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GS Paper II: Current Affairs

1. Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Diplomacy

a. Introduction

Diplomacy refers to the management of relations between countries through dialogue, negotiation, persuasion, and trust-building. Traditionally, diplomacy depended heavily on human judgement, institutional memory, negotiation skills, confidential communication, and long-term experience accumulated by diplomats and state institutions.

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence is gradually transforming this domain. AI systems can process vast quantities of information, recall historical negotiations, analyse risks, generate policy summaries, and simulate possible diplomatic outcomes. Consequently, AI is becoming an increasingly important tool in diplomacy, foreign policy, and national security decision-making.

However, the growing use of AI also raises concerns relating to accountability, cyber security, strategic autonomy, and the preservation of human judgement in international affairs. Therefore, the future of diplomacy will not be shaped by AI replacing diplomats, but by the ability of states to combine technological capacity with human wisdom.

b. Why AI is Entering Diplomacy

Growing Complexity of International Relations

The contemporary international environment is far more complex than earlier periods. Diplomats today must simultaneously deal with:

- Wars and regional conflicts.
- Trade disputes and economic sanctions.
- Climate negotiations.
- Cyber threats.
- Migration crises.
- Technological competition.
- Terrorism and transnational security threats.
- Rapidly changing public opinion.

This complexity has made foreign policy decision-making more information-intensive and time-sensitive.

Explosion of Information Sources

Information generation has expanded enormously through:

- Newspapers and media reports.
- Intelligence assessments.
- Satellite imagery.
- Social media platforms.
- Government databases.
- Think-tank publications.
- Diplomatic cables and digital communication systems.

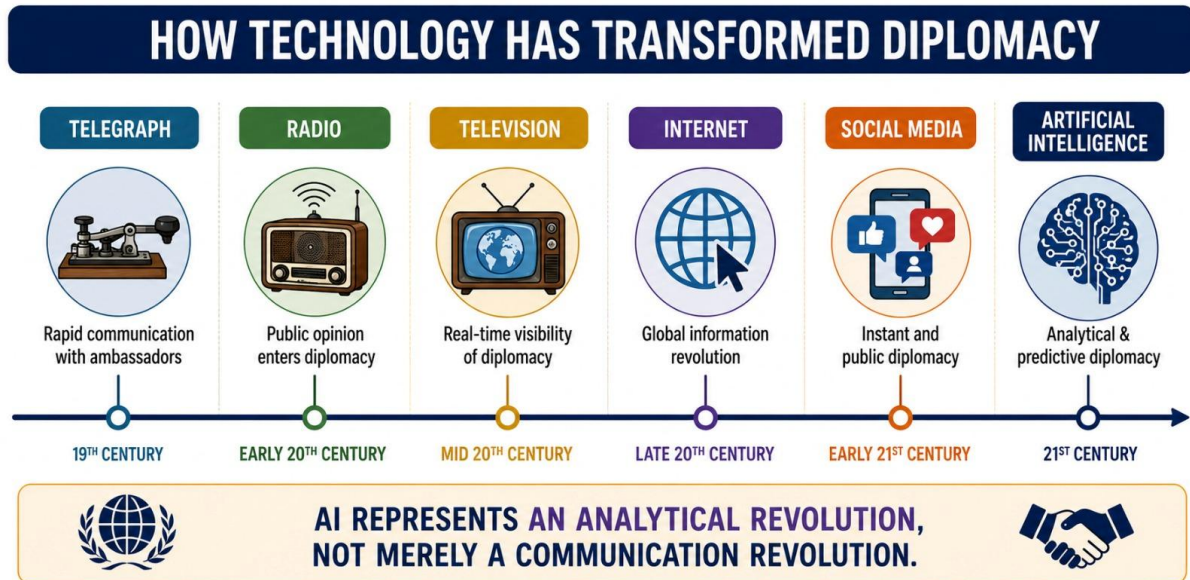
Human officers alone often find it difficult to process and analyse such massive quantities of information within limited time.

AI as an Information-Management Tool

AI helps address this challenge by:

- Organising information.
- Summarising lengthy material.
- Classifying data.
- Detecting patterns.
- Analysing emerging risks.

In this sense, AI is entering diplomacy because modern foreign policy increasingly depends on information management and rapid strategic assessment.



c. Historical Relationship Between Technology and Diplomacy

i. Technology as a Driver of Diplomatic Change

Artificial Intelligence is not the first technological innovation to transform diplomacy. Throughout history, communication technologies have altered how states conduct foreign relations.

Major Technological Shifts

- **Telegraph:** Enabled governments to communicate rapidly with ambassadors stationed abroad.
- **Radio:** Brought public opinion into international politics.
- **Television:** Made diplomacy more visible and immediate.
- **Internet:** Accelerated the global flow of information.
- **Social Media:** Transformed diplomacy into a highly public and real-time activity.

Each technological shift changed the speed, visibility, and pressure under which diplomacy operated.

ii. Why AI is Different

Artificial Intelligence differs from earlier technologies in a fundamental way.

Difference from Earlier Technologies

Earlier technologies mainly transmitted information. AI, however, can also:

- Interpret information.
- Analyse patterns.
- Generate summaries and drafts.
- Simulate possible outcomes.
- Support decision-making.

Thus, AI represents not merely a communication revolution, but an analytical revolution in diplomacy.

This analytical role forms the basis of what is now called AI-assisted diplomacy.

d. Meaning of AI-Assisted Diplomacy

i. Definition

AI-assisted diplomacy refers to the use of Artificial Intelligence systems to support diplomatic work and foreign policy decision-making.

It does not imply replacing diplomats with machines. Instead, AI acts as an advanced support system that assists diplomats in:

- Research.
- Drafting.
- Translation.
- Crisis analysis.
- Strategic forecasting.
- Negotiation preparation.

ii. AI as a “Second Brain”

In practical terms, AI can function as a “second brain” for diplomatic institutions.

Functional Role

It can help diplomats:

- Recall past negotiations.
- Retrieve institutional records.
- Compare policy positions.
- Generate briefing notes.
- Identify risks and opportunities.

Thus, AI enhances the speed, efficiency, and analytical capacity of diplomatic institutions.

The practical significance of AI-assisted diplomacy is visible across several areas of diplomatic work.

e. Major Uses of AI in Diplomacy

i. Managing Information Overload

Diplomatic institutions receive enormous amounts of information every day.

Role of AI

AI systems can:

- Summarise lengthy reports.
- Identify key developments.
- Compare policy documents.
- Detect emerging risks.
- Prioritise urgent issues.

This reduces the burden on diplomats and allows them to focus more on strategic judgement rather than routine information processing.

ii. Strengthening Institutional Memory

Institutional memory refers to the accumulated record of treaties, negotiations, policy positions, meetings, and diplomatic commitments developed over time.

Role of AI

AI can make institutional records searchable and easily accessible.

Before a negotiation, diplomats can quickly retrieve:

- Previous discussions.
- Unresolved disputes.
- Past commitments.
- Changes in negotiating positions.
- Historical sensitivities.

This improves continuity in foreign policy and prevents loss of historical knowledge within bureaucracies.

iii. Drafting Diplomatic Documents

Diplomats spend substantial time preparing written material.

Documents Where AI Can Assist

- Speeches.
- Briefing notes.
- Communiqués.
- Treaty drafts.
- Joint statements.
- Policy summaries.

AI systems can generate initial drafts rapidly, which human officers can later refine, verify, and validate.

This reduces routine administrative workload and improves institutional efficiency.

iv. Crisis Forecasting and Early Warning

AI can analyse patterns from multiple data sources.

Sources of Analysis

- Economic indicators.
- Military movements.
- Conflict databases.
- Diplomatic communications.
- Social media trends.
- Satellite imagery.

Such analysis may help identify early warning signs of:

- War.
- Political instability.
- Economic crises.
- Civil unrest.
- Humanitarian emergencies.

In this way, AI can strengthen preventive diplomacy and crisis preparedness.

v. Negotiation Support

AI systems can support diplomats before high-level negotiations.

Possible Uses

- Simulating negotiation scenarios.
- Predicting possible reactions from other states.
- Suggesting alternative formulations.
- Identifying compromise areas.
- Assessing risks linked to policy choices.

This improves preparation and enables more informed negotiation strategy.

These uses show why AI is increasingly seen as a force multiplier for diplomatic institutions.

f. AI as a Force Multiplier in Diplomacy

Meaning of Force Multiplier

A force multiplier refers to something that increases the effectiveness of existing capabilities.

In diplomacy, AI can multiply the capacity of existing institutions by increasing speed, accuracy, recall, and analytical reach.

Reducing Capacity Gaps

Traditionally, major powers enjoyed advantages in diplomacy because they possessed:

- Larger bureaucracies.
- More analysts.
- Extensive archives.
- Greater research capacity.

AI can reduce some of this disparity.

Benefits for Smaller Diplomatic Systems

Smaller diplomatic teams can use AI to:

- Analyse large volumes of information.
- Prepare documents efficiently.
- Respond rapidly to global developments.
- Track multiple negotiations simultaneously.

Therefore, AI may strengthen not only great powers, but also middle powers and developing countries that adopt technological systems effectively.

However, AI's usefulness should not be mistaken for complete diplomatic replacement.

g. Why AI Cannot Replace Human Diplomats

i. Diplomacy as a Human Activity

Despite its analytical power, AI cannot fully replace human diplomacy because diplomacy is fundamentally rooted in human interaction.

Human Elements of Diplomacy

Diplomats must understand:

- Emotions.
- Trust.
- Cultural sensitivities.
- Informal signals.
- Body language.
- Political symbolism.

- Historical grievances.

International negotiations often depend on personal relationships, credibility, and psychological understanding.

ii. Importance of Trust and Empathy

Peace negotiations and high-stakes diplomatic settlements often succeed not merely because of legal wording, but because negotiators develop confidence in one another.

Limits of AI

AI can assist with information analysis, but it cannot independently:

- Build trust between adversaries.
- Interpret emotional silences.
- Repair historical grievances.
- Exercise political wisdom.
- Take moral responsibility for decisions.

Thus, diplomacy ultimately requires human judgement, empathy, and political wisdom.

This is why the rise of AI must be accompanied by awareness of its risks.

h. Risks of AI in Diplomacy

i. Incorrect Interpretation

AI systems may misunderstand historical context, cultural nuances, or political sensitivities.

Possible Consequences

- Diplomatic embarrassment.
- Misreading of another country's intentions.
- Escalation due to incorrect assessment.
- Poorly worded communications.

Diplomatic mistakes based on inaccurate analysis can produce serious international consequences.

ii. Overdependence on Technology

If policymakers rely excessively on AI-generated recommendations, human judgement may weaken.

Areas of Risk

This is especially dangerous in decisions related to:

- War and peace.
- Sanctions.
- Alliances.
- Crisis management.
- Military escalation.

AI must therefore remain advisory, not authoritative.

iii. Algorithmic Bias

AI systems learn from data. If the training data contains biases, outputs may also become biased.

Diplomatic Impact

Bias may affect:

- Country assessments.

- Risk analysis.
- Policy recommendations.
- Interpretation of political behaviour.

Such distortions can weaken the quality of diplomatic decision-making.

iv. Cyber Security Threats

Foreign ministries and national-security institutions possess highly sensitive information.

Risks

AI systems storing or processing such information may become targets for:

- Hacking.
- Espionage.
- Cyber attacks.
- Data theft.

Thus, cyber security becomes central to AI-enabled diplomacy.

v. Accountability Problems

If AI influences an incorrect diplomatic decision, responsibility may become difficult to determine.

Accountability Questions

Responsibility may be unclear among:

- Officials.
- Ministries.
- Software developers.
- AI system designers.
- External technology vendors.

This creates legal and ethical challenges for governance.

These risks become especially serious when AI enters national-security bureaucracies.

i. AI and National Security Bureaucracy

Institutional Tension

National-security institutions are traditionally:

- Hierarchical.
- Secretive.
- Cautious.
- Procedure-driven.
- Resistant to rapid change.

AI systems, by contrast, function in a:

- Fast.
- Adaptive.
- Data-driven.
- Constantly evolving manner.

This creates institutional tension between traditional bureaucratic structures and emerging technological systems.

Strategic Advantage of AI Integration

Countries that integrate AI effectively into national-security institutions may gain advantages in:

- Intelligence processing.
- Diplomatic forecasting.
- Crisis response.
- Strategic planning.
- Real-time decision support.

Conversely, states that remain technologically slow may face strategic disadvantages in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment.

This makes AI-assisted diplomacy particularly relevant for India.

j. Relevance for India

i. India's Complex External Environment

For India, AI-assisted diplomacy is important because the country faces a highly complex external environment.

Major Challenges

- Border disputes.
- Maritime competition.
- Cyber threats.
- Terrorism.
- Neighbourhood instability.
- Global trade negotiations.
- Great-power rivalry.

India must therefore modernise its diplomatic and national-security institutions while preserving strategic autonomy and democratic accountability.

ii. Potential Benefits for India

AI can help India improve:

- Foreign policy coordination.
- Crisis analysis.
- Multilingual communication.
- Cyber preparedness.
- Strategic forecasting.
- Institutional memory within ministries.

Therefore, AI can strengthen India's diplomatic capacity if it is adopted securely and responsibly.

k. What India Should Do

i. Build Indigenous AI Capacity

India should develop secure domestic AI systems for government and diplomatic use rather than depending excessively on foreign platforms.

Importance

Indigenous AI capacity is essential for:

- Strategic autonomy.

- Data security.
- Sovereign decision-making.
- Customisation for Indian diplomatic needs.

ii. Train Diplomats and Civil Servants

Diplomats and civil servants must be trained in:

- AI literacy.
- Cyber security.
- Digital diplomacy.
- Data analysis.
- Ethical technology use.

Future diplomacy will increasingly require technological competence alongside traditional diplomatic skills.

iii. Protect Sensitive Data

Diplomatic and national-security information must be protected through:

- Strong encryption.
- Secure servers.
- Cyber audits.
- Access controls.
- Data-security protocols.

Without data security, AI-enabled diplomacy may create new vulnerabilities.

iv. Maintain Human Oversight

AI should assist decision-making rather than replace human authority.

Principle

Final diplomatic and national-security decisions must remain under human control.

This is essential for accountability, prudence, and democratic governance.

v. Develop Ethical and Legal Frameworks

India should formulate clear principles regarding:

- Responsible AI use.
- Transparency.
- Accountability.
- Prevention of misuse.
- Protection of sensitive information.

Such frameworks can prevent technological modernisation from becoming uncontrolled automation.

These measures must be integrated into a broader long-term strategy for diplomatic modernisation.

1. Way Forward

i. Use AI as a Strategic Support Tool

AI should be treated as a strategic tool that enhances diplomatic efficiency without replacing human judgement.

Suitable Uses

India should use AI for:

- Research.
- Analysis.
- Forecasting.
- Information management.
- Translation and drafting support.

ii. Preserve Human Control in Sensitive Decisions

Human oversight must remain central in:

- Negotiations.
- Crisis management.
- War-related decisions.
- Alliance choices.
- Strategic communication.

This will ensure that diplomacy remains guided by judgement, accountability, and political wisdom.

iii. Invest in Sovereign and Secure Systems

India must invest in:

- Sovereign AI systems.
- Cyber resilience.
- Secure data infrastructure.
- Institutional capacity-building.
- Ethical governance frameworks.

Such an approach would modernise India's foreign policy apparatus while preserving strategic autonomy and constitutional accountability.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is transforming diplomacy by improving speed, analytical capacity, institutional memory, and crisis preparedness. It enables diplomats to manage information overload and make more informed policy decisions in an increasingly complex world.

However, diplomacy ultimately remains a human activity rooted in trust, empathy, persuasion, cultural understanding, and political judgement. AI can support diplomats, but it cannot replace the moral responsibility and strategic wisdom required in international affairs.

Therefore, the future of diplomacy is unlikely to involve machines replacing diplomats. Instead, it will involve AI-enabled diplomats using technology intelligently under human supervision, democratic control, and secure institutional safeguards.

Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

Dear Aspirant,

This document is part of the PrepAlpine Current Affairs Series — designed to bring clarity, structure, and precision to your daily UPSC learning.

While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

1. Orientation & Purpose

This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

- factual coverage
- data recall
- Prelims-style MCQs
- objective pattern analysis

This Prelims Edition will be released separately as a standalone publication.

2. Content Length

Some sections may feel shorter or longer depending on topic relevance and news density. To fit your personal preference, you may freely resize or summarize sections using any LLM tool (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) at your convenience.

3. Format Flexibility

The formatting combines:

- paragraphs
- lists
- tables
- visual cues

—all optimised for retention.

If you prefer a specific style (lists → paras, paras → tables, etc.), feel free to convert using any free LLM.

4. Monthly Current Affairs Release

The complete Monthly Current Affairs Module will be released soon, optimized to a compact 100–150 pages — comprehensive yet concise, exam-ready, and revision-efficient.

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