Use of E-Government Technologies in Kenyan Foreign
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# Use of E-Government Technologies in Kenyan Foreign Affairs Diplomacy. A Critical Literature Review.

**Dr. Jane Njeri**

University of Nairobi, School of Security Studies

Corresponding author's email: journals@carijournals.org

## Abstract

**Purpose:**   Among the communication methods significant to diplomacy is signaling. Signaling in diplomacy is characterized by ambiguity that is deemed creative as well as constructive. The overall objective of this study was to examine use of E-government technologies in Kenyan foreign affairs diplomacy.

**Methodology:** The paper used a desk study review methodology where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify main themes and to extract knowledge gaps.

**Findings:** This study concluded that that there are several studies that have explored the concept of digital diplomacy at various levels of analysis especially in the developed countries. Nonetheless, there were several gaps identified when it came to examining the concept of digital diplomacy in developing countries particularly those in the African continent. Diplomatic communication was noted to have transitioned as communication did. Some of the notable communication technologies that have influenced diplomatic communication included the telegraph, air mail, radio, television, telephone and modern-day information communication technologies.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice:** This study recommended that in addition to the efforts of further equipping the ministry with high tech digital equipment's, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade needs to consider that digital resources toolkits should be matched with the needs of digital diplomacy. This is because certain pieces of technology are best suited in pursuant of identified foreign policy objectives. Moreover, procuring of digital resources should be matched with extensive training of the staff on how they can utilize them to achieve maximum benefits.

**Keywords:** *Use*, *E-Government, Technologies, Kenyan, Foreign Affairs, Diplomacy*.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges of evaluating the level of ICT integration in an institution is measuring the extent of integration. To this end, the researcher sought to find a framework that can aid in evaluating ICT integration. According to Ziemkerdof (2017), there are three phases that can help organizations, institutions, ministries as well as governments to oversee the implementation of e-governance. It is further emphasized that the three phases are conceptually viable when it comes to thinking about the goals of e-government which in this study was replaced by the goals of digital diplomacy. The three phases are consistent of publishing, interacting as well as transacting. When it comes to Publishing it is expected that institutions should publish or disseminate information about the ministry or information complied by the ministry to a wide audience. As such, publishing of ministry of foreign affairs and international trade sites can serve as the benchmark of edging towards digital diplomacy. The second phase of interaction is characteristic of two-way communication that begin with basic functions such as email contact for government officials as well as feedback forms that can allow users to submit policy proposals or even legislative comments. The final stage is on Transaction that is characterized by ability of citizens to access ministerial services or transact business with the foreign ministry online. In such a context a transaction website offers direct links to the ministerial services at any given time. This is deemed significant as it enhances public service delivery precisely because it ensures that those services offered by the ministry are made faster, simpler and cost effective for both the ministry and stakeholders (Tran, 2018).

According to Hill (2019), the development of information communication technologies is constantly changing the modes of communication among individuals, organizations as well as states through the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs). The emergence of advanced ICTs has revolutionized the communication among MFAs as well as other stakeholders in international relations (Etta, 2015). Essentially, the application of ICTs in the MFAs has led to the emergence of several diplomatic buzz words such as public diplomacy and digital diplomacy. Bakker (2016) explains that the first generation of ICTs to be integrated in MFAs as forms of diplomatic communication included the telegraph, print press, telephones as well as radio. Subsequently, televisions, early generation computer, digital computers as well as satellite were integrated. Grech (2016) documents that in modern day, the digital computer and the World Wide Web has shaped diplomatic communication thus the utilization of social media, electronic mail among other internet substitutes available to modern diplomats.

In view of this, there has been a continued increase in studies conducted by countries as well as individual researchers on application of ICTs in ministries of foreign affairs. For instance, Dutton and Thelwall (2012) noted that there had been several studies conducted by the American State Department which is an equivalent of an MFA on the utilization of social media. Similarly, Christensen (2013) did an exploratory study on the Swedish government's utilization of twitter in view of nation branding. Berridge (2022) in a study titled E-Diplomacy in East Africa: Case Study

of Kenya stated that the application of ICTs transform the way sovereign states conduct their international communications both with the foreign states as well their own official diplomats abroad. Holwsti (2015) explores on the changes and implications for African Nations in light of integration of digital technology in international relations. Nonetheless, the existent studies on digital diplomacy are based on the experience of developed western nations. Subsequently, these studies on digital diplomacy fail to focus on how ICTs are utilized in the MFAs in respect to diplomacy and instead assume that digital diplomacy is a representation of all online actions exhibited by MFAs

## Statement of the Problem

In reference to studies that have specifically focused on diplomacy, most researchers have edged towards the aspect of public diplomacy which is the engagement of citizens in a nation's foreign policy through ICT tools (Potter, 2022). Public diplomacy in this context, considers the transformation of the exchange between governments and the public through social media platforms, the internet, real time video-conferencing among other ICT tools (Orwa, 2022). Nweke (2010) categorizes this form of engagement as Government to Citizen (G2C). However, the questions that this study sought to answer is what is the status of ICT integration in Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and what implication does this have on the conception of digital diplomacy at the ministry. This study will therefore examine use of use of E-government technologies in Kenyan foreign affairs diplomacy.

## Objective of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to examine use of E-government technologies in Kenyan foreign affairs diplomacy.

## Significance of the Study

The study was also significant as it filled the gap in literature on the concept of digital diplomacy in the developing countries. The study findings inform diplomacy stakeholders and bureaucrats in Kenya about the potential of embedding technology in the conduct of diplomatic services. Further, the findings of the study illuminate on the changing nature of diplomacy in a world that is progressively becoming digital in its operation.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study will benefit from the actor network theory proposed by John (2012).

## The Actor Network Theory (ANT)

 The researcher utilized the Actor Network Theory (ANT) as the explanatory framework of analysis to the concept of digital diplomacy. According to Ziemkendorf (2017) ANT can be traced back to the mid-1980s and is precisely linked to Bruno Latour (2017), Michael Callon (2016) as well as John Law (2012). According to Nweke (2012), the Actor Network Theory is especially significant in the exploration of socio-technical processes. According to Huxley (2014), ANT has

in the last few years gained immense influence in international relations as well as organizational and state studies. Nweke (2012) argued that though proponents of ANT have mostly edged towards science and technological activities, it cannot be denied that science is not profoundly different from social activities. From this vein, ANT was fundamental to this study as it acknowledged both the human actors as well as non-human actors within an institution. The theory identifies two major players in a communication setting that is the actor and the actant.

Drawing from the theory, the actor is linked to the non-human aspects hence machines, hybrids and texts among others. In addition, the actors can be defined as the identities, things, relations or networks that have the potential of layering within other assorted networks. Consequently, actants are the agents who can in this context be individuals or collective bodies that can form or discontinue relations with other agents. Essentially, actants are responsible for the aspect of forming associations. In reference to the study's interest digital diplomacy, the actors represented information communication technologies while the actants represented all the state agents attached to the political and diplomatic affairs directorate. Since ANT covers hardware and software components of ICT, the researcher was be able to comprehensively investigate how ICT is employed in the ministry of foreign affairs and international trade. Nweke (2012) argues that ANT pertinently illustrates the link between actors and actants and further goes ahead to expound its relevance in international relations and diplomacy. Within the constricted focus on diplomacy, the theory helped the researcher to interrogate how diplomats or rather the diplomatic fraternity applies ICTs in their quest for achieving their states interests in the international scene. It is important to note that states pursue their interests and identities through the foreign policy. In reference to this study, this helped the researcher in interrogating Kenya's foreign policy in relation to the diplomatic trends. Moreover, it aided the researcher in exploring how the systematic vicious cycle of communication or interaction evidenced in the delivery of diplomatic services has changed in view of the digital age.

**Empirical Review**

Wamalwa (2022), conducted a study to analyze Kenya's foreign policy towards Ethiopia from 1963 to 2020. This study had three objectives: This study adopted an exploratory research design and purposive, snowball and stratified random sampling techniques were employed. Interview schedules research instruments were used to obtain data. A thematic approach was used in analyzing qualitative data and the statistical package for social sciences was employed in the analysis of quantitative data. This enabled a contemporary analysis of the available academic material and interstate reports to determine Kenya's strategic advances towards Ethiopia. The findings showed that Kenya and Ethiopia have had cordial diplomatic relations over time though with some traces of tension. The study however presented a conceptual gap as it focused on Kenya's foreign policy towards Ethiopia from 1963 to 2020 our study will however look at use of E-government technologies in Kenyan foreign affairs diplomacy.

Ibrahim (2021), conducted a study that the examined Kenya-Britain military diplomacy and trends in acquisition of military equipment. The study used the historical research design to trace the nature of cooperation and trends influencing the acquisition of military equipment between the two states. The study also made use of comparative case study to provide new empirical evidence on nature, trends and factors influencing trade diplomacy among the two states. The study utilized a sample size of 70 respondents. The conclusion that emerged from this study was that general volumes of trade imports in military equipment from Britain to Kenya and military diplomacy between the two countries had declined over time. This trend has been influenced mostly by economic and political sanctions levelled on Kenya in the advent of multi-party democracy in the early 1990s as well as the Look-East policy adopted by Kenya to cushion it from the stringent measures on limited funding from the West. The study however presented a methodological gap as it utilized historical research design while our study will utilize desktop review approach.

Sitienei (2021), conducted a study to evaluate the discontinuities in Kenya-China foreign aid relations between 1963 to 2015. This study adopted the qualitative approach in the analysis of both primary and secondary data consulted. Sampling was done based on a purposive technique and snow balling to reach out the informants who were sourced for primary data. The data from the two sources were corroborated for authenticity and validity. Data analysis was done through critical textual analysis, evaluation and comparison of collected and existing information. The study used realism and rational choice theories. The two theories were used in the interpretation of established primary and secondary data. The study found that there has been changing trends (discontinuities and continuities) on Kenya-China foreign aid relations dictated by internal and external political developments under different regimes. During the first regime, Kenya-China partnership was not as enhanced as compared to later regimes. The study also generally adds to existing literature on international relations and diplomacy and relations between Kenya and China in particular. The study focused on Kenya-China relations presenting a contextual gap while our study will focus on Kenyan foreign affairs diplomacy.

Adan (2020), conducted a study to interrogate the extent to which the National Assembly influence Kenya's foreign policy from 1963 to 1978, analyze the mechanisms that have been used by National Assembly to influence Kenya's foreign policy from 1979 to 2002, and to assess the impact of the National Assembly on Kenya's foreign policy from 2003 to 2014 in Kenya. Descriptive research design was employed in this study. The target population was current and former members of parliament, diplomats, ministers, and other experts in the field of foreign relations. The study findings revealed that, beginning of Kenyatta's regime parliament had powers bestowed to them by the constitution allowing them to have significant influence on Kenya's foreign policy. However, during Kenyatta's regime (1963-1978), the law did not restrict the Executive ability to conduct foreign policy without involving Parliament. The study concluded that the effectiveness of parliamentary diplomacy is anchored in the 2010 constitution and there before, diplomatic relations were more of succession politics. The study however presented a conceptual gap as if focused on extent to which the National Assembly influence Kenya's foreign

policy from 1963 to 1978 while our study will focus on use of E-government technologies in Kenyan foreign affairs diplomacy.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to use of E-government technologies in Kenyan foreign affairs diplomacy. Three sorting stages were implemented on the subject under study in order to determine the viability of the subject for research. This is the first stage that comprised the initial identification of all articles that were based on use of E-government technologies in Kenyan foreign affairs diplomacy. The search was done generally by searching the articles in the article title, abstract, keywords. A second search involved fully available publications on the subject on use of E-government technologies in Kenyan foreign affairs diplomacy. The third step involved the selection of fully accessible publications. Reduction of the literature to only fully accessible publications yielded specificity and allowed the researcher to focus on the articles that related to use of E-government technologies in Kenyan foreign affairs diplomacy which was split into top key words. After an in- depth search into the top key words (use,E-government, technologies, Kenyan, foreign affairs, diplomacy), the researcher arrived at 4 articles that were suitable for analysis. This were findings from:

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## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

This study concluded that there are several studies that have explored the concept of digital diplomacy at various levels of analysis especially in the developed countries. Nonetheless, there were several gaps identified when it came to examining the concept of digital diplomacy in developing countries particularly those in the African continent. Diplomatic communication was noted to have transitioned as communication did. Some of the notable communication technologies that have influenced diplomatic communication included the telegraph, air mail, radio, television, telephone and modern-day information communication technologies.

Consequently, in reference to application of ICTs in the foreign policy processes ICTs were noted to be significant in aspects of enhanced information gathering, improved knowledge management, facilitation of policy planning and coordination as well as enriched implementation of foreign policy goals and objectives. The results denoted that the cost factors involved in information management in the traditional conduct of diplomacy is significantly reduced by collecting and disseminating of information via the internet. Cost compressions are not the only benefit but so are space and time compressions that are all significant aspects of diplomacy. The diplomatic bag was also noted to have substantially decreased due to the ease of sending documents online

## Recommendations

It is recommended that in addition to the efforts of further equipping the ministry with high tech digital equipment's, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade needs to consider that digital resources toolkits should be matched with the needs of digital diplomacy. This is because certain pieces of technology are best suited in pursuant of identified foreign policy objectives. Moreover, procuring of digital resources should be matched with extensive training of the staff on how they can utilize them to achieve maximum benefits.

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