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Digital Diplomacy as a Tool for Resolving Political Conflicts in Multilateral Negotiations

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ABSTRACT

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The Relevance of the Study is driven by the growing role of digital technologies in international relations and the transformation of traditional diplomatic mechanisms toward digitalization. The purpose of the study is to assess the role of digital diplomacy in the resolution of political conflicts based on a systemic analysis of key indicators of states' diplomatic activity. In the course of the research, comparative analysis, index method, cluster approach, and generalization method were applied, which made it possible to systematize data and identify patterns in the development of digital diplomacy. The information base of the study consists of data from international analytical centers, including the Lowy Institute, Global Diplomacy Index, Digital Diplomacy Index, Global Soft Power Index, and Freedom House. For a comprehensive assessment, a system of indicators was developed, including diplomatic influence, diplomatic network, digital activity, level of soft power, and information freedom. The results of the study show that the diplomatic influence of leading countries remains the basis of their negotiation power, with China demonstrating growth of the indicator to 97.7, while the United States shows certain volatility (82.7 in 2025). A developed diplomatic network ensures the institutional presence of states in the global environment, with China and the United States having the largest number of diplomatic missions (274 and 271, respectively). At the same time, digital diplomacy acts as a key instrument of informational influence, which is confirmed by high indicators of the United States (8.61) and India (10.00 in terms of digital outreach). It is proven that the level of soft power is a determining factor of trust, with the United States (79.5) and China (+1.6) demonstrating a strengthening of reputational influence. It is determined that the effectiveness of diplomacy depends on the integrated interaction of institutional, network, digital, and image components. The practical significance of the obtained results lies in the possibility of using the proposed model for developing digital diplomacy strategies, enhancing the effectiveness of international negotiations, and forming a positive image of the state in the global information environment.



KEYWORDS

digital diplomacy; international negotiations; political conflicts; diplomatic influence; diplomatic network; digital communications.



Цифрова дипломатія як інструмент врегулювання політичних конфліктів у багатосторонніх переговорах

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СТАТТЯ

АНОТАЦІЯ

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Актуальність дослідження зумовлена зростанням ролі цифрових технологій у міжнародних відносинах та трансформацією традиційних дипломатичних механізмів у напрямі цифровізації. Метою дослідження є оцінювання ролі цифрової дипломатії у врегулюванні політичних конфліктів на основі системного аналізу основних показників дипломатичної діяльності держав. У процесі дослідження використано порівняльний аналіз, індексний метод, кластерний підхід та метод узагальнення, що дозволило систематизувати дані та визначити закономірності розвитку цифрової дипломатії. Інформаційною базою дослідження стали дані міжнародних аналітичних центрів, зокрема Lowy Institute, Global Diplomacy Index, Digital Diplomacy Index, Global Soft Power Index та Freedom House. Для комплексного оцінювання сформовано систему показників, що охоплює дипломатичний вплив, дипломатичну мережу, цифрову активність, рівень «м'якої сили» та інформаційну свободу. У результаті дослідження встановлено, що дипломатичний вплив провідних держав залишається основою їхньої переговорної сили, при цьому Китай демонструє зростання показника до 97,7, тоді як США характеризуються певною волатильністю (82,7 у 2025 р.). Розвинена дипломатична мережа забезпечує інституційну присутність держав у глобальному середовищі, зокрема, Китай та США мають найбільшу кількість дипломатичних установ (274 та 271 відповідно). Водночас цифрова дипломатія є основним інструментом формування інформаційного впливу, що підтверджується високими показниками США (8,61) та Індії (10,00 за охопленням цифрових каналів). Доведено, що рівень «м'якої сили» є визначальним чинником довіри, зокрема, США (79,5) та Китай (+1,6) демонструють посилення репутаційного впливу. Визначено, що ефективність дипломатії залежить від комплексної взаємодії інституційних, мережевих, цифрових та іміджевих компонентів. Практичне значення отриманих результатів полягає в можливості використання запропонованої моделі для розробки стратегій цифрової дипломатії, підвищення ефективності міжнародних переговорів та формування позитивного іміджу держави в глобальному інформаційному середовищі.



КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

цифрова дипломатія; міжнародні переговори; політичні конфлікти; дипломатичний вплив; дипломатична мережа; цифрові комунікації.

1. Introduction

The growing number of political conflicts, hybrid threats, information wars, and crisis phenomena in the world system underscores the need to seek new, effective tools for influencing international processes [16]. Under these conditions, digital diplomacy is becoming an important element of foreign policy, allowing states to quickly respond to challenges, shape the international order, and influence the course of political processes. Digital diplomacy is of particular importance in the context of the settlement of political conflicts, where, along with traditional diplomacy tools, information and communication mechanisms are gaining more and more importance [12]. The use of social networks, digital platforms and public diplomacy tools provides an opportunity to directly influence the international audience, shape public opinion and promote national interests in the global information space. Digital communication channels are characterized by a high speed of information dissemination, wide coverage and the possibility of targeted influence, which significantly increases their effectiveness in negotiation processes [18]. In this regard, there is a need to form a systematic approach to the study of digital diplomacy, which combines traditional and modern tools of international interaction and allows us to assess their effectiveness in the context of the transformation of the global environment.

2. Literature Review

In the context of the digitalization of international relations and the transformation of diplomatic practices, scholars pay considerable attention to the study of digital diplomacy as a tool for influencing and resolving international conflicts. Thus, L. Rifki finds out that digital diplomacy is an important tool for conflict resolution, but its effectiveness is achieved only if it is integrated with traditional diplomatic mechanisms [18]. The issue of transformation of multilateral negotiations under the influence of digital technologies is revealed by H. Singh, proving that the use of artificial intelligence (hereinafter referred to as AI) changes the architecture of international interaction, at the same time increasing the inequality of access to digital resources [19]. A similar problem is developed by O. Öztay and H. Yurdakul, who substantiate that digital communications and AI contribute to the formation of symbolic capital of states and expand their diplomatic influence in the global space [15]. At the same time, M. Ahmad and colleagues (M. Ahmad et al.) focus on the formation of a techno-geopolitical paradigm of diplomacy, in which big data and digital platforms provide opportunities for forecasting and strategic planning, but create risks of disinformation [2]. A team of scientists led by H. Mostafaei et al. proves that the use of AI in diplomacy helps to increase the effectiveness of crisis management, the development of public diplomacy and the improvement of the decision-making process [14]. Tools for quantitative measurement of digital science diplomacy, which allow assessing the level of international interaction of states and their information activity, are proposed by M. Abrantes et al. [1]. The institutional aspect of diplomatic interaction is revealed by E. Heldt and colleagues, who prove that the effectiveness of international organizations in multilateral negotiations depends on their ability to adapt and interact with different actors [7]. The importance of diplomacy in the context of global crises is studied by N. Kantsedal et al., emphasizing that geopolitical upheavals increase the instability of the international environment and actualize the role of diplomatic coordination mechanisms [8].

In particular, V. Burenkov finds out that digital diplomacy of the diaspora functions as a polycentric system capable of shaping strategic narratives and influencing the international information space [4]. Expanding these approaches, Y. Polyakova and O. Shaida prove that public and digital diplomacy are the main tools for shaping the international image of the state and ensuring strategic communications [17]. Generalization of the research results indicates that digital diplomacy is considered a comprehensive tool of international interaction that combines technological, communication and institutional components and significantly affects the effectiveness of foreign policy activities of states.

At the same time, the issues of a comprehensive assessment of digital diplomacy based on an integrated scorecard, determining the relationship between its main components (diplomatic influence, diplomatic network, digital activity, soft power, information freedom), as well as the formation of applied models for its use in the process of resolving international conflicts in multilateral negotiations, remain insufficiently studied. In view of this, the need to substantiate a generalized model of the effectiveness of digital diplomacy determines the relevance of the study.

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of the study is to assess the role of digital diplomacy in resolving political conflicts on the basis of a systematic analysis of the main indicators of diplomatic activity of states and the formation of a generalized model of its effectiveness in multilateral negotiations.

Objectives of the article:

- 1) to analyse the dynamics of traditional diplomatic influence and institutional presence of the world's leading countries (on the example of the Diplomatic Influence and Global Diplomacy Index);
- 2) to investigate the state of development of digital diplomacy and soft power tools, identifying the main components of their effectiveness (network coverage, effectiveness of messages, reputational impact);
- 3) to form and substantiate a generalized model of digital diplomacy in multilateral negotiations, determining the interaction of its main components in the process of resolving political conflicts.

4. Methods and Materials

The methodological basis of the study is a combination of general scientific and special methods of analysis, which provide a comprehensive study of the development of digital diplomacy in the modern international environment. The information base of the study is formed on the basis of open data of international think tanks and research organizations, in particular, the materials of the Lowy Institute, indicators of the Global Diplomacy Index, Digital Diplomacy Index and Global Soft Power Index. analysis, statistical generalization and analytical interpretation, which made it possible to assess the dynamics of diplomatic influence of states, the scale of their diplomatic networks, the level of digital activity and indicators of "soft power". To identify structural differences between countries, the method of systematization and matrix generalization of indicators was used, which made it possible to form a model for a comparative assessment of the diplomatic capabilities of states in the context of the development of digital diplomacy.

5. Results and Discussion

Digitalization is significantly transforming traditional approaches to diplomacy, forming a new model of interaction between states, in which communication, influence and negotiation processes are increasingly implemented through digital channels. Digital diplomacy goes beyond the classical tools of international relations and encompasses the use of social networks, online platforms, information resources and digital technologies to shape the image of the state, promote national interests and influence the international audience [9]. A feature of modern digital diplomacy is its high speed, scalability and ability to form public opinion in real time, which significantly increases the role of information resources in the global competition of states.

The effectiveness of digital diplomacy is determined not only by the level of technological development, but also by a complex of interrelated factors that reflect both traditional and modern aspects of international influence [13]. In this context, digital diplomacy is considered as an integrated system that combines institutional, communication and reputational components. In particular, the diplomatic influence of the state, which characterizes its ability to form an agenda in international relations, a diplomatic network that reflects the level of the country's representation in the world, as well as digital activity as an indicator of the intensity of communication through digital platforms [3]. No less important are the indicators of "soft power", which form trust in the state and its international image, as well as the level of information freedom, which determines the openness of the information environment and the possibility of implementing digital communications.

Thus, for a comprehensive analysis of digital diplomacy, it is advisable to form a system of indicators reflecting various aspects of its functioning, in particular, diplomatic influence, diplomatic network, digital activity, soft power level and information freedom [1]. The use of these indicators makes it possible to assess both the potential of the state in the field of international communication and the effectiveness of the implementation of its foreign policy strategies in the digital environment. An integrated approach to assessment provides an opportunity to identify structural differences between countries, identify leaders and outsiders, and form an analytical base for the development of effective diplomatic strategies.

Taking into account the need to systematize and generalize the data obtained, the study uses a set of general scientific and special methods to ensure the objectivity and reliability of the results. The information base of the study is the data of international think tanks and organizations that assess the diplomatic activity and influence of states in the global environment. The materials of the Lowy Institute are used, in particular, indicators of diplomatic influence, data from the Global Diplomacy Index [11], which made it possible to characterize the branching and dynamics of diplomatic networks. In addition, the results of the Digital Diplomacy Index [5], reflecting the intensity of online activity of subjects in international relations, as well as the Global Soft Power Index [6], are important indicators of countries' reputational capital and "soft power". The synthesis of these sources made it possible to ensure the complexity of the study, combining quantitative indicators of technical development with the qualitative characteristics of diplomatic influence in the context of modern transformations of the global environment.

First of all, it is advisable to analyse the dynamics of the indicator of diplomatic influence for the leading countries of the world, which makes it possible to trace changes in their position in the global diplomatic system during the period under study (Figure 1).

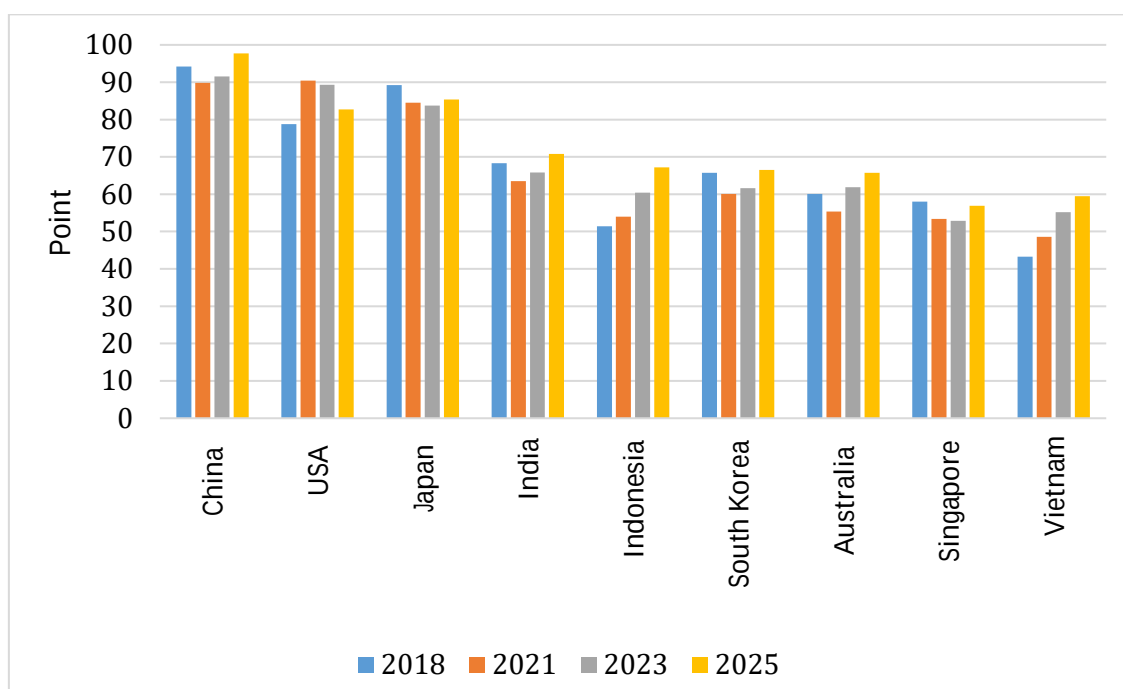


Figure 1. Dynamics of the "Diplomatic Influence" indicator (Lowy Institute) for the TOP-10 countries in 2018–2025

Source: Built by the authors according to [11; 10].

The analysis of the dynamics of diplomatic influence indicates the preservation of China's leading position, which shows an increase in the indicator from 94.2 in 2018 to 97.7 in 2025, which confirms the strengthening of its role in global negotiations. The US is characterized by volatility: after a peak of 90.4 in 2021, there is a decrease to 82.7 in 2025, which may indicate a change in instruments of influence.

Japan maintains a stable position (85.4 in 2025), which indicates the constancy of its diplomatic presence. At the same time, there is a significant increase in the role of India (from 68.3 to 70.8), Indonesia (from 51.4 to 67.2) and Vietnam (from 43.3 to 59.5), which reflects the strengthening of regional centres of influence. The growth of South Korea and Australia (to 66.5 and 65.7, respectively) confirms the formation of new diplomatic actors in multilateral processes. Thus, diplomatic influence remains an important basis for the negotiating power of states, determining their ability to shape the international agenda and act effectively in the context of the digitalization of diplomatic processes.

A logical continuation of the analysis is to consider the institutional basis of diplomatic influence, primarily the scale and dynamics of diplomatic networks. They ensure the physical and organizational presence of states in the international environment (Figure 2).

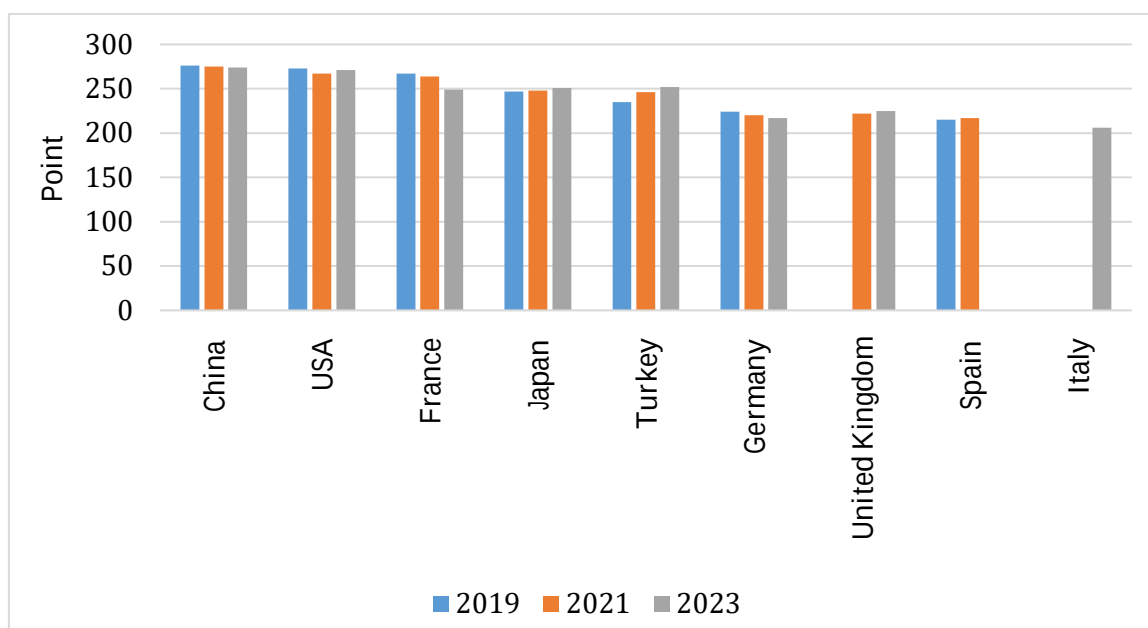


Figure 2. Dynamics of the diplomatic network of the countries of the world in 2019–2023

Source: Built by the authors according to [11; 10].

An analysis of the dynamics of diplomatic networks indicates that China and the United States, which have the largest number of diplomatic missions in the world (274 and 271, respectively, in 2023), maintain leadership, which ensures their global presence in multilateral negotiations. At the same time, there is a reduction in the network of France (from 267 in 2019 to 249 in 2023) and Germany (from 224 to 217), which may indicate the optimization of diplomatic resources. Japan shows stable growth (from 247 to 251), while Turkey is characterized by the highest network expansion dynamics – from 235 in 2019 to 252 in 2023, which indicates the intensification of its foreign policy strategy. The gradual build-up of the UK's diplomatic presence (from 222 to 225) also confirms the desire to maintain influence in the global environment. Thus, a wide diplomatic network is the institutional basis of international influence, ensuring the possibility of prompt participation of states in negotiation processes and strengthening their position in the settlement of political conflicts.

At the same time, in modern conditions, the physical presence of states is complemented by digital tools of interaction, which necessitate assessing the level of development of digital diplomacy as one of the factors of effectiveness of international communications (Table 1).

Table 1. The level of development of digital diplomacy of countries in 2023

Country	Digital Diplomacy Level	Network coverage	Message Performance	Global visibility	Diplomatic language
USA	8.61	9.55	8.25	9.14	9.65
India	8.21	10.00	8.78	9.43	7.83
Indonesia	7.87	9.16	8.01	8.54	4.42
France	7.66	8.88	5.68	9.30	10.00
Mexico	7.44	8.96	6.28	9.02	6.48
Saudi Arabia	7.42	8.99	5.31	8.14	6.48
Turkey	7.35	9.35	10.00	8.97	5.58
Canada	7.30	8.61	7.07	8.77	7.21
United Kingdom	7.23	8.47	3.17	8.31	8.37

Source: Created by the authors at [5].

The analysis of digital diplomacy indicators indicates the leadership of the United States, which has the highest overall level (8.61) and high values in all components, including network coverage (9.55) and diplomatic language (9.65), which ensures the effective formation of global information influence. India demonstrates a high potential for the development of digital diplomacy (8.21), in particular due to maximum network coverage (10.00) and high message efficiency (8.78), which indicates the active use of digital platforms. Indonesia is also characterized by a significant level of digital activity (7.87), but

the restriction in the language part (4.42) reduces the effectiveness of communication. France and the United Kingdom have a high level of global visibility (9.30 and 8.31, respectively), but demonstrate different digital communications performance, including a low message effectiveness value in the United Kingdom (3.17). At the same time, Turkey has the highest message efficiency (10.00), which indicates the ability to generate strong information signals, despite the lower overall level of digital diplomacy. Thus, digital diplomacy is the main tool for shaping the information influence of states, while its effectiveness is determined not only by the scale of digital presence but also by the ability to generate effective communication messages and adapt them to a global audience.

Taking into account the fact that digital diplomacy is mostly based on trust and the international image of states, it is advisable to analyse the indicators of "soft power", which determine the level of perception of a country in the global environment and its ability to influence international processes through intangible instruments (Table 2).

Table 2. The level of "soft power" of the world's countries in 2025

Location	Country	Ball	Change until 2024
1	USA	79.5	+0.7
2	China	72.8	+1.6
3	United Kingdom	72.4	+0.6
4	Japan	71.5	+0.9
5	Germany	70.1	+0.3
6	France	68.5	+1.2
7	Canada	65.2	+0.8
8	Switzerland	64.9	+2.0
9	Italy	62.4	+0.4
10	UAE	60.4	+0.7

Source: Created by the authors at [6].

The analysis of the indicators of "soft power" indicates the dominance of the United States, which has the highest score (79.5) and demonstrates positive dynamics (+0.7), which confirms its ability to shape the global information agenda. China ranks second (72.8) with the largest increase among the leaders (+1.6), which indicates the activation of instruments of reputational influence. European countries, in particular the United Kingdom (72.4), Germany (70.1) and France (68.5), maintain stable positions, ensuring a high level of trust in the international environment. Switzerland demonstrates the highest dynamics (+2.0), which is associated with its role as a neutral negotiating platform. At the same time, mid-level countries, in particular Italy (62.4) and the UAE (60.4), are gradually strengthening their positions through the development of cultural and innovative diplomacy. The presented indicators of "soft power" confirm that reputational influence is an important factor in the effectiveness of digital diplomacy, as it determines the level of trust in the state and enhances the effectiveness of its communications in international negotiations.

Taking into account the results obtained, it is advisable to summarize the main characteristics of diplomatic influence, network presence, digital activity and "soft power" to form a holistic view of the potential of states in the field of digital diplomacy (Table 3).

Table 3. Matrix of diplomatic capabilities of states in the context of digital diplomacy

Country	Diplomatic influence	Diplomatic Network	Digital diplomacy	"Soft Power"	Type of diplomatic model
USA	Very high	Very high	Very high	High	Global Digital Leader
China	Very high	Very high	Medium	High	System-network model
India	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Digitally oriented model
France	High	High	Medium	Very high	Image and communication model
Turkey	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Regionally active model

Source: Created by the authors.

The analysis of the matrix of diplomatic capabilities indicates significant differences in the models of implementation of digital diplomacy of states, which determines their effectiveness in multilateral negotiations and the settlement of political conflicts. The sample includes countries that are represented in all the main indicators of the study and occupy leading positions in the global diplomatic environment, which ensures the representativeness of the analysis. The United States demonstrates a balanced model of diplomacy with the highest values in all components, including diplomatic influence, network and digital diplomacy, which provides it with the status of a global digital leader and the ability to shape the international agenda in negotiation processes. China is characterized by high values of diplomatic influence and network, which allows it to implement a systemic strategy of global presence, but a relatively lower level of digital diplomacy limits the effectiveness of communications in an open information environment. India, having average indicators of traditional diplomacy and a high level of digital activity, is forming a digitally-oriented model that allows compensating for the limitations of the diplomatic network through the active use of online tools. France, on the contrary, relies on a high level of "soft power" and stable positions in classical diplomacy, which ensures effective influence through the formation of trust and international image. Turkey is an example of a regionally active model, combining a developed diplomatic network with an average level of digital diplomacy, which allows it to actively act in regional negotiation processes.

Thus, the effectiveness of digital diplomacy in resolving political conflicts is determined not by individual indicators, but by their balance. The most effective states are those that combine high diplomatic influence, a wide network of international missions, active digital communication and a high level of trust, which provides them with the opportunity to have a comprehensive impact on negotiation processes.

Taking into account the results of the comparative analysis of diplomatic influence, network presence, digital activity and "soft power" of states, it is advisable to form a generalized model of digital diplomacy, which allows systematizing the main tools of influence and determining their role in the process of resolving political conflicts. This approach provides a holistic vision of the interaction of traditional and digital diplomacy mechanisms, which is especially important in multilateral negotiations, where the importance of information influence and trust is constantly growing (Table 4).

Table 4. Digital Diplomacy Model in Multilateral Negotiations

Component	Tools	Implementation methods	Evaluation indicators	Role in conflict resolution
Institutional	Official diplomacy, international organizations, intergovernmental negotiations	Negotiations, mediation, diplomatic initiatives, sanctions policy	Diplomatic influence	Formation of strategic positions, determination of the interests of the parties
Network	Embassies, consulates, diplomatic missions, international missions	Bilateral contracts, participation in international forums, diplomatic missions	Diplomatic Network	Coordination of negotiations, support of communication between the parties
Digital	Social media (X, Facebook), digital platforms, online diplomacy, digital campaigns	Digital communications, public diplomacy, information campaigns, strategic communications	Digital diplomacy level, global visibility	Influence on public opinion, formation of the information environment of negotiations
Image	Soft Power, Cultural Diplomacy, International Projects, Country Brand	Cultural programs, international initiatives, humanitarian diplomacy	Soft power level	Building trust, reducing tensions, and promoting trade-offs
Informational	Media, Information Policy, Digital Security	Information influence, counter-propaganda, narrative management	Information freedom	Ensuring transparency, countering information threats

Source: Created by the authors.

The proposed model demonstrates that the effectiveness of digital diplomacy in multilateral negotiations is determined by the complex interaction of institutional, network, digital and image components. The institutional level forms the strategic basis of negotiations, determining the positions

of states and their interests. The network component provides organizational support for the negotiation process through diplomatic missions, which is especially important for maintaining an ongoing dialogue between the parties. The digital component significantly expands the possibilities of influence, allowing states to quickly respond to events and shape international public opinion, which is confirmed by the high indicators of digital diplomacy of the leading countries. The image component, in particular "soft power", is a determining factor of trust, which directly affects the willingness of the parties to compromise. Thus, countries that combine strong diplomatic influence, a developed diplomatic network, active digital communication and a high level of trust demonstrate the highest efficiency in resolving political conflicts. This confirms that digital diplomacy does not replace traditional diplomacy, but integrates with it, forming a comprehensive mechanism of international influence.

6. Conclusions

Summarizing the results of the study, we can conclude that digitalization has led to a profound transformation of international relations, where the diplomatic influence of states is now determined not only by the scale of their physical presence but also by the ability to integrate traditional tools with digital communications. The analysis of the dynamics of indicators indicates the preservation of institutional leadership of China and the United States, but at the same time demonstrates the rapid strengthening of regional centres of influence, in particular India and Turkey, which effectively use digital strategies to compensate for the limitations of traditional resources.

It has been found that the main factor of success in the digital environment is not just the technical coverage of the audience, but the quality and effectiveness of information messages, which directly correlates with the level of "soft power" and international trust in the state. The proposed generalized model of digital diplomacy proves that the most effective in resolving political conflicts are balanced strategies that provide synergy between institutional weight, an extensive network of representative offices and an active position in the global information space.

Thus, digital diplomacy appears as a complex mechanism of symbolic power, where the successful implementation of national interests in multilateral negotiations depends on the ability of the state to form a favourable information environment and broadcast convincing narratives that reduce conflict tensions.

The practical significance of the results obtained lies in the possibility of using the proposed model by public authorities, diplomatic missions and international organizations to increase the effectiveness of participation in multilateral negotiations. In particular, the results of the study can be applied to develop digital diplomacy strategies, optimize communication channels, increase the level of international trust and form a positive image of the state in the global information space. In addition, the model can be used as an analytical tool to assess the positions of states in international conflicts and determine directions for strengthening their diplomatic potential.

Prospects for further research are related to an in-depth analysis of the impact of digital diplomacy on the processes of resolving international conflicts, in particular, assessing its effectiveness in crises, information wars and global instability.

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