



DIGITAL DIPLOMACY IN AUTHORITARIAN AND DEMOCRATIC REGIMES: AI PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:

The dynamics of contemporary global politics are increasingly shaped by technological progress, which has not only transformed the forms of economic and social relations but has also redefined the very essence of international relations. Modern communication tools, social networks, and digital platforms have turned diplomacy into a more open, rapid, and multifaceted process, where information exchange and influence on public opinion occur in real time. In this transformative process, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly become one of the most powerful tools, capable of significantly reshaping both the structure of interstate relations and the everyday mechanisms of diplomatic practice.

Keywords: Digital diplomacy; Artificial Intelligence; authoritarian regimes; democratic regimes; international relations; technology and politics; political communication; propaganda; transparency; strategic communication.

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Introduction:

The integration of AI into digital diplomacy creates both unique opportunities and serious challenges. In democratic regimes, it can be used to enhance transparency, public engagement, and international cooperation, whereas authoritarian regimes often employ it to deepen propaganda, informational manipulation, and political control. Consequently, AI becomes not only a technological resource but also a profoundly political one, whose impact on digital diplomacy depends on the values and strategic goals of the specific political system.

This article analyzes how AI is reshaping the architecture of digital diplomacy, the opportunities and risks arising from its use, and how these dynamics manifest differently within democratic and authoritarian political contexts. The discussion includes both theoretical analysis and practical examples, allowing for a clear understanding of how technology has become one of the key drivers of transformation in international relations.

Theoretical Framework

In the analysis of digital diplomacy, contemporary theories of international relations play a crucial role, as they provide the interpretative foundation for understanding how the integration of artificial intelligence influences global communication. The liberalism paradigm emphasizes the importance of international cooperation and open communication, based on the premise that relations between states can be improved through the free exchange of information and the dissemination of shared values¹. From this perspective, AI serves as a significant tool for strengthening trust and coordination, particularly in environments where digital platforms cultivate multifaceted diplomatic relations.

The realist theory, which views the international system as an anarchic environment, perceives AI as a mechanism for maintaining the balance of power and safeguarding national interests². From a realist perspective, technological superiority can become a critical factor in global competition and the expansion of influence. In this context, artificial intelligence may be employed for both defensive and offensive purposes, ranging from enhancing cybersecurity to optimizing disinformation campaigns.

The constructivist approach, on the other hand, places particular emphasis on the social context, norms, and identities that shape the ways in which technology is used and the outcomes it produces³. Consequently, the integration of AI in authoritarian and democratic regimes produces different outcomes, as the use of technology is always closely linked to the specific characteristics of political culture and governance structures. At the same time, debates in technology policy place significant emphasis on the tension between technological determinism and social constructionism. The former argues that technology itself determines social change⁴. The latter, however, holds that its impact depends on the social and political contexts in which it operates⁵. This theoretical framework enables a better understanding of how AI is politically interpreted and institutionally adapted across different governance regimes.

¹Power and Interdependence, Joseph S. Nye. 2012.

²Mearsheimer, J.J. (2001). The tragedy of great power politics.

³Social Theory of International Politics, Alexander Wendt, 1999.

⁴John Howells, Does Technology Drive History?: The Dilemma of Technological Determinism, 1997.

⁵The Social Shaping of Technology. Robin Alun Williams. 1996.

The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Digital Diplomacy

Artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to bring a complete transformation to digital diplomacy, both by rapidly increasing the speed and scale of communication and by enhancing the efficiency of diplomatic processes. The generation of automated textual and visual content provides states with the ability to respond to global events in a more targeted and timely manner⁶. At the same time, AI enables the in-depth assessment of public sentiment among foreign audiences through Big Data and social media analysis, allowing for the precise and targeted tailoring of messages⁷.

Moreover, artificial intelligence plays a significant role in strengthening cultural diplomacy. For instance, by automating content localization processes and accounting for linguistic and cultural specificities, it becomes possible to enhance mutual understanding and build trust with foreign countries⁸. In the practice of crisis diplomacy, the use of AI proves particularly effective, as real-time information processing and the forecasting of potential scenarios allow diplomats to respond to crises quickly and rationally.

Democratic Regimes in Practice

Democratic regimes typically employ artificial intelligence (AI) in digital diplomacy to enhance open communication and strengthen “soft power”⁹. This approach is based on the principles of transparency, citizen engagement, and open discussion. For example, the practices of the European Union and the United States include disseminating information on public platforms, conducting public consultations, and deepening multilateral relations with international and non-governmental actors. In this way, AI becomes not only a technological but also a strategic diplomatic asset, serving to strengthen international trust and cooperation. In democratic contexts, particular attention is devoted to the development of ethical frameworks. One key principle is the avoidance of unfair bias, as it can lead to numerous negative consequences, ranging from the marginalization of vulnerable groups to the reinforcement of prejudices and discrimination. To promote diversity, AI systems should be accessible to all, regardless of any disability, and should involve all relevant stakeholders throughout their entire lifecycle. European Union (EU) Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy

⁶First contact: integrating generative AI into digital diplomatic intelligence. CorneliuBjola&llan Manor. 2024.

⁷AI AND THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY. Vivian S. Walker. Aug 22, 2023.

⁸AI’s Transformative Impact On Diplomacy: A New Era Of Global Engagement. ShahzadAryobee. April 30, 2025.

⁹Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics – Joseph S. Nye, Jr. 2004

AI¹⁰ and US AI Bill of Rights¹¹. It represents an effort to prevent manipulation and disinformation. These frameworks establish principles of transparency, human rights protection, and accountability, which help prevent the use of AI against democratic values. For example, the European Union's EU vs Disinfo platform employs AI technologies to identify and monitor Russian disinformation¹².

Authoritarian Regimes in Practice

In authoritarian regimes, the use of AI fundamentally differs from democratic models. The primary goals are controlling the informational environment, enforcing internal censorship, and enhancing international propaganda. AI is employed through social media bots, algorithmic filters, and Deepfake technologies to shape desired political narratives and manipulate international public opinion¹³. Such practices are often focused on discrediting opponents and isolating the local population from accurate information.

"Sharp Power" is described as the strategy employed by authoritarian states aimed at influencing public opinion in foreign countries through cultural and informational channels. In this context, China's Great Firewall serves as a digital censorship and information isolation system, restricting access to foreign information and controlling internal communication¹⁴. Russia's RoskomnadzorIt exercises strict control over the internet space, blocks undesirable content, and develops disinformation campaigns on both domestic and global scales¹⁵.

Example of a Democratic Regime – European Union

Within the framework of digital diplomacy, the European Union actively employs artificial intelligence to combat disinformation and facilitate open communication. For instance, the EU vs Disinfo platform uses AI to analyze online content and filter out false information, helping both European societies and international partners access accurate, evidence-based information. The operation of this system is grounded in ethical principles and transparency, which enhances the EU's international image as a reliable and progressive actor on the global

¹⁰Ethics guidelines for trustworthy AI. European Commission, 2019.

¹¹What is the Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights?. THE WHITE HOUSE.

¹²EU vs Disinfo, ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 2023.

¹³The Global Disinformation Order 2019 Global Inventory of Organised Social Media Manipulation. Samantha Bradshaw . University of Oxford
Philip N. Howard .

¹⁴ How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression, GARY KING. May 2013.

¹⁵Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media, Alexander Zharov.

stage¹⁶. Here, AI is not only a tool for processing and disseminating information but also a component in safeguarding democratic values, stimulating citizen engagement, and promoting international cooperation.

Example of an Authoritarian Regime – China

China, as an authoritarian regime, employs AI in large-scale monitoring and censorship systems to ensure informational control over society and maintain political stability.,,Great Firewall“And its associated algorithmic filtering mechanisms control massive flows of information on the internet, restrict freedom of information, and suppress critical voices¹⁷. AI is also used to deploy social media bots to support the government’s narrative and counter foreign influence. In this way, China employs technology not only to influence domestic audiences but also to project power externally, manipulating the informational space and disseminating propaganda, effectively undermining democratic values and offering other states a model of authoritarian governance.

Comparative Analysis

In the case of the European Union, the use of AI reflects an open, ethical, and partnership-oriented approach aimed at building trust, deepening democratic dialogue, and fostering multilateral cooperation. This approach embodies the fundamental values of democratic systems: transparency, a free informational space, and citizen engagement. In contrast, China uses AI as a mechanism for maintaining power and political control, where technology serves as a key tool for informational security and propaganda. Moreover, the authoritarian model relies on control, censorship, and intervention, which strengthens state institutional power but simultaneously creates deficits in international trust and perception. The difference between these two models is defined not only by the way technology is used but also by its impact on political culture and international relations. Democratic countries strive to manage AI through ethical and responsible mechanisms, whereas authoritarian regimes prioritize technological control and regime preservation, posing significant challenges to global democracy and the informational environment

¹⁶European External Action Service, 2023.

¹⁷ Great Firewall
Chinese Internet policy, Nicholas Gisinna, Jul 17, 2025.

Conclusion

The integration of artificial intelligence into digital diplomacy is no longer merely a technological issue but represents a transitional phase in global politics and international relations, far surpassing the introduction of a new communication tool. This process has clearly demonstrated that the forms and outcomes of AI use are heavily dependent on a country's political and institutional environment.

Future research should explore how universal ethical standards can be established that are applicable across different political contexts while ensuring the responsible use of technological innovations. Particular attention should be given to AI's political impacts on international relations, its implications and constraints for democracy, as well as the transparency and accountability of technological control mechanisms in authoritarian regimes. In this way, the development and integration of AI in digital diplomacy can avoid becoming a tool for global confrontation and a crisis of trust, instead serving as a platform to strengthen international cooperation, peace, and democratic values¹⁸.

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¹⁸Establishing the Rules for Building Trustworthy AI, Luciano Floridi, May 2019.

7. Wendt, Alexander. 1999. <http://www.guillaumenicaise.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Wendt-Social-Theory-of-International-Politics.pdf> (accessed 08 14, 2025).