DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN DIGITAL AND CYBER DIPLOMACY: A TERMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT. This article explores the challenges of terminology in the study of digital diplomacy. Current academic discourse remains fragmented, influenced by factors such as the emergence of new terms, shifting definitions, and limited continuity across different research phases. The analysis highlights how certain expressions-like *“e-diplomacy*” or *“tweetplomacy”*-have gradually fallen out of common use, though they still appear in some contexts worldwide. At the same time, terms such as *“digital diplomacy,” “cyber diplomacy,”* and *“digital public diplomacy”* have proven more stable and hold greater promise for future scholarly inquiry. To strengthen the field, the article recommends establishing a clear periodization, refining definitions, and integrating new concepts into existing terminological frameworks. Based on this analysis, three main directions in the study of digital diplomacy are identified: the adoption of new technologies in diplomatic practice (including social media), the emergence of new negotiation agendas, and the intersection of computational sciences with diplomacy.

KEYWORDS: cyber diplomacy, data diplomacy, digital diplomacy, data diplomacy, science diplomacy, digital international relations

INTRODUCTION. The influence of digital technologies on diplomacy has emerged as an important area of research since the early 21st century, although earlier studies had already highlighted speculative possibilities for their application in diplomatic practice [1].

It should be emphasized that the information revolution of the late 20th century was not the first challenge requiring diplomats to adapt. Earlier, innovations such as the steam engine and the telegraph enabled continuous communication between diplomatic missions and decision-making centers, thereby reducing the range of issues on which diplomats could act independently. In a similar way, the rise of the internet, email, and social media further accelerated information exchange and expanded the volume of data processed by diplomatic services.

This process has given rise to a variety of new terms, *including media diplomacy, digitalization of public diplomacy, virtual diplomacy, hybrid diplomacy, e-diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, net diplomacy, public diplomacy 2.0, and real-time diplomacy.*

The proliferation of numerous definitions-often overlapping or embedded within one another-has resulted in terminological confusion. Certain terms failed to gain widespread acceptance because of their limited focus, being tied to specific platforms or functions, while others fell out of use due to the absence of clear and consistent definitions.

By contrast, terms like *digital diplomacy* and *cyber diplomacy* (along with their variations) have proven to be the most resilient within academic discourse. This paper aims to systematize the principal conceptual approaches to defining these terms and to highlight prospects for their further development, using *data diplomacy* as an illustrative case.

METHODOLOGY. This study employs a qualitative approach, combining discourse analysis and conceptual mapping to trace the evolution of terminology in the field of digital diplomacy. Academic works, monographs, and policy documents from the early 2000s to the early 2020s were reviewed, with attention given to both scholarly and governmental sources. The analysis focused on identifying the contexts in which terms such as *digital diplomacy, cyber diplomacy,* and related concepts were introduced, how their definitions have shifted over time, and the extent to which they have been integrated or abandoned in academic discourse. To capture broader trends, the material was thematically examined with reference to three directions of digital diplomacy studies: the integration of new technologies into diplomatic practice, the emergence of new negotiation agendas, and the intersection of diplomacy with computational sciences.

Since 2011, research on digital diplomacy has generally followed two main definitional approaches: broad and narrow. The narrow approach views digital diplomacy primarily as the use of digital technologies to shape foreign public opinion or to serve public diplomacy objectives [3]. This perspective highlights two central aspects: the focus on communication channels and efforts to influence public opinion. Accordingly, it mainly encompasses the use of social media platforms, such as Twitter, and official websites.

In turn, the broad approach is characterized by understanding digital diplomacy as the influence of digital technologies on diplomacy as a whole [4]. However, given that researchers have often refined their definitions over a relatively short period, it is currently difficult to identify which approach is more characteristic of individual countries or institutions.

The broad definition put forward by Manor-like any expansive concept-necessitated further clarification. To address this, Oxford University researcher K. Bjola introduced a distinction between the micro- and macro-levels of digital diplomacy. At the macro level, digital diplomacy is situated within broader contexts such as networks and soft power, while

at the micro level, it refers to the specific contributions of digital technologies to diplomatic practice, including consular services, crisis communication, and influence efforts [6].

At the same time, I. Manor, expanding the definition of digital diplomacy itself, proposed to speak separately about the digitalization of public diplomacy, referring to the use of social networks to promote the state image [5]. A similar position is held in one of her recent works by N. A. Tsvetkova, speaking separately about the digitalization of public diplomacy [7].

Some researchers address this issue by introducing the additional term "tweetplomacy" ("Twitter diplomacy"), which refers to the use of social media, primarily Twitter*, for public diplomacy and to improve a state's image. This term gained widespread popularity in the early 2010s [8], but is still used by researchers, especially outside the Western academic community. For example, several monographs devoted to this phenomenon, published in the Middle East, include "Twitter Diplomacy: Media Polarization Before and After the Abraham Accords" by Nayad Alsayed [9] and "Within Tweeting Distance: How States Use Twitter Diplomacy" by Nur Suwan [10].

The issue of terminology becomes even more complex with the parallel emergence of the term *cyber diplomacy*. It first appeared around the same period as *digital diplomacy*, notably in the 2002 collective volume *Cyber-Diplomacy: Managing Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Canadian scholar Evan H. Potter [11]. Similar to digital diplomacy, however, *cyber diplomacy* was introduced without a clear or consistent definition.

Potter's work initially defined it as conducting information campaigns through new technologies (the internet, websites), although the book also extensively explores the influence of media on diplomacy in general. Like digital diplomacy, cyber diplomacy in its current sense was popularized after 2011, when the term migrated into academic circles from US State Department reference materials.

The U.S. State Department's documents also refrain from offering a precise definition, but their description indicates that cyber diplomacy *covers a wide spectrum of U.S. interests in cyberspace, including cybersecurity, internet freedom, internet governance, military applications of the internet, innovation, and economic growth.* It is in this broader sense that the term has gained traction within the academic community.

Examples of cyber diplomacy in this sense include the work of the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Norms of Conduct in Cyberspace or negotiations aimed at resolving cyber incidents. This is well reflected in the fact that the term has become established, particularly within the UN, as well as the fact that the prefix "cyber-" is more often used in the context of security.

Later, S. Riordan defined cyber diplomacy as *the use of diplomatic tools and approaches to address issues arising in cyberspace*. To differentiate between digital and cyber diplomacy, a similar logic can be applied to that used by Russian researcher E. A. Konkov in his work *Digitalization of Politics vs. the Politics of Digitalization*. Konkov distinguishes between the digitalization of politics-as the integration of technology into political relations-and the politics of digitalization, which concerns political management of digital technology development in the economy and social sphere [12]. In the context of diplomacy, this distinction translates into two dimensions: the integration of technology into diplomatic relations on the one hand, and *digitalization diplomacy*-the involvement of diplomats in shaping the emerging digital negotiation agenda-on the other.

Revising terminology and refining definitions makes it possible to link the key phenomena examined by contemporary digital diplomacy scholars with Dizard's original concept. However, this still leaves unresolved the boundary between digital diplomacy and

digital public diplomacy, as well as the question of how newly emerging terms fit within this framework.

Thus, this field of academic inquiry remains fragmented in both its terminology and conceptual foundations for several reasons. First, scholars frequently adopt terms borrowed from official policy documents. Second, the meaning of the word *digital* has shifted significantly over the past decades. Third, the continuous emergence of new digital technologies and communication platforms has introduced additional terms into scholarly discourse, such as *tweetplomacy* [8] and *data diplomacy*.

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