

Vinnykova Nataliya Anatoliivna

Public diplomacy in the age of artificial intelligence: between pervasion and control

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Vinnykova Nataliya Anatoliivna
Doctor of Political Sciences,
Associate Professor,
Professor at the Department
of International Relations
Educational and Scientific Institute
“Karazin Institute of International
Relations and Tourism Business”
of V. N. Karazin
Kharkiv National University
Maidan Svobody 4, Kharkiv, Ukraine
ORCID: 0000-0001-5941-7562

This article critically examines the evolving role of artificial intelligence (AI) in shaping public diplomacy strategies, with particular attention to how AI-driven tools and narratives influence foreign public opinion in relation to domestic political contexts. By unpacking the technological, communicative, and normative dimensions of AI-enabled diplomacy, the study contributes to the emerging scholarly discourse on the ethical boundaries of AI in international engagement. The research pursues interrelated objectives: (1) to unveil recent trends in the integration of AI into public diplomacy practices; (2) to explore how top-performing countries in global diplomacy leverage AI technologies, assessing whether their communicative strategies lean toward ethical persuasion or directive messaging.

Methodologically, the study employs a comparative case-study approach, focusing on countries ranked in the top ten of the Global Diplomacy Index. Selected cases are examined through qualitative content analysis of AI-powered public diplomacy tools and messaging strategies. To assess the communicative orientation of these efforts, the research integrates a correlative analysis across three key indices: the Global Diplomacy Index, the Global AI Index, and the Global Democracy Index. By mapping countries' performance across technological capacity, diplomatic reach, and democratic quality, the study identifies patterns in how AI is deployed in international communications.

Findings reveal a complex, non-linear relationship between a nation's political system, its AI capabilities, and its diplomatic standing. While authoritarian regimes strategically deploy AI for narrative control and global influence, democracies emphasize ethical standards and multilateral engagement. The study concludes that AI in public diplomacy is regime-sensitive but not regime-dependent, with success hinging on strategic prioritization and institutional integration rather than democratic maturity alone.

Key words: artificial intelligence, public diplomacy, political regime, communications, public opinion.

Introduction. Artificial intelligence (AI) is swiftly reshaping the way states engage with the global community, in particular implementing public diplomacy. AI equips governments and international non-state actors with the ability to customize messaging for diverse audiences, monitor regional sentiment in real time, and execute precision-driven campaigns. As digital competition grows increasingly global, nations are recognizing AI as a pivotal tool for cultivating international influence and shaping public perception abroad. AI simultaneously enhances traditional public diplomacy instruments – such as cultural outreach and broadcasting – while introducing sophisticated technologies that enable more precisely targeted communication aimed at influencing individual perceptions. A central concern emerging from AI's growing role in international public discourse, and widely debated within academic circles, is whether such advancements align with ethical standards (see AI Mazrouei N. [1], Di Martino L. and Ford H. [4], Walker V. [24]). Given its dual-use nature, AI-driven strategies may serve both persuasive and potentially manipulative purposes, prompting critical reflection on their legitimacy within democratic and normative frameworks. Authoritarian governments, for instance, have embraced AI for mass surveillance, systemic monitoring, and behavioral regulation, creating a repressive model with potential to transcend national boundaries. This exportation of digital authoritarianism threatens to reshape global governance norms and erode democratic resilience. As

the ambiguous role of AI appears increasingly correlated with regime type, its implications for public diplomacy warrant critical reassessment.

The purpose and goals. The article aims to critically examine the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in shaping public diplomacy strategies, exploring how AI-driven tools and narratives frame the public opinion abroad in relevance to domestic political domain. It seeks to unpack the technological, communicative, and normative dimensions of AI-enabled diplomacy and to contribute to the scholarly discourse on the ethical boundaries of AI in international engagement. The related tasks of the research are defined as follows: 1) unveil recent trends in AI-public diplomacy evolution; 2) explore how top-performing countries in global diplomacy leverage AI technologies in public diplomacy, and whether their communicative impact leans toward influence (persuasion) or exhortation (strong, directive messaging).

Methods of research. This research employs a comparative case-analysis methodology, focusing on countries ranked in the top ten of the Global Diplomacy Index [17]. Selected cases are examined through qualitative content analysis of AI-powered public diplomacy tools and messaging strategies. To assess whether these efforts lean toward ethical influence or directive exhortation, the study integrates a correlative analysis across three key indices: the Global Diplomacy Index, the Global AI Index [21], and the Global Democracy Index [9] (see Table 1). By mapping countries' performance across technological capacity, diplomatic

Table 1

The three-fold correlation matrix on AI-driven diplomacy related to country's regime type

Country	Diplomacy Rank	AI Index Rank	Democracy Index Score	Regime Type
China	1	2	2.11	Authoritarian Regime
United States	2	1	7.85	Flawed Democracy
Türkiye	3	34	4.26	Hybrid Regime
Japan	4	11	8.48	Full Democracy
France	5	5	7.99	Flawed Democracy
Russia	6	31	2.03	Authoritarian Regime
United Kingdom	7	4	8.34	Full Democracy
Germany	8	7	8.73	Full Democracy
Italy	9	24	7.58	Flawed Democracy
Brazil	10	30	6.49	Flawed Democracy

reach, and democratic quality, the research identifies patterns in how AI is deployed in international communication.

Results. Artificial intelligence is already being leveraged to strengthen multiple facets of public diplomacy. However, its integration into this domain presents notable challenges. Ethical concerns, such as ranging from algorithmic bias and data privacy to issues of transparency, complicate the formulation of coherent policy frameworks and regulatory standards, particularly within governmental bodies spearheading public diplomacy initiatives. Despite inherent challenges, AI presents substantial opportunities to enhance the reach and efficiency of public diplomacy operations, particularly benefiting organizations with constrained resources.

A primary advantage of AI lies in its capacity for rapid content generation. AI-powered tools enable the swift and high-volume production of diverse materials, including press releases, emails, social media posts, speeches, and diplomatic articles. This automation allows diplomats to reallocate valuable time towards strategic planning and direct relationship building, areas that demand human nuanced interaction. Furthermore, AI significantly advances sentiment analysis and strategic messaging. Diplomats are increasingly leveraging AI to monitor public sentiment across social media and news platforms in real-time. This real-time analysis facilitates the crafting of highly targeted messages, enables rapid responses to disinformation campaigns, and supports the development of adaptive engagement strategies informed by audience reactions. For instance, U.S. embassies have deployed AI to identify the proliferation of authoritarian narratives, allowing them to adjust their outreach efforts accordingly [22].

AI offers crucial support in overcoming language barriers and enhancing translation for global communications. For example, the U.S. Department of State uses AI tools like Northstar for digital and social media analytics [5]. In an innovative public diplomacy initiative, Alexander Hunt at the U.S. Embassy in Guinea used generative AI (Leonardo, Runway) to

produce an animated graphic novel about an African prince, an effort that won the 2023 Ameri Prize for Innovation [20].

China promotes open-source AI collaboration as a counter-model to Western proprietary systems, framing it as more inclusive and accessible. This approach is part of China's diplomatic effort to lead global AI governance discussions, especially among Global South nations. Through its Digital Silk Road initiative, China exports AI technologies – such as facial recognition, smart city systems, and language processing tools – to partner countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. These technologies are often bundled with diplomatic messaging and training programs, positioning China as a tech enabler and governance model. Chinese platforms like Baidu's ERNIE Bot, Alibaba's Qwen, DeepSeek, Moonshot (Kimi K2) series are used to generate multilingual content.

State-backed outlets, such as Xinhua, increasingly use AI to automate news translation, sentiment analysis, and audience targeting. AI helps these media arms adapt content for different cultural contexts while maintaining ideological consistency, enhancing China's soft power reach. Notably, the Beijing-based firm GoLaxy developed an AI tool called GoPro, which can monitor millions of social media posts daily across platforms such as Weibo, Facebook, and X. This tool constructs psychographic profiles and dynamically adapts persuasive content to shape public discourse, particularly during periods of political instability [19].

Turkish institutions use AI to monitor global social media platforms (especially X, formerly Twitter) to analyze public sentiment toward Türkiye's foreign policy and cultural initiatives. Enables real-time adjustment of diplomatic messaging and counters disinformation during crises or international negotiations [18]. Türkiye collaborates with Turkic states to develop AI-based multilingual translation tools that support Turkish, Azerbaijani, Kazakh, and other regional languages. AI Promotes cultural affinity and shared narratives across Eurasia, reinforcing Türkiye's soft power through linguistic diplomacy.

During regional conflicts or humanitarian crises, Türkiye has used AI to track narrative shifts and deploy targeted diplomatic responses [7].

Japan's use of AI in public diplomacy with other countries is both strategic and values-driven – blending technological leadership with soft power. Japan actively uses AI to create and adapt content for international audiences as part of its public diplomacy strategy. The Japan Foundation has piloted AI translation tools to adapt Japanese literature, arts, and educational materials for global audiences. Japanese creators and institutions use AI tools like Runway ML, Adobe Premiere Pro (AI features), and voice generators to produce multilingual educational videos; automated social media content; interactive museum tours and cultural showcases [16]. These tools help Japan tailor its messaging to diverse international audiences while maintaining high production quality.

AI itself has become a subject of diplomatic negotiation, especially around ethics, governance, and risk management. France is emerging as a global leader in using artificial intelligence to shape its public and cultural diplomacy, blending ethical governance, multilingual outreach, and creative innovation. During the AI Summit, France hosted a cultural weekend at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Conciergerie featured interactive AI experiences for the public; explored how AI transforms storytelling, heritage, and artistic creation and attracted 3,000+ international participants, including students and artists [6, p. 5]. In partnership with Hugging Face, France launched a public repository to evaluate AI models in French and to improve multilingual AI performance as well as to support international developers working in Francophone regions. The ultimate goal of this programme is to promote French language and culture through AI-enhanced tools [10].

Russia's use of artificial intelligence to communicate with international audiences is primarily focused on information operations, strategic messaging, and digital influence campaigns. While some initiatives are framed as technological innovation, many documented examples reveal how AI is deployed to shape perceptions, amplify narratives, and manipulate public opinion abroad. According to Ukraine's Center for Countering Disinformation, since early 2025, Russia has conducted 191 AI-powered information operations that have reached over 84.5 million views. These campaigns utilize sophisticated techniques, including creating realistic but fabricated videos known as deepfakes, which feature AI-generated faces or voices. Other methods involve overlaying authentic footage with synthetic voices or additional frames, as well as producing AI-generated clips with fake captions and logos from trusted media outlets. Additionally, Russian propaganda networks have reportedly infiltrated popular AI chatbots, prompting them to repeat false narratives [3].

The United Kingdom's National AI Strategy emphasizes using AI for resilience and global influence, positioning diplomacy as a key domain for strategic AI deployment [12]. The UK is leveraging artificial intelligence as a tool for international engagement to bolster diplomatic relationships with nations in the Middle East and North Africa, including Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. AI-driven technologies are deployed to analyze regional sentiment and customize diplomatic communications. This strategic application of AI also supports the Abraham Accords, serving to counterbalance China's growing regional influence. Specific applications include the use of predictive analytics for anticipating diplomatic opportunities and the implementation of AI-enhanced platforms for strategic communication [23]. Another example can be addressed the programme, that follows a «Scan > Pilot > Scale» model to identify promising AI tools for storytelling, digital archives, and interactive diplomacy experiences [13].

Germany's approach to using AI in public diplomacy is grounded in transparency, democratic values, and strategic foresight. Through partnerships with the EU and Global South, it advocates for inclusive digital governance; ethical AI standards; countering authoritarian uses of technology [11]. The Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa) commissioned a study on the impact of AI in international cultural relations, in particular it explores how AI can enhance creative collaboration across border and support automated translation tools to facilitate intercultural dialogue [14]. Projects funded by German ministries and research institutes use AI to digitize and restore historical archives and artworks and translate and annotate cultural texts for global audiences. Germany's approach is not just about showcasing technology – it's about using AI to build bridges, foster understanding, and amplify cultural voices in a responsible and inclusive way.

Italy has been using AI in public diplomacy to analyze social media and online content to gauge public sentiment and effectively communicate Italy's stance on international issues. Italy has begun integrating artificial intelligence into its cultural diplomacy efforts in several creative and strategic ways. Italian Cultural Institutes abroad have hosted virtual art exhibitions enhanced by AI-generated multilingual narration. These experiences allow global audiences to explore Italian heritage interactively, with AI adapting content to local cultural contexts. The *IT Out OFF* initiative, performed by Italian Cultural Institute in Berlin, uses AI tools to promote contemporary Italian art internationally [15]. AI helps curate personalized digital experiences and analyze audience engagement across platforms.

Brazil has modernized its digital presence, using AI-driven sentiment analysis to monitor international reactions to Brazil's foreign policy [2]. These tools

help tailor messaging across platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube, especially during global events such as COP summits or cultural festivals. A 2024 study by researchers at PUCRS (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul) explored how ChatGPT could be used to simulate cultural diplomacy dialogues, focusing on Brazilian identity, music, and international perception [8]. Brazil's strategy for using artificial intelligence in public diplomacy is emerging as strategic with a clear emphasis on soft power, digital modernization, and Global South leadership.

Taken together, the comparative overview of ten states – spanning authoritarian regimes, flawed and full democracies, and hybrid systems – reveals a diverse yet patterned landscape of AI deployment in public diplomacy. The correlation matrix (Table 1.) highlights that high diplomatic performance does not always coincide with democratic governance or advanced AI infrastructure. Instead, strategic intent, institutional adaptability, and geopolitical positioning often shape how AI tools are integrated into diplomatic practice. This nuanced interplay sets the stage for broader reflections on the regime-sensitive nature of AI-driven diplomacy and its implications for global communication norms, which are explored in the following conclusions.

Conclusions. This analysis of AI in public diplomacy reveals a complex, non-linear relationship between a nation's political system, its AI capabilities, and its international diplomatic standing. The findings suggest that the efficacy of AI-driven public diplomacy is not solely determined by a country's democratic maturity or technological superiority. Instead, success is contingent upon the strategic prioritization and institutional integration of AI into foreign policy frameworks.

Full democracies pair strong democratic credentials with solid AI and diplomacy rankings, prioritizing ethics, transparency, and multilateralism though often at the expense of rapid innovation in strategic messaging. Flawed democracies show robust AI and diplomatic capacity, but internal pluralism can slow coherent deployment. Hybrid regimes demonstrate a divergence between their high diplomatic standing and their level of AI development. Authoritarian states leverage centralized control to rapidly deploy AI for narrative shaping and audience targeting, boosting global influence.

Overall, the data underscores that AI in public diplomacy is regime-sensitive but not regime-dependent. Authoritarian states may leverage AI for narrative control and global influence, while democracies face normative constraints but benefit from innovation ecosystems and international trust. Hybrid regimes occupy a transitional space, where AI adoption may be shaped by both strategic necessity and institutional volatility. Future research

should explore public trust in AI-mediated diplomatic communication through cross-national surveys and discourse analysis, with particular attention to how transparency, personalization, and perceived neutrality shape audience reception across diverse sociopolitical contexts.

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Публічна дипломатія в епоху штучного інтелекту: між переконанням і контролем

Вінникова Наталія Анатоліївна

доктор політичних наук, доцент,
професор кафедри
міжнародних відносин
Навчально-наукового інституту
«Каразінський інститут міжнародних
відносин та туристичного бізнесу»
Харківського національного
університету імені В. Н. Каразіна
майдан Свободи, 4 Харків, Україна
ORCID: 0000-0001-5941-7562

У статті критично осмислюється еволюційна роль штучного інтелекту (ШІ) у формуванні стратегій публічної дипломатії, зокрема, як інструменти та наративи, керовані ШІ, впливають на іноземну громадську думку в контексті внутрішньополітичних процесів. Дослідження розкриває технологічні, комунікативні та нормативні аспекти дипломатії, що реалізується за участі ШІ, і робить внесок у наукову дискусію щодо етичних меж його використання в міжнародних відносинах. Завданнями статті є виявлення актуальних тенденцій інтеграції ШІ в практики публічної дипломатії, а також аналіз використання ШІ-технологій провідними країнами у сфері глобальної дипломатії. Особливу увагу приділено оцінці того, чи їхні комунікативні стратегії схильються до етичного переконання або ж до директивного впливу. Методологічно дослідження базується на порівняльному кейс-стаді країн, що входять до першої десятки Глобального індексу дипломатії. Відібрані кейси аналізуються за допомогою якісного контент-аналізу інструментів публічної дипломатії, що використовують ШІ, та відповідних комунікаційних стратегій. Для оцінки характеру комунікативного впливу інтегрується корелятивний аналіз трьох ключових індексів: Глобального індексу дипломатії, Глобального індексу ШІ та Індексу демократії. Відстежуючи показники країн за технологічною спроможністю, дипломатичним охопленням і якістю демократії, дослідження виявляє закономірності у використанні ШІ в міжнародних комунікаціях. Результати демонструють складний, нелінійний зв'язок між політичною системою держави, її можливостями у сфері ШІ та дипломатичним статусом. Авторитарні режими стратегічно використовують ШІ для контролю наративів і посилення глобального впливу, тоді як демократії акцентують на етичних стандартах і багатосторонній взаємодії. Отже, використання ШІ в публічній дипломатії є чутливим, але не залежним від типу режиму. Його успіх визначається не стільки рівнем демократичного розвитку, скільки стратегічними пріоритетами та інституційною інтеграцією в зовнішньополітичні процеси.

Ключові слова: штучний інтелект, публічна дипломатія, політичний режим, комунікації, громадська думка.

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