

Digital diplomacy of USA and China in the era of datalization

N. M. Kuznetsov¹, Fushu Liang²

¹ St. Petersburg State University,
7–9, Universitetskaya nab., St. Petersburg, 199034, Russian Federation

² D & C Think Institute,
222, Xi Da Mo Chang Street, Dongcheng District, Beijing, People's Republic of China

For citation: Kuznetsov N. M., Fushu Liang. Digital diplomacy of USA and China in the era of datalization. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. International Relations*, 2023, vol. 16, issue 2, pp. 191–200. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu06.2023.206>

Among the numerous discourses on US-China relations in recent years, issues of the influence of digital international relations (which include such areas as digital/data diplomacy, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence (AI) development, and the influence of information projects in social networks) are rarely given explicit consideration. At the same time, all these elements have come under the pressure of datalization and takes a big pleasure on the place of states in the world politics. This article reveals the phenomenon of one the most important element of digital international relations — digital diplomacy of the USA and China — and focuses on the political and academic discourses about this foreign policy instrument in these countries. The first part of the study presents academic discourses on digital diplomacy of Chinese and American experts, provides characteristics of PRC and US digital diplomacy, trends and role in bilateral relations. The second part of the article reflects the existing strategies and projects in Chinese and American digital diplomacy in relation to each other. The authors stated that digital diplomacy evolved from just an instrument of international information broadcasting to the full-fledged foreign policy mechanism which already has visible elements, structural connections and an evolutionary path of development with difficult methodology and institutional regulation, covering the issues of public diplomacy and cybersecurity, and which is the main instrument of the new ideological and economic confrontation of two powers.

Keywords: digital diplomacy, data diplomacy, public diplomacy, propaganda, discourse, Big Data, USA, China.

Introduction

In recent years political and social scientists reveal that the system of international relations has become digital and characterize its main directions with the term *digital international relations*. According to them, the most issues at the interstate level relate to the regulation of cyberspace, and the digital space has changed the nature of the work of the foreign policy mechanism and diplomacy. One of the most important areas of this concept is *digital diplomacy*, which until recently was studied as the only term accumulating any information activity of states on the Internet [1].

The impact of new technologies on the economy, national security and foreign policy of states has changed the image of digital diplomacy as just a *Twitter**-diplomacy [2]. Such foreign policy mechanism has called by experts as a strategic asset that contributes to increasing the effectiveness of foreign policy and reforming diplomacy on a global scale [3].

* Officially blocked in Russian Federation.

© St. Petersburg State University, 2023

USA and China are considered the innovators of this area, whose influence on modern world politics has become the most significant.

US digital diplomacy has launched the process of digitalization of world politics and public diplomacy, in particular. Traditionally attributed to J. Nye's concept of *soft power* projects in the field of culture, education, language and attracting the attention of foreign audiences to state values acquired new, digital incarnations, and then completely faded into the background in state strategies on national branding, giving way to propaganda and *data diplomacy* [4]. It is propaganda on social networks, Big Data analytics about foreign audiences, chat bots and a whole arsenal of tools to combat the information activity of opponent countries that have become tools of modern public diplomacy [5].

Digital diplomacy of the People's Republic of China uses all available tools of information influence on the audience. Beijing identifies AI as the main driver of its national economy, actively explores the possibilities of social media analytics, and continues to develop public diplomacy projects to influence overseas audiences [6]. Such activity raises concerns in the United States, where the PRC is traditionally considered one of the main threats to national security and its informational influence is called as *sharp power* [7; 8]. With regard to the United States, China's digital diplomacy is developing rapidly, trying to create a strong image of China's leadership, culture and politics. For this, all possible tools available in the era of Big Data and social networks are used.

The development of digital diplomacy between the United States and China in relation to each other has changed interstate relations. Strategies and projects which initially were called soft power and didn't seem to draw the attention of many experts, has become not just a separate instrument of influence, but an integral part of the foreign policy of the two countries. The issues of cybersecurity and propaganda, analytics of Big Data about each other's audience, ideological wars and denigration of domestic and foreign policies, the use of chat bots, artificial intelligence and Internet trolls have become realities of modern international relations [9].

In this regard, the problem of the phenomenon of digital diplomacy in interstate relations between the United States and China remains practically unexplored in modern world science. What are the real steps taken by the US and Chinese administrations in this direction? What are its strategies and projects? Is digital diplomacy a separate area of modern foreign policy or can it be considered part of a full-fledged digitalization of the political influence of one state on another?

The purpose of this article is to reveal the political and academic discourses on digital diplomacy and data diplomacy of the United States and China, to establish their projects in relation to each other. The research is spited into two parts. In the first part of article the authors analyze the theoretical frameworks of US and Chinese digital diplomacy. The second part observes digital diplomacy's practical realization, including the strategy of American policy of deterrence towards Chinese digital diplomacy.

The documents of the US and Chinese government including the bills and hearings at the US Congress and some reports taken from the agencies which implement some projects in the field used by authors to demonstrate practical realization and understanding of digital diplomacy by two counties.

As research methods, authors used documentary and analyze, as well as quantitative and qualitative methods of processing Internet resources.

US and Chinese digital diplomacy: From theory to practice

Digital diplomacy became a phenomenon of international relations in 2010–2018. USA and China play important role in the development of this world politics' field. The main method of implementing digital diplomacy in world practice has become the use of social networks to build communication with a foreign audience. Social media is seen as an attractive technology-based communication channel for many embassies and other organizations, especially those facing budget cuts and increased demand for participation, due to their perceived ease of access and low cost compared to other methods.

An important stage in the digitalization of international relations took place in 2020, when Internet platforms became the only opportunity for states to influence foreign policy because of the COVID-19 pandemic [10]. New realities have proven the impact of digitalization not only on activities aimed at public diplomacy, but also on global diplomatic activities, which are increasingly acquiring a quantitative dimension and can be subjected to statistical processing. Cybersecurity and *cyber deterrence* issues, digital information campaigns and the use of AI have become an integral part of world politics.

US digital diplomacy has received close attention from the entire scientific community. The starting point in the process of digitalization of public diplomacy was the period of Barack Obama presidency (2009–2017). The ideas of the American political scientist J. Nye about soft power have become the imperative of US public diplomacy.

The United States began to develop special digital diplomacy projects to inform citizens of the whole world, to conduct direct or public dialogue with foreign audiences, to spread liberal values and its ideology through social networks, blogs, instant messengers, etc. The attempts made by the United States of America in recent years to use AI in the practice of the diplomatic service, to predict the effectiveness of its influence in cyberspace, to use methods of processing the continuously increasing volumes of information about the Internet activity of social network users (Big Data), as well as to monitor the information activities of the opponent countries (first of all — Russia, China and Iran) gave rise to a discourse about a new direction of American foreign policy as we known as data diplomacy [11]. Over the past decade, this mechanism has been gradually developing. The implementation of data diplomacy began with the analytical activities of the counter-terrorism department of the US Department of State and evolved to the interagency work of the entire US government [12–14].

The discourse of the world scientific community about new trends in US digital diplomacy has different assessments. Some authors speak about the digitalization of public diplomacy and the use of machine methods to study it, without dividing digital diplomacy and data diplomacy into separate fields [15]. Other experts are convinced that digital diplomacy and data diplomacy are evolutionary stages in the development of public diplomacy, associated with it, but having a number of characteristics that allow us to consider them from the point of view of independent phenomena. Data analytics is used in research on the concept of sharp power, in which the authors try to reveal the information activity of Internet trolls and bots of foreign countries [16]. Catrine Ashbrook, the Head of the Future of Diplomacy Project in the Harvard University, notes that data aggregation becomes an indispensable aspect of foreign policy. In other researches, authors write about data diplomacy in such terms as *scientific diplomacy*, *public digital diplomacy*, *artificial intelligence diplomacy*, etc. [17–19]. This underlines the existence of different approaches to understanding the phenomenon of data diplomacy at the present stage.

China's digital diplomacy proceeds with a certain degree of specificity in comparison with the United States, where the information policy is to be conceptualized by common strategies and concepts of *powers*. In addition, the study of Chinese digital diplomacy has received much less attention from the international community. With the guidance of China's strategy for the construction of *Digital China*, it has gained international recognition in related aspects such as Internet technology, network security, and international cooperation in cyberspace. Compared with Western scholars, the research on digital diplomacy by Chinese scholars is relatively late. Some Chinese scholars have conducted in-depth research and discussion on the relevance of media and think tanks, and the role of new opportunities and challenges of diplomacy in the new media environment in public diplomacy.

China's digital diplomacy is facing important historical opportunities and will surely take advantage of Big Data technology and follow the correct direction of global governance in cyberspace. It will certainly have a broader stage in the future development of China [20]. Professor Zhang Ji and Professor Luo Hailong discussed the impact of cyber diplomacy on international relations in *Cyber Diplomacy and the Chinese Government's Countermeasures* [21]. They also made suggestions for solving the current problems of China's digital diplomacy. Two scholars, Li Jie and Liang Xiaoli, combed the current frontier development of international cyber diplomacy, analyzed classic cases, and put forward four major strategic models of cyber diplomacy. They mentioned in the *Research on International Cyber Diplomacy Strategy Models* that Internet diplomacy has established a mechanism that can quickly create and disseminate information based on the ever-changing international situation, and increase the ability to communicate with foreign target groups. Digital diplomacy has become an important strategic choice for the reform of diplomatic methods of various countries in the new situation [22].

Under the influence of new media represented by new technologies, public diplomacy has undergone tremendous changes. Some scholars believe that the associated with the Internet of things, cloud computing, such as block chain wisdom the vigorous development of media technology, the public diplomacy based on artificial intelligence become a new focus of diplomatic service to compete, digital technology to promote the public diplomacy evolution from *targeted* to *custom* [23]. From the strategic thinking that focuses solely on the *communicative power data*, to a strategic thinking that pays more attention to whether the purpose of public diplomacy is truly realized. In the future, personalized communication will be carried out in accordance with the personal characteristics, interest demands, and habitual preferences of specific communication targets, and public diplomacy will be carried out accurately. Liu Xingrui proposed that in the future, AI will be used in the construction of intelligent international public opinion monitoring and analysis systems, computing communication based on political robots, and immersive experience communication applications [24]. At the same time, it will also help to exert more targeted influence on the target country's audience, create recognition, and create an external environment conducive to the implementation of the country's foreign policy. Jiang Ying argues that social media platforms advance the goals of public diplomacy by providing space for global interaction and political engagement. Chinese publicity media should also take advantage of the advantages of new media and attach importance to diversified, multi-channel, three-dimensional interaction and two-way influence with the international public. But at the same time, the new media environment has injected more public opinion variables into public diplomacy, coupled with the diversification of the subjects of diplomatic activities nowadays, this has

increased the uncontrollability of diplomatic interaction results and the uncertainty of the realization of policy goals to a certain extent [25].

To sum up, with the rapid development of digital technology, technological change has also penetrated into the field of diplomacy. With the development of digital technology and network technology, the change of international competitive environment makes digital diplomacy no longer in the frontier of international politics, but become an important force affecting international political operation. It can be argued that public diplomacy and soft power are no longer important in discourses about US and Chinese foreign policy influence. It is propaganda, data diplomacy and AI development, cyber presence in the information field of foreign countries and the integration of new technologies that occupy a key place in digital diplomacy and actively influence the relationship between the two countries according to models of rivalry. Realizing all the possibilities of new technologies and the competitive struggle of China to the global audience, the United States focused on combating enemy information and began to use all the capabilities of AI for counter-propaganda. American experts call on the White House to abandon simple reforms in the field of digital diplomacy and carry out a radical revolution of American strategic communication to restore the monopoly of American information influence in the world. China is trying to catch up with the United States in a new technological arms race and, according to a number of American experts, is now the new world center of AI. Under the current guidance of China's new strategy, the development of China's digital diplomacy is facing new requirements and new tasks. Today, China is accelerating into a new era of intelligent interconnection, and the construction of *digital China* has entered the fast lane. It plays an important role in government diplomacy and public diplomacy through the Internet, mobile Internet, AI, and Big Data.

American and Chinese digital diplomacy: Informational deterrence

According to the official statements, China's digital diplomacy has been vigorously safeguarding national interests on the international stage, enhancing PRC national image in various fields, and in particular has played an important role in promoting major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics and the concept of *beautiful China* [26].

From 1999, China set off a big wave of Internet development, and in 2019, China quickly entered the 5G commercial era. At the same time, the number of Chinese Internet users has reached 854 million, and the number of IPv6 addresses is the largest in the world. Internet fields such as cloud computing, Big Data, Internet government affairs and finance, and the Internet of Things have developed rapidly [27]

China continues to promote the standardized development of cyberspace governance. The Chinese government has established relevant departments and institutions in the country, and has issued a number of bills and systems to provide development guarantees for cyberspace governance. In addition, China is also actively participating in global network governance. In recent years, China has carried out extensive cooperation in Internet development and security, and established a mutual trust and cooperation mechanism with countries around the world on network security. In 2017, the State Council of the People's Republic of China released the *New Generation of Artificial Intelligence Development Plan*, a key document for conceptualizing Beijing's public approach to AI development [28]. The Chinese leadership has pledged \$ 22.5 billion in funding for the development of artificial intelligence, and more than \$ 150 billion for the development of related industries. China plans

to become a world leader in AI and new technologies by 2030. In 2018, it was announced that the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs is testing specialized algorithms for Big Data analytics to design its actions on the global stage [29]. It can be stated, that Chinese government understands all opportunities of data diplomacy's influence to the world audience. For example, the construction of the Digital Silk Road has become a highlight of the Belt and Road Initiative initiated by China. In this regard, China continues to pursue innovation-driven development, strengthen cooperation in frontier areas such as digital economy, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology and quantum computers, and promote the development of Big Data, cloud computing and smart cities to build a digital Silk Road for the 21st century.

In recent years, China has increased its exposure on American social media in order to demonstrate its efforts to showcase its diplomatic activities on the global stage. According to observations on social media, starting in mid-2019, Beijing has accelerated its investment in the use of social media. On Twitter*, China's diplomatic accounts have grown to the current 80. Observed on various social media, the color of communism in China's public diplomacy is gradually diminishing. China takes "China's unique culture" as the center of its public diplomacy, not its philosophy and system, and strives to shape its international image as "*China is a peaceful and beautiful country*". This has also opened up a new path for China's foreign affairs work, and now China's diplomatic work pays more attention to interacting with the people of all countries [30].

Enhance China's international discourse power and safeguard China's own rights and interests through vocalization on social media. China's social values are constantly being challenged in the Western world of discourse, and there are still many voices attacking and discrediting China's image. In this way, the Chinese government has responded strongly to official remarks and discordant voices that are detrimental to China's international image. From the perspective of content, the content disseminated by China on social media is guided in the direction of politicization according to its intended purpose. However, in the process of dissemination, the unilateral purpose was over-emphasized, the content and narrative were over-emphasized, and the communication was neglected. In addition, digital public diplomacy has also become an important means for the Chinese government to control and guide internal online public opinion.

China has no intention to hedge against the United States in its foreign policy, and its diplomatic principles have always maintained independence and autonomy is the fundamental principle of China's foreign policy, which is also reflected in the field of digital diplomacy. In today's world, both developed and developing countries are in an important stage of economic and social digital transformation. The digital economy is playing an increasingly prominent role in promoting the development of the real economy, improving the livelihood of the society and improving national governance capabilities.

Such informational activity of Chinese users started the Western discourse of *sharp power*. In 2018, the American political scientist and author Joseph Nye published an article in Foreign Affairs entitled *How Sharp Power Threatens Soft Power*. In it, the well-known power theorist states the emergence of a new strategy of foreign policy influence, which he calls sharp power. In his opinion, sharp power has become the basis of the foreign policy of China and is aimed at destabilizing the democratic states. The author emphasizes that sharp power is not aimed at engaging the audience in its agenda, but is a set of tools that combine

* Officially blocked in Russian Federation.

both classical propaganda mechanisms and completely new methods of influence — hacker attacks on government databases that distribute beneficial information, bots criticizing democratic institutions of the “army of Internet trolls”, fake news, etc. It is impossible not to pay attention to the statement of K. Walker and J. Ludwig, according to which the sharp power methodological set has no meaning. In their opinion, absolutely any areas of public diplomacy of authoritarian states (like China, according to authors) pose a threat due to the fact that their entire foreign policy course is aimed at “suppressing democracy”. The thesis that sharp power is a collective term reflecting all the “deceit”, “cunning” and “aggressiveness” of the foreign policy of China and other “autocracies” has become an obligatory reservation in the works of Western experts. Western writers convince the audience that such methods are inherent exclusively in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, and not in “free democracies”.

The United States began to develop institutions of digital diplomacy in order to stop China’s information presence on the social media. The most active accounts, attracted bots and the media began to be marked as hostile information and blocked by appeals to corporations that own the largest social networks.

Beijing’s information deterrence is handled by the *China Team* of the Global Engagement Center of the US Department of State. The *GEC China* works closely with the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs, the Department of Defense, and “US international partners” to develop a global strategy to counter Chinese disinformation and propaganda. The Center for Global Engagement seeks to “increase understanding of China’s propaganda and disinformation for making informed decisions”, increase “resistance to disinformation and propaganda of civil society” and, against this background, “create and strengthen positive messages about the United States”. The center accumulates Big Data on PRC information campaigns, blocks malicious content and searches for information sources sponsored by Beijing, and also uses AI, chat bots and other technological capabilities to create effective counter-propaganda that reaches millions of Internet users. The information activity of the PRC is designated in official documents of the United States as “malign influence”. In 2020, the Center for Global Engagement received \$ 59 million in funding. In 2021, these indicators will more than double and amount to \$ 138 million.

Deterrence to Chinese information and the containment of Beijing from influencing the audience of Asian countries is carried out through the dissemination of pro-American propaganda through Internet projects and international broadcasting channels. The main channels of American propaganda in Asian countries are *Radio Free Asia* and *Voice of America**. In 2020, the US Agency for Global Media, which manages American foreign broadcasting, received a record \$ 810 million in funding. Criticism of Chinese policy in the field of human rights, religious freedoms and other aspects of domestic and foreign policy is the main content of such resources, which is officially enshrined in the reports of the US Agency for Global Media [31].

Finally, the development of digital projects for civil society in the PRC, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Asian countries, as well as financial support for the digitalization of educational and cultural projects in the United States, have traditionally been a priority in US policy.

The rapprochement between China and Russia raises particular concerns in the United States. Both countries are classified as “authoritarian regimes” whose sharp power destabilizes democracies. However, many experts close to the White House ask the White House to

* Is recognized as a foreign agent in Russian federation.

radically change the US public diplomacy towards Moscow. For example, the famous political scientist Charles Kupchan advocates the involvement of Russia in the camp of the Western powers for the sake of a joint confrontation with the PRC [32]. He suggests to Joseph Biden not only to continue, but also to strengthen Donald Trump's policy of containing Beijing, while significantly softening the pressure on Moscow. The expert suggests J. Biden to gradually lift sanctions against Russia, encourage its trade with the European Union, discuss the Chinese threat to Russian-American interests in the Arctic and do everything to drive a wedge in relations between the Russian Federation and the PRC. Two days before J. Biden's inauguration, the US Department of State recognized the actions of the Chinese leadership against Muslim Uighurs and other representatives of ethnic and religious minorities in Xinjiang province as genocide. The new administration backed up the allegations, stepped up criticism of China's malign influence in cyberspace, and increased the spread of anti-Chinese propaganda in Asian countries. In September 2021, a number of Western media outlets argued that such US policy was the reason for the refusal of the leader of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, to meet with his American counterpart in person [33].

Digital activities of the United States and China play an important role in the development of bilateral relations and the development of digital diplomacy as its component. The ideological struggle between countries is already called the *New Cold War*, when cyber operations, hacker attacks, content blocking, AI generation of beneficial information and its dissemination by bots and trolls have become the realities of modern information policy at the global level [34–35].

Conclusion

Digital diplomacy has become an integral part of modern international relations. The numerous concepts which reveal researchers (data diplomacy, digital international relations, acute force, etc.) proves this fact. The rapid development of digital diplomacy demonstrates the importance of this foreign policy direction in positioning the country on the world stage. The digitalization of public diplomacy has aggravated the interstate relations between the United States and China, which are fighting for ideological, economic and political dominance in each other's audiences.

The development of the concept of *Digital China*, the introduction of new forms of foreign policy influence on the Internet, the emergence of strategies in state laws, the build-up of forces in social networks and other aspects demonstrate the determination of the PRC leadership to fulfill its plan to become a world leader in AI this decade. Recognizing the deterioration of its image in Western countries over the past years and benefiting from the popularization of its image at all levels, China is integrating an increasing number of technological innovations into foreign policy, making digital diplomacy an integral part of traditional diplomacy. Faced with digital diplomacy, China gives more consideration to how to integrate diplomatic practice and technology into a better integration. In the face of cross-cultural differences, how to adjust the purpose and means of communication, to further achieve the spread of domestic and foreign values.

Such activity raises concerns in the United States, where the PRC is traditionally considered one of the main threats to national security and makes Washington and Beijing direct rivals for the attention of the world audience. China is becoming the main target of US public diplomacy and the main object of study by American experts. US digital diplomacy policy towards China falls under concept of informational deterrence. Deterrence involves

directing all efforts to combat Chinese information on the Internet, blocking its content and analyzing its effectiveness using Big Data processing methods. The offensive, on the contrary, presupposes the active dissemination of pro-American information both in China and in all Asian countries.

It must be emphasized that this research analyzed the policy of the United States and China in relation to each other and the main strategies for the information struggle of the United States for the Asian audience and the PRC for the American audience. We can guess that the war between the United States and China for the audience of other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America provides a basis for further study of the factor of digital diplomacy in US-China relations.

References

1. Tsvetkova, N. A. and Kuznetsov, N. M. (2020), Phenomenon of Data Diplomacy in World Politics, *RSUH/RGGU Bulletin. Series Political Science. History. International Relations*, no. 4, pp. 27–44. <https://doi.org/10.28995/2073-6339-2020-4-27-44> (In Russian)
2. Ashbrook, C. C. (2020), From Digital Diplomacy to Data Diplomacy, *International Politics and Society*, January 14. Available at: <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/digital-diplomacy-data-diplomacy> (accessed: 15.03.2023).
3. Bargaoanu, A. and Cheregi, B. F. (2021), Artificial Intelligence: The New Tool for Cyber Diplomacy, in: Roumate, F. (ed.), *Artificial Intelligence and Digital Diplomacy*, Springer, pp. 115–130. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68647-5_9
4. Boyd, A., Gatewood, J., Thorson, S. and Dye, T. (2019), Data Diplomacy, *Science and Diplomacy*, vol. 8, no. 1. Available at: https://www.sciencediplomacy.org/sites/default/files/boyd_may_2019_0.pdf (accessed: 15.03.2023).
5. Nye, J. (2018), How Sharp Power Threatens Soft Power, *Foreign Affairs*, January 24. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-01-24/how-sharp-power-threatens-soft-power> (accessed: 27.11.2021).
6. Kovachich, L. A. (2020), *Chinese experience in the development of the artificial intelligence industry: a strategic approach*. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/07/07/ru-pub-82172> (accessed: 27.11.2021). (In Russian)
7. O'Brien, R. C. (2020), How China Threatens American Democracy, *Foreign Affairs*, October 21. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2020-10-21/how-china-threatens-american-democracy> (accessed 27.11.2021).
8. Tsvetkova, N. A. (2019), Dealing with a Resurgent Russia: Engagement and deterrence in US international broadcasting, 2013–2019, *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. International Relations*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 435–449. <https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu06.2019.403> (In Russian)
9. Sharma, A. and Sisodia, V. (2021), Digital diplomacy and the global pandemic. *Media Asia*, vol. 49, iss. 1, pp. 62–64.
10. *U. S. Strategy on Data Informed Diplomacy. Enterprise Data Strategy Empowering Data Informed Diplomacy*. 2021. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Reference-EDS-Accessible.pdf> (accessed: 27.11.2021).
11. Tsvetkova, N. A., Sytnik, A. N. and Grishanina, T. A. (2022), Digital diplomacy and digital international relations: Challenges and new advantages, *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. International Relations*, vol. 15, iss. 2, pp. 174–196. (In Russian)
12. *U. S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. 2016 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting*. Available at: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/262381.pdf> (accessed: 27.11.2021).
13. *U. S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. 2020 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting*. Available at: https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ACPD_2020Report_FINAL_DIGITAL_508.pdf (accessed: 27.11.2021).
14. Sytnik, A. (2019), Digitalization of Diplomacy in Global Politics on the Example of 2019 Venezuelan Presidential Crisis, *Communications in Computer and Information Science*, vol. 1038, pp. 187–196. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37858-5_15
15. Hanouna, S., Neu, O., Pardo, S., Tsur, O. and Zahavi, H. (2019), Sharp power in social media: Patterns from datasets across electoral campaigns, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies*, vol. 11, no 3, p. 97–113.

16. Spry, D. (2018), Facebook* diplomacy: a data-driven, user-focused approach to Facebook* use by diplomatic missions, *Media International Australia*, vol. 168, no 1, pp. 62–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1329878X18783029>
17. Walker, C. and Ludwig, J. (2017), The Meaning of Sharp Power. How Authoritarian States Project, *Foreign Affairs*, November 16. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2017-11-16/meaning-sharp-power> (accessed: 27.11.2021).
18. Yuanzhe, R., Pochora, C. and Huan, Z. (2019), Digitization and the Transformation of Contemporary Diplomacy — Based on the Perspective of Organizational Culture Theory. *Review of Foreign Affairs (Journal of China Foreign Affairs University)*, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 1–27.
19. Zhang, J. and Luo, H. (2009), Network Diplomacy and the Chinese Government's Countermeasures, *Friends of Leadership*, no 6, pp. 46–47.
20. Li, J. and Liang, X. (2019), Research on International Network Diplomacy Strategy Model, *Electronic Government Affairs*, vol. 12, pp. 64–70.
21. Shi, A. and Yaozhong, Z. (2020), Digital Public Diplomacy: Evolution of Ideas, Practices and Strategies, *Youth Journalist*, vol. 7, pp. 78–81.
22. Ou, Ya. and Liu, X. (2020), The Prospects and Problems of AI Technology Application in Public Diplomacy, *Public Diplomacy Quarterly*, vol. 2. Available at: https://caod.oriprobe.com/articles/60013463/The_Prospects_and_Problems_of_AI_Technology_Applic.htm (accessed: 27.11.2021).
23. Ying, J. (2016), The use of Chinese social media by foreign embassies: How generative technologies are offering opportunities for modern diplomacy, in: Griffiths, M. and Barbour, K. (eds), *Making Publics, Making Places*, University of Adelaide Press, pp. 145–162.
24. Chen, T. (2019), The connotation and characteristics of the new public diplomacy and its enlightenment to our foreign propaganda media, *Young Journalist*, vol. 12, pp. 9–10.
25. Wernli, D., Chopard, B. and Levrat, N. (2021), When Computational Power Meets Diplomacy: Training a New Generation of Scientists in Diplomacy and Diplomats in Science, *VSH-Bulletin*, no. 2, pp. 42–45.
26. China Internet Network Information Center. The 44th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China (2019), *Official website of China Internet Information Center*. Available at: http://www.cac.gov.cn/2019-08/30/c_1124938750.htm (accessed: 27.11.2021).
27. State Council on Printing and Distributing Notice of the new generation of artificial intelligence development plan (2017), *China's State Council*. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2017-07/20/content_5211996.htm (accessed: 27.11.2021).
28. Chen, S. (2018), Artificial intelligence, immune to fear or favour, is helping to make China's foreign policy, *South China Morning Post*, July 30. Available at: <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2157223/artificial-intelligence-immune-fear-or-favour-helping-make> (accessed: 27.11.2021).
29. Kuznetsov, N. M. and Tsvetkova, N. A. (2021), Data Diplomacy of China and US policy of deterrence, in: *Russia and China: History and Prospects of Cooperation: proceedings of the X International Scientific and Practical Conference*, pp. 382–388. (In Russian)
30. U.S. Global Media Agency Annual Report, 2018. Available at: <https://www.usagm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/USAGM-AR-2018-final.pdf> (accessed: 27.11.2021).
31. Kupchan, C. A. (2021), The Right Way to Split China and Russia, *Foreign Affairs*. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-04/right-way-split-china-and-russia> (accessed: 27.11.2021).
32. Neal, L. (2021), Joe Biden's suggestion of summit with Xi Jinping falls on deaf ears, *Dan.com*. Available at: <https://insider-voice.com/joe-bidens-suggestion-of-a-summit-with-xi-jinping-falls-on-deaf-ears/> (accessed: 27.11.2021).
33. Bean, H. and Comor, H. (2018), Data-Driven Public Diplomacy: A Critical and Reflexive Assessment, *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace*, vol. 7, no 1, pp. 5–20. <https://doi.org/10.20991/allazimuth.321794>
34. Collins, N. and Bekenova, K. (2019), Digital diplomacy: success in your fingers, *Place branding and public diplomacy*, vol. 15, pp. 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-017-0087-1>
35. Cull, N. (2008), Public Diplomacy Before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase, in: *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, New York: Routledge, pp. 39–43.

Received: January 31, 2023

Accepted: March 13, 2023

Authors' information:

Nikita M. Kuznetsov — Postgraduate Student; nmkuznetsov@list.ru
Fushu Liang — Research Assistant; ssglzzh@qq.com

* Meta is recognized as an extremist organization in Russian Federation.