Digital Diplomacy:
The Evolution of a New Era in Diplomacy

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Abstract:

As digitalisation begins to form its importance in the world of diplomacy, it is now said that- 'Data is the new oil'. Leaders of the world are embracing digital technology. Digital diplomacy is the practice of diplomats communicating with one another and the public through digital means of communication. Through the use of hashtags, leaders are promoting government campaigns and disseminating data and analysis in times of crisis. The uses of digital diplomacy are thus multifold and diplomats are constantly coming up with new strategies for using it to further their goals.

This paper, thus, explores the concept of digital diplomacy, focusing on the use of digital media in the field of diplomacy and how countries, especially India, are utilising these tools in the furtherance of their foreign policies. It examines the opportunities and challenges these media offer for diplomatic activities and how the digital media affects core diplomatic functions of representation, communication and relationship management.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy can be seen in all aspects of life. Everything we witness around us has a diplomacy of its own. Defence diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, trade diplomacy, medicine diplomacy and the most recent is vaccine diplomacy. One of these is **digital diplomacy**, which came with the advent of the internet and continues to develop in its nature and scope.

The Internet is often given the prestige of being called a stalwart of greater interconnectedness across the world. The advent of digitalisation no doubt has transformed the international community today. It has redefined how diplomacy is conducted and has emerged as an undisputed medium for diplomatic communication. Diplomacy has always had to adapt to the novel communication formats of its environment. The capacity to gather and disseminate information to large audiences at virtually unknown rates has given policymakers and government agencies new opportunities to communicate their messages and advance their political agendas outside of the traditional channels in a world where everyone is becoming increasingly connected.

Although the conventional form of conducting diplomacy remains essential, but, in today's interconnected world, individuals and organisations—rather than merely countries—play a significant role in international affairs. The Internet revolution has affected all aspects of life, including International relations and global governance. This revolution has also transformed diplomacy as a tool of foreign policy. **This has led to what is referred to as *Digital Diplomacy or DigiPlomacy.***

The distinguishing characteristics of this ***twenty-first century statecraft*** lead the way for deeper changes that will eventually reshape all of foreign policy by broadening its purview, substituting new instruments, and altering its values. It has been suggested that the adoption of digital diplomacy has changed the ways in which diplomats manage information, engage in public diplomacy, prepare strategies, engage in international talks, or even manage crises.

This paper looks at a pertinent question- **How does digitalisation really affect the world of global diplomacy as well as international relations?**

It would not be questionable to say that the recent spread of digital initiatives in foreign ministries is often argued to be nothing less than a revolution in the practice of diplomacy.

Modern diplomacy is in the midst of a process of change, this paper, thus, aims to discuss:
1. The meaning of digital diplomacy and how it evolved as a practice
2. A case study on India's response to digitalisation
3. How digital cooperation is emerging in the international arena
4. Some challenges faced by the digital revolution of diplomacy

II.   <u>DIGITAL DIPLOMACY</u>: Meaning And Evolution of the Practice

The importance of digital diplomacy is based on **the usage of ICT, the internet and social media, which at the same time represent its base, for the strengthening of diplomatic relations**. Therefore, knowledge about the role and importance of digital diplomacy is indispensable.

The search for a definition of digital diplomacy must start by examining the changes that occurred to both the definition and practice of diplomacy during the 20th century.

Digitalisation frequently starts with societal as well as personal changes. For instance, WhatsApp groups were first used by ambassadors in Geneva to coordinate family holidays. They soon discovered that they could also coordinate diplomatic actions in UN organisations using WhatsApp. In Geneva, the EU currently runs a lively WhatsApp group that is used to plan actions, prepare resolutions, and mobilise support at UN meetings. Similar to this, British diplomats started using Facebook to stay in touch with far-off acquaintances. They rapidly understood that Facebook might be used to keep in touch with far-off Diasporas.

Global diplomatic practice has seen significant changes as a result of the ICT revolution. Social media has developed as a platform for disseminating uncensored public information among users in nations. For instance, social media helped Arab Spring activists by enabling many to connect and share information, as well as, in certain circumstances, by facilitating the planning of actual protests. Thus, we see a growing relevance of non-state actors on the global arena with the advent of digitalisation.

Today's diplomats employ digital tools in many aspects of their work, including communication, policy analysis, and representation and negotiation. The use of social media for public diplomacy (such as Twitter diplomacy) is the most prominent, but as will be seen during the course of the paper, digital tools have a much more significant impact on other aspects of diplomacy.

II.1 <u>EVOLUTION OF THE PRACTICE OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY</u>

The development of email, the widespread use of websites by diplomatic missions and international organisations, the introduction of laptop computers and Wi-Fi in conference rooms, and most recently, the widespread use of social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs can all be summed up as 20+ years of e-diplomacy. Each new e-tool that was released posed a challenge to conventional methods of operation and provided new chances for diplomats and diplomacy.

In the 1860s, on receiving the first telegraph message, a British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, predicted the "End of Diplomacy". However, little did he know that the world of diplomacy would survive as well as adapt to not only telegraph but also the subsequent technological advancements, including the recent advent of social media.

Diplomats' usage of digital technologies is shaped by long-term digitalisation processes that are influenced by offline occurrences. Given the claim that virtual environments can assist diplomats get around the restrictions of traditional diplomacy, diplomats started experimenting with virtual diplomacy.

The first ever global diplomatic session with online participation was held by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in 1963. Since then, remote participation has been a possibility for more open and inclusive international negotiations.

Two early developments in digital diplomacy occurred in 1992. Civil society activists utilised emails and mailing lists for the first time during the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit to coordinate their stance during lobbying and talks. The Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies created the first Unit for Computer Applications in Diplomacy at the same time in Malta. Later, the group became the DiploFoundation[1], which has spent the last 20+ years researching and instructing thousands of diplomats on how the internet and computers affect diplomacy.

As an illustration, Sweden became the first country to open its virtual Embassy in Second Life in 2008. Any computer user throughout the world could access this embassy, overcoming time and space restrictions. In order to make up for the lack of an actual diplomatic presence in Teheran, America also opened a virtual Embassy in 2011.

The **Arab Spring** followed in 2010, which compelled ambassadors to use social media to engage with online users and keep an eye on online discourse in order to foresee upcoming shocks to the international system.

In the present times, Covid-19 has once again changed digital procedures. Diplomats increasingly blended offline diplomacy with virtual summits using Zoom or comparable tools. The pandemic led to the advent of what is called- 'Zoom Diplomacy'.

Thus, we can see that **digital practices change due to offline occurrences**. However, digitalization also comes from trial and error. Practices are altered following successes and failures.
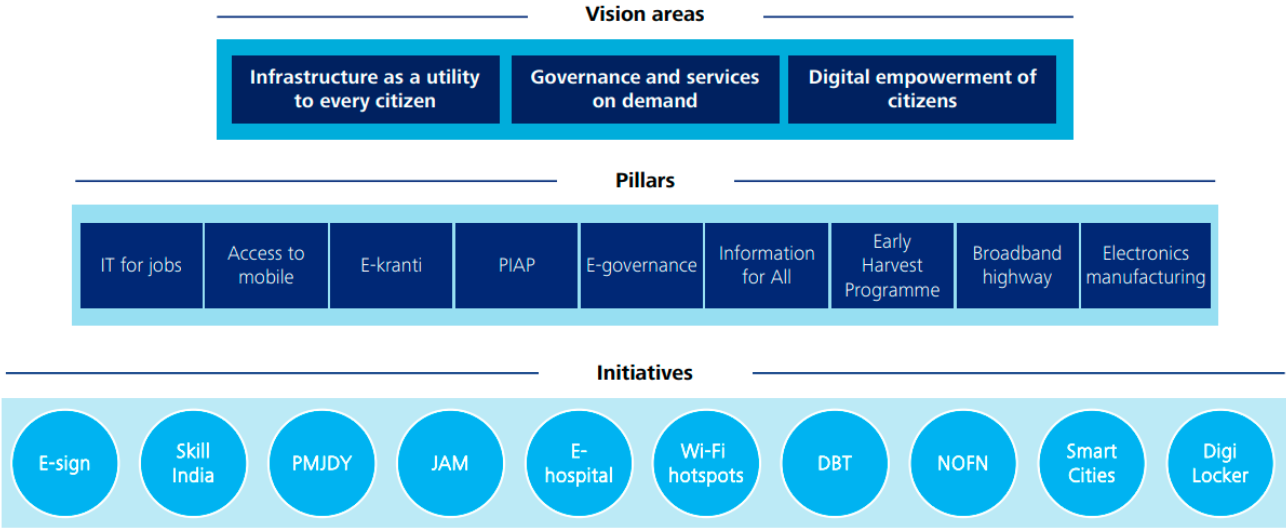
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[1] https://www.diplomacy.edu/

III. INDIA'S TRYST WITH 'DIGITAL' DESTINY : *A Case Study On India's Digital Diplomacy*

It is often said that what you see depends on where you stand. Looking at the world from India, digitalization appears to have inspired Ministries and Departments to start initiatives and projects that ensure everyone has access to the internet, paving the way for a $1 trillion digital economy. Entrepreneurship has benefited from digitalization, which has also improved access to public services like health and education. By providing citizens with prompt, transparent services, ensuring their participation, and providing them with a supportive atmosphere for connection and growth, it has helped India revolutionise governance. Access to technology that is revolutionary, inexpensive, and sustainable is another crucial quality.

India is no stranger to digital diplomacy. Indian diplomacy went digital when the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) posted its first tweet in 2010. With its newly created public diplomacy division, **MEA quickly became a digital leader within the Indian government**.

At the same time, *domestically*, the initiatives of the Digital India programme fit in with the nine pillars of the program's flagship efforts that is shown in the schematic image below:

SOURCE: Deloitte & ASSOCHAM joint official report
(https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/technology-media-telecommunications/in-tmt-empowering-indian-citizens-through-technology-noexp.pdf)

These programs will alter governance and finally realise the goal of inclusive growth in a way that is virtually revolutionary. The majority of the efforts have been successful, at least in the beginning. How policymakers, the executive branch, and citizens respond to the different obstacles that arise at various points in time will determine how successful they are in the future.

In this paper, we will be discussing in detail the effects of digitalisation on two major sectors in India:

1. Tourism
2. Trade

III.1. <u>TOURISM</u>

Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity affecting diplomacy in the present times. Each year, thousands of tourists travel to various parts of India, making it a famous tourist destination. Tourism is used as a proficient tool to promote Indian culture across the world, thus becoming a significant part of India's soft power diplomacy.

Tourism in India is also important for the country's economy and is growing rapidly.

To improve the way it serves its inhabitants, the government has launched an **E-Governance program in the tourism industry.** The government's tourist industry has used tech-savvy solutions through E-Government to deliver its range of services, including widespread distribution of information about tourist destinations, gathering and responding to tourist feedback, online reservations for travel to various tourist destinations, making it much easier for them to provide their services to both domestic and foreign tourists.

Here are some of the examples how E-Governance has been implemented in tourism sector:-
- Official Websites of the Tourism sector of the Government like Ministry of Tourism, which disseminates information related to tourism destinations in India.
- Online booking facilities for booking tours and hotels online through Official Website(s) of the Tourism sector of the Government.
- Development of Online Travel Portals & Mobile Apps for easily accessing all the services online.
- Use of social media to promote and publicise the Pilgrimage sites, Tourist Spots and events
- Adapting New Technologies Like 360 Degree Virtual Tours and VR Enabled Videos to enable users to have a virtual experience of the tourists spots without physically visiting it.
- Integration of tourist spots with Google Maps for easy navigation.
- Integration of Payment Gateway with online booking portal for easy Payments and many more.

Technological development has made it possible for the tourism sector to offer travellers an improved travel experience, which has increased the industry and elevated it to one of the top revenue-generating industries.
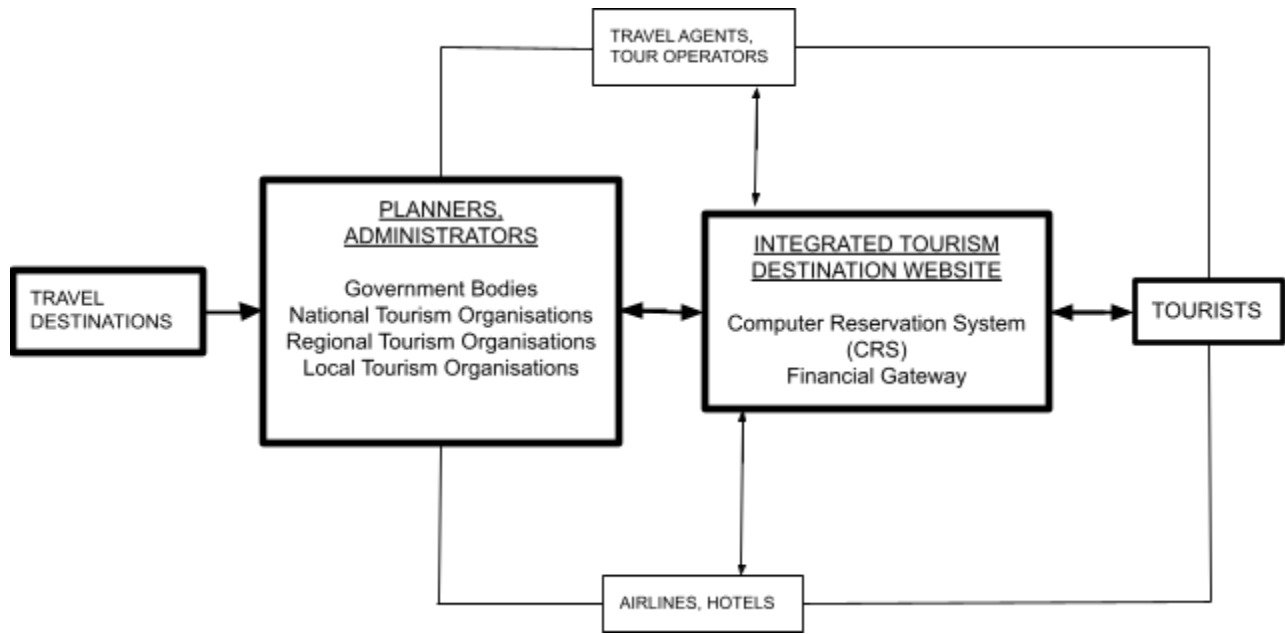
FIGURE 1: Flowchart explaining the use of digital resources in tourism sector

Some of the e-tourism activities performed by the main services are: e-booking, e-Hospitality, e-Travel agency, e-Tour operators, e-Visa and even e-Passport in the coming days.

Through these services, the following major stakeholders interactions were distinguished:

- Governments to Governments
- Governments to Citizens
- Governments to Businesses
- Government to Employees
- Governments to Visitors

Thus, it can be concluded that the use of digital resources has helped travellers acquire hassle-free travel related services as well as benefited the tourism industry by generating income.

III.2. TRADE

The number of online transactions between citizens and the government is dramatically increasing in India. The number of such e-transactions has grown by more than 200% in 2 years: from 840 million in 2013 to 2580 million in 2015[2].

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[2] Refer to Deloitte, ASSOCHAM India. (2015). E-governance and Digital India, Empowering Indian Citizens through Technology.

The exponential increase of e-transactions over a three-year period demonstrates that people quickly adopt new technologies as they become accessible. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government to establish the necessary infrastructure and regulations to enable effective economic digitalization, which will boost the effectiveness of digital governance.

India's lower-income states are narrowing the digital divide, and by 2025, the country could be fully connected. More development is possible. The **economic value** that India's digital revolution could produce for consumers, businesses, microenterprises, farmers, the government, employees, and other stakeholders is likely to **grow** as it takes shape.

Thus, digitalisation of India seems to have mobilised Ministries and Departments to launch schemes and projects ensuring Digital Inclusion of all, leading towards the '**Trillion Dollar Digital Economy**'.

India is becoming a significant player in the digital economy. The volume and growth of its digital economy have now surpassed those of the majority of other nations by a variety of important criteria, including internet connections and app downloads. The public and private sectors are moving quickly to establish high-speed connectivity throughout the nation and to offer the tools and services needed to link Indian customers and businesses to the internet.

What does this enhanced connectedness mean in economic terms? And how fast and successfully will India be able to use digital technologies to its advantage?

Digital technologies have the potential to fundamentally alter how people and businesses conduct day-to-day operations.:
   1. by enabling connections between individuals to facilitate collaboration, commerce, and information sharing
   2. by allowing businesses to automate routine operations to increase productivity
   3. and by giving organisational leaders the resources they need to analyse data, formulate insights, and make better decisions.

India's digital economy is expected to touch $1 trillion by the year 2025. It is anticipated that India would be a $10 trillion economy by 2030 and half of it would be the digital economy.

Some initiatives by the government can be seen in this arena:

   I. **Digital payments ecosystem and the advent of FinTech**: The growth of the digital payments ecosystem has had an impact on the economy. One of the most widely used digital payment options for sending, receiving, and paying for various utility bills is the BHIM app.
   A world-class FinTech hub was suggested to be built in Gandhinagar's Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) in the Union Budget for 2021–2022. In order to promote the adoption of digital payments, the budgetary assistance for the digital payment ecosystem that was previously announced will continue in 2022–2023. In the last few years, India's Fintech industry has witnessed a tremendous development. The

combined valuation of India's fintech industry is set to surge to $150 billion in the next three years.

II. **E-commerce**: E-commerce has revolutionised how businesses operate in India. By 2025, the Indian e-commerce market is anticipated to reach US$ 188 billion. An increase in internet and smartphone usage is largely responsible for the industry's expansion. The 'Digital India' campaign led to a considerable increase in internet connections in 2021, reaching 830 million.

With a turnover of $50 billion in 2020, India became the eighth-largest market for e-commerce, trailing France and a position ahead of Canada.

III. **Employment & Entrepreneurship**: In order to provide local youth with employment opportunities and ensure balanced regional growth of the information technology and IT enabled services (IT/ITES) sector in each state, the establishment of BPOs in small towns has been encouraged. Today, more than 100 BPO units have opened up in roughly 100 small towns throughout India.

To provide affordable access to digital services, particularly in rural regions, a huge network of more than 3.06 lakh digital service delivery centres, dispersed among 2.10 lakh Gram Panchayats, has been established throughout the nation. Through the creation of 10 lakh jobs and the encouragement of rural entrepreneurs, of whom 54,800 are women[3]. These centres have also contributed to the empowerment of the socially marginalised.

Besides, according to McKinsey Global Institute's estimates, the productivity unlocked by the digital economy could create 60 million to 65 million jobs by 2025, many of them requiring functional digital skills.

Thus, India's digital story is one of digital empowerment and digital inclusion for digital transformation based on technology that is affordable, inclusive and equitable. The Digital India Programme is paving the road for a technologically advanced future and achieving rapid growth in our digital economy, which is expected to reach a trillion-dollar level by 2025.

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[3] Data from MeitY, GOI report on India's Trillion-Dollar Digital Opportunity

IV.   DIGITAL COOPERATION

For present and future involvement in the digital society to be more inclusive, there is an urgent need in the region to provide meaningful digital possibilities to all, especially to older people and youth, women and girls, and marginalised persons. The main areas of cooperation are closing the digital divide and developing new digital opportunities through improved digital connectivity infrastructure, digital technologies and apps, and big data usage.

In India today, artificial intelligence (AI) has lately made inroads into a number of sectors- including defence, agriculture, healthcare, the economy, and governance. The toolbox for AI in foreign policy includes public diplomacy, policymaking, and multilateral and bilateral cooperation. AI is now a widely used tool in international diplomacy in fields like cyber-warfare, cyber-security, and keeping track of agreements or treaties that have been signed.

Through MEA, the Indian government recently introduced new efforts to enhance AI. For instance, India and Finland have decided to investigate working together in fields involving cutting-edge technology like artificial intelligence and quantum computing. Additionally, the Indian government has planned to advance its technological upgrades through the use of artificial intelligence (AI), advanced data analytics, etc. in collaboration with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), as part of the Passport Seva Programme (PSP), and has planned to implement e-passports by 2022–2023. However, to be a significant leader in AI, India must make a lot of progress.

India could contribute to emergent technology alliances in **three ways**:

1. It should endeavor to establish **new regulations and standards for technologies** like artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and 5G, which are essential for deciding on a uniform regulatory approach or coordinating efforts among governments.

2. To defend local innovations and technical ecosystems against challenges presented by the world, countries must make sure that **domestic laws governing the screening of technology investments and export controls are compatible with key partners.** For instance, India has continuously advocated for international data standards that strengthen the position of the Indian state. *At the 2019 Osaka G20 Summit, India took a position against the Osaka Track, which called for data exchange between major economies.*

3. Countries should **strive to strengthen economic and technological collaboration** in fields like AI or quantum computing, depending on threat assessments. By establishing norms that control the creation of technologies and their subsequent use, it is vital to strengthen the supply chains, innovation clusters, and technical ecosystems that already exist.

Some of the digital cooperation initiatives taken by India are:

IV.1. NEST AS A NEW DIVISION IN MEA:
Modern technologies have a significant impact on foreign policy, international relations, national security, and the place of India in the international community.

The Ministry of External Affairs made an important change by creating the new division on **New and Emerging Strategic Technologies (NEST)**.

The NEST division serves as the prominent point in MEA for issues concerning new and emerging technologies regarding the foreign policymaking of India and negotiations that defend the country's interests in several multilateral platforms such as the G20, United Nations (UN) or World Trade Organisation (WTO).

As a result, NEST in this context can further cooperate by developing more appropriate ideas and signing bilateral or multilateral agreements with other nations and regional organisations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS).

In multilateral and plurilateral frameworks, NEST will negotiate technology governance guidelines, standards, and architecture that are appropriate for India's circumstances. By utilising the talent pool already in place and assisting foreign service officers in functional specialisation in various technology sectors, it would help create HR capacity inside the ministry for technology diplomacy activities. Additionally, it will aid in evaluating the consequences of emerging technologies and technology-based resources for international law and foreign policy.

IV.2. PAN-AFRICAN NETWORK:
India has established a fibre-optic network as part of the Pan African e-Network Project to offer satellite access, tele-medicine, and tele-education to countries in Africa. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, a former Indian president, conceptualised the project, which was publicly launched on February 26th, 2009.

In order to provide the people of Africa with access to the resources and knowledge of some of the greatest universities and super-specialty hospitals in India, the project's goal was to establish substantial links for tele-education and telemedicine, internet, video-conferencing, and VoIP services. The GOI has properly outfitted the receiving centres, and Indian experts have taught the local staff there.

In addition to providing VVIP connectivity between the Heads of State of the African countries through a highly secure closed satellite network, the project is equipped to support e-governance, e-commerce, infotainment, resource mapping, and meteorological and other services in the African countries.

IV.3. INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY 2023 AND THE DIGITAL AGENDA:
India will inherit one of the most challenging contemporary policy issues when it assumes the G20 presidency in 2023. This challenge is digitalization. Digitalization has evolved from a minor policy priority on the periphery of global politics to taking centre stage on the strategic agenda of the G20 presidencies. The

importance of digitalization has increased to the point where it is one of the three major pillars of the Indonesian presidency, along with sustainable energy transition and global health architecture. However, it can be said that India is in a good position to advance its agenda in 2023, given its flagship "Digital India" program.

IV.4.   INDIA-VIETNAM AGREEMENT IN IT SECTOR:
In addition to demonstrating resilience and maturity in the face of this epidemic, India's IT services sector, Digital Government initiatives, and the rapidly rising digital startup environment have become paradigms for other developing and less developed nations. On December 16, 2021, the two Ministers signed a document extending the MoU between India and Vietnam for cooperation in the area of information technology. The MoU aims to promote active exchange and collaboration in the ICT sector between business entities, governments, institutes working to create capacity, and other public and private organisations of the two nations.

IV.5.   E-HEALTH COOPERATION:
Telemedicine services have been provided by the Pan-African E-Network, which is financed by India, since 2009. Additionally, it links African counterparts of Indian hospitals and educational institutions. India has also become a desirable location for "medical tourism" owing to its cutting-edge medical facilities that provide services at affordable prices.

This portrays India's active "medical diplomacy". In the foreseeable future, Africa's dependence on a low-cost supply of necessary medications along with an affordable Covid-19 vaccination is only going to grow.

India appears to be prepared to share its digital expertise in order to improve and lower the cost of access to universal healthcare.

IV.6.   India- ASEAN Digital Connectivity:
There is a great deal of opportunity for cooperation in the post-COVID-19 era in the fields of fintech, artificial intelligence, and cyber security. The need for improved physical and digital connectivity was emphasised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 17th ASEAN-India summit in November 2020. He also restated India's offer of a US$ 1 billion line of credit for ASEAN connectivity. ASEAN and India are among the fastest-growing markets for e-commerce with a projected volume of US$ 90 billion and US$ 165.5 billion, respectively by 2025.[4]

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[4] Refer toRIS publication of AIC Commentary No.2, February 2020. E-commerce and Digital Connectivity: Unleashing the Potential for Greater India-ASEAN Integration.

V.   CHALLENGES

There have been several obstacles and a dark side to digital diplomacy that has led to grave consequences for the international order in recent years. The difficulty that government representatives, diplomats and national leaders have in pursuing digital diplomacy is that their **roles have altered recently**. Prior to the advent of digitalization, the principal duties of the leaders included representing their governments outside the country and reporting back to their countries only upon their return. However, the development of social media has made it possible for anyone to produce and consume information anytime.

The need to distinguish between right and wrong is usually the biggest challenge. Cyber-attacks have become a critical area for all technology-focused organisations in India. Several Indian government websites were vulnerable to hacking and information leaks over the past years.

Thus, some prominent challenges noticed in the arena of digital diplomacy are:

V.1. **Threat to State Security and Censorship**
Social media's egalitarian and open nature makes it challenging for governments to censor content believed to be dangerous to national security. This presents a significant challenge to diplomacy and foreign relations, which demand secrecy and control over information.The concept of "secrecy" in diplomacy has been overtaken by the advent of social media. It is now difficult for diplomats to escape the public spotlight, and they can no longer be certain that their opinions won't be revealed to audiences they have never intended.

V.2. **Misinformation, Fake News and the lack of digital ethics**
The proliferation of digital tools such as social media has caused a crisis of trust in information on the Internet. The internet also offers a ton of information with suspicious origins. The information that is exchanged on social media is marked by defamation and fabrication. Digital ethics and digital frustration are interrelated. What is permitted and prohibited in the online distribution? What is hate speech, and what types of speech can be covered under the freedom of speech? Ministries dealing with foreign affairs and diplomats are therefore essential for advancing a worldwide dialogue on concerns of digital ethics, along with civil society.

V.3. **Difficulties in Identifying and Targeting an Audience**
Targeting audiences effectively is a difficulty for modern diplomats. It is imperative that diplomats understand who they are targeting, what messages to send, and when to promote a certain message. Instead of taking a uniform approach, countries must perform market research to determine the most effective media tools, messaging, and target audience. Any diplomat who's using social media is partly trying to influence abroad and partly at home.

V.4. **Emergence of Non-State actors in the International Arena**

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

V.5. The culture of anonymity

Anyone can pretend to be someone else and cause damage to certain persons. Complicated situations might result because contradicting or even false information is published in an anonymous society. The ability of leaders to handle the ensuing crises may be hampered by this kind of pervasive disinformation on the internet. Social media platforms must update their pages to make it evident whether a post originates from a reliable source in order to prevent misuse.

V.6. The Technical and Digital Divide

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

V.7. Lack of Cyber Security and Privacy

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

Controlling information is no longer successful in the ICT era; instead, success is in knowing how to use information effectively. Because the reputations of states and their leaders may suffer

when private information is made public, this might have an immediate and significant effect on how world affairs are being led. Cyber security has, thus, reached the top of the international diplomatic and political agendas of the UN, NATO, ITU, OECD, OSCE, Commonwealth, G7 and G20. National cyber security plans and associated legislation have been implemented by numerous nations. The majority of the infrastructure and internet services are privately owned, with operators dispersed throughout the numerous international countries, which further complicates matters.

Therefore, we see that globalisation of information encourages connections, information about norms elsewhere, also comparing policies and best practices notes. However, new communication technologies have had a profound impact on negative events as well.

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

In conclusion, it is noticed that **the internet multiplies the number of voices and interests engaged in developing international policies, complicating international decision-making and eroding the country's exclusive authority over the process.**

VI.   CONCLUSION: A WAY FORWARD

Though the basic form of interaction can be seen as social media, defining digital diplomacy purely within the scope of social media is not sustainable. The definition is already evolving as big data advancements and the widespread adoption of technology devices boost the potential of "digital".

In the near future, diplomats will have a wider range of digital tools at their disposal, enabling them to employ data science to undertake intelligent studies to forecast public sentiment and construct models to predict future reactions or creating custom apps for digital diplomacy - the possibilities are endless.

International relations is no longer just the domain of governments and diplomats. Non-state actors like people, businesses, and NGOs are already adopting digital means and becoming more influential and active in influencing world affairs. As new digital tools increasingly allow people to connect, engage and mobilise, we can see a shift to **diplomacy 2.0**—an instant, hierarchy and protocol-free, peer-to-peer (P2P) diplomacy. But there are certain challenges on the way. The crucial subject of global internet governance will need to be resolved in order for this transition to be successful.

Therefore, even though the discussion of digital diplomacy is still in its early stages, it is beginning to become institutionalised.

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