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Aug 18, 2025 by **Paul Hare**

Why Trump’s “Truth Social Public Diplomacy” Leads to Few Diplomatic Wins ^[1]

Six months into his term, President Trump's diplomacy has had few successes. How does "Truth Social Public Diplomacy" contribute to these diplomatic stumbles?

The Ukraine war has intensified with Russia's largest-ever aerial attacks. The Hamas-Israel ceasefire that Trump negotiated fell apart in March, and there is no deal to stop the fighting.

This week, we have the Trump-Putin summit in Alaska, after many months of unproductive diplomacy. Putin's ambitions appear undiminished.

Yes, Trump has built on Obama's 2014 NATO commitment to increase defense spending. And some new tariff deals are done. It is true all diplomacy usually fails more often not. But Trump's record suggests his use of Truth Social and social media does not help diplomatic outcomes.

Trump portrays himself as the master dealmaker. Do others see it like that? On July 8, a Russian newspaper commented: "The US president blows hot and cold...he changes his mind on key issues as easily as he changes shoes."

Trump's Truth Social posts claim the headlines. But they also give clear leverage to countries to know which diplomatic card to play. Other countries exploit what they have learnt from Truth Social. Here are some examples and the results for Trump's diplomatic objectives.

Win the Nobel Peace Prize. Trump and his advisors are determined that he should win the Nobel Peace Prize. On June 21st, Trump listed on Truth Social the reasons he deserved the prize. Pakistan had just nominated him for mediating their conflict with India. India later denied Trump's involvement. Pakistan has also recently invested in Trump's crypto company, World Liberty Financial. Ironically, Pakistan also played a leading role in assisting Iran's nuclear program. Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Israel have now played the same Nobel card.

Reject Obama's legacy. Trump has ridiculed Obama's Nobel Prize in social media. He scrapped Obama's deals— joining the Paris Climate Accords, the Cuba reset and the JCPOA Iran nuclear agreement. The JCPOA was not "Obama's agreement" because it included Russia, China, the UK, France, and Germany. By going it alone on Iran, Trump's diplomacy has undermined the whole nuclear non- proliferation regime.

Negotiate without allies. The Afghanistan withdrawal of 2020 was signed alone without NATO allies and the Afghan government. The Taliban knew Trump wanted a peace deal before the November 2020 election. They had read his Twitter posts and saw how they undermined the Afghan government.

Israel. Trump had always wanted a peace win in The Middle East. Netanyahu gave this in the Abraham Accords of 2020. The Accords ignored the Palestine issue. The Accords emboldened Hamas and Iran, leading to the chaos since October 2023. Yet Trump tweeted they would lead to "real peace in the Middle East for the first time."

Trump claimed on Truth Social that only he could have achieved the January 2025 Hamas-Israel ceasefire even though Biden's team had drafted it. Israel was to withdraw from Gaza but it collapsed in March. Then Trump suggested that America should 'own' Gaza. But Trump's other main ally in the region – Saudi Arabia – had broken with him, insisting the Palestine State be recognized. Palestine now has far more support than when Trump came to office

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Iran. Trump's Iran peace talks ended when Netanyahu persuaded Trump to bomb Iran's nuclear sites. Now the IAEA and Israel worry about Iran's enriched uranium stockpile. Trump said on Truth Social that Iran's nuclear assets had been "obliterated." Israel and Iran had asked him to make peace. None of that was true. Iran is closer to Russia than ever before and the IAEA lost their knowledge of Iran's nuclear program.

Putin. On February 19, Trump repeated on Truth Social Russia's arguments for the Ukraine war, even saying that Ukraine started the war. Trump posted that Putin would never have invaded if Trump had been President. In April, Putin ignored Trump's "Stop, Vladimir" post and has continued to attack Ukrainian cities.

Other diplomatic forays. Elsewhere, Trump has no results from his diplomatic forays into Greenland, the Panama Canal, even Canada. And there is no deal with Venezuela to repatriate thousands of Venezuelans. Trump publicly stated in January that the inhabitants of Greenland "want to be with us." A poll showed that 85% did not. On North Korea, after three summits with Kim Jong Un in 2019, their nuclear program is stronger than ever.

Tariffs. Trump's motives for tariffs are varied. To protect US manufacturers. To raise money. To pressurize Brazil over Bolsonaro and Canada over Palestine recognition. Confusion abounds. Previously the Mexico Canada free trade deal of 2020 had been called 'a colossal victory'.

Trump's image. Trump watches polls. Israel is losing support in America. And Trump's tariff target countries know tariffs may alienate American voters. Brazil can use social media to blame Trump for the coffee price rises.

Strings attached. Trump promotes his meme coin, perfume, etc., on Truth Social. His diplomacy is linked to his family's businesses in real estate, golf resorts, and crypto. He has long wanted a Trump Tower in Russia. Putin is using crypto to evade US sanctions. Elsewhere, Vietnam has announced massive projects with Trump . The UAE has invested \$2bn in World Liberty Financial – where envoy Steve Witkoff is a partner- and Qatar has donated a luxury plane. A Chinese government-linked company, GD Culture Group, has invested \$300m in Trump's meme coin. And Saudi Arabia has done numerous business deals with the Trump family.

Around the Corner. On February 19th Trump posted, “we are successfully negotiating an end to the war with Russia.” Minister Lavrov commented on Trump's latest 50 day Ukraine ultimatum: “It used to be 24 hours. It used to be 100 days.... “

Trump's public diplomacy regularly misquotes other countries' diplomatic positions. In February, Trump said that President Putin was not opposed to European peacemakers in Ukraine. Russia immediately denied. On February 5, Saudi Arabia rebuked Trump for saying they would not insist on recognizing Palestine as a state.

The Putin-Trump summit, which both have wanted, has finally happened. After the long litany of Truth Social posts, we may be close to Trump's peace win on Putin's terms. Public diplomacy can help or hinder the overall activity of diplomacy. But the evidence suggests Trump's use of Truth Social has seriously undercut America's diplomatic credibility.
