

Central European University and Bard College

**“BUSINESS DIPLOMACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: STRATEGIZING THE FUTURE
ROLE OF THE BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING IN
AN AI-DRIVEN WORLD”**

By

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INTRODUCTION

In an age where Artificial Intelligence (AI) appears to be remodeling the landscapes across many, if not all, sectors, the domain of international business and diplomacy inevitable stands at the crossroads of a transformative shift. On this note, this capstone project delves into the changing dynamics in business diplomacy in an age of AI by focusing particularly on the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU) and the evolved role the organization has played in the world of business diplomacy since its establishment. In that view, the paper aims to study the impact of AI on the practice of business diplomacy and explore the future trajectory and directions of organizations such as BCIU through depth analysis of the existing literature.

Applications of AI technologies further enhances the level of efficiency and brings improved innovative solutions that can change the ways international business and diplomatic practices are conducted traditionally. It, thereby, leads to a new era in the world of international business and diplomacy. AI capabilities, from more advanced data analysis to predictive modeling, possess the capability of improving the quality of decisions made, strategic planning, and stakeholder involvement in all diplomatic activities via breaking through the dimension of geographical and political barriers (Bano, Chaudhri, and Zowghi 2023; Tretyakov 2022; Feijóo et al. 2020; Sharma 2022). Nonetheless, with AI comes an unpaired set of challenges, including an increasing risk of a digital divide and disparities in governance and access, over-reliance and expertise attrition, transparency and accountability, bias in data quality and fairness, as well as potential consequences for the dynamics of the human workforce and various other areas (Duberry 2023; Roumate 2021; de silva, Dulshan Kanishk 2021). This paper aims to explore these dimensions and give emphasis to the significance AI holds in reshaping the landscape of international relations and business diplomacy across the globe.

The temporal context of this study is of particular importance at the present time. In a world grappling with technological advancements at a fast pace and even followed with abrupt geopolitical changes, learning effects that AI can offer to international business and diplomacy is of great significance. The world economy is already experiencing shocks due to digital transformation, and it presents some opportunities on one hand. Yet on the other hand, it introduces more disruptions brought about by AI. The advent of AI is seen by Julia M. Puaschunder as signaling a potential market disrupter that shifts globalization to ‘slowbalisation’, where “trade and conventional globalization indicators seem to slow; yet all big data and AI related industries appear to be growing exponentially” (Puaschunder 2019, 4). In the same way, the international diplomatic field is walking through new paths, crisscrossed with challenges at every corner, to make the best out of AI for better communication, negotiation, and decisions. This is the juncture at which this research comes in to contribute valuable insights to the discourse on the role of AI in international relations and guide strategic thinking by entities operating in this domain.

At the heart of this exploration is the organization set up during the Administration of Eisenhower in the year 1955, i.e., BCIU. Since then and known for its people-to-people initiative, BCIU has been at the forefront of promoting international understanding and cooperation through business diplomacy (Wayne 2006). BCIU has consistently filled the gap between the economic and diplomatic interests of many countries by facilitating dialogue among business leaders and political figures at the roundtable, hosting knowledge exchange events, and providing an enabling environment for international trade and investment. However, just as AI starts to redefine parameters in global engagement, so does its emergence begin to beg some questions about how traditional institutions, like the BCIU, come to navigate this new terrain.

Figure 1*One of the first roundtable discussions in 1960s (BCIU Archive)*

This project intends to assess the business diplomacy operational mechanisms in the AI era, outline the role of BCIU in the future, and adaptive strategies due to the rapidly changing environment. Therefore, this paper brings to the fore the historical significance of BCIU and its potential use of AI in carrying out its mission of fostering international understanding through business engagements. From an investigative and analytical approach, informed by a review of about 40 scholarly articles and reports, the piece outlines nuanced understanding of AI's impact on business diplomacy and offers a roadmap for entities like BCIU to navigate the complexities of the digital age.

1. THE EVOLUTION OF BUSINESS DIPLOMACY IN THE AGE OF AI

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) developments in the 21st century point to a transformative phase in the trajectory of business diplomacy and is aptly called 'new-new' diplomacy. The term 'new-new' diplomacy is used by Robyn Ehryn Williams in his article published in 2022 in *Diplomatic Studies Journal* related to the evolution of diplomacy as it designates a very different phase from its predecessors. The concept of 'new-new' diplomacy is defined by a broader pool of actors and the pivotal role of such emergent technologies as AI, big data, and the Internet of Things, referred as IoT, in diplomatic practices (Williams 2022, 27). Therefore, the term 'new-new' diplomacy covers not only traditional diplomatic actions but also integrates these technological advances. This expanded structure changes the conducts of international relations and reflects an increasingly complex global landscape, where technology and diplomacy intersect more than ever before.

In the annals of history, diplomacy underwent a shift from the 'old' diplomacy, characterized by private and secretive bilateral agreements and exchanges between nations, to the 'new' diplomacy marked by more transparent and multilateral engagements, brought about by occasions like the Congress of Vienna and the founding of the League of Nations (Sofer 1988). This transition has, in fact, seen the opening of diplomatic processes to multilateralism and non-state actors. In the wake of this transition, the notion of 'new-new' diplomacy was developed that envisions further change, brought about by the 4IR technologies, to expand the canvas of diplomatic engagement much beyond the conventional areas with newly advanced technologies (Williams 2022). The evolution from 'old' diplomacy to 'new' and now to 'new-new' diplomacy demonstrates a continuity in which technological progress and international cooperation stimulate

the expansion and adaptation of diplomatic practice. These changes highlight the growing influence of various stakeholders and technologies on shaping global dialogue.

Figure 2

	Old diplomacy	New diplomacy	New 'new' diplomacy
Date	700BC-1914	1919-2020	2020-
Nature	Closed	Open	More open
Communication	Physical missions	Physical missions, telephonic calls, email.	Physical missions, telephonic calls and social media.
Interdependence	Low levels of interaction, alliances. The state is the primary actor	Multilateralism– states, non-state actors such as international organisations and non-governmental organisations.	Multilateralism– states, non-state actors. Public citizens, businesses, interest groups.
Legislation	Treaty of Westphalia of 1648. Congress of Vienna of 1814.	Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations of 1963.	Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations of 1963– falls short in some areas.
Actors	Professional diplomats	Diplomats, international organisations	Diplomats, IOs, media, public, businesses, interest groups
Functions	To represent the state and achieve the foreign policy goals of the state.	To represent the state and achieve the foreign policy goals of the state.	To represent the state and achieve the foreign policy goals of the state.

The central features of old, new, and new-new diplomacy (Williams 2022, 35)

A whole new age of digital automation, improved data analysis, and virtual interactions has been started by the introduction of AI into international commerce. The use of AI reaches out to predictive modeling and data analytics, which gives organizations an edge in their particular area with never-before insight into how things are like market trends, consumer behavior, and policy impact (Stanzel and Voelsen 2022; Tretyakov 2022; Benchea 2023; Radanliev 2024). This leap in technology has allowed for the automation of routine tasks, optimization in decision processes, and much more dynamism and interactivity in the forms of virtual diplomatic engagements (Duberry 2023; Kshetri and Dwivedi 2024). In the e-diplomacy and cyber-diplomacy stage, 'new-new' diplomacy could fit in perfectly with the present ever-increasing AI integration into the diplomatic practices (Williams 2022, 31). This finds place among the digital tools that social media platforms, virtual posts through Virtual Presence Posts (VPPs), and big data analytics integrate to serve diplomatic objectives, including a more inclusive, transparent, and responsive diplomatic discourse. Accordingly, through artificial intelligence, better understanding of public

opinions around the world, enhancement of crisis management capability, and proactive policy-making can be allowed by providing real-time data analysis and sentiment analysis.

4IR has also brought about fundamental changes in diplomatic communication through its democratization by making it more accessible, faster, and borderless (Ndung'u and Signé 2020). The digital diplomacy initiatives represent a trend towards more open and communicative diplomacy, including those where states make use of Twitter and Facebook to outline their foreign policy and communicate with their international audience (“The Digital Diplomacy Revolution: How Technology is Transforming International Relations 2023”). The growing adoption of VPPs and smart, big data, and AI-enabled uses for information collection and analysis underline a changed landscape of diplomatic communication characterized by more transparency, efficiency, and inclusivity (Williams 2022).

All in all, the ‘new-new’ diplomacy voiced by Williams is a shift in paradigm conduct on international relations and business diplomacy in this century within the emergent trend where governments redefine the dynamism of their diplomatic service. This stage is characterized by the integration of AI with various other 4IR technologies, along with expanding the purview of diplomatic engagement and altering traditional practices. As business diplomacy navigates this era of technological innovation, it stands on the cusp of a new dawn, where great and largely unrealized potential exists for AI to augment diplomatic endeavors.

2. THE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING (BCIU)

The formation of BCIU in 1955 marked a significant milestone in U.S. diplomatic history. It reflected a strategic adaptation of the U.S. in the face of intense geopolitical pressures from Soviet Union following the end of Second World War (Powleske, 1). Emerged from a critical juncture, the U.S. sought to sharpen its international reputation by seeking to increase its influence at a time of increased Communist propaganda in Europe and beyond (Ibid., 2). President Dwight D. Eisenhower set the cornerstone of the White House meeting held on November 10, 1955, referred to as the “Industrial Cooperation Council Conference,” which marked a direct response to these challenges (“The Business Council for International Understanding - Report on the Plenary Meeting” 1956). The large influence that the Soviet Union had in Eastern Europe and even across had to be confronted with an effective policy by the United States in the post-Second World War years. President Eisenhower, considering the limitations of traditional diplomatic and military measures alone in the battle for hearts and minds, envisioned a more integrated approach involving the American private sector (Powleske, 1.). This vision was part-inspired by the probable recognition of American industry with vast resources that could project American values in entrepreneurship and democracy internationally.

Hosted while Eisenhower was convalescing from a heart condition, with Vice-President Richard M. Nixon standing in for the President, the conference called together from American industry top-level executives and key government officials.

Figure 3

Attendees: White House Conference on November 10, 1955 with the newly formed		
Industrial Cooperation Council *		
(* tentative name)		
Business Participants:		
Anderson, Carl	Merck-Sharp-Dohme International	Vice President
Aurell, A. K.	Singer Sewing Machine Co.	Vice President in Charge of Oriental Operations
Batt, William	SKF Industries, Inc.	Former Chairman of Board
Brunet, Meade	Radio Corporation of America	Vice President
Fuller, D.B.	Fuller Fabrics, Inc.	President
Granger, Fitzhugh	International Harvester	Manager, Overseas Operations
Hancock, A.C.	Remington Rand, Inc.	Vice President in Charge of Overseas Public Relations
Kruming, Paul	National Export Advertising Service	President
Larrabee, Carroll	American Chemical Society	Director of Publications
Logan, Harlan	Corning Glass Works	Director of Public Relations
Meek, Samuel W.	J. Walter Thompson Co.	Vice President, Director of Foreign Advertising
Moore, Charles F., Jr.	Ford Motor Company	Vice President
Pryor, Samuel W., Jr.	Pan American World Airways, Inc.	Vice President
Reed, Ralph T.	American Express Co.	President
Reppner, Theodore	The Advertising Council	President
Reynolds, Conger	Standard Oil Co. (Indiana)	Director, Public Relations Department
Ryus, David D.	Time-Life International	General Manager
Schimmel, Ernst L.	Bell & Howell Company	Vice President
Whitman, Edmund S.	United Fruit Co.	Director of Advertising and Public Relations
Willis, Charles F., Jr.	W.R. Grace & Co.	Assistant to Chairman

Government Officials:	
(Attendees - 11/10/1955 White House Conference - continued)	
Richard M. Nixon	Vice President
Nelson A. Rockefeller	Special Assistant to the President
Theodore C. Streibert	Director, U.S. Information Agency
Harold McClellan	Assistant Secretary of Commerce for International Affairs
Abbott Washburn	Deputy Director, U.S. Information Agency
James M. Lambie, Jr.	Special Assistant in the White House Office
Herbert A. Dingwall	Chief, Office of Private Cooperation, U.S. Information Agency
John M. Begg	Deputy Chief, Office of Private Cooperation, U.S. Information Agency
William H. Weathersby	Public Affairs Officer for the U.S. Information Service in Cairo

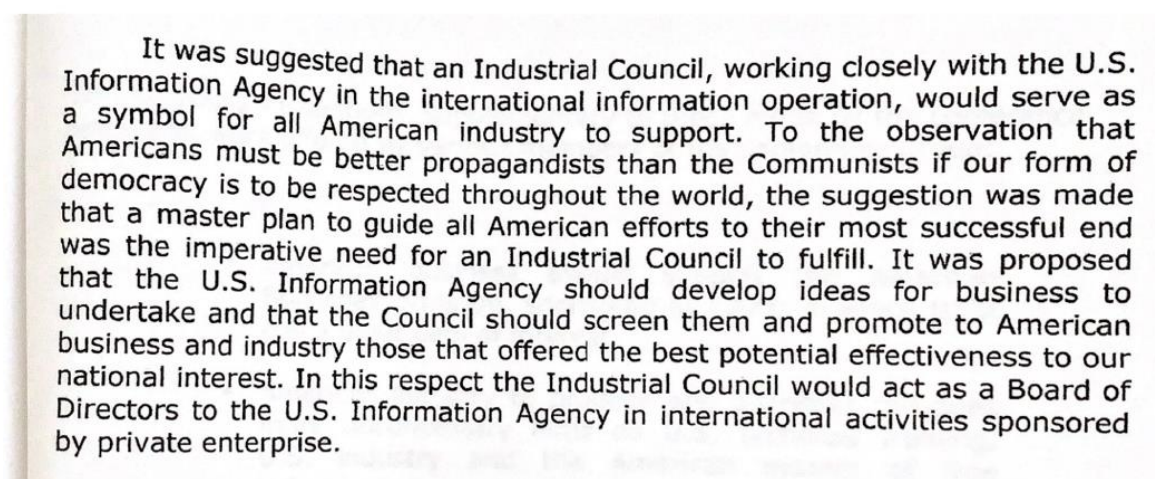
List of participants at the "Industrial Cooperation Council Conference" (Powleske, 9-10)

The choice of Theodore C. Streibert, the Director of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), to chair the session was strategic; it emphasized the role of information dissemination as a tool of soft power (Ibid.). The discussions that, therefore, followed at the conference were quite deep and went on to touch on many future-focused issues. They were supposed to assess not only the actual operations of USIA but to try to mine through to the potential for deeper business-government collaboration (Ibid., 7). The dialogue underscored the critical role that American businesses could play in bolstering the U.S.'s international image. This role was envisaged not only in economic terms but in the form of cultural and educational exchanges that could humanize the American presence abroad and serve as a counterbalance to Communist narratives.

The business leaders, through the conference, were briefed on the importance of their engagement in the international markets for purposes not only to grow their businesses but also for the purposes of national security. Discussion placed great weight on the importance of effective

use of American corporate reach to support effective American information campaigns (Ibid.). This means that business would play an important role in offering a chance to form perceptions of international U.S. activities through their overseas operations and community involvement. The consensus from the conference was clear: a structured organization was necessary to systematically harness and guide the American private sector's contributions towards global information and cultural efforts (Ibid.). This resulted in the proposition and later formation of the Industrial Cooperation Council, which later changed into BCIU.

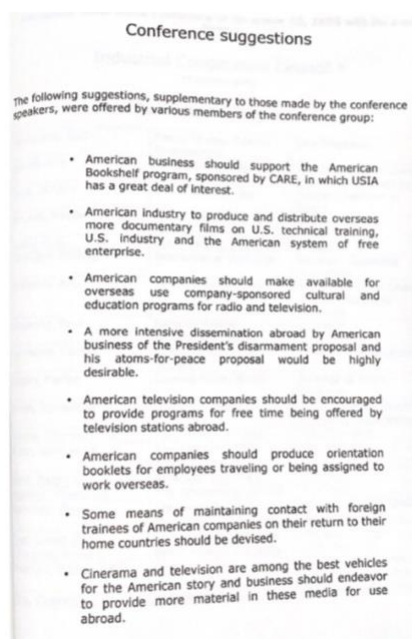
Figure 4



The core functions of the Industrial Council, later known as BCIU (Powleske, 7)

The council was seen as a potential bridge between the strengths of American industry and the strategic information goals of the United States Government. Accordingly, the establishment of BCIU was such a strategic move designed to institutionalize the involvement of the U.S. private sector in overseas cultural and information programs. It aimed at coordination of the efforts of U.S. businesses in a manner reconcilable with national interests. This was at a time when the global ideological struggle with communism was at its peak.

Figure 5



Conference suggestions listed (Powleske, 8.)

The establishment and foundational activities of BCIU were inherently designed to enhance the global perception of the United States through a sophisticated blend of cultural diplomacy and strategic media outreach. Early initiatives included the American Bookshelf program and the production of a series of orientation booklets for employees stationed abroad (Powleske, 7). These resources enabled an appreciation of the depth of American values and operational practices by allowing cultural assimilation of U.S. companies with locals, thus improving the image of America abroad. This formed a key focus of BCIU's early efforts: strengthening American cultural diplomacy through media. Supporting U.S. television companies' interest in broadcasting American content around the world, BCIU contributed to extending the influence of American cultural products and to consolidating the U.S. narrative in global media (Ibid.). In addition, BCIU contributed to the production and release of documentary films focused on U.S. industrial competence and virtues of the American free enterprise system, further cementing the influence of the U.S. in the international markets.

Some groups, like the bi-national groups under the guidance of BCIU, epitomized the great level of involvement by the organization in the nurturing of deep cross-cultural and commercial relationships (Ibid.). According to the BCIU guidance or supported by them, the participation of American firms should have taken part in educational and cultural exchanges. The educational and cultural exchange programs were to support English teaching programs and taking part in cultural institutions abroad. These efforts, in turn, played a great role in building community relations and mutual understanding.

Founded in 1959 at The American University in Washington, D.C., BCIU training programs were a landmark approach to orienting U.S. business executives for international roles. They offered detailed knowledge about the customs, values, history, and business environments of many countries (“Building Business and Cultural Effectiveness Overseas - 25th Anniversary Year” 1980). By equipping executives with essential cultural and operational knowledge, BCIU aimed to reduce the high failure rates of overseas corporate assignments, which were often attributed to cultural misunderstandings. Thus, BCIU came up with the idea of giving executives the required cultural and operational learning.

Figure 6

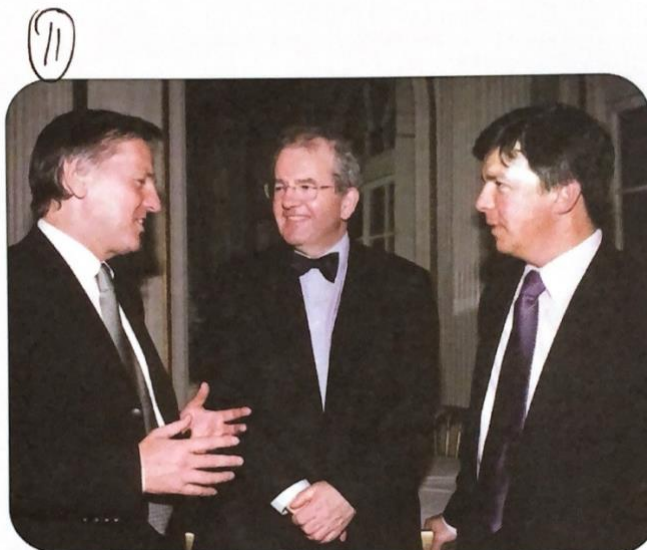


In a typical training session at The BCIU Institute (“Building Business and Cultural Effectiveness Overseas - 25th Anniversary Year” 1980)

On top of that, BCIU has also played a role in the organization of workshops, which see the participation of prominent business leaders and government officials. All these forums are crafted with the intent to foster dialogue on international economic policies and seriously address the issues of global economic challenges such as trade barriers and market access (Ibid.). These workshops were critical to BCIU's role in international economic diplomacy and helped develop policies that would improve international trade and investment.

As of 2001, BCIU actively facilitated interactions between its member companies and key global financial institutions through sponsorship of events at annual meetings of major development banks. These included the Inter-American Development Bank in Santiago in March, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in London in April, and the Asian Development Bank in Honolulu, as well as the African Development Bank in Valencia, both in May ("Business Council for International Understanding - 2001 Annual Report" 2001). BCIU's role extended beyond mere facilitation; it actively organized conferences to enhance regional economic understanding and provide strategic business insights to policymakers. Additionally, BCIU continued its innovative approach to diplomatic engagement through its TELECONFERENCE program, which reached its fifth year in 2001 (Ibid.). This program allowed direct communication between business leaders from over 75 companies and U.S. Ambassadors and Commercial Officers across various regions, including Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, the Caspian Region, and Central Asia.

Figure 7



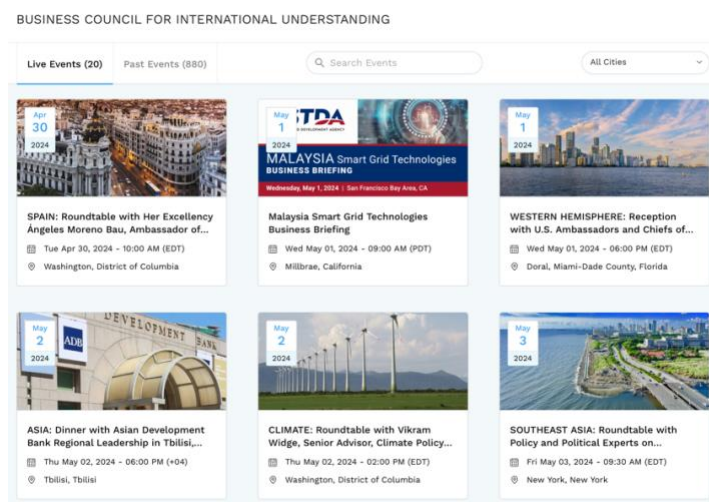
Pfizer's Friederich Breitenstein (left) and Robert Leechman (right), of The Coca Cola Company, speak with Graham Avery, Chief Advisor for Enlargement at the European Commission, at BCIU's conference in London in May for executives of companies expecting to be affected by the expansion of the European Union ("Business Council for International Understanding - 2001 Annual Report" 2001)

Alongside this, BCIU's COMMERCIAL TRAINING program, established eight years prior, offered comprehensive courses in commercial diplomacy to U.S. Foreign Service and Commercial Service personnel. The training, delivered by senior executives from member companies, was designed to prepare embassy officials for effective service abroad, emphasizing critical areas such as intellectual property rights, market access, and export licensing ("Business Council for International Understanding - 2001 Annual Report" 2001). This training was supported by an e-Learning Center to provide ongoing resources for embassy officers, ensuring they are well-equipped to promote U.S. business interests globally.

Currently, within modern contexts, BCIU facilitates high-level dialogues that bring together key stakeholders from the US business community, American officials stationed abroad, and foreign government leaders, including heads of multinational entities. Today, these interactions are meticulously orchestrated through the BCIU conferences, meetings, roundtable discussions, Reserve Trade Missions programs in cooperation with the United States Trade and

Development Agency (USTDA) and others that have become important practices in the preservation of tradition and economic diplomacy.

Figure 8



List of current events from BCIU (accessed on April 28th, 2024)

This reflects the continued commitment of the United States to further strengthen its diplomatic capacity to ensure effective promotion of the United States' interests abroad.

BCIU has, from the beginning, adopted a people-to-people approach: from cultural exchanges to media initiatives and high-level discussions, with the aim for better international understanding and presenting a positive image of the United States in the world. That foundational approach still forms the base of BCIU diplomatic activities and has been evolving over time into more structured economic and diplomatic engagements.

3. AI POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR BCIU

3.1 Opportunities:

BCIU stands at the forefront of AI adoption to step-change its diplomatic and business engagements. This integration offers quite a number of opportunities, ranging from renovation of traditional processes to setting new paradigms in the dynamics of international relations and practices of global businesses.

Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) together possess the opportunities for cultural and business products to reach people on an international scale (Kshetri and Dwivedi 2024; Hall and Takahashi 2017). Such technologies are key to blowing up traditional silos like geography and language, which enables BCIU to create immersive and interactive experiences in telling the stories of culture and commerce to the world. An example of this can be found in the tourism sector: VR and AR certainly reduce the role of intermediates since they provide potential tourists with comprehensive, direct insight into destinations and, by doing so, allow them to make independent decisions (Beck, Rainoldi, and Egger 2019).

AI technologies are becoming extremely helpful in streamlining routine operations within diplomatic contexts. For instance, nowadays, technologies supporting visa applications, consular services, and enhanced cybersecurity measures are fully automated (Duberry 2023). Such processes are not only easier to use but also faster and more accurate in execution. These operational efficiencies are important since they free up organizations like BCIU and diplomats to spend more of their time on strategic tasks and complex negotiations. Most relevantly, within the domain of data analytics, the capabilities of AI are truly transformational (Ibid.). Applying AI, through a mix of descriptive, diagnostic, predictive, and prescriptive analytics, BCIU's arm their member companies with deep insights into global trends, public sentiments, and potential future disruptions. This depth of analysis supports more realistic policy-makers and strategic planners

within the organization for the bettering of the organization's capacity for a proactive reaction to international developments.

The influence of AI continues right down to the landscape of the media. AI media monitoring tools and sentiment analysis allow relevant organizations and diplomats to gauge rightly the global perception of their national policies and initiatives (Walker 2023; "The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Public Diplomacy: ACPD Official Meeting Minutes, June 14, 2023" 2023). This is very important, especially to counter misinformation and manage the country's international brand. In addition, in today's digital world, people are more interconnected than ever before, and information presents itself with extremely high volume and speed. This can, more than ever, create a real sense of overload, especially when measuring up international perceptions and stories. The tools of AI content analysis are invaluable in this regard since they are able to process enormous data coming from numerous media sources such as newspapers, blogs, social media sites, and broadcast media very quickly and efficiently (Stanzel and Voelsen 2022). They incorporate highly complex algorithms that, among many other things, include sentiment analysis, keyword detection, and thematic categorization, which is the way institutions like BCIU can build an in-depth understanding of global perspectives.

What is more, AI powers the efficiency of such diplomatic operations even further, with one case being the ChatGPT tool to help with the automation of repetitive public diplomacy tasks (Walker 2023). The automation empowers diplomats to engage more substantively with international counterparts and local populations; this fosters deeper diplomatic ties and enhanced cultural exchange. AI also makes possible the building of virtual embassies and use of bots for routine citizen communications, which changes the mode in which the diplomatic missions work and communicate with the public (Bano, Chaudhri, and Zowghi 2023). Equally, communications

security and data management in cyber diplomacy could make use of blockchain technology for use in their information security (Bano, Chaudhri, and Zowghi 2023).

Moving on, one of the most promising scopes of AI in the field of crisis management is the utilization of AI to monitor, analyze, and respond to emergencies by means of advanced data analysis and predictive modeling. Anticipating and lowering risks is something AI tools can contribute to by using the technology from geopolitical conflicts to pandemics can make management better (Bano, Chaudhri, and Zowghi 2023). The AI-related digital transformation also revolutionizes the process of negotiations. In connection with Big Data and digital tools, every physical border is removed, which makes the whole process easier and faster (Benchea 2023). This is highly relevant in the diplomacy of multilateral business, where the complexity of negotiations has a lot of advantages to enhance data access and real-time communication. The same goes for BCIU. Moreover, the participation of AI in scenario construction and forecasting of state actions ushers in a new era for diplomatic strategy and international policy by providing probability-ranked outcomes for decision-making (Stanzel and Voelsen 2022; Duberry 2023). In this way, AI enhances strategic planning and decision support within BCIU by simulating a range of possible outcomes and giving insights into the likely behaviors of states.

In short, the operational integration of AI by the BCIU holds transforming potentials across all dimensions of its diplomacy and international business. From enhancing operational efficiencies to transforming how diplomatic engagement and crisis management happen, AI supports the status quo but also creates new potential for innovations and leadership. As BCIU continues to navigate these advancements, strategic deployment of AI remains pertinent to ensure that it can maximize its impact and be at the cutting edge of global diplomacy and international business development.

3.2 Challenges:

BCIU, given its pioneering role in dialogue between the business world and government on various issues of international economic policy, besides the potential opportunities highlighted above, cannot escape the possible challenges in integrating AI into diplomatic and business operations. This could create an impact not only fraught with technical and operational barriers but profound, philosophical, and ethical quandaries that might change the face of how diplomatic relations and international business practices look today.

Among the most serious challenges, scholars point out such risks as, the ‘virtuality trap’, when dependence on electronic means of communications at the expense of the actual physical presence of an organization on the ground may put organizations at risk (Sinkovics, Sinkovics, and “Bryan” Jean 2013; Yamin and Sinkovics 2006; Kshetri and Dwivedi 2024). Such a shift would possibly make BCIU’s programs less effective since this organization’s work has been based on the bedrock of personal diplomacy and people-to-people initiative. Knowledge of the subtleties and trust developed in personal contacts could be diluted, and quality can be lost to the international relations and cooperation (Shonk 2021). The growing reliance on virtual platforms, therefore, has the potential to reduce the effectiveness of organizations such as BCIU, which succeed through direct human interaction. As digital technologies become more widespread, it is extremely important for such organizations to find a balance that will preserve the wealth of personal diplomacy and at the same time increase the effectiveness of virtual tools.

As this AI technology develops, the world today is looking at a broad and all-encompassing need for governance frameworks. However, the current global powers, in one form or another, have or are setting out on divergent approaches to AI governance, such as the EU or China (Feijóo et al. 2020). All these different perspectives can deepen into the present-day geopolitical rifts and can place organizations such as BCIU in a rather sensitive balancing act. It makes it challenging

for the organization to try to navigate through such very complex global geopolitical dynamics. Balancing these diversified regulatory environments and at the same time adopting AI effectively in that challenging environment remains a big challenge for BCIU.

In addition, the potential over-reliance on AI could lead to the erosion of diplomatic expertise, where the human skills of negotiation, intuition, and creativity are undervalued (Duberry 2023; Charline Alexandre and Lucie Blanckaert 2020). For an organization such as BCIU, whose operation depends on the nuanced practices of diplomacy in traditional settings, such a shift may appear as if it is undermining the very foundations of effective diplomacy and international business negotiations.

Another primary criticism laid against AI systems is their lack of transparency, known as the ‘black box’ phenomenon, where the decision-making processes are not visible or understandable to users or stakeholders (“AI’s Black Box Problem: Challenges and Solutions for a Transparent Future” 2023). This opacity could lead to huge accountability issues, especially when decisions taken have to be defended or justified in international forums (Duberry 2023). For BCIU, keeping transparency and accountability of its operations is key to maintaining trust among its members and partners. It would, however, demand large sets of data to train AI systems in using sensitive and potentially very revealing diplomatic communications. Further, the danger is inborn in AI algorithms, in that they reflect not only the values and norms of the developers but also info put in the databases, which might bring in foreign values by mistake and may, therefore, skew negotiations in a wrong direction, which bears the potential to lead to international disputes (ibid.).

Moreover, the rapid development and deployment of AI are likely to increase the global digital divide, especially between the Global North and Global South (Okolo 2023; Duberry 2023). Such technological imbalance tends to shift the power play balance and impacts global diplomacy

in some other disadvantageous ways to the developing world (Bano, Chaudhri, and Zowghi 2023). BCIU should take all these needs into consideration when developing practices that will be both inclusive with and among the developed and developing countries. It has, to an equal measure, raised deep ethical questions as to narrative manipulation and the security of sensitive information (“The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Public Diplomacy: ACPD Official Meeting Minutes, June 14, 2023” 2023). The integration of AI should thus be carefully done to ensure that BCIU avoids any ethical infractions that may be compromised to its credibility and effectiveness.

To sup up, BCIU’s joining AI with diplomatic and business practices gives a chance to seriously look at this landscape filled with both opportunities and significant challenges, framing that the challenges must deliver a balanced approach that respects the nuance human diplomacy holds and the advantage to be derived from AI. Very important is to ensure ethical deployment free of bias and keeping data secure. Promoting international collaboration is of great necessity in the successful integration of AI at BCIU.

4. AI'S IMPACT ON BCIU'S PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE INITIATIVE

AI technologies in the domain of diplomacy, especially when they intrude into institutions like BCIU, unavoidably brings change to the people-to-people initiative. Through shaping business, cultural, and educational diplomacy in accordance with these technologies, AI can automate routine activities, improve data analysis, and offer methods for deeper and more effective participation in international relations.

AI-based tools further reinforce a crucial role in the efficiency of diplomatic processes by giving diplomats and relevant actors the ability to process and analyze large quantities of data in the fastest possible ways (Charline Alexandre and Lucie Blanckaert 2020). This is the key since it brings out patterns and insights that can be obscured to human analysts or take a much longer time to perceive. Therefore, AI tools enable tailored engagements to an international audience. This is where AI comes into business diplomacy through helping to analyze market trends and consumer behaviors in such a way that it assists multinational corporations to understand the economic climates and business environments of new potential markets. Through such analytical capabilities, the analysis supports better-informed decision-making on areas for investment, even on where to expand (Charline Alexandre and Lucie Blanckaert 2020). Thus, it enhances the people-to-people initiatives through easy facilitation of deep and more meaningful communications between individuals from diverse business or cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, AI-enabled digital platforms allow for virtual trade missions and digital networking events. This approach reduces the costs and logistical challenges associated with international business interactions (Benchea 2023). It complements traditional programs like RTM conducted by BCIU in cooperation with the USTDA. Historically, these missions have enabled direct, in-person business interactions by bringing delegations across the globe and fostering substantial economic partnerships. The integration of AI into such frameworks enhances the efficiency and scope of

these programs, and enable continuous engagement across borders, even when physical meetings are not feasible.

In the realm of cultural diplomacy, AI is increasingly used to enhance the accessibility and customization of cultural content. Institutions are already utilizing AI to offer personalized virtual tours that cater to the specific interests of global audiences, which makes cultural education more accessible (Bano, Chaudhri, and Zowghi 2023). Additionally, educational diplomacy benefits from AI, particularly through virtual learning platforms that offer personalized educational programs. These platforms adapt to the varying proficiency levels and learning speeds of international students by identifying knowledge gaps and providing targeted educational interventions (OECD 2021). This adaptability not only makes education more accessible but also more effective and contributes significantly to the global exchange of knowledge and learning opportunities.

However, the great peril in the growing reliance on AI is that of depersonalizing the diplomatic processes for which an essential human touch is requisite (Sigfrids et al. 2023). Therefore, maintaining a human-centric approach in diplomacy is very necessary. This approach is based on ethical considerations, and thus, there must be full transparency in the AI decision-making process to prevent biases and ensure that AI operations do not inadvertently damage diplomatic relations (Puaschunder 2019). AI systems should be developed to augment rather than replace the diplomatic capacity of humans, who will still need to engage in strategy and decision-making processes that demand emotional and ethical judgments, along with cultural sensitivities.

Moreover, effective diplomacy is grounded in empathetic and culturally nuanced interactions, which cannot be fully replicated by AI. Diplomats possess a unique ability to read subtle social cues and adapt their behavior in culturally appropriate ways during negotiations (Nadeem Khan 2023). This is a skill that is beyond AI's capabilities. Consequently, training

programs for diplomats should continue to focus on the development of these interpersonal skills alongside proficiency in utilizing AI tools.

Collaborative systems where AI supports human decision-making can offer a balanced solution. It enables diplomats to operationalize AI for their data-intensive tasks and at the same time let them concentrate on the aspects of diplomacy for which in-depth insight into human emotion and cultural subtleties is required (“Is ChatGPT Better at Business Consulting than an Experienced Human Analyst?” 2023). For instance, while AI could very well process economic data and even predict market trends, it should be that human diplomats carry out sensitive negotiations, since these involve human understanding and empathy.

All in all, AI presents significant opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of BCIU’s people-to-people initiatives by making diplomatic processes more efficient and by enabling broader and deeper international engagement. However, it is imperative that these technologies are integrated into diplomatic practices in a way that respects and enhances human values and capabilities by ensuring that diplomacy retains its fundamentally human character. This balanced integration of AI into diplomacy will ensure that international relations continue to benefit from the nuanced and empathetic approaches that only humans can provide, thus maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of diplomatic interactions in an increasingly digital world.

5. ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: BCIU'S ROLE

As the rapid expansion of AI has brought revolutionary changes across many domains, including international business diplomacy, BCIU faces a challenge stemming from the digital divide between developed and developing nations. This gap in access to and effective utilization of digital technologies poses serious implications for BCIU's operations and the broader scope of international diplomacy. The differential integration and adoption of AI technologies exacerbate this divide and deepen existing inequalities, which introduces new challenges within the realms of global commerce and diplomacy (Feijóo et al. 2020; Xia 2024).

Developed countries with their developed digital infrastructures, high technology adoption rates, and substantial investments in AI research and development leverage these advancements to enhance productivity, foster innovation, and stimulate economic growth. This technological prowess enables them to optimize efficiencies across a number of sectors, such as healthcare, education, and security, thus accelerating their development trajectories and enhancing their competitive edge on the global stage (Bughin et al. 2018). Conversely, many developing countries are hampered by inadequate digital infrastructure and limited access to cutting-edge technologies, which place them at a stark disadvantage (*United Nations* 2023). This technological gap not only limits their economic opportunities but also restricts their ability to engage effectively in the global diplomatic arena.

The internet provides a striking example of how technological advancements have historically widened the gap between developed and developing countries. Initially, access to and utilization of the internet were predominantly concentrated in developed countries, which already possessed the necessary infrastructure, such as widespread telecommunications networks and high levels of computer literacy. This facilitated rapid adoption and integration of internet technologies into various sectors that allowed these countries to leverage the internet for significant gains in

productivity, innovation, and economic growth, as detailed by Bughin et al. (2018). In stark contrast, many developing countries struggled with limited telecommunications infrastructure and lower levels of digital literacy, which delayed their internet adoption and integration. According to the United Nations (2023), these structural disadvantages hindered their economic development and reduced their ability to participate effectively on the global stage. The initial digital divide created by the internet has had long-term implications for everything from education and healthcare to business and government efficiency in these countries. This historical context underscores the importance of addressing similar disparities as new technologies, such as AI, begin to permeate global economies and diplomatic practices.

The digital divide, apparently, represents a complex set of challenges to BCIU that aims to promote international understanding through business diplomacy. BCIU's efforts, which typically focus on facilitating dialogue, developing trade agreements, and encouraging technological exchanges, become considerably more challenging when stakeholders are from less digitally advanced nations. This disparity can adversely affect the effectiveness of such diplomatic efforts and potentially isolate these countries from international discussions and projects. Also, this scenario presents further complication of BCIU's systemized diplomatic practices.

Addressing the digital divide requires BCIU to adopt a multifaceted approach that incorporates capacity building, strategic partnerships, and advocacy for equitable AI development and access. First, capacity building is crucial. BCIU can lead and support programs designed to enhance the digital capabilities of developing nations. This might include training for local businesses and government officials in the application of AI and digital technologies with the focus on how these tools can drive economic development and improve governance. Furthermore, BCIU can facilitate access to digital resources and support infrastructure development projects by

connecting developing countries with potential investors and technology providers within its extensive network. Strategic partnerships also play a crucial role. By collaborating with technology firms, academic institutions, and international organizations, BCIU can enhance its capacity to bridge the technological gap. Partnerships with technology companies can provide developing countries with access to advanced AI technologies and expertise. Collaboration with academic institutions can encourage research and development that is specifically tailored to the needs of these countries, while cooperation with international organizations can help mobilize global resources and offer a platform for policy advocacy. Lastly, BCIU must advocate for policies that promote fair and equitable access to AI technologies. This involves supporting international agreements aimed at inclusive AI development and advocating for the removal of barriers to technology transfer. Through its advocacy efforts, BCIU can promote a global governance framework for AI and ensure that the benefits of technological advancements are distributed more broadly and equitably.

In short, BCIU can play a critical role in addressing the digital divide through focused capacity building, strategic partnerships, and robust advocacy. This approach ensures that the transformative potential of AI technologies benefits not only economically advanced but also those countries that are lagging behind. By mitigating the risks associated with the digital divide, BCIU supports its mission of fostering international understanding through effective business diplomacy. Thus, BCIU's strategic initiatives can significantly contribute to creating a more inclusive global economy, where both developed and developing nations can harness the benefits of AI and thrive together in the new digital era.

6. THE FUTURE ROLE OF BCIU IN THE AGE OF AI AND STRATEGIES

The changes driven by AI dictate a strategic re-evaluation of BCIU's operations to better utilize AI for enhanced diplomacy and business interactions. This section outlines the vision and strategic recommendations for BCIU to employ AI effectively. In particular, it focuses on how these technological advancements impact its people-to-people initiative and member support services.

BCIU's vision to adapt to the changing environment involves integrating AI technologies to enhance the effectiveness and reach of its business and diplomatic endeavors. AI can streamline information flows, enhance decision-making processes, and offer predictive insights that can significantly improve the outcomes of international negotiations and engagements. By leveraging such tools, BCIU not only enhances its operational capabilities but also ensures that it remains at the forefront of diplomatic evolution.

In its people-to-people initiatives, BCIU can harness AI to facilitate more dynamic business, cultural, and educational exchanges. AI-driven platforms can effectively identify and match entities across borders with shared interests and complementary capabilities that fosters new partnerships and collaborations. These platforms can also personalize and enhance the experience of participants in BCIU programs by tailoring content and learning experiences to individual needs and cultural contexts. All of this maximizes engagement and effectiveness.

With regards to membership services, incorporating AI into BCIU's operations could enhance its support services by leveraging AI's capabilities in data analysis, pattern recognition, and predictive analytics. AI's implementation within BCIU's Global Network could transform how connections are established. This allows more strategic matchmaking to align member needs with potential partners and opportunities, thereby fostering proactive rather than reactive engagements. This would be particularly beneficial in identifying and leveraging emerging trends

for the advantage of its members. Also, AI could improve the customization and management of BCIU's numerous events by tailoring discussions to current global trends and member interests, and streamlining event logistics from planning to execution. Additionally, integrating AI into annual planning processes could provide predictive insights from past data by ensuring that future BCIU initiatives are relevant and strategically aligned with global dynamics. This would not only enhance membership value but also strengthen BCIU's leadership in international understanding by optimizing visibility and engagement through smart data-driven strategies in branding and social media presence. Such advancements would transform BCIU's operational efficiency with strategic capability, and make it a more adaptive and foresighted organization in the realm of international business diplomacy.

What is more important, BCIU can enhance its role by applying the concept of integrating digital and physical worlds. According to Tretyakov (2022), 4IR is characterized by the fusion of cyber-physical systems where data from the physical world is collected, analyzed, and applied through AI and deep analytics to generate optimal actions and recommendations. This integration can enhance BCIU's operations by facilitating the adoption of cyber-physical systems within its member organizations and diplomatic initiatives. Leveraging big data analytics and AI to collect and analyze data from the physical world enables the formulation of predictive models and scenarios for strategic recommendations and actionable insights.

All of that is possible with developing comprehensive training programs that equip BCIU staff and the broader diplomatic community with the necessary skills to effectively utilize AI tools. These programs should address both the technical aspects of AI applications and ethical considerations. These training programs help practitioners understand the limitations and risks

associated with AI technologies to safeguard that human judgment remains central in diplomatic decision-making and can be supported and complemented by AI, rather than overshadowed.

In addition, the organization should commit to developing AI tools specifically designed for diplomatic use. This commitment allows BCIU to ensure that these tools comply with international security protocols and ethical standards. Staying ahead of technological advancements and preparing for their implications necessitates a strong collaboration with AI developers. This proactive approach will enable BCIU to remain at the forefront of integrating technological advances into diplomatic practices.

Last but not least, BCIU could play a critical role in addressing and mitigating the ‘digital divide,’ a major challenge to be brought about by the rapid advancement of AI. By facilitating capacity-building programs and forming strategic partnerships, BCIU can help ensure that developing countries are not left behind in the AI era. This includes working with partners to provide the necessary infrastructure, training, and resources to enable these countries to fully participate in the digital economy.

Figure 9

OpenAI's GPT-4	Can assist in analyzing diplomatic communications, translating documents, and drafting diplomatic notes.
Google Cloud Natural Language API	Uses machine learning to reveal the structure and meaning of text. It can extract information about people, places, and events, and it has capabilities for sentiment analysis, entity analysis, and content classification.
Zoom AI	Can aid in diplomatic communications by ensuring all parties have accurate records of discussions along with summaries and real-time transcription.
IBM Watson	Can analyze data to provide predictive insights that help in forecasting geopolitical trends or outcomes of negotiations. It could enhance decision-making and strategic planning.
Salesforce Einstein	Uses AI to enhance customer relationship management by predicting customer behaviors and suggesting next steps. It could be adapted to manage BCIU's membership interactions and predict potential diplomatic and business alignments.
Cvent and Bizzabo	Utilize AI to streamline event planning and logistics.
Siemens MindSphere and GE Predix	Support the integration of digital operations with physical processes. These could help BCIU and its member organizations in integrating and analyzing data from both realms.
Hadoop and BigQuery	Can manage and analyze vast amounts of data, providing insights and foresights into global trends and scenarios.
Intercom and Drift	Offer chatbot services that can automate customer support and member interaction, providing quick responses to inquiries and facilitating communication.
Tableau	An advanced data visualization tool that can help in making sense of complex data sets, ideal for presenting insights in an easily digestible format during diplomatic negotiations or member briefings.
Power BI	Microsoft's analytics service provides interactive visualizations and business intelligence capabilities with an interface simple enough for end users to create their own reports and dashboards.
Brandwatch	A digital consumer intelligence platform that uses AI to analyze sentiment, trends, and public opinion from social media and web sources, which is crucial for understanding the public and political landscape.
Crimson Hexagon	An AI-powered consumer insights platform that can provide BCIU with deep insights into global opinions and trends, aiding in strategic planning and policy formation.
SAS Advanced Analytics	Provides predictive and prescriptive analytics that can help forecast international market trends and suggest optimal strategies.
Alteryx	Offers data blending and advanced analytics, including predictive, statistical, and spatial analysis within an intuitive workflow.
ABBYY FlexiCapture	Offers powerful data extraction technology to convert documents into business-ready data, reducing manual entry and increasing accuracy.

A few specific AI tools and technologies BCIU can consider using

To summarize, the future role of the BCIU in the age of AI is poised for transformation as it is recommended to adapt to this new era by leveraging AI for enhanced global interactions. BCIU should be proactive in integration of AI into its operations and programs to revolutionize its diplomatic and business endeavors from streamlining information flows and decision-making processes to enhancing its people-to-people initiative. By employing AI to improve its global network, event management, and strategic planning, BCIU can maintain its leadership in fostering international understanding and cooperation. Moreover, it is recommended to develop AI-driven tools tailored for diplomatic use, coupled with comprehensive training programs, to ensure that these technological advancements complement rather than replace human expertise in diplomacy. Additionally, BCIU can take a role in addressing the digital divide to ensure equitable access to AI technologies, thereby supporting global inclusivity in the digital age. This forward-looking approach not only enhances the operational effectiveness of BCIU but also strategically positions it to thrive in an increasingly digital and interconnected world.

CONCLUSION

In the evolving landscape of international relations and business diplomacy, BCIU is poised to redefine its strategic imperatives in the age of AI. Going forward, BCIU has to grapple with the double-edged opportunities and challenges that AI presents in order to ensure that it utilizes these advancements to improve its diplomatic engagements while maintaining the human-centric essence of its missions. AI provides strong tools for predictive analytics, scenario planning, and personalized digital interactions, which could significantly enhance BCIU's effectiveness in conducting business diplomacy. This technological shift promises increased operational efficiencies and deeper analytical insights into global trends and member needs. However, integrating AI also presents challenges, notably managing the digital divide that tends

to widen disparities between developed and developing economies. Moreover, maintaining a balance between automated processes and the irreplaceable value of human diplomacy will be essential as BCIU adapts to these changes. It must continue to champion the people-to-people approach that have long been its hallmark and ensure that technology enhances rather than replaces the nuanced interactions fundamental to effective diplomacy.

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