

Digital Diplomacy and Its Impacts on Uzbekistan's International Relations

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the role of digital technologies in Uzbekistan's diplomatic activities, emphasizing innovation strategies, project support, personnel training, and the development of digital platforms. It explores the concept of digital diplomacy, focusing on the use of digital media in diplomacy and how countries utilize these media to achieve their foreign policy objectives. The study delves into the opportunities and challenges presented by digital media for diplomatic activities, highlighting the necessity for countries to actively engage in digital diplomacy and keep abreast of emerging trends in this field. The article emphasizes the importance of digital diplomacy not only as a new tool but also as a factor that transforms general diplomatic strategies. By examining Uzbekistan's efforts in integrating digital technologies into its diplomatic strategies, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how digitalization is shaping contemporary diplomacy. It underscores the importance of technological advancement and digital literacy for diplomatic personnel to navigate the complex landscape of global information integration. Through a comprehensive analysis, the paper presents evidence supporting the active implementation of digital diplomacy by nations and discusses the implications for future diplomatic practices. The findings reveal that digital diplomacy not only enhances the efficiency and reach of diplomatic efforts but also poses certain challenges that need to be addressed to maximize its potential. Overall, the research provides valuable insights into the dynamic intersection of digital innovation and diplomatic strategy in the context of Uzbekistan's international relations.

Keywords: International Relations, Digital Diplomacy, Uzbekistan.

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Dijital Diplomasi ve Özbekistan'ın Uluslararası İlişkilerine Etkileri

ÖZ

Bu makale, Özbekistan'ın diplomatik faaliyetlerinde dijital teknolojilerin rolünü incelemekte olup, inovasyon stratejilerine, proje desteğine, personel eğitimine ve dijital platformların geliştirilmesine dikkat çekmektedir. Ülkenin bilgi alanında küresel entegrasyonunu ele alarak, diplomaside dijital medya kullanımını ve ülkelerin bu medyayı dış politika hedeflerini gerçekleştirmek için nasıl kullandıklarını araştırmaktadır. Dijital medyanın diplomatik faaliyetler için sağladığı fırsatlar ve karşılaştığı zorluklar değerlendirilmiş, ayrıca ülkelerin dijital diplomasiyi aktif bir şekilde uygulama gerekliliği ve bu alandaki yeni trendleri takip etmenin önemi vurgulanmıştır. Makale, dijital diplomasiyi sadece yeni bir araç değil, aynı zamanda genel diplomasi stratejilerini dönüştüren bir unsur olarak önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu araştırma, Özbekistan'ın dijital teknolojileri diplomatik stratejilerine entegre etme çabalarını inceleyerek, dijitalleşmenin çağdaş diplomasiyi nasıl şekillendirdiğine dair daha derin bir anlayışa katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Teknolojik gelişme ve diplomatik personelin dijital okuryazarlığının, küresel bilgi entegrasyonunun karmaşık yapısında başarılı bir şekilde gezinmeleri için önemini vurgulamaktadır. Kapsamlı bir analiz yoluyla, bu makale, ülkelerin dijital diplomasiyi aktif bir şekilde uygulamaları gerektiğine dair kanıtlar sunmakta ve gelecekteki diplomatik uygulamalar için çıkarımlar tartışmaktadır. Bulgular, dijital diplomasiyi diplomatik çabaların verimliliğini ve erişimini artırmanın yanı sıra, potansiyelini en üst düzeye çıkarmak için ele alınması gereken bazı zorluklar da ortaya koyduğunu göstermektedir.

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Genel olarak, bu araştırma, Özbekistan'ın uluslararası ilişkileri bağlamında dijital yenilik ve diplomatik strateji arasındaki dinamik kesişim hakkında değerli bilgiler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararası İlişkiler, Dijital Diplomasi, Özbekistan.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital diplomacy refers to the use of digital technologies, particularly social media, in managing international relations and communication between states. Unlike traditional diplomatic methods, digital diplomacy allows governments to directly engage with the public, accelerate information dissemination, and manage global interactions in real time. In this context, digital diplomacy has become an important tool for states to announce official policies and shape international perceptions.

Digital diplomacy emerged in the early 2000s with the widespread adoption of the internet and social media platforms. Traditional diplomacy relies on embassies, formal negotiations, and behind-closed-doors discussions, while digital diplomacy has made these processes more open and accessible. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have enabled governments to reach both their citizens and the global public instantly. Digital diplomacy differs from traditional diplomacy in its ability to reach a broader audience and facilitate faster information exchange. However, it has not replaced traditional diplomacy; instead, it complements it.

The reason digital diplomacy is particularly prevalent in foreign policy is that it allows states to shape their global image and defend their interests on the international stage. Digital platforms provide a direct means for a country to present its perspective to the global public and to respond swiftly in times of crisis. Nevertheless, digital diplomacy has not yet supplanted traditional diplomacy, which remains essential for secret negotiations, agreements, and upholding international law.

The effects of digital diplomacy on both domestic and foreign policy are significant. Domestically, governments use digital diplomacy to reach their citizens directly, explain their policies, and seek public support. This can enhance the perception of transparency and strengthen public relations. However, there is also a risk of misinformation spreading.

In foreign policy, digital diplomacy has become a crucial tool for states to advocate for their interests on the international stage. During crises, the ability to quickly share information

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and shape public opinion can bolster a state's position in foreign policy. Moreover, the use of social media in diplomatic negotiations can make these processes more transparent and open to public scrutiny.

Reduced to its fundamental elements, foreign policy has two components: the national goals to be achieved and the means to achieve them. The interplay between national goals and the resources to achieve them is a perennial theme of statesmanship. In its components the foreign policy of all nations, great and small, is the same. Thus, one of the components of foreign policy is the means to achieve the country's external goals, and one of the main tools of foreign policy is diplomacy (Crabb 1972).

In the contemporary information society, where information and communication technologies are becoming increasingly significant, diplomatic relations between states are also undergoing significant changes. The advent of the digital era in diplomacy brings forth new opportunities and presents new challenges. Digital diplomacy has emerged from public diplomacy, which is defined as a tool used by states to understand cultural, attitudinal, and behavioral characteristics, to establish and manage relationships, and to influence thinking and mobilize actions in interests and values (Cooper, et. al. 2013). The concept of digital diplomacy encompasses the utilization of advanced information technologies and communication tools to strengthen and develop diplomatic relations.

One of the pivotal factors shaping modern diplomacy is the transformation in information and communication technologies (ICT). These technologies have revolutionized the way we communicate and share information, triggering profound changes in the political, social, and economic landscapes worldwide. As noted by M. Faye, ICTs offer even less developed countries the opportunity to transition from industrialization to information-based economies, capable of competing with developed nations in the global market (Faye 2000: 28-30). Technological innovation is a driving force behind globalization, establishing the infrastructure for interconnectedness across the globe. It is imperative for countries worldwide to embrace these technologies to avoid missing out on the opportunities they bring forth.

The Internet, particularly through its role as a means of communication, allowing the publication, exchange, and storage of information has emerged as a crucial tool for both public and private communication (Westcott 2008). Modern communication tools, including social media platforms, have facilitated dialogue among millions of people, bridging geographical divides. With over two billion active users on social media platforms like X, Facebook,

Instagram, Snapchat, and others, the world has witnessed a significant reduction in distances and a profound impact on the daily lives of billions. Now, information exchange and dialogue between representatives of different countries occur 24/7, 365 days a year. Social media presents significant opportunities and challenges for states and international organizations as they navigate the evolving political landscape of the Internet.

Essentially, the transformation in ICT has sparked fundamental changes in the practice of diplomacy on a global scale. In nations like Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen, social media has evolved into a platform for the unrestricted dissemination of public information among users. During the Arab Spring, social media played a pivotal role in enabling activists to transcend the psychological barriers of fear, facilitating connections and the exchange of information, and in some instances, orchestrating physical protests (Kassim 2012)

While the traditional mode of diplomacy, rooted in interactions among representatives of sovereign states, continues to hold significance, the interconnected nature of today's world is elevating the roles of not only countries but also individuals and organizations. This shift has given rise to what is commonly referred to as digital diplomacy. However, as highlighted by Bjola K., despite the potential promises offered by digital diplomacy within the realm of international relations, there remains a lack of comprehensive analytical study on its functionality, level of success, and inherent limitations (Bjola 2015: 1-9).

This article delves into the concept of digital diplomacy, centering on the utilization of digital media within the diplomatic sphere and how nations leverage these tools to advance their foreign policy objectives. It scrutinizes the opportunities and challenges presented by these media in diplomatic endeavors, while also assessing the current trends in digital diplomacy usage within Uzbekistan. Furthermore, it conducts an analysis of the prospects for further development within the framework of the national strategy for modernization and innovation.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the role of digital technologies in Uzbekistan's diplomatic activities, specifically focusing on how these technologies are shaping diplomatic strategies and influencing the achievement of foreign policy goals. The study aims to provide a detailed analysis of what digital diplomacy entails, how digital media is utilized within the diplomatic sphere, and the impact these tools have at both national and international levels. By doing so, the research seeks to understand how Uzbekistan is integrating digital technologies into its diplomatic efforts, identifying the opportunities and challenges that arise

in this process, and drawing conclusions about the implications for the future of digital diplomacy.

The hypothesis of the study posits that digital diplomacy offers significant advantages over traditional diplomatic methods, such as broader audience reach and faster information dissemination, but also introduces new security and privacy risks. Using Uzbekistan as a case study, the research suggests that digital diplomacy can be an effective tool in supporting national foreign policy objectives, but maximizing its potential requires enhancing digital literacy and optimizing the integration of digital technologies into diplomatic strategies. This hypothesis seeks to evaluate both the benefits and limitations of digital diplomacy, offering insights into how these technologies can be more effectively utilized in future diplomatic practices.

Definition of Digital Diplomacy

Diplomacy serves as a fundamental aspect of international relations (Cohen 1998). It represents the established process through which states articulate their foreign policy objectives and coordinate efforts to influence the decisions and behaviors of foreign governments and populations through dialogue, negotiations, and other non-violent means. Throughout history, diplomacy has been employed by states to safeguard their specific or overarching interests, including the mitigation of conflicts between them. It stands as the primary instrument for attaining objectives, strategies, and overarching foreign policy tactics aimed at fostering peaceful coexistence and cultivating amicable relationships with foreign nations and peoples. Its ultimate aim is to secure cooperation or, if necessary, neutrality from them.

Digital diplomacy, being a relatively recent phenomenon, has garnered attention and analysis from researchers and practitioners alike (Sotiriu 2015). Consequently, there is no widely accepted definition or universally applicable framework that comprehensively encapsulates this concept. It can be inferred that current research is only starting to delve into the essence of digital diplomacy and its operational dynamics. This lack of a robust conceptual framework in existing literature explains the challenge in assessing the efficacy of social media in the realm of public diplomacy (Bjola & Jiang, 2015: 71-88).

Over the last decade, integrating digital technologies into diplomacy has emerged as a priority in the foreign policy communications of various nations. Digital diplomacy has rapidly become one of the most efficient means for countries to convey their official stances on international political developments.

The term “digital diplomacy” first appeared in the book *Digital Diplomacy: American Foreign Policy in the Information Age* by American journalist W. Dizard. Dizard (2001) analyzes the use of information technology in U.S. foreign policy and military relations and proposes a program he developed for the country’s government. He argues that in a situation of increasing influence of non-governmental and transnational organizations, “digital diplomacy” is a complex but successful means of communication.

The concept of “digital diplomacy” is considered a new term and in many aspects correlates with such terms as “cyber diplomacy” (Barston 2014), “social diplomacy”, “virtual diplomacy,” “electronic diplomacy” (Hocking et al. 2012), and “diplomacy 2.0” (Harris 2013).

Although digital diplomacy began to be used in the political sphere from the beginning of the 21st century, researchers and political scientists have not yet given a uniform definition of this term. Representatives of the Anglo-Saxon school, such as Holmes, Segev, Manor, Ross, Lewis, and Biola (2015), define digital diplomacy as a tool of soft power and believe that it should be used in international politics and diplomacy based on mutual trust and values.

Russian scientists characterize digital diplomacy as a tool for shaping public opinion and as a factor influencing the process of making foreign policy and political-economic decisions. Krikunov interprets digital diplomacy as the application of modern information and communication technologies to solve foreign policy problems, and Zinovieva (2019) describes it as the use of information and communication technologies, including new media tools, social networks, blogs, and similar media platforms, to implement the current tasks of the foreign policy agenda of government bodies.

According to the Australian Hanson Strategic Policy Institute (Hanson 2012), digital diplomacy is defined as the use of the Internet and new information communication technologies to perform diplomatic tasks. It aims to achieve several political goals, including utilizing departmental and national knowledge to preserve, spread, and optimize it for achieving national interests abroad. Maintaining contact with the audience as they migrate online is another objective, using new communication tools to listen to important audiences, target them with key messages, and influence major online influencers. Additionally, it involves collecting and using the vast flow of information to better inform policy development and to anticipate and respond to emerging social and political movements. Creating direct, personal communication channels with citizens traveling abroad and managing communications in crisis situations is another key goal. Digital diplomacy also aims to use connectivity technologies in

disaster response situations. It seeks to develop technologies that ensure the Internet remains free and open, promoting freedom of speech and democracy while undermining authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, it involves creating digital mechanisms to attract and utilize external expertise to achieve national goals and ensuring effective supervision, coordination, and planning of international policy within the government in response to the internationalization of the bureaucracy.

Implementing these goals through digital diplomacy significantly enhances government efficiency. It helps form a realistic image of the state, dismantling stereotypes and attracting investors, which supports its effective development and functioning. Establishing direct dialogue with people increases transparency in government activities, identifies gaps and grievances in policies, and allows social network users to express their opinions on real situations with negative consequences, often without fear of threats, pressure, or other repercussions due to the confidentiality and anonymity offered online.

Additionally, providing communication, assistance, and consular registration via the Internet for citizens abroad can result in significant savings, as it eliminates the need for travel and hosting expenses. Before the global pandemic, these processes were conducted traditionally. The limitations on physical contact have driven the adoption of information and communication technologies in all areas of life, especially in establishing foreign and domestic relations.

All these points demonstrate the effectiveness of digital diplomacy. However, for new practices to be introduced in the state, the adoption of appropriate legal frameworks is crucial.

World leaders and diplomats are increasingly utilizing social media platforms, particularly X, for communication and direct engagement with their target audiences, whom they aim to influence. Additionally, diplomatic activities are progressively being facilitated through online tools. Nikos Christodoulides highlights that the internet can be regarded by governments as a unique diplomatic instrument; through its effective utilization, they can not only disseminate their stances on various issues but also propagate their ideas globally. This opportunity, if harnessed appropriately, assists embassies and, consequently, states in fostering a positive impression in the host country (Christodoulides 2005). Diplomats are increasingly depending on the internet for information retrieval, communication with peers via email, and conducting negotiations through electronic document exchange. Moreover, they are increasingly leveraging emerging social media platforms such as blogs and Facebook. Social

media has introduced a significant real-time dimension to diplomacy, enabling instantaneous communication and, when necessary, a more informal approach.

Digital diplomacy has become an essential aspect of foreign policy. In today's intricate global landscape, both state and non-state entities vie for influence and authority within the online sphere. This domain is inhabited by over three billion individuals, with the majority accessing the internet solely through their mobile devices. Utilizing digital diplomacy effectively is increasingly becoming a compelling and pertinent supplement to traditional diplomatic practices. It can aid states in advancing their foreign policy objectives, broadening international influence, and reaching populations who may never physically engage with an embassy (Cave 2015).

Digital technologies hold particular significance in the realm of public diplomacy, as they enable the gathering and analysis of information, enhance consular services, and facilitate communication during emergencies and disasters. International experience demonstrates that adept utilization of digital diplomacy tools can yield substantial benefits for those who invest resources in them. Furthermore, implementing digital diplomacy does not always necessitate significant financial investment; on the contrary, it often aims to reduce costs. The human factor plays a crucial role: the commitment of personnel to professional development, proficiency in new technologies, allocation of time for engaging with the online audience, processing electronic data, and creating informational materials are all essential aspects (Permyakova 2012).

As Richard Grant observes, a significant portion of the tasks performed by foreign ministries worldwide still adhere to traditional diplomatic methods: issuing directives to embassies in foreign nations; conducting meetings and negotiations that often escape widespread public notice; gathering, analyzing, and disseminating current information; patiently and methodically engaging with stakeholders; and addressing numerous technical challenges through intergovernmental mechanisms such as international conferences, regional organizations, or technical working groups (Grant 2004). Therefore, digital diplomacy does not supplant classical diplomacy; rather, when employed adeptly, it can enhance a state's engagement in international relations and foreign policy by expediting processes and maximizing the efficient utilization of available resources.

Digital Diplomacy in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan's motivations for establishing digital diplomacy are multifaceted, rooted in its desire to modernize its foreign policy apparatus and improve its international standing in the digital age.

Uzbekistan began actively using digital diplomacy around the mid-2010s as part of its broader push for modernization and international engagement. By 2020, Uzbekistan had gained recognition for its efforts, being ranked among the top 30 countries globally in digital diplomacy, reflecting its rapid progress in this area. The most popular and interactive platforms for Uzbekistan's digital diplomacy are social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. These platforms are primarily used to reach a global audience, including foreign governments, international organizations, and the Uzbek diaspora, aiming to project Uzbekistan's image, promote its culture, and foster international cooperation.

Several factors prompted Uzbekistan to focus on digital diplomacy. Firstly, the global shift towards digital communication made it essential for Uzbekistan to adapt in order to stay relevant on the international stage. Secondly, Uzbekistan's leadership recognized the potential of digital tools to enhance the country's visibility, promote its economic and cultural interests, and engage with both domestic and international audiences more effectively. The government's broader agenda of digital transformation across various sectors also influenced this focus, as it aligned with the goal of building a more connected and tech-savvy state.

Uzbekistan has promoted and developed digital transformation in foreign policy through several initiatives. The government has invested in building digital infrastructure and training diplomats in the use of digital tools. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been particularly active on social media, using these platforms to engage with foreign publics and disseminate information about Uzbekistan's policies and achievements. Moreover, Uzbekistan has sought to integrate digital technologies into other areas of governance, such as e-government services, to enhance transparency, efficiency, and citizen engagement. These efforts reflect a broader strategy to position Uzbekistan as a modern, forward-looking nation that is fully engaged in the global digital landscape.

The processes of globalization, the development of information and communication technologies in developed countries, the Internet, and the strengthening of the role of non-governmental organizations in international relations encourage the active use of advanced technologies. As a new form of using soft power in the foreign policy of states, digital

diplomacy is often used in the foreign policy of leading countries such as the USA, Canada, Russia, Japan, France, Iran, and others. The countries of Central Asia are no exception.

The introduction of digital tools depends on the existing infrastructure in the country, Internet coverage, and the speed of Internet connections. The state's national strategy in the field of digitalization, organization of public services, and e-government is reflected in the country's digital diplomacy. In particular, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are among the countries that are more successful in this direction than other Central Asian countries. According to the results of the UN e-Government Knowledge Base study, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are among the leaders in Central Asia in terms of the "E-Participation Indicator" and "E-Government Development Indicator" (Hudoykulov 2020).

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the use of digital diplomacy began in 2016 with the development of digital diplomacy in the country, a radical transformation, and the improvement of the system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The creation of an Action Strategy for the period 2017–2021 defined the tasks necessary for the implementation of digital diplomacy.

According to Twiplomacy, the most popular digital resources in Uzbekistan are the press services of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Prime Minister Abdulla Oripov, as well as the gov.uz portal and the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Hudoykulov 2020).

The press service of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev actively uses the capabilities of social networks. The digital resource of the presidential press service has more than 40000 subscribers on X, more than 3 million subscribers on Instagram, and more than 250000 users on the Facebook page.

To strengthen the role of government agencies in social networks, a systematic approach is necessary. According to Hocking and Melissen (2015), several factors are important for the successful digitalization of foreign policy activities of foreign ministries. Firstly, the foreign policy department needs internal structural support, which requires the creation of a special unit including digitalization experts. Secondly, an effective digital moderator is required, which is a person who actively supports and develops digitalization processes. Thirdly, professional staff is needed, necessitating a special program to train diplomats in network management and the dissemination of information among various groups and categories of users. Additionally, it is important to take into account the features associated with the direct activities of foreign policy departments.

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In Uzbekistan, digital diplomacy is actively utilizing social networks and online platforms to initiate and sustain communication with representatives from other countries. This strategic approach fosters the exchange of information, facilitates dialogue, and enhances the country's positive image within the global community. According to an analytical report by We Are Social, 76.6% of Uzbekistan's permanent population are internet users (We Are Social, 2024). Engaging with popular social media platforms such as X, Facebook, YouTube, VKontakte, Instagram and others reinforces Uzbekistan's presence in the digital realm of diplomacy, promoting transparency, accessibility, and international recognition.

The growing interest in social media is not coincidental, as it is evolving into a strategic instrument of foreign policy. These platforms not only relay messages from diplomatic entities but also function as sources of information, avenues for engaging with society, and tools for monitoring ongoing issues (Arapov 2016: 171). Therefore, the strategic utilization of social media entails assessing target demographics, crafting messages, and selecting the most effective communication channels.

Social networks are now a key channel for reaching millions of young people, the target audience of digital diplomacy, due to their capacity for rapid mobilization based on information, video broadcasts, and creating conditions for direct dialogue between the government and foreign citizens. This was evident in the Arab Spring, where social media was instrumental in organizing protests and calling for mass demonstrations among youth, many of whom were trained by U.S. activists and became leaders in their respective countries (Gedlerchuk 2018). The advantage of social networks is the opportunity to connect with citizens of other countries almost in real-time (Fisher 2013). As a form of public diplomacy, digital diplomacy is a mechanism for influencing foreign audiences through various methods such as posting radio and television programs on the Internet, distributing open access literature in digital format, monitoring discussions in the blogosphere, sending information via mobile phones, and creating personalized pages for government members on social networks (Surma 2015).

The potential ease of access to social networks and their low cost compared to other methods make them an attractive tool for many embassies and government agencies facing budget cuts and needing to increase involvement (Adesina 2017). Social networks like X and Facebook, used in digital diplomacy, reach a wider audience regardless of age, gender, race, or nationality. Unlike traditional media like radio and television, which were broadcast models of the twentieth century and have lost their significance among the younger generation, social networks offer interactive functions such as replies, comments, shares, and multilingual

capabilities. This approach focuses on audience feedback, fostering close interaction with viewers and readers, and engaging the public in diplomatic processes through views, comments, reposts, and likes.

An essential facet of digital diplomacy in Uzbekistan involves leveraging digital technologies to conduct virtual events, conferences, and negotiations. Government institutions and organizations in Uzbekistan are actively adopting video conferencing platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. enabling participants to engage in real-time interaction regardless of their geographical locations. This approach enhances the flexibility, efficiency, and accessibility of diplomatic gatherings, facilitating effective communication on the global stage. Moreover, it not only saves time and resources but also renders diplomatic processes more accessible and transparent to a broader audience.

Digital technologies are particularly useful in collecting and processing information, consular activities, and maintaining secure communications during natural disasters and emergencies, such as COVID-19. The global coronavirus crisis, which erupted at the end of 2019, severely limited physical contact and significantly boosted activities in the digital sphere, becoming the only channel for interpersonal communication and news. With stringent quarantine measures and self-isolation, long-distance movement was restricted, leading to the transition of diplomatic activities to the digital space. Important events, conferences, and diplomatic meetings were predominantly conducted via video conferencing. Examples include international summits like the ASEAN, G7 and G20, held remotely in 2020.

Thanks to digital diplomacy, Uzbekistan can efficiently represent its interests on the world stage, engage in international initiatives, and highlight issues crucial to the country. As digital diplomacy continues to evolve, Uzbekistan will harness new technologies to further solidify its position within the global community.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan highly values the significance of digital diplomacy and advocates for its further enhancement. Innovative approaches outlined in his resolutions include supporting projects in the digital technology sector, providing educational initiatives for personnel to effectively utilize new tools, and aiding in the development of digital platforms to promote Uzbekistan's culture, tourism, and economy abroad. The President underscores that these digital platforms serve as potent instruments for bolstering international relations, showcasing the cultural wealth of the country, and fostering external economic ties.

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One of the pivotal initiatives driving the advancement of digital diplomacy in Uzbekistan is the integration of information and communication Technologies into diplomatic practices. Uzbekistan is actively progressing in the adoption and implementation of electronic document management, electronic visas, and other digital solutions to streamline external affairs processes. These efforts aim to facilitate quicker and more efficient interactions with foreign partners, diminish bureaucratic hurdles, and enhance the effectiveness of diplomatic endeavors. Platforms such as mfa.uz, gov.uz, chamber.uz, miit.uz, among others, serve as crucial repositories of information for foreign investors. They offer comprehensive data on investment opportunities, current legal frameworks, business procedures, and other pertinent aspects. These digital platforms play a pivotal role in advancing digital diplomacy in Uzbekistan by ensuring effective communication, facilitating information exchange, and garnering international attention towards the country. Not only do they simplify interaction processes with foreign partners, but they also contribute to fostering a positive perception of Uzbekistan as an innovative and collaborative nation.

Legal Regulations Leading The Development of Digital Diplomacy in Uzbekistan

Today, Uzbekistan has several normative and legal acts focused on digitalization, including the development and use of digital diplomacy. Key among these are the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated April 5, 2018, No. PP-3654, "On Organizational Measures for Further Improvement of Activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan," and the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 5, 2020, No. UP-6079, "On Approval of the 'Digital Uzbekistan' Strategy 2030."

The eighth part of resolution No. PP-3654 stipulates that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Ministry for Development of Information Technologies and Communications, must develop and approve measures to enhance and develop information and communication technologies within the foreign policy department and foreign institutions of Uzbekistan. This includes strengthening the logistical base of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with modern computer hardware and software, modernizing information networks, and enhancing information security.

It also involves implementing an information system for monitoring "road maps" of foreign institutions of Uzbekistan for active and systematic work with the host country, creating a secure video conferencing system and an electronic database for unified accounting of international treaties, inventory, and monitoring of their implementation, improving websites

and converting consular services into electronic form, equipping with modern equipment and technical communication means, creating a unified electronic system for processing incoming requests, and providing necessary software for the Ministry's call center. Additionally, it involves expanding the use of "digital diplomacy" and extensively utilizing the Internet and social platforms (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan 2018).

The decree "On approval of the Strategy 'Digital Uzbekistan-2030' and measures for its effective implementation" issued by the President of Uzbekistan outlines a comprehensive plan to advance the digital economy and integrate modern information and communication Technologies across various sectors.

The strategy "Digital Uzbekistan - 2030" has been approved to foster digital transformation, developed with input from government bodies, business communities, academia, and international experts, along with regional and sector-specific digital transformation programs for 2020-2022.

To enhance infrastructure, the decree aims to increase internet access in settlements from 78% to 95%, expand broadband access, lay 20000 kilometers of fiber-optic lines, and develop mobile networks. Over 400 information systems and electronic services will be implemented, alongside training programs for 587000 individuals in computer programming and efforts to improve digital literacy.

The strategy includes developing e-government systems to provide comprehensive public services, including personal digital profiles, online state payments, and increased information availability by 2021. Administrative procedures will be streamlined, transparency enhanced, and processes in government bodies automated.

IT parks will be established nationwide, with efforts to train qualified personnel and support IT companies and startups. Digital education will be promoted by compensating IT certification costs, establishing digital training centers, and creating specialized schools for IT education.

The strategy emphasizes research in AI, machine learning, big data, and other advanced technologies, supporting the commercialization of innovative projects and technology transfer. Public awareness campaigns will raise understanding of the strategy's goals and progress through comprehensive media coverage.

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Diplomatic missions will facilitate technology transfer and collaboration with international companies, while at least 5% of investment project funds will be allocated to digital components.

In summary, the decree sets an ambitious roadmap for transforming Uzbekistan into a digital diplomacy and economy by 2030. The implementation aims to improve public administration, education, healthcare, and agriculture through enhanced ICT infrastructure, digital literacy, and regulatory reforms, thereby increasing the country's economic competitiveness and improving the quality of life for its citizens (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan 2020)

CONCLUSION

Digital diplomacy has fundamentally reshaped the structures and operations of Ministries of Foreign Affairs and profoundly altered the essence of traditional diplomacy. The evolution of information and communication technologies has facilitated the ubiquitous dissemination of information, enabling swift and extensive sharing of information and affording avenues for expressing concerns, sentiments, and influencing political decisions. Consequently, governmental interactions have become more responsive and encompass a broader global scope.

Digital diplomacy offers both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, social media platforms provide countries with enhanced access to information, aiding in the resolution of social issues. For instance, individuals in conflict zones utilize social media to garner support, coordinate protests, and inform the global community about events in their countries, particularly in situations where traditional media face restrictions or censorship. On the other hand, employing social media as a diplomatic tool comes with inherent risks. Nevertheless, it appears that the opportunities afforded by digital diplomacy outweigh the challenges.

In conclusion, it is evident that Uzbekistan is actively striving to develop digital diplomacy and harness advanced technologies to bolster its presence in the global information sphere. It is imperative for the country to consistently invest in the advancement of digital diplomacy, engage effectively in the global community, adapt to evolving technological trends, and implement innovative digital solutions. These efforts will be crucial for Uzbekistan to sustain its long-term engagement and relevance on the international stage.

To promote the adoption of digital diplomacy, it is advisable to establish regular interaction and collaboration between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal

Affairs, and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies. Additionally, it is essential to develop a comprehensive plan, strategy, and regulations for the widespread utilization of digital diplomacy. This coordinated effort and framework will facilitate effective implementation and integration of digital diplomacy practices across governmental departments.

To establish effective communication with the audience, it is advisable to create official government accounts on popular social media platforms and actively disseminate information about the latest structural and strategic changes in the state, both in Russian and English languages. Moreover, it is crucial to enhance the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, establish a hotline for citizens residing abroad, and ensure a high level of cybersecurity on platforms for diplomatic communications and discussions on global issues. These measures will enhance transparency, accessibility, and security in governmental communication with the public and international community.

To implement these practices, it is essential to enact appropriate regulatory legal acts and define specific tasks for designated periods. Sustained innovative efforts and continual advancement in digital diplomacy will enable Uzbekistan to bolster its international reputation and cultivate mutually beneficial relationships with the global community. This proactive approach will be instrumental in ensuring the effective implementation and ongoing progress of digital diplomacy initiatives in Uzbekistan.

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Digital Diplomacy and Its Impacts on Uzbekistan's International Relations

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Makale Bilgileri/Article Information

<i>Etik Beyan:</i>	Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan edilir.	<i>Ethical Statement:</i>	It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.
<i>Çıkar Çatışması:</i>	Çalışmada kişiler veya kurumlar arası çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.	<i>Conflict of Interest:</i>	The authors declare that declare no conflict of interest.
<i>Yazar Katkı Beyanı:</i>	Çalışmanın tamamı yazar tarafından oluşturulmuştur.	<i>Author Contribution Declaration:</i>	The entire study was created by the author.
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