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Digital Diplomacy and Media Framing: The Transformation of Political Communication in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

Political communication is in the midst of a dramatic shift in the twenty first century due to digital technologies, social media and changing information consumption habits. Diplomatic efforts that were previously only carried out in closed door meetings, through official channels, and with governments, have now extended to digital platforms, where governments, political leaders, and non-state actors can engage directly with domestic and international audiences. At the same time, media framing has become an essential process in digital environments by which political realities are created, reinterpreted and negotiated, and has been the subject of growing research and study. This article explores the connection of digital diplomacy and media framing and analyzes its impact on political communication in the modern world. The study draws from the Framing Theory, Agenda-Setting Theory, and Networked Public Sphere Theory, to illuminate the impact of digital platforms on diplomacy, strategic narratives, public diplomacy, and political influence. The article concludes that digital diplomacy and the manipulation of narratives and framing are a key part of soft power and strategic communication in international relations and constitute a new weapon in the arsenal of narrative warfare. These advancements not only improve public involvement and communication process but also add to misinformation, polarization, and information conflicts. The study establishes that political communication over the years will be increasingly shaped by states' capacity to control digital narratives, use effective framing and remain credible in an ever-changing information landscape.

Keywords: *Digital Diplomacy, Media Framing, Political Communication, Social Media, Public Diplomacy, Strategic Narratives, Soft Power, Information Warfare*

Introduction

Politics has undergone a radical change in how it is done and communicated to audiences in the twenty-first century. The structure and dynamics of political communication has been transformed by rapid developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs), the increasing use of the internet and the new social media platforms. Newspapers, radio and television, and official diplomatic channels have been the mainstays of traditional models of communication, but digital models are now assisting, and in some instances supplanting, these traditional tools that facilitate instant, interactive, and global communication. In the context of such dynamic space, two of the most important instruments that have impacted political communication, public opinion and international relations in the modern era have been digital diplomacy and media framing.

Traditionally, diplomacy involved behind-the-scenes working of diplomats in formal negotiations, confidential diabolical communication, and with state officials. The dissemination of information was influenced primarily by the governments and traditional media which were the gatekeepers of political information. Announcements, speeches, and press conferences were carefully prepared and delivered to both local and foreign audiences to ensure messages were disseminated to the right people. But the digital revolution has shaken the whole structure of these traditional channels, creating new communication channels that are not bound by geographical or institutional barriers. Governments, diplomats, political leaders, international organizations and even non-state actors today interact directly with a global audience, via social media platforms like X/Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and LinkedIn.

International communication is undergoing this change, which is evident in the rise of digital diplomacy. Digital diplomacy is the strategic utilization of digital technologies and online communication platforms by governments, foreign ministries, diplomats and international bodies for the purpose of diplomacy, as well as for communicating policy positions and managing crises, promoting national interests, and engaging foreign publics. In contrast to traditional diplomacy, which was largely intergovernmental, digital diplomacy is an intergovernmental and interpublic way of communication, giving the opportunity for states to engage directly with citizens, journalists, civil society groups and foreigners. This change has broadened the diplomatic sphere of engagement and has opened up new possibilities of states to wield influence in the international system.

Digital diplomacy can be connected with the global political and communication changes. The rise of digital diplomacy is aligned with the global political and communication changes. The world has come to an era of globalisation, interdependency, and quick dissemination of information, where public perception has become an important aspect of international influence. The ability of military powers and economic strength are no longer the only things that matter to governments; they are now competing each other not only for legitimacy, credibility, and narrative control in the global information environment but also for power. Consequently, digital platforms are now emerging as a strategic means of displaying soft power, influencing perceptions abroad and promoting foreign policy agendas. Digital diplomacy enables governments to project their values, policies and national identity onto the world, and to track how the world reacts and to deal with new challenges as they occur.

Concurrently, the media framing of political events, policies and international developments has become more powerful in shaping the public's comprehension of these dynamics. Meanwhile, the media's framing of political events, policies, and international developments has come to play an increasingly influential role in shaping the public's understanding of these dynamics. Framing is how media, stakeholders, and communicators highlight a particular aspect of reality in order to enhance its salience and promote a specific interpretation and evaluation of the situation and policy preferences. Media frames influence perceptions of the public by defining a problem, identifying a cause, establishing a responsibility, and proposing a solution to the problem. Hence, framing an issue can have a dramatic impact on public opinion, political decisions and policies.

In a digital communicative context, the role of media framing is more developed even more. Digital platforms have added more information sources for audiences while traditional media

still have their influence in the public discourse. Since today, political leaders, the government, journalists, activists, influencers, and ordinary people are in the process of shaping and spreading political narratives. This new democratisation of communication has caused a breaking down of traditional gate-keepers and is shaping a more complex information environment in which different frames and narratives constantly clash. It has also brought new challenges, however, with information overload, misinformation, disinformation, and polarization on the political level.

Digital Diplomacy is a new dimension in the twenty-first century political communication, in which digital and media are merging. This is a new dimension in the twenty first century political communication, digital and media merging: Digital Diplomacy. Today, political actors are increasingly using digital platforms to disseminate information, but also to "tell a story" and strategically give meaning to events which contributes to their political agenda. Digital diplomacy is a tool that governments use to shape their international image, build positive perception, and combat against strategic narratives and raise support for foreign policy initiatives. At the same time, political and diplomatic texts are framed in such a way that they can be understood and interpreted by domestic and international audiences. Political communication, therefore, is not just a process of narration but also a process of contestation and dissemination and is taking place on dynamic, interconnected, and digital networks.

The strategic narrative is one of the biggest trends in modern political information. Strategic narratives are coherent stories, built by the political actors, about international events, the justification of policy decisions and political reality. The stories help shape meaning of complicated political events and are strong tools of influence. In the digital context, strategic narratives can be rapidly spread through various platforms, influenced by users' interactions, algorithms recommending content and networked communication systems, and be amplified. Accordingly, narrative competition has become a key aspect of international politics, with states and non-state actors vying to position themselves as winners in the struggle for a narrative in disputed information environments.

The importance of strategic narratives has led to the development of what the scholars call as 'narrative war' and 'information war'. In today's geopolitical competition, public opinion is being manipulated, perceptions are being altered and information flows are being controlled. Today, states compete by communicating rather than with force or through economic coercion, and communication strategies seek cognitive and psychological gains. Digital diplomacy and media framing are critical to these processes in terms of forging persuasive stories, shaping public debates, and undermining alternative storylines around political events. The use of this trend is especially noticeable in the interstate arena, in election campaigns, in diplomatic crises, and among geopolitical rivals who wish to "frame" the events in ways that benefit their strategic interests.

The importance of digital communication to influence political outcomes has been proven in recent years with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia–Ukraine conflict, U.S.–China strategic competition, Middle Eastern conflicts, and many electoral campaigns. In these occasions, using digital platforms as communication channels, public perception management and countering misinformation was a key strategy for governments. At the same time, the media and the social media users were involved in the framing contests, which shaped the public

perception of these developments. The examples above underscore the current close linkages between digital diplomacy and media framing in the realm of political communication.

The opportunities afforded by the digital technologies have also come with substantial challenges for political communication. Digital communication is both fast and vast, allowing misinformation and disinformation to spread quickly, impacting trust in institutions and making it more difficult to reach a factual consensus. Political polarization and echo chambers can occur as a result of algorithm-driven content distribution systems, which tend to promote the most emotionally engaging and controversial content. Additionally, artificial intelligence, deepfakes and automated communication technologies increase the relevance of ethical and security issues concerning the authenticity and credibility of political information.

Given these circumstances, it is more important than ever to grasp the link between digital diplomacy and media framing, both for scholars, policy makers and communication practitioners. An analysis of the use of digital platforms to represent an issue, to create a narrative and to communicate to an audience can be useful to understand the nature of power and communication in the digital age. Furthermore, studying these processes also adds to the discussion on democracy, public opinion, international relations, and information governance.

This article discusses the changing nature of political communication in the multiple mediated and diplomatic frames of digital diplomacy. The study draws on the theories of the Framing Theory, the Agenda-Setting Theory and Networked Public Sphere Theory to look at how the digital technologies have changed the way diplomacy is done, how it has changed the dynamics of the media and how it has given rise to new possibilities for strategic communication. In this article, the authors conclude that digital diplomacy and media framing have come to play a central role in today's political landscape and demonstrate how states and political actors can use these tools to shape narratives, project soft power and secure a place in the information arena to fend off competing narratives and attract legitimacy. The study aims to help to understand the changing dynamics of political influence and the impact of digital communication technologies on political influence in the twenty-first century as well as their implications for global governance, diplomacy and international relations.

2. Literature Review

Evolution of Political Communication in the Digital Age, examines the development of political communication in the digital era.

There have been huge changes in the nature of political communication over the last 100 years. The traditional political communication was a kind of information one-way street from political institutions to citizens via newspapers, radio and television. These communication mechanisms allowed governments and political elites to spread information and media were considered to be gatekeepers that chose, cut and mouthed political messages. The centrality of mass media in moulding public opinion and affecting political behaviour was pointed out by the scholars like Walter Lippmann and Harold Lasswell.

With the advent of digital technologies, this communication landscape was completely transformed. The advent of internet and social media has revolutionized the political communication from a hierarchical and centralized process to decentralized and interactive communication. Citizens are no longer just the recipients of information, but also its manufacturers and commentators of political information. This has led to the traditional

media organizations' relevance and influence being diminished, and to new possibilities of direct media interaction between political actors and the public.

Chadwick's Hybrid Media System theory suggests that the current politics communication is a blend of traditional and digital. Digital technologies have not been an end to traditional media, but rather a hybrid space in which a number of actors are vying to create public discourse. Political narratives are built and spread by political leaders, journalists, activists, influencers and ordinary citizens. Political communication is, therefore, more dynamic, participatory and transnational than ever.

Digital communication technologies have also helped in the globalisation of political communication, due to their growing availability. What happens in one part of the world can quickly become a topic of discussion and impact the world's perception elsewhere. The information environment is therefore, against the backdrop of a constantly changing world, more complex, more interconnected and more overlapping between domestic and international audiences, increasingly in the hands of governments and political actors. This reflects in the realm of diplomacy, in the shaping of public opinion and in the strategic communication.

Conceptualizing Digital Diplomacy

Digital diplomacy is one of the biggest innovations in modern diplomacy. Diplomacy in the past was about the exchange with representatives of the states for the management of international relations, but the digital revolution has been to change the scope and techniques of diplomacy.

Digital diplomacy is a broad term that describes the use of a government, foreign ministry, diplomats, international organisations or other official entities' use of digital tools, social media platforms and other online communication methods to fulfill diplomatic goals. Digital Diplomacy is not solely about the use of new communication technologies but is seen as a new paradigm in diplomatic culture, strategy and practice, writes scholars.

According to Manor (2019), Digital Diplomacy is the evolution of the diplomatic institutions to face the networking society. These days, diplomats aren't just allowed to have private discussions and official statements. Instead, they are involved in public debates, interact with the foreign audiences and speak directly to their stakeholders trans-nationally.

The phenomenon of digital diplomacy can be attributed to various reasons. In the first place, digital technologies enable prompt communication between governments, enabling them to respond quickly to international events and crises. Secondly, social media has the ability to reach a global audience at low-cost, providing an effective way of reaching large numbers of people. Third, digital communication helps governments to circumvent the traditional media gatekeepers and reach citizens and foreign publics directly.

Today digital diplomacy is being used by the foreign ministries of many countries for various reasons: public diplomacy, crisis communication, reputation management, policy advocacy and strategic communication. States use social media campaigns, online engagement initiatives and digital storytelling to promote positive images of the nation, and enhance its foreign influence.

Digital diplomacy has also changed the nature of the interaction between the government and citizens. The traditional aim of public diplomacy was to create a foreign public impact through cultural exchanges and international broadcasting. Digital diplomacy further

supports these activities, by facilitating immediate communication between diplomatic institutions and the world. This has boosted engagement, promoted transparency and access, and made actors in the diplomatic field more subject to public examination.

The role of public diplomacy and soft power

The topics of public and soft power are also closely related to that of digital diplomacy. Joseph Nye's notion of soft power is one that stresses how states can accomplish desired outcomes by attracting and persuading other states, not coercing or forcing them. I believe that there are two major sources of soft power in international relations: culture and political values and foreign policy legitimacy, Nye said.

States use public diplomacy as means to convey these sources of attraction to other people. In the past, public diplomacy was based on education exchanges, cultural initiatives, international radio and television broadcasting and diplomatic communication campaigns. But, digital technologies have greatly broadened the scope and impact of public diplomacy efforts.

The concept of 'digital diplomacy has been called an indispensable tool in soft power projection by scholars. Scholars have said that digital diplomacy has emerged as an indispensable tool for soft power projection. Governments can share national values, cultural narratives and reach foreign audiences better than traditional diplomatic channels, via social media platforms. In today's increasingly competitive global information environment, digital diplomacy is the means by which states can build positive images and improve their international reputation.

In the age of geopolitical competition, the digital diplomacy and soft power relationship is gaining its importance. States are increasingly bidding for military/strategic, economic, and narrative power and public legitimacy. Therefore, digital communication is an important element of today's international relations.

Framing theory and Political Communication.

Media framing is one of the most prominent theories used in political communication studies. The roots of framing theory lie in the work of sociologist Erving Goffman who developed the idea of framing as "interpretive structures in the mind of the individual, the influence of which is rarely acknowledged in the study of social reality" (1970: 8). The idea was picked up and applied to media and politics by later researchers, especially by Robert Entman.

Entman's definition of framing is the selection of some elements of reality and making them more salient in the text of communication. The role of frames in shaping views of the audience is manifested in five ways: as a definition of the problem, as the naming of causes, as an allocation of responsibility, as a moral evaluation and as an offer of solutions. As a result, framing affects the perception of political issues and the assessments of policy options by people.

Studies show that media frames have a significant impact on population's opinions on issues of politics, international conflict, economic policies, immigration, terrorism, and elections. As media outlets and politicians frame the event differently, so will be the public reactions.

There are a number of commonly occurring dominant frame categories in political communication research. Conflict Frames focus on competition and conflict between political players. Responsibility frames deal with holding players accountable for political results, in terms of blame or credit. Human interest stories make political stories personal by

emphasizing personal experiences. Economic consequence frames focus on financial consequences whereas morality frames evaluate issues on an ethical basis.

Framing is effective because it helps to reduce the political complexities. In today's societies, people are faced with a lot of information and make use of frames to process it and help them make decisions. Thus, the frame is an influential technique of political persuasion. Students will be able to use the framing of media as a tool for understanding its meaning within digital environments.

Framing processes have been significantly changed by the advent of digital media. The traditional framing studies concentrated on the news media—newspapers and television news—where professional news media played a large role in information production and dissemination. Digital communication environments, on the other hand, have several actors who are involved in the framing activities.

Through social media, citizens, influencers, activists, politicians and other government actors can create and share their frames, without the involvement of traditional media. The distribution of framing has taken place and different interpretations of political events have entered the game.

Another advantage of digital platforms is that they also enable fast frame diffusion. Sharing, reposting and algorithmic amplification can share a message around the world in minutes. For this reason, framing contests take place in an unprecedented speed and scale. Competitive political actors actively attempt to create dominant interpretations prior to when alternative interpretations become entrenched.

The algorithmic systems are increasingly important in deciding visibility of frames. Social media algorithms favour content that engages users, and can boost the spread of polarised and emotionally charged stories. This dynamic has some significant consequences for political communication, as it can enable the sensationalist and conflictual frames to thrive over balanced and nuanced interpretations.

The researchers also observed networked framing in which frames become more complex as a result of the interactions between a number of different actors in digital communication networks. Networked framing is one of the models developed to consider the collaborative and contestation process of creating meaning in digital environments as opposed to the traditional framing theory that focuses on the elite influence.

The concept of strategic narratives and narrative construction. The notion of strategic narratives and narrative construction.

Strategic narratives have become an emerging field of study in Political Communication and International Relations. Strategic narratives are intentional stories created by political actors to be used as tools to influence audience's understanding of a political reality and to elicit certain actions.

Miskimmon et al. describe strategic narratives as being at a variety of levels: international system narratives, national narratives and issue-specific narratives. These stories offer perspectives for audiences to read and to analyze the political happenings and the policy choices.

States and non-state actors have greatly improved their potential to propagate strategic narratives with digital technologies. Political actors can connect directly with audience,

without the help of traditional media and launch an ongoing narrative competition through social media.

Narratives can be especially significant in times of crisis and conflict as they help audiences make sense of the uncertainty and complexity of situations. Strategic narratives are commonly used by government for policy making, to garner support from the public and to legitimize challenges from others. So, the role of making narratives has become a key part of the modern political communication strategies.

Digital Diplomacy, Media Framing and Information Warfare

The ties between digital diplomacy, media framing and information warfare have also been increasingly acknowledged by scholars in recent years. Information Warfare involves strategies using information manipulation and communication to affect perceptions, attitudes and behavior.

Digital is critical terrain on which states battle for narrative control. Digital diplomacy is one part of the process of governments sharing strategic messages and the other part is shaping international events so that they align with government's national interests.

Information warfare is growing in significance as a means of power and conflict are changing. The struggle for information, legitimacy and public perception is a part of the contemporary geopolitical competition along with a battle on the battlefield. In this regard, communication abilities are now integral elements of the country's power.

Digital Diplomacy and Media framing are said to be important tools in these larger information battles. By crafting the content of the frame and carefully controlling the flow of information, States aim to manipulate domestic and international audiences, challenge opposing information and narratives, and control the global information landscape.

Therefore, the literature indicates that in order to understand contemporary political communication, the following aspects need to be taken into consideration: digital diplomacy, framing the media, strategic narratives, and information warfare. These ideas form a fully-fledged paradigm of studying the competition for influence in the twenty-first century information age.

Research Gap

While there is wide-reaching research on digital diplomacy and media framing in isolation, there has been little research that has sought to analyse the interaction between these two in a single analytical framework. Studies on diplomacy focus on diplomatic communication practices or on the effects of media, but few studies consider strategic narratives the means to bridge the gap between the two. Moreover, the literature does not sufficiently reflect the contexts of emerging powers and developing countries, while the majority of literature reflects the context of the western countries. The aim of the current study is to fill these gaps by combining three theoretical lenses: digital diplomacy, framing analysis and perspectives on strategic narratives to address the transformation of political communication in today's digital age.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is integrated theory which includes the theoretical framework of Framing Theory, Agenda-Setting Theory, Networked Public Sphere Theory, Soft Power Theory, and Strategic Narrative Theory. These unique lenses help to understand the relationship between digital diplomacy and media framing in shaping twenty-

first-century political communication in a holistic manner. The framing theory frame (Entman, 1993) is the foundation of analysis, because it helps to explain how political actors select and emphasize aspects of reality to shape interpretation, assign responsibility, and suggest solutions. In digital diplomacy framing is strategically employed to build a positive narrative, shape international perceptions and refute other interpretations, and digital platforms allow multiple actors to compete in framing processes beyond the scope of the traditional control of the media gatekeepers.

Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) helps to understand how the salience of issues is constructed during public discourse. It asserts that the media and digital platforms shape the thinking of audiences, and that the framing will shape how they think. Agenda setting can be done in the digital age through direct influence on the salience of global issues via social media, algorithms, governments and networked users, and facilitate the spread of political messages at a rapid pace across the world.

The theory of Networked Public Sphere (NPST) by Benkler (2006) is the concept that the structure of communication systems is shifting to become decentralized, horizontal, and interactive. This context diminishes the role of traditional media gatekeepers and opens up the space for states, non-state actors, and individuals to create and disseminate political messages at the same time. This presents an opportunity and a competition for digital diplomacy: state narratives need to share the same digital space as other narratives and even opposite ones.

The strategic aspect of this framework is represented by the Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2004), which focuses on attractions instead of coercion. Digital diplomacy is a tool of 'soft power,' which is manifested via online communication, cultural projection, and narrative persuasion, which can influence the international image of the state and strengthen its legitimacy. But, the digital sphere also carries risk and there are counter-narratives states face in it, and credibility and communication agility are necessary for soft power to be effective.

These processes are combined within Strategic Narrative Theory (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin & Roselle, 2013), which addresses the creation of coherent narratives by political actors at the system, national and issue levels, which define global realities about political events. In digital diplomacy, strategic narratives are quickly and constantly shared and challenged on different platforms, and this is what narrative competition is all about today.

These theories are linked to create a coherent framework that shows agenda-setting as an influence on issue salience, framing as an influence on interpretation, the networked public sphere as an influencing on the flow of communication, the soft power as an influence on objectives of influencing, and the strategic narratives as an influence on the coherence of political communication. They outline the reciprocal relationship between digital diplomacy and media framing and how such a process is dynamic, competitive and networked when it comes to political communication.

4. Research Methodology

The research used in this study is a qualitative research design through critical analysis of secondary data. The qualitative approach is suitable since the study is not on measurable variables but rather on interpretative processes, discursive constructions and communicative practices. The goal is to critically synthesize and analyze previous research, policy documents, official digital communication products and media reports, and to conceptual and analytically

understand the relationship between digital diplomacy and digital framing in today's political context.

This research is based on the use of only secondary sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, policy papers, think tank reports, official government communications and quality media publications. Relevant literature was identified using key academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Sage Publications, Oxford Academic and journals indexed in Scopus. Apart from this, the outputs of the foreign ministries, foreign missions and international organisations from a digital diplomacy perspective were also analysed and collected from publicly accessible sources to gain insight into the effectiveness of digital diplomacy.

An analytical method is used to analyze the existing literature on digital diplomacy and media framing, as well as to look for patterns, contradictions and gaps in the literature on digital diplomacy. The analysis is not a summary of previous studies, rather it challenges the theoretical assumptions, looks at methodological weaknesses and compares various interpretations of the scholarship. Particular focus is on framing processes' functioning in digital diplomacy practices and the building and communicating of strategic narratives in networked communication environments.

Thematic analysis is also used as an interpretative method in this study to classify and combine the common themes found in the literature. The following themes were identified: (i) the changing nature of diplomacy in the digital age, (ii) the role of social media in the context of narrative control and information war, (iii) the rise of narrative competition and information warfare in diplomacy, (iv) the influence of algorithmic systems on political visibility, and (v) the significance of soft power in digital diplomacy. Themes are analysed systematically to set up conceptual connections between the practices of digital diplomacy and media framing processes.

The methodological rigor is guaranteed by the use of the triangulation method of secondary data sources, both academic and institutional sources and sources from real-world digital communication practices. This will increase the validity of findings by multiple checking of interpretations between types of evidence. It analyzes theoretically, in relation to empirical cases of state-led digital diplomacy campaigns and international crisis communication strategies, for example, the ideas of framing and agenda-setting.

Discourse analysis tools are also applied along with the methodological framework, to analyze the role of language, framing devices and narrative structures in the field of digital diplomacy. The analysis of official statements, foreign ministries' communication via Twitter, and international organization communication is carried out to gain insight into the construction and dissemination of political meanings within digital space. This will help to deepen the understanding of how strategic narratives are integrated into the digital diplomacy practices. One of the difficulties with using secondary sources is a lack of primary research, including interviews or surveys with diplomats, policymakers, or even media practitioners. This constraint is somewhat addressed, however, through the large amount of digital communication archives and published scholarly research, that provides ample data for critical interpretation. Furthermore, the secondary nature of the data makes it possible to make a broad comparative assessment in terms of different geopolitical situations, both current and emerging, both major powers and emerging powers.

Ethical issues in this study are relatively low as it is only secondary data which is publicly available. However, the research is academically sound and adheres to appropriate citation practices, as well as avoiding plagiarism and misrepresentation of sources and critically analyzing all sources cited. All interpretations are based on existing frameworks of expertise within the field to ensure the objectivity and analytical clarity of the interpretation.

Overall, this methodology allows for a thorough and systematic analysis of the digital diplomacy and media framing as intertwined processes. Using secondary sources of information, the study provides a critical analysis using thematic and discourse analysis approaches, and the analysis results are then structured to form an interpretive framework that explains the process of political communication in the digital era in terms of framing, narration and the structure of communication networks.

Theme Area	Secondary Data Sources	Analytical Focus	Key Use in Study
Digital Transformation of Diplomacy	Peer-reviewed journals, books, foreign ministry websites, UN digital communication reports	Shift from traditional diplomacy to digital platforms, real-time communication, public engagement	Understanding how diplomacy has moved from closed-state communication to open digital engagement
Media Framing of Political Events	Academic literature (Entman, Goffman), international news media (BBC, Al Jazeera, Reuters), policy papers	Construction of meaning through selective emphasis, framing of conflicts and crises	Examining how political events are interpreted differently across media ecosystems
Strategic Narratives	Scholarly books (Miskimmon et al.), government speeches, diplomatic social media accounts	Storytelling in international politics, narrative competition, legitimacy construction	Analyzing how states construct coherent narratives to influence global perception
Information Warfare & Disinformation	Think tank reports, cybersecurity studies, OSINT reports, media investigations	Propaganda, disinformation campaigns, counter-narratives in digital space	Assessing how digital diplomacy is used for influence and perception management
Algorithmic & Platform Influence	Social media platform studies, tech policy reports, academic articles on AI and algorithms	Algorithmic amplification, engagement bias, echo chambers, visibility control	Understanding how platform logic shapes framing and agenda-setting
Soft Power Projection	Policy documents, academic works (Nye), cultural diplomacy reports, state campaigns	Attraction-based influence, national branding, reputation management	Exploring how digital diplomacy enhances or weakens state soft power

4.1 Secondary data and thematic framework used to describe the secondary data.

The table below provides a holistic analytical framework where the secondary data sources are combined with the key thematic dimensions used in this study, whose focus is digital diplomacy and media framing. It provides the methodological framework for the comprehension of the process of political communication construction, dissemination and interpretation in digital culture.

The first thematic area is Digital Transformation of Diplomacy and it relies on studies and publications by other universities and institutions, as well as official documents and communications produced by foreign ministries and international organizations. This theme reflects the transition from traditional and state-based diplomacy to digitally-infused diplomatic engagement. It brings to light the growing importance governments give to social media, online diplomatic campaigns and live communication tools for engaging both the internal and external audiences. Immediacy, accessibility and broadening diplomatic engagements beyond elite negotiations are the points of focus in the analysis.

The second theme, Media Framing of Political Events, is based on classical and contemporary communication theories including framing scholarship, and empirical evidence of the framing of political news by international media outlets like BBC, Al Jazeera and Reuters. In this theme, students will learn how political events are variously interpreted and represented. The idea is to highlight the ways in which meaning is constructed in the media: what is included in a story, what is omitted, how it is emphasized or de-emphasized, and its impact on how international crises, conflicts and policy decisions are seen by the public.

The third theme Strategic Narratives is mainly based on academic texts addressing the theory of narrative and empirical data from government speeches and official social media pages of diplomatic institutions. This theme discusses how states build stories that make sense and are convincing to readers, listeners, and viewers of international events, the reasons for taking policy action, and how to build their legitimacy. It focuses on the narrative competition of having several actors who try to assert themselves in global debates by presenting different narratives to the same political reality.

The fourth theme, Information Warfare and Disinformation, includes information from think tank reports, cybersecurity analyses, open-source intelligence (OSINT) publications and investigative media reports. In this theme, the darker side of digital communication is explored, with a special emphasis on the manipulation of information to persuade, shape, and ultimately skew perceptions and undermine opposing narratives. It emphasizes the growing trend of disinformation campaigns, propaganda and counter-narrative campaigns in digital diplomacy.

The fifth theme, Algorithmic and Platform Influence, is based on academic research on digital platforms, reports on governance of AI technologies and technology policy research. This theme is concerned with the visibility, engagement and circulation of political content on the social media platforms and algorithms. It targets the mechanisms of platform-driven amplification and echo-chamber dynamics as well as personalization shaping the narratives that come to the fore in the digital public sphere.

Lastly, the sixth theme, Soft Power Projection, draws on classical theoretical literature (including Joseph Nye) and current policy literature and cultural diplomacy projects. The theme describes the use by the states of digital diplomacy to improve their image, foreign

cultural values and to develop the long-term attraction effect over the country that shapes the image. It brings awareness of the criticality of credibility, visibility and the effectiveness of the narrative in determining soft power in the digital age.

The table as a whole suggests that the study has a multi-source, multi-thematic analytical framework. It brings together a variety of secondary data sources and the conceptual themes in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between digital diplomacy and media framing and their impact on political communication in today's digital information landscape.

5. Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Findings

This study demonstrates that digital diplomacy and media framing are strongly intertwined processes which together influence today's political communication in the 21st century. The analysis shows that diplomacy has entered a new realm of interaction between states and grounded itself in a highly networked digital ecosystem in which government directly interacts with the global mass audience. It has greatly boosted the speed, reach and visibility of diplomatic communication, enabling states to be able to react to international events as they happen and shape global narratives without needing to rely on traditional media gatekeepers.

One of the important conclusions of the study is that the process of framing news in the media is still a major process in the construction and contestation of political meaning in digital public spaces. Both state and non-state actors – such as governments, journalists, and online influencers engage with the process of creating alternative frames to depict international events, blame, and public meaning. The production of information has become decentralized, leading to a growing number of frames and multiple narratives being presented on digital platforms and at the same time, often conflicting with each other.

The research also shows that in digital diplomacy, strategic narratives are the preferred format of political communication. Coherent Storytelling (CST) techniques are gaining in popularity as a means to clearly articulate policy choices, to review foreign policy decisions and to influence international understanding. These narratives are continually challenged in this digital space with other actors trying to undermine or rework the dominant narratives.

One of the other major findings is that of the role of algorithmic mediation as an increasing influence on political communication. Social media sites are not neutral spaces; they promote certain content and its visibility through their algorithmic systems. This has resulted in the amplification of frames with high emotional content, conflict orientation and polarisation that can lead to misunderstandings, or inaccurate interpretations of international events.

The study also reveals that through soft power projection, i.e., by attracting, communicating and managing images with foreign publics, digital diplomacy is a crucial tool. Credibility, consistency, and the ability to counter misinformation, however, become more and more necessary in the success of soft power in the digital space.

Lastly, this research indicates that information warfare and disinformation campaigns have become part and parcel of communication in the digital era. Beyond communication, both States and non-State actors are using digital platforms for strategic manipulation, attempting to influence or change perception, and to create geopolitical leverage.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes some recommendations for the policy makers, diplomatic institutions and media organizations.

First, governments need to create a more comprehensive digital diplomacy programme that brings together communication and policy and cybersecurity aspects. Diplomatic institutions should implement a framework of structured approaches to managing narratives, to communicating with audiences facing crisis situations and to target their audiences on digital platforms to go beyond ad-hoc social media engagement.

Second, it is necessary to boost media literacy and public awareness programme to fight misinformation and enhance the capacity of the public to analyse digitally disseminated content. It is important to incorporate education on framing in educational initiatives, how to spot disinformation and how algorithms affect information consumption.

Third, Diplomatic institutions need to have strategic narrative development units to systematically design, monitor and evaluate national narratives in global digital spaces. These units should be directed towards maintaining coherence, consistency and credibility of all digital communication channels.

Fourth, there needs to be more transparency in algorithmic governance, in social media platforms. There is need for greater transparency in ranking contents and better regulation of harmful contents amplification to decrease polarization and increase quality of information in the digital public sphere.

Fifth, it is necessary to strengthen international cooperation in counteracting disinformation and information warfare in the states. Multilateral approaches and diplomatic accords may be useful in creating norms for responsible state actions in digital communication environments and lower the risks of state cross-border information manipulation.

Last, future studies need to concentrate on empirical case studies and quantitative analysis of the digital diplomacy campaigns in various geopolitical settings. A comparative analysis of digital diplomacy strategies between key actors and developing countries would yield more insights into the differences in digital diplomacy strategies from a political and cultural perspective.

Finally, the study illustrates that the study of digital diplomacy and media framing are not two distinct categories but complement each other as essential components of contemporary political communication. States' use of digital narratives, framing and soft power requires effective management to reach the desired ends in the current global information order.

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