

## DIGITAL DIPLOMACY FOR SMALL STATES: COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS FROM ESTONIA AND SRI LANKA

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This study explores how Estonia, a small Baltic state with a population of just over 1.3 million, has effectively employed digital diplomacy to expand its influence in international relations. The primary objective is to examine Estonia's strategic use of digital tools, including its advanced e-governance platform, pioneering cybersecurity measures, and solid online diplomatic presence. These initiatives have allowed Estonia to enhance its global standing and project soft power despite its limited size and resources. This research employs a qualitative case study approach to achieve these aims, drawing on a thorough analysis of Estonia's digital diplomacy initiatives. Sources include official documents, various digital platforms, and Estonia's active participation in international forums. In addition to focusing on Estonia, this study compares Sri Lanka, a South Asian nation, which although less advanced in digital adoption than Estonia, has made significant strides in digital governance. Sri Lanka aims to strengthen its international profile through increased digital engagement and outreach. By contrasting Estonia's e-residency program, digital identity initiatives, and advocacy for global digital rights with similar emerging efforts in Sri Lanka, this research provides valuable insights into how small states across different regions can strategically utilize technology to attract foreign investment, build international partnerships, and enhance their diplomatic influence. The findings of this study reveal that Estonia has successfully leveraged its digital capabilities to overcome the traditional diplomatic limitations of smaller states. Estonia's proactive approach has established it as a key player in international discussions on cybersecurity, enabling it to influence policy and set standards that align with its national interests. While Sri Lanka operates at a different developmental stage, its initiatives further underscore the potential for digital diplomacy to empower small states. Ultimately, the study concludes that Estonia's innovative approach to digital diplomacy serves as an inspiring model for other small states, including Sri Lanka, seeking to increase their influence on the global stage. By strategically embedding digital tools into their foreign policies, small states can not only participate effectively in international affairs but also take on leadership roles in shaping global relations.

**Keywords:** Cybersecurity, digital diplomacy, e-governance, Estonia, small states