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Diplomacy in the AI Era: How AI Could Become a Game-Changer in Multilateral Negotiations

DISSERTATION

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by

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ABSTRACT

The world is facing crises that call into question the effectiveness of multilateralism. The imbalances of power between states during negotiations are particularly highlighted. By contributing to discussions on a possible reform of multilateralism, this study explores the extent to which artificial intelligence can facilitate the work of small delegations to re-establish a genuine balance around the negotiating table. Drawing on academic publications and interviews with diplomats, this research presents the advantages of using artificial intelligence upstream and during negotiations, but also its limits and ethical aspects to be considered. It shows that artificial intelligence can increase the participation and effectiveness of small delegations, provided that it is properly developed to produce the desired results, that data protection is ensured and that diplomats are trained in its use. However, this technology may increase power imbalances, as larger delegations have more resources to fully exploit its potential to their advantage.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Generative AI, Diplomacy, Techplomacy, Multilateralism, Negotiations, United Nations, Small delegations

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ANI	Artificial Narrow Intelligence
DL	Deep Learning
EU	European Union
GenAI	Generative Artificial Intelligence
IOs	International Organizations
LLMs	Large Language Models
ML	Machine Learning
MDSD	Most Different System Design
NGOs	Non-Governemental Organizations
NLP	Natural Language Processing
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OIF	Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie
UN	United Nations
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

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INTRODUCTION

During his New Year's Eve address on December 31, 1999, the U.S. President Bill Clinton enthusiastically shared that the 21st century would be the century of “triumph of freedom wisely used, to bring peace to a world in which we honor our differences, and even more, our common humanity” (The White House., 1999). President Clinton called for greater international cooperation to combat poverty, new diseases, global warming, and to share the gains of globalization, democracy, human rights, education and health, in order to “embrace our common humanity and our shared destiny”.

However, although major advances were made in the above-mentioned areas, several crises erupted around the world in the first quarter of the century, undermining international cooperation. These include the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the ensuing fight against terrorism; the 2008 subprime crisis, which led to the collapse of world stock markets; the Arab Spring; humanitarian crises provoking massive waves of refugees; the Covid-19 pandemic; as well as the ongoing armed conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza.

Against this backdrop, international cooperation has never been so crucial, putting the United Nations (UN) in the spotlight. Yet the UN, which is intended to be a platform for facilitating international cooperation to maintain world peace and solve global issues (United Nations., 1945, Article 1), has never been so questioned as today, as recalled by the Ambassador of Lebanon to the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), during the 58th session of the Human Rights Council (H.E. Mr. Salim Baddoura., 2025, 2:12:28). Among many criticisms, the most frequent include the veto system granted to the Security Council, the organization's ineffectiveness in managing and resolving conflicts, its bureaucratic slowness, and its lack of representation of the current balance of power between member states.

On this last point, the UN is often seen as being dominated by the five victors of World War II and under-representing certain regions of the world. This imbalance is reflected in the multilateral negotiations taking place within the organization. Indeed, countries with small delegations[1] face significant structural disadvantages due to their limited resources, which undermine the conduct of their negotiations and the achievement of their objectives (Súilleabháin, A. Ó., 2014). Beyond this negative outcome, it is the essence of multilateral negotiation that is impacted, since the aim is to reach an outcome that represents the point of view of the majority of states and not just that of the most influential ones (Horn, T., 2018), which is essential to ensure the lasting implementation of the adopted document and, ultimately, sustainable peace.

In the face of these structural issues, new digital technologies could offer a solution to redress power imbalances in negotiations. With unprecedented developments in recent years, integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into all sectors of society has become trendy. This is due to its rapid demonstration of the ability to absorb huge amounts of information and process it in the blink of an eye. The enormous potential of AI is attracting backers who are willing to invest significant sums to further its development. A prime example is the announcement by the freshly re-elected U.S. President Donald Trump of the launch of the Stargate Project, aimed at investing $500 billion in AI infrastructure over the next five years. Similarly, at the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit held in Paris on February 6-11, 2025, French President Emmanuel

[1] For the purpose of this master's thesis, small delegations are defined as permanent missions to the UNOG consisting of five or fewer diplomats, according to the UN Blue Book (United Nations Office at Geneva. (n.d.). The term “small states” is avoided because some geographically small countries, such as Qatar, maintain a relatively large delegation with 11 diplomats, whereas larger countries like the Central African Republic have only four diplomats in their permanent mission.

Macron unveiled a €109 billion investment plan in AI and data centers. The European Union (EU) also announced the mobilization of €200 billion through the "InvestAI" initiative.

However, AI is not perfect, and its numerous limits, including governance, ethics, consent, management of sensitive data, and respect for privacy, are raising significant concerns (Shrestha, A. K., & Joshi, S., 2025).

Therefore, at a time when multilateralism and its institutions have never attracted so much interest and, paradoxically, never been so contested, the need for reform to adapt to geopolitical dynamics and tackle today's global challenges is more than enviable. Starting by rethinking traditional negotiation methods to adapt to the new technological landscape and fully exploit the potential of new digital tools while taking into account the ethical and social implications they entail in order to build a fairer and more equitable world for all.

In this regard, this academic paper proposes to answer the following research question:

> *To what extent can artificial intelligence reduce power imbalances in multilateral negotiations and enhance the effectiveness of small delegations?*

This study takes place in the context of a debate between two opposing approaches to the integration of AI into society. On the one hand, the American view, under Donald Trump's new presidential term, which favors deregulation of the digital sector (Schaake, M., 2024), enabling greater and faster innovation at the expense of an increased exposure to risks, with regulation applied as problems arise. In this regard, the U.S. Vice President J. D. Vance emphasized at the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit that "over-regulation of the AI sector could kill a transformative industry"[2]. On the other hand, the European vision, more cautious and

[2] LiveNow from Fox. (2025, February 11). VP JD Vance on the future of artificial intelligence [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/64E9O1Gv99o

pragmatic (Ibid), which regulates this emerging sector with enormous potential upstream in order to mitigate the risk of harm to the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens, at the expense of a loss of competitiveness.

With that being said, this research project has three objectives. Firstly, to fill a gap in the literature, given that to date, no academic publication specifically addresses the question of whether AI could benefit diplomats in their negotiations, despite the future changes it will bring to the profession. Secondly, to contribute to the ongoing work carried out by the UN on the broader reflection of how AI could be integrated within the organization, including in which context and under which conditions. Thirdly, to enrich an already vast literature on power dynamics and global governance and democratic processes.

The research question is addressed in five stages, starting with a literature review that provides an overview of how multilateral negotiations work. This section analyzes the three stages of a negotiation, namely the pre-negotiation, negotiation, and agreement phases. The discussion then moves to power imbalances between delegations, showing how small delegations struggle to navigate multilateral negotiations due to asymmetric access to information, lack of expertise, and cuts in the UN's multilingualism policy. Following this, the negotiating capacity indicator is introduced, a tool for quantifying these power imbalances based on delegation size and composition. The literature review also clarifies the definition of AI, as well as key technical concepts essential for understanding the topic. The role of AI in diplomacy is then examined through the concepts of techplomacy and digital diplomacy. Finally, AI governance is addressed through existing legal, ethical, and data protection frameworks.

Secondly, the theoretical framework mobilizes the approaches relevant to understanding the angle from which the research question is addressed. In particular, it draws inspiration from Amartya Sen's capabilities approach to perceive AI no longer as a tool but as an enabler of

agency and participation for diplomats. Prior to the data collection, this section presents three hypothetical scenarios that are expected to occur.

Next, the research design outlines the qualitative methodology used for data collection. This method is chosen due to the lack of empirical data stemming from the recent expansion of AI. This section details the selected sources, namely secondary data such as academic articles, combined with interviews conducted with diplomats working for permanent missions to UNOG. The selection criteria for interviewees (diversity of socio-economic and geographical contexts, population sizes, histories of conflicts and peace) are also explained. Finally, the data analysis method is introduced through the Most Different System Design (MDSD), which examines the same object (AI) across different contexts (various negotiations) in order to assess whether its influence is applicable to all negotiation settings or context-dependent.

The fourth stage presents the data collected and patterns identified between the interview responses regarding the definition of AI, its use during the pre-negotiation and negotiation phases, and the conditions for a trustworthy use (modeling, data protection, training, legally binding framework). This section therefore answers the three hypotheses and the research question. Finally, it takes a critical look at the present study by outlining its limitations.

The research concludes with final remarks and suggestions for future research.

I. LITTERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Multilateral Negotiations

In recent years, several major events have highlighted the difficulty of reaching joint decisions, calling into question the fundamental principles of inclusion and collective governance upheld by the UN and, consequently, the functioning of multilateral negotiations, a mechanism at the heart of multilateralism. Due to their nature of involving at least three actors at the table, multilateral negotiations are often perceived as slow and complex processes. Nevertheless, they continue to be frequently organized and sometimes succeed in bringing together the interests of all stakeholders and reaching a common decision, as illustrated by the various arms control conventions, nuclear non-proliferation treaties, monetary and free trade agreements (Touval, S., 1989), the Paris climate agreement, or the Sustainable Development Goals, among others.

In theory, negotiations are organized in three stages. Firstly, the pre-negotiation phase plays an essential role in the smooth conduct of the negotiation. This is when the list of participants, which consists of member states in the case of international organizations (IOs), is unveiled, and the first coalitions begin to form. Coalitions are a crucial tool, as they allow states to strengthen their negotiating power and defend their interests more effectively than they could alone. They also increase their ability to exert pressure on other actors. Additionally, a phenomenon of role differentiation emerges within coalitions, some becoming mediators and others assuming leadership, the latter often defined "by the power and status of the actor" (Ibid., p. 162). Finally, informal meetings and encounters allow diplomats to guess the positions and flexibility of other parties involved. All these informal tools have important consequences for the formal negotiation phase.

The second phase of multilateral negotiations is more visible than the first, as it takes place in conference rooms, with the physical presence of all national delegations and official representatives. This is where the agenda is adopted, positions are explicitly shared, and bargaining takes place through structured discussions (Placidi-Frot, D., 2013). Provisional agreements can be reached, bearing in mind that the greater the number of stakeholders involved, the more difficult concessions become, and consequently, the harder it is to reach a common agreement. Furthermore, unforeseen tensions and last-minute disagreements may arise, adding further complexity to the discussions. It is also here that the rules are precisely defined, and the drafting process begins, often involving legal experts.

The final stage is the agreement phase, during which the parties make a final attempt to assert their interests and reach an outcome that is satisfactory to all. This phase is equally important and strategic, as some stakeholders may withhold their support until their interests have been taken into account or until they obtain guarantees from other parties. Finally, this phase can be lengthy due to the careful choice of wording in the final agreement, which must be thoroughly reviewed to avoid future misunderstandings and disputes.

The UN, as the quintessential platform for multilateral negotiations, has been organizing since 2019 the World Negotiation Day through the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. During the first edition, Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan, former EU chief negotiator at the UN Human Rights Council, highlighted several structural issues that prevent UN negotiations from having a concrete impact on the state of the world[3]. On paper, the UN is supposed to

[3] Bellion-Jourdan, J. (2019, September 25). Negotiations on human rights: UN negotiations and their impact in a turbulent world [Keynote address]. World Negotiation Day, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland. https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/sites/internet/files/2019-10/2019%20World%20Negotiation%20Day%20-%20Keynote%20address%20by%20Jerome%20Bellion-Jourdan.pdf

uphold the principle of sovereign equality (Article 2 of the UN Charter), which stipulates that all member states should be equally represented and possess the same voting weight, irrespective of their size, population, or economic power. However, practice differs widely from theory, and persistent inequalities continue to affect the ability of some to fully participate in negotiations.

1.1.1 Imbalances of Power Between Delegations

One major problem faced by diplomats during negotiations is managing the flow of information and communication, which increases proportionally with the number of participants. States sometimes struggle to access all the documents, declarations, and signals issued by other parties (Touval, S., 1989). In particular, smaller delegations are the ones most affected, which is why this is referred to asymmetrical access to information (Súilleabháin, A. Ó., 2014). On the one hand, these delegations are not enough to process the entire flow of information transmitted to them. On the other hand, they encounter difficulties in identifying and prioritizing the most relevant elements. As a result, they have less time to synthesize, analyze, and respond effectively to defend their position.

In addition, another problem closely linked to access to information that greatly affects small delegations, as well as developing and least-developed countries, is the language and interpretation barrier. Indeed, many diplomats have not studied in an English-speaking environment and find themselves significantly disadvantaged when conferences or debates are not interpreted or when essential documentation, such as draft resolutions, is not translated, as frequently happens (Study Group on Language and the United Nations., 2018).

This issue of multilingualism is regularly raised by Member States, as the UN, in its cost-saving and efficiency-oriented approach, does not hesitate to reduce the budget devoted to

multilingualism, considering it less of a strategic priority. As a consequence, this reduces the supply of interpretation and translation of documents (McEntee-Atalianis, L. J., 2018).

Moreover, Andrea Ó. Súilleabháin (2014) mentions a structural problem frequently highlighted by small delegations, which is the bureaucratic heaviness of the UN administration. The latter is criticized for its slowness in publishing official reports, often voluminous, taking a long time to read and analyze. Ambassadors therefore call on the UN to do more to facilitate the active participation of small delegations, for instance, by communicating information more clearly, concisely, quickly and by simplifying complex procedures.

A fourth significant obstacle is the limited human and financial resources of small delegations. Clearly, their lack of expertise and capacity to influence drastically limits their chances of being elected to head strategic committees such as the Human Rights Council or the Security Council. The latter also requires more staff that not all permanent missions can mobilize (Ambrosetti, D., 2013). Conversely, these member states are not encouraged to submit candidacies because their election would involve heavy administrative responsibilities and an additional workload that their staff would not be able to manage properly.

Finally, a notable argument highlighting the persistent imbalances of power between parties is unequal access to networks of influence and informal forums. These benefit major powers with vast diplomatic networks of influence, to the detriment of smaller delegations. As a result, these networks of actors and informal exclusive meetings exert a significant influence on multilateral negotiations, further marginalizing smaller delegations who do not take part in crucial discussions behind closed doors. This phenomenon, although widely acknowledged among practitioners, remains poorly documented due to its discreet and informal nature.

In response to these power imbalances, small missions are often compelled to align themselves within regional blocs or coalitions in order to wield greater influence during negotiations.

However, this compromises their diplomatic autonomy and forces them to defend common interests that are not always their own. These challenges result in decisions that favor dominant states, leading to agreements that fail to address the real needs of the smaller. It also reinforces the perception of inefficiency and inequality that overshadows multilateral organizations.

These power imbalances between stakeholders are often correlated with the size and composition of diplomatic delegations, which influence their actual capacity to negotiate.

1.1.2 Negotiation Capacity Indicator

A widely used indicator to assess a country's ability to participate in, and influence negotiations is the negotiating capacity indicator. This indicator consists of two variables: delegation size and composition.

Large delegations possess advantages that smaller ones do not. For instance, they have more in-depth expertise on a broader range of topics, granting them access to the most technical meetings. They are also able to participate in multiple events simultaneously and take turns in lengthy negotiations. Conversely, smaller delegations must cope with limited time and resources to process the most relevant information and attend the most important conferences (Gemenne, F., 2013), emphasizing the asymmetric access to information. Moreover, diplomats in small delegations often cover several themes and lack deep expertise on each of the topics they handle (Klöck, C., & Castro, P., 2022). The size of a delegation also affects the number of experienced diplomats, as larger delegations tend to have proportionally more seasoned delegates (Roberts, J. T., & Parks, B., 2006).

Finally, two key factors help explain the size of a delegation. First, the importance of the topic under discussion for the country. If a country identifies a subject as a strategic priority, it has an incentive to send a larger delegation to increase its chances of achieving its objectives. Second, the country's financial capacity. Martinez, G. S., & al. (2019) observed a correlation

between a country's level of wealth and the size of its delegations in the context of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Therefore, the size of a delegation already says a lot about a country's ability to participate in, and influence negotiations. However, to make the negotiating capacity indicator more robust, a second variable, the delegation composition, is added to better differentiate member states.

Klöck, C., & Castro, P. (2022) argue that large delegations have the capacity to mobilize reputed agents with broader and specialized skills to follow the technical discussions (operational, legal, etc.) and to assign a specific function to each member. Some are ministers, government officials tasked with attending parallel conferences, scientists, etc. Conversely, small delegations, limited in both financial and human resources and thus unable to ensure strong specialization, often rely on non-governmental actors such as expert committees (Ambrosetti D., 2013, p. 250), consultants, or even members of civil society, nicknamed "mercenary negotiators", to complete their teams (Gemenne, F., 2013, p. 419).

Another dynamic surrounding small delegations relates to the experience, stability, and continuity of delegates mobilized for international negotiations. Indeed, forming a cohesive team of highly reputed and experienced delegates who have consistently followed the same theme for many years significantly increases the likelihood of achieving positive and impactful results by the end of a round of negotiations (Klöck, C., & Castro, P., 2022).

Hence, the main argument presented by Klöck, C., & Castro, P. (2022) is that small delegations are disadvantaged in participating in and influencing the outcome of a negotiation due to their small size and fragile composition (negotiation capacity indicator). They argue that these imbalances could potentially be mitigated if diplomatic missions recruited more external experts from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), think tanks, or civil society to join their delegations. However, while the arguments put forward are compelling, the study published in

2022 does not address the role of new digital technologies as a possible solution to counterbalance the power imbalances between member states in negotiation settings.

1.2 Artificial Intelligence

Popularized by Prof. Klaus Schwab at the 2016 World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is characterized by "a much more ubiquitous and mobile internet, by smaller and more powerful sensors that have become cheaper, and by artificial intelligence and machine learning" (Schwab, K., 2017, p. 7). It is considered a revolution rather than a mere evolution of the Third Industrial Revolution due to its velocity, scope, and systemic impact (Xu, M., & al., 2018). Although the fourth phase relies on various technologies such as automated guided vehicles, cloud platforms, and blockchain, AI is considered the real driving force behind this revolution.

Briefly mentioned in the introduction, AI is attracting considerable attention, as evidenced by the record number of visits to ChatGPT in September 2024, with over three billion visitors in a single month[4]. Paradoxically, there is no universally agreed definition of AI to date. In fact, the terms "artificial" and "intelligence" are vague and open to broad interpretation. This ambiguity explains the myriad of definitions and supports the view that AI is an "umbrella term that refers to several technologies", as stated by Dr. Jérôme Duberry, Managing Director of the Tech Hub at the Geneva Graduate Institute[5]. Nevertheless, for the sake of this study, AI is

[4] Courrier international. (2025, January 14). Dans la course des chatbots, ChatGPT est en tête. Courrier international. https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/infographie-dans-la-course-des-chatbots-chatgpt-est-en-tete_225451

[5] Duberry, J. (2023, September 29). AI diplomacy: What vision for the future of multilateralism? Geneva Solutions. https://genevasolutions.news/science-tech/ai-diplomacy-what-vision-for-the-future-of-multilateralism-1

defined as “a machine-based system that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments. Different AI systems vary in their levels of autonomy and adaptiveness after deployment.” (OECD., 2024, p. 4).

Two types of AI must be distinguished. Artificial narrow intelligence (ANI), which refers to an AI system that is programmed with predefined sets of parameters to perform a specific task with precision and efficiency, such as Siri, Google Translate, weather forecasts, or playing chess. ANI lacks self-consciousness, unlike artificial general intelligence, which is capable of performing any intellectual task that a human can do (Babu, V. S., & Banana, K., 2024). However, artificial general intelligence does not yet exist and is generally perceived as a theoretical ideal. That being said, ANI is nowadays considered advanced, and this is made possible by two systems called Machine Learning (ML) and Deep Learning (DL).

ML is an intelligent system that adapts its behavior and responses based on the latest data it receives (Riedl, M. O., 2019). For instance, ML is behind the weather application on iPhones or the robots that play tic-tac-toe. Yet, it is the potential unlocked by DL that has propelled AI into a new dimension. DL is a subcategory of ML that relies on large neuronal networks similar to the human brain (Jakhar, D., & Kaur, I., 2020), enabling AI systems to make complex data-driven decisions. According to some scholars, these models are capable of outperforming humans in certain tasks. Hence, the main difference between ML and DL lies in the degree of autonomy: while ML requires human intervention to feed and label data, DL allows the system to learn and improve on its own, thanks to its artificial neural networks.

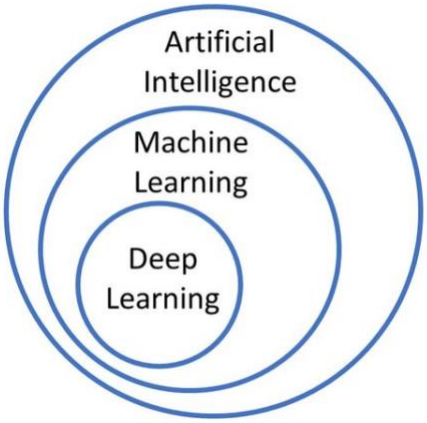

Figure 1: Imbrication of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and deep learning[6]

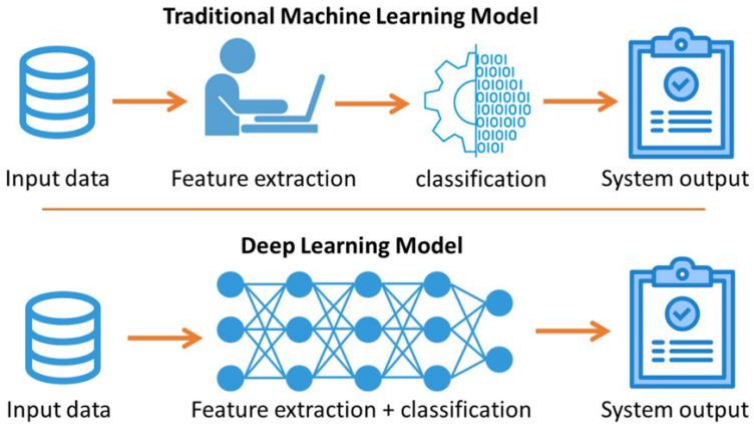

Figure 2: Comparison between machine learning and deep learning models[6]

Among the fields in which AI has made significant progress in recent years, natural language processing (NLP) stands out. This technology can understand and interpret human language to translate, summarize, or even generate texts in a way that gives the impression they were written by a real person. This capacity has been taken to another level with large language models (LLMs), which perform the above-mentioned tasks more smoothly and accurately by analyzing massive quantities of data through deep learning-based artificial neural networks. NLP, when enhanced by LLM, powers generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), allowing it to

[6] Hazratifard, M., Gebali, F., & Mamun, M. (2022). Using machine learning for dynamic authentication in telehealth: A tutorial. Sensors, 22(19), 7655.

interact naturally with users and autonomously produce human-like content across various formats, including text, image, video, audio, music, code, and speech. It is this entire structure that supports the claim that ANI is at an advanced stage and approaching the theoretical ideal of general artificial intelligence.

1.2.1 Artificial intelligence and diplomacy

GenAI, and AI more broadly, have permeated every sector of society, including diplomacy. As Khelif, M. (2023) notes, traditional diplomacy no longer possesses all the tools necessary to address today's challenges. It is therefore essential for diplomacy to harness technological innovations to confront global issues such as climate, health, or trade. It is within this context that, in 2017, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched the “techplomacy” initiative, symbolizing the intersection between digital technology and diplomacy. The goal of this initiative is to open up discussion on how diplomats should adapt to the societal changes brought by social networks, digital platforms, AI, big data, or cryptocurrency (Klynge, C., & al., 2020). Another objective is to explore how to engage and cooperate with multinational technology companies, which have gained considerable influence and the capacity to influence international relations according to specific interests and agendas. These reflections led to the establishment of a dedicated office and the appointment of Casper Klynge as the world’s first ambassador to the technology industry. Denmark is not the only one to undertake such an initiative, as Australia, Estonia, and the United States appointed "cyber ambassadors" and even "tech envoys" to Silicon Valley (Abbakumova, D., 2024).

However, it is important to distinguish the notion of techplomacy and digital diplomacy, since the first refers to “how diplomatic relations and dialogue serve as a connecting bridge between governments, civil society, and tech companies on global digital policy and emerging

technological issues"[7], while the latter denotes "the use of the Web, ICTs, and social media tools to engage in diplomatic activities and carry out foreign policy objectives" (Sandre, A., 2013, p. 9). A recent example of digital technology used for diplomacy is the creation, with the help of GenAI, of the first virtual diplomat, Victoria Shi, who serves as spokesperson for the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2024[8]. In the current context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the use of digital technologies such as AI is seen as a necessary means to minimize human casualties. The decision to "employ" a virtual diplomat underscores the need to rethink the profession, as Victoria Shi does not meet the classical definition of a diplomat under the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations of 1961 and 1963.

In fact, AI is already widely used in consular work and is handling administrative tasks that do not require human intervention, such as visa applications, passport renewals, or consular registrations. In the same spirit of adapting the diplomatic profession to an interconnected and rapidly evolving world, the DiploFoundation has emerged as a leading actor in training diplomats and government officials in digital diplomacy. The non-profit organization offers courses and workshops, as well as publications and events on the topic. One of its most notable projects, entitled "African Digital Diplomacy and Governance", aims to support small African states and developing countries in acquiring the essential digital skills needed to engage efficiently in international affairs. Through its work, the DiploFoundation adopts a positivist approach by emphasizing the potential of digital technologies to reduce inequalities, foster innovation, and improve the overall state of the world by enhancing international cooperation.

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[7] International Committee of the Red Cross. (n.d.). Techplomacy. International Committee of the Red Cross. Retrieved February 6, 2025, from https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/techplomacy

[8] Arte France. (2024, November 13). Ukraine : ma porte-parole est une IA [Episode of Le dessous des images]. ARTE. https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/116710-119-A/le-dessous-des-images/

However, despite the latest technological achievements, AI continues to present significant limitations and biases. For instance, it sometimes produces false or misleading information, which can, in some cases, be deemed toxic (Ouyang, L., & al., 2022). AI also contains algorithmic, gender, and ethical biases, along with concerns regarding the management and protection of personal data. All these challenges can be grouped under the concept of "AI abyss", theorized by Ramírez Sánchez, A. M., & al. (2023). It denotes the gap between the rapid development of AI technologies and the ability of human societies to adapt to and regulate them in order to mitigate their risks and correct their biases. This situation raises the fundamental question of AI governance and leads to studying the frameworks that regulate it.

1.2.2 Governance of Artificial Intelligence

Until recently, no legally binding instrument governed the use of AI at the international level. The very first is the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, adopted on May 17, 2024, by the Council of Europe. Although this instrument is the first to enshrine the principles of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in AI-related activities, it remains highly ambiguous, since it "does not regulate technology and is essentially technology-neutral" (Council of Europe., 2024). The most comprehensive legally binding instrument for regulating AI is the EU AI Act, adopted by the European Parliament in March 2024 and approved by the Council of Europe on May 21, 2024, which applies to the 27 EU member states.

In reality, the main obstacle to the adoption of a legally binding instrument, especially at the international level, lies in the absence of a universally accepted definition of AI. As discussed in the previous section, the lack of consensus on what constitutes AI makes it difficult to regulate, as the exact scope of regulation remains unclear.

Moreover, there exist non-legally binding frameworks, the most notable one being the UN General Assembly's (UNGA) first-ever resolution on "Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development", adopted on 21 March 2024. Supported by more than 120 countries, this resolution seeks to ensure that AI benefits to all by encouraging member states to use the technology in an accountable, collaborative, ethical, and sustainable way while respecting human rights, fundamental freedoms, and ensuring personal data protection (United Nations General Assembly., 2024).

Building on this resolution, the UN Global Digital Compact was unanimously adopted on 22 September 2024 by all 193 member states of the UNGA. It calls for enhanced international cooperation to make digital technologies more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable (United Nations., 2024). Among its five goals, one is dedicated to establishing robust international governance of AI for the benefit of humanity as a whole. In this regard, the Compact advocates for AI models to be open-source, freely accessible, transparent, and respectful of linguistic and cultural diversity. It calls on developers to address hate speech and discrimination in AI-generated content and to develop effective standards for data protection and privacy. Moreover, points 50 and 51 of the Compact call for the full and equal participation of all countries in shaping global AI governance frameworks. Finally, it refers to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s "Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence", adopted in 2021.

The latter, also adopted unanimously by the organization's member states, aims to mitigate the risks associated with AI, particularly regarding data protection. Like the Global Digital Compact, the UNESCO framework outlines a set of principles and recommendations, including respect for human rights and dignity, fundamental freedoms, the right to privacy, data protection, digital literacy, and public awareness (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization., 2021). Other IOs have followed suit, such as the World Health

Organization[9] or the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)[10], which promote similar values. The case of the OECD is noteworthy because the signatories of the "Principles for trustworthy AI", initially adopted in 2019, decided to revise the text in May 2024 to ensure its continued relevance in light of the latest technological advances, such as GenAI. This highlights policymakers' willingness to develop flexible rather than rigid governance frameworks in order to ensure their effectiveness and adaptability over time.

Beyond IOs, other actors such as think tanks have also developed AI governance frameworks and generally converge all in the same direction in terms of objectives, principles, and recommendations. Most of them adopt a cautious, if not skeptical, stance, emphasizing the potential risks associated with AI rather than its benefits and advocating for stronger regulation and global governance. Except for the EU AI Act, all these frameworks have a common weakness, which is their lack of enforcement mechanisms to ensure ethical and responsible use of AI.

[9] World Health Organization. (2021). Ethical use of artificial intelligence: principles, guidelines, frameworks and human rights standards. In WHO Consultation Towards the Development of guidance on ethics and governance of artificial intelligence for health: Meeting report Geneva, Switzerland, 2–4 October 2019 (pp. 8–11). World Health Organization. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep35680.8

[10] OECD. (2025). Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence (OECD/LEGAL/0449). Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0449

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the arguments presented in the literature review, this section formulates initial theoretical hypotheses regarding the potential answer to the research question stated in the introduction, which is to know to what extent AI can reduce power imbalances in multilateral negotiations by enhancing the effectiveness of small delegations.

The literature review has highlighted that multilateralism is going through a period of turbulence, marked by regular crises. This is illustrated in particular by the difficulty of the UN to enforce the principle of sovereign equality. This inequity particularly affects countries with small delegations and takes the form of asymmetric access to information, language and interpretation barriers, lack of staff, expertise, experience, diversity, and thus affects their capacity to influence.

Subsequently, the literature review discusses the pros and cons brought by AI and GenAI. The latter, having been built on ML and DL, is able to adapt its responses according to the latest information it receives and to improve itself continuously in order to make complex data-driven decisions. In addition, it is capable of fluidly and accurately understanding and interpreting NLP in order to translate, summarize, or even generate human-like texts.

Finally, the literature review presents the limitations of this new technology in terms of protection of sensitive data, algorithmic, gender, and ethical bias, as well as its lack of legally binding regulation at the international level.

Thus, this research fits in perfectly with the dynamics of structural approaches, which:

> *"focus on the resources available to parties in negotiation, as well as on the power asymmetries existing between them and conditioning their ability to negotiate. Negotiations are akin to bargaining and power struggles, and the questioning focuses in particular on the interest of the weakest in negotiating with the most powerful, since*

negotiation is supposed to accentuate the existing distribution of power" (Placidi-Frot, D., 2013, p. 44, trans. by Foloppe, K.).

Furthermore, the capabilities approach, theorized in the 1980s by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, which aims to improve access to the tools people use to lead a satisfying life, is the missing piece of the puzzle that allows to sketch out the first elements of a theoretical response to the research question. The original argument of this theory is to show that people can extend their freedoms and thus achieve the life they want by mobilizing their capabilities rather than solely having a right or freedom to do so (Sen, A., 1999). In his book, Amartya Sen argues that these are those capabilities that ultimately determine people's agency and participation in society.

The author also criticizes John Rawls' theory of justice stipulating the equality of social goods, which he finds inadequate, and argues that the capabilities approach defends not only the equality of means but also the equality of effective possibilities to perform certain acts between two individuals with different metabolisms (Sen. A., 2009).

In relation to the research topic, applying the capabilities approach to small delegations helps explain how AI could reduce imbalances of power between parties in negotiations. Small delegations face structural problems due to limited access to information (excessive information flow, language barriers), reduced analytical capacity (lack of expertise and experience), and bureaucratic hurdles. In this context, AI could act as a capacity-building tool to mitigate these drawbacks by absorbing vast amounts of data, translating documents and speeches, summarizing key points, and generating insights, enabling diplomats to focus on higher-level decision-making and make more informed choices. AI could also compensate for the lack of expertise and reliance on external experts by acting as a thematic counselor and providing real-time support in negotiations. Finally, it could improve strategic decision-making

through simulations and predictive models, allowing diplomats to anticipate negotiation dynamics and adjust their strategy.

Thus, through the lens of this theory, AI would provide the skills needed for small delegations to negotiate on an equal footing with large delegations. Moreover, in *Development as Freedom* (1999), the Nobel Prize winner in Economics argues that technological and institutional innovations can enhance human capabilities by removing barriers (such as the slow pace of UN bureaucracy) that limit the ability of individuals (in this case, diplomats) to act effectively.

In addition, the context in which AI is deployed, in other words, the complexity of a negotiation, needs to be addressed. In this sense, Petiteville, F., and Placidi-Frot, D. (2013) establish several indicators for assessing the degree of complexity of a negotiation. First, the number of participants must be considered, as in a multilateral environment, the more players there are around the table, the greater the interests to be taken into account to reach a resolution. Secondly, the scope of the agenda. The more subjects a negotiation covers, the more difficult it is to reach agreement on all of them, compared to a situation focusing on a specific subject. Thirdly, the diversity of the players involved. The more varied the profiles within a delegation (experts on each of the themes addressed, scientists, NGO representatives), the more complex the negotiation will be. Conversely, if there are only a few diplomats, as is often the case with small delegations, the situation is less complex. Fourthly, grouping several states together in a coalition simplifies the process, since a single position commits all coalition members. Fifthly, the type of decision-making and adoption. A negotiation that requires unanimity (as at the World Trade Organization) is always more complex than one that simply requires broad consensus. In cases where the right of veto is authorized, this adds another layer of complexity. Last but not least, the duration of the negotiation must be taken into account, since a negotiation that goes on until the middle of the night has a considerable influence on the behavior of the negotiators and the resulting outcome.

Taking into account all the information provided in the literature review and the distinction between complex and less complex negotiations, under the prism of Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, an initial hypothesis can be put forward as follows:

> **Hypothesis 1:** *Small delegations tend to use artificial intelligence in complex environments to compensate for their difficulties in processing large amounts of information and their lack of expertise, which results in a structural disadvantage.*

Furthermore, the capabilities approach not only seeks to give people more freedom but also to ensure that the freedom they acquire is of high quality. Sen A. (1999) argues that the development of a country should not be calculated solely on the basis of gross domestic product but should also take into account the human dimension as an indicator of well-being. In relation to the master's thesis, one can ask in what conditions AI can really be beneficial to delegations without bringing new risks. Indeed, the literature review showed that AI can be biased, particularly when it comes to questions of transparency, ethics, and data protection, which could considerably affect its integration into diplomacy, given the sensitive data that diplomats handle on a daily basis. This leads to propose a second hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 2:** *Small delegations refrain from using artificial intelligence when they consider the technology to be unreliable in terms of data protection and the ethics of handling sensitive information.*

This second hypothesis helps rule out potential bias among respondents, as it provides justification for a diplomat’s reluctance to fully integrate AI into their work. Depending on the responses, it may also support the need for more stringent global regulation of AI.

Finally, after asking in what context and under what conditions delegations use AI, it is pertinent to ask whether this use actually brings any benefit to small delegations. For example, does this digital technology save them time in the processing of information, or is the

cost/benefit ratio related to the time it takes to obtain the desired results unattractive? Does the integration of AI actually enable diplomats to make better-informed decisions and thus participate more actively in negotiations? A third hypothesis can therefore be put forward, as follows:

> **Hypothesis 3:** *When using artificial intelligence, small delegations tend to believe that they achieve significantly better results than when they do not use it.*

This hypothesis highlights the importance of developing the technology properly so that it produces the desired outputs, but also the importance of training the user on how to use the AI in order to obtain the desired results.

In addition, the three hypotheses put forward can be studied independently of each other. Indeed, hypothesis two does not depend on a particular response to hypothesis one. Nor does hypothesis three depend on the answers to the previous hypotheses, as long as AI is used in a negotiation context (regardless of its complexity). The figure below helps to better visualize the reasoning behind the hypotheses made in this academic research.

To summarize, the capability approach provides an ideal framework to understand AI's role in diplomacy and negotiations because it shifts the focus from AI as a simple tool to AI as an enabler of agency and participation. It helps analyze whether AI reduces power asymmetries in multilateral negotiations by expanding the negotiation capabilities of small delegations, making global governance more inclusive and representative.

Figure 3: The three suggested hypotheses

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Data Collection

In order to answer the research question and the three hypotheses, this study undertakes a qualitative analysis for one major reason. Obtaining quantitative data is fraught with practical difficulties, as the development of AI is very recent and its application to the diplomatic world is still at the stage of reflection and experimentation. The best way to respond is therefore to carry out a qualitative analysis, gathering data through a careful desk review, as well as interviews with permanent mission officials and experts in the field. Moreover, the use of this method, which enables precise data to be collected in order to understand the reality on the ground, follows the approach chosen by other researchers who have worked on similar issues (Lenzner, M., 2023) on the geopolitics of AI.

The desk analysis focuses on collecting and interpreting secondary data from articles, reports, book reviews, and academic studies produced by IOs, including UN agencies and the DiploFoundation.

The choice of interviewing diplomats from small permanent missions to UNOG seems obvious, given the central place they occupy in this research. On the one hand, diplomats know precisely the issues and challenges facing small delegations (in terms of resources, expertise, etc.), and on the other hand, they are the ones most experienced at talking about negotiations in a multilateral context. As the aim was to collect primary data in order to be able to carry out the most comprehensive analysis possible, the selection of missions to be interviewed was based on the list of regional groups drawn up by the UN, namely Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, South America and the Caribbean, Western Europe and Other States (United Nations., n.d. -a). In addition, the UN Blue Book, which lists the size and composition of each permanent mission, makes it possible to select only the smallest of them. Through the missions selected for interviews, this research attempts to reflect the diversity of Member States as much as

possible, for example, by taking into account varied socio-economic and geographical situations, population sizes, and histories of peace and conflict.

In order to obtain a complete picture that can truly answer the research question, interviews are also conducted with people who do not belong to the world of diplomacy but rather to the world of research, namely professors and experts in AI in diplomacy. In particular, an interview is conducted with an IO official whose job it is to assist small delegations with capacity building.

Individuals are selected according to purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling consists of identifying participants through a series of strategic choices based on their function and expertise (Palys, T., 2008). Snowball sampling involves presenting the study to someone who is likely to be interested in it (Davidson, J., 2006). Given that this study focuses on a niche area of expertise and high-level individuals, snowball sampling proves very useful.

A total of nine interviews are conducted: six with ambassadors, deputy permanent representatives, minister counselors, and other positions (Permanent Missions of the Principality of Andorra, Malta, Latvia, Barbados, the Central African Republic, and the Republic of Nauru to the United Nations in Geneva), two with IO officials (Permanent Representation of the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) and DiploFoudation), and one with a professor specializing in AI and negotiations (Harvard).

To overcome the lack of empirical data, these interviews are conducted in a semi-structured way in order to understand the relationship (Taylor, S. & al., 2015) that permanent mission officials have with AI and their perception of new digital technologies in their daily work. In the case of the current research, the advantage of this type of interview is that it allows questions to be adapted to the interviewee's responses (Hardon, A. & al. 2004). For this reason, fifteen key questions are prepared and summarized in the table below. Questions 2 to 6 correspond to Hypothesis 1, questions 7 to 11 to Hypothesis 2, and questions 12 and 13 to Hypothesis 3. Time

is also set aside for open discussion, either to request clarification on specific points or to allow the interviewee to provide additional information.

Finally, all interviewees are contacted by e-mail and diplomats via the generic permanent mission address listed in the UN Blue Book.

Q1	How do you define artificial intelligence?
Q2	According to you, what are the main challenges small delegations face during negotiations?
Q3	In what context is AI relevant for small delegations? In negotiations considered complex? Less complex? Both? Why?
Q4	During the pre-negotiation phase, can AI compensate for the difficulties small delegations have in accessing and processing information? If yes, how?
Q5	During negotiations, can AI be used to predict voting? Can it be relied upon? What are the risks?
Q6	Would you prefer a thematic AI advisor or a general AI model that provides you with information on any topic? To what extent can diplomats trust its recommendations?
Q7	Is it necessary to develop its own AI model, or can existing models be used to avoid high costs?
Q8	How can AI ensure data protection, given the sensitivity of information handled by diplomats? Do you use AI when you believe you have control over data protection?
Q9	Should diplomats undergo specific training to use AI effectively? What type of training would be needed?
Q10	Is a legally binding international framework the solution for regulating AI? Is it feasible?
Q11	What can the UN do to help small delegations with or without AI?

Q12[11]	Is the ratio between the time spent training the model and the quality of results/time saved beneficial for diplomats?
Q13	According to you, when AI is used in negotiations, does it significantly improve outcomes compared to situations where it is not used?
Q14	According to you, can AI reduce power asymmetries by enhancing small delegations' effectiveness?
Q15	Do you have any additional comments?

Figure 4: Predefined questions asked during the interviews

3.2 Data Analysis

This research reproduces a hypothetico-deductive scheme by proposing three hypotheses based on a literature review and a structured theoretical framework. These hypotheses are then tested based on the theories put forward (capacity approach, degree of complexity of a delegation) and the primary and secondary data collected. To process this raw data, a method called "qualitative content analysis" (Ercan, S. A., & Marsh, D., 2016) is used. The strength of this method is that "large volumes of textual data and different textual sources can be dealt with and used in corroborating evidence" (Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H., 2008, p.114). The aim is to identify patterns in the responses of the different stakeholders, the latter being summarized in a table (see figures 5, 6, and 7). To strengthen reliability, triangulation is applied by cross-checking findings from multiple sources, including literature, interviews, and extensive desk research.

In addition, this study analyzes several concrete multilateral negotiations taking place within different UN agencies, whose subjects vary in complexity. Political scientists often favor the

[11] Given the technical nature of this question, it is only asked to AI experts, not diplomats.

comparative case study when they wish to conduct a transnational analysis (Kaarbo, J., & Beasley, R. K., 1999). This is relevant to this research as it investigates the use of AI by different countries and in different negotiations. The study refers to the Most Different System Design model, which is one of the methodologies proposed by the comparative case study. This model suggests analyzing the same object but in different contexts in order to find out whether the object applies to all situations or only to some (Anckar, C., 2008). This approach makes it possible to identify whether there is a correlation between the use of AI by diplomats and better negotiation outcomes and whether this applies only to a particular type of negotiation or extends to all types, regardless of their complexity. For this research, negotiation topics were not pre-selected, as diplomats in small permanent missions are assigned several thematic files. Moreover, the probability of interviewees working on the same affairs is low. Consequently, the case studies are naturally defined on the basis of the dossiers handled by the diplomat interviewed. In the context of MDSD, the greater the number of cases studied, the more accurately hypotheses can be confirmed or refuted. It also helps to consolidate or challenge existing literature.

As such, the findings of this research are highly relevant for permanent missions, the UN, and engineers developing AI models. On the one hand, they will stimulate reflection within diplomatic missions on their real needs in terms of negotiation and a wider use of AI in their activities. On the other hand, for the UN and developers, these results will enable them to better understand and target the needs of this type of customer in order to design more tailored, effective, and reliable algorithms.

IV. ANALYSIS

4.1 Presentation of the results and comparison with each other

This section aims to demonstrate whether AI can be useful for diplomats during the pre-negotiation and negotiation phases and to what extent. It looks at whether AI is relevant for gathering large amounts of information and carrying out descriptive analyses on specific topics, as well as for producing predictive inferences, using GenAI, to anticipate the position of other countries. It also addresses the risks, policy implications, and possible ways to mitigate them.

One of the difficulties encountered when collecting data is the accessibility of permanent missions. Indeed, after an initial mailing of some 20 e-mails, only two replies were received, of which only one was positive. Although it was expected that not all the missions would respond, this large absence of response was unexpected, and it quickly became necessary to adapt the strategy. It was therefore decided to cast a wide net, contacting all small permanent missions in waves of 10 e-mails at regular intervals of three to five days until a satisfactory number of positive responses for an interview was reached. The message sent was also modified several times to ensure that the lack of response was not due to an imprecise e-mail. In all, several dozen e-mails were sent to diplomatic missions in Geneva. The rate of positive responses was low, representing approximately 20 % of the invitations sent. This is partly due to the very busy schedules of small permanent missions, which do not have time for an interview. Several of the negative responses received point in this direction.

Regarding the countries that accepted the request, all the regional groups established by the UN are represented, and geographical and socio-economic diversity has been respected.

Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour and were almost all conducted in person in order to collect better quality data. Only two were conducted by video conference, as the

participants were not physically present in Geneva. Interviews were conducted in French or English, depending on the interlocutor's preference.

Recording conversations can be distracting and prevent participants from expressing their true opinions (Brinkmann, S., 2017), although it is a great help when transcribing interviews for analysis. In this study, all participants explicitly consented to being recorded, strictly for transcription purposes. Consequently, measures were put in place, such as explaining the goal of the study and participants' rights, as well as deleting recordings once the transcription was complete, in order to comply with Geneva Graduate Institute research ethics guidelines[12].

Given the large volume of data collected and transcribed, the key points provided by each interviewee for each question are summarized in the tables below[13].

[12] Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. (n.d.). Research ethics. Geneva Graduate Institute. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/research-support/research-ethics

[13] Some diplomats interviewed pointed out that the answers given reflect their personal opinion and may not represent the official position of their government.

	Principality of Andorra	Malta	Latvia
Q1	An ever-growing encyclopedia that gives instant answers	Self-learning and self-updating program capable of predicting trends	Human-created, develops itself, gives rapid access to a big database
Q2	Always having to justify your place, sometimes not being taken into consideration, lack of human resources, prioritization of meetings	Lack of human resources, experts and expertise, issues in covering all topics, loss of effectiveness, small delegations collaborate among themselves	Lack of human resources, issues in covering all meetings, prioritization, lack of time to write and send reports to the capital
Q3	Complex question, do not really know	Useful in any kind of negotiation	Do not see any difference
Q4	Summarize reports, meetings, statements, recall historical positions	Summarize documents, draft speeches, design visual presentations, note questions asked during review sessions	Prepare speeches, statements, summarize high-level meetings as long as minutes are public
Q5	Useful to identify co-sponsors and regional blocs' positions	Could save a lot of time and influence position on non-priority topics	May be useful and could influence the national position
Q6	Has limitations, always check sources	Prefer a more general model to have an overview	Yes, it would be helpful
Q7	The ministry doesn't have the resources, uses a model already existing	Ideally an in-house model, but no budget, regional model (EU) as a solution	Can't develop an in-house model in near future, rely on a regional model (EU)

Q8	Avoid sharing sensitive information like names, no ethical guidelines	No AI is fully transparent, contains gender bias, has a memory, avoid sharing name	Don't feel comfortable sharing sensitive information
Q9	Yes, useful to introduce diplomats to AI, how to carefully choose words to get the right answers	Absolutely needed, investing in training is necessary, know which word to use during negotiations	Training on security measures and data protection/awareness could be interesting
Q10	Need to regulate it, but difficult to get consensus, start at the regional scale and then expand to global	Safer to have a global agreement that applies to everyone but difficult to reach in the current scenario	Would be difficult to harmonize at the global scale because too many aspects to agree on
Q11	Restore hybrid meetings, meeting minutes in all languages, UN webcasts	Virtual meetings and hybrid participation will definitely help	In the current context, the UN cannot do so much for small missions
Q12	/	/	/
Q13	Yes, to have arguments on the spot, if used as an assistant and never as a substitute	Yes, definitely	Helpful to identify compromises but won't help to achieve them in difficult situations
Q14	Can make small delegations more efficient but unbalanced if used by bigger powers, which can exploit full potential	Could help small delegations to be more effective but won't solve the power asymmetries	Could help perform very specific tasks that require a lot of human resources, but won't reduce inequalities

Figure 5: Key points from diplomats' answers 1/2

	Barbados	Central African Republic	Republic of Nauru
Q1	Human-created, refines over time, facilitates work	Tool to save time and be more efficient in research	Self-thinking software, gives reasoned answers
Q2	Lack of human resources, AI licenses, software and hardware, infrastructures, small administration to rely on	Lack of human resources, no deep expertise, cover several topics, loss of time and energy	Lack of human and financial resources, unable to attend all meetings, voice not heard, representation costs
Q3	Particularly useful in technical negotiations, to be more informed	Useful in less complex negotiation, when diplomats can certify the information	Useful in any kind of negotiation
Q4	Quick access to key facts and data, draft speeches and interventions, time-saving	Background research and sourcing, prepare speeches, summarize meetings' minutes drawn up by the African group	Draft speeches, identify potential partners, common grounds and differences, summarize meetings, translate
Q5	Would definitely use it, influence your position, since you know what you might win and lose	Not relevant for small delegations, no influence on position because based on ministry instructions	Yes, pretty accurate, identify supporters, pros and cons, ended up co-signing a resolution
Q6	One general model for cross-cutting issues	Never trust 100 %, always ask for sources	Yes, would be useful
Q7	Use already existing models and improve their data protection policy	Financially not possible, use memberships like ChatGPT Pro can compensate	No resources for an in-house model, rely on regional organizations

Q8	Small delegations do not have any protocols for the use of information and data, need licensing, cybersecurity and cyber-protection training	Convinced that ChatGPT is safe enough, do not always take measures, sometimes share sensitive information to save time summarizing reports and drafting speeches	ChatGPT is getting better and better, and so is Google AI, for now happy with it, if one AI specifically dedicated to diplomacy, would use it
Q9	Completely, diplomats need to be trained on recognizing AI-generated content and cybersecurity	Yes, for example, a one-day training with a catchy name "Become the best expert in your field thanks to AI"	Absolutely, online courses like the ones from DiploFoundation, how to properly ask a question
Q10	Global agreement better but not feasible currently	No consensus, some see it as a violation of sovereignty	We will need to regulate it one day
Q11	Offer training on AI, expand AI in translation and interpretation	Provide interns, develop an AI that gives access to all UN agencies' archives	Financial and logistical support to set up representation in Geneva
Q12	/	/	/
Q13	Yes, because no negative to having more access to more information	Gives more expertise and credibility to the diplomat vis-à-vis other interlocutors	Yes, improves outcomes for small delegations, provides expertise
Q14	Gives more ability to influence the outcome, reduces asymmetries	Increases effectiveness and efficiency but does not reduce asymmetries	Yes, helps small delegations, recreates a balance at the table

Figure 6: Key points from diplomats' answers 2/2

	OIF	DiploFoundation	Harvard professor
Q1	Machines that simulate human cognitive functions	Perform human-like tasks thanks to ML and DL	Machine able to learn and generate content
Q2	Lack of time, resources and expertise	Limited human and financial resources, lack of expertise, coordination challenges, bureaucratic burden	Pressure on time and space, language barrier, voice not heard, instrumentalized
Q3	Useful in all negotiation processes	AI is relevant in both complex and less complex	Effective for mastering complex topics
Q4	Extract and process information from meetings' minutes, analyze positions	Streamline information, summarize statements, transcribe meetings, identify key trends in data	Filter, categorize, summarize information, in any language
Q5	Can help anticipate voting trends, but final judgment must remain human	Yes, but has risks and limits: lack of trust, inaccuracy, transparency, accountability, algorithmic bias	Useful for simulations, keep in mind it's a probabilistic model
Q6	Use different profiles, one AI legal advisor, one political, etc.	Trustworthiness of AI depends on transparency, accuracy, and contextual understanding of AI	Depends on the focus: thematic or political. A technical approach would be best
Q7	Use existing models as a basis and then adapt it, no need to invest millions	Leverage existing open-source models and tailor them in-house	Expect a drop in the developing cost in coming years, making it accessible for all missison

Q8	Not enough technician to answer this question	Establish internal security protocols like encryption, automating threat detection. Tougher for external devices	It is a matter of infrastructure, in-house models are safe, not external, question of trust
Q9	Yes, diplomats definitely must be trained, DiploFoundation courses are really great	Yes, use AI for AI training, like our AI Apprenticeship model, courses on ethics and governance, etc.	Yes, to limit the digital divide, training on risks. Example of AI Negotiation Challenge
Q10	Desirable, but extremely difficult to implement	May be necessary, build it on already existing regulations	Not relevant in a few years
Q11	Train diplomats, facilitate access to digital tools	Expand training, ensure inclusive digital infrastructu.	Build a fairer negotiating framework
Q12	In the short term, requires a significant investment of time but marginal gains in the long term.	Significant investment of time and resources in the short term but substantial benefits in the long term	The cost/benefit ratio is debatable today but will be very relevant in a few years
Q13	Yes, especially in the preparation phase by filtering information and exploring scenarios	Yes, but dependent on the interplay between AI capabilities and human expertise	Yes, thanks to LLMs, as long as there is a balance between technology and human qualities
Q14	Improve efficiency when AI is well-trained, but won't eliminate structural power asymmetries	AI as an efficiency multiplier, but not neutral and at risk of reinforcing power asymmetries	Power imbalances will remain, AI rather increase them because large delegations use it too

Figure 7: Key points from experts' answers

The first observation that can be made is that everyone shares a similar vision of AI but expresses it using different terms. The definition that emerges is the following one: AI is a human-developed programming system that, through an algorithm, relies on different research tools to compile a large amount of publicly accessible data on the Internet (such as facts, figures, opinions) in order to quickly identify key concepts and elements, generate content such as reasoned answers instantaneously, and predict certain trends, all with the aim of saving the user time and making them more efficient in their work.

Once created by a human, the technology is capable of adapting, learning, and perfecting itself without ceasing to increase its knowledge, thanks to DL. The more AI is used, the more its responses match the user's expectations. Already at this stage, concerns are expressed about the unknown limits of AI in terms of the amount of information it can retain, as well as data protection, consciousness, transparency, and accountability.

With regard to the challenges faced by small delegations, there is a recurrence of responses. Both diplomats and experts point out a lack of human and financial resources, which severely penalizes them. The organizational burden associated with the various thematic issues covered by each diplomat leads to excessive workloads and scheduling conflicts between meetings happening at the same time in different UN agencies and IOs from international Geneva. Given that diplomats cannot “duplicate” themselves (as some said in a self-depreciating tone), they must therefore prioritize some meetings over others according to certain criteria, the main ones being national priorities and general discussions (over technical ones).

Having to choose the meetings to attend involves consequences. First, diplomats’ expertise is limited against their will. Secondly, small delegations’ participation is limited and their country's visibility reduced. Permanent mission representatives expressed that, in the long term, it causes a lack of consideration from other parties, as sometimes their opinion is forgotten to

ask during meetings or draft resolutions. They also feel a form of instrumentalization, in the sense that a large delegation will ask for their opinion only when it is looking for support to adopt or oppose a resolution. In the same vein, some expressed that their voice is not heard, and they always have to justify their seat and rights as a full member of the UN. To counterattack, small delegations often organize in coalitions to be heard louder. They also rely on each other to report and share meetings when one of them cannot participate.

Other challenges put forward include the lack of time to draft and send reports to the capital, the lack of infrastructure to fully exploit the potential of digital technologies, the high costs associated with setting up a permanent mission in Geneva (offices, housing, company cars, etc.), and the loss of efficiency due to bureaucratic burden[14]. A final challenge that few have thought of is taking up in relation to the administration at home. Because of their small size, the small delegations rely heavily on their colleagues in the various ministries back home. However, the time difference significantly affects some small delegations in negotiations when they need to react quickly. For example, officials based in Barbados are unable to intervene when negotiations take place in the morning in Geneva, just as Nauru officials are unavailable when they take place in the afternoon. The interviews conducted thus confirm and complement the challenges identified in the literature review.

4.2 Relation with Hypothesis 1

Use of AI in complex versus less complex environments

Regarding the use of AI depending on the type of negotiation, the debate is livelier, and there is no real consensus on the issue. Although a distinction was made earlier about the degree

[14] The interviewee refers to the following article: Kurbalija, J. (2016, May 25). Diplomacy between sprint and marathon. Diplo. https://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/diplomacy-between-sprint-and-marathon/

of complexity of a negotiation, the interviews were unable to demonstrate that AI is more useful in one context than another, but on the contrary, that it is useful for any type of negotiation, whatever the context or complexity of the subject addressed, as asserted by three diplomats and two experts.

One diplomat argued that the use of AI does not depend on the negotiation context but rather on the diplomat's expertise. In his view, AI can only be used when a person has sufficient expertise in a field to verify the information provided by the technology and adopt a critical judgment, citing the lack of reliability and transparency of current algorithms in terms of reasoning and sourcing. Conversely, this person advises not to use AI to summarize a subject too unfamiliar because the diplomat, who has the responsibility of committing his country, cannot make the slightest error, on pain of serious consequences. He therefore recommends using AI in negotiations considered less complex.

However, the opposite view is also expressed, with one diplomat indicating that he uses AI in negotiations deemed complex or technical in order to be better informed and master his subject. This view is echoed by one of the experts, who asserts that small delegations rarely engage with complex topics due to a lack of time, resources, and expertise. The added value of AI thus lies here, as it solves these three problems and enables small delegations to engage in negotiations in which they were previously absent. Given these responses, it is not possible to confirm Hypothesis 1, according to which small delegations tend to use AI in complex environments to compensate for difficulties in processing large volumes of information and a lack of expertise, which together constitute a structural disadvantage. The complexity of a negotiation, therefore, does not appear to be the only determining factor in the decision to use AI.

It's worth noting that all those interviewed affirmed that AI is relevant as a negotiator's assistant, to speed up task processing, for example, and that it can in no way replace the negotiator, as the model is not capable of understanding the insinuations and tone of diplomatic language, nor of "reading between the lines", an essential skill for a diplomat to decipher clues.

AI in the pre-negotiation phase – Solving asymmetric access to information and delegation size issues

The pre-negotiation phase is often underestimated, even though it is crucial in negotiations, as it is where states, generally less influential, try to compensate for their weaknesses in order to compete with the major powers. To overcome the difficulty in processing the continuous flow of information, AI can be used for descriptive and automated analysis of current events (press articles, position papers, official communications, press conferences, reports, recent work and progress, information, etc.) in many languages in order to identify trends concerning a specific theme or region. The interview responses support this, explaining the usefulness of AI to conduct background research, having access to sourced information and key data quickly, as well as remembering the historical position of countries on the negotiated topic.

Ma, Z., & al. (2024) demonstrated that AI-powered LLMs are effective in producing coherent and reliable summaries for negotiators in the context of humanitarian negotiations. AI is also capable of synthesizing this vast amount of data into tables or graphs that provide a clear and rapid visualization of key takeaways, such as the Crisis Risk Dashboard (Duberry, J., 2023). Two other ambitious AI projects aimed at solving this problem are currently under development: the DiploFoundation's Geneva AI Attaché and another one from OIF.

The Geneva AI Attaché aims to facilitate the informed and effective participation of small permanent missions by automating preparations, reporting, and other tasks such as agenda setting, gathering background information, and drafting official statements, so that diplomats

can focus on engagement, persuasion, and compromise-seeking (Kurbalija, J., 2024). The second, developed by OIF, has a similar objective of helping French-speaking delegations make more informed decisions. As the latter is still in its development phase, the OIF declined to share further information on its features.

The deployment of these helps address a major problem by compensating, at least in part, for the small size of delegations. The document analysis highlighted the inability of small delegations to attend all preparatory and technical meetings. Interviews confirmed this challenge and unanimously indicated that AI can produce reports of the discussions, debates, and statements produced during the meetings in which diplomats were unable to participate. Moreover, AI is capable of analyzing this information regardless of the language in which it is expressed, thanks to NLP (Babu, V. S., & Banana, K., 2024), thus overcoming the language barrier. Respondents also indicated the usefulness of producing summaries of long reports that they do not have time to read, thanks to GenAI. However, AI's ability to report on debates and reports remains limited, as it relies solely on public documents accessible online or manually provided to the machine and cannot participate on behalf of the absent delegation.

By generating detailed meeting minutes that include countries' negotiation priorities and strategies, as well as risk analyses, the use of AI contributes to building the capacities and skills needed for successful negotiations. In doing so, AI allows diplomats in small delegations to save considerable time. The added value of AI lies in its ability to collect and synthesize such a large amount of information that, when made available to negotiators, it can have a significant impact on the overall outcome of negotiations (Courtois, P., & Lavadoux, F., 2024).

Finally, interviews revealed the use of GenAI, such as ChatGPT, by some diplomats to draft interventions and improve wording in order to deliver clear and impactful speeches. This is

especially relevant for representatives whose native language is not one of the six official languages of the UN.

AI in the negotiation phase – AI as a thematic counselor and voting predictor

By drawing on data collected during the pre-negotiation and negotiation phases, as well as the analysis of diplomatic signals and diplomatic cables sent by embassies, press summaries, and intelligence briefings (Bjola, C., 2020), AI acts as a replicable thematic advisor (advisor on disarmament, environment, health, human rights, trade, etc.), indicating the probabilities of various scenarios occurring and replicating a Monte Carlo simulation, thereby solving the problem of delegation composition (thematic expertise, negotiation experience).

However, interviews highlighted that it would be more relevant to have a generic model that can provide answers on any type of subject rather than an AI thematic counselor for each subject or each UN agency, arguing that subjects at the UN are transversal and cannot be siloed. AI must then be able to take into account the discussions that took place in a given UN agency when making recommendations for a discussion taking place in another agency. Several also point out that one should never rely solely on the recommendations issued by the digital tool, as it presents algorithmic bias, inaccuracy, transparency, accountability, etc. It is also important to always ask for its sources.

Furthermore, researchers have investigated GenAI's ability to predict scenarios, stakeholder preferences, and likely voting behavior during multilateral negotiations (Stanzel, V., & Voelsen, D., 2022). They propose modeling AI based on available information about other parties, such as voting behavior on previous resolutions (all General Assembly resolution votes since 1946

are published in the UN Digital Library[15]), resolution authorship, and membership in regional groups and IOs.

The authors conclude that AI allows scenarios to be generated much more quickly and at a lower cost than if done manually. It has the ability to cross-reference immense amounts of data, which would otherwise require massive labor, and interpret them with fewer assumptions than humans, allowing it to propose scenarios that diplomats would not necessarily consider. However, Stanzel, V., & Voelsen, D. (2022) are unable to assert that using AI as a predictive model represents a strategic advantage, as it still produces too many absurd results. They therefore conclude that predictive AI must be further explored to reduce its margin of error and thus truly become a strategic weapon for small delegations.

More broadly, the value of using AI to make predictions is the fact that it can provide advice and suggestions in real time without being influenced by emotions as an individual would be. Therefore, it makes rational decisions based on data while eliminating “irrational exuberance” (Schwab, K., 2017).

However, although the interviews highlight a certain curiosity about knowing the position of other states, or even the co-sponsors of a resolution, few indicate that this would significantly challenge their own position, defined during the pre-negotiation phase, because it is often defined "behind closed doors" and guided by orders from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a result, respondents consider it unlikely that they will change their position based on the indications provided by the AI, especially since these are only probabilities and the model is not 100 % reliable in its predictions, which, as a reminder, are based solely on information publicly available online. Nevertheless, it can have an effect on the position in the case where

[15] United Nations. (n.d. -b). Voting Data. United Nations Digital Library. Retrieved March 15, 2025, from https://digitallibrary.un.org/search?cc=Voting%20Data&ln=fr

the diplomat discovers that he is the only one defending a certain position or that his entire regional bloc votes differently from him. In this situation, the diplomat should be alert to a possible argument or element of language that he may have missed.

4.3 Relation with Hypothesis 2

Data protection, ethical concerns, and biases

In a situation where diplomats cannot rely on internally developed models due to financial limits, meaning they do not have control over data protection, the question arises as to what measures must be taken to prevent data leaks, given the sensitivity of the information handled on a daily basis.

Although the interviews emphasize the need for caution in handling information and highlight the risks of sensitive data leaks linked to the use of external models, paradoxically, the vast majority of the diplomats interviewed mentioned using commercial AI, such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, or Microsoft Copilot, and claim to have no control over the management of the data collected by American firms. These results, therefore, lead us to reject Hypothesis 2.

As Ma, Z., & al. (2024) recall, most LLMs on the market today are developed in Western countries and contain biases that often influence the answers offered to users. In his article for the media Geneva Solutions, Jérôme Duberry (2023) describes the phenomenon well:

> *"Introducing a proprietary AI developed by a foreign state or a private company into diplomatic negotiations is akin to bringing an unchecked stakeholder into the room. Technology is political in the sense that it reflects the values and interests of its designer, which are both temporally and geographically localized."*

Facing these risks, each diplomat adopts its own measures. For example, by avoiding uploading confidential documents or revealing the names of individuals or governments during their

interactions with the AI. Furthermore, few of these delegations (and by extension, their government) have a legal framework or guidelines ruling the use of AI by their staff. Only two diplomats feel confident that ChatGPT respects the protection of the data of its users, in particular the paid version subscribers. Yet, the lack of transparency is frequently raised, as no one is able to say where the data is stored and who benefits from it. Experts explain that only internally developed algorithms can guarantee total transparency and data protection by relying on encryption, access controls, and compliance with data protection legislation such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Finally, several people highlight raising diplomats' awareness of these issues as an effective measure to reduce the risk of data leaks, which raises the question of whether diplomats should undergo specific training to use AI.

Diplomats training

Training the model to comply with data protection is one thing, training the user is another. All nine respondents are convinced of the importance of training diplomats in the use of AI.

It's important that diplomats are trained, for instance, to know how to communicate with the model and express their queries correctly so that the machine produces the desired results quickly and accurately. Given that AI responses depend on the data supplied to them, it is crucial to understand how the algorithm works to exploit its full potential without relying solely on AI-generated content and losing the human qualities of a negotiator. Users also need to be made aware of cyberthreats and security measures to be taken to minimize risks. Finally, diplomats need to be able to detect when content such as speeches is AI-generated.

In this respect, in-person and online training courses have been multiplying in recent years, and two players stand out in international Geneva in this field. On the one hand, the DiploFoundation offers several training courses specially designed for diplomats, starting with

the AI apprenticeship course[16], which provides both theoretical and practical foundations by enabling participants to create their own AI model based on GenAI. There's also the Diplo AI Campus[17], which brings together a range of courses covering tech diplomacy, e-diplomacy, disinformation, cybersecurity, diplomatic communication, and much more. For example, one of these courses is the AI Prompting for Diplomats course[18], which enables them to bridge the digital divide and learn how to communicate with AI in order to obtain quality results.

On the other hand, the Geneva Graduate Institute, through the executive education department and Tech Hub, offers a two-day training course for diplomats in negotiation techniques made possible by AI[19]. Finally, there is the AI Negotiation Challenge[20], an initiative aimed at simulating a negotiation where participants, in teams, must develop their own AI model in order to solve global issues by elaborating scenarios and strategies.

The aim of all these training courses is to raise diplomats' awareness of the ethical implications of AI, including bias and accountability, as well as teach how to automate data analysis to save time and achieve better outcomes.

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[16] DiploFoundation. (n.d.). *AI and diplomacy: Apprenticeship in negotiating AI governance*. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from https://www.diplomacy.edu/course/ai-apprenticeship/

[17] DiploFoundation. (n.d.). *Diplo AI Campus*. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from https://study.diplomacy.edu/ai-campus/

[18] DiploFoundation. (n.d.). *AI Prompting for Diplomats*. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from https://study.diplomacy.edu/courses/ai-prompting-for-diplomats/

[19] Geneva Graduate Institute. (n.d.). *AI-Enhanced Negotiation Tools and Techniques*. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from https://executive.graduateinstitute.ch/programmes/ai-negotiation-tools-techniques

[20] AI Negotiation Challenge. (n.d.). *AI Negotiation Challenge*. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from https://www.ai-negotiation-challenge.org/

The need for a global legally binding framework

Beyond the training of diplomats, the definition of a legally binding framework is a solution to regulate and better govern AI. In this sense, eight of the nine people interviewed are in favor of a legally binding framework on a global scale, enabling the effective regulation of AI use and ensuring compliance with its application by stakeholders. To maximize the legitimacy of this framework, all parties must adhere to its articles.

However, it is precisely the difficulty of finding a consensus that makes global agreement not realistically conceivable in the near future. There are two main reasons for this. The first is the different positions and contexts of the players around the table. Some are calling for less regulation of the technology sector, while others are still affected by power cuts and lack of Internet connectivity, which puts AI regulation at the back of their priorities. Secondly, AI has a cross-sectoral impact, requiring agreement on a huge number of issues. Getting everyone to agree could result in a weak agreement with very broad principles.

The proposed solution is therefore to start by establishing regional regulatory frameworks along the lines of the EU AI Act. It is only once all regions of the world have their own framework that negotiations at the international level can take place to harmonize practices. The advantage of starting with regional frameworks is that they reflect local dynamics and challenges, which would be very difficult to achieve with a top-down approach (global framework). In any case, a global agreement is needed for the long term to ensure better governance, given that information is global. Without a solid governance structure, there is a real risk of ethical and legal breaches that could compromise diplomatic integrity.

The role of the UN

As this study focuses on multilateral negotiations taking place within the UN, it is important to take a closer look at the role played by the latter in balancing power relations

between its member states. All participants indicate that the UN has the responsibility to ensure compliance with article 2 of its founding charter, according to which all member states must be equally represented [...], regardless of their size, population, or economic power. Diplomats call on the UN to provide logistical and financial support to small delegations so that they can concentrate fully on their negotiations, for example, by subsidizing part of the costs of setting up and maintaining a representation in Geneva (offices, accommodation, travel), which are relatively high for small missions.

In view of the low level of participation by small delegations, it is also requested that hybrid formats for participation in meetings be reintroduced, as they were during the COVID-19 pandemic, to enable missions affected by logistical problems preventing them from traveling to the Palais des Nations to follow conferences from their offices or even from their ministries. The maintenance of broadcasting conferences via the UN TV service as well as meeting reports is more than wished, as the offer has been greatly reduced by the liquidity crisis, thus penalizing those who are unable to attend the meetings and wish to watch the replay or read the minutes. On another point, a diplomat put forward an original proposal by asking the UN to provide two paid interns to small missions that request it. According to him, this would allow a certain objectivity in the people chosen and would greatly help the mission in its work, as it has neither the time nor the resources to hire trainees.

In terms of implementing AI within the UN, several proposals came from the interviewees. First, the UN should be the one in charge of AI training. Second, if the UN develops its own AI, one of its features should give access to member states to the archives and data of all UN agencies to save them crucial time when looking for an old document in preparing for negotiations. Third, which has come up several times, is to extend the use of AI to many agencies for voice interpretation and translation of documents and websites, currently limited to a handful of organizations such as the International Telecommunication Union.

However, the latter proposal is fueling a heated debate. On the one hand, some argue that its use will save a great deal of time and broaden the offer by making events and documents accessible in the six official languages and even beyond, thereby resolving the shortcomings in the principle of multilingualism, as well as minimizing the significant costs represented by human interpretation and translation, especially at a time when the organization's financial health is deeply concerning. On the other hand, some are opposed to the expansion of AI in these fields, justifying the job losses it would entail and the drop in quality in interpretation and translation, arguing for the need to always double-check by a human, and questioning the ability of AI to correctly interpret diplomatic language marked by the recurrent use of figures of speech, innuendo, and subtle humor.

Therefore, interviews do not allow for any conclusions on the use of AI for interpretation and translation. Nevertheless, AI can prove useful when used in an informal context or for unofficial purposes.

4.4 Relation with Hypothesis 3

Modeling AI

A first element addressing Hypothesis 3 is the relationship between the time spent training the model and the quality of results/time saved. All the experts give similar answers, acknowledging that in the short term, developing a model requires significant financial effort and resources (coding the algorithm, selecting relevant documents to train it, writing effective prompts), but that in the long term, the benefits far outweigh the initial investment. For example, once the model is up and running, it considerably reduces the time spent by diplomats on administrative tasks such as summarizing reports and forecasting positions, enabling them to focus on more strategic tasks. To illustrate this marginal time-saving phenomenon, one of the experts uses the example of a subscription to a sports club. An annual subscription for a

single training session is very expensive. On the other hand, the more training sessions you take part in, the more profitable the membership becomes. In the case studied, the more AI is deployed in various negotiations over time, the more the initial costs will be spread and minimized.

As for the necessity to develop its own model from scratch, the interviews show that small permanent missions do not have the resources to develop their in-house model. As a solution, it is recommended to rely on larger entities that have the required financial and human resources to develop models, such as regional organizations like the EU, the Pacific Island Forum, or the Commonwealth Forum. In this way, confidence in the model would be preserved, and avoid investing millions in an internal model. A short-term proposal is to use existing open-source models and tailor them in-house or subscribe to memberships like ChatGPT Pro. In the long term, development costs should decrease, making it more affordable to have its own AI model to achieve better results. As Anita Lamprecht, from the DiploFoundation, explains:

> *"While building and running foundational AI models (LLMs) may be beyond the reach of many countries, the situation is different for agents. The AI Apprenticeship course underscored a crucial point: anyone can build and host independent AI agents. This includes countries, organizations, and even individuals with reasonable budgets, reducing reliance on big tech companies. Such independence is vital for diplomats representing their countries' interests in international negotiations and for organizations that must maintain impartiality"* (Lamprecht, A., 2024).

AI for achieving better goals

Regarding question 13, the answer is unanimous. Everyone recognizes that AI allows small delegations to achieve significantly better outcomes during negotiations where it is used compared to situations where it is not. For example, it allows for the identification of common

ground and possible compromises but also gives more credibility to the diplomat when addressing to other negotiators, notably by providing him with additional arguments to immediately react to the remarks of a peer. Above all, its ability to automate certain tasks through ML, such as synthesizing discussions, allows negotiators to focus on more strategic aspects of the negotiation, such as understanding the nuances of the opposing parties' positions. More broadly, this frees up human resources that can be reassigned to other tasks, thereby increasing the participation and effectiveness of a delegation. However, its use only works under human supervision to control the truthfulness and accuracy of the responses because it lacks empathy, emotional intelligence, and cultural understanding, essential human qualities in diplomatic contexts. All these results confirm hypothesis 3.

AI as a reducer of power asymmetries and an increase in the efficiency of small delegations

Now that all three hypotheses have been answered, an answer to the research question can be formulated. Although earlier analyses would have us believe that AI has the capacity to reduce power asymmetries by increasing the effectiveness of small delegations, the answer is more complicated than that. In fact, the problem has to be broken down into two parts. All diplomats and experts confirm that AI does indeed increase the effectiveness of diplomats in certain specific tasks, notably by providing them with additional key elements for their argumentation, enabling them to intervene more confidently by accurately identifying stakeholders' positions and potential scenarios.

Yet, although smaller delegations will be more effective, seven out of nine interviewees pointed out that AI will not reduce the imbalances of power around the negotiating table. The reason may seem obvious: nothing stops large delegations from using AI too. On the contrary, these larger delegations have greater financial and human resources at their disposal, enabling them to exploit the full potential of AI to their advantage. What needs to be understood in this context

is that, at best, AI will maintain these imbalances of power to the detriment of smaller delegations; at worst, one can expect it to increase inequalities between players in multilateral negotiations.

4.5 Limitations

In order to lend solidity to this research, it is crucial to take a critical look at it, highlighting its limitations.

First, it is necessary to recall that there is a lack of empirical data on the concrete effects of AI on multilateral negotiations, linked to the fact that the use of this technology is still in the development and experimentation phase. Ideally, a similar analysis based on quantitative data must be reproduced in order to confirm or refute the results of the present study, which is positioned as a first attempt on this still poorly documented subject.

Second, although the sample size corresponds to the standards imposed by qualitative research and diversity criteria are applied, it must be recognized that it represents the opinion and vision of only a handful of diplomats from small permanent missions and that their point of view does not necessarily apply to all diplomats from all UN member states. It would be interesting to replicate the same study by including interviews with diplomats from larger delegations, who have the financial and human resources to exploit the full potential of AI, so as not to be limited to a single negotiator profile. In the same spirit, although three experts answered the questions, it was not possible to meet any expert working at the UN, notably from the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies, despite several invitations being sent out. This would have been added value for the study, as it would have enabled a comparison between the perspectives of diplomats and reality, while also providing insights into ongoing discussions and projects on AI within the UN.

These first two limitations suggest the possibility that this study contains a slight subjectivity bias, given that it is based mainly on a dozen interviews rather than verified empirical data.

A third limitation concerns the rapid evolution of AI, which could render the findings of this study obsolete within a few years. For example, there is some likelihood that the interpreter and translator sectors will undergo profound changes in the years to come, given the speed at which AI is developing, expecting it to be able to interpret language, tone, and diplomatic humor, as well as emotions and body language of diplomats, and to translate documents in many languages with near 100 % accuracy. The same applies to position prediction and scenario simulation by GenAI models such as DiploFoundation's Geneva AI Attaché, which today are not reliable enough for widespread use because they are too imprecise but which could rapidly see their margin of error diminish and reach levels of accuracy never before equaled.

Finally, there is no guarantee that AI will completely resolve power asymmetries, as a negotiation involves an infinite number of variables, most of which are subjective and beyond the control of even the most experienced negotiator, as are external factors such as the national and global politico-economic context.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, by examining the place of AI in multilateral negotiations and its capacity to reduce inequalities between players, this academic research is part of a wider movement to reflect on current transformations that are overturning multilateralism and the established international order. It raises questions about power dynamics, persistent inequalities, and the way in which societies wish to embark on the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The literature review first establishes the context in which the research is conducted. In other words, it provides an overview of multilateral negotiations in the 21st century. More specifically, it highlights the persistent inequalities between world powers during negotiation cycles as an obstacle to the proper functioning of multilateralism as a mode of global governance. The literature review then turns to a discussion of AI, the driving force behind the Fourth Industrial Revolution. At a time when speeches in favor of its integration into all sectors and industries of society are multiplying, it is legitimate to wonder about its usefulness in negotiations, given that the subject is still poorly covered. Its first deployments in diplomacy, as well as the question of its governance and ethics, are addressed.

Then, drawing on the capabilities approach theorized by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, the theoretical framework proposes to perceive AI as a capacity-building tool that would alleviate the structural challenges faced by diplomats, thus increasing the participation and influence of small delegations in negotiations. On this basis, three hypotheses are put forward, arguing that 1) small delegations tend to use artificial intelligence in complex environments to compensate for their difficulties in processing large amounts of information and their lack of expertise; 2) small delegations refrain from using artificial intelligence when they consider the technology to be unreliable in terms of data protection and the ethics of handling sensitive information; 3) when using artificial intelligence, small delegations tend to believe that they achieve significantly better results than when they do not use it. These three hypotheses, which

serve as guidelines for the field analysis, also help to answer the research question posed in this study, namely, to what extent can artificial intelligence reduce power asymmetries in multilateral negotiations and enhance the effectiveness of small delegations?

Given the lack of quantitative data on the subject, it was decided to answer these questions by using a qualitative method based on interviews with diplomats from small permanent missions, given their centrality in the research, as well as with experts on the subject. To compensate for the lack of empirical data and to ground the qualitative method, a hypothetico-deductive analysis scheme combined with data triangulation is undertaken.

Therefore, the results of the nine interviews conducted indicate that the use of AI would be useful not only for negotiations deemed complex but for any type of context, thus rejecting Hypothesis 1.

During the pre-negotiation phase, AI through LLMs helps small delegations by facilitating contextual searches, providing rapid access to reliable information and key data, synthesizing it in graphical form, and recalling countries' historical positions on the subject under negotiation, thus partly solving the structural problem of lack of personnel by artificially increasing the size of the delegation. Generative artificial intelligence is also capable of producing coherent content, such as summaries of long reports and bases of official declarations in all languages, thus eliminating language barriers.

During the negotiation phase, AI proves to be slightly less impactful in that its predictions, which, as we recall, are merely probabilistic and have only a lesser influence on the position of the countries that use it. Nevertheless, it remains very relevant if the modeling of a single agent can address issues within all UN agencies, given the cross-cutting nature of the issues discussed within them.

Moreover, it is possible to draw inspiration from existing models to develop its own or, alternatively, to join forces under a regional initiative to reduce initial costs.

Furthermore, the results highlighted a significant paradox: diplomats claim to respect data protection and the ethical use of AI, even though they admit to using commercial AI without knowing how and for what purposes their data, some of which may be sensitive or even confidential, is used, thus rejecting Hypothesis 2. To address this significant problem, there are several solutions. A first one is to develop its AI model internally in order to establish security protocols such as encryption and access control. A second solution is to train diplomats in the use of this technology, as well as to raise their awareness of cybersecurity issues. A third solution is the adoption of a legally binding framework at the international level regulating the use of AI. However, the latter does not seem to be objectively feasible in the short term. It is therefore recommended to first establish jurisdiction at the regional level, similar to the EU AI Act, and only after consider unifying standards at the international level. The analysis also highlights the UN's responsibility for the smooth running of negotiations by ensuring the participation of smaller delegations through equity measures.

Overall, AI has the capacity to facilitate the work of diplomats, and the significant long-term benefits it brings far outweigh the fixed costs it requires upfront. Similarly, smaller delegations tend to believe they can achieve significantly better results when using AI compared to when they do not, thus confirming Hypothesis 3. By automating certain tasks, such as summarizing discussions, AI frees up human resources that can be allocated to other strategic tasks in the negotiation, thus increasing the efficiency of a delegation. However, this increase in efficiency does not reduce power imbalances at the negotiating table, as other delegations with greater financial and human resources are able to harness the full potential of AI to their advantage. Based on the results of this research, we should therefore expect to see inequalities persist or even widen between member states as AI becomes more widespread in negotiations.

Given that this research is a first in this field, it would be interesting to replicate this analysis by attempting to empirically measure the gap that AI will widen between small and large delegations. Moreover, this study focused solely on small delegations from UN member countries. There exist other types of actors (NGOs, private companies, industry representatives, associations, lobbies) that face similar problems and for whom the findings of this study may be beneficial. Similarly, the research focuses on negotiations taking place within the UNOG. It would therefore be relevant to determine whether the results are the same for negotiations taking place in other contexts (UN Headquarters, EU, OECD, International Organization for Standardization) and with different actors.

Finally, this study did not address two closely related dimensions: the degrees of integration and dependence on AI that we want to have in negotiations and, more broadly, in diplomacy. Regarding the first dimension, it has been mentioned earlier that AI, in its current form, cannot replace diplomats and is more effective as an tool for the negotiator by supplementing their practical knowledge. Regarding the second dimension, excessive reliance on LLMs can lead the negotiator to neglect certain human skills, such as critical thinking, thus preventing him from detecting errors made by the model. This raises several important questions that we must answer: Given that AI will undoubtedly become more competent and reduce its margin of error in the coming years, what do we want multilateral negotiations to look like? What do we want the professions of negotiator and diplomat to look like? Which human qualities are we willing to relinquish with new technologies, and which ones must we protect at all costs?

It is urgent to reflect on the direction we want to take as a global community and to clearly define the path to follow in order to integrate AI into our societies in a manner that is neither rushed nor overly cautious, so that we can harness its full potential for the benefit of all, leaving no one behind.

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