Harnessing Digital Diplomacy: Opportunities and Challenges for Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Kenya and South Africa

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Abstract

Digitization of diplomacy has been hailed as a transformative initiative that is meant to increase the effectiveness of diplomacy. However, many of the changes linked to digital diplomacy challenge traditional ways of conducting and practicing diplomacy. Even though, a growing number of countries world over including in Africa have embraced digital diplomacy. The main objective of this study was to critically examine the challenges and opportunities of digital diplomacy by comparing Kenya and South Africa. In particular, the article highlights institutional and structural challenges that are experienced across the two countries as well the opportunities present to help the two nations utilize Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) into digital diplomacy. In order to examine the challenges involved with digital diplomacy, the study adopted both exploratory and descriptive research designs, utilizing a mixed-method approach to collect data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kenya and the South African Embassy in Kenya. The paper establishes that some of the institutional challenges that hinder digital diplomacy are organizational culture, bureaucracy and inadequate skilled employees while structural challenges include inadequate technological infrastructure among others. The result indicates that both South Africa and Kenya are gradually adopting digital diplomacy into their foreign policy plans. Furthermore, both nations have acknowledged the effect of globalization and the use of digital tools to enhance their foreign policies. Opportunities include existence of massive human capital, access to financing for digital infrastructure and the already-in –place ICT policy that position the two countries as digital hubs on the in Africa. The study recommends that the respective countries to establish clear guidelines for technology adoption, provide capacity-building programs for officials, and foster collaboration among state agencies and international partners to address challenges like cyber threats and misinformation.

Key Words: Kenya, South Africa, Digital Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Globalization, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFAs)

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I. Introduction

Digital diplomacy is nowadays becoming increasingly an indispensable tool in diplomacy conduct and practice. These revolutionary modes of communication offer Foreign Service officers with a digital platform to advance their host countries interest across the global scene and effectively participate in international diplomacy. According to Rashica (2018) social media leverage together with web platforms in addition to other internet technologies enables instant direct and wide-reaching connections, thus transforming conventional diplomatic procedure. As countries across the world combine these modern technologies into their diplomatic work, they encounter substantial chances to bolster their global presence and impact. Researchers Kampf, Manor, and Segev (2015) posited that despite African MFAs being actively present on the web space as their global peers, they have not wholly embraced digital diplomacy to realize the full value of digital streams.

This study offers a glimpse into the organizational and structural constraints that hinder digital diplomacy from attaining its maximum potential and recommend possible solutions through a critical assessment of these two nations. This current analysis delves into the specific tactics and instruments that the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) in the two nations employ. It focuses on structural matters e.g. inadequate technology infrastructure and main challenges such as organizational culture, bureaucracy, and insufficient qualified workforce. The research in addition assessed methods in which MFAs' digital diplomacy deployment combines with the wider strategies of other diplomatic bodies. For the purpose of enhancing digital diplomacy effectiveness, conclusions of the research stresses the need of addressing these challenges and offer practitioners and policymakers with suggestions on how to embrace digital resources to advance interests of a nation and boost international engagement.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has ushered in a new era of digital diplomacy, aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of foreign policy strategies. However, the integration of digital tools into diplomatic practices poses significant challenges to Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs), particularly in Kenya and South Africa. These challenges include institutional barriers such as organizational culture, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and the scarcity of skilled personnel, alongside structural limitations such as inadequate technological infrastructure. This study seeks to critically examine these challenges and explore the opportunities presented by digital diplomacy in both countries, with a focus on understanding how they can leverage their human capital, access to digital financing, and existing ICT policies to advance their diplomatic agendas in the digital age**.**

II. Methodology

Using both exploratory and descriptive research designs, the paper critically analyzes the opportunities and problems related to digital diplomacy. The target population included individuals working at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and familiar with digital diplomacy in Kenya and South Africa. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 respondents from each embassy, totaling 20 participants. Data was collected through online questionnaire and official government documents, allowing for triangulation. Qualitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics as well as conceptual content analysis for qualitative data. The findings were presented in figures and tables as well as narratively, ensuring respondent anonymity.

III. Literature Review

3.1 Theoretical Review

This study is grounded on soft power theory**.** Joseph Nye, Jr. created the concept of soft power in 2011 (Nye, 2011). Since the concept is essential to public diplomacy, it can be used to analyze digital diplomacy. Nye defines soft power as having the capacity to persuade, cooperate, and positively attract others in order to accomplish goals (Kos-Stanisic & Car, 2021). Digital diplomacy requires data exchange, which enables state leaders to elicit favorable reactions from domestic and international audiences (Melissen, 2015).

Joseph Nye distinguished between two sorts of power. Hard power is the ability to persuade others to act in ways that contradict their initial choices and plans (Nye, 2004). This is the ability to coerce using threats and inducements (sticks and carrots). On the contrary, soft power is the ability to persuade others to seek the outcomes you want, and more specifically, the ability to attain goals through seduction rather than force. He contends that soft power is equally, if not more, essential in international politics than hard force. Indeed, soft power uses persuasion and appeal to affect other people's behaviour without competition or conflict.

Soft power has emerged as a widely recognized concept in international relations, with many scholars highlighting its potential benefits for public diplomacy (Saaida, 2023). In today's evolving world, marked by the pervasive influence of social networking and the transformative impact of communication technologies, the dynamics of global interaction are being reshaped. Soft power plays a crucial role in public diplomacy strategies, offering nations the ability to achieve diplomatic goals through cultural appeal and attraction (Hall, 2010).

Digital diplomacy, a contemporary manifestation of soft power, leverages digital tools to enhance diplomatic outreach and influence. As these tools become more prevalent across both governmental and non-governmental sectors, the strategies for utilizing them effectively continue to evolve rapidly. The integration of digital platforms in diplomatic efforts enhances the speed, reach, and precision with which messages can be disseminated to global audiences (Hall, 2010). This capability underscores the growing importance of technological proficiency in shaping international perceptions and achieving diplomatic objectives more effectively than traditional methods alone. Thus, digital diplomacy represents a pivotal advancement in leveraging soft power for contemporary diplomatic practices.

3.2 Empirical Review

Several countries notably, the United States as a pioneer in the use of digital diplomacy, has effectively utilized social media and other digital platforms to advance its foreign policy objectives and communicate with the rest of the world (Adesina, 2017). The US State Department has globally established a specialized digital diplomacy workforce mandated to overseeing the department's presence in social media and exploiting digital resources to advance the interests of the country's and beliefs abroad (Wynne, 2020). In this regard, Arthuis & Farrell (2018) observed that a developed country like United Kingdom has adopted digital diplomacy, utilizing social media and extra digital tools to engage with its local and the broader public to promote its foreign policy objectives. As such, the UK Office of Foreign and Commonwealth has constituted a digital diplomacy team to oversee its social media presence, with a goal of utilizing digital channels to boost interests and values of Britain globally.

According to Baktybekova & Batyrkhan (2021) China as a nation has been engaging actively in digital diplomacy. It has achieved this by embracing social media as well as other digital technologies to promote its foreign policy objectives. At the same time, China offers the world at large a positive outlook of its digital diplomacy programs which are spearheaded by the Foreign Affairs Ministry. These are meant to win Chinese political convictions, economic interests, and cultural goals. In order to defend its human rights record and present itself as a respectable global player, China has used digital diplomacy (Zhang & Ong'ong'a, 2021).

Social networking networks have become the new home for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) in a number of African countries. For instance, Mali, Niger, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have active Twitter accounts (Manor, 2016). On the other hand, "Botswana, Uganda, Namibia, Somalia, and Ethiopia use Facebook.

Oloo asserts that "the use of social media in diplomacy may benefit African nations in three key domains: nation branding, networking and diaspora affairs" (Oloo, 2023). Considering the magnitude and worldwide dispersion of African Diasporas, an increasing number of African countries are allocating resources towards fortifying their connections with expatriate populations. Diasporas may play a key role in fostering cross-national trade as well as tourism, academic exchanges, and cultural linkages.

Thus, digital diplomacy can support African countries in keeping strong connections with their Diasporas around the world. For example, South African embassies may use "Facebook and Twitter to build lively social networks where people can contribute information about diplomatic events and political issues in South Africa." Similarly, "Kenyan embassies may utilize social media to tell foreigners about possibilities for investment in their home country and to offer consular assistance" (Oloo, 2023).

Social media appears to have been most enthusiastically embraced by the Ethiopian MFA as a diaspora diplomacy instrument (Manor, 2016). For example, "the Ethiopian embassy in the United States has over 30,000 Facebook fans, and the embassy in the United Kingdom has over 10,000 Facebook fans and 7,000 Twitter followers." Embassies in South Africa and Kenya, on the other hand, appear to be largely dormant on the internet, failing to capitalize on the possibilities of digital diplomacy (Kent & Taylor, 2019). This is mostly due to the numerous challenges encountered while using digital diplomacy in South Africa and Kenya. This study looks at the challenges that hinder digital diplomacy as well as the opportunities present that can help enhance digital diplomacy in Kenya and South Africa.

III. Results and Discussion

4.1 State Of Digital Infrastructure in Kenya and South Africa
4.1.1 Technological Infrastructure

Despite being latecomers to digital transformation, African countries like Kenya and South Africa have rapidly adopted technology, improving their digital diplomacy infrastructure significantly. In Kenya, 17.86 million people used the internet as of early 2023, or 32.7% of the country's population (Kepios Analysis, 2023). One major factor contributing to this growth is the increasing use of cell phones and low-cost data plans. Submarine fiber optic cables such as TEAMS and SEACOM, which improve capacity and dependability, underpin the nation's strong internet infrastructure. Kenya also boasts 63.94 million active cellular mobile connections—a number that exceeds the population because of multiple SIM card ownership—and 10.55 million social media users as of January 2023, accounting for 19.3% of the country's total population (GSMA, 2022).

South Africa boasts an even higher internet penetration rate of 74.7% as of early 2024, with internet users increasing by 409 thousand between January 2023 and January 2024 (Kepios Analysis, 2023). The country's digital infrastructure is bolstered by extensive fiber optic networks and high-speed broadband services. Undersea cables such as SAT-3 and WACS provide significant bandwidth, and the country has a relatively high fixed broadband penetration. South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) actively uses digital platforms, including social media and online portals, to engage in digital diplomacy.

Notwithstanding these successes, both nations still have difficulties. As of the beginning of 2023, 36.70 million Kenyans were still offline, meaning that 67.3% of the country's population did not use the internet. Comparably, even though more people live in South Africa, a sizeable section of the population is still offline. Differences in the use of mobile broadband coverage and mobile internet utilization are a clear demonstration of consistent impediments e.g. digital literacy and affordability particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

4.1.2 Institutional Infrastructure

Policy models deemed valuable in bettering digital diplomacy have been set up in both Kenya and South Africa. A good example is Kenya's Vision 2030, the Digital Economy Blueprint plus National ICT Policy. These three examples depict a model for combining technological adoption into works of the state e.g diplomacy. To effectively undertake digital diplomacy programs, Kenya's MFA has initiated the formation of specialist departments. Nyambura et al. (2019) posited that, other than controlling social media engagement, these units are responsible for developing and undertaking strategies linked to digital communication.

In South African setting, Gillwald (2020) noted that National ICT Policy White Paper and the National Development Plan (NDP) are leading advocates for a strong tactical adoption of digital technologies in almost every sector including diplomacy. As such, the author asserted that DIRCO's organizational model is comprised of specialized units and departments encompassing digital communication and public diplomacy. They are obligated to oversee digital programs in majority of its diplomatic missions. In addition, they are mandated to establish and sharing of content and communicating with online users.

4.1.3 Human Resource Infrastructure

In digital diplomacy contexts, investing money on training, instructing and digital literacy is essential for enhancing effectiveness. With a variety of educational initiatives aimed at equipping government workers and diplomats with the skills necessary to use technology effectively and efficiently, Kenya prioritizes digital literacy. According to Rashica, emphasizing capacity building, ambassadors are guaranteed to be adept at using digital technologies for diplomatic objectives (Rashica, 2018). Additionally, South Africa funds the advancement of its ambassadors' digital skills. To help its employees become more proficient with social media, online communication tools, and other digital platforms, DIRCO provides training programs. Both nations understand that leveraging the advantages of digital diplomacy requires having strong digital skills (Rashica, 2018).

4.2 Challenges of Digital Diplomacy

Despite progress, several barriers hinder the full realization of digital diplomacy's potential in Kenya and South Africa.

4.2.1 Organizational Culture

The survey reveals that a substantial portion of the respondents, constituting 86.7%, agree that organizational culture of a country's foreign policy establishment significantly impacts its capacity to effectively use digital tools and therefore is central to the successful of digital diplomacy. On the other hand, 13.3% of respondents had divergent opinion that diplomatic or foreign policy-related activities are not affected by organizational culture as shown in Figure 3.
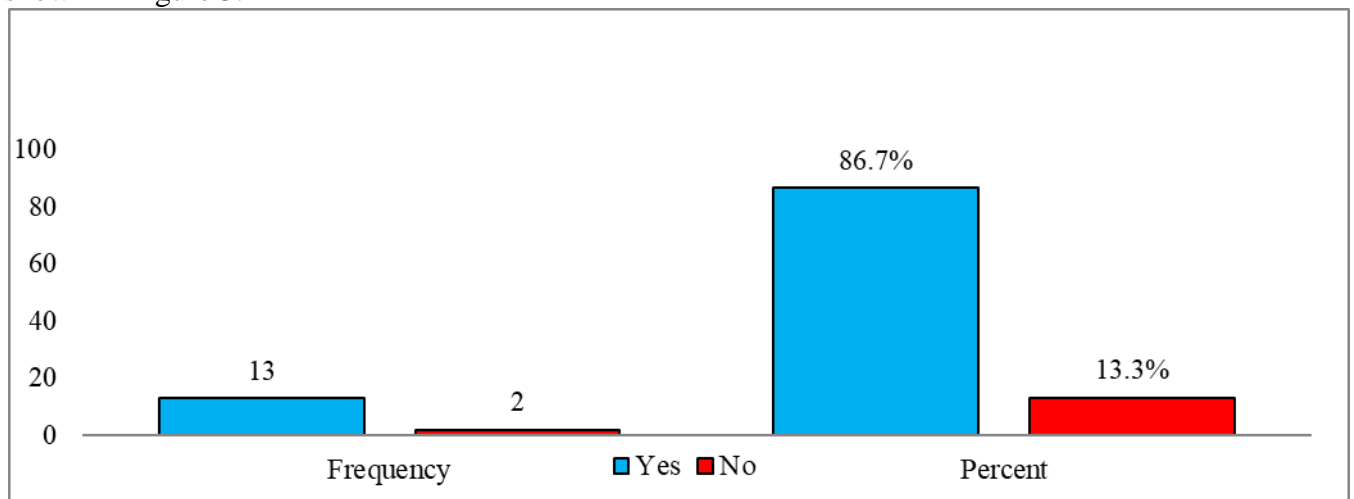
Figure 1: *Organizational Culture*
Source: Field Data 2023

This finding emphasizes the significance of African customs and ways of life, which may be less adaptable to the change and innovation required by the implementation of digital diplomacy. Despite the potential of digital diplomacy, Kenya and South Africa, like many African governments, place a high emphasis on bureaucracy (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2019). Indeed, according to Akhakpe, bureaucracy is the most visible branch of the executive branch of government, responsible for implementing policies and programs of the government as well

as providing products and services to the people (Akhakpe, 2014). Aside from the technical information it provides to its users, it has been discovered to be the best technique of exercising control over human beings in the workplace.

Thus, public officials are slow to embrace change. To this end, one of the participants said:

> However, the virtue of professionalism has not been ingrained in administrators despite years of administrative reforms. These reforms will only benefit public employees insofar as they will enhance their material circumstances; they will not enhance their capacity to provide the public with effective and efficient services. Many of these changes have occurred without completely altering the public sector or the way officials perform their jobs (Respondent 2).

Furthermore, there is a chance that MFAs' quick switch to digital tools could cause internal strife, particularly among senior diplomats who might be accustomed to the more conventional forms of diplomatic communication and are not up to date on the newest developments in technology. The hierarchical structure and organizational culture of MFAs limit the youth's ability to use the newest digital diplomacy tools, even though they may be more familiar with them. One of the participants points out that:

> Senior officials or those close to the leadership can embrace digital diplomacy since they have political insurance. Everyone else has a much more difficult time doing this. So I believe that holds back digital diplomacy (Respondent 4).

On the other hand, younger diplomat generations have shown a willingness to investigate the possibilities of social media and the Internet as a communication tool with other countries. However, the elder generation of conventional diplomats has been reluctant to use modern technologies in their traditional diplomatic endeavors. For instance, conventional diplomats would rather go to festive parties on national holidays. Younger diplomats, on the other hand, might celebrate the national holiday by applauding the opposition party on social media.

In response, an experienced diplomat said that people his age are accustomed to operating in shadows. The diplomat claims that in a climate of secrecy, diplomacy is seen to have a higher possibility of success. In contrast, openness and transparency are valued in modern diplomatic thought. Kenya and South Africa, whose career older generation of diplomats has not yet been replaced by a younger cohort, face significant challenges as a result of this transformation.

4.2.2 Personnel Challenges

Figure 2 shows a majority of the respondents, constituting 86.7%, agree that there is inadequate supply of qualified information technology professionals in MFAs. On the other hand, 13.3% of respondents did not see it as challenge.
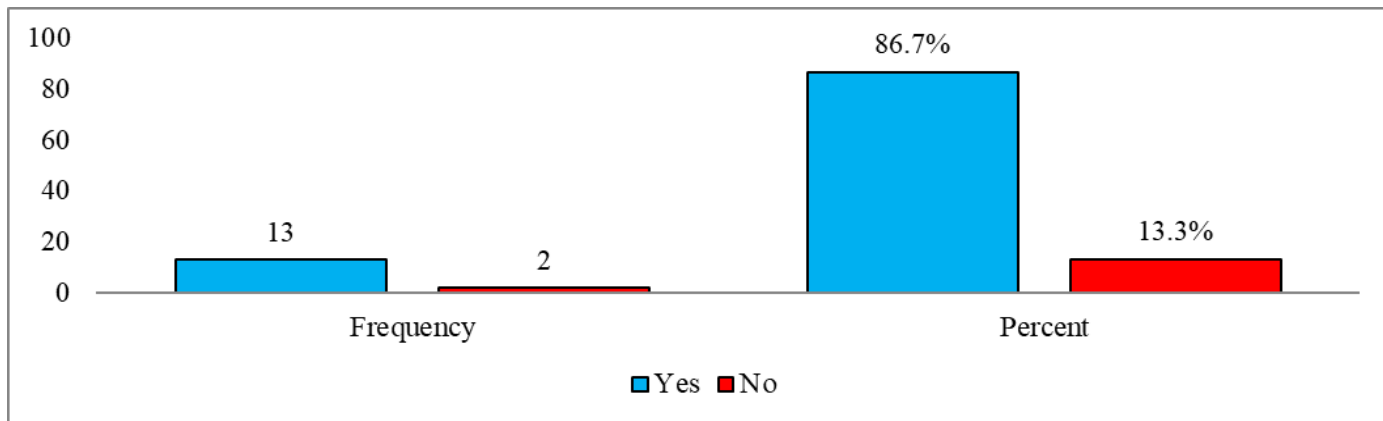
Figure 2: *Personnel Challenges*
Source: Field Data 2023

The results indicate that there are personnel challenges in both South Africa and Kenya. Finding well qualified manpower is a significant challenge in both countries. The talent pool that is available is small and thus commands significantly higher salaries. This erodes the labour price competitiveness.

An effective digital diplomacy strategy needs not only cutting-edge communication tools and knowledgeable practitioners, but also the soft skills of language experts who can create compelling messages and material in a variety of languages for a wide range of target audiences. English and Kiswahili are the most commonly used languages in internet communications about foreign policy in Kenya and South Africa. Therefore, the inability of diplomats to employ a variety of languages in their digital diplomacy communications hinders their potential to influence and mold global public opinion in addition to limiting their ability to communicate with broader audiences. To this one of the respondents said:

> A major contributing factor to the failure of digital diplomacy strategies is linguistic barriers. The ability of diplomats to properly interact with their counterparts may be hampered by language problems. A bilingual e-government portal must be created by Kenya and South Africa as part of their digital diplomacy program (Respondent 5).

4.2.3 Political Factors

Domestic political unrest may jeopardize a nation's ability to employ digital diplomacy successfully. To support this assertion, one respondent made the following observation:

> Political considerations could make it difficult to use a digital diplomacy strategy. It could be more challenging for diplomats to perform their duties in an unstable political environment. Political unrest occasionally makes it

> necessary to restrict the use of digital measurements, which increases reliance on conventional measures (Respondent 1).

The widespread misconception that the African nations are violent and politically unstable hinders the two nations' attempts to use digital diplomacy to portray themselves as welcome and stable nations. In fact, a lot of people outside of Africa have unfavorable opinions about the continent, thinking it is full of intolerant people and war, and they make similar assumptions about the two countries. It is challenging for both nations to successfully spread good messages of stability because of these unfavorable impressions.

4.2.4 Targeting an Audience

Diplomats also face the challenge of   audience targeting. To this end, one of the respondents said:

> Instead of using a blanket strategy, nations should carry out market research to determine which audiences to target, what messages to convey, and which media methods are most effective in each nation (Respondent 6).

According to Olubukola digital diplomatic communication should be directed at foreign audiences and publics, but it can also reach the broader public (Adesina, 2017). However, information for each audience should be tailored to their individual needs.

4.2.5 Fake News

Kenya and South Africa are still susceptible in the current social media landscape to the spreading phenomena of fake news that is spread by hostile actors, groups, and governments for political ends. To this end, one of the respondents said;

> Fake news is a big challenge to digital diplomacy. Disinformation as a strategy of diplomacy aims to spread false information to unbalance foreign states by confusing and misleading their citizens, in this way, the state sending the message benefits from the disagreement generated in the society, the change of policies due to pressure from citizens on governments, as well as increasing its international presence and power, and fulfilling its international policy objectives (Respondent 7).

According to Agarwal and Alsaeedi, false news is deliberate deception, with some created by governments and non-state entities (Agarwal & Alsaeedi, 2020). To reap the benefits of digital diplomacy, Kenya and South Africa must face the hurdles of preventing adversary groups' dissemination of misleading information.

4.2.6. The Risk of Cyber Attacks

World leaders and diplomats have become more vulnerable to cyberattacks due to their greater use of digital technologies. In addition to conventional state enemies, nonstate actors pose a concern because they want to sabotage government communication networks and pilfer confidential data for their own gain. To this end, one of the respondents said:

> Kenya and South Africa remains major targets of hackers. In a major breach of diplomatic communications, the e-mail accounts of some of the Ambassador ware hacked, and sensitive information was shared on the social media (Respondent 11).

Cyberattacks exploit cyberspace as a tool for global effectiveness and directly threaten all cyberspace assets, including digital diplomacy (Rashica, 2018). Therefore, in order to evaluate and stop these dangers and crimes, digital diplomacy in intricate connections between governments, non-state actors, and organisations should be used. Cyberdiplomacy necessitates a reduction in the impacts of cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, and offensive cyber operations by state or non-state actors.

4.2.7 Infrastructure Challenge

Digital diplomacy is affected by the digital divide that exists between the global north and the global south. Kenya and South Africa has the lowest rate of internet penetration when compared to other regions in the world. According to one of the respondents,

> In comparison, North America has an 87.7% penetration rate while Europe has 70.5% and Africa's penetration rate is 26.5% (Respondent 18).

To overcome this gap in digital capacities, one of the respondents said:

> As part of a soft diplomacy strategy, wealthier nations need provide technical support to Kenya and South Africa to boost their digital diplomacy capacity (Respondent 9).

Insufficient investment in infrastructure is the root of the issue, as both communications networks (fibre, broadband data) and the hardware and devices that enable participation in these networks remain behind developed countries, even though Kenya and South Africa boast some of the highest quality telecommunication networks in the continent (Corrigan, 2020).

The lack of ICT infrastructure in South Africa and Kenya is caused by a number of factors. In certain places, there is a negative correlation between investment returns and poor roads and electricity infrastructure, or a lack thereof. Because there are frequently unstable electrical networks, base stations need to be equipped with solar energy supply units. Due to the lack of fixed-line telephone service, the majority of communication must occur almost solely on wireless networks, placing additional strain on the precarious mobile infrastructure.

Affordability is still a major problem, especially for women, low-income people, and people living in rural areas. Even with their decline, the price of data plans and internet-enabled phones still accounts for a large amount of many people's monthly income. For instance, in Kenya, the average cost of a phone is now 25% of a person's monthly per capita income, compared to 39% five years earlier. Digital skills and literacy present further difficulties. Even while many people are aware of mobile internet, they are not proficient in its use. 40% of Kenyan mobile internet users who are aware of the service cite a hurdle as being insufficient digital abilities (GSMA, 2022).

V. Opportunities

The study sought to determine opportunities that Kenya and South Africa can take advantage of to fully entrench digital diplomacy in their respective MFAs. The results are presented in Table 2.

Figure 3: *Opportunities*
Source: Field Data 2023

Figure 3 demonstrates that the majority of respondents in Kenya (80%) and South Africa (60%) rated human capital as the most likely avenue for the government to address the previously mentioned concerns. Approximately 60% of Kenyans and 90% of South Africans indicated that funding is another easily accessible option in both nations. Seventy percent (70%) and eighty percent (80%) of respondents from South Africa and Kenya, respectively, said that ICT policies present a chance for their governments to solidify digital diplomacy within their MFAs. These results are in line with those of Mboya, who contended that South Africa and Kenya possess all the necessary prerequisites to fund digital diplomacy within their MFAs (Mboya, 2021). By positioning themselves as Africa's internet hubs, South Africa and Kenya have made it possible to use digital diplomacy for development.

Furthermore, the results of the interviews indicated a lack of human capital with digital skills. In light of this, a respondent stated:

> We have shortage of people in ICT at MFAs. We need more young people who are conversant with social media ecosystem to run our diplomatic Facebook and twitter accounts (Respondent 4)

According to MFA in Kenya, the government has launched a program to effectively equip people at all levels with relevant training. South Africa's government has previously committed considerable sums of money to the construction of training institutes to address the country's demand for ICT skills. The private sector in both nations has likewise responded fast. Both countries are attempting to help young people in rural and urban areas develop digital skills.

While funding is often regarded as the primary barrier to digital diplomacy implementation at MFAs, large-scale ICT infrastructure projects are easily funded in Kenya and South Africa. Both nations are currently involved in a wide range of ICT initiatives and programs that are centered on information security, digital inclusion, e-infrastructure, eLearning and skills development, and other initiatives (Nchake & Shuaibu, 2022).

The respondent further pointed out that Kenya is known as Silicon Savannah due to its advanced ICT policies and vibrant business scene and therefore, digital diplomacy should ride on this good will. Kenyan officials have long pushed for a strong digital economy, which includes business, infrastructure investment, innovation, and a digital government. International investors are showing a great deal of interest in this sector. The nation now has a solid foundation from which to leverage on the soaring demand for ICT thanks to the top-down focus on ICT investment and sector development. In a similar vein, South Africa has made a name for itself as the continent's centre of innovation and technology. Software development, hardware production, telecommunications, cybersecurity, digital services, Fintech, and digital payments are all part of South Africa's IT industry, and they all have the ability to advance digital diplomacy.

VI. Discussions

Regarding structural challenges related to digital diplomacy, specifically in the contexts of Kenya and South Africa, Olubukola indicates that although certain issues may not be exclusive to these countries and may not resolve quickly, institutional issues offer chances for successful intervention (Babalola, du Plessis & Babalola, 2021). The author suggests that rules and guidelines for digital behaviour and social media usage should be developed and implemented, taking into account the unique institutional limitations that each nation has. These rules could range from more permissive frameworks to stricter regulations.

Kenya and South Africa might take a similar tack by taking inspiration from the British model, which encourages ambassadors to utilise social media while abiding by official policy stances and professional norms of conduct. One strategy to follow is promoting diplomatic interactions on social media platforms. However, caveat would need to be observed to ascertain that such action does not expose state secrets or participate in illegal undertakings. Others include undermining official positions, display of political prejudice, injuring diplomatic missions' repute, or disregarding ethical principles (Antwi-Boateng & Al Mazrouei, 2021).

In addition, there exists various opportunities for digital diplomacy expansion initiatives in regards to setting up infrastructure, assuring sufficient funding, and investing in human resource. Although the digital landscape is complex, both Kenya and South Africa may promote their digital diplomacy work through a number of ways. Gichoya (2016) noted that some entail taking advantage of these possibilities, advancing their specific national interests and promoting constructive engagement with the global community.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The importance and benefits of digital diplomacy is discussed in this study, a case study of Kenya and South Africa. Research outcomes reveals myriad of opportunities and constraints that stem/arise from their engagement in this emerging sphere. Nevertheless, there exists a chance for digital diplomacy to satisfy public diplomacy aims and project soft power, although institutional and structural constraints block efforts to enforce effectively. Outcomes of this study further elaborate how digital diplomacy instruments can expand a state's diplomatic authority. This has been demonstrated by ways such as winning more interaction and communication with international audiences.

These two nations are better placed to expand their awareness globally, dictate public opinions, and enjoy influence on global conversation by adopting mechanisms such as social media, web platforms, and digital communication streams. Research findings further marked key obstacles that need to be handled in an effort to fully derive digital diplomacy benefits.

Establishing a pragmatic and workable equilibrium between digital forms adoption to further diplomatic aims and safeguarding national security concerns is a real concern. The adoption of online instruments in great extents alongside fast information diffusion in the digital era brings up legit concerns. As an example, they are dangers of fake news campaigns, cyber security threats, and diplomatic errors. In this regard, current research elaborates the need for South Africa and Kenya to make use of institutional shortfalls and structural blocks that slow successful enforcement of digital diplomacy. In the same vein, enabling diplomats and stakeholders to conveniently embrace new technology in digital diplomacy can result in decreased bureaucratic processes. This will lead to enhanced communication between state bodies and foreign missions alongside offering monetary support for digital literacy programs.

7.2 Recommendations

Study outcomes hint that it is vital for the two countries to avail adequate resources for the sake of bolstering their institutional structures for digital diplomacy. This entails forming clear and elaborate rules and principles dictating technology adoption in diplomacy. Further, there is need to avail state officials and diplomats capacity-building and instructional programs to aid them optimal use of these tools. Similarly, promoting cooperation and interconnectedness between state agencies, foreign missions, and other organizations taking part in digital diplomacy is paramount.

Smooth collaboration and resource integration between South Africa and Kenya can heighten their digital diplomacy endeavors further expanding their influence on international stage. To this end, it is vital for both nations to prioritize programs that handle internet access constraints and literacy. Innovating programs pertaining digital skills, campaigning for internet infrastructure expansion and ascertaining that digital diplomacy projects are widespread and accessible to all, are some of the mechanisms to attain this goal.

In the end, it is suggested that both countries ought to take a proactive stance to curb possible threats that are linked to digital diplomacy. Some of this includes fake news campaigns and predisposition to cyber security threats. This may mean apportioning funds to establish strong cyber security mechanisms, dismantling misinformation networks by setting up specific communication campaigns in addition to coalition forming with international partners to handle mutual digital concerns.

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