

Economic Diplomacy at the Crossroads of Digitalization and Sustainability: A New Era of Policy Diversification

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Abstract. *Economic diplomacy is now at the forefront of global policymaking, increasingly shaped by digital transformation and sustainability. In recent years, the United States has experienced significant changes driven by the contrasting approaches of the Trump and Biden administrations. Trump prioritized trade protectionism, deregulation, and technological advancement, while Biden focused on multilateral cooperation, sustainability, and Artificial Intelligence governance. With Trump's return to office in 2025, economic diplomacy has shifted toward deregulated digital policies and a potential retreat from sustainability commitments. Existing research emphasizes the growing influence of digital platforms on public sentiment, yet many studies have focused on elections, overlooking the impact of key political events. This study addresses that gap by analyzing social media reactions to Trump's 2025 inauguration, through a comprehensive sentiment analysis, using Machine Learning models. The results showed positive sentiments, surpassing negative and neutral reactions. Compared to election-period sentiment, the inauguration sparked more positive reactions, reflecting both symbolic optimism and expectations for economic and technological growth, while negative sentiments mainly focused on environmental concerns, revealing ongoing debates about the trade-offs between deregulation and sustainability. These findings contribute to the existing studies by demonstrating how political transitions influence public sentiment, with key events temporarily shifting opinions. By combining sentiment analysis with the study of digitalization and sustainability, this research highlights the importance of understanding public perceptions in shaping economic diplomacy.*

Keywords: economic diplomacy, digitalization, environmental governance, sentiment analysis, policy shifts, public perception

Introduction

Economic diplomacy is rapidly evolving, shaped by the global push for digital transformation and sustainability. As countries navigate an increasingly interconnected world, advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital technologies are reshaping the international economic scene. Simultaneously, the shift toward sustainable policies is driving governments to balance economic growth with environmental responsibility. Digitalization and sustainability have become defining factors in shaping global economic strategies, influencing not only national policies but also diplomatic relations.

The transition from the Biden Administration to the Trump Administration reflects the tension in American society between favoring technological innovation and maintaining environmental accountability. The Biden Administration prioritized global cooperation, sustainable energy, and digital regulation, while Trump's return marked a shift toward economic growth driven by deregulation and technological advancement, often at the expense of environmental commitments (Crawford, 2025). This policy shift reflects the belief that prioritizing innovation and competitiveness will strengthen the United States (US) economy, even as it challenges international climate agreements.

The primary aim of this research is to examine the sentiments expressed by the public on social media during the inauguration of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2025, placing this analysis in the context of the contrasting approaches of the Biden and Trump administrations, particularly in terms of digitalization and sustainability. The study starts from the premise that public sentiment toward major policy events can provide insight into the level of support for particular policy directions and potential future developments. This sentiment is often shaped by media representations of presidential decisions, including the adoption and implementation of digital and environmental policies, considered two areas where the differences between the Biden administration in 2021 and Trump's initial actions in 2025 are particularly pronounced. Given the media's influence in shaping public opinion, analyzing the sentiments expressed in news and other forms of media discourse provides additional context for understanding how these narratives influence public perception. The study therefore seeks to explore the connections between public dialogue in social media and its impact on perceptions of key policies, with a focus on how these dynamics can shape future socio-political trends.

By combining economic policy analysis with sentiment analysis, this research provides a broad perspective on how economic diplomacy is evolving in relation to digitalization and sustainability. The findings contribute to a better understanding of the influence of political leadership on global economic strategies and highlight the role of public opinion in shaping economic policy decisions in an increasingly digitalized and sustainability-conscious world.

Literature review

Economic Diplomacy Under 2021 Biden Administration and 2025 Trump Administration

The transition from the Biden administration (2021-2025) to the Trump administration in 2025 marked a sharp turning point in US policy, particularly in the areas of digitalization and sustainability, where the differences between administrations are most pronounced, as stated by von Daniels (2024). This shift reflected the American voters' decision to re-elect Trump, indicating a preference for his more radical approach to reshaping US economic, digital and environmental strategies.

In terms of digital policy, von Daniels (2024) notes that the Biden administration emphasized regulation, ethical AI development, and consumer data protection, aligning with global trends toward responsible digital governance. In contrast, the Trump 2025 administration quickly reversed this course, prioritizing innovation, deregulation, and technology leadership, as observed by Duball (2025). Key executive orders have removed barriers to AI development and expanded digital financial technology to boost US competitiveness and national security. Initiatives such as the Presidential Task Force on Digital Finance and the Council of Advisors on Science and Technology were designed to support entrepreneurship and accelerate technological advances.

However, this deregulation has raised concerns about consumer protection, cybersecurity and the ethical implications of the rapid development of AI.

Sustainable development policy has undergone an equally radical change. Biden has positioned the US as a global leader in tackling climate change, re-adhering to the Paris Agreement and promoting investment in green energy to reduce carbon emissions (Asuene, 2025). Trump's return to power has brought a renewed focus on economic growth through traditional industries such as oil, gas and coal. His administration withdrew the US from the Paris Agreement for a second time, signaling a retreat from global climate commitments. This shift reduced government intervention in environmental regulation, intending to boost domestic energy production and industrial growth (Gibson, 2025). While these moves have been praised by sectors that want less regulation, they have raised concerns about long-term environmental risks and a diminishing US role in global climate leadership.

Donald Trump's return to the presidency in 2025 has sparked a wide range of reactions worldwide, reflecting diverse geopolitical perspectives. A survey by Ash et al. (2025) for the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) found that while Europeans expressed significant concerns about Trump's second term, many countries viewed his return more positively, as respondents believe his return could bring peace and reduce tensions in global conflicts. Domestically, while a considerable segment of the US population sees Trump's return as a positive development, reflecting a sense of renewed national pride and a change from previous policies, recent surveys reveal a more nuanced public opinion.

Sentiment Analysis in Modern Politics

Sentiment analysis is the process of evaluating text to identify whether the sentiment expressed is positive, negative, or neutral. It plays a key role in understanding people's attitudes, emotions, and thoughts regarding specific events or topics. By analyzing large amounts of unstructured data from social media and online platforms, sentiment analysis helps reveal trends in public opinion and digital engagement, as studied by Bhavitha et al. (2017). Sentiment analysis has the potential to become a key tool in modern politics, providing real-time information about public opinion that can influence both election outcomes and policy decisions. With the rapid growth of social media platforms, politicians and researchers have access to an expanded pool of unfiltered opinions, revealing how individuals react to political events as they unfold. As demonstrated by Ansaria et al. (2020), analyzing political sentiments expressed on social media platforms allows researchers to track public reactions and predict electoral trends. Findings showed that social media sentiment provides valuable insights into voter preferences, highlighting the growing influence of digital platforms in shaping political narratives. This reflects broader trends in modern political communication, where social media serves as a space for public expression and as a strategic tool for political campaigns to interact with voters, shape their messages and respond to feedback in real time. As digital communication continues to evolve, sentiment analysis is set to play an increasingly central role in politics, providing data-driven insights that help political players understand and respond to the complex and rapidly changing landscape of public opinion.

Leading up to the 2024 US presidential election, Permutable AI (2024) conducted an extensive sentiment analysis comparing media portrayals of Kamala Harris and Donald Trump. Their findings showed a significant shift during the week of October 7th, 2024, when, for the first time in the analyzed period of time, positive sentiment toward Trump surpassed that of Harris. This shift was observed across 350 major news outlets and revealed a notable change in both media presentation and public opinion. The analysis demonstrated how changing media narratives can

shape electoral dynamics, with favorable coverage of the Trump campaign aligning with broader trends in public sentiment. The study emphasized the growing importance of sentiment analysis as a tool for understanding the complex relationship between media, politics and public perception. By utilizing digital tools to capture shifts in opinion in real time, the research provided a picture of how media coverage influences and reflects voter attitudes. This highlights the critical role of public opinion monitoring to better understand the factors that drive political campaigns and shape election outcomes.

In addition to traditional media analysis, Bulut (2024) also examined social media texts to assess public sentiment throughout the 2024 US election period. The results revealed a pronounced dominance of positive sentiments towards Donald Trump, with favorable expressions consistently outnumbering neutral and negative ones. This trend emerged not only in direct mentions of Trump, but also in broader discussions of key political events and policy proposals. The consistency of positive sentiment over time suggested consistent support from certain segments of the online community. While negative and neutral sentiments fluctuated throughout the year, positive reactions maintained a more stable presence, reflecting a solid approval base. In addition, the study highlighted the influential role of media coverage in shaping public sentiment, as portrayals of Trump and his policies often amplified both praise and criticism. The intersection between traditional media narratives and user-generated content on social media platforms provided insights into how public opinion shifted during the election period, highlighting the complex relationship between media representation and digital discourse.

Methodology

In this study, we conducted a sentiment analysis to assess public reactions to the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump in the United States on the 20th of January 2025, using messages posted on the social media platform X (formerly “Twitter”) by users on the day of the event as the analyzed database. Our analysis began by preparing the dataset, which we sourced from Kaggle (2025). The dataset contained 65,536 social media entries related to Trump’s inauguration, that we stored in an Excel file named “XDatabase.xlsx”. All non-English texts were translated using the “=googletranslate()” function in Google Sheets to ensure consistency in sentiment interpretation. This approach preserved the context and tone of the original messages while enabling the application of the model’s English-based lexicon.

To analyze public sentiment regarding the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States in 2025, we used VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and Sentiment Reasoner), a lexicon-based sentiment analysis tool for interpreting sentiment conveyed in textual data, especially on social media platforms, developed by Hutto and Gilbert (2014). We chose VADER as an appropriate model for our study, as it is designed for analyzing short, informal and context-rich texts, taking into account features such as slang, emoticons, capitalization and punctuation that are prominent in social media posts.

VADER operates in Python as a sentiment analysis library integrated into the NLTK (Natural Language Toolkit) library, that analyzes a text to determine whether it is positive, negative or neutral, assigning each word an emotion score. After calculating the scores for all analyzed texts, the model generates four main results: a positive score for sentiments detected as positive, a negative score for negative ones, and a compound score, which summarizes the overall sentiment. This compound score ranges from -1, which means “very negative”, to +1, which means “very positive”. If the score is above 0.05, the text is considered positive, if it is below -0.05, it is negative, and scores between these values are considered neutral (Geeks for Geeks, 2024).

To ensure that the dataset kept its original structure while remaining compatible with the tools used for the analysis, we started by extracting the content using the "openpyxl" library. This allowed us to efficiently access the data stored in the Excel file and focus on the worksheet named "for_export", where the social media posts were organized for processing. Given the informal nature of social media language, characterized by abbreviations, emojis, and casual expressions, we prioritized preserving the context of each post, acknowledging that these elements can have a significant impact on the results of sentiment analysis.

Once the dataset was ready to use, we carried out the sentiment analysis using VADER, accessed through the "SentimentIntensityAnalyzer" module of the NLTK library. We initialized the model and iterated through each message in the dataset, excluding empty entries to maintain the integrity of the data. For each valid message, we applied the "polarity_scores()" function, which returned four distinct sentiment scores: positive, negative, neutral, and compound, which were then stored in four lists: vader_neg, vader_neu, vader_pos, and vader_compound, to facilitate both individual analysis and the identification of broader trends. This structured approach allowed us to capture the sentiment profile of each post, while allowing a clear comparison of sentiment categories across the dataset.

To further simplify the analysis, we compiled the collected scores into a Pandas DataFrame called "sent_scores". Organizing the data in this format allowed us to apply various statistical operations and classify the sentiment scores more efficiently. Each row in the DataFrame corresponded to a single post, with separate columns representing negative, neutral, positive and compound scores. This way, we generated a comprehensive picture of the general sentiment landscape.

Lastly, we generated visualizations charts of the results using the "matplotlib.pyplot" library to highlight patterns and trends in public sentiment. The charts provided a comparative picture of the volume of positive, negative and neutral messages, while measuring the intensity of the sentiments of the texts. By combining quantitative analysis with visual interpretation, we were able to present a clear picture of public opinion during this politically important event, ensuring that the informal and context-rich nature of social media communication was accurately captured.

Results

The results of our sentiment analysis provide a detailed picture of public reactions expressed on social media during Donald Trump's presidential inauguration in 2025. Our findings offer a practical application of the theoretical concepts discussed by bridging the gap between research insights and empirical evidence. As noted in previous sections, digitalization has transformed the way individuals engage with political events, with social media serving as a primary space for expressing support, criticism, and general commentary. Moreover, the contrasting approaches to sustainability and digital governance adopted by the Biden and Trump administrations have generated diverse public reactions, making it essential to examine how these sentiments play out in real-time discussions during significant political events. Recent studies have shown that favorable media coverage of political figures and policies can influence public sentiment. However, because user-generated content represents both informal expressions of personal opinions and direct reactions to media reporting, social media adds an additional layer of complexity. This link frequently produces a wide range of emotions that represent both individual perspectives and collective social perceptions.

Figure 1 presents a detailed overview of the distribution of compound sentiment scores. This representation not only visually highlights the proportions of positive, neutral and negative

messages, but also depicts their emotional intensity. The results can be interpreted in relation to the influence of the digital environment and media on public discourse, particularly regarding the controversial digitalization and sustainability policies, which have been approached differently by the Biden and Trump administrations.

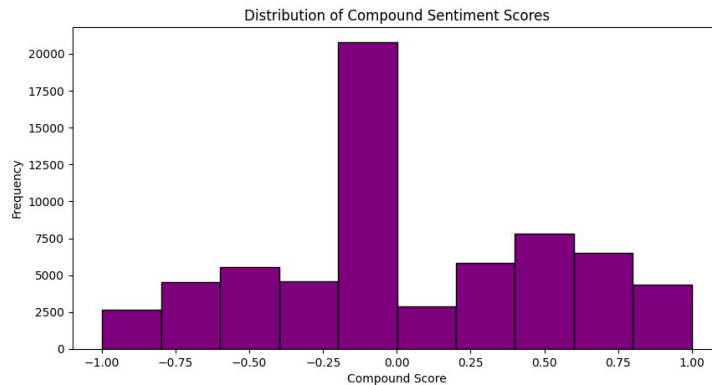


Figure 1. Distribution of Compound Sentiment Scores

Source: Authors' own research.

The histogram shows a significant concentration of messages with scores close to zero, suggesting a predominance of neutral messages with low emotional intensity. This type of distribution is common for major political events, when a considerable proportion of users tend to adopt a descriptive or moderate stance, without expressing strongly polarized opinions. However, the distribution is not symmetrical, with a relevant number of posts with positive scores ranging from 0.25 to 0.75, suggesting a bias towards expressing favorable, though not necessarily enthusiastic, sentiments. On the other hand, messages with negative scores, placed between -0.75 and -0.25, are less frequent, signaling a lower volume of intense criticism.

This trend can be explained by the way the media has reflected the policies promoted by Trump, highlighting differences from the previous administration's approaches. Frequent exposure to positive or balanced narratives about Trump's initiatives in digitalization and economic competitiveness influenced the overall tone of public discourse. For example, the deregulation policy advocated by Trump and the emphasis on digital innovation were presented by news channels during the election campaign as opportunities for private sector development and strengthening the US economic position globally. In this way, public perceptions may have been altered and the public's political leanings reinforced, even during the inauguration. This presentation may explain why a significant share of the messages analyzed expressed positive or moderate public sentiments rather than vehement criticism. Moreover, during periods of political transition, digital platforms become channels of expression for supporters of the new administration. This can lead to a disproportionate representation of positive sentiment, mainly due to algorithms that prioritize highly engaged content, often associated with positive messages. So, the automatic distribution of favorable content across the network contributes to a more positive overall perception.

The histogram indicates an overall moderate tone of public discourse, with a slight tilt towards positivity, suggesting a general tendency of support or acceptance of the event. The presence of a smaller number of negative scores, particularly at the extremes, indicates that although there was criticism, it did not dominate public discourse. This distribution pattern correlates with the previous studies, that demonstrate that public opinions on major political events,

such as presidential inaugurations, may be influenced by media channels, which may show a biased attitude toward the candidates.

Figure 2 presents a delimitation of the sentiment category proportions. The pie chart provides a visual overview of the text analyzed, showing that 41.2% of the messages were categorized as positive, 29.8% as negative and 28.9% as neutral.

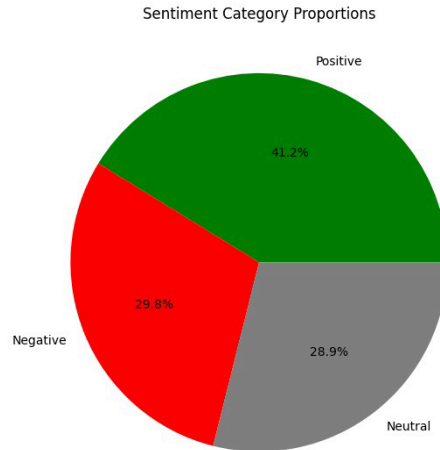


Figure 2. Sentiment Category Proportions

Source: Authors' own research.

Complementary to the histogram, this representation emphasizes the preponderance of messages with a positive tonality, a significant aspect given the context of the inauguration and the contrast between the ideological approaches of the Biden and Trump administrations. The policies promoted by Trump in the areas of digitalization and sustainability have generated strong reactions, both supportive and critical, as highlighted in the Literature Review section. Even though the US withdrawal from international agreements on sustainability and the emphasis on deregulation have been criticized in the progressive press, supporters of these measures highlighted the economic benefits and increased competitiveness, which explains the high proportion of positive messages observed in the sentiment analysis.

The 29.8% share of negative posts highlights the divisions in public opinion on the policy direction Trump is taking. The volume of these opinions was not enough to dominate the public discourse on Inauguration Day, which may suggest either a lower mobilization of opponents or a more limited visibility of negative posts on platform X, possibly due to algorithms that favor more engaging content. In terms of the 28.9% of posts being categorized as neutral, this proportion indicates that many users adopted a descriptive or moderate approach, without expressing strongly opinionated views. In addition, the significant presence of neutral posts suggests that, for a part of the public, the inauguration was perceived as an institutional moment rather than an occasion to express strong opinions. This diversity of reactions contributes to a clearer image of how major political events are reflected on social networks, highlighting the complexity of public feelings and perceptions in a context marked by ideological differences and intense debate.

The pie chart gives a clear overview of the general tone of the discussions on Inauguration Day. The predominance of positive messages indicates that a significant part of the users perceived the event in a favorable light, either out of direct support or resigned acceptance of the change of administration. The messages that presented negative and neutral feelings on the part of the public had relatively equal proportions, to a considerably lesser extent than the positive messages. This

distribution emphasizes the complexity of public perceptions, highlighting the influence of both the media and the dynamics of social networks in shaping the collective discourse in a context marked by differences of opinion and divergent political interests. It also reveals a consistency in public perception of this political event, considering both the electoral period and the inauguration day.

Discussions

Comparing the sentiment analysis based on public opinion during the election period conducted by Bulut (2024) with the one conducted on Inauguration Day, a high level of polarization can be observed in both cases, with a significant share of social media users expressing both positive and negative opinions, reflecting deep divisions among the public. Engagement levels were substantial in both periods, indicating strong interest and active participation in political discussions. While the election period reflected a more balanced mix of positive and negative reactions to the candidates, the sentiment analysis on Inauguration Day showed a higher proportion of positive responses. This shift might suggest the influence of the “rally ‘round the flag” effect, defined by Baker and Oneal (2001) as a phenomenon in which national events, especially political transitions, temporarily boost positive sentiments, even among people who do not fully support the new administration. This effect is often driven by a sense of unity, renewed hope and collective anticipation that accompanies the beginning of a new political chapter. In addition, the ceremonial and symbolic elements of inaugurations, such as inaugural speeches and traditional rituals, play a key role in promoting national pride and a sense of stability. Changing sentiments align with existing research, which emphasizes that public opinion is shaped not only by political beliefs, but also by the emotional and symbolic meaning of national events. The public reaction to Trump's inauguration reflects a broader pattern in which significant political milestones generate a short-term increase in collective optimism, even in a politically divided society.

Sentiment analysis of social media engagement on Inauguration Day reveals a range of positive, negative and neutral views on the Trump administration's anticipated policies. Positive sentiment arises from expectations about favorable economic measures and advances in digitalization, with supporters expressing optimism about deregulation favoring innovation and economic growth. In contrast, negative sentiment is driven by concerns about the administration's approach to environmental responsibility, in particular the potential reduction in sustainability initiatives and its impact on climate change. This divergence reflects the broader social debate between prioritizing short-term economic gains through deregulation and pursuing long-term environmental sustainability through government intervention. Meanwhile, a significant portion of social media users maintain a neutral stance, waiting to see the actual policies and actions of the new administration before forming strong opinions. The correlation between our sentiment analysis and the literature review highlights the complex relationship between public opinion and the contrasting digitalization and sustainability policies of the Biden and Trump administrations. The observed polarization reflects a broader societal debate about the balance between economic growth, technological progress and environmental responsibility. The mixed reactions illustrate the complex interplay between short-term emotional responses to policy transitions and evolving public expectations as policies take effect. Ultimately, the findings highlight the need to consider both the immediate emotional impact of policy events and the broader, longer-term implications of policy decisions when assessing public sentiment in the digital age.

Conclusion

This study explored the evolving landscape of economic diplomacy at the intersection of digitalization and sustainability, focusing on the contrasting policy approaches of the Biden and Trump administrations. Through a comprehensive sentiment analysis of social media reactions during Donald Trump's 2025 presidential inauguration, we examined public perceptions of these policy shifts, offering insights into how digital platforms both shape and reflect contemporary political discourse. Through a sentiment analysis of public reactions on social media during the 2025 presidential inauguration of Donald Trump, we examined public perceptions of the political event, correlating the sentiments expressed by the public with those expressed during the election campaign, contributing to a better understanding of public perceptions toward political decisions through their portrayal by media channels. The findings reveal a predominantly supportive public reaction, mixed with criticism, reflecting wider societal debates on the balance between economic growth, technological innovation and environmental responsibility.

This research contributes to the field of economic diplomacy by demonstrating the value of sentiment analysis as a tool for capturing public opinion in real time, providing policymakers with insight into both the emotional and cognitive dimensions of public discourse. The growing role of digital platforms in political communication has transformed how citizens engage with policy decisions. Our analysis emphasizes the importance of considering these digital expressions as indicators of public sentiment, which can influence both domestic policymaking and international diplomatic relations. This reinforces the need for policy-makers to monitor both immediate reactions and evolving attitudes that shape long-term policy outcomes.

This study provides valuable insight into public sentiment during Donald Trump's inauguration in 2025, although some limitations should be acknowledged. The temporal limitation comes from analyzing a single event, which captures only a fragment of public opinion. Future research should adopt a longitudinal approach, examining sentiment before, during and after key political events. The demographic limitation results from using a dataset exclusively from one social media platform, which may not represent the wider population, suggesting that future studies should include various platforms for a more comprehensive perspective. The methodological limitation of using VADER is derived from its predefined lexicon, which may misinterpret or not understand sarcasm, irony, and evolving slang. Future research could benefit from the integration of advanced models which may provide better contextual understanding and increase the accuracy of sentiment analysis, especially in social environments where language is highly nuanced and dynamic.

This study highlights the complex relationship between digitalization, sustainability and economic diplomacy, demonstrating how public sentiment can provide valuable insights into the social impact of policy decisions. By using digital platforms as both a source of data and a scene of engagement, policymakers can better understand and respond to public concerns, promoting more inclusive and transparent decision-making processes. Future research should continue to explore the evolving role of digital communication in shaping public opinion, with a focus on capturing the dynamic interplay between short-term emotional reactions and long-term shifts in policy attitudes. Through these efforts, we can deepen our understanding of how digitalization and sustainability intersect in the broader context of economic diplomacy, paving the way for more effective and responsive policy frameworks in an increasingly interconnected world.

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