during times of crisis.

In conclusion, Donald Trump's use of social media during the Covid-19 pandemic brought to light both the potential and risks of social media diplomacy in the 21st century. While it allowed for direct communication with citizens and foreign leaders, it also amplified misinformation and contributed to diplomatic tensions. As social media continues to play a central role in shaping international relations, future leaders must strike a balance between transparency, responsible communication, and the need to uphold public health during global crises.

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CHAPTER FOUR
CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN 21ST
CENTURY STATE RELATIONS

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed a profound transformation in the field of diplomacy, driven by the rapid evolution of digital technology and the widespread adoption of social media platforms. Diplomacy, once conducted primarily behind closed doors through official channels, has now entered the public domain in a manner unprecedented in history. This chapter delves into the challenges and prospects of social media diplomacy in the context of state relations during the first two decades of the 21st century. Social media diplomacy, a term coined to describe the strategic use of digital platforms by governments, diplomats, and international organizations, has become a pivotal instrument in shaping the dynamics of international relations. This chapter explores the multifaceted nature of this emerging diplomatic landscape, aiming to provide insights into both its promises and pitfalls.

As we navigate the complex terrain of social media diplomacy, we will examine the prospects it offers, such as direct and transparent communication, real-time crisis management, engagement with global audiences, and the promotion of cultural

diplomacy. However, we will also confront the challenges it poses, including the spread of misinformation and disinformation, the proliferation of fake accounts and impersonation, diplomatic tensions and missteps, erosion of diplomatic privacy, lack of context and nuance, and the amplification of nationalism and populism. In this ever-evolving digital age, understanding the dynamics of social media diplomacy is paramount for diplomats, policymakers, and citizens alike. By exploring its challenges and prospects, this chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of social media in shaping state relations in the 21st century.

Identifiable Challenges of Social Media Diplomacy

Social media diplomacy presents several challenges that can impact the effectiveness and conduct of international relations. These challenges arise due to the unique nature of social media platforms and the way they influence communication between states and their leaders. Some these identifiable challenges include, misinformation and disinformation, diplomatic tensions and missteps, erosion of diplomatic privacy and etc.

Misinformation and Disinformation

Misinformation and disinformation are critical challenges in the realm of social media diplomacy. They refer to the spread of false or misleading information, either

unintentionally (misinformation) or with the intent to deceive (disinformation). These issues have become pervasive on social media platforms and can have significant implications for international relations and diplomatic efforts.¹ Misinformation and disinformation erode trust in governments, institutions, and international partners. When false information is disseminated through official channels or by state actors, it can damage the credibility of those involved and hinder diplomatic efforts based on trust and transparency. False information shared by one nation or leader can lead to misunderstandings and diplomatic tensions with other countries. Misinformation or disinformation campaigns targeting specific nations can escalate conflicts or disrupt diplomatic relations.² When misinformation circulates during international crises or negotiations, it can hinder cooperation and impede the ability of nations to work together effectively. This can hinder collective efforts to address global challenges and find common solutions. For example, on August 23, 2020, Trump posted a tweet claiming that "Mail Drop Boxes...are not Covid sanitized" and accused the Democratic Party of using mailboxes despite alleged voter security and fraud issues with postal voting.³ He suggested that voting by mail enables a person to vote multiple times and questioned who controls the mailboxes. In response, Twitter applied a warning to the tweet, stating that it

violated their Civic Integrity Policy for making misleading health claims that could potentially discourage people from participating in voting.⁴

Fake social media accounts impersonating world leaders or diplomats can spread false statements, leading to confusion and diplomatic challenges. For example, a fake account of a foreign minister may tweet a provocative statement, causing diplomatic tensions. In 2017, a fake Twitter account impersonating North Korea's leader Kim Jong un (@DPRK_News) gained significant attention.⁵ The account tweeted provocative statements, satirical news, and misinformation, leading to confusion among the public and media outlets about North Korea's official stance on various issues. In 2017, a fake Twitter account of then-French President Emmanuel Macron (@PresidntMacron) was created, sharing misleading statements on various policies and international relations. The account amassed thousands of followers, leading to potential misinformation and confusion about the French government's official positions.⁶ In 2020, a Twitter account impersonating India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar (@DrSJaishankar), posted statements on sensitive issues like India-China border tensions and regional politics.⁷ The account was later exposed as fake, but not before causing confusion and raising concerns about diplomatic implications.

These examples demonstrate the potential impact of misinformation and disinformation in social media diplomacy. The speed and scale at which false information can spread on these platforms highlight the importance of critical media literacy and responsible communication by world leaders and citizens alike to counter the influence of false narratives.

Diplomatic Tensions and Missteps

Diplomatic tensions and missteps are situations in international relations where communication, actions, or decisions by world leaders or diplomats result in strains or conflicts between countries. These tensions can arise due to various factors, including miscommunication, misunderstandings, miscalculations, or intentional provocations. In 2014, the Russian Foreign Ministry tweeted a controversial photo montage that depicted President Barack Obama eating a banana.⁸ The tweet was perceived as racially insensitive and led to increased diplomatic tensions between Russia and the United States. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow responded with a tweet criticizing the image, further escalating the situation. Also, in 2016, a tweet from then-Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte comparing himself to Adolf Hitler resulted in a diplomatic row with China.⁹ The tweet was part of Duterte's defense of his controversial war on drugs. China, as well as other countries, condemned the statement, and it strained relations between the

Philippines and some of its neighbors. In 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump announced the United States' withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal via Twitter.¹⁰ The tweet caught world leaders and diplomatic partners by surprise, leading to diplomatic tensions and a contentious global response. The decision had significant implications for international relations and regional stability.

In 2018, Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister, Chrystia Freeland, tweeted concerns about Saudi Arabia's detention of activists.¹¹ In response, Saudi Arabia expelled the Canadian ambassador, froze trade relations, and recalled its students from Canadian universities. The incident exemplified how diplomatic tensions can escalate quickly due to social media communications. In 2020, a tweet from India's Minister of Home Affairs, Amit Shah, claiming that the new political map of India included territory disputed by Nepal, further strained India-Nepal relations.¹² The tweet sparked outrage in Nepal, leading to a formal protest and heightening diplomatic tensions between the two neighboring countries. These historical examples illustrate how diplomatic tensions and missteps can arise due to world leaders' social media usage. The rapid and unfiltered nature of social media communications can lead to misunderstandings, escalations, and negative repercussions in international relations. These incidents highlight the need for

responsible and careful social media diplomacy to avoid unintended consequences and maintain constructive diplomatic relationships.

Erosion of Diplomatic Privacy

Traditional diplomacy often relies on confidential and discreet channels for sensitive discussions. However, social media diplomacy can erode the privacy of diplomatic exchanges, making it challenging to conduct confidential negotiations and address sensitive issues discreetly. In the same vein, diplomatic discussions or statements made on social media platforms lack the confidentiality of traditional diplomatic channels. Tweets and posts by diplomats and leaders are accessible to the public, making them susceptible to misinterpretation or public scrutiny. For example, in 2010, WikiLeaks, an organization that publishes leaked documents, released a massive trove of diplomatic cables sent by U.S. diplomats to the State Department.¹³ The leaked cables contained sensitive and candid assessments of foreign leaders, confidential discussions on international issues, and candid views on other countries. The leak caused a diplomatic firestorm and strained relations between the United States and many other countries. In 2016, emails from the Democratic National Committee (DNC) were hacked and leaked during the U.S. presidential election.¹⁴ The leaked emails contained confidential and sensitive information about political strategies and internal discussions. The leak had a

significant impact on the election and raised concerns about the security of digital communication channels in the political and diplomatic realm.

In 2021, confidential emails from French diplomats were leaked, exposing internal discussions and assessments of foreign policy matters.¹⁵ The leaks created a diplomatic embarrassment for France and led to questions about the security of diplomatic communications. These historical examples illustrate how the erosion of diplomatic privacy through leaks, hacks, and surveillance can have far-reaching consequences. Such breaches of confidentiality can strain diplomatic relations, undermine trust between nations, and create challenges for conducting open and candid negotiations in the international arena. The incidents also highlight the need for robust cybersecurity measures and responsible handling of sensitive information in diplomatic communications.

Lack of Context and Nuance

The lack of context and nuance refers to the challenge of conveying complex ideas, policies, or positions accurately on social media platforms due to limitations such as character restrictions, rapid pace, and the absence of non-verbal cues. This can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and oversimplification of diplomatic messages. Diplomatic statements shared on social media may be taken out of context, leading to

misinterpretations by the public or other countries. A nuanced remark about a specific issue could be misunderstood when presented as a standalone tweet without proper context. Complex foreign policies often require detailed explanations and justifications. However, due to character limitations on platforms like Twitter, world leaders may have to oversimplify their policy positions, which can lead to misconceptions about their intentions or actions. The fast-paced nature of social media can lead to impulsive reactions and hasty tweets by world leaders. Such tweets may lack nuance and thoughtfulness, potentially causing diplomatic tensions or misunderstandings. Social media platforms often promote concise and attention-grabbing soundbites. However, international relations often require nuanced and in-depth dialogue, which may not be effectively conveyed through brief statements.

In 2013, Pope Francis tweeted the message, "Inequality is the root of social evil."¹⁶ The tweet, due to its brevity, lacked context, and its nuanced meaning was misconstrued by some as a call for socialism. The Vatican clarified that the pope's statement was a reflection on the moral responsibility to address inequality, not an endorsement of any specific political ideology. Also, in 2017, then-U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted, "Despite the constant negative press covfefe."¹⁷ The tweet ended abruptly with the nonsensical word "covfefe," sparking confusion and humor on social

media. The lack of context and apparent mistake in the tweet led to speculation and jokes, diverting attention from other important issues. In 2018, Saudi Arabia's official Twitter account posted an image of a plane flying towards the Toronto skyline, along with an emoji of a plane and a pair of hands clapping.¹⁸ The tweet was seen as a response to a diplomatic spat between Canada and Saudi Arabia. The lack of context and nuance in the tweet, which appeared threatening, caused tensions and misunderstandings between the two countries.

In 2019, amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, a tweet from Pakistan's government account featured an image of its Prime Minister, Imran Khan, with the caption, "Nuclear Button is not for use."¹⁹ The tweet was meant to convey a message of restraint but lacked the necessary context, raising concerns and questions about Pakistan's nuclear policy. These examples demonstrate how the limitations of social media platforms, such as character restrictions and rapid communication, can lead to tweets and posts that lack the necessary context and nuance for proper understanding. In these cases, the lack of elaboration or clarification in social media communication resulted in misinterpretations and potential diplomatic tensions. It underscores the importance of responsible and thoughtful communication by world leaders on social media platforms to avoid unintended consequences in international relations.

Amplification of Nationalism and Populism

The amplification of nationalism and populism refers to how social media platforms can magnify and reinforce nationalist and populist sentiments among the public.²⁰ Social media's characteristics, such as its ability to rapidly disseminate information and create echo chambers, can contribute to the spread and reinforcement of nationalist and populist ideologies. Social media algorithms often prioritize content that aligns with users' existing beliefs and preferences. As a result, like-minded individuals tend to interact with and share similar content, creating echo chambers where nationalist and populist views are reinforced and dissenting opinions are rarely encountered. Nationalist messages that resonate emotionally or tap into a sense of patriotism can quickly go viral on social media platforms, garnering widespread attention and support. This viral nature can amplify nationalist narratives and increase their influence. Social media can intensify political polarization, with nationalist and populist groups becoming more extreme in their views due to exposure to like-minded content and limited exposure to alternative perspectives. Nationalistic hashtags and symbols can become trending topics on social media, drawing widespread attention and participation, further amplifying nationalist sentiments.

During the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign in the United Kingdom, social media played a significant role in amplifying nationalist sentiments and populist messages.²¹ Pro-Brexit groups utilized social media platforms to reach a wide audience and disseminate messages advocating for leaving the European Union. The campaign capitalized on nationalist narratives, such as regaining sovereignty and controlling immigration, which resonated with certain segments of the public. In recent years, nationalist movements in several European countries have leveraged social media to amplify their messages and mobilize supporters. Parties and leaders promoting nationalist and populist ideologies have used platforms like Twitter and Facebook to engage with their followers, spread nationalist narratives, and criticize globalization and multiculturalism. Populist leaders around the world, such as Donald Trump in the United States and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, have effectively used social media to communicate directly with their followers and amplify populist rhetoric.²² Their tweets and posts resonate with nationalist and populist sentiments, leading to substantial online followings and real-world political impact.

Nationalist movements in Asian countries have also utilized social media to amplify their messages and mobilize support. For example, in India, nationalist narratives and appeals to patriotism have been widely shared and amplified through social media,

contributing to the popularity of certain political leaders and parties. During the Catalan independence movement in Spain, social media played a role in amplifying nationalist sentiments.²³ Pro-independence groups used platforms like Twitter to promote their cause, share updates on protests, and mobilize supporters, leading to widespread online engagement with the nationalist movement. These examples demonstrate how social media can amplify nationalist and populist sentiments, allowing political movements and leaders to reach a broader audience and mobilize support. The rapid dissemination of information and the ability to connect directly with followers on social media platforms have facilitated the rise and impact of nationalist and populist movements in various parts of the world. However, it is essential to recognize that the relationship between social media and nationalism/populism is complex, and social media alone is not the sole driver of these ideologies but can play a significant role in their dissemination and amplification.

Prospects of Social Media Diplomacy

The prospects of social media diplomacy are both promising and challenging, offering opportunities for enhanced communication and engagement between states while presenting potential risks that need careful management.

Direct and Transparent Communication

Direct and transparent communication is one of the key prospects of social media diplomacy. It refers to the ability of world leaders, diplomats, and governments to engage with the public and counterparts in other countries directly and openly through social media platforms. Social media provides a direct channel for leaders to reach a global audience without intermediaries. Messages can be disseminated quickly and reach a wide range of people, including citizens, journalists, and policymakers. During the 2008 and 2012 U.S. presidential campaigns, Barack Obama's team effectively used social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook, to engage directly with the public.²⁴ Obama's social media strategy allowed him to share policy positions, engage with voters, and fundraise effectively. His use of social media was seen as groundbreaking and played a significant role in his successful election and re-election.

Leaders can provide real-time updates on important events, policies, and diplomatic initiatives. This immediate communication allows for timely information sharing during emergencies, crises, or diplomatic negotiations. Social media allows leaders to engage with their own citizens in a more accessible and personal manner. It enables leaders to listen to public concerns, respond to questions, and address issues of national importance directly. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is known for his active presence on social media platforms. He leveraged Twitter and other platforms to

directly communicate with Indian citizens and the global Indian diaspora. Modi's use of social media contributed to his popularity and enabled him to engage with a vast audience, particularly during his election campaigns in 2014 and 2019.²⁵ Also, Pope Francis has been active on social media since his election in 2013. He regularly tweets messages of peace, hope, and compassion to his millions of followers on Twitter. His social media engagement has allowed him to reach a global audience and communicate the Vatican's messages directly to the public. Former U.S. President Donald Trump was known for his prolific and often controversial use of Twitter during his presidency. He used the platform to communicate directly with the public and express his policy positions, which sometimes led to diplomatic tensions and reactions from other world leaders.²⁶

Social media platforms allow countries to engage in public diplomacy by projecting their culture, values, and achievements to the global community. This form of digital diplomacy can influence international perceptions and enhance a country's image. Social media allows leaders to receive immediate feedback from the public, promoting accountability and responsiveness. Citizens can voice their opinions, and leaders can address concerns directly. South Korean President Moon Jae-in has employed YouTube as a platform to communicate directly with the public. He has held "Blue House" press conferences and posted videos discussing various national and diplomatic issues. This

approach allows him to engage with citizens and provide explanations on government policies.²⁷ Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau used Snapchat to engage with younger audiences during his election campaign and afterward. He leveraged the platform to share behind-the-scenes moments, participate in interviews, and connect with young voters, illustrating the potential of social media in reaching different demographic groups.²⁸ These historical examples demonstrate how world leaders have harnessed the power of social media for direct and transparent communication with citizens and the international community. Their use of these platforms has enabled them to engage in public diplomacy, communicate policy positions, and build personal connections with their audiences. However, it is worth noting that the impact of social media on diplomacy is continually evolving, and its responsible use remains an ongoing challenge for world leaders.

Real-Time Crisis Communication

Real-time crisis communication is the use of social media and digital platforms to provide immediate and up-to-date information during emergencies and crises. It allows governments, leaders, and organizations to communicate directly with the public, stakeholders, and the media to disseminate critical updates, instructions, and reassurance. Social media enables instant communication, allowing leaders to share vital information

in real-time during a crisis. This can include updates on the situation, safety guidelines, evacuation procedures, and emergency contact information. Leaders and organizations can respond quickly to address rumors, misinformation, and public concerns during a crisis. This helps to maintain accurate information flow and prevent panic or confusion. Social media platforms have a global reach, enabling leaders to communicate with a broad audience, including citizens, journalists, and international stakeholders. It facilitates the dissemination of information to a diverse range of individuals and communities. Real-time crisis communication encourages public engagement and participation in emergency response efforts. It empowers citizens to share information, report incidents, and contribute to relief and recovery efforts. Social media allows leaders to convey empathy, compassion, and care during a crisis. Sharing personal messages and showing genuine concern can humanize the response and foster trust with the affected population.

During Hurricane Sandy, a devastating storm that affected the eastern United States, government agencies and officials used social media, including Twitter and Facebook, to provide real-time updates on evacuation orders, emergency shelters, road closures, and safety precautions.²⁹ social media played a crucial role in keeping the public informed and safe during the crisis. In the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing in

2013, law enforcement agencies used social media platforms to share real-time updates on the situation, warn people to stay away from affected areas, and provide information about emergency services.³⁰ They also used social media to request assistance from the public in identifying suspects. After the devastating earthquake in Nepal in 2015, social media became a vital tool for real-time crisis communication. Government agencies, international organizations, and individuals used platforms like Twitter and Facebook to share information on relief efforts, locate missing persons, and coordinate aid distribution.³¹ Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, health authorities and governments worldwide have used social media to share real-time updates on infection rates, vaccination drives, public health guidelines, and safety measures.³² Social media became a crucial platform for disseminating accurate information, combating misinformation, and engaging with the public during this ongoing crisis. It has become a reality today that, governments, law enforcement agencies, humanitarian organizations, and individuals have leveraged social media to provide critical information, coordinate response efforts, and connect with affected communities during times of crisis. The speed and accessibility of social media have made it an indispensable tool in crisis communication and emergency management.

Engaging Global Audiences

Engaging global audiences is a significant prospect of social media diplomacy. It refers to the ability of world leaders, diplomats, and governments to interact with people from different countries and cultures on social media platforms.³³ This engagement facilitates cross-cultural communication, promotes understanding, and fosters international cooperation. Social media allows leaders to engage in conversations with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Through these interactions, leaders can gain insights into different perspectives, values, and concerns, promoting cross-cultural dialogue and empathy. Social media platforms support multiple languages, enabling leaders to communicate directly with people around the world in their native languages. This inclusivity facilitates better understanding and helps break down language barriers. Leaders and diplomats can engage in virtual town halls, webinars, and live Q&A sessions on social media to interact with a global audience. This provides an opportunity for citizens worldwide to ask questions and participate in diplomatic discussions.

Social media allows countries to showcase their culture, arts, and heritage to the world. Through posts, photos, and videos, leaders can promote cultural diplomacy, enhancing their nation's soft power and global image. Social media empowers citizens to engage in diplomacy and bridge divides between nations. Citizens can build connections, initiate dialogues, and participate in international relations discussions. Social media

transcends geographical boundaries, allowing leaders to communicate with audiences in remote or underserved regions. It facilitates access to information and public diplomacy efforts. During global crises, leaders can express solidarity and support for affected regions or nations through social media. This fosters a sense of global community and compassion. Leaders can use social media to address global challenges and solicit ideas and solutions from a diverse range of individuals. This crowdsourcing approach can enrich policy discussions and diplomatic efforts.

Since his election in 2013, Pope Francis has actively engaged global audiences through social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram. His tweets and posts cover a wide range of topics, including interfaith dialogue, environmental stewardship, and social justice issues. His social media presence has allowed him to connect with millions of followers worldwide, transcending traditional barriers and fostering cross-cultural dialogue.³⁴ During the annual United Nations General Assembly sessions, world leaders and diplomats engage global audiences through social media platforms. They share updates on their speeches, discussions, and diplomatic engagements, promoting transparency and offering the public a glimpse into international relations and diplomacy. The United Nations' #HeForShe campaign, launched in 2014, aims to promote gender equality and engage men as advocates for women's rights. Social media, including

Twitter and Facebook, played a central role in encouraging global audiences to participate and show solidarity with the movement.³⁵ The global climate strikes, led by young activists like Greta Thunberg, gained significant momentum through social media. Hashtags like #FridaysForFuture and #ClimateStrike spread awareness of climate change and mobilized global audiences to demand action from leaders and governments.³⁶ Social media platforms have enabled leaders, organizations, and citizens to connect, share ideas, and collaborate across geographical and cultural boundaries, transforming the landscape of international relations and diplomacy.

Digital Diplomacy and Soft Power Projection

Digital diplomacy, also known as e-diplomacy or cyber diplomacy, refers to the use of digital technologies and social media platforms by governments and diplomats to conduct diplomatic activities and engage with foreign audiences. It involves the strategic and responsible use of online communication channels to advance diplomatic goals and foster international cooperation. Engaging with foreign publics through social media to promote a country's culture, values, and policies. Digital diplomacy allows governments to communicate directly with global audiences, building bridges and enhancing mutual understanding. Empowering citizens to participate in diplomatic efforts through online campaigns, petitions, and cross-cultural exchanges.

Soft power refers to a country's ability to influence others through attraction, persuasion, and the appeal of its culture, values, and policies.³⁷ Soft power projection involves leveraging a country's positive image and cultural appeal to gain influence and build constructive relationships with other nations. Sharing a country's cultural heritage, arts, music, and cuisine through social media platforms to attract global interest and admiration. Engaging foreign audiences through social media to advocate for shared values, promote democratic ideals, and address global challenges.

For example, the British Council's online platform for English language learning, "LearnEnglish," engages millions of learners worldwide, enhancing the UK's soft power in education and language.³⁸ The U.S. State Department's "Diplomacy Lab" uses digital tools to crowdsource innovative solutions to global challenges, demonstrating a commitment to public engagement and citizen diplomacy. Also, the Korean Wave (Hallyu), including K-pop music and Korean dramas, has become a global cultural phenomenon, significantly enhancing South Korea's soft power and global appeal.³⁹ Canada's "International Education Strategy" leverages digital platforms to promote Canada as a destination for international students and researchers, strengthening its soft power in education and research.⁴⁰ These examples illustrate how digital diplomacy and soft power projection complement each other, allowing countries to leverage digital

technologies and social media to enhance their diplomatic efforts and positively influence global perceptions and relationships.

Conclusion, the rise of social media has significantly impacted state relations and diplomatic communication in the 21st century. While it offers opportunities for direct engagement, transparency, and crisis communication, it also presents challenges such as misinformation, diplomatic tensions, and erosion of diplomatic privacy. The future of social media diplomacy will depend on how world leaders navigate these challenges, strike a balance between responsible communication and effective engagement, and leverage the prospects of digital diplomacy to foster international cooperation and understanding.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This research work explored the evolving landscape of social media diplomacy and its impact on 21st-century state relations. The intersection of social media, diplomacy, and global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has given rise to new challenges and opportunities for world leaders and diplomats. Through the lens of prominent examples, we have analyzed the use of social media by leaders like Donald Trump, the engagement of global audiences, and the prospects and challenges of this emerging form of diplomacy.

The study further examined the concept of social media diplomacy and its role in international diplomacy. Social media diplomacy was defined as the use of digital platforms, including social media, for diplomatic communication, engagement, and the pursuit of diplomatic objectives. It encompasses public diplomacy, crisis diplomacy, virtual diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and public engagement. Social media diplomacy draws from concepts such as public diplomacy and soft power. Network diplomacy emphasizes the role of non-state actors in international relations, while social media provides a platform for multistakeholder engagement. The practice of social media diplomacy has evolved from tentative experimentation to a mature and integral component of diplomatic strategies.

It was against this backdrop that the study delved into the role of Donald Trump and Twiplomacy and the overall role social media played during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Donald Trump's use of Twitter as a direct communication tool reshaped diplomatic interactions. Bilateral diplomacy was conducted through tweets, impacting international relations. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical role of e-diplomacy in managing global crises. Social media platforms became vital for disseminating information and addressing international concerns.

Furthermore, the research work discussed the varying challenges and prospects social media diplomacy plays in modern international relations. Over the two decades covered in this study, social media diplomacy has evolved from a tentative experiment into a mature and integral component of diplomatic strategies. Leaders, diplomats, and governments have harnessed platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to engage with global audiences, influence international discourse, and project their nation's image. The digital age has redefined the landscape of diplomacy. Leaders now have the ability to communicate directly with the global public, bypassing traditional media intermediaries. This direct and unfiltered communication has enabled immediate crisis management and has shaped public opinion in ways previously unimaginable. Social media platforms have emerged as essential tools for crisis management and information dissemination during emergencies and global crises. The immediacy of these platforms allows leaders to

provide real-time updates, share critical information, and address public concerns promptly.

However, throughout the two decades under examination, social media diplomacy has presented diplomats and governments with a range of formidable challenges. These challenges have tested the boundaries of traditional diplomatic practices and demanded innovative solutions. The rapid dissemination of false or misleading information on social media platforms has been a significant challenge. Malicious actors and ideologically driven sources have taken advantage of the speed and reach of these platforms to spread misinformation and disinformation, sowing confusion and undermining trust in official diplomatic communications. Fake social media accounts impersonating world leaders, diplomats, or government officials have become increasingly prevalent. These impostors often disseminate false statements or provocative messages, creating confusion and diplomatic tensions. For instance, a fake account posing as a foreign minister might tweet a controversial statement, leading to diplomatic misunderstandings. The immediacy and informality of social media platforms can lead to diplomatic tensions and missteps. Diplomatic messages sent in haste or without sufficient consideration for their implications can strain relations with other nations. A poorly worded tweet or post can lead to damage control efforts, impacting diplomatic efforts. Despite these challenges,

social media diplomacy offers numerous prospects and opportunities. It enables direct and transparent communication, real-time crisis management, engagement with global audiences, and cultural diplomacy. When leveraged effectively, it enhances a nation's soft power and fosters cross-cultural understanding.

To harness the full potential of social media diplomacy, leaders and diplomats must exercise caution and strategic thinking in their communication. The responsible use of social media platforms is essential in countering misinformation and promoting transparency. Striking a balance between openness and safeguarding diplomatic privacy is crucial in preserving the integrity of diplomatic negotiations. Engaging global audiences should prioritize cultural sensitivity and empathy, fostering genuine cross-cultural understanding. As we move forward in the 21st century, social media diplomacy will continue to shape state relations and international discourse. Its role in crisis communication, public diplomacy, and soft power projection will be further amplified in the digital age. To navigate this dynamic landscape successfully, leaders must adapt to the evolving digital diplomacy landscape, embracing innovative approaches while upholding the principles of diplomacy.

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