

Digital Diplomacy

What is the issue?

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Social media has empowered citizens, putting diplomats under pervasive public scrutiny.

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What is the present state of diplomacy?

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- The digital age has disrupted traditional diplomacy, forcing diplomats to be less formal and more accessible, reaching out to ordinary people both within and outside their countries.

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- Leaders are often directly in touch with one another and believe, sometimes with good reason, that personal diplomacy may yield more substantive results than diplomats negotiating with one another.

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What is the role of digital media in diplomacy?

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- Diplomacy in the digital age places a premium on the speed of communication.

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- Social media like Facebook and Twitter enable instant dissemination of information and opinions that form around it.

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- Leaders are on Twitter and their comments on events spread instantly and widely.

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- In the digital age, the authority of the state itself has diminished and the diplomat must now represent his people and not just the government.

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- The digital technologies have a premium on secrecy, and have given way to transparency.
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What are the challenges involved?

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- Staying ahead of the information curve may weaken a very integral aspect of diplomacy.
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- Transparency and the involvement of the public and the media have become significantly more salient than before and pose a challenge to effective diplomacy.
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- The digital world is complex and constantly mutating; in a congested area of competing states there are heightened dangers of inter-state conflict.
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- Instant and unmediated reactions can be risky, particularly when inter-state tensions may be high.
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How issues can be addressed?

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- States can remain relevant only if they become the source of expeditious distribution of high quality and reliable information.
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- Diplomats should use the digital tools to get credible information and assessments into the public domain so that misperception and misinformation are minimised.
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- Diplomats must aspire to become critical nodes in networks and not always the most significant and influential component.
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- Modern diplomacy requires mastering the art of networking through different channels.
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- Diplomacy needs to keep abreast of these changes and constantly upgrade

and update the principles and practices of the profession.

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Source: Business Standard

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