Цифровая дипломатия США

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*Аннотация. Введение. Данная статья представляет комплексный анализ феномена цифровой дипломатии Соединенных Штатов Америки как ключевого инструмента современной внешней политики и публичной дипломатии. **Материалы и методы.** В статье исследуются исторические предпосылки и этапы эволюции цифровой дипломатии США, начиная с первых интернет-инициатив и заканчивая формированием сложной экосистемы цифровых практик. **Результаты и обсуждение.** Детально рассматривается институциональная архитектура, включая ведущую роль Государственного департамента и других ведомств, а также механизмы межведомственной координации. Анализируется широкий спектр применяемых инструментов и стратегий: от активного использования социальных сетей для публичной дипломатии и управления кризисами до продвижения концепций открытого интернета и свободы информации с целью оказания воздействия на другие страны, а также противодействие иностранному вмешательству. **Заключение.** Статья содержит описание конкретных примеров успешного применения цифровых технологий в дипломатической практике, а также освещает ключевые вызовы и критические аспекты, такие как вопросы информационной безопасности, цифрового суверенитета, этики, прозрачности и эффективности. На основе проведенного анализа формулируются выводы о текущем состоянии, перспективах развития и роли цифровой дипломатии США в формировании глобального цифрового ландшафта и международных отношений в XXI веке.*

Ключевые слова: цифровая дипломатия, США, Государственный департамент, публичная дипломатия, социальные сети, интернет, внешняя политика.

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Research article

U.S. Digital Diplomacy

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*Abstract. Introduction. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of U.S. digital diplomacy as a key instrument of modern foreign policy and public diplomacy. **Materials and methods.** The study examines the historical background and stages of the evolution of U.S. digital diplomacy, from the earliest internet initiatives to the formation of a sophisticated ecosystem of digital practices.*

Results and discussion. The institutional architecture is explored in detail, including the leading role of the State Department and other agencies, as well as mechanisms of interagency coordination. The article analyzes a wide range of tools and strategies employed: from the active use of social media for public diplomacy and crisis management to the promotion of open internet principles and information freedom as a means of influencing other nations, as well as countering foreign interference. *Conclusion.* The paper describes specific examples of the successful application of digital technologies in diplomatic practice and highlights key challenges and critical issues, such as information security, digital sovereignty, ethics, transparency, and effectiveness. Based on the analysis, the author draws conclusions about the current state, future prospects, and the role of U.S. digital diplomacy in shaping the global digital landscape and international relations in the 21st century.

Introduction. The global digital revolution has fundamentally transformed the ways in which states, societies, and individuals interact. Under these conditions, traditional diplomacy inevitably evolves, integrating digital tools and platforms to achieve foreign policy goals. Digital diplomacy has become an integral part of the foreign policy arsenal of modern states [3], and the United States, as a technological leader and pioneer in this area, plays a key role in this process. US digital diplomacy is a comprehensive strategy that integrates the use of information and communication technologies, social media, digital platforms, and data analytics to address a wide range of challenges: from promoting values and public diplomacy to negotiation, crisis management, countering disinformation, and shaping norms of behavior in the digital environment [9]. The relevance of this study is determined by the rapid dynamics of the digital environment, the growing importance of the information space in international relations, and the need for a deep understanding of the strategies, tools, and effectiveness of key players' digital diplomacy. The purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of US digital diplomacy, including its genesis, institutional foundations, tools, key areas, practical results, and challenges. To achieve this goal, the following objectives are addressed: tracing the historical evolution of digital diplomacy, analyzing the institutional structure and legal framework, identifying and classifying key tools and methods, assessing effectiveness using specific examples, and identifying key challenges and development prospects. The theoretical and methodological framework for the study is based on approaches from international relations theory: liberal institutionalism, constructivism, and public diplomacy theory.

Research methods include document analysis, content analysis of digital assets of US diplomatic agencies, and analysis of academic literature.

1. The evolution of US digital diplomacy: from early websites to a comprehensive strategy. The origins of US digital diplomacy can be traced back to the mid-1990s, when the State Department and other agencies began creating the first websites, providing information on US policy and consular services online [23]. This was a stage of passive presence, the main purpose of which was to provide access to information. A landmark moment was the appointment in 2001 of the US Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy (with the rank of ambassador) - David Gross, which symbolized the growing awareness of the importance of the global network for foreign policy [8]. In 2003, a special unit for digital diplomacy was created - the "Office of eDiplomacy" [20]. During the tenure of Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State, social media teams were strengthened, large-scale initiatives were launched [14]. 2010s were characterized by the active adoption of social networks such as Twitter and Facebook by both diplomatic missions abroad and agencies at the federal level. The Obama administration also actively promoted the idea of a "secure digital space" as the basis of its digital foreign policy [21, p . 27]. Under the Donald Trump administration, the emphasis shifted towards a more instrumental and pragmatic use of digital channels, often focusing on direct

communication between the president and his team, bypassing traditional media (the phenomenon of "Twitter diplomacy"). In the 2017 National Security Strategy, the United States reaffirmed its commitment to the "free flow of data" and active participation in the international regulation of these data flows, including on platforms such as the UN and the International Telecommunication Union [22, p. 41]. In domestic political discourse, the emphasis was placed on countering foreign interference in elections and disinformation, with accusations typically directed at Russia and China. These accusations were reflected in the interim national security strategic guidelines [19]. The US administration's efforts were channeled toward identifying and deterring malicious actors in the digital space, an issue that was highly politicized and exaggerated. The Joe Biden administration actively used similar arguments in domestic political struggles, declaratively hiding behind plausible priorities: combating disinformation, protecting human rights in the digital space, strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure, and forming coalitions to establish norms of responsible behavior in cyberspace. At all stages of evolution, a general trend can be observed from the experimental use of individual tools to the development of a comprehensive, albeit not devoid of hyper-politicization, approach.

2. Institutional architecture and legal framework. US digital diplomacy is implemented through a complex institutional structure, in which the State Department plays a leading, coordinating role. Let's examine the key divisions of this agency and their functions.

The Bureau of Global Public Affairs is the division responsible for U.S. public diplomacy and media communications worldwide. It oversees the organization of strategically significant information dissemination events both within the State Department and abroad. It also oversees the State Department's digital platforms (websites, social media), and provides content development and analysis of the global media flow [12]. Accordingly, within this key division, there are four areas of focus, covering the following main areas of activity:

1. global media,
2. strategy, outreach and events,
3. digital content,
4. research and analytics [12].

In fact, the work of the Bureau of International Information and Communications is focused on the open and rather assertive dissemination of news and information advising official information.

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor oversees programs to support internet freedoms, digital rights defenders, and civil society in the face of digital repression and combat digital authoritarianism [11].

The Bureau of International Organization Affairs (BIA) addresses digital diplomacy in multilateral settings, including within the UN and OECD, including issues of internet governance and digital data flows [13]. The OECD's founding principle "is a shared commitment to a market economy supported by democratic institutions" [6], making it a convenient platform for advancing a digital agenda with politicized overtones.

The Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy was established relatively recently – in 2022 – as the central element of the digital diplomacy pipeline [10]. This unit is divided into three key areas: international cybersecurity (including norm-setting), international digital policy (data flows, digital economy), and digital freedom (internet freedoms, human rights online) [17].

Within the State Department, there is also a Global Engagement Center (GEC), a structure whose functions include "directing, leading, synchronizing, integrating, and coordinating the efforts of the U.S. federal government to identify, understand, expose, and counter foreign and non-state propaganda and disinformation aimed at undermining or influencing the policy, security, or stability of the United States, its allies, and partner countries" [18].

State Department-led embassies implement digital diplomacy at the regional and country levels, adapting central strategies to local contexts and languages.

In addition to the State Department, the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM) plays a significant role in US digital diplomacy. It manages international broadcasting organizations, including the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Asia. The agency acts as a direct actor in the dissemination of information, actively using digital platforms in its work [29].

The offensive component of the digital approach involves the use of digital tools for both political warfare and the weakening of a potential adversary's infrastructure. This approach, represented by the United States Department of Defense [28], addresses cybersecurity, defensive, and offensive cyber operations, which are directly related to the military-political aspect of digital diplomacy. The US Department of Defense's Digital Strategy emphasizes that the work is aimed not only at "defensive cyber operations," but also at maintaining the ability to "conduct combat operations to counter an adversary in cyberspace." "We will leverage the unique characteristics of cyberspace to meet Joint Force requirements and create asymmetric advantages," the document states [15, p. 3].

At the same time, the US Department of Defense's Digital Strategy officially identifies the main sources of threats, primarily including our country, North Korea, Iran, and violent extremist organizations. I would like to examine the threat analysis within this document in more detail. Russia is singled out as a separate threat in the list, appearing first. The second block includes two countries (North Korea and Iran) and extremist organizations. It appears that singling out our country is an attempt to separate one of the world's most powerful states from extremist organizations. This diplomatic gesture seems no accident, although the mere listing of three independent states as threats and the inclusion of extremist organizations leaves a negative impression of attempting to equate sovereign countries with extremist groups. Such a list could not be a coincidence and speaks of a hostile attitude, which is expressed not only in the plane of the economic struggle carried out through sanctions [2], but also in the military-political focus of the United States on the fight against the designated countries.

The US Department of Commerce (DoC) [27] is involved in shaping international policy on the digital economy, e-commerce, and standards, which is a central pillar of the agency's international agenda. Its declarative policies are based on the idea that an open and free internet is the foundation of the global economy, fostering trade, economic opportunity, and respect for human rights.

The combination of agencies and areas of work presented appears fairly logical, but interagency coordination is critically important yet challenging, requiring ongoing efforts to overcome departmental barriers and ensure unity of action. This problem is not unique to the United States.

The legal framework for US digital diplomacy is formed at the intersection of international law, national legislation, and internal departmental regulations, including the aforementioned national security strategies, which highlight sections on cybersecurity and technological competition, the US Department of Defense's digital strategy, which defines approaches to the military-political component of digital diplomacy, and the internal directives of these departments.

3. Tools and strategies of US digital diplomacy. The US digital diplomacy arsenal is diverse and constantly evolving. Key tools include official websites, social media, digital platforms, media outlets, and digitalization standards. This applies equally to global media, local media, social networks, and the like.

Let us consider in this context the main strategies of US digital diplomacy.

An active presence on social media is one of the key strategies of American digital diplomacy. Embassies, consulates, and US officials maintain active accounts on Twitter (since 2023 – "X"), Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms adapted for local audiences, such as Telegram. According to expert estimates, by mid-2024, the State Department had launched more than 1,450 accounts – the most extensive diplomatic network [1, p. 105]. The goals are to disseminate the official position, refute false information, foster a positive image of the United

States, interact with local users, and monitor sentiment. Various formats are used: text, infographics, photos, videos, and live broadcasts. Moreover, what is especially important: "By 2013, the State Department began measuring the effectiveness of digital diplomacy not only by the number of subscribers, but also by the number of likes, comments, and reposts" [1, p. 128].

Digital public diplomacy in the context of image management is also an important strategy.

One could even say that this image management strategy predates digital diplomacy itself. By this statement, the author understands the strategy of promoting American values and culture through cinema. Moreover, this format has proven to be not a costly endeavor, but a profitable one – along with disseminating the image of the United States, film distribution has generated revenue.

The use of digital platforms to promote American values, culture, education, science, and technology is a 20th-century innovation that gained momentum in the 2010s. Film distribution has become possible not only in theaters but also on online platforms. Projects include virtual exchanges, online courses, digital libraries, support for bloggers and influencers, and the creation of positive content. This strategy emphasizes "soft power" to attract audience sympathy.

The strategy of promoting an "open internet" is declared to counter internet censorship, protect freedom of expression online, and support access to information. However, in reality, this strategy is implemented as a policy of double standards and consists of lifting restrictions on the dissemination of information by US government agencies themselves. Financial and technical assistance is even provided for tools to circumvent blocking in foreign countries: in 2022, "the US nearly doubled funding for VPN services nthLink, Psiphon, and Lantern" [1, p. 155; 16]. Participation in international internet governance forums to advocate for a multilateral governance model with US participation.

Combating foreign disinformation and propaganda is an important strategy for the state. In the case of the United States, this strategy is more reminiscent of a fight against "dissent." In 2016, the Global Engagement Center (GEC) refocused from counterterrorism to combating "Russian, Chinese, and Iranian propaganda" [1, p. 139; 24].

The GEC aims to actively expose—publicly identify sources of "disinformation" and "manipulation" tactics—by responding to narratives that conflict with the official US position. This response is conducted through official channels and partner media.

Supporting "independent journalism" is a key US strategy that played a role in the destruction of the USSR, and, if we look at the historical facts even more deeply, it is, in fact, an integral part of the disinformation campaign against the illiterate population, which was also used in Europe in the mid-20th century [7]. Funding and training journalists in foreign countries is used as a tool to guide editorial policy.

Crisis communications and consular support is an important strategy for using digital channels to quickly inform U.S. citizens abroad during natural disasters, political unrest, and pandemics, provide consular instructions, and organize evacuations. The State Department-administered SmartTraveler app [25] is used for this purpose. Social media, as described above, can also serve as a channel for emergency communications.

Digital intelligence strategies include monitoring websites, other open sources, social media, and other digital data to analyze political situations, public sentiment, and identify threats and opportunities in foreign countries.

4. Application examples and effectiveness evaluation. An analysis of specific examples allows us to gain an understanding of the potential of US digital diplomacy. In this regard, it is important to highlight several historical events.

One such example is "Twitter diplomacy" during the Arab Spring: the State Department and US embassies actively used Twitter to express support for democratic protest movements while condemning violence in the countries where the protests took place. This contributed to the image of the United States as a defender of democracy, especially among younger audiences.

However, interference in the internal affairs of states often reflected the promotion of an American-centric worldview "on social media to woo skeptical Arab audiences" [1, p. 98].

The State Department and US intelligence agencies regularly publish detailed reports attributing specific cyberattacks to state actors (Russia, North Korea, China, Iran, and others). These public accusations, without further investigation, serve as justification for imposing sanctions and mobilizing international condemnation. Their effectiveness in preventing future attacks is also debatable, but the very act of publicly accusing them has become a step in the counter-tactics strategy.

The promotion of internet freedom against China has included support for censorship circumvention tools (primarily VPNs), funding for anti-censorship research and development, and diplomatic pressure on China on digital human rights issues [4]. Despite significant resources, the results of US efforts to weaken China's internet control system have been minimal, underscoring the limitations of external influence on the sovereign decisions of states. In this context, the blocking of most American information services in Russia is perplexing: as of early 2025, streaming services, online cinemas, and official websites of US government agencies are officially unavailable in our country—all by decision of US government agencies. This policy of double standards consists of countries that previously agreed to access American content attempting to demonstratively deny this access, as if "as a warning," while countries that "prevented" American media from entering their markets become targets of attacks aimed at "punching a breach."

Virtual exchanges and online education, including projects that connect students and professionals from the United States and other countries through online platforms, such as the Stevens Initiative [26], allow for greater reach at a lower cost, but cannot fully replace the depth and intensity of face-to-face interactions found in traditional exchange programs.

Evaluations of the effectiveness of US digital diplomacy are mixed. On the one hand, it has significantly expanded the reach and speed of communication with global audiences, strengthened public diplomacy and image management capabilities, and created new channels for crisis response and consular support. On the other hand, there are serious downsides: scandals related to the fight against dissent (in addition to the interstate interactions described in the article, the Snowden affair is an example) have undermined trust in the US as a defender of privacy and the open internet. The perception of double standards weakens US authority.

Interference in internal affairs, which has long since become the norm, has led to the development of internal processes in the countries targeted by this influence. These may include domestic political processes aimed at increasing political literacy among the population, developing critical thinking, and activating Russia and China's own educational resources. The DPRK may also respond by erecting protective barriers.

Conclusions. US digital diplomacy has come a long way from experimental initiatives to a recognized strategic foreign policy direction. It has evolved into a complex, multi-layered ecosystem, integrated into the work of key agencies, primarily the State Department, and has become a key pillar of foreign policy. The US has demonstrated innovative use of social media for public diplomacy and crisis communications, and is actively promoting an open internet model and digital freedoms as the foundation of its foreign policy.

However, the effectiveness of US digital diplomacy is not absolute and faces challenges. Geopolitical competition with China and Russia in the digital sphere is shaping up to be a systemic clash of development models. Scandals related to double standards and digital surveillance are undermining US authority and credibility of its rhetoric about internet freedom.

The future of US digital diplomacy will depend on the ability of the administration and agencies to restore trust and credibility: adapt to a multipolar world order and technological change, and create more adaptive institutional structures capable of responding quickly to crises and the evolution of the international relations system.

Digital diplomacy remains an indispensable tool for the United States in a context where the information space has become a new arena for global competition. Its success will be

determined not only by technological superiority but also by the ability to offer an attractive model for the digital future based on values and trust, as well as effectively protect national interests in the complex and dynamic digital landscape of the 21st century.

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