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**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON DIPLOMACY: A CASE STUDY OF US-  
RUSSIA RELATIONS**

**BY**

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of Ghana, Legon, in partial fulfilment of  
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**LEGON**

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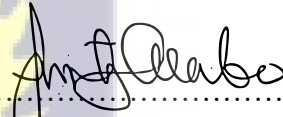
**DECLARATION**

I, hereby declare that this dissertation is an original research conducted under the supervision of Ambassador Dr. Kodzo Alabo and all references have been duly acknowledged.



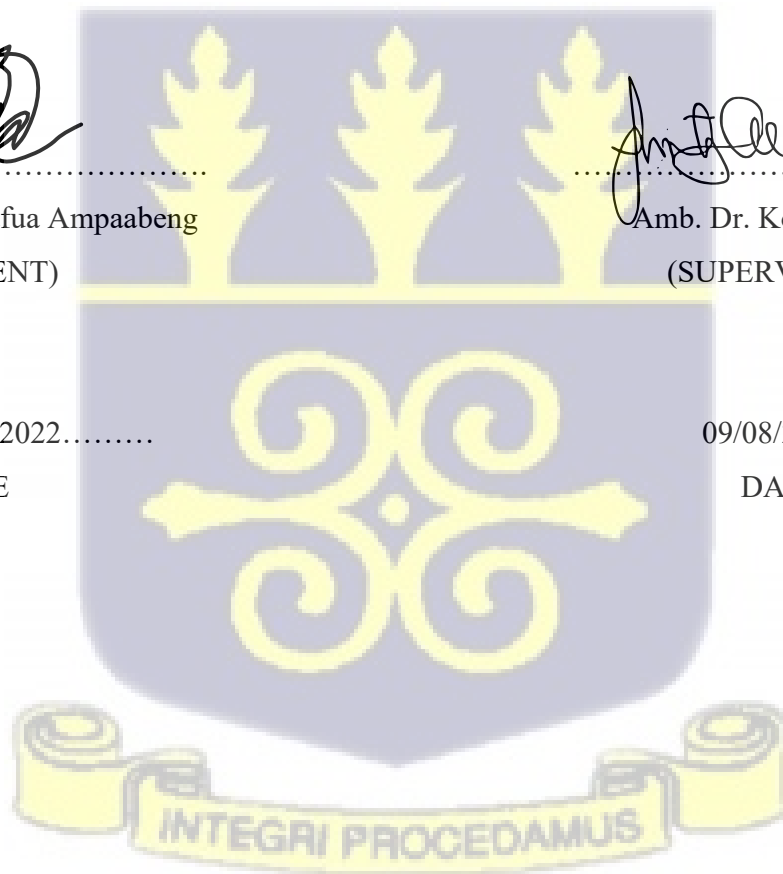
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### **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work first and foremost to God who made it possible for me to complete this successfully and to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ampaabeng for all their support.



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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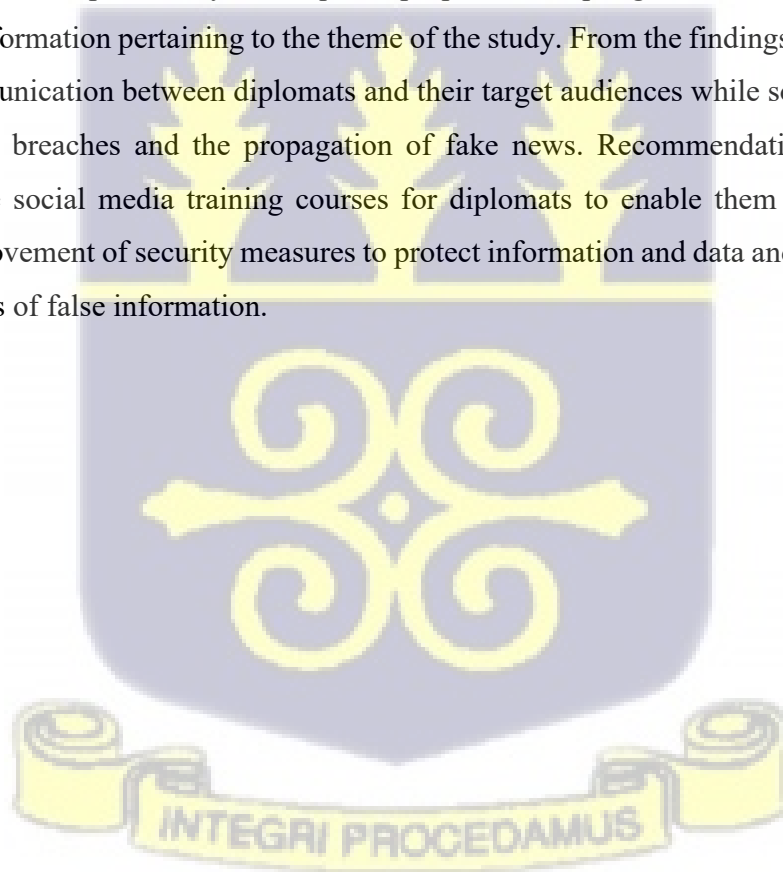
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### ABSTRACT

Social media has now become a major part of modern diplomacy with countries all over the world embracing it as an alternative medium of communication within diplomacy. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, websites and blogs are examples of dominant social media platforms used by states and non-states alike. The use of social media in diplomacy has given rise to public diplomacy efforts, e-diplomacy or digital diplomacy and soft power and consequently transformed modern diplomacy. The aim of the study was to examine the impact of social media on the conduct and execution of modern diplomacy. The study measured the extent of social media's influence on diplomatic relations between the USA and Russia particularly and drew out some benefits and challenges as well as preferred solutions to the challenges. The research design of the study made use of the qualitative method in collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. The sampling method employed was the non-probability technique of purposive sampling because the selected sample had adequate information pertaining to the theme of the study. From the findings, social media has enhanced communication between diplomats and their target audiences while some shortcomings include security breaches and the propagation of fake news. Recommendations based on the findings include social media training courses for diplomats to enable them to stay on top of situations, improvement of security measures to protect information and data and measures to deal with propagators of false information.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Sir Ernest Satow, a distinguished British diplomat, defines diplomacy as “the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between governments of independent states”<sup>1</sup>, and communication is essential for the execution of diplomacy. Diplomacy is as old as time and has evolved over the years with several factors accounting for its development. Key among the factors and for the emphasis of this study is social media. Carr and Hayes in their work explain social media as internet-based channels that enable users to resourcefully engage and carefully self-present, in either real-time or non-simultaneously, with both narrow and broad audiences who benefit from user-generated content as well as the observation of communication with others<sup>2</sup>. The ability to share opinions, pictures, videos, live events, and information in real-time has practically changed the way we do everything and diplomacy is not exempt. The Internet is now vital to both private and public conversations with modern instruments such as social media, bringing masses into open and equal platforms to interact in. It is, however, wrought with benefits and challenges for individuals, states, and organizations in their efforts to maximize the emerging opportunities provided by the Internet.<sup>3</sup>

Social media came into existence in the late 1990s and rose in popularity in the early 2000s. As of 2006, Facebook and Twitter were introduced and continue to be quite popular today. Currently, there are a variety of social networking sites, and many of them permit cross-posting which allows users to reach their specific audiences without sacrificing proximate communication.<sup>4</sup>. Some examples of social media platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, Snapchat, TikTok, among several others. The use of social media by US adults increased from 5% in 2005 to 79% in 2019, whereas, in Russia, the number of social network users increased from 60.5 million in 2013 to 79.2 million in 2019<sup>5</sup>. Facebook surged from covering almost 1.5% of the world’s population in 2008 to about 30% in 2018<sup>6</sup>. From the first quarter of 2010 to the first quarter of 2019, the global volume of monthly active Twitter users increased from 30 million to 330 million.<sup>7</sup> According to Cohn and Wolfe, the percentage of the presence of UN member states on Twitter is 97%, while Facebook is the next most popular platform amongst state leaders and is

where they have their biggest audiences. Since his assumption of office in January 2017, Donald Trump has indisputably impacted Twitter and is the most followed world leader with more than 52 million followers<sup>8</sup>. He is also one of the few world leaders that personally manage their own accounts. The micro-blogging service has now existed under three presidencies, but no politician has utilized it quite like Trump.<sup>9</sup> Notably, former president Barack Obama was also the first American leader to use Twitter. Averagely, Russia's foreign ministry account on Twitter with handle (@MID\_RF) shares 11 posts per day same as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (@narendramodi), with Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump) behind by just 10 posts a day. Jair Bolsonaro, president of Brazil, Donald Trump and Narendra Modi top the chart of the world leaders with the most interactions.

Social media is a powerful instrument that has played a role in the advancement of diplomacy since dynamism and communication particularly, are essential to diplomacy. In the digital age, diplomacy has come to be referred to as "Digital Diplomacy,"<sup>10</sup> "Twiplomacy (Twitter Diplomacy),"<sup>11</sup> "Cyber Diplomacy,"<sup>12</sup> and "Virtual Diplomacy"<sup>13</sup>. They however fall under the broader term "E-diplomacy (Electronic Diplomacy)"<sup>14</sup> Diplomats are progressively relying on Twitter in their daily communications with their colleagues. These interactions happen in the presence of an international audience, which adds an extra level of scrutiny that is exclusive to this method of communication.<sup>15</sup> It has also given rise to the participation of non-state actors such as multinational corporations (MNCs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations, in the conduct of diplomacy.

With the rise of increased internet usage and social media specifically, governments all over the world are actively engaging in social media to catch up with the trend for many reasons, chief of them all is to promote the interests of the countries they represent. The U.S.A State department in adapting to the internet age has accepted digital diplomacy as a form of soft power or smart power as described by former American president Barack Obama. As an alternative to hard power or military power, soft power coined by Joseph Nye<sup>16</sup> refers to the use of persuasion without the use of force to attract a specific audience to attain foreign policy objectives. The USA introduced the 21<sup>st</sup> century statecraft agenda which supplements traditional foreign policy tools with modernized and adapted instruments of statecraft that wholly utilize the various technologies, networks, and statistics of the interconnected world<sup>17</sup>.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) of the United States has also been a leader in the field of digital transformation. Technology and social media can be used to conduct business, provide services, and start conversations, according to the United States government. Two hundred and sixty-eight embassies, high commissions, and consulates in one hundred sixty-eight countries have active social media accounts as part of the USA Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Together, they have a little over 7 million followers on their 700 plus official social media accounts worldwide.<sup>18</sup> Russia surpassed Germany in 2011 as Europe's largest internet market by gaining more than 54 million monthly users, a figure that is increasing at a fast pace. President Putin, at an ambassadors' conference in Moscow, urged diplomats to take advantage of new instruments of diplomacy and argue in a more effective way that articulates the Russian stances and views on global affairs. This is based on their belief that as more people know about their country and its policies, they can better understand them and attain stability and harmony in the long run.<sup>19</sup> Cohn and Wolfe in their work '*Twiplomacy*' have ranked the Russian foreign ministry on Twitter 4<sup>th</sup> out of 50 best connected world leaders in 2019.<sup>20</sup>

Some benefits of social media with regards to diplomacy include strengthening of international relations, proximity with audiences, fast and effective communications, and low financial cost. It has transformed diplomacy from statist to citizen diplomacy. It has in some cases created a turn-around in governance and politics. The Arab Spring is a case in point where citizens protested the ruling government using social media platforms to organize protests and chronicle violent events, beginning in Tunisia, and causing Egypt, Libya and other Arab countries to rebel against authoritarian governments. However, it has also affected the conduct of diplomacy by reducing the work of diplomats and forcing them to make quick decisions on issues because of the fast spread of information. The era of social media has made the world transparent, noisy and awash with chaff as well as fake news. Security breaches such as hacking and leaking of vital data is another challenge presented by social media use. An example is the leakage of diplomatic cables by Julian Assange of Wikileaks in 2010 which caused a stir in diplomatic circles. Another example is Edward Snowden's exposé of classified information concerning global surveillance programs run by the USA National Security Agency (NSA) in collaboration with other telecommunication corporations and governments in 2013. The world is now filled with an array of voices that define social media, numerous conflicting views, and some extent of disharmony among the spheres. She continues by saying that regardless of the liberty that comes with the expression of views on social

media, freedom of expression is threatened because intolerance is abundant.<sup>21</sup> The world has now become rife with political extremes, rage, and followers or audiences that only support or endorse like-minded opinions.<sup>22</sup>

The study seeks to examine the impact of social media on diplomacy between the USA and Russia.

## 1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

USA's foreign policy has transformed from isolationism by George Washington to containment and currently to economic aid. Like foreign policy, diplomacy has also changed over time with developments such as technology and social media within the broader context of digital media. Social media has been making many strides in contemporary times hence becoming the focus of this study.

Rao in quoting a study, stated the effect of social media as a threat to democracy, tolerance, and political dialogue which consequently erodes the public sphere gradually<sup>23</sup>. Rao again points out that diplomacy now has to contend with predetermined, prismatic opinions on select policy issues, offensive responses, hate speech, vilification, and varied forms of abuse which can be overwhelming for embassies' social media accounts<sup>24</sup>.

Social media facilitate communication between a government and a foreign population. As a public relations technique, this media outlet proved efficient in influencing public opinion during Obama's 2008 campaign. Therefore, it is advantageous to use social media platforms to advance U.S.A interests overseas.<sup>25</sup> When the local population opposes the foreign nation's existence, it is hard to achieve any foreign policy aim requiring the assistance of citizens in that country. In the case of Russia, social media may be a useful and strategic instrument for PD activities since the whole nation has appropriate internet and social media site access. These websites may be used to disseminate information globally; however, it is crucial that the material be provided in both Russian and English so that people and governments can participate actively<sup>26</sup>

These measures may improve the United States' image in Russia and dispel any misunderstandings. Some opponents consider these attempts to be propaganda. However, theorists such as Ociepka argue that it is not propaganda since public diplomacy, as it is now performed, involves its intended audience in discourse. Cox and Stokes claim that the use of social media in

U.S. foreign policy is a type of propaganda since it promotes just a favourable image without highlighting the complete policy aims of the United States. These divergent viewpoints generate a dispute over the ethics of public diplomacy.<sup>27</sup>

Social media has enhanced freedom of speech and expression of views which has given rise to a multiplicity of opinions, fake news, and political extremity, diminishing the principle of non-intervention, transparency, and undermined sovereignties. Information is easily accessible by all and in a very quick manner via the internet on smartphones, tablets, and computers which, although may be good, affects the conduct of diplomacy. Diplomats or policymakers, for instance, are sometimes forced to make quick decisions sometimes swayed by public opinion, or promptly diffuse tensions caused by fake news. Countries are kept abreast with happenings in other countries and certain cases, enemy countries. Opinions or comments that otherwise should be said behind closed doors or kept to oneself can now be discussed on social media which can incite violence or hatred in the public. Some comments or statements made on social media by high-ranking officials or diplomats can be detrimental to their job or country as it tarnishes the country or organization they represent. There is also the problem of misinterpretation of information posted by leaders. In this era of social media, governments have limited control over information flows and an example is the Wikileaks incident when the USA government secrets were leaked, showing its limited capacity in controlling information in the internet era<sup>28</sup>. Also, important to note is the fact that, the internet is a platform that never forgets and there have been several occasions where an unfortunate post from a leader has been used against him and the country or organization they represent at a later date.

Thus, this study seeks to investigate the influence of social media on diplomacy with a focus on US-Russia relations.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. To what extent does social media influence diplomacy between the USA and Russia?
2. What challenges do social media present to diplomacy between the USA and Russia?
3. What measures can be put in place to address the challenges?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

1. To determine the extent of social media's influence on diplomacy between the USA and Russia.
2. To examine the challenges social media presents to diplomacy between the USA and Russia.
3. To make recommendations that will limit the challenges.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study investigates the influence and effects of social media on diplomacy with a focus on relations between the United States of America and Russia, with a period of investigation spanning from 2000 to 2020 because social media rose to prominence and has become popular within this period and continues to remain dominant. The theme of focus for the study is social media and its impact on modern diplomacy.

### **1.6 Rationale of the Study**

This research attempts to address the effects of social media on diplomacy. Several studies have been done on the relationship between social media and diplomacy, however, this study seeks to not only augment knowledge but to put into perspective the influence of social media in both the USA and Russia's diplomatic relations over the years. It is significant also because it would aid in future strategies of diplomatic relations while taking into consideration activities of social media in modern society with a focus on USA and Russia.

### **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

This study evaluates the use of social media through the theoretical framework of the Medium Theory by Marshall McLuhan (1994)<sup>29</sup>. Joshua Meyrowitz, originally coined the term in 1985 in his book, "No Sense of Place"<sup>30</sup> but Marshall McLuhan first highlighted the medium theory in 1964 when he first published his book "Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man"<sup>31</sup>. He formulated concepts such as "The Medium is the Message", "Hot and Cool Media", and "Laws of the Media".

McLuhan is of the view that technologies are any extensions of our nervous and physical system that intensify power and speed; thus, "a medium is any extension of ourselves or any new technology"<sup>32</sup>. Hence, a wheel is an extension of our feet, the phone an extension of our voice, the television an extension of our eyes and ears, the computer an extension of our brains and electronic

media generally an extension of our central nervous system.<sup>33</sup> This means that through electronic media, the speed of communication resonates with the speed of the senses. We are progressively linked together across the world via media which includes the telephone, television and recently the personal computer and the 'Internet', allowing worldwide communication of people.<sup>34</sup> As a result of this extension of capabilities, media is undoubtedly linked to human society and human actions. McLuhan in his statement "The medium is the message"<sup>35</sup> highlights the effects of media technology itself rather than the effect of the content within the media. In his view, the medium affects the perceptions, attitudes, experiences and behaviour of users and therefore the human society as a whole and that is more important than its content. Additionally, Levinson is of the view that the impact of any communication medium is greater than the actual content of the communication medium or what it conveys. For instance, watching television has a greater effect on our lives than a specific television program does, or talking on the phone has become more innovative in human communication compared to information shared over the phone.<sup>36</sup>

A medium is not only restricted to the various technologies but rather it is the environment of the media technology which affects everyone. McLuhan also points out that a strange effect of this electronic environment is the overall absence of secrecy and as secrecy comes to an end, so do monopolies of knowledge.<sup>37</sup> This means that as electronic media spreads and creates a global environment where secrecy or privacy becomes nearly non-existent or is eroded, people, governments or institutions that have total control of information also lose their power to influence or control information since information is easily accessible by everyone all over the world.

McLuhan predicted the world becoming a global village due to electronic technology which meant that people would be able to connect with each other all over the world. They would be abreast with events and information from all over the world without being present in those places, therefore, facilitating the easy contribution of ideas, opinions, views and even extension of help in some crises or situations from people all over the world. Since electronic technology is an extension of man's central nervous system it means that, in the same way that the central nervous system connects and coordinates with the rest of the body, electronic media also works in the global system by connecting people all over the world, thereby creating the global village.

Although this theory was propounded before the rise of social media, it is a fitting theory to explain social media today. For instance, with Twitter, the limited number of characters per post (280)

makes for brief yet important posts by users to get the attention of the public quickly. It also allows for people all over the world to be abreast with events in real-time and contribute to conversations. Because the medium is the message, Twitter is used to influence targeted audiences in society through a variety of strategies, conversations and engagements of all sorts with respect to the unique way that Twitter works. Instagram which is more focused on visual content allows users to communicate with their audiences mainly through pictures and videos. Again, the use of this medium helps to influence a target audience. With Facebook, the medium is the message of social connections.

McLuhan categorized media channels/platforms into hot and cool media and differentiated them by saying that hot media extends one single sense in high definition whereas cool medium extends in low definition. He explained high definition as the state of being very filled with data, so a newspaper, radio and photographs, are examples of hot media because of the enormity of data they contain. However, a medium like a telephone was considered cool media because of the meagre amount of information the ear receives, and because so little is given, the rest of the information must be completed by the listener. Hot media, however, leave little to be filled in by the audience and are, thus, low in participation, while cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience. Other examples of cool media are speech and television.

The laws of media are a tetrad or a group of four parts that have simultaneous consequences in the way media is operated. First, the media or process enhances or intensifies, then at the same time it obsolesces. It then retrieves from the obsoleted media or retrieves yet another obsoleted media or process which may have been previously antiquated by an earlier process, and when it is pushed to the limit of its potential, it flips or reverses into something else substantively different<sup>38</sup>. An example here would be the radio, which obsoleted print and at the same time retrieved from it and after being pushed to its limit gave rise to the television which includes both print and radio, so people can now hear and see as against print which allowed for visual communication and the radio which allowed auditory communication. With retrieval, it should be noted that as the radio obsoleted print, it recaptured the oral texture of communication which itself had been previously replaced by print. With a microphone-P.A. system, individual speech and rhythm are amplified which obsoletes the big band, grand opera, and the Latin Mass. It then recovers group participation and finally moves from private to corporate sound bubble. Also with the example of housing, when

a private enclosed visual space is amplified, caves, tents, wigwams, and domes are obsolesced while retrieving wagon trains, mobile home clusters, and covered wagons (pioneers), and when it finally reverses it leads to high-rise corporate.<sup>39</sup> When a medium obsolesces another medium it does not necessarily become completely obsolete, since it is still used although not as much as before, and the new medium instead becomes more prominent than the obsolete one.

Raymond Williams<sup>40</sup> critiqued McLuhan's medium theory for being exceedingly technologically deterministic. In his assessment, technological determinism diminishes everything outside of media to an effect. He is of the view that humans adapt to new technologies that arise because it is modern. He adds that technology in itself is powerful enough to change societies and condition humans although humans use the technology. However, this can be countered by the fact that in reality people rather use these mediums or technology to influence society.

Christopher Ricks also criticises McLuhan for disregarding the impact of the content of media entirely and narrowing the effect of media only to media. Yet, Levinson in his book, 'Digital McLuhan: A Guide to the Information Millennium', clarifies that McLuhan's attempt to shift the focus from the content of the medium to the overall impact of the medium is as a result of his belief that content grasps our attention and is disadvantageous to us in the sense that, we are unable to fully comprehend and perceive the medium and all it entails. He contends that McLuhan's intention in postulating that the medium is the message was to enable people to better understand the importance of media in their lives. He did not disregard the content of the media outright but rather held that the effect of the medium on society is more important than the effects of content.<sup>41</sup>

There are quite a number of criticisms about the theory as with all theories but nevertheless, it is an appropriate theory for the research because of McLuhan's analysis of media on society as seen especially in his prediction of the world becoming a global village, with the intensification of media and the power of the media in "the medium is the message". This theory is relevant because the study lays emphasis on social media which is captured in McLuhan's analysis as a type of media and how it influences and affects diplomacy. The theory is also appropriate because the study examines how the diplomatic practice has evolved with the advent of social media.

## **1.8 Literature Review**

Michael Cox and Doug Stokes in their book, “US Foreign Policy”, focus on the foreign policy of the USA with the world and their strategies. More importantly, they include a chapter about the internet and the rise of global media while highlighting the media and USA diplomacy and how the USA is making use of the internet and social media to improve public opinion and ultimately pursue foreign policy.

The author of the chapter, Piers Robinson discusses public and media diplomacy aimed at projecting USA power abroad. Throughout, attention is paid to the means through which the media and public opinion can be leveraged as a source of influence for, and as a limitation to, USA foreign policy. The chapter concludes by discussing the contemporary debate concerning the impact of technological developments, including the internet and the rise of global media upon USA power and influence. An example is the leaking of a series of secret documents by Wikileaks that compromised the credibility of the USA giving credence to the fragility of information on the internet. The USA has taken social media seriously in order to try as much as possible to control information concerning the USA that goes out into the world. From the cold war era, the use of the media was a tactic used to spread liberal democracy and demonize communism and currently, social media is the latest media avenue used to influence public opinion of not only the USA but many countries across the world.

It is relevant because it examines the antecedents of the media on USA foreign policy and further deliberates by expanding on public diplomacy and the media using Joseph Nye’s concept of soft power, a term that denotes non-coercive (and non-military) tactics of projecting to the world, the extent and expanse of US influence and power.

Bjola and Holmes, discuss digital diplomacy at length in their book, “Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice”. They looked at the increasing interest and pursuance of social media as a game changer in the conduct of international relations by governments as well as other non-state actors. Digital diplomacy for that matter is described as “a way for states to manage change”, defined as “the use of social media for diplomatic purposes” and is attributed to changing the practices of how diplomats engage in managing information, developing strategies, engaging in public diplomacy, negotiations or even crisis management<sup>42</sup>.

In this volume, the authors seek to discover how digital diplomacy works, its achievements and its limitations in the conduct of international relations. Leading scholars and experienced diplomats are brought together to systematically identify different strands of research on digital diplomacy and make them speak to one another. The book hypothesizes digital diplomacy, weighs its connection with traditional diplomacy, measures the furtive power dynamics that are distinctive to digital diplomacy, and seeks to reveal the circumstances under which digital diplomacy regulates, constrains or informs foreign policy. The book seeks to find out the level at which digital diplomacy shows a crucial point of departure from the interactive engagements of international actors as against a more indistinct method of protection of the status quo.

The relevance of this literature is in the in-depth knowledge about Digital Diplomacy which is central to the study.

In his book, “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics”, Joseph Nye introduces a concept known as soft power and its importance without relying solely on hard power. He explains soft power as the ability to get what you want through attraction resulting from the appeal of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies rather than through coercion or payments. He looks at the changing nature of soft power and the soft power of some countries and non-state actors<sup>43</sup>. Examples of the use of soft power by the USA include young people behind the Iron Curtain listening to news via Radio Free Europe and enjoying American music, young Iranians sneakily viewing prohibited American videos and TV programs in their homes, the creation of a replication of the Statue of Liberty by Chinese students signifying their protests in Tiananmen Square, freshly liberated Afghanistan citizens requesting for a replica of the Bill of Rights in 2001.<sup>44</sup> He relates soft power to American foreign policy and hammers on the essence of incorporating it into national strategy and also examines the practical problems of how to wield soft power through public diplomacy.

Joseph Nye's Soft Power concept is appropriate for the research because the media, social media for that matter is one of the avenues of soft power. In the digital age, social media has become a stellar way of utilizing or showcasing soft power. For a country to be attractive to the rest of the world, social media is the window or rather a door, considering the massive growth of social media today, through which the rest of the world may view these attractions. Content in the form of videos, and pictures posted on social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and

others by both state and non-state actors can persuade viewers in their thoughts, actions, values, interests and several other aspects. Soft power is evidenced by this current age of digital diplomacy where governments and other organizations are trying their best to portray the countries or the interests they represent in a good light.

Sandre seeks to explore the way social media diplomacy helps to create and preserve an accurate conversation between diplomats and foreign publics. “Twitter for Diplomats” is a collection of information, anecdotes, and experiences that focuses on Twitter, a social media network, that is steadily on the rise as the most powerful, engaging form of interaction between diplomats and the public. It contains accounts of foreign ministers and ambassadors and their experiences in their interaction and exploration of Twitter. He begins by shedding some light on social media and diplomacy and then makes a comparison between Twitter and Facebook. He then delves into Twitter diplomacy or rather Twiplomacy which has seen a significant increase in the number of government accounts and ambassadors on Twitter. He adds that Twiplomacy, however slow, is creeping into the foreign policy agenda as a combined e-diplomacy tool to reconsider objectives and adequately face new shortcomings. He also talks about some challenges and risks of twitter.<sup>45</sup>

Twitter for Diplomats is appropriate for the research because Twitter as predicted by Andreas Sandre has become the leading form of communication between diplomats, foreign publics and other non-state actors in current times. It has gradually forced its way into foreign policy in almost all governments all over the world.

“Digital Diplomacy: Conversations on Innovation in Foreign Policy” is in three parts: the traditional mode of diplomacy versus the innovative form, the true nature of innovation and beyond innovation and social media. Andreas Sandre looks at digital diplomacy as an innovation in the administration of foreign policy and diplomacy. Technology advancements, or rather innovations, are happening whether or not governments jump on the bandwagon, but since diplomacy is about communication, it would help a great deal if technology was taken more seriously in order to reach their audiences. He talks about diplomacy 2.0, which involves diplomats tweeting and citizens contributing to discussions, and then introduces diplomacy 3.0, which is where non-state actors also directly interact with states in a more networked environment. He defines diplomacy 3.0 as the development of foreign policy into a setting that is more networked, whereby there is horizontal interaction between state and non-state actors. This book contains a compilation of conversations

with key individuals like ambassadors, public policy experts, State Department officials, and scholars who give different perspectives on digital diplomacy, with some admonishing it and others unconvinced of the transparency it is purported to bring.

He teases out arguments about whether diplomacy is losing or has lost its essence, especially with the advent of technology and the multiplicity of non-state actors, or has not really changed much as traditional diplomacy is still practiced. There are several examples of the use of digital diplomacy in foreign affairs illustrated in Sandre's book. There are also arguments about the prospects and challenges that digital diplomacy brings with the added content from conversations and interactions with knowledgeable experts in the field of diplomacy, and all of this will be useful to the research.

In G. R. Berridge's "Diplomacy Theory and Practice", he details the intricacies of the field of diplomacy and begins by chronicling the antecedents of diplomacy from the origin and growth of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and all that it entails both home and abroad, to embassies, consulates, summits and conferences and delves into the stages of negotiation. Berridge also discusses public diplomacy and is of the view that it is the "modern name for white propaganda directed chiefly at foreign publics"<sup>46</sup>. He highlights the importance of public diplomacy or propaganda and outlines the roles of the embassies and the roles that ministries of foreign affairs play as coordinators and players in executing public diplomacy or propaganda. He talks about telecommunications in diplomacy and the strides that are being made in that regard. The final part of the book is about diplomacy without diplomatic relations, which looks at the ways that diplomacy is still conducted even in the event of severed relations between countries.

The book is an appropriate reference tool because it is a useful source of information to appreciate the beginning of diplomacy and the way traditional diplomacy works which can help us to understand modern diplomacy today.

"The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy" is a comprehensive compilation of over fifty contributors on the changing scenes of diplomatic practices. It analyses the interface between club diplomacy, which consists of a limited number of players, a vast hierarchy, low transparency and is based largely on written communication; and network diplomacy, which constitutes a relatively higher number of actors, a more substantial verbal element, better openness, and a horizontal

structure; and describes the various factors responsible for the changes and continuity in diplomacy<sup>47</sup>. It covers topics such as multilateral diplomacy, trade and investment promotion, economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, soft power, public diplomacy, international organizations and diplomacy, defence diplomacy and a host of others. Globalization and innovative information technologies are linked to the changes in the conduct, tools, actors and sphere of diplomacy. It also addresses new challenges brought on by current trends in modern diplomacy and gives some perceived projections into the future of the field.

The Handbook is important to the study because it provides a complete analysis and description of the transition from club diplomacy to network diplomacy and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century diplomacy and all of its dimensions.

Heine and Turcotte's "Tweeting as Statecraft" gives an overview of the shifting cultural, political, and social conditions of the information age and looks at how social media has changed the role of diplomacy. The newest trend in the current revolution of diplomatic practice is the growing use of Twitter. Twitter embodies the trend of public diplomacy from states all over the globe furthering interactions between diplomats and the public on a more open and singularized basis by opening new pathways for social engagement. They further look at the gains and consequences that engagement through social networks brings to the diplomatic profession.

The article seeks to explain why Twitter is thriving in diplomatic circles with the existence of blogs, websites and e-mails. Several diplomats prefer Twitter because of its brief, informal, and crisp manner which is the preferred and current method of communication, especially among the youth, who opines that e-mail is even slightly out-of-date.<sup>48</sup> Diplomacy has changed from traditional to the public mainly as a result of real-time social media networks and the presence of multiple non-state actors. He also makes a distinction between network diplomacy and public diplomacy with network diplomacy being a representation of the entire collective efforts used by diplomatic representatives to reach out to the private and the government sectors, civil societies, and NGOs to project the perceptions and interests of their home country, and public diplomacy being the direct efforts made to foreign publics, skipping the intermediaries altogether. They also identify three levels of Twitter usage: The basic level involves posting tweets that communicate speeches, consular information, speeches and all forms of official information. The intermediate level involves heads of missions directly calling attention to keynote events and recommending

current press articles, therefore taking on a more personalized style. At the advanced level, diplomats are active participants on both international and national fronts and actively engage in controversial topics, which can be quite risky but also worthwhile at the same time.<sup>49</sup>

This article is relevant to the study because of its emphasis on Twitter diplomacy or “Twiplomacy” which is a current development in the age of diplomacy. Twitter has become a major platform through which governments communicate with their target audiences. Non-state actors such as civil society organizations, NGOs, and thinktanks among others, also partake in the engagement of the public via social networks concerning issues of diplomacy and therefore expanding the scope of diplomacy.

### **1.9 Sources of Data**

This study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was gathered through a structured interview and questionnaires with respondents from the Russian embassy and the Swedish Consulate. Social media experts from Hype Net Marketing, Paragon Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing were also interviewed because of their expertise in digital media. However, the interview guides and questionnaires were formulated differently for both cultural attachés and digital media professionals because of their specific and different fields of knowledge and expertise. Structured interviews were selected because they give a much clearer and more comprehensive view of the study and facilitate easy comparison of responses from respondents during analysis. The questionnaire was added because face-to-face meetings could not be set up due to COVID-19 restrictions and respondents opted to fill out questionnaires instead. Secondary data complemented the primary data and consisted of books, journal articles and online sources such as websites and blogs.

### **1.10 Research Methodology**

The research design of the study made use of the qualitative method in collecting, analyzing and interpreting data because it constituted structured interviews and largely open-ended questionnaires. The purpose of the research is to investigate the influence of social media on diplomacy particularly between the US and Russia while adding to knowledge so the qualitative approach will be suitable for the study. Qualitative research relies on non-numerical information, and data collection is usually via interviews and questionnaires, observation, focus groups,

participant observation, audio or video recordings, documents, etc.<sup>50</sup> “The objective of the qualitative methodology is to produce in-depth and illustrative information, and meanings in order to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis”<sup>51</sup>. It is also useful in understanding causal reasons, opinions and trends. Conversely, the qualitative method can be time-consuming and “is not an appropriate means for arriving at statistical descriptions of a large population”<sup>52</sup>. It can be difficult to gather data because of the specificity of the sample and “is hard to generalize from a small number of case studies”<sup>53</sup>. Nonetheless, the qualitative method is appropriate for the study because of the knowledge and expertise of respondents regarding the topic.

Consequently, qualitative researchers are interested in studying and/or understanding natural occurrences. Thus, qualitative research is the study of phenomena by the researcher, who must have in-depth environmental knowledge as well as strong creativity and mental analytic abilities to gather data<sup>54</sup>. Inductive and interpretative, qualitative research generates hypotheses based on the researcher's understanding<sup>55</sup>. One of the greatest advantages of qualitative research is the capacity to create extensive descriptions of participants' mental processes and to concentrate on the "why" an event happened<sup>56</sup>.

This study employs inductive reasoning because the findings led to generalizations on the influence of social media in diplomacy though the focus is on USA and Russia.

The sampling method employed is the non-probability technique of purposive sampling which is also known as selective sampling or judgmental sampling, and “reflects a group of sampling techniques that rely on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units...that are to be studied”<sup>57</sup>. This comprises the identification and selection of persons or groups of people that are particularly well-informed or experienced in an area of interest.<sup>58</sup> The reason for purposive sampling in the study is because the selected sample, being the cultural attachés and digital media experts, has adequate information about the theme of the study. Purposive sampling allows for a lot of information to be gleaned from data findings as well as a full description of the impact of the findings on the larger population. However, although unintended, purposive sampling can be prone to researcher bias since the researcher is at liberty to choose participants. “This judgmental subjective component of purpose sampling is only a major disadvantage when such judgements are ill-conceived or poorly considered”<sup>59</sup>. Also, the subjective and non-probability nature of

sample selection in purposive sampling means that it can be difficult to defend the representativeness of the sample<sup>60</sup>. Nevertheless, purposive sampling is suitable for the study because it is necessary to be intentional with the respondents in order to get information relevant to the research.

However, the research obtained data by interviewing the individuals in an environment that was content and nonthreatening for the participants. Conducting interviews provides the researcher with the chance to acquire significant volumes of data and follow-up for clarity through the use of member checking<sup>61</sup>. Each interview took around 30 minutes. The time and venue of the interview were decided according to the participant's convenience. The research acquired the agreement of the participants before recording the interviews. The settings of the interviews were picked by the participants to minimize distractions.<sup>62</sup> Participant-selected interview settings allow the researcher to concentrate on the participant's time restrictions, culture, space, and sentiments. The researcher developed a comfortable atmosphere in which the participants demonstrated a desire to engage and contribute information pertinent to the study subject. All interviews were at the participants' workplace where they felt safe and secure.

When researchers conduct semi-structured interviews and utilize member checking, these vulnerabilities posed by the interview process was mitigated, as will the possibility of participants making untruthful interview replies. The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews, and the transcripts and interpretations were shared with the participants through a planned phone conversation to validate the correctness and increase the validity of the study by attaining data saturation. Interviews with members may also aid in attaining data saturation<sup>63</sup>. During the transcription procedure, there were no issues with the research. Participants confirmed the correctness of the material, thus the researcher was not required to make any changes. Before data saturation, the researcher planned to do follow-up interviews with members and revise the transcripts and explanations appropriately. The researcher did not need to conduct any further interviews and was able to reach data saturation.

After data collection, the findings were analyzed to discover patterns and understand the trend of social media and its use in diplomacy. Together with information from the questionnaires, data collected from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed with thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is defined<sup>64</sup> as "a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting

themes found within a data set”<sup>65</sup>. Although the instrument of data collection was initially interviews only, questionnaires were included because COVID-19 restrictions made it impossible to meet some of the respondents physically. However, the questionnaires contained a lot of open-ended questions and some close-ended questions but since the open-ended questions were geared toward answering the research questions, the findings from the open-ended questions were analyzed. Close-ended questions were not analyzed because they were generic and were not directly related to the research objectives and questions making the research design a flexible one.

The respondents were cultural attachés from the Russian embassy in Ghana, the Honorary Consul of Sweden, Head of Digital Marketing- Hype Net Marketing and Co-founder and Chief of Digital Marketing at Paragon Digital and Social Media Marketing. Unfortunately, the diplomatic missions that were initially targeted were unwilling to meet largely due to COVID-19 restrictions and the nature of the research topic. Additionally, there were inordinate delays in responses from some of these missions. The Swedish Consulate was chosen to supplement the data because the USA embassy when contacted was not forthcoming. It was also chosen because both Sweden and the USA belong to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Ethical considerations such as confidentiality and consent were strictly adhered to. Respondents were informed of the study and were assured that the research was for academic purposes only. Permission was sought beforehand and participation of respondents was voluntary.

### **1.11 Arrangement of Chapters**

The study is divided into four chapters. Chapter one comprises the introduction which includes the background of the problem, statement of the problem, research questions and objectives, scope and rationale of the study, literature review, theoretical framework, sources of data and methodology. Chapter two looks at an overview of the use of social media in the sphere of diplomacy. Chapter three consists of an examination of the influence of social media on US-Russia diplomacy and Chapter four consists of the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### OVERVIEW OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE SPHERE OF DIPLOMACY

#### 2.0 Introduction

The introduction of the internet together with the wave of social media has had a significant impact on almost every sector or aspect of the world and diplomacy is not exempt. This chapter seeks to throw more light on the evolution and history of diplomacy through the years to the current age of digital diplomacy to give a background of the progression of communication in diplomacy.

#### 2.1 Origin and Evolution of Diplomacy

Diplomacy is as old as time; its origins date back to about 3000 years ago. Diplomats in early times were known as orators or envoys. A key prerequisite of an ambassador at the time was to have good oratory skills since their main task was to address citizens of the city-state to which they were accredited, at the public square or 'agora'. Ceremonies, customs, and rules of procedure were founded and institutionalized.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of diplomacy was to facilitate communication between sovereign states and prevent conflicts from escalating into wars and ultimately prevent wars from occurring. Permanent diplomatic missions did not exist until later developments. The position of diplomats was usually restricted to aristocrats or people from the upper class in society or relatives of royals or socialites.

##### 2.1.1 Greece

One of the earliest pieces of evidence of diplomacy was recorded in Greece resulting together with the concept of alliance, from the persistent struggle for military supremacy and economic control between the two Greek city-states, Sparta and Athens. When there was an imminent war, prominent leaders were sent to negotiate but the risk of negotiations during that climate was to be killed. Subsequently, however, diplomatic immunity was introduced to solve this problem. There was also the issue of secret treaties and spying within missions and the Greeks resorted to open treaties. The purpose of diplomacy at the time was to relay messages through merchants and messengers and was premised on the observance of treaties and codes of hospitality. The Greeks

had three types of representatives known as the ‘Angelos’ or ‘presbys’, the ‘keryx’ and the ‘proxenos’. Angelos or presbys meant messenger and elder respectively and were envoys who were used for missions that were specific and short-term. The keryx was a herald who possessed special safety rights, while the proxenos was resident and informal.<sup>2</sup> The Greeks had an extensive diplomatic vocabulary, principles of international conduct that governed international law, advanced archives, and numerous essentials of modern diplomacy. Greek diplomats and entourages benefited from diplomatic immunity. Common features of diplomacy in that era included truces, alliances neutrality, treaties, commercial conventions, and conferences.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1.2 Rome

The Romans introduced the sanctity of contracts which developed into the basis of treaties. During the late Republican era, the Roman laws that were applied to foreign envoys and foreigners, in general, were fused with the Greek concept of natural law which applied to all people, to produce a “law of nations.” The sanctity of contracts together with the law of nations was incorporated into the Roman Catholic Church and conserved centuries after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Hence, the laying of a foundation to deal with the growing modernized international law doctrines that began to appear alongside Europe about a thousand years later.<sup>4</sup> They established diplomatic missions and resident ambassadors which transcended into diplomacy all over the world and are still used today. Resident ambassadors were not necessarily natives of the sending state, building on the use of ‘proxenos’ (local citizens) by Greece in resident missions.

Diplomatic responsibilities were placed primarily with a ‘nuncius’ and a ‘plenipotentiary’. A nuncius was no more than a ‘living letter’, while a plenipotentiary had ‘full powers’ or ‘plena potestas’, to negotiate on behalf of and bind his principal.<sup>5</sup> Roman envoys were sent overseas by their government with scripted directives. A messenger or nuncius was usually sent, to towns. When there were greater responsibilities, a ‘legatio’ or embassy consisting of 10 or 12 ‘legati’ or ambassadors was established under a president. The ‘legati’ were leading citizens chosen for their impeccable oratory skills and were untouchable. Rome also set up sophisticated archives, that were staffed by competent archivists.<sup>6</sup>

Until the sixteenth century, the individual European states did not focus responsibility for diplomacy and foreign policy on a single administrative element and rather assigned it to new and

different bureaucracies based on location. A number of such bureaus were in charge of specific domestic issues. However, this started to change with the joint pressure of the multiplicity of global relations and growing links of resident missions which were characteristic of the early contemporary era.<sup>7</sup> Modern diplomacy originated from the Italians. Latin was the lingua franca of diplomacy and it was one of the expected characteristics of a good diplomat at the time, among other qualities.

### 2.1.3 Byzantium

The rulers of Byzantium (Eastern Roman Empire) sought to ensure respect for their imperial pretensions through the ceremony, protocol and formal management and training of their diplomats.<sup>8</sup> Since Byzantium was surrounded by enemies on all of its borders and did not possess adequate military capacity, diplomacy was essential for their survival. The Byzantine elite had an important rule, which was to evade wars as much as possible because it was public knowledge that even on the off chance that Byzantium is triumphant they would lose in the long run because of its inadequate military prowess.<sup>9</sup> In the year 740, the first permanent office dealing with foreign relations, a predecessor of the modern ministry of foreign affairs, was created. The office's main purpose was to discover means of resolving insurgencies in subordinate regions as well as invasions from neighbouring states, in the event of insufficient standalone military power. The Byzantines established training of negotiators and interpreters and their envoys were adequately prepared for foreign missions as well as receiving foreign guests. Both negotiations and decisions were made concerning the declaration of war and the making of peace. Diplomatic customs like protocol, etiquette, formalities, etc. were established and all formal rules of the protocol were made rigid to emphasize the power of the state and give the impression that it is more powerful than it actually is. The ruler was at liberty to decide what could and could not be shown to foreigners.<sup>10</sup> They could display their wealth and elegance in the presence of ambassadors or make it seem they had less in peculiar situations when they had to be discreet. Ringmar is of the view that the longevity of the Byzantine empire was a result of its aggressive use of diplomacy. The "Bureau of Barbarians" was set up with the sole purpose of gathering intelligence on their rivals and preparing diplomats for foreign missions. The diplomats were able to negotiate treaties, form alliances, and make friends with the enemies of their enemies. Neighbours of a state that threatened to attack were showered with extravagant gifts to persuade them to be part of the Byzantine coalition, while

foreign régimes were usually undermined through a variety of devious tactics. There was a whole stable of exiled royalty in Constantinople, that the Byzantines were prepared to reinstate on their thrones in the event of a situation that required it.<sup>11</sup> Some contributions of the Byzantines to diplomacy include a proto Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the introduction of regular diplomatic reporting, proto intelligence service, early multi-stakeholder diplomacy, early international law, soft power and public diplomacy, and time-management.<sup>12</sup>

#### 2.1.4 Venice

Venice, with its early preoccupation with trade, in effect transformed its mercantile agents into resident envoys.<sup>13</sup> The Venetians built on the form of diplomacy that the Byzantines used and became one of the first to create an organized system of diplomacy with their diplomats reputed to be the most refined and well-informed. New standards of honesty and technical proficiency were set.<sup>14</sup> Some requirements of a Venetian diplomat were returning any gift or money received from the receiving state to his head of state upon his return, and sending his own cook along with him on posting due to the fear of foreign cooks poisoning him, a practice still common today. Getting to the end of the Middle Ages, the Venetians pioneered the organized distribution of newsletters in their diplomatic facility.<sup>15</sup> The diplomatic system of Venice was remarkable in its usages and duties for the honour and dignity of its diplomatic body, its minute and continuous attention to making it influential, thoughtful and powerful, and the extension of this representation to all of Europe. From the ending of the twelfth century to the mid-seventeenth century, Venetian diplomacy attained and maintained its greatness and reputation. Diplomacy continued during this period in both the East and the West. Upon completion of his term of service in a foreign mission, an ambassador of the Republic of Venice, within fifteen days of his return was to present to the Senate a “Reliazone” which is a solemn written report on the government to which he was accredited. The original was then given to the Chancellor who kept it in the “Secreta” which was specially meant for such documents.<sup>16</sup> Venice was particularly known for being elaborate in their reports, setting them apart from other diplomats in their report writing. In the earlier history of Venice, an ambassador could remain at his mission of posting for only two years but by the fifteenth century, it was extended to three years. The reason for the stated span was to avoid excessive personal relations between the ambassador and the foreign people.<sup>17</sup> Venice was great

at its conduct of diplomacy to the extent other governments sought assistance in matters pertaining to diplomacy.

#### 2.1.5 France

Cardinal Richelieu was instrumental in the evolution of diplomacy by bridging the gap between renaissance diplomacy and modern diplomacy. He first established the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in France on 11 March 1626, which fully established permanence in diplomacy. French became the traditional language of diplomacy and replaced Latin. This was championed by Cardinal Richelieu through his work in the advancement of French diplomacy. The treaty of Westphalia in 1648 brought about the first modern diplomatic congress and France's approach to diplomacy was based on Cardinal Richelieu's *raison d'état* (national interest) as the ultimate purpose. The main factor that contributed to the expanse of resident missions was the *raison d'état* doctrine. *Raison d'état* was simply the furtherance of a state's interests. This sanctioned what, in the seventeenth century, Richelieu called 'continuous negotiation': permanent diplomacy 'in all places, irrespective of considerations of sentiment or religion.'<sup>18</sup>

It was the surge and alliance of the grand dynastic European monarchies, coupled with their steadily consolidated administrations centred on cabinets, chancelleries, and royal courts, that led to the selection of clerks, secretaries, and ultimately independent departments with specific responsibilities for foreign affairs. Nowhere was this more apparent than in seventeenth-century France, where diplomacy, like the armed forces, was organized to meet the needs of an expansive and potentially hegemonic power. Diplomacy also acquired its aristocratic ethos at a time when the government was largely in the hands of the crown and the nobility.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the French were well versed in the art of negotiations, a crucial aspect of diplomacy today.

#### 2.1.6 19<sup>th</sup> century

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, many European states had special ministries and departments for foreign policy management. The 1814–15 Vienna Congress allowed for the control and revision of established diplomatic practices.<sup>20</sup> The Congress of Vienna was a conference or a meeting set up as a result of the Napoleonic wars and his desire (Napoleon Bonaparte of France) to conquer all of Europe, which was subsequently thwarted when some of the European states came together and fought him off. Afterwards, the conference was set up and

the main purpose was to safeguard their security, regulate the European system and prevent any such revolutionary disturbances in the future by addressing shared security matters and seeing to it that no one country has so much power to threaten the territorial integrity of other states. In 1815, the Congress of Vienna codified diplomacy as a distinctive institution of the new state system and set out the international codes of conduct governing diplomatic discourse among sovereign states in the interests of the nation as a whole rather than of any given dynasty.<sup>21</sup> The Congress of Vienna ensured that issues of rank among the practitioners were codified to bring order to a growing number of diplomatic actors and interactions.

### 2.1.7 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century

With the establishment of the League of Nations after World War I and upon its demise, the United Nations (UN) after World War II, diplomacy began to change from occurring between states to including non-state actors and from bilateral diplomacy to multilateral diplomacy. Comprising 193 member states, the UN works by negotiating international accords to resolve worldwide issues such as climate change, lack of education, and human rights violations.<sup>22</sup> The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) was adopted in 1961 by the United Nations, to outline and formally recognize the privileges that diplomats should have in diplomatic missions in host countries. This is to ensure that they work diligently and comfortably without any harassment or fear from the host country.

Currently, diplomacy involves relations not only between states but other non-state actors like NGOs, think tanks, Multinational Corporations (MNCs), media, civil societies etc. Countries now belong to inter-governmental organizations for the achievement of specific goals and objectives. Some of these organizations include the African Union (AU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), World Trade Organization (WTO), Association of South-East Asian States (ASEAN), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), European Union (EU), and many others who now play an active role in modern diplomacy or what is referred to as diplomacy 3.0.

## 2.2 History of Communication in Diplomacy

Communication is essential to diplomacy. It is practically the backbone of diplomacy because it has to do with relaying information between states. Earlier times began with signals, birds, envoys,

and changed with the invention of the telegraph, the telephone, the internet and currently social media. Communication has been constant throughout the evolution of diplomacy with only the mode of communication changing.

### 2.2.1 Telegraph

The invention of the telegraph made it the earliest medium of communication in diplomacy. It was also known as the semaphore, teletypewriter, or mechanical telegraph. It was a device used to transmit information across distances. A telegraph is any system that transfers encoded information via signal across a distance using an electro-mechanical typewriter. Although associated with sending messages through an electric current, the word telegraph was coined to describe an optical system of sending coded messages. Until the invention of the telephone, the telegraph became the standard mode of communication in the urban areas of the US and Europe.<sup>23</sup> The earliest form of the telegraph was invented by Claude Chappe in France in 1794. A crucial later development was by Samuel Finley Morse who created the Morse code to encode messages with the telegraph. Although it was first invented in 1794, there were subsequent advancements to it in later years and it was first introduced in diplomatic circles in 1856 at the Congress of Paris where the British representative received a coded telegram from Prime Minister Palmerston and in 1866 when the State Department sent a cable to the US mission in France.<sup>24</sup> During this time, the telegraph was used for internal communication between diplomatic missions and headquarters, and subsequently, it became a predominant communication medium between governments. Some notable telegrams that impacted diplomatic history were: the Ems Telegram in 1870 used by Otto von Bismarck in unifying Germany and as a means of preparing to enter the Franco-Prussian war, and the Kruger Telegram which was sent by the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II to Stephanus Paulus Kruger third president of the South African Republic which caused turmoil in the UK particularly, and the Zimmerman Telegram sent originally in secret by German Foreign Minister, Arthur Zimmermann to the German foreign minister for Mexico, Henrich von Eckhardt, which was intercepted and decoded by British intelligence which revealed that he was to begin negotiations with Mexico and encourage them to enact war with the United States, and if the Central Powers won the Mexicans would be able to annex Texas, New Mexico and Arizona leading the US to enter the first world war.<sup>25</sup> The invention of the telegraph improved the speed of delivery of messages significantly. Prior to the telegraph, communication in diplomacy was usually done through letters from an

envoy or diplomat of one state to another via journeying (merchant caravans), and distance by road could take days to months before a message was received and, in some instances, birds delivered messages.

### 2.2.2 Telephone

The telephone is commonly known to have been invented in 1876 by Alexander Graham Bell together with the assistance of Thomas A. Watson, his colleague.<sup>26</sup> Alexander Graham Bell got the patent in 1876 in the USA to begin the production of telephones on the market. It is important to note however that there were previous inventions of the telephone just before Bell's but due to some restraints, largely financial, were unable to make it into the market. Antonio Meucci, an Italian innovator is recognized as the pioneer in the invention of the first basic telephone in 1849 and 1854, Charles Bourseul a Frenchman, also invented a phone. Alexander Bell was successful mostly because he was able to secure funds for the research and production of telephones. The very first telephone line, switchboard, and telephone exchange happened in 1877-78. Three years later, about 49,000 telephones were in use. Bell merged this company with others in 1880 to form the American Bell Telephone Company, and by 1885 American Telegraph and Telephone Company (AT&T) was formed, dominating telephone communications for the next century.<sup>27</sup> The introduction of the telephone did not entirely make the telegraph outdated but rather complemented it. The telephone helped to improve diplomatic communications distinctively. It played a key role in international crises such as the 1973 Middle East war, the 1967 Six-day War in the Middle East, the 1979 USSR invasion of Afghanistan, and the India-Pakistan crisis in December 1971.<sup>28</sup> Another major example of the use of the telephone was during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1961 which occurred during the Cold War phase. A hotline was immediately established linking the White House to the Kremlin for urgent communication between the leaders of both countries when tensions were too high.

The telephone has facilitated the increase in speed of delivery of messages, reduced travel costs, established effective communication on important issues, steadily advanced delicate negotiations and created links that go beyond cultural and ideological differences and geographical distances. Some drawbacks however include eavesdropping on conversations, recording calls such as the case of the Watergate scandal in the US between 1972-1974 in President Nixon's tenure which led to his subsequent resignation, having less time to make a decision or make a hasty decision and

not seeing verbal cues from the speaker on the other end of the phone. Nonetheless, the telephone is still used to this day and is not completely outdated even with the introduction of other forms of communication.

### 2.2.3 Radio

The invention of the radio changed diplomatic communication by including foreign publics on foreign policy issues and shaping public opinion. This helped to move it away from a profession shrouded in secrecy to a more open and inclusive one. Rawnsley (1996) records the earliest use of radio in foreign policy when Russia in 1926, ordered Bessarabia's return from Romania. In 1929, the introduction of Radio Moscow made Moscow the first to utilize universal radio as an instrument of foreign policy. It was first aired in four languages and progressively grew to eleven languages by 1933. The main objective was to endear to the rest of the world the Communist revolution and propagandize its achievements.<sup>29</sup> VOA (Voice of America) was particularly instrumental in showcasing American culture and portraying America in a friendly light to the foreign public. Both VOA and Radio Moscow actively contributed to the spread of public diplomacy and propaganda. During the Bay of Pigs invasion, an event where Cuban exiles were trained by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the US to collapse Fidel Castro's communist government, an attempt which failed, Radio Moscow was able to broadcast and paint America black as trying to interfere in Cuba's matters while highlighting the hypocrisy of the Kennedy administration, since George Washington, first president of the United States was all about America pursuing isolationism and non-interventionism in the beginning. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, an event that nearly brought the world into a nuclear war sparked by the siting of nuclear missiles by the Soviets on the Cuban island, which was just about ninety miles off the coast of Florida<sup>30</sup>, the VOA was instrumental in their reportage of the crisis, adding to the anxiety of Americans about Cuba. Just before the incident, the VOA was aimed at exposing, weakening and isolating the existing government with the intent of a subsequent removal and replacement by US friendly government, and so it was fundamental to the deposing of Cuba, another sovereign state. Soviet radio broadcasts also incessantly attacked American policies concerning Cuba and condemned aggression that was purported to be sponsored by the US against Cuba in preparation for a likely invasion in future.<sup>31</sup> The Cuban missile crisis was finally resolved as both the Americans and the Soviets made use of the radio to directly communicate with each other thereby

supplementing the existing conventional channels of diplomacy and negotiation. Despite differing opinions on the shortcomings of BBC coverage of the Suez crisis, the corporation was generally influential with its radio reportage of the crisis in 1956. Within that period the Hungarian uprising occurred and there were anti-Soviet demonstrations in Poland which the BBC covered. The leading radio program on current affairs, 'At Home and Abroad' although cautious in its coverage, provided a platform for essential voices and generated significant concerns with regard to government policy.<sup>32</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Television

The television was invented in the 1920s with contributing developments from John Logie Baird and Philo Farnsworth, a 14-year old farm boy in Idaho, USA. Television started as a monochrome medium transmitting with a screen resolution of 405 lines which was grainy and lacked impact. Then, in the 1960s colour television was introduced with a resolution of 625 lines and the sharper picture and startling realism of colour were instantly a huge success.<sup>33</sup> It was a revolutionary invention because it offered both audio and video and it was now possible to watch programs and shows on a screen in the comfort of one's home. As it developed further, it became possible to watch programs from all over the world. It became the main source of information on international affairs and began to play a crucial role in diplomacy as a means of soft power. Television was used as a tool of public diplomacy due to the ability of programs and shows to be telecast in most parts of the world. In 1980 Cable News Network (CNN), a 24-hour news channel was formed by Ted Turner and Reese Schonfeld, which provided live updates on events and happenings from around the world. CNN was the first television channel to broadcast 24/7 and set the pace for other TV channels like Sky News which was established in 1989, BBC News established in 1997, Channel One Russia in 1995, Information Telegraph Agency of Russia–Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) and several others. CNN's dramatic live coverage of breaking news and vivid images on screen appealed to people and was able to effect change as needed. CNN became a key instrument of public diplomacy by the US since it could broadcast to other parts of the world.

Subsequently, the term, CNN Effect was coined in the 1990s and was understood as the increased effect of mainstream news media in general, and not limited to CNN alone, on foreign policy formulation. In Northern Iraq, extensive media reporting of the Kurdish crisis seemed to make possible the first lawful intervention by the UN, by creating guarded 'safe havens' in Northern

Iraq to protect the Kurds from the attacks of the Saddam Hussein forces. In Somalia, US news media coverage of famine during the civil war of the early 1990s appeared to sway President George Bush (Snr) to organize the deployment of 28,000 troops to support aid workers<sup>34</sup>. Consequently, television became a key instrument of public diplomacy by several states due to its capacity to broadcast to the world almost in real-time.

#### 2.2.5 Fax

The facsimile machine, widely known as fax was the next innovation in communication invented originally by Scottish mechanic and inventor Alexander Bain in 1843 but came to prominence in the 1980s. Ritto described fax as the transmission of printed scanned materials, usually to a telephone number which is linked to a printer. The receiving fax machine translates the tones and restructures the original image by printing a paper version<sup>35</sup>. Originals of important documents such as minutes, speeches, verbal notes, treaties, letters, memos, press releases and all types of reports were now distributed by fax in all diplomatic missions<sup>36</sup>. Foreign ministries ensured that all their embassies used the fax to receive regular updates from their respective ministries and the government. The fax system was also beneficial to consular services as vital documents such as visas, passports, marriage certificates, birth certificates, etc. could now be sent from their various capitals with ease, thereby allowing the provision of swifter and more dependable services by diplomatic missions to their citizens living abroad.<sup>37</sup> The invention of the fax greatly enhanced diplomatic communication since documents could now be sent anywhere in the world in a matter of minutes.

#### 2.2.6 Internet

The internet is a system or network of computers connected at a global level. It was developed in the 1960s and later became available to the public in the 1990s. Cohen-Almagor (2013) states that the early Internet was developed and executed in USA research departments, colleges, and cable companies with an interest and passion in pioneering research. The program saw steady growth throughout the 60s and 70s, developing into a computer network system that transmitted information by “packet switching.” The Internet entered the commercial phase in 1984-1989, enabled by the upgrade of backbone links, the rise of interconnected universal networks, and fresh software programs. It massively expanded in the 1990s, into an international network at a time

when both business computers and personal computers with various operating systems joined in, and from there, social networking subsequently emerged and developed successfully. The technology has changed into an everyday network for finding, distributing and carrying across information and concepts, trading pictures, animation, videos, and sounds to masses of users all over the globe.<sup>38</sup> With the internet came e-mail, which was one of the services used extensively by the diplomatic community in sending messages and documents across the world. Other services that the internet provides are webpages and websites, browsers such as Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Microsoft Edge etc. and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Instagram, just to mention a few. Services such as e-commerce, dating, games, advertising, blogging, TV streaming, video streaming, music, online radio stations, and podcasts have been made possible due to the internet. The arrival of the internet has greatly increased the use of digital technologies in diplomacy. (See Fig 1)

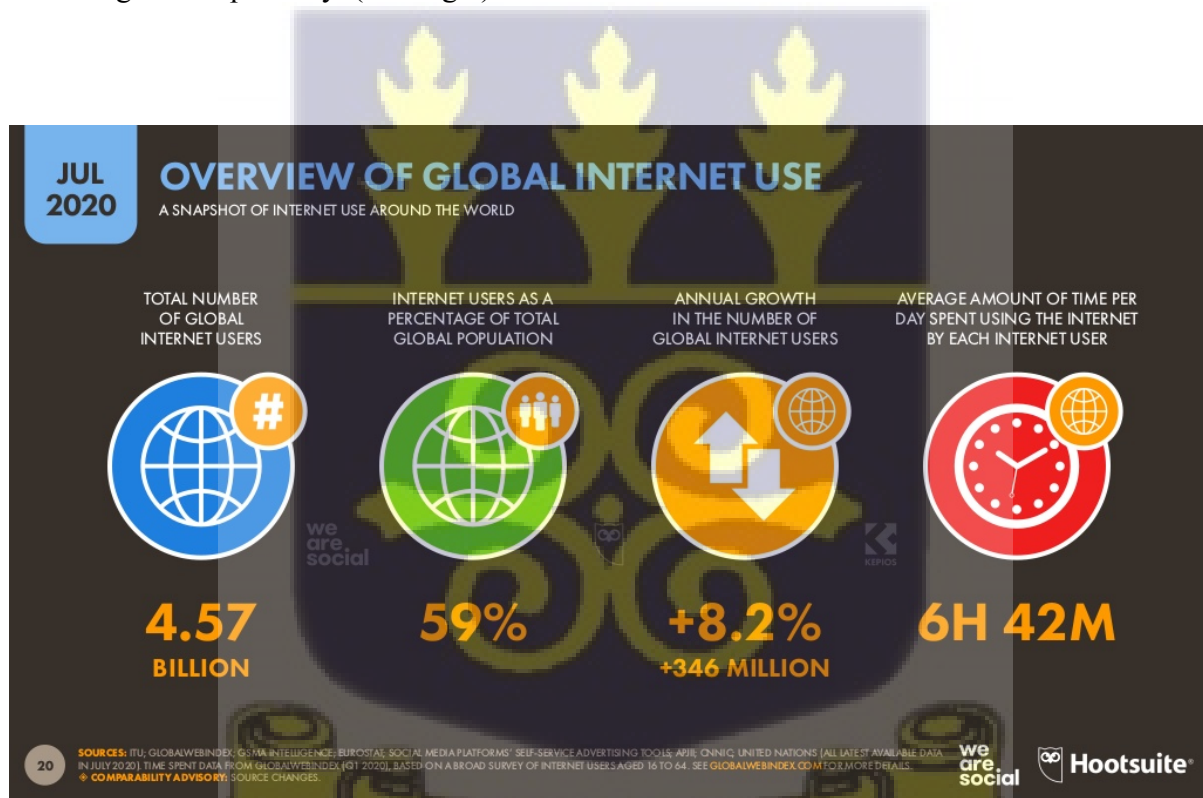


Figure 1: Overview of Global Internet Use



Figure 2: World's Most Visited Websites

### 2.2.7 Social Media

Safko (2010) breaks down social media into two: social, meaning the instinctual needs humans have to connect with fellow humans and media, which refers to the means through which humans make those connections. He adds that humans have been doing this in different ways since the beginning of time, because of our need to belong to groups with people with similar interests with whom we can contentedly share ideas, experiences, and thoughts. Over the years, what has changed is the technologies used to make that connection or maintain those relationships that we have always had.<sup>39</sup> Social media can be explained as online technologies that people use to collaborate and share ideas, opinions, experiences, products, insight and much more, to connect, maintain and create relationships.

With the rise of the internet, social media was introduced and became prominent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. From the beginning of 2020, over 4.5 billion people are using the internet, while social media users have exceeded the 3.8 billion mark. Almost 60% of the global population is already online.<sup>40</sup> The first social media network created was Six Degrees in 1997 and was one of the very first to allow

its users to create profiles, invite friends, organize groups, and surf other user profiles<sup>41</sup> followed by Friendster in 2002, and Myspace in 2003. These set the pace for the subsequent emergence of social media applications that have become widespread today. Some of these include Facebook, LinkedIn, Skype, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Zoom, and several others. Most apps recently have become very useful to many people, from diplomats to government leaders, CEOs, students, job seekers and the like.

#### 2.2.7.1 Skype

Skype is a video networking platform created in 2003 that allows free online audio and video calls, and messaging via the internet. It facilitates online meetings, interviews, and conferences and is available for mobiles, tablets, and PCs. Skype grew at an incredible rate within two years of its availability with over 155 million downloads, almost 54 million users, and nearly 2 million paid subscribers by August 2005.<sup>42</sup> It was not limited to specific groups or organizations so everyone could use it easily to connect with people irrespective of distance. Most video networking platforms today are built on Skype and although it is not as popular as it used to be, it is still used by individuals, organizations, and television news reporting.

#### 2.2.7.2 Facebook

Facebook was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg as a social media platform where users are able to create profiles, post pictures, videos, and other content, write on their own walls or other people's walls, like, comment, and react to other users' posts. It is a medium through which people connect with one another, reconnect with longtime friends or acquaintances, start discussions etc. Since its formation, Facebook has grown and is still one of the most popular and most used apps (applications) currently. According to Datareportal, Facebook is the world's most used social platform. (Refer to Fig 5) Although formerly used primarily to share photos, videos, links, feelings, etc., Facebook has steadily become useful for professional engagements as well. The creation of institutional or personal accounts by organizations, or groups can attract people with similar interests, increase efficient engagement with the public and help to compile and organize content.<sup>43</sup>

#### 2.2.7.3 YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing platform that was formed in 2005, which enables users to freely upload videos to their channels. YouTube is focused on content sharing and is free and easy to use by everyone. As a user-generated content community, its sheer size and mainstream popularity were unprecedented. The success of YouTube is attributed to comments, an embeddable video player, an email link to allow video sharing and video recommendations via the "related videos" list.<sup>44</sup> People can like videos, share videos, comment and subscribe to specific channels they would be interested in seeing more content from. YouTube is the second most used social platform worldwide according to Datareportal. (Refer to Fig 5)

#### 2.2.7.4 Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging social networking service created in 2006 by Jack Dorsey. Users are able to post tweets and interact through tweets, mentions and hashtags. The “@” feature is the main key to Twitter’s role as a medium for conversation and is essential for creating, maintaining, and enlivening connections among users. In a platform designed to announce rather than converse, it is emblematic of users’ insistence on their capacity to reorganize in order to socialize.<sup>45</sup> The hashtag “#” makes it easier to keep up with topics and trends simply by including a hashtag before a topic, for example, #cybersecurity. Any user that searches with the exact hashtag will then see all posts concerning #cybersecurity as long as those posts had the hashtag. Twitter has grown to become one of the most popular social media platforms for everyone, world leaders, celebrities, organizations, and everyday users alike and for various purposes such as entertainment, political discussions, crowdfunding, and business marketing and promotion. (Refer to Fig 5)

#### 2.2.7.5 Instagram

Instagram is a social media application created in 2010 by Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom, that lets its users share photos and videos with their followers. The app is used by many people for several reasons, some of which include: networking, e-commerce as a creative channel, brand awareness, etc. Instagram also makes use of the hashtag and is mainly image-based rather than blog-focused like other apps. Users are able to view photos, like, follow, share and comment on posts from their followers as well as people they follow.

#### 2.2.7.6 TikTok

Known in China as Douyin, TikTok is a Chinese social networking service based mainly on video sharing. Users are able to create and share short videos, where speed can be skewed, and filters can be used. It was created in 2016 and enables everyone to be a creative content creator while encouraging users to share their passion through videos. Currently, there are about 800 million active users worldwide. This app also makes use of the hashtag symbol which is found in the Explore section to find trending topics.

### 2.2.7.7 Zoom

Zoom is a video conferencing app created in 2011, which gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic to facilitate meetings for schools, workplaces, seminars, conferences, and interviews among others. **Datareportal** (2020) records Zoom as having the highest number of global users with about 300 million worldwide daily meeting participants. (See Fig 3)



Figure 3: Video Conferencing Platforms

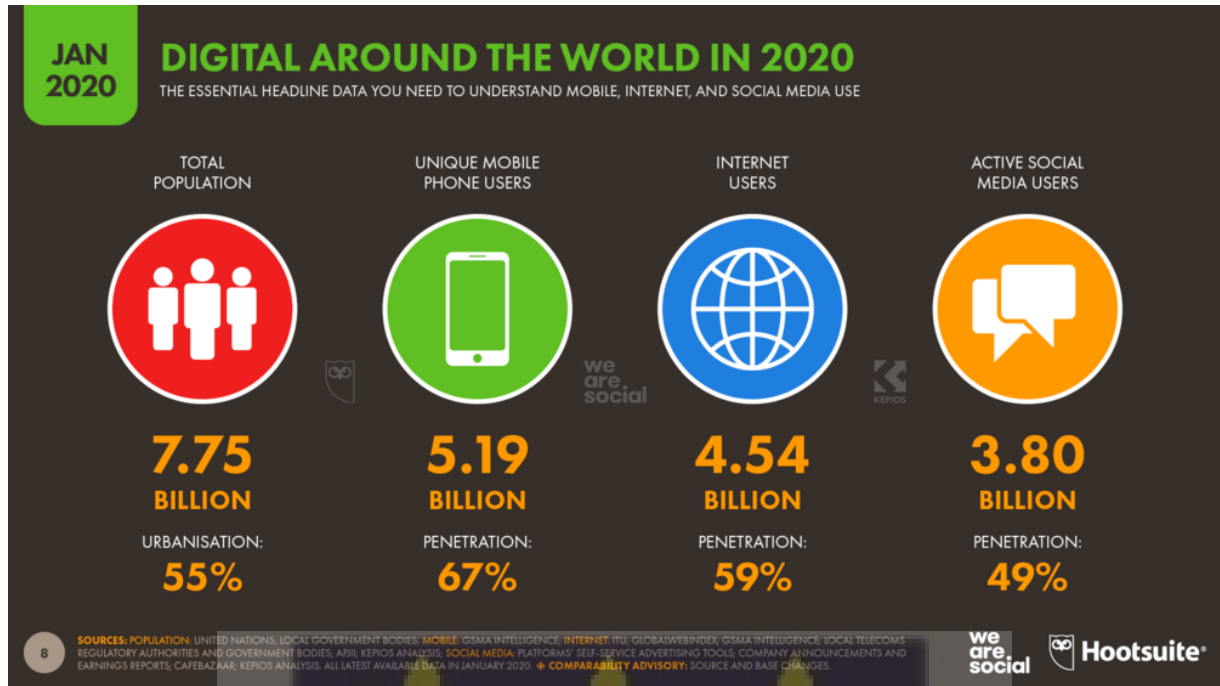


Figure 4: Digital Around the World in 2020

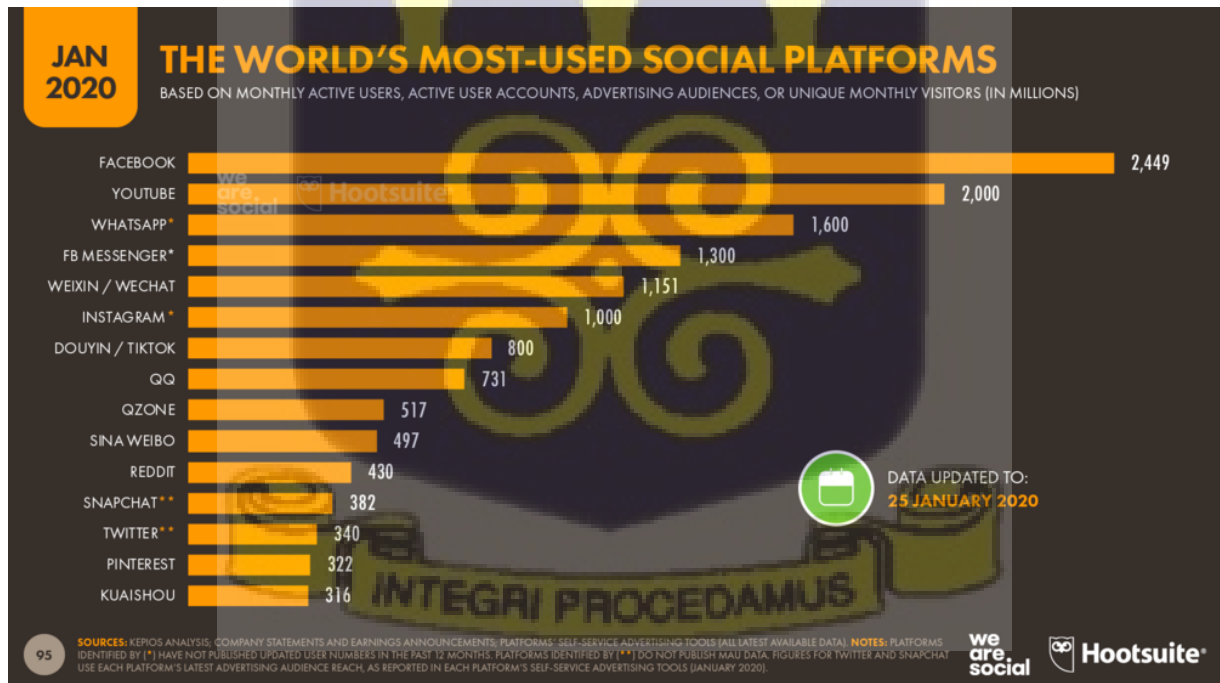
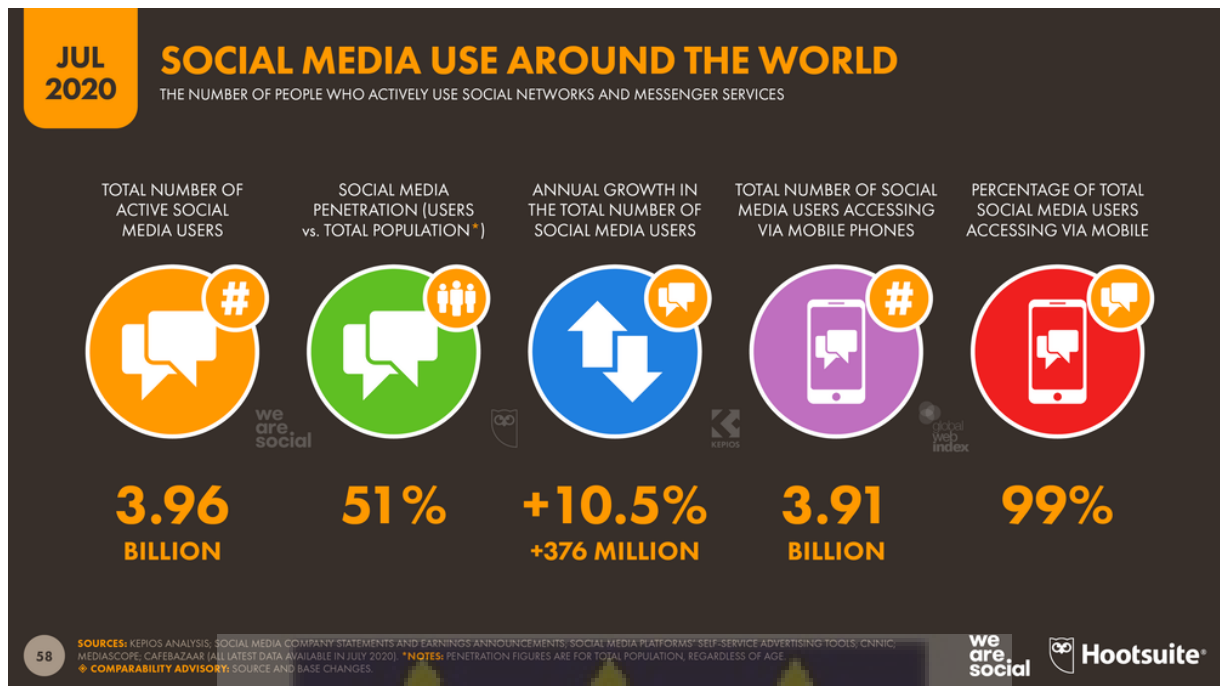


Figure 5: The World's Most-Used Social Platforms



**Figure 6: Social Media Use Around the World**

Social media began to be incorporated into diplomacy in 2000 via Facebook and Twitter, and slowly to other networks like Instagram and YouTube. Diplomatic communication greatly changed with the arrival of social media. Currently, Twitter and Facebook are the most common platforms used by diplomats and world leaders worldwide. People are able to engage easily and get updates instantly because of the increasing number of active social media users. Datareportal (2020), reports that there are 3.96 billion active users with a 10.5% annual growth in the number of users. (Refer to Fig 6) Shirky (2011) emphasizes that social media has now become an everyday technological tool for the transmission of information since it is how we communicate with the world and often where we retrieve our first source of news. Not only has it become a platform through which sentiments are shared but also increased freedom to demand change.<sup>46</sup> Unlike mainstream media, social media has presented itself as a medium through which unfiltered and real-time events can be realized.

### 2.3 Emergence of Social Media in Diplomacy and E-diplomacy

Some years back, the CNN effect was a theory that was used to explain the actions or inactions of governments, as a response to vivid images and video footage of events such as wars, conflicts

and many others on cable television networks, particularly CNN. The CNN effect in actual fact is about the speed that cable news is able to spread information and the influence on people who otherwise would not have noticed issues happening far away from them.<sup>47</sup> After the 1991 Gulf War, revolts occurred in northern and southern Iraq with the intention of overthrowing Saddam Hussein, resulting from a UN backed war by the US to reverse the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and Saddam Hussein. However, Saddam Hussein was able to successfully repress the revolts and as a result, a humanitarian crisis developed, with Iraqi Kurds becoming trapped in the mountainous region of northern Iraq in trying to escape Hussein's forces. In the subsequent weeks, extensive media coverage of the occurrences drove the US to intervene by creating safe areas in northern Iraq.<sup>48</sup> This symbolized the influence of the media on the US, creating a political call to intervene in the domestic matters of another country to save lives and guard human rights.

The USA intervention during the 1991-1992 Somalia crisis, was an important episode in the history of the influence of media on public policy formulation and humanitarian intervention. The crisis was as a result of a civil war that broke out leading to the collapse of the government and subsequent starvation of the Somali people. As graphic and emotive images of starvation and conflict were shown on television, the crisis began to garner attention on the international scene and the US began intervention by deploying 28,000 US troops in December 1992 to provide aid. By mid to late 1993, the operation had steadily progressed from the provision of aid to military actions against certain factions in Somalia. The worldwide broadcast of a dead USA marine being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu coupled with the 'Black Hawk Down' incident which involved the death of 18 USA soldiers and up to 1000 Somalis, echoed the failure of the USA intervention and their immediate withdrawal from Somalia. At this stage, the media now had an impediment effect on policymakers whereby images of dead USA soldiers turned public opinion against involvement in Somalia.<sup>49</sup>

The CNN effect has reduced to an extent with the dawn of social media in the sense that, with the rise of the use of the internet, social media presents news and live updates in real time and faster than what the CNN effect did. This was especially prominent because a majority of the population has smartphones. Also, in terms of the credibility of information, posts from a diplomat or government official or civil society personnel are seen to be more authentic because they are direct. TV channels have even taken advantage and created accounts on social media as an extension of

their news channels where instant updates are given and have also been made interactive to get feedback from users. The CNN effect was a useful theory to analyze events but in this current digital age, perhaps a new theory can best explain the influence that social media has on diplomatic relations.

Following the introduction of the internet, social media use has accelerated diplomatic communication. According to the BCW Twiplomacy Study, 108 heads of state, 88 foreign ministers, and 83 prime ministers have personal accounts on Facebook which are generally more popular than the accounts of their respective organizations. By March 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, the combined total of page likes of the 692 personal and institutional Facebook accounts belonging to world leaders was more than 345 million. 767 million interactions were also recorded since March 1<sup>st</sup> 2018.<sup>50</sup> Social media networks afford an opportunity for officials to directly connect with global audiences. It helps them to review policies based on the feedback received concerning certain issues, particularly through Twitter and Facebook.

The “Arab Spring” was a watershed of the penetration of social media and the internet into diplomatic activities. It was a series of protests and demonstrations against oppressive governments that began in North Africa in December 2010 first in Tunisia, and afterwards, an extraordinary movement of protests quaked the whole Arab world. Consecutively, the ruling governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya, were overthrown. With a divergent degree of intensity, protests and demonstrations broke out and still continued in some Arab countries. The Tunisian and Egyptian revolts visibly showed the use of social media platforms as an efficient tool to rally online activists, and move them towards offline activism on the streets where they made the change happen. Social media accelerated the speed at which information travelled across nations and provided the means for individuals to communicate with others all over the world.<sup>51</sup> On April 14 2014, followers of a terrorist group known as Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls from a school in Chibok in Nigeria. Subsequently, Michelle Obama posted a photo of herself on Twitter, posing with a white piece of paper that read: “#BringBackOurGirls”. This hashtag campaign was intended to create awareness about the kidnappings and reached 1 million tweets by the time her husband Obama joined. She delivered a public address a couple of days later, during which she gave the assurance that her husband, in conjunction with the US government were doing their best to rescue the Nigerian girls. This increased attention and awareness of the issue in the USA and

the world over.<sup>52</sup> Although there are many contentions with her campaign due to little that was done to help, the fact that some have still not been found and coupled with the backlash she received reminding her of her husband's drone strikes, the hashtag campaign got everyone talking and made the international community aware of the kidnapping.

E-diplomacy consists of the various electronic media or channels that are employed in the carrying out of diplomacy to enhance diplomatic communication. It is also known as digital diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, real-time diplomacy, and a host of other names. Now more than ever, social media has become ingrained in diplomacy following the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. This pandemic for the safety of all has forced everyone to stay home and be safe while conducting business and meetings online to ensure the reduction of human contact and prevent the further spread of the virus. As a result, bilateral and multilateral gatherings have all moved online via Zoom video conferencing, Google Meet and Skype thereby increasing the use of social media platforms in diplomacy.

#### **2.4 Forms of e-diplomacy**

E-diplomacy involves the use of technology, typically communication technologies in the conduct of diplomacy and takes form in the following ways:

##### **2.4.1 Public Diplomacy**

Gilboa describes public diplomacy as the use of the media and other communication channels by both state and non-state actors, to influence public opinion in foreign societies.<sup>53</sup> By influencing the citizens their governments are also eventually influenced. The United States, for instance, first began to incorporate public diplomacy into its foreign policy in the First World War when in 1917, the Committee on Public Information was set up by President Woodrow Wilson, with George Creel put in charge as director. Although he insisted his office's activities were not propaganda, the evidence eventually contradicted George Creel's denials since together with other activities, he set up a state-sponsored news service, organized tours, distributed pamphlets on 'the Gospel of Americanism', ensured the prompt receiving of wartime allocations of uncommon materials, and made sure that the movies depicted America positively. Shortly afterwards it was abolished, and the invention of the radio later thrust many governments into international radio broadcasting as a form of public diplomacy.<sup>54</sup> Public diplomacy became very popular during the Cold War era when

both the eastern and western blocs resorted to the shaping of public opinion to further their agendas, with America using Radio Free Europe, VOA and Radio Liberty and the USSR using Radio Moscow. In the US, the United States Information Agency (USIA) was created in 1953 to handle public diplomacy efforts and was later in the mid-1990s integrated into the State Department as part of budget cuts. In the late 1980s, the US government included foreign TV programs, such as 'WorldNet' and 'Dialogue', to its collection of public diplomacy media stations.<sup>55</sup> Traditional diplomacy reputed to be discreet has become less discreet with advancements in communication and the inclusion of the public and other non-governmental organizations. Public diplomacy has now become an important part of foreign policy in many countries however, it only complements traditional diplomacy. It helps to shape foreign policy objectives and improve relations between states on the international stage. In order to influence public opinion, certain matters that may have been discussed behind closed doors are now discussed on social media and other media outlets like the television and radio with the inclusion of non-state actors, citizens and foreigners alike. Official government representatives nowadays have growing engagements with various actors in national and international civil society, religious, business, and other cultural groups.<sup>56</sup> This signifies the shift from club diplomacy where diplomats are restricted to their peers to network diplomacy, where previously excluded actors are now actively involved in diplomatic activities.

Gilboa suggests three variations of public diplomacy namely the basic, the non-state transnational, and the domestic public relations variants. The basic variant is the use of the media and other means to create a favourable image in the mindsets of citizens in a foreign state, with the aim of influencing them to exert pressure on their governments to make changes in their policies. By providing the target audience with more objective yet intentional information on their own country, it counters the domestic propaganda in their government. The Cold War period is a clear case in point where the US and the Soviet Union used radio stations and television programs to shape the attitudes of the foreign public and pursue their respective ideologies. The non-state transnational variant is the influence of non-state actors like individuals and groups on public behaviours and sentiments in direct relation to another state's foreign policy choices. The domestic public relations variant simply refers to public diplomacy that takes place in the country of origin. This can be from the opposition of the government in power to discredit the incumbent government or even the government in power itself to undermine their opposition or highlight their achievements or

policies. It is also when the country of origin embarks on a public diplomacy campaign targeted at effecting changes in another state. An instance is when an American public relations firm was hired by the Kuwaiti monarchs in exile, to initiate a public diplomacy campaign in the US to gather support from the American people for Bush to intervene in the Gulf conflict of 1990-1991 by removing Saddam Hussein.<sup>57</sup>

Public diplomacy is also a form of soft power, a concept even more powerful than war according to Joseph Nye and a major instrument of statecraft. Soft power is the ability to shape the preference of others by attraction or what he calls co-optive power, which is based on the appeal of one's culture and values. He states that the soft power of a state is premised mainly on three resources: its culture which should be appealing to others in other places, its political values which should be the same at home and abroad, and its foreign policies which must be legitimate and have moral authority.<sup>58</sup>

Melissen in his work, draws a distinction between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy, by describing the former as one that concerns dealings between national representatives or other global players, while the latter concerns the wide-ranging public in foreign societies.<sup>59</sup> Joseph Nye asserts that the use of networks by NGOs has provided increased flexibility that has led to the growth of the 'new public diplomacy'. This novel form of diplomacy is not limited to campaigns, messages, or direct state links with foreign societies, but is also concerned with establishing relationships with public society players in foreign states and building connections between non-state actors both home and overseas. New public diplomacy features partnership, dialogue and inclusivity.<sup>60</sup> This strategy allows government policy to focus on promoting and participating in, rather than controlling the media. Excess control or even the appearance of excess control could undermine the integrity of networks like these. The progression of public diplomacy from a one-way to a two-way discourse model treats public groups as peer originators of meaning and communication.<sup>61</sup>

#### 2.4.2 Twiplomacy

Twiplomacy, a merger of Twitter and diplomacy is a tool of public diplomacy with a focus on the social media network, Twitter. The micro-blogging platform allows one to send and receive short posts called tweets that are up to 280 characters which can include photos, videos, and links.

Twitter users follow other users and can therefore see tweets from people they follow on the Twitter 'timeline'. One can follow, organizations, people, groups, or topics based on similar interests. Retweeting is the instant sharing of another person's tweet which leads to the swift and efficient sharing of information with a huge audience.<sup>62</sup> Hashtags are also used to start conversations and enable users to easily track a specific conversation. For example, the hashtag #COVID19 when included on posts on coronavirus will all be categorized under the hashtag so if one wants to see a conversation concerning the coronavirus or any updates you only need to search for the #COVID19 hashtag and be directed straight to all discussions in that category. In a conversation with Chris Messina, Godfather of the Hashtag, he affirms its usefulness by saying that "when it comes to foreign policy—hashtagged media (i.e., media that a user has tagged with some additional public, textual metadata) can be useful for getting a sense for what's happening right now, on the ground. It shouldn't necessarily dictate policy, but it should be used as a signal to inform it or guide it"<sup>63</sup>. He continues by explaining that it constitutes public opinion and is a convenient way to draw from a range of perspectives at a moment's notice<sup>64</sup>. It has fast become the platform for diplomats, heads of state and leaders of both NGOs and IGOs (Inter-Governmental Organizations) to engage and impact their audiences, both home and foreign. It is a quick way to connect and share real-time news, updates, and information via tweets. The limited number of characters allowed per tweet makes them succinct which allows for more reach to audiences since social media today is fast-paced, and considering the vast amount of information put out every day, it makes it easier to read a tweet when it is not lengthy. Heine and Turcotte identify three levels of Twitter use which are basic, intermediate and advanced. Basic tweeting includes official information such as speeches, press releases or consular matters. Intermediate has a more personalized approach with diplomats acting more or less like a media guide by recommending and highlighting articles, blogs and events. The advanced level of tweeting involves a full-on approach of diplomats on the national and international fronts who actively pursue polemical topics, stirring debates and consequently increasing their impact and following, and although it is risky, it seems to be the most rewarding.<sup>65</sup>

Barack Obama, a former US President is recognized as one of the first presidents to join Twitter in 2007 to reach his growing audience as part of his presidential campaign. Although he was criticized for his blunt and undiplomatic language in his tweets, former USA ambassador to Russia, Ambassador Michael McFaul was one of the first diplomats and ambassadors to create a Twitter

account in his tenure to connect with the Russian public, tweeting in both Russian and English. His tweets were popular and replicated several times over the Internet, typically mixing the personal and the political parts of his daily life. Getting through traditional media in Moscow is but one of the several limitations encountered by US diplomats in Moscow considering the fact that it is not the easiest place to be posted to, and Twitter offers a nationwide presence that can be hard to replicate anywhere else.<sup>66</sup> Currently, embassies, governments, organizations and the everyday user are all on Twitter. Andreas Sandre (2013) suggests two positive effects of Twitter on foreign policy as fostering an advantageous trade of ideas between public society and policymakers, and improving the ability of diplomats to curate information and get ahead of events, manage, analyze and react to them.<sup>67</sup> Presently, most social media users prefer to get their authentic information from leaders themselves rather than from television news or newspapers. Kwak, Lee, Park, and Moon assert that some news broke on Twitter before CNN, confirming the role of Twitter as media for breaking news close to an omnipresent CCTV. This grants viewers, subscribers and readers immediate, real-time, access to events through which they can collectively demand interventions from political leaders<sup>68</sup>. According to the 2020 edition of the BCW Twiplomacy Study, the governments and leaders of 189 countries have an official presence on Twitter, with a significant percentage of 98 of the 193 UN member states. The countries whose governments are absent on Twitter are North Korea, Laos, Turkmenistan and Sao Tome and Principe.<sup>69</sup> There are over 100 organizations including the UN, AU, World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and more than 500 embassies on Twitter. U.S. President, Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump) is the record followed world leader with over 81 million followers, trailed by Narendra Modi (@NarendraModi), Prime Minister of India with over 57 million followers and coming in third is Pope Francis who has 51 million followers on his nine different language accounts. Most of these accounts have seen an increase in their followership due to the coronavirus pandemic. Governments have been quick to use Twitter to encourage their citizens to stay safe and share important information and updates regularly.

### 2.4.3 Digital Diplomacy

Digital diplomacy also known as e-diplomacy, net diplomacy, and cyber diplomacy among others, encompasses all electronic or digital channels used to accomplish foreign policy objectives. A

specific definition does not quite exist for digital diplomacy partly because of the various names it goes by, and although they have almost the same meaning, the prefix before them refers to an exact aspect of digital technologies used in diplomacy. For instance, cyber diplomacy is related to security issues. Digital diplomacy like Twiplomacy is a form of public diplomacy and a tool of soft power. Bjola and Holmes refer to digital diplomacy as the rising utilization of social media platforms by a state to attain its foreign policy objectives and preemptively oversee its brand and status.<sup>70</sup> It has become standard for embassies, foreign missions and governments to have websites and social media accounts. Most developed countries have taken advantage and invested a lot in public diplomacy efforts, and developing countries are catching on gradually.

Digital diplomacy occurs at the foreign ministry level and the embassy level, so by operating on both levels, nations are able to gear foreign-policy and nation-branding messages towards the exclusive characteristics of resident audiences, with regard to their values, history, culture and traditions. Thus, promoting acknowledgement and recognition of their foreign policy and national brand they seek to publicize<sup>71</sup>. Digital diplomacy is useful for nation branding and can also be used to ensure that “the image a nation promotes is linked with reality as content shared on social media accounts deals both with foreign policy goals as well as the concrete actions taken by a nation in the global arena”<sup>72</sup>.

Sandre in his work, *Digital Diplomacy: Conversations on Innovation in Foreign Policy* categorizes diplomacy into diplomacy 2.0 which involves diplomats and citizens tweeting and contributing to discussions, and diplomacy 3.0 where non-state actors are introduced into diplomacy 2.0 by interacting more directly with states through social media. Sandre’s definition of diplomacy 3.0 is the evolution of foreign policy into a networked environment where state and non-state actors interact directly in a networked environment.<sup>73</sup>

The coronavirus has been a key facilitator of further digitization in diplomacy. Since for the time being there is no travel, no meetings, no handshakes, and generally as very limited human contact as possible, everything has become virtual. Diplomats, heads of state, government officials, world leaders and even everyday users now use social media platforms and video conferencing applications such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and Skype, to connect and engage with people all over the world as an alternative to meetings that require travel and physical contact.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Over the years, diplomatic communication has adapted to technological changes and rightly so since communication is necessary for diplomacy. These technologies have significantly improved diplomacy while also bringing about some drawbacks. Between the USA and Russia, it has not been any different from the use of the telegraph right through to social media. Both countries have gone through various changes in diplomatic communication, especially during the cold war era and post-cold war era.

Although diplomacy seems to be changing, its purpose remains the same as it is an important aspect of international relations. The use of social media has boosted diplomacy and despite its usefulness, it cannot completely replace traditional diplomacy but only complement it because of the unique role it plays. Social media has enhanced diplomatic communication all over the world as states are catching up and incorporating it at different levels but overall, it has come to stay.



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## CHAPTER THREE

### INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON US-RUSSIA DIPLOMACY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the extent of social media's influence on USA-Russia diplomacy and the attendant benefits and challenges. Diplomatic relations between the United States and Russia have been dynamic, becoming tense and warm over the years right up till current times. Media has been significant in both reducing and amplifying matters between both countries and this chapter seeks to investigate how social media particularly does so.

#### 3.1 USA-Russia relations

The relationship between the United States and Russia is an interesting one. Overall, there have been highs and lows in their relations characterized by events, actions and utterances, and also dependent on regimes in both countries. Relations can be normal and warm in one regime and hostile in the next change of regime in one or both countries.

On October 28, 1803, Russia recognized the USA and in 1809, diplomatic relations between both countries were formally established. However, after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, relations between Russia and the United States were marred and President Woodrow Wilson in December 1917 directed all American diplomatic agents to desist from communicating directly with Bolshevik government representatives, and until November 16, 1933, the USA never recognized the Bolshevik government.<sup>1</sup> In 1946, the Cold War between the US and the USSR together with their allies began, and relations became tense throughout the period, becoming slightly warm sparingly. This was dependent on actions and decisions taken as well as the president and government in power in both countries. For instance, during President Reagan's term of office, relations between the U.S. and Russia escalated since Reagan was anti-détente and championed containment by drastically increasing U.S. defence spending and ramping up the nuclear arms race with the Soviets. Presidents Nixon and Jimmy Carter were largely concerned with managing the cold war with détente rather than containment until Carter turned to détente after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev was quite open-minded and vowed to bow out of the arms race contributing significantly to the end of the cold war in 1991. In

1991 the USA recognized the Russian Federation as the replacement for the Soviet Union and established diplomatic relations. The US then implemented a bilateral approach with Russia to make smooth the cooperation on international matters and encourage foreign trade and investment.<sup>2</sup>

President Boris Yeltsin, President George W. Bush Senior and later President Bill Clinton largely maintained warm relations during their terms of office. However, towards the end of the 1990s Russians began to suspect NATO's expansion in the East. During the tenure of Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush, relations between both countries became strained due to different perspectives on certain actions and decisions such as the USA invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the USA's decision to pull out from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. However, both presidents maintained good relations with each other.

During the Bush administration, relations became somewhat strained but at a G20 summit in 2009, a joint statement from Dmitry Medvedev, Vladimir Putin and Barack Obama stated they were ready to begin a fresh start in US-Russia relations. In 2010, both countries agreed to reduce their nuclear weapon supplies through a new nuclear arms reduction treaty signed by Obama and Medvedev to replace the previous 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty that had expired in 2009. In 2012, relations seemed to remain sour indicating that perhaps there wasn't really a genuine do-over of relations. On the part of Russia, factors that contributed to this included expectations of reclaiming superpower status in the world, Putin's departure from democracy, and the ploy of influencing trade policies and drawing divisions within NATO. In the West, some factors consisted of Russia's growing shift from democracy, fear and suspicion, and a call for firmer political, military and economic integration between Eastern Europe and the West.<sup>3</sup> Over the next three years, relations worsened with the event of the Ukrainian crisis resulting in several sanctions imposed on Russia by the US and its allies, the annexation of Crimea by Russia leading to their suspension from G8 in 2014, and military intervention in the Syrian civil war by the US and Russia.

During the USA presidential election campaign in 2016, there were allegations against the Russian government for cyber hackings and leakages to influence the election in favour of Donald Trump, leading to an investigation into the matter even after the end of the elections. The Kremlin also alleged that the Obama administration intended to mar USA-Russia relations irreversibly for the incoming Trump administration. In an address to the Federal Assembly in Russia, President Putin

said: “We are also ready to cooperate with the new American administration. It is important to normalize and start developing bilateral relations on an equal and mutually beneficial basis. Interaction between Russia and the United States in solving global and regional problems meets the interests of the whole world. We have a common responsibility for ensuring international security and stability, for strengthening the non-proliferation regimes.”<sup>4</sup> This indicated Russian efforts to repair relations with the USA.

A week after President Donald Trump’s inauguration, he had a conversation with President Putin via telephone that lasted 50 minutes, during which they agreed on cooperation to fight against terrorism, forge closer economic ties and also arranged to have a personal meeting at a later date.<sup>5</sup> This signified to both governments a reset of relations between the two countries. Later that year, Trump and Putin met at the G20 summit in Hamburg and spoke for hours, which was more than the initial 30 minutes they were allotted. Just before the meeting, Mr. Trump remarked that it was an “honour” to meet Mr. Putin. The Russian leader, then said that telephone conversations were not sufficient to deliberate on the pressing matters.<sup>6</sup> In Trump’s tenure of office so far, he has made both pro and anti-Russo statements and decisions, but largely USA-Russia relations in his administration have not been hostile as compared to previous times.

In the first twenty-five years of the post–Cold War era, a blend of cooperation and competition was prominent in U.S.-Russia relations. Since 2014, the balance between both elements has spectacularly shifted to competition, a trend that is projected to last for the indefinite future<sup>7</sup>. Throughout their history, the US and Russia took advantage of the media available at different points in time mainly to communicate, report news and further public diplomacy efforts. The telegraph, telephone, newspaper, radio, television, fax, internet, and social media have progressively been utilized throughout USA-Russia relations up until now. Some are still very useful and are commonly used till date such as the telephone, radio, television, print media, and even the telegram. On October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020, it was reported that Putin sent a telegram to Trump wishing him and his wife a speedy recovery after contracting the coronavirus a few days before. In the telegram, he stated, “I am certain that your inherent life energy, high spirits and optimism will help you to overcome the dangerous virus”.<sup>8</sup>

In our current age, the internet and social media are gradually becoming the most utilized and convenient forms of communication. The internet allows social media use to be possible and also

allows for emails, websites, blogs, etc. Both Russia and the US have taken advantage of social media and created accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and other platforms for mutual relations or peer connections, to circulate information, and engage with the public.

### 3.1.1 Social Media

Social media is an integral part of modern life and communication that cannot be disregarded<sup>9</sup> and from the interactions with the respondents, it is a crucial aspect that has been accepted in order to be well-connected and to stay ahead of happenings in and around the world. As Arturo Sarukhan, Ambassador of Mexico to the US (2007–2012) states, “it is an indispensable tool to succeed in our mission as ambassadors, in communicating our messages, changing the narrative, correcting misperceptions, bad or wrong information, and yes, ultimately, for spinning”<sup>10</sup>. It has become expedient to be passively active at the very least on social media platforms, even if the diplomat or embassy is unwilling, in order to be abreast with information that floats on these platforms. Some social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Vkontakte, Flickr, etc. From the interviews with the cultural attaches, social media seems to be an important part of their communication mediums that states have come to embrace because of its usefulness and speed in communication<sup>11</sup>. While Russia has about 500 accounts on social media: 225 Facebook accounts, 102 Twitter accounts, 26 VKontakte accounts, 67 Instagram accounts, 46 YouTube accounts, 6 Periscope accounts, 11 Flickr accounts, and 12 Telegram accounts,<sup>12</sup> the US has over 1000 social media accounts altogether: 351 Twitter accounts, 344 Facebook accounts, 135 Flickr accounts, 173 YouTube accounts, 123 Instagram accounts, 31 accounts on LinkedIn as well as a DipNote blog.<sup>13</sup>

As of October 2020, President Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump) has 86.9 million followers on Twitter while President Vladimir Putin (@KremlinRussia\_E) has 843,100 followers. The White House is the most followed institution, followed by 315 heads of state and government and foreign ministers. The @POTUS account comes in second with 264 peer connections, marginally ahead of the @realDonaldTrump account, followed by 261 world leaders. The U.S. State Department (@StateDept) is the most followed foreign ministry on Twitter, with 5,843,040 followers. The Russian Foreign Ministry (@MID\_RF) is the 4th most followed foreign ministry in 2020. @MFA\_Russia is the 2<sup>nd</sup> best connected foreign ministry in 2020.<sup>14</sup> They are more active on

Twitter and Facebook where they can have interactions with local and foreign publics, other stakeholders and some governments.

The US and Russia are currently active on most of their accounts and are not only used for communication with their citizens and local public but their fellow diplomats and state leaders.

### 3.1.2 Communication

Communication is the backbone of diplomacy so technological advancements to it have made it swift to exchange information<sup>15</sup> and enhanced diplomatic communications. Social media has undoubtedly eased communications worldwide over the past two decades. It has allowed open conversation spaces that foster two-way communications between diplomats and the public as against the radio or television which was mainly one-way mode of communication. This has enabled diplomats, leaders, lawmakers, and other non-state actors to engage with the public directly and make use of feedback received in policy making. The cultural attaché at the Russian Embassy in Accra affirms that “it is one of the major and most effective communication tools of present-day”<sup>16</sup>.

*Respondents agreed that social media has had an impact on communication within diplomacy especially now that it provides real-time communication between diplomats and their targeted public (Field Note, 2022)*

### 3.1.3 Target audience

*Respondents were very mindful and well aware of their target audiences and how social media acts as a linkage between them. These audiences constitute sections of the public that are important to the missions. States all over the world and particularly missions, try to communicate with their home citizens, both home and in the host nation, local publics in the host nations, or the entire expatriate public (Field Note, 2022)*

Most countries target all the groups that are of relevance to them and encompass as many aspects of the public as they can to enhance and streamline their public diplomacy efforts. Social media has allowed states and missions to reach their audiences no matter how wide, share information, clear up misinformation, give updates, etc. The target groups for the respondents of the study included their home citizens, their home citizens in the host nation, the local public in the host

nation and the entire expatriate public. According to them, it is imperative to engage with all the groups to keep them all informed, build connections and correct fabrications whenever they occur.

### 3.1.4 Influence

Social media has had an impact on diplomacy in several ways, such as easing communication irrespective of borders and saving costs. It has enhanced public diplomacy since it has widened the reach of target audiences and become easy to connect with them. Digital diplomacy has been deepened especially during the coronavirus pandemic when social media became a perfect alternative for diplomatic activities since leaders could still engage directly with their audiences and with colleagues without physical contact. Meetings, conferences, and seminars were conducted via social media networking sites for the time being increasing participation in some of these activities. Social media has also contributed to the seeming loss of control and regulation of information by states and due to its fast-paced nature, it has made it even tougher to keep up with and contain the spread of information, especially in cases where the information is damaging, propaganda or fake news. It has shortened decision-making time because the introduction of 24-hour news coverage together with various information channels compels governments to respond swiftly to developments, or risk being depicted as indecisive. This novel media environment also generates irrationally high expectations and standards of performance. Secrecy and unacknowledged understandings have usually been the backbone of traditional diplomacy. Clandestine negotiations however still occur, but just a few of them stay hidden for long.<sup>17</sup> The arrival of social media in the conduct of diplomacy has created a multiplicity of actors such as think tanks, IGOs, NGOs, and resident and foreign publics.

Between the USA and Russia however, the impact has only been to a small extent. Both countries experience the successes and challenges that come with the technology but it has not largely influenced diplomatic relations between them. In an interview with a Russian respondent, he was of the view that there has been no influence by social media on diplomacy between the USA and Russia.<sup>18</sup>

One respondent stated that social media will continue to strengthen its influence on modern diplomacy, nations will become more transparent and international relations will become

informative<sup>19</sup>. In this regard, social media is here to stay and will continue to gain attention and impact diplomacy.

### **3.2 Benefits of Social Media use in US-Russia diplomatic relations**

The use of social media in the conduct of diplomatic relations between the USA and Russia to some extent has been advantageous to both countries as discussed below:

#### **3.2.1 Reach**

*All respondents pointed out that, the use of social media has helped to reach their wide audience due to the speed at which information is spread via these platforms. It has bridged the gap between governments and their citizens and has enabled states to inform their target audiences about relevant issues while achieving their particular foreign policy objectives (Field Note, 2022)*

Target audiences for both countries include local citizens, home citizens locally and abroad, and the entire expatriate public and social media has been instrumental in helping to send information across to all groups for which they are intended at a swift pace. People are now able to easily contact these institutions for information and they are also able to get feedback from their audience through engagement with them becoming the most direct form of communication between states and their audiences yet.

This has contributed to the expansive reach that the USA and Russia now have with their viewers. From this, it can be inferred that both countries are utilizing social media to advance their public diplomacy efforts by informing and engaging with their audiences.

#### **3.2.2 Cheap form of communication**

In an interview with Mr. Kwabena Appianing, Co-founder and Chief of Digital Marketing at Paragon Digital and Social Media Marketing, he highlighted the fact that social media is a cheap form of communication as compared to traditional forms of communication.<sup>20</sup> Traditional forms of communication are usually structured but with social media, one only needs to post information or updates as many times as possible without restriction and at a low cost. Mr. Rasheed Awudu, Head of Digital Marketing at Hype Net Marketing, on the other hand, is of the view that social

media is a free means of connecting with people irrespective of distance<sup>21</sup>. Either way, it is a relatively inexpensive tool that helps to maintain connections and communicate with the intended appropriate audiences. Mr. Appianing added that it is easy to measure and track the results of the work that is put into managing social media accounts. This ultimately helps to ensure that social media apps are being used efficiently and effectively at a relatively low cost<sup>22</sup>.

With regards to USA-Russia diplomacy, compared to traditional media such as the radio, television and others previously leveraged, social media is an inexpensive means of communication that both countries use to dispel false information, inform local and foreign publics, and enhance their respective public diplomacy purposes.

### **3.2.3 Speed**

Safko, in quoting a statistic states that an angry customer is more likely to tell close to 20 other people about a bad experience, and those 20 people could rapidly develop into 20,000 or even 200,000 with social media like Twitter, Facebook, and blogs, which sums up the power and speed of social media.<sup>23</sup> Because of the wide reach of social media platforms, diplomats are now able to reach many people through a single post. This enhances public diplomacy efforts due to the wide audience available online. USA and Russia both have several social media accounts through which they communicate to foreign and local publics. For example, in 2017 the American Security Project held an event on USA-Russia relations that was streamed live on Facebook and by searching the hashtag #asprussia anyone could join in the discussion on Twitter. The Russian respondent points out that never before in history has there been an opportunity to share ideas and opinions so quickly with no borders<sup>24</sup> introducing a new dimension to the flow of information. Today, anyone can send a widely spread message because of the ease of accessibility of social media. As a result, both information and misinformation can be spread in a matter of minutes, and it is for that reason that it is important to be cautious about what to post.

## **3.3 Challenges of Social Media use in US-Russia diplomatic relations**

Despite the many benefits that social media brings to US-Russia relations there are a few drawbacks worth mentioning:

### **3.3.1 Fake news**

*All respondents indicated that the fast and easy pace of social media has created the problem of fake news. Just as easy as it is to disseminate important information to the public, in the same way, false information can be circulated for various reasons, including the furtherance of an agenda (Field Note, 2022)*

This poses a challenge as it sometimes discredits the authenticity of the information from social media accounts of a state, organization or individual. Mr. Fredrik Morsing shared his concerns about the reliability of information shared on social media<sup>25</sup>. Although it is useful in many ways, it can be used as a retaliatory strategy by factions of society for several reasons.

*A respondent added that “some actors are using these instruments to share fakes in favour of political agenda by making unfounded allegations and conducting huge media campaigns against their political opponents (Field Note, 2022)*

*However, it was noted that due to the anonymity that social media offers, people impersonate diplomats and state officials and spread false information to the public which dents the image of the one that is impersonated<sup>26</sup>. This ultimately affects the quality and reliability of information shared on social media and is very misleading to the public (Field Note, 2022)*

Between the USA and Russia, there have been several cases of alleged fake news shared on social media. Facebook’s principal security officer Alex Stamos, in a discussion about Russia’s Internet Research Agency (IRA), confirmed that during the 2016 U.S. presidential election the IRA posted misinforming content on social media ahead of that year. He added that “90% of their content had nothing to do with any candidate. It was really about the driving division in American society” and this became obvious and appeared to have worked when Americans doubted Trump’s legitimate win<sup>27</sup>. It is also reported that Russia also made use of highly utilized social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube while the IRA allegedly hired several “trolls” to post deceptive news stories and socially discordant content on these platforms together with others. “Facebook, for instance, said the IRA posted content that reached more than 140 million of its users”<sup>28</sup>. Russia however, has denied these allegations and sees them as mere propaganda against them.

Ultimately, this affects relations and trust between both countries especially when false information is difficult to verify.

### 3.3.2 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying according to UNICEF is the use of digital technologies in bullying. It can occur on social media, gaming platforms, messaging platforms, computers and mobile phones. It is recurrent behaviour, which is intended to frighten, incense or shame those that are targeted<sup>29</sup>.

*Due to the free nature and ease of access to social media, people hide behind the anonymity that it provides to bully and harass other people. This poses a challenge because it is difficult to authenticate the identities of the culprits and deal with them accordingly (Field Note, 2022)*

Mr. Appianing recounted experiences where trolls hurled insults and furthered propaganda during his management of some social media pages of some ministries in Ghana. He added that some were plainly ignorant and hid behind social media to say things they could otherwise not say face to face with a minister, while others were from the opposition party that tried to push an agenda.

### 3.3.3 Security breaches

A major challenge that plagues diplomats and the general public is security breaches.

*Majority of the respondents mentioned security issues as a challenge of social media in diplomacy. Diplomacy thrives on communication and information so the moment it is compromised, it poses a huge threat to the field. It diminishes the trust in the technology and causes some level of fear of the safety of sensitive or classified information (Field Note, 2022)*

During the 2016 presidential election campaign in the US, the Russian government was alleged to have hacked the election to favour Donald Trump leading to a series of investigations into the matter even after the end of the elections. The Russian effort included unconcealed government activities, compensated internet “trolls”, and state-sponsored media, alongside clandestine actions that included illegitimate cybernetic activities led by intelligence agents. It is reported that the Russian government used state-funded media outlets, including the website and radio broadcaster Sputnik and television network Russia Today (RT), to hinder the Clinton presidential campaign. It was discovered that RT’s depiction of Clinton all through the run-up to the election, “was consistently negative and focused on her leaked emails and accused her of corruption, poor

physical and mental health, and ties to Islamic extremism.” RT and Sputnik together produce media in several languages, including English, for international audiences. U.S. intelligence agencies are yet to ascertain if Russia’s actions influenced the results of the election and to what extent if they did.<sup>30</sup> Russia, however, denies these allegations while the Kremlin also alleged that the Obama administration intended to mar US-Russia relations irreversibly for Trump’s incoming administration. Yet, the US also has a history of interfering in elections in other states through the CIA and other intelligence agencies to place leaders that will favour their interests into office.

Another aspect is leakage of information and this is usually done by someone that worked or had access to important documents and data. A clear example is in 2013 when Edward Snowden, a former NSA employee, leaked classified information concerning global surveillance programs run by the US National Security Agency (NSA) in collaboration with other telecommunication corporations and governments. The NSA and the British Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ) tapped into the internet’s structure<sup>31</sup>. His revelations showed that the NSA’s infiltration was via a program called PRISM which grants main access to user accounts on Google and Yahoo through a court-permitted system<sup>32</sup>. They also accessed the servers of Google and Facebook in a bid to get communication data. The documents revealed that GCHQ monitored close to 600 million communications every day, and the data describing phone and internet use was purported to have been stored for up to 30 days to allow scrutiny and analysis<sup>33</sup>. Another example is the Wikileaks incident in 2010 when Julian Assange leaked US State Department diplomatic cables via Wikileaks, an organization that publishes classified information. This challenge reduces the credibility of social media use to diplomats, resulting in their hesitance to use social media in their diplomatic endeavours.

### **3.3.4 Misinterpretation**

Misinterpretation is the act of forming a wrong understanding of something that is said or done or an example of a wrong understanding.<sup>34</sup> This happens to be another challenge that diplomats encounter in their use of social media. Mr Morsing asserts that misinterpretation is a large risk involved in the use of social media platforms<sup>35</sup>.

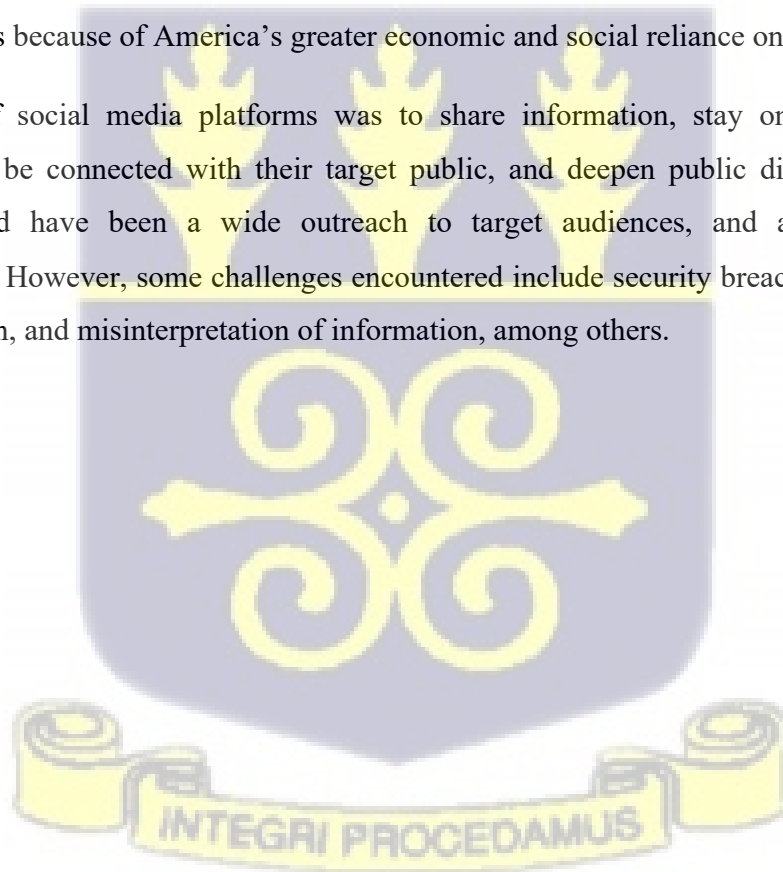
*Since some platforms are blog-based, and therefore information is usually posted in the form of a message, the import of the message can sometimes be lost on the reader or*

*misunderstood altogether. Until further probing is done, the reader may not understand the message and its true intention would have failed (Field Note, 2022).*

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In recent years, states and missions have infused social media in their diplomatic communication including the USA and Russia, because of its rising trend and immense benefits. The introduction of this technological advancement has influenced the practice of diplomacy in positive ways as well as undesirable ways. Both countries have working websites and are active on a number of social media platforms. Russia is particularly active on Facebook, while the USA is more active on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Sokolsky and Rumer are of the view that the USA and Russia are likely to be actively competing in cyberspace in the coming years and their cyber competencies are expected to show remarkable progress. They add that “U.S.A vulnerabilities are likely to outpace Russia’s because of America’s greater economic and social reliance on the internet”<sup>36</sup>.

The purpose of social media platforms was to share information, stay on top of trending technologies to be connected with their target public, and deepen public diplomacy, and the benefits chalked have been a wide outreach to target audiences, and a cheap form of communication. However, some challenges encountered include security breaches, the spread of false information, and misinterpretation of information, among others.



## Endnotes

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 4.0 Introduction

The aim of the study was to examine the extent of social media's influence on diplomatic relations between the USA and Russia. The summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations are as follows:

#### 4.1 Summary of findings

Communication is a core element of the field of diplomacy. A large part of diplomacy is negotiations and the other part is spent in meetings and discussions, all of which make use of communication. As technologies in communication developed so did diplomacy. Advancements from the telegraph right through till the internet have facilitated communication in diplomacy and with the advent of social media transformed diplomacy through the introduction of e-diplomacy and public diplomacy.

States all over the world have embraced social media as part of their communication channels to reach their target audiences (be it local, foreign or both), connect with peers (fellow diplomats, world leaders, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, etc.), clear up misinformation and contribute to discussions online. Recently, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, social media activities became even more enhanced because of the caution to stay home and avoid public gatherings and it became the go-to medium of communication.

The USA has over 1,000 social media accounts while Russia has about 500. Between both countries, they are quite active as they are aware of the relevance and advantages of social media in carrying out their respective foreign policy objectives. USA-Russia diplomatic relations have not been influenced to a large extent by social media. Generally, social media has come to be accepted as a form of communication within diplomacy. US and Russia have also incorporated social media as an alternative communication medium to traditional methods characterized by their social media presence. Social media has inadvertently influenced the conduct of diplomacy in several ways. The gains to both countries have been the attainment of a wide outreach to their

target audiences, saving costs since social media is a cheap means of communication, as well as speed in the transmission of information. Social media relations between both countries are however inhibited due to their history and some level of mistrust which has led to issues of fake news, security breaches, cyberbullying and misinterpretation.

#### **4.2 Conclusions**

The aim of the study was to determine the extent to which social media influences diplomacy between the USA and Russia, examine the challenges and proffer solutions to the challenges. From the findings, the study revealed that due to some level of mistrust, idiosyncrasies of ruling governments, leaders and the public and strained relations between the USA and Russia, social media has not had a large influence on their diplomatic relations. Communication between them has come to increasingly include social media but the quality of relations has not been affected as much. Social media accounts exist, and they communicate from time to time but it is not so much to a large extent. Yet, there have also been allegations against Russia, especially for interference in the 2016 USA presidential elections using cyber hacking and social media trolls for divisive purposes. However, social media has deepened public diplomacy in both countries by enabling direct communication with all of their target groups and correcting false information that may be posted to further an agenda.

An observation was the fact that although both states have competitive economies, the USA seems to have an edge over Russia in terms of how active and influential they can be on social media. This is characterized by the huge presence of the US on social media accounts. Another observation from the findings was the challenges that social media presents to US-Russia diplomacy. They include circulation of fake news, hacking and leakages of sensitive information, cyberbullying, misinterpretation of information by the public, and seeming loss of control of social media. To address the above-mentioned challenges, measures such as training programs, security measures, and regulations, should be put in place to address them thoroughly. With respect to training programs, social media content managers and all diplomats could undergo them to better engage with the public and learn how to stay up to date with all the technology updates to prevent them from feeling overwhelmed and keep them in control of their accounts and information. Regulations should be implemented alongside sanctions to reduce the spread of fake information. Sanctions will punish culprits appropriately and deter others from propagating fake news. Social

media giants should incorporate stricter security authentication measures to reduce hacking and leaks of information. It will also be in the best interest of the US and Russia to find ways to manage competition in the cyber sphere. Angela Stent is of the view that global challenges like climate change, overseeing the Arctic, terrorism, and handling the COVID-19 pandemic also require the two countries to work together<sup>1</sup>.

### **4.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings from the study, the recommendations below have been made:

#### **4.3.1 Training**

To deal with the seeming loss of control of social media and stay on top of its intricacies, it is recommended that training programs are arranged for all diplomatic missions to demonstrate how to use social media platforms and get the most out of them, keep users updated on new security measures for emerging threats, how to detect fake news, bots, etc. and what to do in the event of a leakage of information. By doing so, diplomats can feel safer and more confident in using social media platforms (Feasibility of the recommendation is the government agencies, NGOs and other concerned bodies)

#### **4.3.2 Security authentication**

It is recommended to incorporate security measures to deal with the hacking of information and cyberbullying to secure data. An example is the integration of the two-factor authentication method that is being adopted by several social media apps which encrypts the information of app users and prevent third parties from getting access to sensitive information. Other examples include certificate-based authentication which requires a digital certificate before opening, biometric authentication which requires finger scanning, eye scanning, facial recognition and voice recognition and multi-factor authentication, which requires two or more standalone ways to identify a user. (Feasibility of this recommendation is the User of the various Social media)

#### **4.3.3 Regulation**

Finally, to avoid the spread of false information and fake accounts there should be some form of regulation by social media giants on their platforms and not necessarily government censorship.

For instance, social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube now have mechanisms to detect false information and even graphic content. Users are able to report posts or accounts that they find offensive or fraudulent which are then taken down. Sanctions should also be attached to punish culprits and deter others from repeating the wrongdoing.

Social media use lies with the people that use it and not the technology itself, so it cannot be entirely blamed for the challenges that it brings about. In order to find a lasting and reasonable solution to the challenges, it would have to begin with the very people that use it. (Feasibility of the Recommendation is the social media owner/authorities)



## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Stent, A. (2020). *Why are US-Russia relations so challenging?* Retrieved from Policy 2020 Brookings: <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/votervital/why-are-us-russia-relations-so-challenging/>



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**Interviews**

Personal communication with the Honorary Consul of Sweden on October 15, 2020.

Personal communication with cultural attaché at the Russian embassy on October 13, 2020.

Personal communication with Mr. Rasheed Awudu, Head of Digital Marketing at Hype Net Marketing on October 16, 2020.

Personal communication with Kwabena Appianing, Co-founder and Chief of Digital Marketing at Paragon Digital and Social Media Marketing on October 21, 2020.



**APPENDIX**

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON**

**LEGON CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DIPLOMACY**



**TOPIC: THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON DIPLOMACY: A CASE STUDY  
OF USA-RUSSIA RELATIONS**

**NAME: Gabriella Ewurafua Ampaabeng**

**TELEPHONE NUMBER: 0271301053**

**EMAIL: [ewurafuah@gmail.com](mailto:ewurafuah@gmail.com)**

The purpose of the attached questionnaire is to obtain data on how social media influences the diplomatic relations between USA and Russia. This research is solely for academic purposes and is a requirement for the award for a Master's Degree in International Affairs and Diplomacy. Data gathered through this interview will be treated with confidentiality and used exclusively for this study. Thank you.

1. Can you briefly describe what social media means to you?
2. Which apps in your opinion are best for communication?
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Instagram
  - YouTube
  - LinkedIn
  - Websites

Others Please specify.....

3. What are some of the advantages of social media?
4. What are some of the disadvantages of social media?
5. Can you suggest solutions to these limitations?
6. Can you identify some challenges presented by social media use in diplomacy?



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1. Can you briefly describe what social media means to you?
2. Has your embassy implemented social media as part of its communication?  
 Yes  
 No
3. Why was social media introduced to missions?  
 Home government's initiative

- Embassy's initiative
- Other

4. How long has your mission used social media?

- 0-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 1 year-3 years
- 4-6 years
- More than 6 years

5. What are your target groups for communication via social media?

- Home citizens
- Home citizens in host nation
- Local public
- Entire expatriate public
- All of the above

6. Which social media platforms do you use regularly?

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Blogs
- Websites
- Other

7. On a scale of very high-very low kindly rate your usage of the following:

	Very high	High	Average	Low	Very low
a) Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) YouTube	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) LinkedIn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Blogs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Websites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. How important do you consider the following features of social media?

Not at all    Important    Quite important    Very important    I can't say

- |                           |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Speed                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Interactivity          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Real - time            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Transparency           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Feedback               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Dialogic communication | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. In your opinion are traditional methods of diplomacy still relevant in our current millennium?  
If No why? If Yes why?

10. In your opinion what are some advantages of social media in the diplomatic space?

11. What are some challenges presented by social media in diplomacy?

12. Can you suggest solutions to these challenges?

13. Do you think the communication between USA and Russia has changed to increasingly include social media?

14. Do you think that social media has had a major influence on diplomacy between the US and Russia?

15. How do you see the future of social media in diplomacy or public diplomacy?

