



# Digital Diplomacy in Kenya: A Study on X (Twitter) Analysis and Communication Strategies of A Few Selected Diplomatic Actors

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## Research Article

### Abstract

*The study examined the digital diplomacy practices of three diplomatic actors, namely the US, the UK, and China, in Kenya. To understand how these actors communicate their messages digitally, the study conducted a content analysis of their X tweets, hashtags, hyperlinks, and visuals. Additionally, the study analyzed the tweet impressions section of the posts to gain insight into individual tweet performance, engagement, followers, and following details. These components are crucial in understanding the digital diplomacy practices of the actors. The results showed that the diplomatic actors prioritized following other diplomatic actors, heads of state, online influencers, organizations, projects, and companies of interest, rather than the local Kenyan digital public. The study also found that the preferred topics of the diplomatic actors were tourism, politics, culture, education, and economic development, among others. The reasons for prioritizing certain actors and topics were to monitor activities, protect interests, push foreign policies, expand networks, counter misinformation, and protect image abroad. The findings are presented in the form of a network analysis of tweets to show the communication strategies adopted by the diplomatic actors to influence or exert power over their followers on X.*

**Keywords:** Digital diplomacy, Twitter(X), Network analysis, NodeXL, Communication strategies.

## 1. Introduction

Digital Diplomacy has become an important part of public diplomacy where diplomats and other individuals involved in diplomacy make use of digital platforms to communicate with foreign audiences. These digital platforms provide a range of opportunities for diplomats to showcase their countries in a positive light and counter any negative narratives. Few studies have been conducted on digital diplomacy employed by the US, the UK, and China in Kenya via X, (formerly Twitter). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine who the major diplomatic actors prioritized following, engaging with, and paying special attention to on digital platforms. The focus of diplomatic actors on Twitter as a mass communication medium is important in international relations. The US has been a pioneer in the use of digital diplomacy, leveraging social media and other digital technologies to advance its foreign policy goals and engage with citizens around the world (Rawnsley & Rawnsley, 2019). The US State Department has a dedicated digital diplomacy team responsible for managing its social media presence and using digital tools to promote American values and interests abroad (Alho, 2019). In recent years, the US has used digital diplomacy to

engage with countries in the Middle East, promote human rights and democracy, and counter disinformation and propaganda (Ittefaq, 2019).

China has also been an active user of digital diplomacy, using social media and other digital technologies to promote its foreign policy objectives and present a positive image of China to the world (Madrid-Morales, 2017). China's digital diplomacy efforts are coordinated by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and focus on promoting Chinese culture, economic interests, and political values. China has used digital diplomacy to counter criticism of its human rights record and present itself as a responsible global actor (Jiang, 2017).

The UK has also embraced digital diplomacy, using social media and other digital technologies to engage with citizens and advance its foreign policy goals (Bjola & Holmes, 2015). The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office has a dedicated digital diplomacy team responsible for managing its social media presence and using digital tools to promote British interests and values abroad. The UK has used digital diplomacy to engage with citizens in countries such as India and to promote British interests in areas such as climate change and trade (Bjola & Jiang, 2015).

The US, China, and the UK all use social media and other digital technologies in a similar way when it comes to digital diplomacy, despite variations in their various political systems and foreign policy objectives. All three nations have specialized digital diplomacy teams within their foreign affairs departments and utilize them to interact with their citizens and advance their foreign policy objectives (Ong'ong'a, 2021). Despite similarities in their approaches, there are also significant differences in the use of digital diplomacy by the US, China, and the UK. The US and the UK tend to use digital diplomacy to promote democratic values and human rights, while China uses digital diplomacy to promote its political values and counter criticism of its human rights record. The US and the UK also have a more open and transparent approach to digital diplomacy, while China's approach is more controlled and censored.

The impact of digital diplomacy on foreign policy goals varies among the US, China, and the UK. The use of digital diplomacy has been effective in advancing the foreign policy goals of the US and UK, particularly in terms of promoting democratic values and engaging with citizens. However, the impact of China's digital diplomacy efforts has been limited by censorship and the lack of transparency in its approach. Although these countries have distinct characteristics, they all recognize the potential of digital diplomacy in achieving their foreign policy objectives. However, there is a lack of research on their specific interests in Africa, particularly in Kenya. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how these actors utilize digital tools to shape public opinion. By doing so, this study aims to contribute to society and sustainability.

## **2. The role of social media in shaping public opinion and foreign policy decision-making.**

The way public opinion is formed and foreign policy decisions are made has changed as a result of social media and other digital technologies (Ongonga, 2020). Governments and individuals can now connect in novel and creative ways thanks to the new communication and information dissemination channels created by these technologies. With the growth of digital diplomacy, nations now have new options to further their foreign policy objectives and interact with their citizens more effectively and efficiently (Zhang & Ong'ong'a, 2021). Social media and other digital technologies have been crucial in disseminating information, opinions, and ideas on a worldwide scale, which has helped shape public opinion (Efe Sevin, 2018). Governments and groups now have an easier time swaying public opinion thanks to social media platforms like X, Facebook, and Instagram's rapid access to millions of users (Mazumdar, 2020). New types of citizen diplomacy, where people can engage in cross-border communication and influence public opinion in their nations, have also been made possible by digital diplomacy (Garud-Patkar, 2022).

Digital diplomacy has also had an impact on the formulation of foreign policy. Governments now have new ways to gather data, conduct research, and have diplomatic dialogues thanks to social media and other digital technology (Spry, 2018). This has enabled nations to collect and analyze data in real-time, enabling the making of better-informed foreign policy judgments. Countries may now more easily coordinate their

efforts and work together on global initiatives. Digital technology has expanded the diplomatic process in terms of how it affects more conventional diplomatic techniques including face-to-face meetings, treaties, and discussions. Countries can now communicate and work together more easily because of digital diplomacy, which has eliminated the need for face-to-face meetings and negotiations (Melissen, 2020). However, it has also brought up new difficulties, such as the requirement for strong cyber security measures to safeguard sensitive data and the difficulty in confirming the veracity of information posted online (Barrinha & Renard, 2017; Kasper et al., 2021).

The role of social media and other digital technologies in shaping public opinion and foreign policy decision-making is significant and continues to grow. While digital diplomacy has its challenges, it has also created new opportunities for countries to advance their foreign policy goals and engage with citizens in innovative ways (Oloo, 2021). The integration of digital technologies into the diplomatic process has transformed the way diplomacy is conducted, and it is likely to continue to play a key role in shaping public opinion and foreign policy decision-making in countries such as Kenya.

Kenya is one of the countries in Africa with the highest internet penetration and diverse use of digital platforms (Mboya, 2021; Ong'ong'a, 2021). Social media in Kenya is used for various reasons depending on the affordances that they offer to the users. Among the digital platforms widely used in Kenya are Facebook, X, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok, among others. Social media participation in Kenya is growing, with X taking the lead in this field. The advantage of selecting X as a digital platform to investigate digital diplomacy by the three diplomatic institutions in Kenya is that it is widely used and offers ample affordance for any study by researchers interested in studying various communication aspects. X affords a data-rich prospect in the extent of the diverse populations that may otherwise be impossible to identify, hence making it the most dominant player in the social media landscape.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study used Social Network Analysis (SNA) (OGL, 2016) to investigate how the US, the UK, and Chinese diplomats use X. Digital diplomacy can benefit from the study of social network analysis, a discipline. SNA is used in digital diplomacy to examine the connections and exchanges between diplomatic actors online (Himmelboim et al., 2017). This includes examining how diplomats, governments, and other stakeholders interact on social media, in online forums, and through other digital channels. SNA offers a framework for comprehending the dynamics, communities, and relationships present in digital diplomatic networks as well as their organizational structure (Owen, 2016). This data can be used to aid decision-making, evaluate the success of diplomatic engagement in the digital sphere, and determine the impact of digital diplomacy initiatives.

SNA can be used in digital diplomacy to assess several network characteristics, such as the centrality of participants, the organization of communities, and the exchange of ideas and information among participants (Langley et al., 2016). The identification of important players and influencers, an understanding of the dynamics of digital diplomacy, and the formulation and execution of digital diplomacy projects may all be done using the information provided. SNA can also be used to track and examine how ideas and information are being circulated in the digital diplomatic network, including how news and information are being disseminated, how official statements and messages are being circulated, and how digital diplomacy initiatives are affecting public opinion (Muniesa, 2015).

The problem of data validity and quality is one of the difficulties in implementing SNA in digital diplomacy. The accuracy of SNA results can be impacted by the fact that data on digital interactions and connections is frequently inaccurate, partial, or biased in some other way. SNA in digital diplomacy frequently uses cutting-edge computational techniques and algorithms to handle massive volumes of digital data and compensate for biases and imperfections in the data to address these difficulties (Manor & Segev, 2020).

SNA is a powerful tool for understanding and analyzing the relationships and interactions between diplomatic actors in the digital space. By providing a comprehensive and detailed view of digital diplomatic networks, SNA can help to shed light on the patterns and dynamics of digital diplomacy and can be used to support decision-making, assess the impact of digital diplomacy initiatives, and evaluate the effectiveness of diplomatic engagement in the digital space.

Studies on the use of Social Network Analysis (SNA) are not new. For example, according to OGL (2016), SNA aims to understand a community by mapping the relationships that connect them as a network and identifying key groups within the network. This information can be used to determine the reach and impact of gangs, as well as to identify individuals who may be at risk of gang association or exploitation by gangs. Similarly, Ittefaq (2019) studied the use of digital platforms in Pakistan and India and found that local audiences were not engaged by the governments, while foreign offices were more active in using these tools than other government departments.

Furthermore, Sejung et al. (2019) analyzed the practices and effectiveness of digital diplomacy in South Korea and Japan. They found that public diplomacy organizations generated a more loosely connected and decentralized comment network, which displayed a "small-world" connectivity pattern with highly interconnected actors. These studies demonstrate how SNA is used in the study of digital diplomacy, and suggest that digital platforms provide ample opportunities to study the digital diplomacy of different actors. Therefore, this study aims to establish how three diplomatic actors use digital platforms in their foreign mission endeavors.

#### **4. Method**

The study purposely chose 'X' from January 2019 to December 2020 to determine who the diplomatic players prioritize and what they focus on as part of their communication strategy. X is a popular microblogging platform that is widely used by individuals, organizations, and political institutions to share information and shape the international news cycle. This platform's broad use by opinion leaders, journalists, and policymakers makes it an ideal tool for digital diplomacy, public diplomacy, and media relations. While some experts argue that X may not be the best tool for direct communication with the public, it has been used effectively by diplomats and political leaders to communicate and interact with traditional media (Sevin & Manor, 2019). X's features, such as its 280-character limit and easy accessibility to a global audience, make it an efficient tool for message control and agenda setting. Its short feedback loop also allows for the amplification of messages and enables the creators of tweets to gauge their followers' reactions and engage with their networks.

Collins, DeWitt, and Lefebvre (2019) suggest that X content can be analyzed through hashtags, hyperlinks, and visuals to understand how messages are communicated. X's tweet impressions section allows for analyzing individual tweet performance, engagement, followers, and following details. These components are crucial in understanding Kenya's digital diplomacy practice and determining which data should be collected for analysis.

##### **4.1. Content selection from X**

The purpose of the study was to examine the engagement of diplomats and their institutions on X in Kenya. To do this, an online application, NodeXL, was used to extract the followers and counter-followers of selected X accounts of embassies and diplomats. NodeXL is free software that can gather data such as comments, tweets, followers, and following individuals on X pages. However, it only offers limited comments per extraction and requires payment for more. The study was focused on the followers and following information, so the data set was limited to 600 units. During the extraction process, it was discovered that the Chinese ambassador in Kenya did not have an X account, so the followers and following of the former Chinese ambassador were extracted instead. All the extracted data was saved as an Excel file for analysis purposes.

The X accounts analyzed in this study included @USEmbassyKenya, @USAmbKenya, @ChineseEmbKenya, @WuPeng\_MFACHina, @UKinKenya, and @JaneMarriottUK.

## 4.2. Digital method approach

The use of NodeXL in this study was crucial as it allowed for the analysis of the data extracted from the X accounts of the three diplomatic institutions and their respective diplomats. NodeXL's user-friendly interface and comprehensive coverage of social network analysis metrics and visualization features (Himmelboim et al., 2017), made it an ideal choice for this study. The software was used to visualize and display network illustrations, map attributes, and filter edges and nodes based on color, shape, transparency, size, and location.

The extracted data was presented in the form of networks and was used to compute information regarding the regions of the following X accounts. This information was relevant in determining whether diplomats used X for domestic or diaspora diplomacy. The extracted spreadsheet was sorted and filtered to remove information that was not necessary for the study, such as dates and links to images. The names of the locations and countries of the following X accounts were also coded for easier computation and identification. NodeXL has been widely used in X studies to analyze data and understand communication patterns within the X-sphere. This study found it beneficial to adopt such a technique as it dealt specifically with social media and digital platforms.

## 4.3. Coding Followers and Following on X

"Followers" on X are the number of accounts or users who have subscribed to a specific X feed. These users are typically interested in the profile of the X account and therefore choose to follow its feed. They also receive notifications for tweets posted by the person they are following. In some cases, "followers" may represent support or loyalty to an individual, cause, or belief. However, X acknowledges that following someone's tweets does not always indicate agreement or endorsement of their views. Instead, followers may want to keep track of the person's posts.

"Counter Followers" refers to the number of X subscribers or users that a specific account has chosen to follow. This means subscribing to someone's tweets, allowing you to read and receive their messages in real-time. By following an account, you have permitted them to send you private tweets and direct messages on X. To categorize the information, the following classifications were created:

**Kenyan public:** This group includes all followers and counter-followers from Kenya and encompasses societal influencers, identified by region.

**Politicians:** This category comprises followers and counter-followers who work in political institutions, lawmakers, or are elected officials at the national level in Kenya.

**National government institutions:** This group encompasses all government institutions such as the Ministries of Health, Defense, and Education.

**International Non-Governmental Organizations:** This category includes all international organizations that deal with humanitarian aid and similar projects.

**Local government:** This classification includes followers and counter-followers from the county or local government level and includes local leaders like governors, members of county assemblies, and speakers.

**Civil Society:** This group encompasses followers and counter-followers from the local civil society, NGOs, youth groups, and related organizations.

**Educational:** This category encompasses followers and counter-followers who are concerned with educational issues and includes universities, colleges, high schools, and vocational institutions.

**Media:** This group includes followers and counter-followers from media organizations, journalists, commentators, and freelancers.

Foreign missions: This category includes followers and counter-followers from diplomatic institutions like embassies, ambassadors, diplomats, missions, and Ministries of Foreign Affairs from different states.

Private and others: This classification consists of followers and counter-followers from private institutions like banks, construction companies, business owners, national religious leaders, corporations, think tanks, and airline companies

## 5. Results

The study analyzed the X accounts of ambassadors and their respective embassies to understand the content of their tweets. Network analysis was used to establish the communication strategies employed by these actors to influence their followers or exert power. The study presents the findings of the X analysis by mapping the X accounts of the three diplomatic actors in Kenya. The digraph provides a direct map of the ties, showing their clustering and the scatteredness of the accounts. The level of closeness confers power and influence on the followers of the specific account. The ties between the nodes indicate the presence of a relationship. The in-degree of the person suggests their state in the network in terms of potential resources or the potential to lead someone to another who is resourceful. Therefore, this is a measure of potential power or influence. Influence is the exercise of power, and power, on the other hand, is the potential to influence. Besides, the outer degree brings out the extent of dependency, expansiveness, and capacity for sociability.

The findings revealed that the three diplomatic actors prioritize their peers, heads of state, online influencers, organizations, projects, and companies they fund, or those they have an interest in. This is done to monitor activities, protect interests, promote foreign policies, expand networks, counter misinformation, and protect their image abroad. However, they rarely follow the local Kenyan digital public, only following journalists for updates or to gain media coverage.

### 5.1. The US Embassy’s Digital Diplomacy

As can be seen in Figure 1, the US ambassador has a substantial influence on the X space in Kenya. The US ambassador to Kenya has adopted the mediatization strategy (Manor & Crilley, 2020), by focusing on using media such as K24 news and Bus radio in Kajiado to promote his tweets.

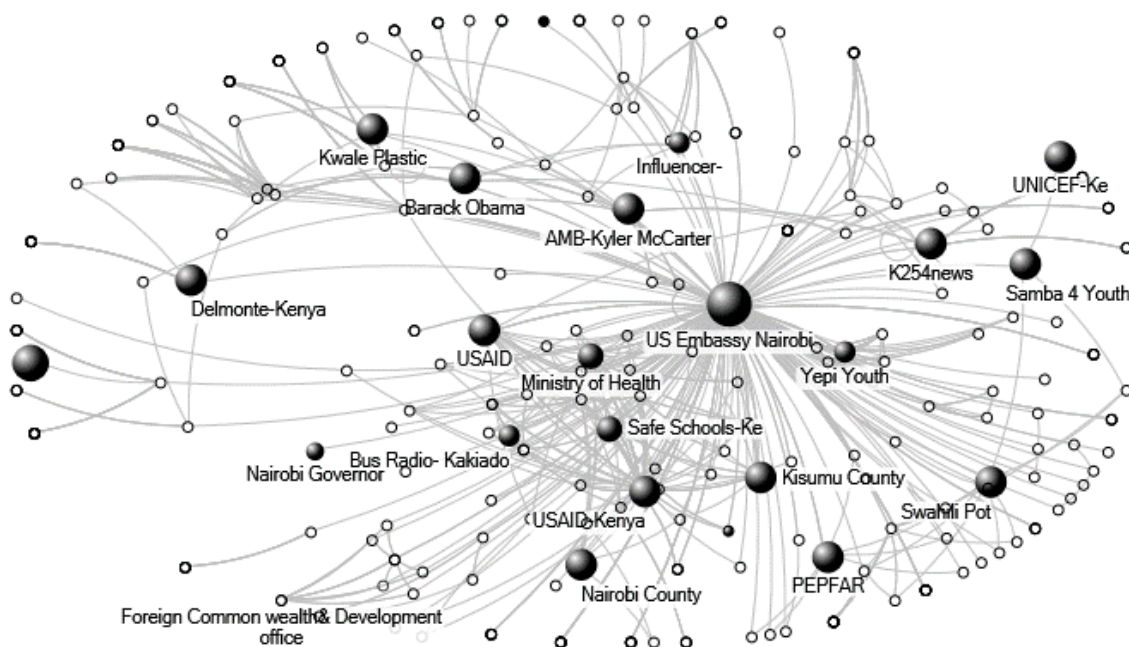


Fig. 1: The US Embassy’s X Focus

The ambassador follows these media on X accounts and the ambassadors tend to follow these media hence t media follows the ambassador's X account to get news that they can report on their channels, which are also important for the US aid programs and projects in Kenya that are implemented in the communities where these media operate. The US ambassador pays attention to the organizations that they fund and monitors their resources. The US ambassador prioritizes following online influencers and other American companies or affiliated industries that are important to US interests in Kenya. The US ambassador also follows the X accounts of county governments in Kenya, former US president Barack Obama, MoH Kenya, and the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office to remotely monitor their performance. The US ambassador also has a peer-to-peer connection with other diplomatic actors by following organizations that are affiliated with the US or implementing US foreign policy strategies.

### 5.2. UK Embassy's Digital Diplomacy

The X presence of the UK high commissioner in Kenya is a representation of the UK's foreign policy objectives in Kenya (Figure 2). The commissioner prioritizes the organizations and agencies that support their initiatives, such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Information Communication Technology.

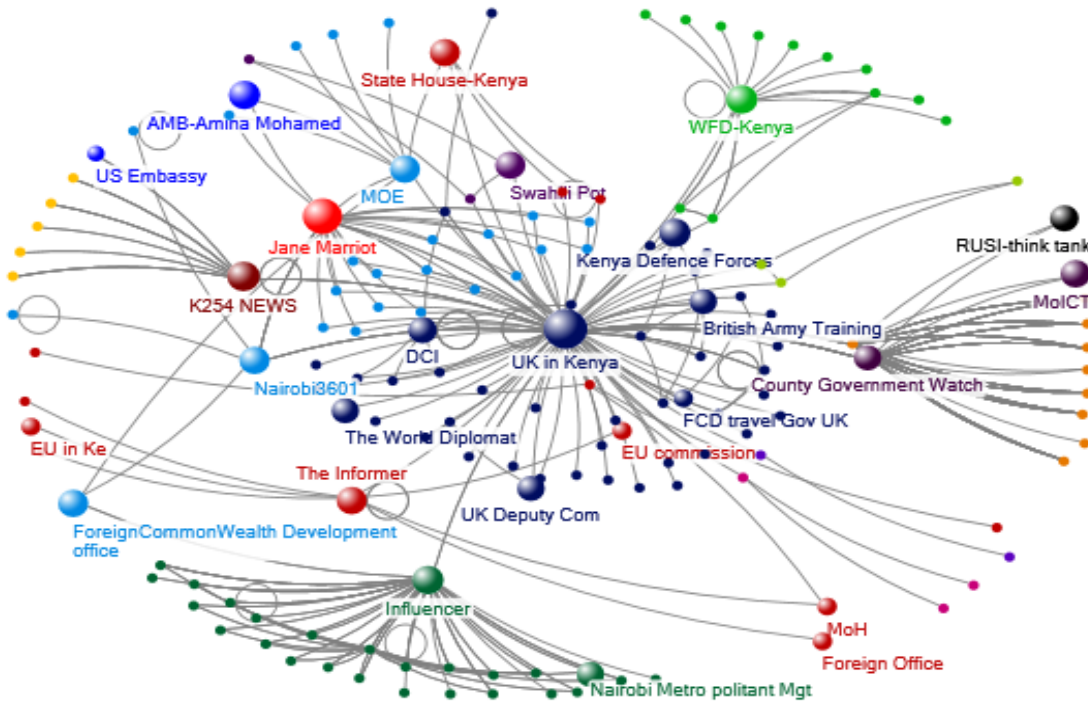


Fig. 2: The UK High Commissioner's X Focus

This helps the UK stay informed and updated on the progress of their funded programs in Kenya. The UK high commissioner also follows the Kenyan Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Director of Criminal Investigation, and the Kenya defense forces, as the UK's foreign policy in Kenya focuses on issues of security and justice. The UK high commissioner leverages the embassy in Kenya to expand its X network, as the embassy has a high centrality, meaning it has a significant influence on the networks it is connected to. The commissioner follows UK-affiliated organizations, officials, and agencies, including the World Diplomat, which helps them stay informed about global developments in the field of diplomacy. The UK commissioner in Kenya also engages in digital diaspora diplomacy by following UK nationals who live in

Kenya on X. This helps the UK communicate with its nationals, offering consular services and updating them on current events within and outside of Kenya. Overall, the UK commissioner's presence on X helps to advance the UK's interests in Kenya, by influencing relationships with the Kenyan government, staying informed on the latest developments in Kenya, and connecting with UK nationals living in Kenya.

### 5.3.Chinese Embassy’s Digital Diplomacy

The strategy of the Chinese ambassador in Kenya to use X as a tool for digital diplomacy is unique and focused on promoting people-to-people diplomacy (Huang & Wang, 2020; Luqiu & Yang, 2020) through the Africa China Review, a think tank group. The ambassador prioritizes following the UN in Kenya due to the country's membership in the UN Security Council and its hosting of various UN offices. The closeness between the deputy secretary-general of the UN and the Chinese ambassador demonstrates China's power and influence over its followers. The ambassador's indirect connection with the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) indicates a relationship focused on creating business between China and Kenya, with China being the largest trade partner for Africa.

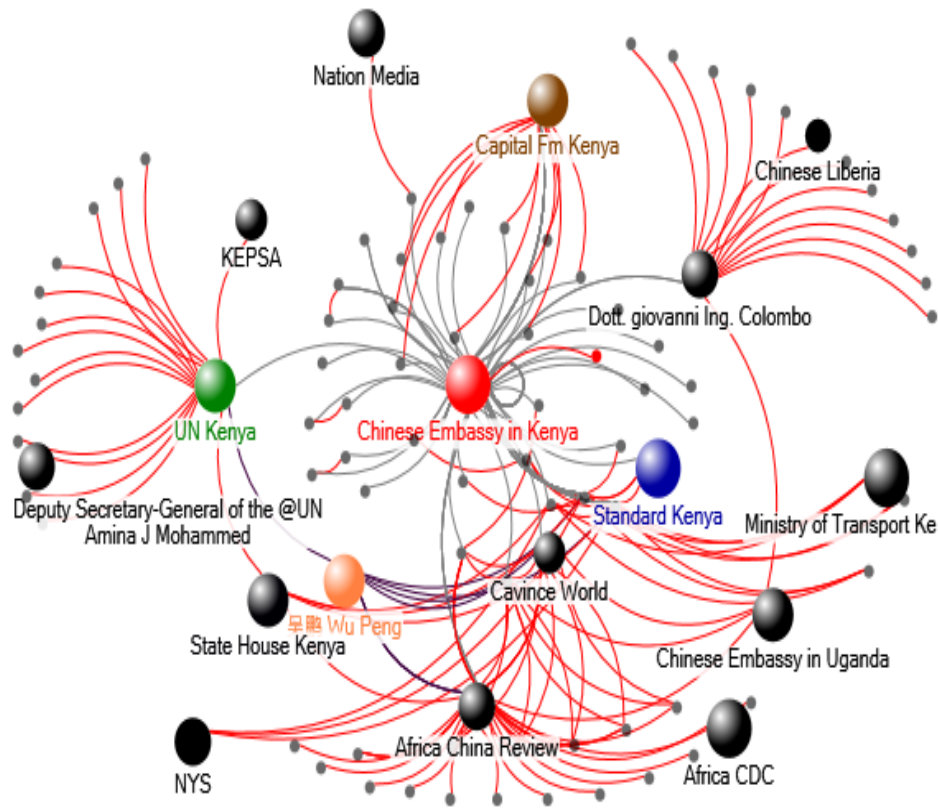


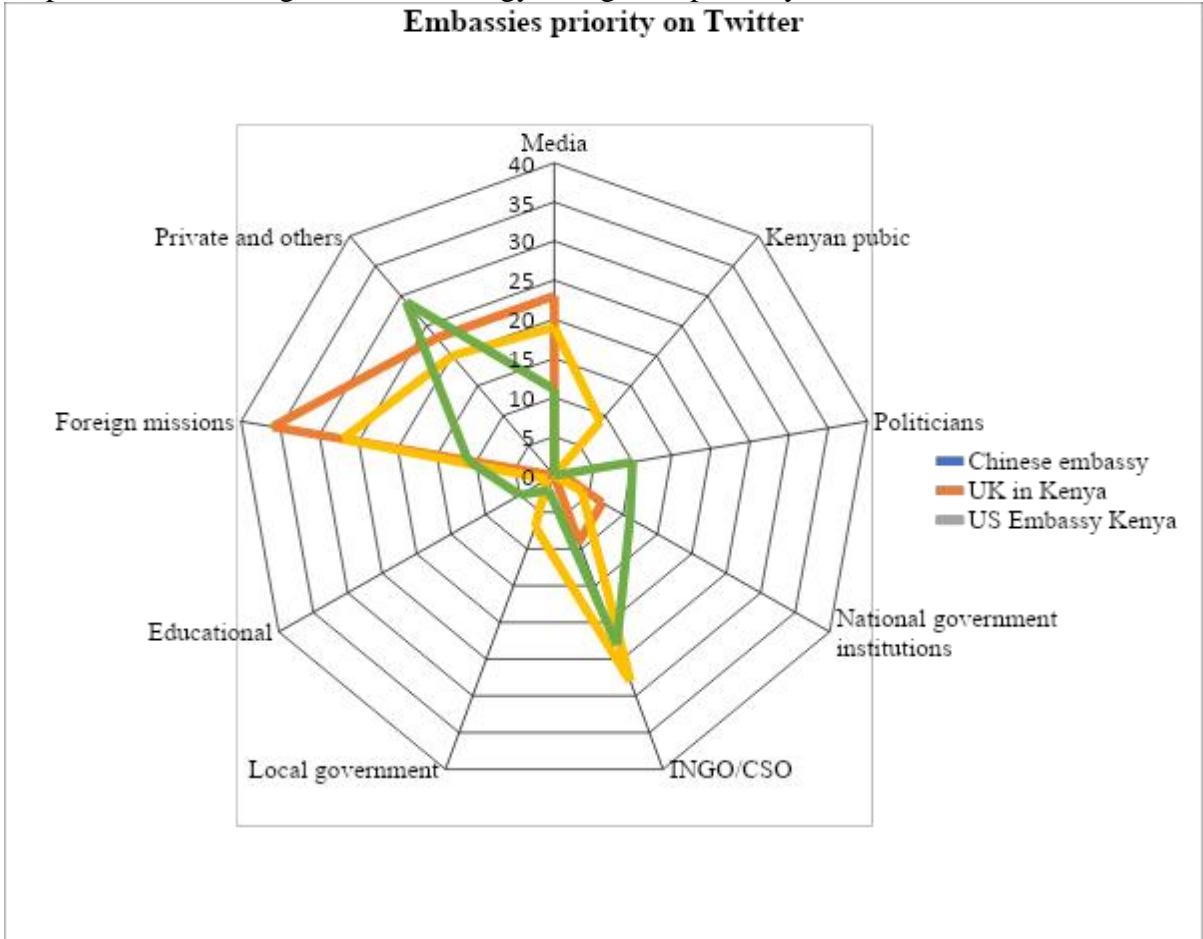
Fig. 3: Chinese Embassy’s X Focus

The ambassador also closely follows other Chinese embassies in other African countries and the Ministry of Transport (MoT) in Kenya due to the involvement of Chinese companies in construction projects in Kenya. The ambassador also indirectly follows the African CDC to counter misinformation spread by alternative voices and to follow up on discussions related to Chinese pharmaceutical companies partnering with African countries. The ambassador also has some level of influence on journalists and media in Kenya, following media outlets such as Nation Media, Capital FM, and Standard Kenya, among others. This is to follow what the media reports about China and its involvement in Kenya and to leverage the relationship to get airtime on media and provide press releases to be published in the print media.



### 5.4. X favoring

The findings (Figure 4) in this section show that all three diplomatic actors prioritize following either their organizations, projects, and companies that they fund or those of interest to them. It is worth noting that they rarely follow the local Kenyan digital public; if they do so, they follow journalists to get updates or use their influence to get airtime and space in the media. The next section presents the findings on who the embassies prioritize following on X as a strategy of digital diplomacy.



**Fig. 4: Comparison of Embassies' Strategies on X**

#### 5.4.1. Chinese Embassy

As seen in Figure 4, the priorities of embassies on X vary when it comes to the people and organizations they follow. The Chinese embassy in Kenya follows 325 X accounts, with the highest number of foreign missions followed compared to the UK and US embassies. The foreign missions followed by the Chinese embassy can be divided into two categories. The first category is foreign missions abroad, including the UN Geneva, EU in Kenya, China mission UN, and China EU Mission. The second category is various Chinese embassies, ambassadors, spokespersons, and high-ranking diplomats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, such as the China Embassy in Ottawa, Pakistan, Consulate Chicago, Manila, Slovenia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Somalia, KSA, Nigeria, Grenada, Hungary, Ghana, and the US. The Chinese embassy follows the X accounts of the Russian Embassy and the UK High Commissioner to Kenya but surprisingly does not follow the US embassy's X account, suggesting the global power struggle between China and the US is present in foreign countries as well.

#### **5.4.2. The UK Embassy**

The UK embassy in Kenya is following 1640 X accounts, including the British Chamber of Commerce Kenya, Shell MD & Country Chair, UK at the African Union, COP26 the UN Climate Change Conference, and UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN. The embassy pays close attention to missions outside London, due to the UK's representation in the African Union.

#### **5.4.3. The US Embassy**

The US embassy in Kenya is following 1190 accounts, including the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, consulates in Brazil, Hungary, and Côte d'Ivoire, US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State, Deputy Administrator of USAID, and the UK High Commissioner to Kenya and Chinese Embassy in Kenya. The US embassy in Kenya does not follow other US embassies in Africa, indicating it serves several countries in the region. The US and UK embassies in Kenya follow international non-governmental organizations and community social groups more closely than the Chinese embassy. The US embassy prioritizes the following organizations such as UNEP, Centre for a New American Security, World Food Program Kenya, and Linda Katiba Movement, which are youth-directed and funded by US agencies. The focus of these organizations includes political leaders, professionals, activists, and active citizens who aim to advance democracy and the rule of law. The UK embassy follows organizations such as WWF Kenya, Nurse in Hand, and DDG Mine Action, whose programs focus on creating a safer world through access to reliable emergency response services and empowering young people. In the category of private and others, the US embassy prioritizes following the X accounts of Delta, Google, AidData, and Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES), while the UK embassy follows accounts such as You Lead Summit, FAO Locust, and Com Sec Youth.

### **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

This study investigated the digital diplomacy strategies used by the US, UK, and China in Kenya in the context of X. The overall results of this study indicate that X has become an important tool for communication, information sharing, and expression in Kenya, with foreign diplomats adopting it for their activities (Dumčiuvienė, 2017; Gonçalves & Assis, 2019; Gurskas, 2016). Over the years, the platform has been adopted by a growing number of Africans, with millions of users now active on the platform. The literature review in the previous section revealed the debates on the concept of digital diplomacy. These confusions stem from whether the diplomatic actors using X are engaging in "new public diplomacy" (Helmets, 2016), to engage and interact with foreign audiences or utilizing this platform to engage with their host government as a form of conventional diplomacy. Diplomatic actors use X to express their opinions, set the agenda for the day, influence their followers, and provide the media with information on what they believe is important to report. In this study, four key themes emerged in the use of X by the three diplomats in Kenya, which include political discourse, breaking news, social activism, and brand promotion.

The findings of this study revealed that X has become an important platform for political leaders, activists, and citizens across Kenya to discuss and engage in political debates, hold public officials accountable, and voice opinions on key issues. In many African countries, traditional news outlets are subject to censorship or lack the resources to provide comprehensive coverage, making X an important source of information and political discourse. Political leaders and elected officials across the continent use X to communicate with the public, respond to criticisms, and shape public opinion on key issues. This can be seen on X, where different actors compete for power and prioritize following other actors. This can also be noticed when diplomatic actors try to set agendas by following and engaging in debates and holding public officials accountable. This means that X is widely used by these actors to express their views on key issues, respond to public concerns, and engage with citizens (Andéhn et al., 2014). Furthermore, the use of X by diplomatic actors in Kenya has the advantage of having a broad reach. With millions of active users in the country, X

provides a large and highly engaged audience for political discussions. Furthermore, because X is real-time and fast-paced, political debates can be quickly and easily disseminated, making it an ideal platform for shaping public opinion and influencing political discourse. Although X plays a major role in political discourse in Kenya, it is not without its challenges. While the platform provides a space for free expression, it can also be a breeding ground for misinformation, fake news, and propaganda (Duncombe, 2018). This can undermine public trust in political discourse and have a negative impact on the political process.

In addition, this study found that diplomats either use X to break news or use it as a source of news and information. This means that X has become an increasingly important source of news and information in Kenya, with diplomatic actors following journalists and media organizations because these individuals use the platform to report on breaking events as they unfold. It's fast-paced and provides real-time updates, making it an ideal platform for covering breaking news and events. This is equally true in this study, where diplomatic actors follow particular media in and outside Kenya to get a sense of what is happening around them. This was also seen when these diplomatic actors used X to provide real-time updates on disease spread, such as COVID-19, as well as to dispel myths and misinformation about the disease (Mutua & Ong'ong'a, 2020). Therefore, the use of X by these diplomatic actors is to bypass gatekeepers. This is particularly important in countries where traditional news outlets may be subject to censorship, lack resources, or be slow to provide comprehensive coverage. Additionally, X's global reach means that news events in Kenya and these diplomatic initiatives can quickly be disseminated to a global audience, providing increased visibility and attention to important issues on the continent.

It is also important to note that these diplomatic actors follow various individuals and organizations because they want their policies and interests to be represented. In this way, social activists follow each other on X, which has become a key tool for social activists in Kenya to raise awareness about issues, mobilize support, and coordinate campaigns. The platform provides a way for activists to amplify their voices and reach a large, engaged audience, making it an ideal tool for promoting social and political causes. In addition to its use by activists, X is also used by advocacy groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Kenya to promote their causes and engage with the public. These organizations use X to share information about their programs, raise awareness about important issues, and engage with stakeholders and supporters (Ong'Ong'A, 2022; Ong'ong'a, 2022). This highlights the important role that X plays in promoting social and political activism among the diplomatic actors in Kenya and elsewhere.

The diplomatic actors in Kenya that this study has examined use X for their brand promotion. This is because they see the importance of the platform to promote their policies, as well as follow up with their affiliated organizations, promote the businesses of these organizations in Kenya in terms of their products, services, and events, and engage with customers and the public. For instance, these trends can be noticed when the diplomatic actors follow the X accounts of interested or affiliated companies and organizations. Companies across a wide range of industries, from tech to consumer goods, use X to reach a large, targeted audience across the globe. X provides a cost-effective way for businesses to connect with customers and promote their brands, making it an important tool for businesses in Kenya looking to expand their reach and increase their visibility.

In conclusion, this study provides insight into the relationships and communication between nations and helps to analyze a country's foreign policy goals and strategies. X can be used as a tool for public diplomacy, allowing countries to engage with citizens and organizations in foreign countries. The study sheds light on the role of social media in shaping international relations and contributes to the development of new research methodologies for studying diplomacy and international relations, including the use of big data and computational techniques. In the context of Kenya, the study helps to better understand the relationships between Kenya, the US, the UK, and China and the role of social media in shaping their interactions and cooperation.

## 7. Limitations and Direction for Future Research

This study has some limitations. Firstly, it only focuses on Kenya to demonstrate the digital diplomacy of the US, the UK, and China. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to reflect their digital diplomacy efforts across the whole of Africa. Nonetheless, the findings provide us with a glimpse into how these actors perform on the Kenyan digital stage. Secondly, the study used a free version of NodeXL, which may have some limitations in the amount of data and tweets extracted for analysis. However, these limitations do not hinder the study's efficacy since the findings are consistent with those from previous studies using similar platforms. Future studies could take into account the difference in digital diplomacy strategies of these actors while considering other social media platforms like Facebook, Websites, TikTok, and Instagram. This could provide insights into whether the results are the same or if their strategies differ across these platforms.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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