

DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AND RUSSO-AMERICAN RELATIONS UNDER PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP (2016-2020)

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the concept of Digital Diplomacy specifically within the framework of Russo-American relations during Donald Trump's presidency (2016-2020). It primarily focuses on the utilization of social media tools in International Relations, examining how nations are leveraging these platforms to further their foreign policy objectives. The research elucidates both the opportunities and challenges presented by these social media instruments in diplomatic endeavours, positing that countries must proactively engage with the evolving landscape of digital diplomacy to remain relevant in contemporary global affairs. The theoretical foundation of the study is anchored in liberalism, complemented by the principles of soft power. A descriptive historical research design was employed, utilizing secondary data collection methods, with an emphasis on content analysis for data interpretation. The findings highlight a significant paradigm shift in International Relations, where the involvement of non-state actors—including individuals, corporations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – has become increasingly pronounced, demonstrating a more active and influential role in global dynamics. Furthermore, this study advocates for heightened awareness among audiences regarding the potential risks associated with social media usage, particularly in relation to the proliferation of cyberattacks and espionage activities. Such awareness is deemed essential for mitigating the adverse effects of digital engagement in international relations.

Keywords: Diplomacy, Digital Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Russo-American Relations

INTRODUCTION

Towards the conclusion of the Cold War, a diplomatic model known as Traditional Diplomacy emerged, characterized by its emphasis on direct state-to-state relations. This approach facilitated engagement between the officials of both states through face-to-face dialogues and negotiations, deliberately excluding the general public from the diplomatic discourse. Traditional Diplomacy did not involve intermediary organizations, representatives, or any other authorities apart from the state officials of the respective nations during diplomatic interactions. Moreover, this model was marked by its inherent secrecy; discussions between state officials from the participating countries were typically kept confidential and were not disclosed to the broader public (Brookings, 2022).

At the beginning of the 20th century, diplomacy altered considerably throughout the globe and had the strict interpretation of all communication between the government of one country and the government of another. Direct communication between the government of one country and the population of another was regarded as Public Diplomacy. This form of diplomacy saw countries

accomplish their foreign policy goals by communicating with foreign publics through the use of communication tools like the Radio set in order to facilitate the acceptance of one's policies. Following the revolutions of the 1920's and 30's, numerous countries began to practice Public Diplomacy. France sent cultural attachés to its embassies abroad, the United States established the Voice of America Radio Station, and the BBC World Service began broadcasting in a variety of languages. Yet, as the 20th century came to an end, a new form of diplomacy known as Digital Diplomacy began to emerge (Brookings, 2022).

The rise of social media as a tool in diplomacy has given way for states to strike up two-way or dialogic communication with other diplomatic actors and their foreign publics, compared to the one-way nature of traditional public diplomacy. While traditional diplomacy occurs offline in relative privacy, online diplomacy has allowed a multitude of actors to discuss foreign policy-making, increasing the impact of public opinion on the foreign policy agenda (Duncombe, 2019). This method of digital diplomacy provides additional avenues for other actors to engage in co-creation with influential people and organisations on multilateral diplomatic campaigns. An example of this would be the 2012-2014 Campaign to End Sexual Violence in Conflict launched by then British foreign secretary William Hague, which used a multi-channel digital and offline approach to engage UN organizations as well as states. A video featuring co-created content by Angelina Jolie, a UN Special Envoy, supporting the campaign managed to attract 15,000 views, compared to the foreign secretary's similar video, which only attracted 400 views (Pamment, 2015).

Access to social media as a diplomatic channel has also changed the relative influence of diplomatic actors from states thought to possess little hard power or power achieved through material resources strength amongst other diplomatic actors. Manor and Segev (2020), measured the social media mobility of ministries of foreign affairs and UN missions to New York, finding that states with less hard power could use social media to become supernodes in online diplomatic networks. This is also referred to this as the theory of networked diplomacy.

Then in November 2016, Donald Trump was elected President of the United States of America, and there was celebration on the floor of the Russian State Duma. To Russians, Trump's victory came unexpected, as it did to most people, including Trump himself. In the atmosphere of worsening US-Russian relations, Trump's election campaign was useful to the Kremlin as his rhetoric was revealing the flaws of the US democratic system and the hypocrisy of the US ruling elite. In particular, Trump was blasting Hillary Clinton, who, seven years before, had been encouraging youthful Russian urbanites protesting against a rigged election to the Duma, and demanding a Russia without Putin. Clinton was not only seen as a continuation of Barack Obama, the president who insulted Vladimir Putin by calling Russia a regional power; some in Moscow feared that her intention to enforce a no-fly zone in Syria, where Russian forces had been operating since 2015, risked leading to a direct military clash between the two powers (Dimitri, 2019).

In spite of his colourful personality, in the words of President Putin, Trump appealed to Russian hopes of an American president who would put ideology to one side and adopt a realistic view on international relations and conduct a foreign policy directly based on national interests. Such an American leader, it was hoped, would be agreeable to a series of transactions with Russia, a sort

of a grand bargain". Once the deal was done, the hope in the Kremlin was, the unfortunate page in the US-Russian relations created by the Ukraine crisis, would be turned. The Ukraine issue would be settled on terms that would be acceptable to Russia; the US sanctions imposed in the wake of events in Crimea and Donbass would be lifted; and Moscow and Washington would resume partnership on an equal basis in places such as Syria, Afghanistan, and North Korea. To make things easier for the incoming US president, Putin decided not to hit back against Obama's expulsion of dozens of Russian diplomats and the seizure of Russian diplomatic property in the United States (Dimitri, 2019).

Dimitri (2019) noted that, even though the Mueller investigation report has rejected the belief of a Trump-Russia conspiracy, it supported the claim of Russia's involvement in the 2016 US presidential elections campaign. It is safe to assume that there was some interference which, to the Russians, was something that all countries, starting with the United States itself, do, but also always deny. It is also safe to assume that the impact of the combined likely Russian interference, from hacking to social media accounts to television broadcasts, was relatively minor. Russian Duma members may have cheered Trump's election publicly, and some Russian government officials may have congratulated themselves privately, but Russia did not elect Donald Trump the 45th President of the United States. Knowledgeable people in Moscow also believed, initially, that accusations to the contrary, understandable as they were from the bitterly disappointed Democrats, would die down soon after the Trump inauguration. However, the spring of Russo-American relations did not arrive as expected.

Statement of the Problem

Though states have managed to achieve diplomatic prominence online through their use of Twitter and other online channels, these new diplomatic channels do not come without risks. Messages and images shared on social media platforms, particularly Twitter, have already given rise to diplomatic crises. In 2018, Global Affairs Canada tweeted a statement calling on Saudi Arabia to release imprisoned human rights activists. In response, Saudi Arabia cut diplomatic and trade ties with Canada, declaring the country's ambassador persona non grata and recalling Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Canada (Duncombe, 2018).

The incident escalated when a pro-government Twitter account later tweeted an image of an Air Canada plane flying in the direction of Toronto's CN Tower, with the text, He who interferes with what doesn't concern him finds what doesn't please him. The image incited criticism from many on social media due to perceived parallels between the image and the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. Digital platforms have also enabled the spread of disinformation used to undermine states' international and domestic stability, such as the interference of the Russian government in the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Duncombe, 2018).

The internet's culture of anonymity, whereby anyone can assume the identity of another person's address, to attack anyone or any state, and the increased use of cyberattacks for espionage to seek sensitive information and financial gain, with both cybercriminals and state actors exploiting the vulnerabilities stemming from increased reliance of society, business, and individuals on technology. These threats have become increasingly sophisticated in recent years, and the range

of targets has expanded over time to include government agencies, critical infrastructure, healthcare entities and entire supply chains. For example, Russian interference in the U.S. elections and Russian cyberattacks on Ukraine before and during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine took down around 70 Ukraine government websites and multiple government and bank services. The Stuxnet attack is one of the most famous nation-state attacks (Stuxnet is a malicious worm that attacked the Iranian nuclear system; it is responsible for causing substantial damage to Iran's nuclear program). And lastly, the Chinese cyberattacks (Operation Aurora), a sophisticated cyberattack that targeted Google and Adobe, a four-month cyberattack targeting The New York Times reporters, and a cyberattack on America's Office of Personnel Management.

These problems range from the misuse of the digital era by individuals and organisations engaging in cybercrimes and offensive cyber operations, such as susceptibility to fake news to threats posed by the usage of digital tools by hostile non-state actors, anonymous usage, negative regional perceptions, challenges associated with the digital divide, difficulties in identifying and targeting the right audience would be the goal of this study to dissect and analyse as we go further.

Research Questions

1. To what extent did the increased use of cyberattacks for espionage hinder the Russo-American Relations during President Trump's first administration?
2. How can the internet's culture of anonymity be muffled in the time of digital diplomacy?
3. How has the use of social media tools benefited states in the conduct of their foreign policy?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the importance of digital diplomacy in the conduct of foreign policy, especially in Russo-American Relations under President Donald Trump (2016-2020). The specific objectives are as follows;

1. To determine the extent to which the increased use of cyberattacks for espionage hindered the Russo-American Relations during President Trump's first administration.
2. To propose solutions to explain how the internet's culture of anonymity can be muffled in the time of digital diplomacy.
3. To ascertain how the use of social media tools is of benefit to states in the conduct of their foreign policy.

Scope of the Study

This study is centred on Digital Diplomacy as a foreign policy tool in Russo-American relations under President Donald Trump (2016-2020). It covers the benefits and challenges of using social media tools in foreign policy.

Significance of the Study

This study has both practical and empirical significance.

(a) Practical Significance

This study will help nations, states, and diplomats actualise their foreign policy objectives through the use of social media tools. It will also help NGOs and even citizens reach out to government officials directly via social media platforms.

(b) Empirical Significance

Empirically, this study will be of major benefit in the future time to academic scholars and researchers because it provides a real-world case study for understanding the dynamics of digital diplomacy, particularly in complex environments where multiple nations, non-state actors, NGOs, and individuals have adopted the use of social media tools in relating to one another. It would also help to add to the body of literature while giving a proper insight into the Russo-American relations under President Donald Trump.

Operationalisation of Concepts

Diplomacy

Diplomacy is the process of communication and negotiation between nation-states.

Digital Diplomacy

Digital Diplomacy is the growing use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and social media platforms in the conduct of foreign policy.

Foreign Policy

Foreign Policy, which is also known as external policy, is the set of strategies and actions a state employs in its interactions with other states, unions, and international entities.

Russo-American Relations

This means the diplomatic relationship or official contact between Russia Empire and United States of America which began since 1776.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Liberalism theory as its major theoretical framework and the Soft Power theory as its supporting theory.

Liberalism Theory

This theory was propounded by John Locke in 1970. The term liberalism comes from the Latin word liber, which was then associated with liberated or free people liberated from slavery and aimed at the popularisation of the philosophy of freedom (Ekemam, 2016).

Liberalism as a theory has had its share of metamorphosis. This means that its proponents, such as John Locke, who is regarded as the father of Liberalism, if alive today, would be wondering if its contemporary meaning was the idea behind its origin. Liberalism can be said to have its origin in economic thought. As a theory, it rose from the ashes of the breakdown of feudalism (the social system that existed during the Middle Ages in Europe in which people were given land and protection by a Nobleman and had to work and fight for him in return) in Europe and the emergence of industrial capitalism in 1840s (Ekemam, 2016). In an actual sense, liberalism was opposed to feudalism and absolutism (a political system in which a ruler or government has total power at all times).

Liberalism believes that cooperation can dissolve boundaries in such a way that conflict and war are not inevitable as is believed and theorized by the realist paradigm of international relations. Liberalism as an International Relations theory contrasts in a significant way with the realist theory. While realism views the international political system from the perspective of power and conflict, liberalism is optimistic in its conception of the international political system. It sees a more peaceful world as opposed to the realist theory.

Liberalism is a political and moral philosophy based on the rights of the individual, consent of the governed, political equality, right to private property and equality before the law.

Soft Power Theory

This theory was propounded by Joseph Nye in 1990, which he defined as the ability to set the agenda in world politics through persuasion, enticing and attracting others through the force of one's beliefs, values and ideas, and not through military or economic coercion. He differentiates between two types of power: hard and soft power.

Soft power is the ability to get others to want the outcomes that you want (Nye, 2004), and more particularly the ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion. He argues that soft power is as important as hard power, and even more so in international politics. Indeed, soft power enables a change of behaviour in others, without competition or conflict, by using persuasion and attraction. This theory assumes that it is better to twist minds than to twist arms' (Nye, 2011).

Therefore, the concept of soft power is close to the Liberal tradition, even if there is no contradiction between realism and soft power (Nye, 2011). In opposing hard power, soft power emphasises not the ever-possibility of war, but the possibility of cooperation; not military power, but the power of ideas. More precisely, soft power is relevant to the three solutions that Liberals propose to solve the problem of war. The first is that democracies will not go to war against other democracies. In a democracy, the people have a say in the country and can impose peaceful goals.

Democracies are, therefore, more inclined to use soft power than hard power. Furthermore, Nye asserts that even in case of difficulties, a democratic state will not lose its soft power. Thus, when a policy is criticised, it may produce some soft power as people from other countries may see that as proof of authenticity and as a sign of freedom of speech.

Relevance of the Theories

For digital diplomacy to be effective in foreign policy making, soft power theory and the liberalism theory of international relations had to be adopted. This means that people tend to be more comfortable with tranquillity rather than hostility or conflict, where they can reach out to government officials without any form of violence since digital diplomacy is not just about the governments and state actors but also about the citizens of a state. The two theories are interwoven, and as such, the best options to be considered in analysing the concept of Digital Diplomacy and the Russo-American relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Diplomacy

According to Unanka (2014), diplomacy is appreciated in two categories: narrow and broad.

In its simplest narrow process sense, diplomacy is the system and the art of communication between powers (Wight, 1979, as cited in Unanka, 2014). Altogether, in the narrow sense, diplomacy is the process of communication and negotiation between nation-states. Notably, it is the process of transmission of instructions to negotiators. Fundamentally, in its narrow definition, communication and negotiation are strategic concepts in diplomacy. In all, the narrow definition assumes that (i) diplomacy is a process, (ii) that the international system is the only arena for diplomatic practice between nations, and (iii) what matters in diplomacy is the communication and negotiation process and not necessarily the application of special techniques and skills involved in such communication and negotiation process; and thus, (iv) diplomacy lacked professionalism.

In a broad sense, diplomacy is a method. In a broad, restricted sense, it is the modes or techniques of effective foreign policy on the international system (Nicolson, 1939/1964, as cited in Unanka, 2014). The Oxford English dictionary defines diplomacy accordingly as (i) the management of international relations by negotiation; (ii) the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; (iii) the skill in the conduct of international intercourse and negotiations. Gore-Booth and Pakenham (1979 as cited in Unanka, 2014) also define diplomacy as the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states, sometimes extending also to their relations with vassal states, or, more briefly still, the conduct of business between states by peaceful means. In this light, Asobie (1991, as cited in Unanka, 2014) defines diplomacy as the method by which trained ambassadors and envoys manage international relations by negotiating the process of bargaining among states in order to narrow arrears of disagreement, resolve conflicts or reach accommodation

on issues over which agreement cannot, otherwise be reached. Yet what is certain is that the search for a definition of Digital Diplomacy must begin with examining the changes that occurred to both the definition and conduct of diplomacy during the 20th century.

Concept of Digital Diplomacy

Adesina (2017), defines Digital Diplomacy as a form of public diplomacy conducted by states that uses digital technologies and social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Weibo, to inexpensively communicate with the citizens of foreign countries. Similarly, Manor (2016) defines digital diplomacy as the use of Internet and new information communications technologies to help carry out diplomatic objectives. However, scholars do agree that digital diplomacy emerged from public diplomacy, which is defined as an instrument used by states to understand cultures, attitudes, and behaviour; build and manage relationships; and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values (Melissen, 2013). This conceptualization of digital diplomacy fits into the Russo-American governments' goal of cultivating soft power via digital technology by building strong diplomatic relationships and systems. In our (scholars) view, digital diplomacy involves all available diplomatic methods (both online and offline means of communication and information exchange); it is simply the cyber-related subject matter that defines the field.

Donald Trump and the Evolving U.S.-Russia Relationship

Donald Trump came to the White House with a desire to adjust US foreign policy to the ongoing shifts in the international system. As a hardcore realist, he wanted to improve US-Russia relations, perceiving the latter as an important counterweight to quickly-growing China and a potential partner in dealing with religious fundamentalism. Nevertheless, of all Trump's policy initiatives, this former encountered the most resistance from entrenched American elites. Combined with massive propaganda campaign alleging Russian interference in the US elections (that seems to target Trump no less than Russia), the President's opponents pursued an agenda that will have long-term consequences for both countries (Feng, 2019).

The arrival of Donald Trump as a presidential candidate in 2015 and his ensuing victory in the 2016 US elections are symbolic of the seriousness of the challenges that the US currently faces. Thus, the study of the current US policy towards Russia cannot be limited to a discussion of Donald Trump's unorthodox political views and behaviour, and should instead be based on an analysis of the countries' bilateral relations history, ongoing geopolitical changes, and Trump's wider strategy of dealing with the erosion of the US monopoly in the world political system. In contrast to most members of the US political establishment, including Hillary Clinton and such dogmatic Cold War warriors as John McCain, Lindsay Graham, Bob Porter, or Marco Rubio, Trump and his senior political advisor (until August 2017) Stephen Bannon were willing to accept the notion that the world was quickly changing and that the U.S. had to adjust its foreign policies to the new reality and build a new strategy (Korobkov, 2019).

Korobkov (2019), stated that Trump was not, at least initially, interested in getting involved in new military adventures abroad and would have preferred the US to look increasingly inwards. Thus,

the Trump phenomenon represents an attempt to grasp the evolving international order and adjust the goals and methods of US foreign policy to the new political reality. Nevertheless, Trump's policies are encountering strong resistance from most of the traditional American elites. The first steps by the Trump administration indicated a sincere attempt at a cardinal revision of US geopolitical priorities: declaring the America First principle, espousing a return to a traditional understanding of the state sovereignty concept, proposing a less interventionist and ideologically motivated military policy, recognizing the ongoing geopolitical shift towards the Pacific region, and viewing China as the major and quickly growing political, economic, and military threat to the US. Trump (along with Bannon and such members of his original team as Sebastian Gorka and the short-term National Security Advisor Michael Flynn) insisted on the revolutionary modification of U.S. foreign policy goals, including deemphasising the significance of NATO and Europe in general and treating Russia as a counterweight to China and a potential US ally both in East Asia and in the Middle East. In particular, Steve Bannon claimed that:

The economic war with China is everything. And we have to be maniacally focused on that. If we continue to lose it, we're five years away, I think, ten years at the most, of hitting an inflection point from which we'll never be able to recover. One of us is going to be a hegemon in 25 or 30 years and it's gonna be them if we go down this path.

In 2017, which ushered in a new era of American politics, President Donald Trump was officially inaugurated as the 45th president on January 20, 2017, and one of the first items that he would have to confront would be the Russian election interference and what it meant for US-Russian relations moving forward. This came at a moment after, while on the campaign trail, Trump advocated for rapprochement with Russia and once again attempted to 'reset' relations as his predecessor, President Obama, tried to in 2010 and failed to accomplish. This positioned the new president in an awkward place domestically with the US Congress' bipartisan support for stronger sanctions against Russia (US Congress 2017, as cited in Jacob, 2020). This would set the tone for US-Russian relations for the next four years of Trump's presidency and not give much hope for improvement in the short term.

Jacob (2020) noted that in May 2019, Trump held an hour-and-a-half-long phone call with President Putin from the White House. The Russian Embassy stated that the pair discussed a shared commitment to step up dialogue in various areas, including on issues of strategic stability. Trump called the conversation positive and tweeted there was tremendous potential for a good/great relationship with Russia," and later relayed to reporters Putin's assurances that Russia isn't seeking to get involved with the ongoing 2019 Venezuelan presidential crisis, despite Trump's national security advisors saying otherwise. They also discussed North Korean missile activity, with Putin briefing Trump on the April 25 meetings with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. Trump and Putin agreed on the importance of denuclearisation and normalization of relations on the Korean peninsula. The Mueller Report, a report on the results of a domestic US investigation into Russian contacts between Trump's 2016 election campaign, was also discussed.

In June 2019, the New York Times reported that hackers from the United States Cyber Command planted malware potentially capable of disrupting the Russian electrical grid. According to Wired

senior writer Andy Greenberg, "The Kremlin warned that the intrusions could escalate into a cyberwar between the two countries (New York Times, 2019).

In June 2020, the New York Times reported that Russian military intelligence had paid bounties to Taliban-linked insurgents for killing US soldiers in Afghanistan. Trump, his Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe, and National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien said that Trump had not been briefed "because it was unverified intelligence", but it was later reported that Trump received a written briefing on possible Russian bounties in a February 2020 President's Daily Brief, a document that Trump often does not read. In subsequent conversations with Putin, Trump never raised the reports of the bounty program, saying, "That's an issue that many people said was fake news." Some White House officials were aware of the bounty reports by early 2019 (New York Times, 2020).

Challenges of Digital Diplomacy in International Relations

Several impediments to digital diplomacy have led to severe consequences for the international order recently. The difficulty that government representatives, diplomats, and national leaders have in pursuing digital diplomacy is that their roles have altered recently. Prior to the advent of digitalisation, the principal duties of the leaders included representing their governments outside the country and reporting back to their countries only upon their return.

The need to distinguish between right and wrong is usually the biggest challenge. Cyberattacks have become a critical area for all technology-focused organisations. Several governments' websites have been vulnerable to hacking and information leaks over the past years. Thus, some prominent challenges noticed in the arena of digital diplomacy are:

Threat to State Security and Censorship

Social media's egalitarian and open nature makes it challenging for governments to censor content believed to be dangerous to national security. This presents a significant challenge to diplomacy and foreign relations, which demand secrecy and control over information. The concept of "secrecy" in diplomacy has been overtaken by the advent of social media. It is now difficult for diplomats to escape the public spotlight, and they can no longer be certain that their opinions won't be revealed to audiences they have never intended.

Misinformation, Fake News and the lack of digital ethics

The proliferation of digital tools such as social media has caused a crisis of trust in information on the Internet. The internet also offers a ton of information with suspicious origins. The information that is exchanged on social media is marked by defamation and fabrication. Digital ethics and digital frustration are interrelated. What is permitted and prohibited in the online distribution? What is hate speech, and what types of speech can be covered under the freedom of speech? Ministries dealing with foreign affairs and diplomats are therefore essential for advancing a worldwide dialogue on concerns of digital ethics, along with civil society.

Difficulties in Identifying and Targeting an Audience

Targeting audiences effectively is a difficulty for modern diplomats. It is imperative that diplomats understand who they are targeting, what messages to send, and when to promote a certain message. Instead of taking a uniform approach, countries must perform market research to determine the most effective media tools, messaging, and target audience. Any diplomat who's using social media is partly trying to influence abroad and partly at home.

Emergence of Non-State Actors in the International Arena

New digital communication technologies also have the potential to be appropriated by extremist groups and other non-state actors to manipulate the opinions of the public. The Internet has proven to be an effective platform for violent extremists to recruit individuals and spread violent ideologies. Even some terrorist groups in conflict have online presence and operate several social media accounts which advance their terrorist agenda. These groups even attempt to recruit young children by infiltrating online video games and chat applications. They also use platforms such as YouTube and Instagram to glorify their barbaric acts of terror. Hence, the activities of these non-state actors remain a concern for states.

The culture of anonymity

Anyone can pretend to be someone else and cause damage to certain persons. Complicated situations might result because contradicting or even false information is published in an anonymous society. The ability of leaders to handle the ensuing crises may be hampered by this kind of pervasive disinformation on the internet. Social media platforms must update their pages to make it evident whether a post originates from a reliable source in order to prevent misuse. Last year, Facebook faced the harshest criticism of its 14-year history of privacy practices and how it treats user data, known as the Cambridge Analytica Data Scandal. The analytical data firm that has worked with US President Donald Trump's electoral team and the Brexit winner campaign has taken millions of American voters' data and has used them to build a powerful software program to predict and influence the US presidential election of 2016. Cambridge Analytica had access in information of over 87 million Facebook users without their knowledge.

The Technical and Digital Divide

Within a competitive global communication environment, technology is rapidly evolving. Therefore, nations must act quickly to invest in digital platforms to avoid falling behind. Modern network technologies, including 5G, are being adopted to boost the speed of Internet connectivity. However, this also has financial implications for foreign affairs ministries all around the world in an era of deteriorating fiscal conditions. The newest advancement in technology, 5G wireless technology, is hailed as providing the fastest Internet broadband connectivity. While many countries have invested heavily in the adoption of upcoming technology to upgrade their digital infrastructures, many other countries on the other side of the digital divide are unable to make such investments. The digital divide between the Global North and the Global South also has implications for digital diplomacy with respect to its relations with countries in the Global South.

Lack of Cyber Security and Privacy (Hacking)

World leaders and diplomats have become more vulnerable to cyberattacks as a result of their greater use of digital technologies. These dangers are not just posed by conventional state enemies but also by non-state actors who want to sabotage government communications and steal private data for their own purposes. The risk of hacking has existed since the development of the internet. It is regarded as the primary risk of digital diplomacy since it has frequently resulted in career-threatening situations for numerous heads of state, heads of government, and diplomats around the world.

Critics of digital diplomacy warn against dangerous developments on the internet and social media. Different state and regime players, each with their own interests, objectives, and values, put together various security scenarios. External dangers from other states or other international entities, including terrorists, must be a state's assurance. In addition, it must provide security in the face of internal threats to its reputation, law, territory, or demographic stability (Kurt, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, Descriptive Historical research design was adopted. It was used because it aims to analyse and discuss the status of current phenomenon; describing what happened in the past and relating it to the future. According to Williams (2007) descriptive research is a research method that can determine the situation in current phenomenon.

Method of Data Collection

This study is qualitative and therefore adopted the secondary method of data collection. The reason for which is to gain a holistic overview of the context under study, including its logic arrangement, explicit and implicit rule. Data were collected from published books, existing literatures, journals, newspaper report, documentaries, research works, YouTube contents, and other print medias.

Method of Data Analysis

The study, data collected were analysed using content analysis, in which interpretations were drawn from the collected data to nullify or validate the research questions. Content Analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e, text). With content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyse the presence, meanings, and relationships of certain words, themes, or concepts.

Limitations of the Study

Some of the notable limitations to this study are; firstly, the method of data collection, which is not verifiable and lacks validation. And secondly, the scope of the study, which is limited to the

Russo-American relations under President Donald Trump. The findings of this study may not apply to other parts of the world and other past or present administrations.

Conclusion

While the fundamental mode of interaction may be characterized as social media, it is imperative to recognize that an exclusive definition of digital diplomacy confined to social media is increasingly untenable. The conceptualization of digital diplomacy is undergoing transformation, propelled by advancements in big data and the pervasive integration of technological devices, which significantly enhance the capabilities of digital diplomacy.

In the foreseeable future, diplomats will possess an expansive array of digital instruments, allowing them to utilize data science for sophisticated analyses aimed at predicting public sentiment and developing models to anticipate future responses. Additionally, the potential for creating bespoke applications tailored for digital diplomacy represents a realm of opportunities that is virtually limitless.

International Relations has evolved beyond the exclusive purview of governments and diplomats, with non-state actors – including individuals, corporations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – increasingly utilizing digital platforms to assert their influence in global affairs. The advent of new digital tools facilitates enhanced connectivity, engagement, and mobilization among diverse stakeholders, heralding a shift towards a more instantaneous, decentralized form of diplomacy, often characterized as peer-to-peer (P2P) diplomacy. However, several challenges must be addressed to realize the full potential of this transition. Key among these is the imperative to establish a coherent framework for global internet governance, which is essential for ensuring the successful implementation of these new modes of diplomatic engagement. Therefore, even though the discussion of digital diplomacy is still in its early stages, it has become institutionalised.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion and the general study, the following recommendations were made;

- i. It is recommended that effective training and orientation should be provided constantly for career diplomats and professionals within the foreign policy media.
- ii. To improve the state of US-Russian relations, three critical aspects must be addressed, and while listing them on paper is rather easy, the practicality of the matter is quite more difficult. First, both Russia and the US must be willing to accept the current state of relations and what it means for the future if they do not improve while there is still time before a tragic miscalculation to do so. Second, both countries must look back at the end of the original Cold War analyse the events leading up to the current state of relations and accept the role each played in facilitating the new Cold War. Third, they need to set forth policies that adhere to agreed-upon long-term objectives with safety measures on how to deal with immediate issues that will inevitably arise over time. These three recommendations are not to be represented as the only needed reform, but rather what is the most pressing of concerns to reduce the damage of the new Cold War.

- iii. Raise awareness among audience of the risk that comes along with social media to help curb the increased use of cyberattacks for espionage.

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