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Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of Diplomacy: A Systematic Review of Emerging Practices, Risks, and Governance Challenges

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence is moving from a peripheral technological issue to a consequential element of diplomatic practice and international governance. This systematic review synthesises recent scholarship on how AI is being applied in diplomacy, the risks accompanying its adoption, and the governance challenges created by its growing role in foreign affairs. A PRISMA 2020-informed review was conducted across structured scholarly web searches, publisher and repository interfaces, and backward and forward reference chaining. English-language scholarly works published between 2020 and 5 September 2026 were screened for direct relevance to diplomatic practice, foreign-policy decision making, public diplomacy, negotiation, crisis management, consular work, or international AI governance. Twenty-eight focal studies met the eligibility and quality criteria. The thematic synthesis identified three dominant areas of transformation: AI-assisted diplomatic intelligence and decision support; AI-mediated public diplomacy and strategic communication; and regulatory diplomacy surrounding global AI governance. Additional applications were evident in crisis management, negotiation support, and consular administration. The principal risks involved epistemic bias and model unreliability, loss of human oversight, disinformation and synthetic influence, privacy and confidentiality threats, weakened interpersonal trust, and widening inequalities in AI capacity. Governance scholarship further showed that AI is becoming both an instrument and an object of geopolitical competition, especially through standards, regulation, computing infrastructure, and technology supply chains. The review concludes that the most defensible trajectory is augmented rather than autonomous diplomacy, in which AI expands analytical capacity while accountable human judgement remains authoritative. It proposes an integrated practice-risk-governance framework and a research agenda focused on empirical evaluation, the Global South, small-state diplomacy, institutional accountability, and crisis escalation.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence; diplomacy; digital diplomacy; foreign policy; public diplomacy; global governance; systematic review*

1.0 Introduction

Diplomacy has experienced several technological transformations, but in the ‘digital turn’, networked technologies have been introduced into information management, public engagement, negotiation and the practice of organisation (Bjola & Holmes, 2015; Hocking & Melissen, 2015). In the study of digital diplomacy, the focus then shifted from the question of whether diplomats are using digital tools to how digital infrastructures shape professional practices, institutional authority, institutional visibility and interaction with foreign publics (Manor, 2019; Adler-Nissen & Eggeling, 2022). Artificial intelligence is a more impactful aspect of this change as modern systems can classify, summarise, generate, translate, predict, and recommend, tasks traditionally reserved for human cognitive functions within workflows (Bano et al., 2025; Manor & Bjola, 2025b). The question in international relations is now

whether AI will play a supporting role to diplomacy or grow into a more serious, statecraft-like form of cognitive mediation in the diplomatic process (Manor, 2026; Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026).

With the widespread adoption of generative AI, this question has been rejuvenated by the incorporation of large language models (LLMs) into everyday knowledge work, such as drafting, synthesis, multilingual communication, scenario building, and information retrieval (Bjola & Manor, 2025a; Mostafaei et al., 2025). In diplomatic intelligence, AI can assist diplomatic officials in handling the massive volume of complex and varied data, detect patterns, and deliver swift analytical insights when volume and variety of data and time are critical (Bjola & Manor, 2025b; Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023). Public diplomacy is the same technologies that can help with the analysis of audiences and content creation can also be used to create synthetic influence, deepfakes, and to manipulate audiences at scale (Fredheim & Pamment, 2025; Crilley & Saunders, 2025). In this way, AI can serve as an enabler for diplomatic efforts while also increasing the information, ethics, security and political risks facing diplomats (Di Martino & Ford, 2025; Huang, 2025).

The change extends past the work of the foreign ministries, as AI is itself a diplomatic object. States and regional entities increasingly use technological power and international influence in the form of regulation, standards, infrastructure policy, compute access, semiconductor supply chains and governance principles (Mokry & Gurol, 2024; Truby et al., 2026). Global governance scholarship refers to the pervasive institutional gap: While there has been a surge of AI initiatives, a lack of geopolitical cooperation and governance fragmentation presents obstacles to the development of coherent and legitimate international rules (Roberts et al., 2024; Lundgren, 2023). Meanwhile, international documents such as UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and the United Nations Global Digital Compact have emphasised the importance of human oversight, accountability, transparency, inclusion, and capacity building as fundamental principles of responsible AI governance (UNESCO, 2022; United Nations, 2024). In an AI era, diplomacy thus finds itself in a dual role: not only are diplomats expected to engage in AI responsibly, but they are also responsible for negotiating the international rules for the development and use of AI systems (Konovalova, 2023; Garcia, D., 2025).

With growing interest there is still a conceptual fragmentation as well as a lack of empirical consistency in the evidence base. In a systematic survey of 231 academic publications about AI and diplomacy, Bano et al. (2025) identified a wide variety of themes, technologies, and geographic focus, and noted that certain applications of generative-AI were under-researched. Since then, a great deal of subsequent scholarship has rapidly developed into specialised questions concerning diplomatic intelligence, public diplomacy, strategic narratives, institutional adaptation, AI readiness, complexity of foreign policy, and others (Bjola & Manor, 2025b; Crilley & Saunders, 2025; Sadegh-Zadeh et al., 2026; Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026). However, this speed has led to a more fractured literature, with applications, risks and governance issues discussed in isolation from one another, without being synthesized as components of the same diplomatic transformation (Roberts et al., 2024; Manor, 2026).

Thus, a focused systematic review is needed to differentiate between the well-known applications from the speculative ones, to identify the recurring risks in the diplomatic use of AI, and to link the internal adoption of AI within the foreign-ministeries with broader AI governance politics. This holds especially true in light of the growing concerns in the literature regarding technology first mentality, which assumes technical skills equate to diplomatic aptitude (Sevin & Eken, 2025; Garcia, E. V., 2025). The purpose of the present review is to address this need by bringing together recent scholarship in a novel integrated practice-risk-

governance framework and by conceptualizing diplomacy as a socio-technical institution that is governed by algorithms, data, professional norms, political authority and interpersonal relations (Adler-Nissen & Eggeling, 2022; Manor, 2026). It offers a more nuanced understanding of the role of AI in reshaping diplomacy, the areas where human judgment is irreplaceable, and the governance frameworks that are most needed (Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026; Erman & Furendal, 2024).

1.1 Objective of the Review

The objective of this systematic review was to synthesise recent scholarship on the emerging applications, risks, and governance implications of artificial intelligence in diplomacy and to develop an integrated account of how AI is reshaping diplomatic functions, institutional practice, and international governance.

1.2 Review Questions

- RQ1: How has recent scholarship conceptualised the transformation of diplomacy by artificial intelligence?
- RQ2: Which diplomatic practices and functions are most frequently associated with AI adoption?
- RQ3: What principal risks and limitations are identified in the adoption of AI for diplomatic work?
- RQ4: What governance challenges arise from AI-enabled diplomacy and from diplomacy directed at governing AI?
- RQ5: What empirical, geographic, theoretical, and institutional research gaps remain in the literature?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 From Digital Diplomacy to AI-Enabled Diplomacy

The conceptual basis of AI-based diplomacy is in the previous research literature on digital diplomacy, where it was shown that technology does not simply fall from the sky but is mediated by institutions. Bjola and Holmes (2015) demonstrated how digital technologies broadened the scope of diplomatic communication and influence, but also imposed new strategic and organisational requirements, while Manor (2019) highlighted the process of public diplomacy becoming increasingly brought online and the institutions' adaptation needed for the networked information environment. In a similar way, Adler-Nissen and Eggeling (2022) conceptualized diplomacy as blended practice, focusing on the intermingling of digital technologies and embodied routines, hierarchy, professional identity, and contestation in everyday life. The literature is significant because it highlights the need to be aware of technological determinism, which is the influence that AI will have depending on how it is used by diplomatic organizations in their operation of existing norms, incentives and structures (Sevin & Eken, 2025; Manor, 2026).

AI is also unique from previous communication technologies as it has the capacity to engage in analytical and generative activities to a greater extent. Bjola and Manor (2025a) attribute the characteristics of generative AI to horizontal and vertical technological acceleration: horizontal, meaning the impact of the technology on various aspects of diplomatic activities, and vertical meaning the technological depth into specific tasks and routines. Similarly, Bano et al. (2025) demonstrate that in the AI-diplomacy literature, the application of AI is not limited to any specific field, such as decision making, communication, security, negotiation,

governance and administration. This shift from digital to AI-supported diplomacy can thus be interpreted as a transformation from communication mediation to partial cognitive mediation, yet this transformation is subject to institutional acceptance, data quality, security needs, as well as the ongoing power of human diplomacy officials (Bjola & Manor 2025b; Manor 2026).

The difference is particularly significant for generative AI, given that at times it can produce fluent works that seem more competent than they actually are. In contrast to public diplomacy, which is always under the condition of epistemic and political uncertainty, Di Martino and Ford (2025) suggest that generative systems can turn ambiguity into confident yet inadequate, or even potentially outright wrong, answers. Huang (2025) provides evidence of such risks in the process of how AI models can pick up on contested language and unexamined assumptions, which can introduce bias to publicly deployed diplomatic analysis. The central analytical question is whether institutions will be able to identify when probabilistic outputs, training data bias, or contextual gaps can have political implications (Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023; Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026).

2.2 AI for Diplomacy: Intelligence, Decision Support, Negotiation and Administration

The most compelling functional case for the use of AI in diplomacy is related to information processing and decision support. Diplomatic bodies are information-intensive organisations that have to process so much information as officials need to perform political reporting, economic indicators, social media signals, intelligence, policy writing, and the constantly evolving information about crises (Bjola & Manor, 2025b; Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023). AI can be used to help with this work in the following ways: automated summarisation, entity and trend detection, anomaly recognition, predictive modelling, scenario generation, and retrieval from large collections of documents (Mostafaei et al., 2025; Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026). They can enhance the speed and scope of analyses, but their value is dependent on being interpretable, on having reliable data, on being verified by humans, and on the competence of the organisation to do the analysis (Stanzel & Voelsen, 2022; Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023), not on being substituted by humans for decision making (Stanzel & Voelsen, 2022).

Negotiation support is related, but more nuanced because the art of negotiation involves strategy, language, timing, tacit knowledge, and relationship management. Stanzel and Voelsen (2022) studied the potential of using AI to facilitate diplomatically sensitive negotiations and identified possible benefits for scenario building, preparation and structured analysis, and maintained full human control in key decisions that have a political impact. Manor (2026) builds on this potential with an "augmentation scenario," in which AI helps the diplomat to better handle crises and complicated interactions, but also finds paradoxes related to speed and uncertainty. However, Sevin and Eken (2025) and Garcia, E. V. (2025) offer a valuable refutation that trust, empathy, rapport, reciprocity and interpersonal recognition are constitutive elements of diplomacy that cannot be boiled down to an optimised information processing.

Administrative and consular activities seem to be more likely to be selective automated due to the repetitive interactions with services, translation, handling of documents, and structured queries. Mostafaei et al. (2025) cite 'consular services' as one of the practical areas where AI can enhance responsiveness and scale; Pipchenko (2024) notes a general interest in technological adaptation on the part of foreign ministries. However, even in relatively common applications, personal information may be accessed, exclusion may occur based on language or model bias, and accountability may be transferred with automated outputs informing citizens' access to services (Konovalova, 2023; Erman & Furendal, 2024). It is therefore suggested from the literature that the risk-gradient be applied to automation in the sense that it

should be more defensible for low consequence assistance than decisions involving rights, strategic commitments and diplomatic escalation (Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023; Garcia, D., 2025).

2.3 AI, Public Diplomacy and the Information Environment

One of the most visible areas of AI use is public diplomacy, as diplomatic institutions have already been very active over digital platforms and data-driven communication spaces (Manor, 2019; Williams & Otto, 2022). AI can be useful in understanding the concerns of individuals, tracking sentiment, interpreting communication, drafting content, and adapting messaging for different languages and geographic regions (Mostafaei et al., 2025; Xia, 2025). While these roles can increase the scope of foreign ministry reach, they can also be undermining authenticity, as the perceived identity, responsibility, and credibility of the communicator are crucial to communication's persuasive power (Sevin & Eken, 2025; Garcia, E. V., 2025). It is likely, then, that AI-driven communication can be efficient but detract from the relational trust if the recipients don't know whether the message is based on a responsible human decision (Huang, 2025; Crilley & Saunders, 2025).

AI-powered influence operations are a special topic in the literature. In a recent paper, Fredheim and Pamment (2025) demonstrate how large language models are reducing the effort required to generate persuasive, multilingual and personalized content, thus enabling the creation of influence operations that combine humans and machines at a scale that is unprecedented. The rise of low-quality AI-generated content is a threat to strategic narratives and epistemic authority, as noted by Crilley and Saunders (2025), and deepfakes and synthetic misinformation pose a threat to attempts at building diplomatic relationships, as noted by Xia (2025). Public diplomacy is also in a contested information environment and the same analytical skills that are needed to identify manipulation can also be used for more advanced manipulation, leading to a persistent dual use dilemma (Fredheim & Pamment, 2025; Di Martino & Ford, 2025).

2.4 Diplomacy for AI: Governance, Regulation and Geopolitical Competition

AI is also revolutionizing diplomacy and introducing a new arena of diplomatic contestation. Feijoo et al. (2020) went so far as to assert early that AI's trans-border impacts would demand a new form of technology diplomacy, one that would coordinate standards, regulation and public-interest goals across borders. More recent studies indicate that this governance agenda is now firmly tied to geopolitical competition, especially between the United States, China and the European Union whose approaches to regulation have implications for greater technological leadership (Mokry & Gurol, 2024; Truby et al., 2026). Regulatory decisions are thus not just domestic governance tools, but also diplomatic tools that have the potential to influence standards, market access, supply chains, and international legitimacy (Mokry & Gurol, 2024; Manfredi-Sanchez & Morales, 2025).

The literature on governance, however, portrays the international regime as incomplete, and fragmented. Roberts et al. (2024) note the governance gap of first-order interstate competition and second-order institutional dysfunction; and Lundgren (2023) argues that more empirical work needs to be done on the formation, contestation, and legitimation of global AI governance institutions. When AI systems shape collective decision-making, their legitimacy in global governance cannot only be gauged by their effectiveness; procedural accountability and democratic justification also play a role, Erman and Furendal write (2024). These are combined with the multilateral principles of the UNESCO (2022) and the United Nations (2024) which highlight the importance of human rights, human oversight, transparency, fairness, safety, inclusion and capacity development.

Another aspect is the disparity in national AI capabilities, specifically material inequality. Despite being spread across a number of regions and not being located in a single hegemonic centre, Sadegh-Zadeh et al. (2026) find that high capacity states are distributed very unevenly using cross-national readiness indicators for 193 countries. The rise of advanced chips, regulatory efforts and Strategic Technology Ecosystems is now becoming part of the mix of diplomacy and techno-nationalism as shown by Truby et al. (2026). Such patterns suggest that certain states with less infrastructure, human capital, data governance, and/or bargaining power will more likely be captured as rule takers or technology dependants in new governance regimes in AI. These patterns indicate that weaker infrastructure, human capital, data governance, and/or bargaining power states will be more likely to be captured as rule takers or technology dependants in new governance arrangements in AI. The digital divide in diplomacy has thus shifted from the access to communication platforms to access to compute, models, skills, trusted data, and influence over international AI standards (Bano et al., 2025; Sadegh-Zadeh et al., 2026).

2.5 Analytical Lens: Diplomacy as a Socio-Technical and Relational Institution

This review adopts a socio-technical and relational lens rather than treating AI as an independent causal force. Digital diplomacy research shows that technologies gain meaning through the institutions, routines, professional identities, and political environments in which they are used (Adler-Nissen & Eggeling, 2022; Manor, 2019). AI-enabled diplomatic outcomes should therefore be understood as products of interaction among model capabilities, data, institutional rules, human expertise, organisational incentives, legal constraints, and the strategic environment (Bjola & Manor, 2025b; Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026). This lens helps explain why identical technologies can produce different effects across ministries and why technical performance alone cannot establish diplomatic appropriateness (Sevin & Eken, 2025; Pipchenko, 2024).

The relational component is equally important because diplomacy is sustained through recognition, trust, signalling, interpretation, and negotiated meaning. Garcia, E. V. (2025) argues that interpersonal relation remains foundational to diplomatic practice, while Sevin and Eken (2025) stress trust, rapport, and empathy as needs that should shape technology adoption. AI can augment the informational conditions under which relationships are managed, but it cannot automatically reproduce political responsibility or the social legitimacy attached to an accountable diplomatic actor (Erman & Furendal, 2024; Di Martino & Ford, 2025). The analytical framework used in this review therefore links five stages: AI capabilities, diplomatic applications, functional transformation, associated risks, and governance requirements.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Review Design

The study adopted a systematic literature review design reported in accordance with the logic of PRISMA 2020, particularly its emphasis on transparent identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of evidence (Page et al., 2021). A systematic design was appropriate because the AI-diplomacy literature is distributed across international relations, public diplomacy, technology governance, policy studies, communication, ethics, and data science, making unsystematic narrative selection especially vulnerable to disciplinary bias (Bano et al., 2025). The review was designed as a focused update and synthesis rather than a replication of the much broader mapping exercise by Bano et al. (2025), whose corpus of 231 studies covered the wider scholarly landscape. Its distinctive focus was the intersection of three questions: diplomatic practices, risks of AI adoption, and governance challenges.

The review period was restricted to January 2020 through 5 September 2026. The starting point captured the contemporary phase in which AI became increasingly linked to technology diplomacy and foreign-policy practice, while retaining early conceptual contributions that preceded the generative-AI surge (Feijoo et al., 2020). Earlier digital diplomacy works were used for theoretical and historical framing but were not counted in the focal systematic-review corpus because they did not primarily address AI (Bjola & Holmes, 2015; Manor, 2019). This distinction prevented the review from conflating the broader digitalisation of diplomacy with the more specific analytical and governance implications of AI.

3.2 Information Sources and Search Strategy

Searches were conducted on 5 September 2026 through a structured scholarly web-search protocol that targeted Google Scholar-indexed records, journal publisher interfaces, open scholarly repositories, and institutional research repositories. Publisher and journal environments represented in the resulting records included Springer Nature, SAGE, Oxford Academic, Wiley, Elsevier/ScienceDirect, Frontiers, Brill/De Gruyter, DOAJ, and university or policy-institute repositories. Reference chaining was then used to identify relevant studies cited by focal articles and to locate newer studies citing major contributions, a strategy particularly important in a fast-moving interdisciplinary field (Page et al., 2021; Bano et al., 2025). The review did not claim exhaustive coverage of every subscription database; instead, it used a transparent multi-source retrieval strategy and recorded only studies that could be independently verified through scholarly publication records.

Table 1: Core Search Concepts and Eligibility Criteria

Component	Operationalisation	Examples
AI concepts	AI-related terms used to capture analytical, generative, predictive and algorithmic systems	"artificial intelligence" OR "generative AI" OR "large language model*" OR "machine learning" OR algorithmic
Diplomacy concepts	Terms requiring a direct diplomatic or foreign-policy linkage	diplomacy OR "digital diplomacy" OR "public diplomacy" OR "foreign policy" OR negotiation OR "diplomatic intelligence" OR consular
Risk/governance concepts	Terms used in supplementary searches to deepen risk and governance coverage	governance OR regulation OR ethics OR bias OR disinformation OR deepfake* OR cybersecurity OR accountability OR trust
Publication window	Contemporary AI-diplomacy literature	January 2020 to 5 September 2026
Language	Included	English
Eligible evidence	Peer-reviewed journal articles and a small number of high-authority scholarly/policy research reports with direct diplomatic relevance	Empirical, conceptual, review, policy-analysis, normative, or case-based studies
Excluded evidence	Tangential or non-diplomatic uses of AI; board-game Diplomacy research; news/blogs; generic AI ethics with no foreign-policy linkage; duplicates; inaccessible records lacking sufficient scholarly detail	Excluded at title/abstract or full-text assessment

The principal Boolean logic combined the AI and diplomacy concept blocks, for example: ("artificial intelligence" OR "generative AI" OR "large language model*" OR "machine learning") AND (diplomacy OR "digital diplomacy" OR "public diplomacy" OR "foreign policy" OR "diplomatic negotiation*" OR "diplomatic intelligence"). Supplementary searches added governance and risk terms to avoid under-retrieving work whose titles foregrounded

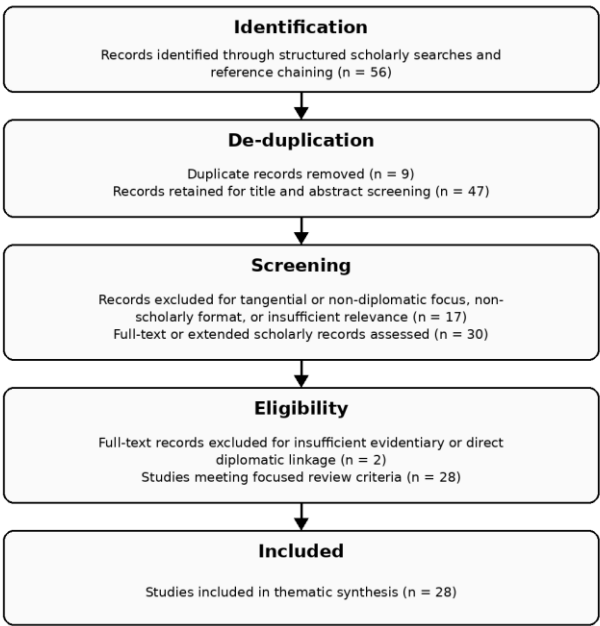
regulation, strategic narratives, influence operations, or AI readiness rather than diplomacy itself. Searches were iteratively refined when false positives emerged, particularly technical studies on the board game Diplomacy, which were excluded because they did not concern international diplomatic practice. This iterative procedure follows the principle that systematic searching in interdisciplinary fields requires transparent sensitivity to terminology while maintaining stable eligibility criteria (Page et al., 2021).

3.3 Screening, Eligibility and Study Selection

The search log contained 56 candidate records before de-duplication. Nine duplicate records were removed, leaving 47 titles and abstracts for screening; 17 were excluded because they were tangential to diplomacy, addressed technical AI without foreign-policy relevance, lacked scholarly publication status, or fell outside the defined period. Thirty records proceeded to full-text or extended scholarly-record assessment, after which two were excluded for insufficient direct diplomatic linkage or evidentiary detail. The final focused corpus therefore comprised 28 studies for thematic synthesis. Because several relevant sources were available as publisher abstracts or full scholarly repository versions, eligibility depended on sufficient information to evaluate purpose, method, context, and substantive findings rather than on open-access status alone (Page et al., 2021).

A study was included only when AI was substantively connected to at least one diplomatic domain: foreign-policy analysis, diplomatic intelligence, negotiation, public diplomacy, strategic communication, crisis management, consular or administrative work, diplomatic relationship building, or international governance of AI. Works on global AI governance were retained where they addressed international institutions, geopolitical competition, regulatory diplomacy, legitimacy, or state influence because these processes represent diplomacy directed at governing AI rather than AI used within diplomacy (Lundgren, 2023; Roberts et al., 2024). This dual inclusion logic reflected Konovalova's (2023) distinction between AI for diplomacy and diplomacy for AI.

Figure 1: PRISMA-Informed Study Selection Flow



3.4 Quality Appraisal and Data Extraction

The heterogeneous nature of the evidence made a single design-specific appraisal instrument unsuitable because the corpus included empirical studies, systematic reviews, normative analyses, conceptual papers, policy analyses, and scholarly research reports. A transparent five-criterion appraisal rubric was therefore applied, scoring each record from 0 to 2 on: direct relevance to diplomacy; clarity of research purpose; methodological or analytical transparency; adequacy of evidentiary support; and contribution to understanding practice, risk, or governance. Studies scoring below 6 of 10 were excluded, while high-authority institutional research reports were retained only when methods or use cases were sufficiently transparent. This approach prioritised traceability and relevance while recognising that conceptual scholarship is substantive evidence in an emerging field whose empirical base remains limited (Bano et al., 2025; Manor, 2026).

Data were extracted into a structured matrix covering author and year, geographical or institutional context, research design, diplomatic domain, principal application, identified risks, governance implications, and key conclusion. Each study could receive multiple thematic codes because AI uses and risks frequently overlap; for example, a public-diplomacy article could simultaneously address disinformation, trust, and geopolitical fragmentation. Coding was first deductive, based on the review questions, and then refined inductively as recurrent subthemes emerged from the corpus. The final synthesis distinguished six practice clusters and nine risk/governance clusters, with frequencies used descriptively rather than as effect sizes because the underlying studies were not statistically commensurable (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

3.5 Synthesis Procedure and Methodological Limitations

The review used thematic synthesis rather than meta-analysis because most included studies were conceptual, qualitative, normative, or review-based, and the few empirical studies measured different constructs and outcomes. Findings were compared across studies to identify convergence, divergence, and boundary conditions, with particular attention to whether claims were based on observed institutional use, documented cases, scenario analysis, or normative argument (Thomas & Harden, 2008; Bano et al., 2025). Descriptive counts show how often a theme appeared in the focal corpus but do not imply prevalence across all diplomatic institutions or causal magnitude. This distinction is essential in a field where scholarly attention to a risk may exceed the amount of observed real-world deployment (Manor, 2026; Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026).

The method has limitations. The review was English-language and used a structured multi-source scholarly web-search strategy rather than direct export from every major subscription index, so some non-English or poorly indexed studies may have been missed. The rapidly changing publication environment also means that studies appearing after 5 September 2026 are outside the review window, while AI capabilities themselves may change faster than peer-reviewed evidence can accumulate (Manor, 2026). These limitations were mitigated through publisher verification, reference chaining, explicit eligibility rules, and transparent separation of the 28-study focal corpus from older contextual literature.

4.0 Results

4.1 Characteristics of the Included Evidence

The final corpus of 28 studies shows a field that has expanded sharply since the introduction of widely accessible generative AI systems. The earliest studies in the review focused on technology diplomacy, public-diplomacy possibilities, negotiation support, and crisis decision

making, whereas the 2025-2026 literature is more differentiated and includes generative AI, influence operations, strategic narratives, AI readiness, foreign-policy complexity, and regulatory competition (Feijoo et al., 2020; Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023; Bjola & Manor, 2025a; Sadegh-Zadeh et al., 2026). This pattern supports Bano et al.'s (2025) observation that the AI-diplomacy field is broadening, but the focused corpus indicates that scholarship after 2024 is increasingly organised around specific diplomatic functions and governance dilemmas rather than generic claims about technological disruption.

The evidence is methodologically uneven. Conceptual, normative, review, and policy-analysis designs dominate, while rigorous observational or comparative empirical studies remain relatively rare; Sadegh-Zadeh et al. (2026) is notable for cross-national quantitative analysis, and Mokry and Gurol (2024) provide a systematic frame analysis of major geopolitical actors. The concentration of conceptual work reflects the novelty of institutional adoption and the difficulty of obtaining data from foreign ministries, where confidentiality and security limit direct observation (Pipchenko, 2024; Manor, 2026). As a result, the literature is stronger at identifying plausible mechanisms and governance risks than at estimating causal effects of AI use on negotiation outcomes, crisis performance, diplomatic influence, or public trust (Bano et al., 2025; Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026).

Table 2: Profile of the 28 Studies Included in the Focused Synthesis

Study	Context / design	Primary diplomatic domain	Principal contribution
Feijoo et al. (2020)	Global / technology diplomacy; Conceptual policy analysis	AI governance and technology diplomacy	Argues that the cross-border effects of AI require a new form of technology diplomacy capable of aligning national interests, standards, and societal well-being.
Williams & Otto (2022)	United States-Iran; Case-oriented public diplomacy analysis	Public diplomacy and strategic communication	Shows how AI-enabled communication can broaden public-diplomacy reach while raising questions of authenticity, targeting, and trust.
Stanzel & Voelsen (2022)	Diplomatic negotiation / multilateral settings; Exploratory research report with use cases	Negotiation support and diplomatic analysis	Finds practical scope for AI-assisted scenario development and negotiation preparation, subject to data protection, security, and retained human control.
Pokhriyal & Koebe (2023)	International crisis management; Analytical opinion / evidence synthesis	Crisis decision support	Identifies AI-assisted crisis analysis as promising but conditional on responsible data sharing, interpretability, robustness, uncertainty communication, and staff capacity.
Konovalova (2023)	Global diplomacy; Conceptual review	AI for diplomacy and diplomacy for AI	Distinguishes the use of AI within diplomatic work from diplomatic efforts to govern AI and stresses new technical competencies and cross-disciplinary cooperation.
Lundgren (2023)	Global AI governance; Research agenda / conceptual analysis	International AI governance	Frames global AI governance as an emerging international-relations research field requiring stronger empirical study of institutional design, actors, and normative choices.
Pipchenko (2024)	Foreign ministries and multilevel governance; Comparative policy analysis	Foreign-ministry digital transformation	Documents growing experimentation with AI-related initiatives across diplomatic institutions and argues for

			structured adaptation in foreign ministries.
Irungu & Kimaita (2024)	Kenya; Country-focused review	Digital and public diplomacy	Highlights opportunities for AI-supported Kenyan digital diplomacy while identifying capability, infrastructure, and governance constraints affecting adoption.
Erman & Furendal (2024)	Global governance; Normative political theory	Legitimacy of AI-supported governance	Shows that the legitimacy of AI in global governance depends not only on outcomes but on procedural requirements, accountability, and democratic justification.
Roberts et al. (2024)	Global AI governance; Institutional mapping and policy analysis	International governance architecture	Identifies a global AI governance deficit produced by interstate competition and institutional dysfunction and proposes stronger coordination through existing and emerging institutions.
Mokry & Gurol (2024)	China, United States, European Union; Frame analysis	Regulatory diplomacy and geopolitical competition	Finds that global AI regulation is increasingly used as an instrument of geopolitical leadership, creating risks of institutional fragmentation and normative rivalry.
Bjola & Manor (2025a)	Diplomatic institutions; Conceptual scenario analysis	Generative AI and diplomatic transformation	Conceptualises generative AI as a source of horizontal and vertical technological acceleration across diplomatic functions and organisational routines.
Bjola & Manor (2025b)	Diplomatic intelligence; Conceptual application analysis	Digital diplomatic intelligence	Shows how generative AI can strengthen data synthesis and analytical support while introducing technical, organisational, and verification challenges.
Sevin & Eken (2025)	Diplomatic practice; Critical conceptual analysis	Human-centred diplomacy	Rejects technology-first approaches and argues that trust, rapport, empathy, and relationship building should determine where generative AI is appropriate.
Fredheim & Pamment (2025)	Social media influence operations; Risk and opportunity assessment	Public diplomacy and information operations	Finds that LLMs can scale multilingual persuasive influence operations but may also support detection and defensive analysis.
Huang (2025)	Digital public diplomacy / ChatGPT; Critical dialogue analysis	Public diplomacy and AI bias	Demonstrates how terminology choices, unargued affirmations, and model bias can distort diplomatic advocacy and public-facing interpretation.
Xia (2025)	European Union-China relations; Bilateral conceptual analysis	Diplomatic relationship building	Finds opportunities for shared AI concerns to support relationship building while identifying deepfakes, data sovereignty, and technological dependence as major risks.
Garcia, E. V. (2025)	Diplomatic profession; Normative conceptual analysis	Human agency in diplomacy	Argues that diplomacy remains fundamentally relational and that AI cannot substitute for the human recognition, judgement, and reciprocity at its core.
Di Martino & Ford (2025)	Public diplomacy; Conceptual analysis	Uncertainty and diplomatic communication	Shows that generative AI can falsely smooth uncertainty into authoritative answers, creating epistemic risks for diplomatic communication and judgement.

Manfredi-Sanchez & Morales (2025)	China; Country-focused conceptual analysis	Generative AI and public diplomacy	Links generative AI to strategic communication, securitisation, reputation, and regulatory narratives in China's diplomacy.
Bano et al. (2025)	Global scholarly field; Systematic review of 231 academic articles	AI-diplomacy research landscape	Maps themes, topics, and geographic emphases in AI-diplomacy scholarship and identifies specific generative-AI applications as underexplored.
Mostafaei et al. (2025)	Global diplomacy; Review with practical models and cases	Consular services, crisis management, public diplomacy	Synthesises predictive and analytical models with examples in consular work, crisis management, trade, and public diplomacy, while noting implementation risks.
Garcia, D. (2025)	Military AI governance diplomacy; Global governance analysis	Diplomacy of military AI governance	Shows that high-stakes military AI requires sustained diplomacy on trust, restraint, human control, and international governance.
Crilley & Saunders (2025)	Public diplomacy and strategic narratives; Conceptual media analysis	Strategic narratives and synthetic media	Explains how low-quality AI-generated content can circulate through resonant narratives, complicating epistemic authority and public diplomacy.
Manor (2026)	Digital diplomacy scholarship / future scenarios; Extensive review and scenario analysis	AI-driven diplomacy	Proposes de-evolution, augmentation, and virtuality scenarios and identifies temporal and uncertainty paradoxes that may constrain AI adoption.
Truby et al. (2026)	United States, China, European Union and emerging regions; Legal-strategic comparative analysis	Techno-nationalism, regulatory soft power, AI chips diplomacy	Shows that AI diplomacy is increasingly organised around technology standards, regulatory influence, chip supply chains, and strategic competition.
Kacziba & Urbanovics (2026)	Foreign policy under polycrisis; Conceptual synthesis	Augmented diplomacy and complexity management	Argues that AI can strengthen foreign-policy analysis but can also create complexity displacement, crisis entrenchment, and epistemic monoculture; proposes augmented diplomacy.
Sadegh-Zadeh et al. (2026)	193 countries / global AI readiness; Cross-sectional and short-panel empirical analysis	AI readiness, diplomacy and global order	Finds highly uneven but multi-regional AI readiness and treats readiness as latent capacity that can condition future diplomatic voice and influence in AI governance.

4.2 Emerging AI-Enabled Diplomatic Practices

Diplomatic intelligence, decision support and forecasting was the most prevalent practice cluster (12 of 28 focal studies). AI is known in the literature for its ability to quickly synthesize information, detect patterns, generate scenarios, make predictions, manage complexity, and provide structured support in decision-making, especially during crisis situations (Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023; Bjola & Manor, 2025b; Mostafaei et al., 2025). Kacziba and Urbanovics (2026) continue this argument and suggest that AI could potentially assist foreign ministries in coping with the different layers of interdependence that exist between political, economic, environmental and security challenges, which go beyond the analytical capabilities of traditional foreign ministries. But the studies are always about how AI can augment and not dictate, as sometimes the data it draws upon is uncertain, the models are opaque, and it can hallucinate or provide politically unsafe recommendations due to the context in which it operates (Stanzel & Voelsen, 2022; Manor, 2026).

The second big group, with 12 studies, was public diplomacy and strategic communication. AI is linked to multilingual writing, content adaptation, audience analysis, sentiment monitoring, strategic narrative production, and quicker public involvement (Williams & Otto, 2022; Mostafaei et al., 2025). But it's also where opportunity and vulnerability are most intertwined—with generative AI making content creation easier and more affordable, and attribution more challenging (Fredheim & Pamment, 2025; Crilley & Saunders, 2025). In addition, some of the essential terms used in diplomatic communication can be misleading because of bias, as Huang (2025) argues, and it can be hard to see even in a clear model that assumptions are made which are neither very obviously obvious nor examined. Moreover, seemingly innocuous choices of terms in diplomatic communication can be misleading due to bias, as Huang (2025) argues, and a fluent generation of any given model can mask uncertainty, as Di Martino and Ford (2025) warn.

The highest number of cross-cutting practice domains occurred in the area of governance (13 studies), followed by regulatory diplomacy and technology competition. The cluster involves diplomacy with regard to regulatory standards, military AI, ethics, institutional design, semiconductor access, compute access, data governance, and international distribution of AI readiness (Roberts et al., 2024; Garcia, D., 2025; Truby et al., 2026). Mokry and Gurol (2024) argue that the United States, China and the European Union are increasingly entering into the global governance of AI with conflicting visions of leadership, whereas Sadegh-Zadeh et al. (2026) highlight the possibility of national readiness for AI shaping future global influence in global governance scenarios. The results consequently indicate that AI is reshaping diplomatic agendas even among institutions that do not significantly automate their internal processes, as it is diplomats' duty to deal with the external political implications of AI development (Lundgren, 2023; Feijoo et al., 2020).

Substantively important but less represented were crisis management, negotiation support, and consular and/or administrative assistance. Crisis-related applications were mentioned in five studies, and centred on rapid synthesis, situational awareness, and complexity management, while negotiation-related applications were mentioned in five and were centred on preparation, scenario exploration, translation, and relationship support (Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023; Stanzel & Voelsen, 2022; Manor, 2026). The number of studies that reported administrative and consular uses was four, and in most cases, they were found to be lower-risk environments for service provision and repetitive tasks (Pipchenko, 2024; Mostafaei et al., 2025). Despite the limited number of studies on these topics, the results should not be interpreted as signaling that the topics are not of practical relevance, but it does suggest that empirical research has not yet matched the range of foreseen applications (Bano et al., 2025; Mostafaei et al., 2025).

4.3 Risks and Limitations of AI Adoption in Diplomacy

The most common risk identified was the issue of accountability, automation bias and human oversight (14 studies). Delegating to systems whose reasoning is probabilistic or opaque could have implications for security, rights, alliance, sanctions, negotiations, and crisis escalation, and may be unwarranted (Erman & Furendal, 2024; Garcia, D., 2025). In addition to being formally advisory, outputs can lead to a form of automation bias as decisions are made quickly, seem objective, or are pushed by institutional pressure, reducing the meaningful accountability (Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023; Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026). The literature thus strongly suggests that accountable human authority is to be maintained where the decisions are irreversible, coercive, and/or politically significant (Stanzel & Voelsen, 2022; Sevin & Eken, 2025).

The coding of bias, epistemic uncertainty, and model reliability was applied to 11 studies. Generative systems can hallucinate, amplify training-data asymmetries, encode contested

categories or provide one plausible answer in a context that requires diplomatic ambiguity and evaluation between competing interpretations (Huang, 2025; Di Martino & Ford, 2025). Kacziba and Urbanovics (2026) also note the danger of epistemic monoculture, where several institutions depend on the same models and data sources, so they start to manifest similar blind spots. In a diplomatic context, this convergence could be especially problematic during crises when information environments may be incomplete or strategically managed and reliance on the synthesis process might spur decision-making too quickly (Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023; Manor, 2026).

There were 10 studies that had trust and authenticity risks, and four that had disinformation and synthetic influence. Public diplomacy relies on credibility of the message, on its ability to express continuity in the relationship between sender and recipient, but generative AI can generate messages, voices, images, and narratives that are very challenging to distinguish from official communication and synthetic impersonation (Fredheim & Pamment, 2025; Crilley & Saunders, 2025). Xia (2025) notes that deepfakes pose a threat to bilateral relationship building, and Garcia, E. V. (2025) states that interpersonal recognition is still a key aspect of diplomacy in an era of expanded communication capacity provided by technology. The problem is not just misinformation, however, but the spread of synthetic content can more generally create an ‘authenticity deficit,’ where diplomats and publics become less able to trust authentic messages (Sevin & Eken, 2025; Crilley & Saunders, 2025).

Privacy, cyber security, and diplomatic confidentiality were mentioned in five studies, but their lower mention rate may be due to a lack of empirical evidence, not their low importance. The handling of classified assessments, negotiating positions, personal consular information, and politically sensitive communications is a regular part of the business of diplomatic institutions, which make them subject to unique data-governance risks (Stanzel & Voelsen, 2022; Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023). The linkage of technology dependence to sovereignty also extends to the reliance on cloud or model ecosystems, or semiconductors, from other countries, which can lead to external leverage or supply-chain vulnerability (Xia, 2025; Truby et al., 2026). Confidentiality should thus be regarded as an architectural feature of the use of diplomatic AI, and not as a compliance post-deployment concern (Pipchenko, 2024; Konovalova, 2023).

Another ongoing risk was institutional capacity, represented by 12 studies, and the uneven readiness for AI. To respond and contribute to the responsible use of AI, the foreign ministries need a cadre of well-trained staff, safe facilities, strategic procurement, trusted data, and governance capacity building. (Pipchenko, 2024; Bjola & Manor, 2025b). The requirements can create an "asymmetric dynamic" between high-capacity and lower-capacity states, allowing the former to develop own tools, influence standards, and engage in governance of AI, while the latter may rely on external providers (Irungu & Kimaita, 2024; Sadegh-Zadeh et al., 2026). The resulting inequality is not only technological, but can also pervade models, regimes, and norms at the international level (Roberts et al., 2024; Truby et al., 2026).

Table 3: Frequency of Major Practice and Risk Themes in the 28-Study Corpus

Theme family	Theme	Studies coded (n)
Diplomatic practice	AI governance, regulatory diplomacy and technology competition	13
Diplomatic practice	Public diplomacy, strategic communication and information environments	12
Diplomatic practice	Diplomatic intelligence, decision support and forecasting	12

Diplomatic practice	Crisis management and complexity response	5
Diplomatic practice	Negotiation and relationship building	4
Diplomatic practice	Consular and administrative support	4
Risk / governance	Accountability, automation bias and human oversight	14
Risk / governance	Institutional capacity and skills constraints	12
Risk / governance	Bias, epistemic uncertainty and model reliability	11
Risk / governance	Trust, authenticity and erosion of relational diplomacy	10
Risk / governance	Geopolitical fragmentation and competing governance regimes	8
Risk / governance	Capability inequality and technological dependence	8
Risk / governance	Privacy, cybersecurity and diplomatic confidentiality	5
Risk / governance	Disinformation, deepfakes and synthetic influence	4
Risk / governance	Legitimacy and procedural accountability	3

Note: Studies could receive multiple codes; counts therefore do not sum to 28. Frequencies indicate thematic recurrence within the focused corpus and are not effect sizes.

4.4 Governance Challenges of AI-Enabled Diplomacy

The results show a multi-level governance challenge. Foreign ministries must have organisational rules governing data handling, model selection, access control, auditability, data review, procurement and classification of tasks by consequence and sensitivity (Stanzel & Voelsen, 2022; Pipchenko, 2024). Professionally, diplomats must also be adept at using AI tools and understanding uncertainties, biases, provenance, and limitations, but are not expected to be machine-learning engineers themselves (Konovalova, 2023; Bjola & Manor, 2025b). The international level requires states to negotiate norms in terms of transparency, accountability, safety, military use, cross-border data, information integrity and equitable participation (Roberts et al., 2024; Garcia, D., 2025). There is a close interdependency between these levels: Poor internal governance could lead to diplomatic incidents, while the rules and standards at the global level will influence technologies and providers offered to foreign ministries (Mokry & Gurol, 2024; Truby et al., 2026).

The second challenge is the one of strategic competition and cooperative governance. AI governance is not just a technocratic process, but also a field of regulatory soft power, in which major powers are incentivized to influence international norms toward their own geopolitical interests and technological ecosystems (Mokry & Gurol, 2024; Truby et al., 2026). Roberts et al. (2024) reveal that such first-order interstate conflicts are related to institutional fragmentation, and Erman and Furendal (2024) prove that efficiency is not enough to secure legitimacy. The governance question then is how to create arrangements that are both capable enough to mitigate systemic risk, and inclusive and procedurally credible enough to not recreate technological hierarchy (United Nations, 2024; UNESCO, 2022).

The third challenge is the maintenance of human diplomatic agency. The general opposition to AI is not against its use, but rather against its use without human judgment in areas where politics, empathy, interpretation of context, and relationship management play a key role (Sevin & Eken, 2025; Garcia, E. V., 2025). Kacziba and Urbanovics (2026) outline the preferred model as “augmented diplomacy,” and Manor's (2026) scenarios indicate that positive results will be achieved if the institutions continue to ensure that diplomats are more rather than less responsible. Human oversight is therefore not a symbolic safeguard after deployment; it is a design principle that should be used when deciding what to automatize, how to verify outputs of the automation, and who should be held accountable for the diplomatic action (Erman & Furendal, 2024; Garcia, D., 2025).

4.5 Geographic and Institutional Patterns

The geographic distribution of the literature reveals persistent concentration in major-power and European contexts. Studies of the United States, China, and the European Union are prominent because these actors shape regulation, technology markets, and strategic competition, while comparative evidence from African, Latin American, and many Asian foreign ministries remains limited (Mokry & Gurol, 2024; Truby et al., 2026). Irungu and Kimaita (2024) provide a useful Kenya-focused exception, and Bano et al. (2025) similarly identify geographic imbalances in the broader scholarly landscape. This concentration risks universalising adoption assumptions derived from well-resourced institutions and underestimating the distinct constraints of states with smaller diplomatic services, weaker digital infrastructure, or greater dependence on external platforms (Sadegh-Zadeh et al., 2026; Roberts et al., 2024).

Institutionally, the literature also privileges national foreign ministries and global governance debates over regional organisations, embassies, consulates, small missions, and issue-specific diplomatic networks. This matters because AI adoption is likely to differ across levels: a headquarters analytical unit may have secure data and specialised staff, whereas a small mission may rely on commercially available systems with different confidentiality and accountability profiles (Pipchenko, 2024; Bjola & Manor, 2025b). Research that treats 'diplomacy' as a unitary institution may therefore conceal substantial variation in organisational capacity, mission type, task sensitivity, and political authorisation (Manor, 2026; Sevin & Eken, 2025).

5.0 Discussion

5.1 The Transformation Is Best Understood as Cognitive Augmentation, Not Diplomatic Automation

The synthesis shows that the key transition in digital diplomacy to an AI-enabled diplomacy is that of digital communication infrastructure to cognitive enhancement. Digital technologies were used mainly to increase the speed, depth and scale of diplomacy, while AI is increasingly being used to intervene in the filtering, interpretation, summarisation and generation of options for action (Bjola & Manor, 2025b; Manor, 2019). This difference is what makes AI raise more direct questions concerning epistemic authority, that is, an AI-generated briefing, forecast, or negotiation scenario may influence the policy before any public communication happens (Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023; Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026). The shift is thus more than being about platform adoption: it is about the informational underpinnings that underpin diplomatic judgement (Manor, 2026).

Meanwhile, the proof doesn't warrant a vision of independent diplomacy in the near future. Even the most optimistic studies conceptualize AI as an enabler of analysis, preparation, responsiveness or complexity management, and not as a political self-determining entity with

binding choices (Stanzel & Voelsen, 2022; Mostafaei et al., 2025). The most profound critical literature also asserts that diplomacy has relational and normative aspects: trust, empathy, political responsibility, accountability, ambiguity management, and signalling aspects which can not be assessed only on the basis of technical quality (Sevin & Eken, 2025; Garcia, E. V., 2025). Therefore, Kacziba and Urbanovics' (2026) idea of augmented diplomacy is the most consistent amalgam of the field: AI can extend the analytical capabilities of human diplomats, but human diplomats remain the ones that bear the responsibility of interpreting and making decisions.

This conclusion also addresses a paradox in the literature where acceleration was seen running counter to caution. Bjola and Manor (2025a) explain why generative AI can be fast and fluently across tasks, whereas Di Martino and Ford (2025) and Huang (2025) explain why speed and fluency can mask epistemic weakness. Calibrated adoption is thus not the maximum automation, but the automation level that corresponds to the structure of the task, reversibility, sensitivity, and the costs of error, as per the relevant policy objective. There is room for more automation in low consequence drafting or retrieval work, but high degrees of human verification and institutional control are needed for crisis signalling, sanctions, recognition decisions, treaty interpretation and politically sensitive negotiation (Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023; Garcia, D., 2025).

5.2 Diplomacy Faces an Epistemic Security Problem

A second major insight is that AI creates an epistemic security problem for diplomacy. Traditional cybersecurity focuses on protecting systems and information from unauthorised access, whereas AI-enabled diplomacy must also protect the reliability of knowledge used in political judgement (Bjola & Manor, 2025b; Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026). Hallucination, model bias, manipulated training or retrieval data, synthetic media, and correlated dependence on similar models can all compromise the informational environment without necessarily breaching a network perimeter (Huang, 2025; Fredheim & Pamment, 2025). This suggests that diplomatic security doctrine should expand from confidentiality and integrity of data to include provenance, uncertainty, model behaviour, and verification of AI-generated analytical claims (Stanzel & Voelsen, 2022; Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023).

The problem is especially acute in crisis diplomacy because the value proposition of AI - speed under information overload - coincides with the conditions under which errors are most dangerous. Manor (2026) identifies a temporal paradox in which technological acceleration can create pressure for faster response even though diplomacy often benefits from delay, consultation, and ambiguity. Kacziba and Urbanovics (2026) similarly warn that AI may displace rather than solve complexity, particularly if decision makers rely on simplified outputs in genuinely entangled crises. AI may therefore reduce information-processing burdens while increasing the need for institutional procedures that slow down the conversion of machine output into politically consequential action (Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023; Di Martino & Ford, 2025).

5.3 Public Diplomacy Is Entering an Authenticity and Attribution Crisis

The review also suggests that generative AI may alter the basic credibility conditions of public diplomacy. Diplomatic communication traditionally depends on identifiable speakers and institutions whose reputations can be evaluated over time, but synthetic media can imitate the form of authoritative communication without preserving responsibility for its content (Fredheim & Pamment, 2025; Crilley & Saunders, 2025). Deepfakes, automated personas, and highly tailored text can undermine trust not only when false messages succeed but also when authentic messages can be dismissed as synthetic (Xia, 2025; Crilley & Saunders, 2025). This

'liar's dividend' type dynamic is especially damaging in diplomacy, where ambiguity about whether a statement is genuine can affect markets, alliances, crisis perceptions, or public attitudes before formal verification is completed.

The answer cannot be a simple prohibition on AI-generated communication because legitimate diplomatic institutions may benefit from translation, accessibility, drafting support, and rapid multilingual engagement (Mostafaei et al., 2025; Williams & Otto, 2022). Rather, the synthesis supports clearer attribution standards, verifiable official channels, records of human approval, and communication protocols for rapidly authenticating high-consequence diplomatic statements. These measures would preserve the productivity benefits of AI while maintaining the link between public messages and accountable institutional authorship (Sevin & Eken, 2025; Erman & Furendal, 2024).

5.4 Global AI Governance Is Also a Distributional Struggle Over Diplomatic Power

The fourth is that Global AI governance is not merely a neutral coordination of technical issues. The comparative literature reveals that the leading actors employ regulatory strategies, standards, market size and technology ecosystems to pursue strategic influence and thus govern the governance negotiation as a game of power politics (Mokry & Gurol, 2024; Truby et al., 2026). Roberts et al. (2024) pinpoint a governance gap that, as they point out, is not just a governance design issue, but rather a real struggle with values, economic benefits, security, and control over the technological infrastructure. Cooperative norm building and competitive regulatory statecraft are therefore likely to be the main pillars of AI diplomacy for the foreseeable future (Lundgren, 2023; Garcia, D., 2025).

The disparity of readiness across the nations is a distributional dimension that is exacerbated. Sadegh-Zadeh et al. (2026) demonstrate how readiness is “multi-regional” in nature but uneven across geographical regions; Irungu and Kimaita (2024) illustrate capacity challenges that can influence AI adoption in an African diplomatic setting. Even when formally represented in governance forums, states with no secure infrastructure, no specialist personnel, the ability to gain access to the compute, or ability to negotiate deals may find themselves relying on external platforms and standards (Roberts et al., 2024; Truby et al., 2026). Capability to participate is thus a key element of inclusive AI governance, and not just the formal inclusion of seats at the negotiating table, as in the United Nations (2024) or in the UNESCO (2022).

5.5 Research Gaps and Future Agenda

The first and foremost research gap is the empirical one. How AI can revolutionize diplomacy is widely discussed in the literature, but very few studies have observed foreign-ministry workflows, assessed the quality of decision-making, compared the performance of AI-assisted and non-AI-assisted foreign ministries, or measured downstream diplomatic outcomes (Bano et al., 2025; Manor, 2026). Field experiments, process tracing, interviews, comparative case studies, and controlled task evaluations should be employed in future research to assess whether AI actually enhances analytical accuracy, preparation for negotiations, consular responsiveness, and/or effectiveness in public diplomacy. Failure cases should also be reported as part of such research – otherwise only successful pilots would be investigated, thereby underestimating organisational and political risk (Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026; Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023).

The second gap is geographic/institutional. There is very little representation in discussions on AI regulation from small states, the foreign ministries of African states, Latin American diplomacy, regional organisations or lower-resource missions (Bano et al., 2025; Sadegh-Zadeh et al., 2026). The gap is also important because of the analytical differences between states with varying resource limitations and those of the large powers that have “sovereign

technology ecosystems” (Irungu & Kimaita, 2024; Truby et al., 2026), in how they choose to leverage commercial AI, regional infrastructure, or specific diplomatic arrangements. Comparative work should thus look at the conditions of adoption and influence of the following: organisational scale, digital readiness, regime type, procurement capacity, and language ecology.

The third gap is about governance effectiveness. International principles are increasingly converging on safety, transparency, human rights, and human oversight, but there is little evidence of how foreign ministries have operationalized these principles to access, audit, procure materials, report incidents, or restrict access to high-risk tasks (UNESCO, 2022; United Nations, 2024). The research should examine the different governance structures in ministries and find out which of the structures make a difference in minimizing error, leakage, automation bias, and accountability gaps in a meaningful way. Finally, a link between domestic AI governance and external regulatory diplomacy requires further consideration as states may promote internationally more principles than those that they apply in their domestic institutional practices (Mokry & Gurol, 2024; Erman & Furendal, 2024).

The fourth gap has to do with crisis escalation and strategic interaction. While the majority of the studies focus on one side of the government using AI, international politics is a multi actor game that can unfold through the involvement of similar or different (even conflicting) AI systems (Pokhriyal & Koebe, 2023; Kacziba & Urbanovics, 2026). Research should thus explore interaction effects like machine-speed signalling, correlated model errors, synthetic crisis messaging, automated information warfare, and the impact of AI-based assessment on deterrence and negotiation. The questions are especially relevant in the diplomatic and military arena, where the lack of attribution and interpretation can reduce decision time and escalate risk of error (Garcia, D., 2025; Manor, 2026).

5.6 Integrated Practice-Risk-Governance Framework

The findings support an integrated framework in which AI capabilities enter diplomacy through specific applications rather than affecting diplomacy directly. Generative language, predictive analytics, machine learning, automated retrieval, and multimodal analysis are translated into diplomatic practices such as intelligence synthesis, public communication, negotiation preparation, crisis monitoring, consular assistance, and governance analysis (Bjola & Manor, 2025b; Mostafaei et al., 2025). Their benefits are mediated by institutional conditions including data quality, human expertise, security, procurement, organisational culture, and task sensitivity (Pipchenko, 2024; Manor, 2026). This mediation explains why the same system may be useful for document retrieval but unsuitable for a high-stakes recommendation involving escalation or legal responsibility.

Each application then generates a corresponding risk profile that should determine governance intensity. Risks include bias and uncertainty, confidentiality loss, synthetic manipulation, automation bias, weakened trust, capability dependence, and geopolitical fragmentation (Fredheim & Pamment, 2025; Roberts et al., 2024). Governance responses should therefore be matched to the source of risk: provenance and verification for epistemic risk; access controls and secure architecture for confidentiality; human approval and audit trails for accountability; authentication standards for synthetic communication; and capacity-building plus inclusive norm-setting for international inequality (United Nations, 2024; UNESCO, 2022). The framework's central proposition is that responsible AI diplomacy is achieved not by maximising automation but by aligning technological capability, diplomatic purpose, risk exposure, and accountable governance.

Table 4: Integrated Framework for AI-Enabled Diplomacy

AI capability	Diplomatic application	Potential value	Principal risk	Governance requirement
Generative language models	Drafting, translation, public communication	Speed, multilingual reach, accessibility	Hallucination, bias, synthetic attribution	Human approval, provenance, verified official channels
Predictive analytics / machine learning	Forecasting, crisis monitoring, decision support	Pattern detection, early warning, analytical scale	Automation bias, correlated error, uncertainty suppression	Model validation, uncertainty reporting, escalation safeguards
Retrieval and document intelligence	Briefing, treaty/policy search, institutional memory	Faster synthesis, knowledge access	Confidentiality leakage, incomplete retrieval	Secure deployment, access controls, source traceability
Audience and social-media analytics	Public diplomacy and influence assessment	Audience insight, rapid monitoring	Privacy concerns, manipulation, feedback loops	Data minimisation, ethical targeting rules, independent review
AI-enabled governance analytics	Regulatory diplomacy, standards and negotiation support	Comparative policy intelligence, scenario analysis	Technological dependence, geopolitical bias	Diverse evidence, sovereign capacity, inclusive multilateral governance

6.0 Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is most clearly changing the scope and pace at which diplomatic institutions can process information, produce content, understand and track complex situations, and prepare policy options. This shift is already apparent in various facets of diplomatic intelligence, public diplomacy, crisis management, negotiation support, consular services, and the burgeoning field of international politics around the governance of AI, as evidenced by the systematic review. However, the evidence is not in favor of a straightforward shift from human diplomacy to machine diplomacy. Augmented diplomacy, which combines AI's analytical and communicative capabilities with the interpretive and political authority of human officials, is the best and most consistent model.

As with anything, the technologies that are generating value are also creating a new vulnerability. By destroying the very attributes of diplomatic success – credibility, judgment, discretion, relationship management, and legitimate responsibility – biases, synthetic influence, uncertainty suppression, confidentiality threats, automation bias, technological dependence, and unequal national capacity can work against the profession. AI does not just alter the security challenge of diplomacy from protecting information to protecting the integrity of the knowledge and judgements that foreign policy is built upon.

The review also sets the foundation for the fact that AI is a diplomatic tool and it is a diplomatic subject. AI governance is becoming more entangled with geopolitical power as states race to influence global standards, regulatory approaches, infrastructure, and technological ecosystems. This is therefore a double challenge for the central policy governance: on the one hand, the diplomatic instruments and their use should be governed by them; on the other, they should engage in legitimate and inclusive international governance of AI. The future of AI-influenced diplomacy will be driven more by the judicious use of AI tools and technologies for diplomatic ends, diplomatic risk, institutional capability, and responsible human control of AI than by the sheer volume of elements that can be automated.

7.0 Recommendations

Foreign ministries should establish a risk tiered AI governance system, where the tasks in government are categorised by sensitivity, reversibility, confidentiality and potential political consequences. Tasks like internal search, translation support, first-draft preparation, and low-

risk tasks may allow for higher levels of automation, whereas high-risk tasks like crisis signaling, treaty interpretation, decision on recognition, negotiation position, sanctions, etc. should be clearly reviewed and approved by human experts.

The technical architectures for using AI must be secure, with approved systems in place, access controls, protected data environments, logging, requirements on the provenance of AI-generated content, and clear prohibitions on placing classified and sensitive diplomatic content in unapproved external models. The use of AI in substantive analysis should be clearly referenced to the sources used, if possible, and uncertainty should be shown rather than masked by fluent models.

Foreign ministries should take steps to cultivate AI literacy among diplomats, not make AI competence a technical job. Training should include limitations of models, bias, hallucination, data governance, data verification, prompt security, risks from synthetic media and institutional responsibilities in human oversight. Responsibility for foreign-policy judgement must be assigned to authorised human officials, but a specialist technical team should support diplomats.

Government and international bodies should reinforce authentication and quick verification processes for high consequence communication of diplomatic messages. Crisis communication, official messages, and public diplomacy content should be disseminated via verifiable communication channels, and there should be clear guidelines on the use of AI-generated content to the extent it is substantial. These are the steps required to ensure the confidence in today's information landscape where fake content can closely mimic authoritative voices.

Capability inclusion should be emphasized in international AI governance. Capacity building in lower-resource countries should focus not only on skills but also on ensuring access to infrastructure, data governance, access to trustworthy systems and meaningful representation in standard setting – not just formal representation. Regional bodies may have a special role in sharing their knowledge and expertise and arranging for the use of capacity in states that are not able to maintain large teams of AI experts.

Future studies need to focus more on the empirical assessment of practice in diplomacy and not primarily on prospective claims. Comparative studies should account for the use of AI for better or worse in analytical accuracy, crisis response, negotiation preparation, loss of public trust, and consular performance, and should report failure as thoroughly as success. Study should also grow significantly in the context of Africa, Latin America, small states and regional organisations, where other institutional pressures can give rise to variant models of AI-driven diplomacy.

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