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**LEVERAGING DIGITAL DIPLOMACY IN GHANA: PROSPECTS AND
CHALLENGES**

BY

HENRIETTA DJABATEY

(22008855)

**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
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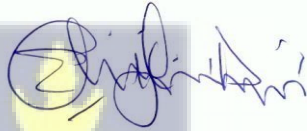
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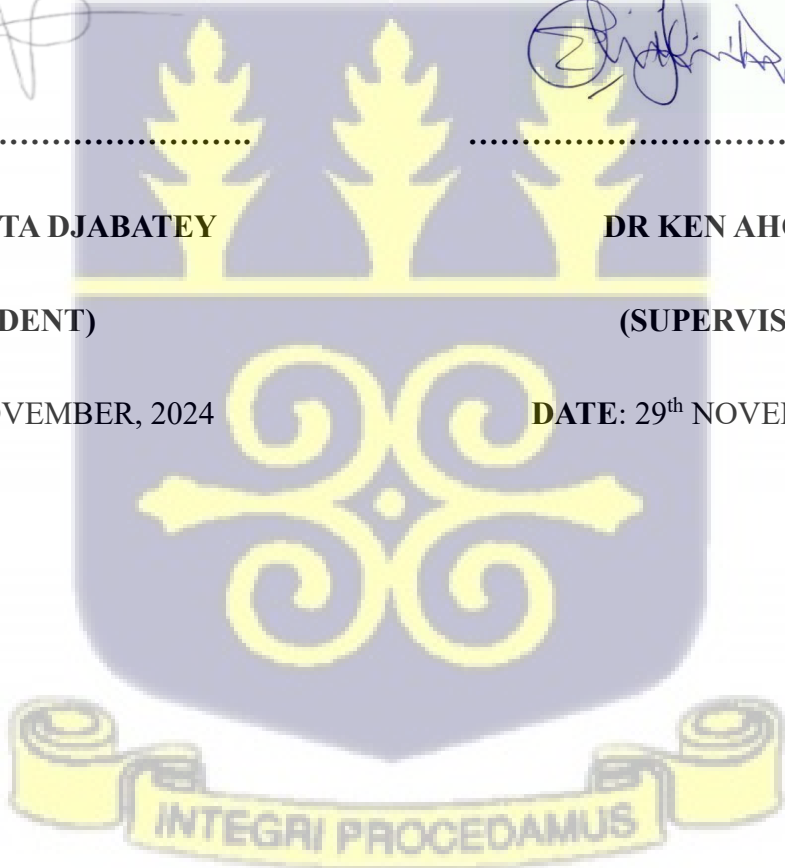
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DECLARATION

I, **HENRIETTA DJABATEY**, hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my original research, under the supervision of **Dr. Ken Ahorsu**. Except where specifically acknowledged, all references, data, analyses, and interpretations presented in this study are entirely my own.

This work has not been submitted in whole or in part for the award of any other degree or diploma at this or any other institution. All sources of information, including books, journal articles, reports, internet resources, and personal communications, have been appropriately cited and listed in the references section in accordance with academic standards.

	
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HENRIETTA DJABATEY	DR KEN AHORSU
(STUDENT)	(SUPERVISOR)
DATE: 29th NOVEMBER, 2024	DATE: 29th NOVEMBER, 2024



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for His unwavering guidance, strength, wisdom, endless mercies that enabled me to complete this dissertation. His boundless grace provided me with resilience and hope every step of this dissertation.

To my parents, for instilling in me the values of hard work and perseverance, I owe this achievement to your belief in my potential.

And finally, to all those who strive to make meaningful contributions to the field of diplomacy, may this work inspire continued exploration and innovation in the digital age.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI - Artificial Intelligence

AU - African Union

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019

ECOWAS - Economic Community of West African States

EU - European Union

FCO - Foreign and Commonwealth Office

GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation

GSS - Ghana Statistical Service

ICT - Information and Communication Technology

IMF - International Monetary Fund

INX - Internet Exchange Points

IRB - Institutional Review Board

MFARI - Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration

NCA - Ghana National Communications Authority

NITA - National Information Technology Agency

OAU - Organization of African Unity (which later evolved into the African Union, AU)

PJCC - Permanent Joint Commissions for Cooperation

UN - United Nations

VR - Virtual Reality

X - Formerly known as Twitter (after the rebranding)



Table of Contents

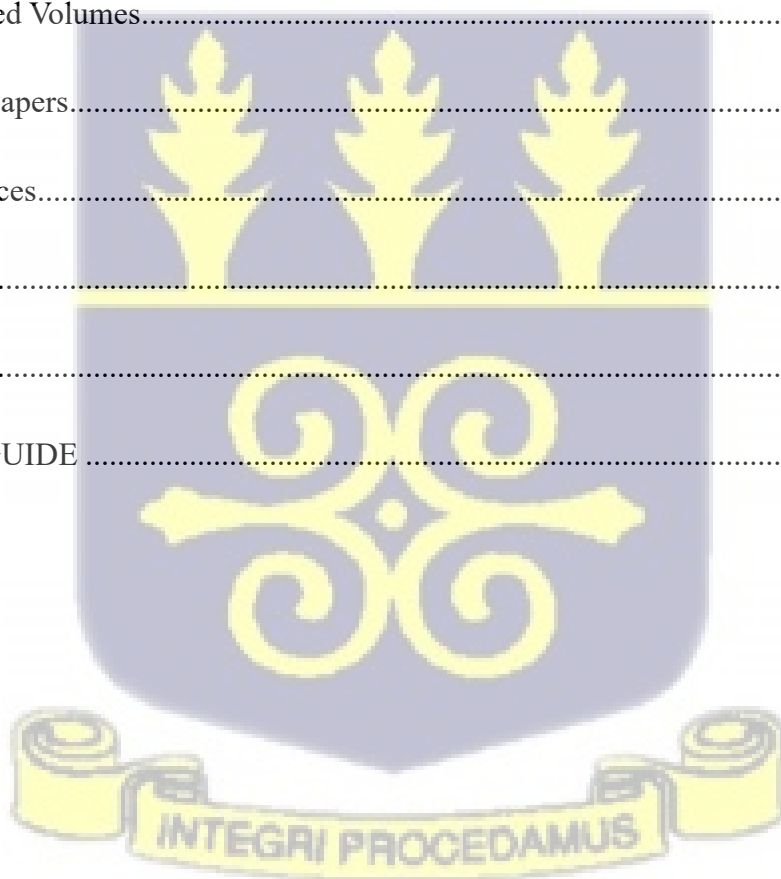
DECLARATION.....	2
DEDICATION	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	4
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	5
ABSTRACT.....	11
CHAPTER ONE	13
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	13
1.0 Introduction.....	13
1.1 Problem Statement.....	14
1.2 Research Questions.....	15
1.3 Research Objectives.....	16
1.4 Scope of the Study	16
1.5 Rationale of the Study.....	17
1.6 Theoretical/Conceptual Framework.....	18
1.6.1 Constructivism Theory.....	18
1.6.2 Soft Power Theory	20
1.6.3 The Nexus Between Social Constructivism and Soft Power: A Theoretical justification.	22
1.7 Literature Review.....	25
1.7.1 Introduction to Digital Diplomacy: Definition, Concepts and Trends.....	25
1.7.2 Key Concepts and Components of Digital Diplomacy	25

1.7.3 Global Trends in Digital Diplomacy Adoption	26
1.7.4 Digital Diplomacy in Developing Countries	27
<i>Unique challenges and opportunities</i>	27
<i>Case studies from other African countries</i>	27
<i>Lessons Learned and Best Practices</i>	28
1.7.5 Digital Diplomacy Tools and Platforms.....	29
Social media in diplomacy	29
Website and online presence management.....	29
Digital tools for consular services.....	30
Emerging Technologies in Diplomacy	30
Challenges in Implementing Digital Diplomacy	31
Infrastructure and Technological Constraints	31
Digital divide and accessibility issues	31
Human resource and capacity building needs.....	32
Cybersecurity and data protection concerns	32
1.7.7 Organizational Adaptation for Digital Diplomacy.....	33
Structural Changes in Foreign Ministries	33
Training and Skill Development for Diplomatic Staff.....	33
Integration of Digital Strategies with Traditional Diplomacy	34
Case Studies of Successful Digital Diplomacy Campaigns.....	35
Challenges in Assessing Digital Diplomatic Efforts.....	36

REFERENCES.....	42
CHAPTER TWO	46
AN OVERVIEW OF GHANA’S DIPLOMACY HISTORY AND CURRENT STATE OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY.....	46
2.0 Introduction.....	46
2.1 Ghana’s Diplomacy History.....	46
2.2 The Emergence of Digital Diplomacy	49
2.3 Current State of Digital Diplomacy in Ghana.....	51
2.4 Comparative Analysis: Traditional vs. Digital Diplomacy in Ghana.....	53
2.5 Conclusion	54
REFERENCES.....	55
CHAPTER THREE.....	57
RESEARCH FINDINGS ON LEVERAGING DIGITAL DIPLOMACY IN GHANA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES.....	57
3.0 Introduction.....	57
3.1 Ghana’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration	57
<i>Role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration.</i>	57
3.2 How Digital Public Diplomacy Differs from Traditional Diplomacy	58
Operational Distinction	58
<i>Human resource requirements and staff training</i>	60
Capacity building	61

Diplomatic operations and procedures.....	63
Creation for specialized bureaus and departments.....	65
Development of digital tools and infrastructure	67
Diplomatic reach and effectiveness	69
Resource utilization.....	72
Balancing Transparency, Diplomatic Discretion, and Combating Misinformation on Digital Platforms.....	74
Cybersecurity and Data Privacy.....	77
REFERENCES.....	81
CHAPTER FOUR.....	82
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	82
4.1.1 Objective 1: The Extent to Which Digital Diplomacy Differs from Traditional Diplomacy.....	82
4.1.2 Objective 2: The Evolution of Foreign Policy Agencies’ Institutional Structures to operationalize Digital Public Diplomacy.....	86
4.1.3 Objective 3: Benefits, Challenges, and Risks in the Implementation of Digital public Diplomacy.....	90
4.1.4 Objective 4: The Ministry’s Adaptability to the Exigencies of Digital Public Diplomacy	93
4.2 Conclusion	95
4.3 Recommendations	96
BIBLIOGRAPHY	98

Books	98
Book Chapters.....	98
Book Reviews	98
Journal Articles	99
Research Papers/Theses/ Dissertation.....	100
Reports	101
Online Articles or Unpublished Works	101
Articles in Edited Volumes.....	101
Book in Edited Volumes.....	101
Conference Papers.....	102
Internet Sources.....	102
Interviews.....	102
APPENDIX.....	103
INTERVIEW GUIDE	103



ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the integration of digital diplomacy into Ghana's foreign policy, examining its potential, challenges, and the evolving strategies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MoFARI). Digital diplomacy, leveraging digital communication tools and social media platforms such as Twitter (now X), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Reddit, Telegram, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Messenger, offers a transformative approach to international relations. It enables Ghana to enhance global engagement, strengthen public diplomacy, and connect with the diaspora, advancing its foreign policy objectives and extending its reach on the global stage. Using qualitative research methods, including interviews with key stakeholders from MoFARI, this study investigates the operational differences between digital and traditional diplomacy, emphasizing the benefits of digital platforms, such as cost-efficiency, real-time communication, and broader audience engagement. The research also highlights the challenges faced in digital diplomacy, including inadequate infrastructure, cybersecurity threats, misinformation, and data privacy issues. Case studies, such as Ghana's crisis management during the COVID-19 pandemic and the evacuation of citizens from Ukraine, illustrate how digital tools have effectively addressed immediate international issues. Constructivism and Soft Power theoretical frameworks are employed to analyze how Ghana can construct its national identity and project influence through digital platforms while enhancing its global stature. Findings indicate that while digital diplomacy presents significant opportunities, its full potential cannot be realized without addressing structural barriers, such as infrastructure gaps, technical expertise, and policy enforcement. Recommendations for Ghana's digital diplomacy include enhancing digital infrastructure, promoting integrated diplomacy, enhancing public engagement, and restructuring expenditure. This dissertation argues that a hybrid approach combining traditional diplomatic methods with

digital strategies will allow Ghana to maximize the impact of its foreign policy efforts and position itself as a regional leader in the evolving digital landscape of international relations.



CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Technological advancements in information and transportation have significantly reshaped contemporary international relations, with diplomacy experiencing profound changes in how states manage foreign relations. Traditionally, diplomacy involved negotiation, persuasion, and dialogue conducted through formal channels. However, the emergence of digital diplomacy has introduced a transformative approach to international engagement, leveraging the internet, ICT, and social media to influence foreign populations, communicate policies, and foster collaboration.

According to Holmes (2015), digital diplomacy departs from conventional practices by utilizing online activities to enhance physical diplomatic engagements. This shift aligns with the broader transition from "hard power" to "soft power" in international relations, emphasizing attraction and persuasion over coercion. Digital platforms and social, including Twitter (now X), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Reddit, Telegram, zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Messenger, allow states to reach global audiences, promote their national interests, and manage crises efficiently.

Globally, developed countries have integrated digital diplomacy into their foreign policy frameworks, using it as a tool for public diplomacy, nation branding, and fostering multilateral partnerships. In Africa, the adoption of digital diplomacy has been more gradual but increasingly impactful, with countries like Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya utilizing it to engage diasporas, promote trade, and address regional issues (Oloo, 2024). Ghana, too, has recognized the importance of digital diplomacy in enhancing its foreign policy. With over 40 million mobile internet subscriptions reported by the Ghana National Communications

Authority (NCA, 2023), Ghana has the potential to leverage digital platforms to promote its image, engage with diasporas, and advance its diplomatic goals.

Despite these opportunities, the adoption of digital diplomacy in Ghana is not without challenges. The country faces limitations such as inadequate infrastructure, technical expertise gaps, and a persistent digital divide. This research “Leveraging Digital Diplomacy in Ghana: Prospects and Challenges,” explores Ghana’s use of digital diplomacy, focusing on its benefits, challenges, and risks, and aims to provide evidence-based strategies to enhance its effectiveness.

1.1 Problem Statement

Diplomacy, as a global social phenomenon, has evolved significantly due to technological advancements, emerging issues, and the exigencies of international relations. Digital public diplomacy, underpinned by ICT, the internet, digital tools, and social media, has fundamentally transformed diplomatic practices, offering both opportunities and challenges. Understanding the role and importance of digital diplomacy is essential as it becomes a critical tool for states to advance their national interests. However, the use of digital platforms also exposes states to cyber risks such as data breaches, misinformation, and misuse by state and non-state actors. Rashica (2018) underscores that despite these risks, the benefits of digital diplomacy outweigh the challenges, making it indispensable for modern diplomatic activities.

The benefits and risks of digital diplomacy vary between developed and developing countries. Manor (2019) highlights that adoption and effectiveness are significantly influenced by technological infrastructure and digital literacy. Hedling and Bremberg (2021) add that the global nature of digital platforms introduces complexities such as the uncontrolled flow of information, which can escalate diplomatic tensions if not properly managed.

In Ghana, growing digital connectivity by 40.2 million mobile internet subscriptions evidenced by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2021) provides significant potential for digital diplomacy. However, challenges persist, including inadequate digital infrastructure, limited technical expertise among diplomatic staff, low competitive remuneration for internet experts, and a digital divide between urban and rural areas (Institute of ICT Professionals Ghana, 2024). Furthermore, as a secondary user of digital technologies, Ghana faces systemic limitations in adapting strategies developed for contexts with more advanced technological capabilities.

The limited existing literature on Ghana's digital diplomacy hampers the development of context-specific, evidence-based strategies. While broader African studies on digital diplomacy exist, there is a need for in-depth research specific to Ghana's experiences, successes, challenges, and threats. This study addresses these gaps by conducting a comprehensive investigation into the prospects and challenges of leveraging digital diplomacy in Ghana, aligning with the call by Danquah, Dadzie, Gyesi, Yeboah, and Nyarko (2024) for contextually relevant research.

In conclusion, while digital diplomacy offers transformative potential, it requires tailored approaches to address inherent risks and challenges. By exploring the classification of benefits and risks, this study aims to support evidence-based strategies for enhancing Ghana's digital diplomatic efforts, ensuring its effective integration into the country's foreign policy framework.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How does digital public diplomacy differ from traditional diplomacy?
2. How do the foreign policy agencies evolve their institutional structures to operationalize digital public diplomacy?
3. What are the benefits, challenges, and risks that Ghana's foreign policy agencies face in the implementation of digital public diplomacy?

4. How has Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration adapted to the exigencies of its digital public diplomacy efforts?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. Explain how digital public diplomacy differs from traditional diplomacy.
2. Investigate how the foreign policy agencies of Ghana evolve their institutional structures to operationalize digital public diplomacy.
3. Examine the benefits, challenges, and risks that Ghana's foreign policy agencies face in the implementation of digital public diplomacy.
4. Analyze how Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration adapted to the exigencies of its digital public diplomacy efforts.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study examines the implementation and influence of digital diplomacy in Ghana, spanning from the 1980s to 2024. The 1980s marked a pivotal era when Ghana broadened its foreign policy to include socio-cultural public diplomacy, renewed diaspora engagement, and economic diplomacy, laying the groundwork for contemporary practices. The research explores digital diplomacy's definition, objectives, evolution, and effectiveness, focusing on its benefits and challenges. It further investigates how Ghana's foreign policy institutions, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI), utilize digital tools to advance the nation's foreign policy objectives. Additionally, the study delves into the strategies employed to address associated risks and ensure the effective integration of digital diplomacy into Ghana's international relations framework.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

The rationale for this study on the use of digital diplomacy in Ghana stems from several key factors that underscore the importance of digital diplomacy in the current global diplomatic landscape:

First, as highlighted in the problem statement, significant knowledge gaps exist regarding the specific challenges and opportunities of digital diplomacy in the Ghanaian context. According to Manor (2016), while digital diplomacy has been extensively studied in Western contexts, there is a dearth of comprehensive research on its implementation in developing countries, particularly in Africa. This study aims to address this gap by providing empirical insights into Ghana's unique experience with digital diplomacy.

Second, the rapid digitization of global communication channels is forcing countries like Ghana to adapt their diplomatic practices. As Bjola and Jiang (2015) argue, countries that fail to effectively leverage digital tools in their diplomatic efforts risk being left behind in an increasingly competitive arena of international relations. The justification for this study is based on the need to understand how Ghana can optimize its digital diplomatic strategies to increase its global influence and protect its national interests.

In addition, digital diplomacy offers unique opportunities for smaller countries, such as Ghana, to strengthen their voice on the global stage and interact more effectively with the international public. However, these opportunities come with significant challenges, such as limited resources and the need for specialized skills (Adesina, n.d.). The rationale for this study is therefore strengthened by the need to identify these specific problems and propose solutions tailored to the Ghanaian context.

Kurbalija (1999) study highlights that the success of digital diplomacy initiatives is highly dependent on the organizational culture and readiness of diplomatic institutions. The rationale

for this study is further strengthened by the need to examine how the Ghanaian diplomatic corps is adapting to the digital age and what organizational changes are required to fully embrace digital diplomacy.

1.6 Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The following, Constructivism, with elements of Soft Power theory as complementary will serve as the framework for this study.

1.6.1 Constructivism Theory

Constructivism has gained recognition as a significant theoretical approach in international relations, offering insights into how state interactions and the global system are shaped by shared ideas, identities, and social dynamics. This perspective is particularly relevant to analyzing digital diplomacy in Ghana, as it highlights the role of social constructs in influencing diplomatic practices in the digital era.

Wendt (1992), a leading constructivist scholar, asserts that the international system is shaped by shared ideas rather than purely material factors. His assertion that "anarchy is what states make of it" underscores the notion that international relations are not predetermined but are molded through state interactions and collective understandings. Similarly, Nicholas Onuf emphasizes that reality is created through human actions and interactions, with language, norms, and social practices playing a central role in shaping global politics (Onuf, 2021).

Constructivism offers valuable insights into digital diplomacy by illustrating how states can use digital platforms to construct and project their identities. Bjola and Jiang (2015) argue that these platforms enable states to influence their international image and relationships, aligning with the constructivist perspective that state identities and interests are not fixed but are continually shaped through interaction.

In Ghana's case, constructivism provides a framework for understanding how digital tools can be used to craft the country's international identity and influence its relationships with other

states. Manor (2019) highlights that digital diplomacy allows nations to showcase their cultural values and policies, potentially reshaping their image and enhancing their position in the global arena.

Despite its utility, constructivism faces criticism. Sterling-Folker (2002) argues that it may downplay the significance of material power and interests in international relations. Critics also caution that the theory's emphasis on the fluidity of state identities might overlook the persistence of long-standing conflicts and rivalries. Nevertheless, Adler (1997) suggests that constructivism effectively bridges rationalist and interpretive approaches, offering a more comprehensive understanding of state behavior.

For this study, constructivism offers several valuable perspectives:

1. It facilitates an exploration of how Ghana employs digital platforms to shape its international identity and relationships.
2. It underscores the role of norms and shared understandings in shaping global perceptions and diplomatic outcomes.
3. It supports an analysis of how Ghana's digital diplomacy contributes to the evolution of new norms and practices in international relations.
4. It provides insights into how Ghana's digital diplomatic efforts are both influenced by and contribute to shaping the international system.

While constructivism has its limitations, its focus on the social construction of international relations makes it an effective framework for studying digital diplomacy. As Ghana navigates the complexities of digital diplomacy, constructivism offers critical insights into leveraging digital tools to construct its identity, build international relationships, and potentially shape global diplomatic norms.

1.6.2 Soft Power Theory

The second theoretical framework guiding this dissertation is soft power theory, introduced by Joseph Nye in the late 1980s. This concept has become a cornerstone in international relations, particularly relevant to understanding the dynamics of digital diplomacy. Soft power theory provides insight into how nations can influence others through attraction rather than coercion or financial inducements.

Nye (2004) defines soft power as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments." It arises from a nation's cultural appeal, political values, and foreign policy practices. Unlike hard power, which relies on military force or economic strength, soft power is rooted in persuasion and appeal.

Soft power theory is especially relevant in the digital diplomacy context. Manor (2019) notes that digital platforms enable countries to promote their culture, values, and policies to a global audience, enhancing their attractiveness and influence. This aligns with Nye's concept of soft power, which focuses on shaping preferences through positive appeal and engagement.

For Ghana, soft power theory provides a valuable lens to understand how the country can leverage digital tools to amplify its influence globally, despite limited hard power resources. As Kurbalija (1999) observes, digital diplomacy offers smaller nations a chance to showcase their cultural richness, democratic principles, and economic potential, thereby strengthening their soft power.

The theory also highlights the enduring benefits of digital diplomacy. Melissen (2005) argues that soft power often results in more sustainable and cost-effective influence than hard power strategies. For Ghana, this suggests that strategic investment in digital diplomacy could bolster its international reputation and foster long-term relationships.

Despite its strengths, soft power theory is not without criticism. Some argue that the concept is too broad and difficult to quantify, complicating its practical application in international relations. Critics like Mattern (2005) also challenge the sharp distinction between soft and hard power, noting that soft power can sometimes have coercive elements. These critiques underscore the need to critically assess digital diplomacy's role in enhancing soft power, particularly regarding potential unintended consequences or negative perceptions.

Nevertheless, Nye (2019) emphasizes that in the modern information age, soft power is increasingly critical, with global influence determined by the ability to shape compelling narratives and perceptions. This reinforces the importance of digital platforms in advancing a country's international objectives.

In the context of Ghana's digital diplomacy, soft power theory provides several important insights:

1. It offers a framework for understanding how Ghana can utilize digital tools to strengthen its international presence without relying on traditional forms of power.
2. It underscores the role of culture, values, and policies in shaping global perceptions, which is vital for Ghana's digital diplomacy strategies.
3. It highlights the potential long-term benefits of digital diplomacy in building Ghana's reputation and international relationships.
4. It facilitates an analysis of how Ghana's digital initiatives align with and contribute to its broader soft power objectives.

Despite its limitations, soft power theory remains highly relevant for studying digital diplomacy. It emphasizes attraction and persuasion as effective tools for international influence. For Ghana, this framework offers critical insights into how digital platforms can be leveraged to enhance

global influence, shape perceptions, and achieve foreign policy goals in a non-coercive and sustainable manner.

1.6.3 The Nexus Between Social Constructivism and Soft Power: A Theoretical justification.

In examining Ghana's digital diplomacy, a dual-framework approach drawing on social constructivism and soft power theory provides a more holistic understanding than either theory alone. Social constructivism emphasizes that state identities, interests, and diplomatic norms are not given but socially constructed through interaction and discourse. Soft power theory, by contrast, centers on a state's ability to create a leverage on influencing others through attraction.

Combining these frameworks is theoretically justified because each addresses complementary dimensions of digital diplomacy: constructivism illuminates how meanings and identities are formed, while soft power explains how those meanings translate into influence and desired outcomes. Social constructivism is particularly useful for understanding Ghana's digital diplomacy as an exercise in identity and norm projection. Constructivist International Relations scholars argue that shared ideas, cultural beliefs, and collective identities shape international behavior.

States like Ghana actively construct a national image and narrative in the digital sphere. For example, portraying Ghana as a stable democracy and a leader in African unity thereby aligning diplomatic messaging with deeply held norms and identities. These shared understandings create an intersubjective structure in which Ghana's actions are interpreted. In other words, Ghana's online diplomatic engagements help socially construct what Ghana represents to foreign audiences (e.g. as a trusted partner or attractive destination), reinforcing certain normative expectations. This focus on ideas and identity is crucial, yet constructivism alone remains analytically limited because it describes the formation of meaning without fully accounting for the power dynamics of persuasion or attraction in diplomacy. Soft power theory

complements constructivism by introducing the dimension of influence and attraction that constructivism by itself does not explicitly theorize. Nye (2004) defines soft power as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion”

It arises from the appeal of a country’s culture, values, policies, or narrative, all of which are highly relevant in digital diplomacy. Ghana’s digital outreach (through social media engagement, cultural promotion, and narrative framing) can be seen as an attempt to cultivate international appeal and credibility, thereby enhancing Ghana’s soft power. For a mid-sized country with relatively limited hard power, such as Ghana, digital diplomacy is a strategic tool to amplify its soft power resources (e.g. rich culture, democratic credentials) and shape global perceptions

Soft power theory thus adds explanatory power regarding how Ghana’s constructed identity and messaging work in practice to attract foreign publics, influence international partners, and manage perceptions in favor of Ghana’s foreign policy goals. It highlights outcomes like increased attractiveness, persuasion, and trust, which are the currency of digital public diplomacy. Neither framework alone suffices to capture the full dynamics of Ghana’s digital diplomacy. A constructivist lens reveals how Ghana attempts to generate shared meanings and align with international norms online, but it does not inherently evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts in changing minds or behaviors abroad. On the other hand, soft power theory evaluates influence and attraction but often treats a country’s appeal as a given resource, without explaining how that appeal is constructed or interpreted by audiences. By synthesizing the two, we acknowledge that attraction itself is socially constructed. Recent scholarship indeed links a state’s soft power to the discursive construction of shared identity between itself and its audience (Solomon, 2014).

In Feklyunina's (2016) constructivist take on soft power, the level of soft power one state holds over another depends on the extent to which the foreign audience accepts a sense of collective identity or affinity with that state.

In Ghana's context, this means the success of its digital diplomacy in generating soft power will hinge on creating narratives and images that resonate with outsiders' existing values or identities. Constructivism enriches soft power analysis by showing that what counts as "attractive". Ghana's image as a peaceful nation, its Pan-African leadership role, and its cultural vibrancy is not objectively given but must be continuously crafted and communicated in line with audience perceptions and social norms.

In summary, using social constructivism and soft power in tandem provides a robust theoretical justification for analyzing Ghana's digital diplomacy. Constructivism explains how Ghana's diplomatic messaging is imbued with meaning on how identities and norms are built and shaped in the digital realm, whereas soft power theory explains the impact of that messaging in terms of influence, attraction, and credibility. This nexus allows the thesis to address both the formation of Ghana's digital diplomatic content and the function of that content in achieving foreign policy outcomes. By appreciating the socially constructed nature of international image and the tangible power of attraction, the combined framework offers a comprehensive lens through which Ghana's digital diplomacy can be understood and evaluated. Such a dual approach acknowledges that winning hearts and minds in the digital age is simultaneously about shaping shared understandings and harnessing those understandings to sway opinions and a critical synergy for any nation seeking to enhance its diplomatic standing in the twenty-first century.

1.7 Literature Review

The literature review of this study will look at the global context, specific challenges and opportunities for Ghana, and future directions in digital diplomacy. This section will examine existing research while identifying gaps that the dissertation aims to address.

1.7.1 Introduction to Digital Diplomacy: Definition, Concepts and Trends

Digital diplomacy, also known as e-diplomacy or cyber diplomacy, involves leveraging digital technologies and social media platforms to conduct diplomatic activities, manage international relations, and engage with global audiences. According to Manor (2019), it marks a significant transformation in how nations communicate, negotiate, and assert their influence on the international stage.

The concept of digital diplomacy began gaining traction in the early 2000s, fueled by the rise of the internet and social media. Bjola and Holmes (2015) note that the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States spurred governments to explore innovative ways to connect with foreign publics, giving rise to what they describe as "diplomacy 2.0." Initially, these efforts focused on public diplomacy and sharing information digitally.

As technology advanced, digital diplomacy expanded beyond its original scope. Hocking and Melissen (2015) argue that it has evolved into a multifaceted ecosystem that now encompasses key diplomatic functions such as negotiation, crisis management, and policy development. This evolution reflects the growing integration of digital tools into traditional diplomatic practices and their potential to redefine international engagement.

1.7.2 Key Concepts and Components of Digital Diplomacy

A central concept in digital diplomacy is "networked diplomacy," as described by Hocking (2016). This approach emphasizes building and maintaining relationships not only between states but also with non-state actors, civil society organizations, and individuals. Digital

platforms play a crucial role in fostering multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration to address global challenges.

Another critical aspect of digital diplomacy is the use of data analytics and digital listening tools. Seib (2012) highlights that these technologies allow diplomats to gain real-time insights into public opinion, monitor emerging trends, and craft messages tailored for greater impact. This data-driven strategy marks a significant departure from traditional methods of information collection and analysis.

Digital storytelling and narrative shaping also play a vital role in digital diplomacy. Bjola and Jiang (2015) argue that digital platforms offer nations unique opportunities to create and share compelling narratives that showcase their culture, values, and policies. This component is closely linked to nation branding and the projection of soft power in the digital era.

1.7.3 Global Trends in Digital Diplomacy Adoption

The adoption of digital diplomacy varies significantly across the globe, with certain countries leading the charge while others trail behind. The Digital Diplomacy Index (2023) identifies nations like the United States, the United Kingdom, and France as pioneers, effectively utilizing diverse digital tools and platforms to strengthen their diplomatic initiatives.

A prominent trend in recent years has been the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and big data into digital diplomacy practices. Rashica (2018) notes that AI-driven chatbots and predictive analytics are increasingly employed by diplomatic missions to enhance consular services and guide policy development. This development highlights the growing convergence of diplomacy with advanced technologies.

Another noteworthy trend is the emergence of "Twiplomacy," or diplomacy conducted via Twitter. Šimunjak and Caliandro (2019) emphasize that platforms like Twitter have become indispensable for global leaders and diplomats to engage directly with international audiences,

circumventing traditional media. While this approach has democratized access to diplomacy, it has also introduced challenges, including maintaining message consistency and adhering to diplomatic protocols.

1.7.4 Digital Diplomacy in Developing Countries

Unique challenges and opportunities

Developing countries encounter distinct challenges and opportunities when adopting digital diplomacy. Adesina (2017) identifies the digital divide as a primary obstacle, marked by limited internet access and low digital literacy in many regions. This divide can restrict the implementation and effectiveness of digital diplomatic initiatives, reducing their impact on both domestic and international audiences.

Infrastructure limitations present another critical challenge. Waithaka (2018) highlights the lack of adequate technological infrastructure in many developing nations, which includes issues with hardware, software, cybersecurity, and data protection, key components for ensuring credibility and maintaining the integrity of digital diplomacy efforts.

Despite these hurdles, digital diplomacy offers significant opportunities for developing nations. Kampf, Manor, and Segev (2015) argue that digital platforms can level the playing field, enabling smaller nations to amplify their global voice and compete with more established powers. This capability is particularly valuable for enhancing international visibility and influence.

Case studies from other African countries

Several African countries have demonstrated innovative approaches to digital diplomacy. Kenya has positioned itself as a leader in this field. Gachigua (2016) notes that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs effectively utilizes social media to connect with the Kenyan diaspora, promote

tourism, and enhance the national brand. For instance, during the 2013 Westgate Mall attack, Kenya used Twitter to execute effective crisis communication.

Nigeria provides another example of digital diplomacy in action. According to Adesina (2022), the country has focused on combating negative perceptions and promoting its cultural exports through digital tools. The launch of Nigeria's *Digital Innovation Hub* in 2017 was a significant milestone in centralizing its digital diplomacy efforts.

South Africa's strategy highlights the use of digital diplomacy to drive economic objectives. Turianskyi and Wekesa (2021) emphasize South Africa's focus on promoting investment and trade via platforms like LinkedIn, where it connects with business leaders to facilitate economic diplomacy.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

The experiences of African nations in digital diplomacy reveal important lessons. One key takeaway is the significance of capacity building and skills development for diplomatic personnel. Investing in comprehensive training programs ensures that diplomats are equipped to effectively navigate and leverage digital tools for engagement.

Another lesson emphasizes the value of integrating digital diplomacy with traditional approaches. Rather than replacing conventional practices, successful initiatives have combined the strengths of both, creating a more cohesive and effective diplomatic strategy.

Additionally, the importance of tailoring digital diplomacy strategies to align with local contexts stands out. By adapting global trends to their unique cultural, political, and technological realities, African countries have ensured their initiatives remain relevant and impactful.

1.7.5 Digital Diplomacy Tools and Platforms

Social media in diplomacy

Social media platforms have become vital tools in modern diplomacy, offering governments and diplomats unprecedented opportunities to directly engage with global audiences. As noted by Bjola and Jiang (2015), platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have reshaped public diplomacy by enabling real-time communication and building relationships with foreign publics. Seib (2012) argues that social media democratizes diplomacy, providing smaller nations and non-state actors with a platform to influence international affairs. Manor (2019) introduces the term "networked diplomacy," where a country's diplomatic power is increasingly determined by its ability to effectively utilize social media.

However, the informal nature of social media also brings challenges. Strauß et al. (2015) point out that the informal style can lead to diplomatic blunders or misinterpretations. They stress the need for clear messaging and social media guidelines for diplomatic teams to minimize such risks.

Website and online presence management

Diplomatic websites act as digital embassies, offering a variety of information and services to both domestic and international audiences. According to Hocking and Melissen (2015), effective website management is crucial for projecting a country's image and fostering engagement with stakeholders. Kampf et al. (2015) observe that the most successful foreign ministry websites feature interactive elements, multilingual content, and user-friendly interfaces. These well-designed websites can enhance a nation's soft power by presenting its culture, values, and policies in a compelling and accessible manner.

Managing a country's online presence goes beyond just its official website, involving various digital platforms and communities. This requires a strategic, coordinated approach to ensure consistent messaging across multiple channels (Manor, 2016).

Digital tools for consular services

The digitalization of consular services has enhanced the efficiency and accessibility of diplomatic missions. Okano-Heijmans (2011) explains that e-consular services, such as online visa applications and passport renewals, have streamlined bureaucratic processes and eased the workload on diplomatic staff. Rashica (2018) highlights the increasing use of digital tools by foreign ministries, which offer citizens abroad access to emergency contacts, travel advisories, and location-based services. These apps enhance the safety and convenience of international travelers.

However, implementing digital consular services requires addressing concerns related to data privacy and digital inclusion. Melissen and Caesar-Gordon (2016) emphasize the need for secure digital infrastructure and the provision of alternative services for individuals with limited access to or skills in using digital tools.

Emerging Technologies in Diplomacy

Emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Virtual Reality (VR) are beginning to play a role in diplomacy. Bjola (2020) argues that AI can revolutionize diplomatic analysis by processing large datasets to identify patterns and forecast international trends. VR and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies also have diplomatic applications, particularly in cultural diplomacy, where they offer immersive experiences of foreign cultures. Bjola and Zaiotti (2020) contend that these technologies can foster cross-cultural understanding and empathy.

However, Cull (2019) warns that the use of emerging technologies in diplomacy is still in its infancy. While promising, their integration will need to address ethical concerns and potential unintended consequences.

Challenges in Implementing Digital Diplomacy

Infrastructure and Technological Constraints

A major challenge in implementing digital diplomacy, particularly in developing nations, is the lack of adequate technological infrastructure. Adesina (2017) highlights that many countries face issues such as unreliable internet connectivity, limited bandwidth, and outdated hardware, which restrict their ability to effectively utilize digital diplomatic tools. Munyua (2016) further notes the financial constraints that hinder nations from upgrading their technological infrastructure, making it difficult for them to compete in the digital diplomatic space. Kampf et al. (2015) argue that even countries with advanced digital infrastructure must continually invest in technology upgrades to stay relevant in the rapidly changing diplomatic landscape.

Digital divide and accessibility issues

The digital divide, which involves unequal access to technology and the internet, remains a significant barrier to the success of digital diplomacy. Pick and Sarkar (2015) explain that this divide exists both between nations and within them, especially between urban and rural regions. Muaka (2021) explores how the digital divide affects East African countries, noting that limited internet access and high data costs in rural areas reduce the effectiveness of digital diplomatic efforts, excluding large segments of the population. Manor and Segev (2015) extend this issue, asserting that digital diplomacy requires not only access to digital tools but also digital literacy, ensuring both diplomats and target audiences are capable of using these tools effectively.

Human resource and capacity building needs

For digital diplomacy to succeed, diplomatic staff must possess a wide range of digital skills. However, as Hocking and Melissen (2015) observe, many foreign ministries struggle to recruit and retain personnel with the necessary technical expertise. Okano-Heijmans and Vosse (2021) emphasize the importance of continuous training to adapt to evolving digital technologies. Digital diplomacy requires not only technical skills but also a shift in mindset toward collaboration, openness, and innovation.

Bjola and Jiang (2015) argue that resistance from traditional diplomats can hinder the integration of digital diplomacy into conventional practices. Overcoming this resistance and fostering a culture of digital innovation within foreign ministries is critical for the successful implementation of digital diplomacy.

Cybersecurity and data protection concerns

As more diplomatic activities take place online, cybersecurity has become a pressing issue. Barrinha and Renard (2017) highlight that diplomatic institutions are prime targets for cyberattacks due to the sensitive nature of the information they handle. Securing digital diplomatic communications and data is essential for maintaining trust and credibility in international relations.

Bjola and Zaiotti (2020) point out the challenge of balancing transparency and security in digital diplomacy. While digital platforms offer greater openness and engagement, they also increase vulnerability to information warfare and disinformation. Rashica (2018) underscores the importance of robust data protection measures for digital consular services to ensure compliance with international standards and safeguard public trust.

1.7.7 Organizational Adaptation for Digital Diplomacy

Structural Changes in Foreign Ministries

As digital diplomacy becomes more integral to global interactions, foreign ministries are adapting their structures to accommodate this shift. According to Hocking and Melissen (2015), many ministries have created specialized digital diplomacy units or integrated digital functions into existing departments. These units manage the country's online presence, engage with audiences via social media, and oversee digital campaigns. The U.S. Department of State, for example, established the Office of eDiplomacy in 2003 to incorporate digital tools into traditional diplomacy (Pilegaard, 2017). These adjustments help foreign ministries stay agile in an increasingly fast-paced digital environment.

Bjola and Holmes (2015) emphasize that these changes go beyond creating new units to redefining roles within ministries. Diplomats are now expected to be digitally literate and incorporate digital tools into their daily activities. Kurbaliya (2016) suggests that digital diplomacy has blurred the lines between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy, necessitating a more unified approach. This ensures that digital strategies are aligned with the broader diplomatic mission, with all personnel, not just specialized units, involved in digital diplomacy efforts.

Training and Skill Development for Diplomatic Staff

The transition to digital diplomacy has prompted the need for diplomats to acquire new competencies. Manor (2019) argues that traditional diplomatic training, which focused on negotiation and policy analysis, must now integrate digital literacy, social media management, and data analysis. Recognizing this shift, many foreign ministries have begun incorporating digital skills into their training programs. For instance, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) developed a digital transformation program covering social media, data-driven decision-making, and online engagement strategies (Hocking & Melissen, 2015).

Williams (2020) notes that ongoing professional development is vital for diplomats to remain current with the rapidly changing digital landscape. Workshops, seminars, and online courses are common avenues for this. Pilegaard (2017) further asserts that training should address not only technical skills but also the ethical aspects of digital diplomacy, such as privacy, cybersecurity, and the responsible use of social media. Comprehensive training ensures that diplomats are not only proficient in digital tools but also capable of using them strategically to further national interests.

Integration of Digital Strategies with Traditional Diplomacy

The integration of digital strategies into traditional diplomatic practices is essential for a cohesive and effective approach. Cull (2013) argues that digital diplomacy should be seen as a core component of a country's overall diplomatic strategy, not a peripheral activity. This integration allows for consistent and coordinated messaging, where traditional and digital channels support each other. For example, during the Arab Spring, several governments successfully combined traditional diplomatic methods with digital engagement to support prodemocracy movements and share their perspectives globally (Howard & Hussain, 2013).

Pamment (2018) highlights that this combination strengthens a country's ability to respond quickly to crises and manage international relations in real-time. Bjola and Jiang (2015) explain that digital platforms enable more direct communication with both domestic and international audiences, which is particularly valuable in times of diplomatic crises. For instance, during the 2014 Ukraine crisis, the U.S. and Russian governments used social media to communicate their narratives to the global audience, demonstrating how digital diplomacy can significantly shape international perceptions (Manor, 2019). This integration ensures that digital diplomacy is not a secondary consideration but a key element of a country's diplomatic strategy.

1.7.8 Measuring the Impact of Digital Diplomacy

Assessing the effectiveness of digital diplomacy is complex but necessary. Pamment (2016) suggests that digital diplomacy campaigns can be evaluated using various metrics, including social media engagement, the reach of online content, and its influence on public opinion. While these quantitative metrics provide valuable insights, qualitative assessments are also crucial, focusing on the relevance of the content, the quality of interactions, and the achievement of strategic objectives. Bjola and Holmes (2015) argue that metrics like likes, shares, and comments offer some insight but fail to capture the full impact of digital diplomacy on international relations. Therefore, a combination of metrics is needed to evaluate the overall effectiveness of digital diplomatic efforts.

Seib (2012) advocates for setting clear goals and benchmarks before launching digital campaigns, ensuring that evaluations can be meaningful and aligned with broader diplomatic objectives. This approach helps in accurately measuring the success of digital diplomacy. Furthermore, Melissen (2011) emphasizes the importance of regular monitoring and evaluation, allowing ministries to adjust strategies and respond to the dynamic digital environment. By continually assessing the impact of digital diplomacy, foreign ministries can refine their strategies and enhance their effectiveness.

Case Studies of Successful Digital Diplomacy Campaigns

Several case studies highlight the success of digital diplomacy in achieving diplomatic objectives. For instance, Howard and Hussain (2013) describe the U.S. State Department's use of social media during the Arab Spring as an exemplary digital diplomacy effort. By utilizing platforms like Twitter and Facebook, the U.S. government supported democratic movements across the Middle East and North Africa, communicated its policies, and directly engaged with local populations. This campaign showcased the effectiveness of digital diplomacy in influencing public opinion and advancing foreign policy goals.

Another notable example is the European Union's (#EU4HumanRights) campaign, which promoted global human rights through social media. Manor (2019) argues that the campaign succeeded in raising awareness about human rights issues while mobilizing both European and international support. The campaign's success was measured not just by high engagement rates on social media but also by its impact on public discourse and policy debates. These cases demonstrate how digital diplomacy, when strategically planned and executed, can effectively further diplomatic objectives.

Challenges in Assessing Digital Diplomatic Efforts

While there have been successes, assessing the impact of digital diplomacy presents significant challenges. Bjola and Holmes (2015) highlight the difficulty in attributing specific outcomes to digital diplomacy, given the complex nature of international relations. Furthermore, the constantly evolving digital landscape means that the effectiveness of digital diplomacy strategies can change over time, making it hard to consistently evaluate past campaigns.

Pamment (2016) notes that another challenge is the potential for digital diplomacy to backfire, particularly if messages are misunderstood or misinterpreted by global audiences. This risk is heightened by the decentralized nature of digital platforms, where unintended consequences can quickly escalate. Additionally, Seib (2012) points out that the large volume of data generated by digital platforms can make it difficult to analyze and interpret results accurately. To address these challenges, foreign ministries must invest in advanced data analytics and develop more nuanced evaluation frameworks that capture the complexities of digital diplomacy.

1.7.9 Conclusion

The contemporary international landscape is increasingly defined by digital media's transformative role, extending far beyond traditional communication paradigms. While platforms like social media initially emerged for social connectivity, they have evolved into

sophisticated channels for state and non-state actors to articulate complex narratives, disseminate institutional values, and project cultural and policy perspectives.

The literature review reveals a diverse landscape of digital diplomacy, where developed nations have pioneered innovative approaches to leveraging digital platforms. These platforms have transcended their original social interaction purposes, becoming strategic instruments for international communication, policy articulation, and soft power projection.

Critically, the research highlights a significant gap in understanding digital diplomacy's implementation within Ghana's diplomatic ecosystem. Despite the widespread availability of digital tools, Ghanaian diplomatic institutions appear to be not fully utilizing these platforms, presenting a compelling research opportunity to investigate the barriers and potential strategies for effective digital engagement.

The existing literature underscores the need for comprehensive research to explore how Ghanaian diplomatic institutions can adapt to digital transformation. Key areas for future investigation include understanding the challenges in digital tool adoption, developing rigorous evaluation methodologies, and examining the potential of emerging technologies in diplomatic practice.

Moreover, critical research domains emerge, including the ethical considerations surrounding privacy and cybersecurity, and the development of strategic frameworks for leveraging digital media to advance national foreign policy objectives.

This study aims to bridge these research gaps by critically examining the current state of digital diplomacy in Ghana, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI), identifying obstacles to digital platform utilization, and proposing strategic recommendations for more effective digital diplomatic engagement.

1.8 Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach, also referred to as exploratory research, aiming to gain a comprehensive understanding of a social phenomenon. Qualitative research primarily uses non-numeric data, such as textual analyses, including content, conversation, discourse, and narrative analysis (Jackson, Camara, & Drummond, 2007). According to Taylor (2019), examples of qualitative methods include interviews, focus group discussions, case studies, field research, ethnography, and observation.

A key advantage of the qualitative approach was that it allowed participants to provide in-depth responses and insights, unlike the quantitative approach, which typically used structured questions that forced respondents into predefined categories with limited opportunities for open-ended responses (Jackson et al., 2007). However, qualitative research was time-consuming, and acquiring data was challenging if respondents were unavailable. Additionally, researchers had to possess a thorough knowledge of the subject matter to probe deeper into the issues (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). Despite these challenges, the qualitative approach was well-suited to this study, as it depended on the direct expertise and experiences of respondents to explore the topic in greater detail.

1.8.1 Sources of Data

Data for this study was sourced from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders involved in Ghana's digital diplomacy, including government officials, diplomats, consular staff, and experts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. Secondary data consisted of a review of relevant literature, policy documents, and official reports on Ghana's digital diplomacy strategies and initiatives. According to Flick (2018), combining primary and secondary sources provided a robust basis for analysis by offering multiple perspectives on the research topic.

1.8.2 Study Area

This research focused on Ghana as the study area, examining its digital diplomacy initiatives and their impact on foreign policy and international relations. Ghana was selected due to its proactive involvement in digital diplomacy and its strategic role within West Africa. The country had achieved notable progress in leveraging digital platforms for diplomatic activities, making it an intriguing case for exploring the opportunities and challenges of digital diplomacy within an African context.

1.8.3 Research Area

The research area centered on the application and impact of digital diplomacy in Ghana. This included exploring how digital tools and platforms were used to advance Ghana's foreign policy goals, enhance its international image, and engage with global stakeholders. The research also examined the challenges faced in implementing digital diplomacy strategies, such as issues related to cybersecurity, digital literacy, and the effectiveness of digital communication.

1.8.4 Research Target Population

The research population included individuals and organizations directly involved in Ghana's digital diplomacy efforts, such as government officials, diplomats, consular staff, and experts within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. Incorporating a diverse range of participants was crucial for obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the diverse nature and impact of digital diplomacy (Walby, 2016).

1.8.5 Sampling Method and Sample Size

Sampling was a critical aspect of the research process, as it entailed selecting individuals from a population to participate in the study. This process enabled the researcher to evaluate the study's accuracy and reliability. In this research, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants with specific knowledge and experience in Ghana's digital diplomacy.

Approximately 10 participants were chosen to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and expertise. Purposive sampling was particularly suitable for qualitative research because it targeted individuals likely to provide valuable and insightful information. This non-probability sampling method involved selecting participants based on the population's characteristics and the study's objectives (Crossman, 2018).

1.8.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

Thematic analysis was used to examine interview data, based on the approach described by Braun, Clarke, and Weate (2016). This process involved recognizing and interpreting patterns and themes within the data to extract valuable insights. The data was coded inductively, enabling themes to emerge organically rather than being forced into predefined categories. The results were presented narratively, with direct quotes and relevant documents to highlight key themes and findings.

1.8.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were essential in research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, with their data securely stored and used solely for research purposes. The study complied with ethical standards, including obtaining approval from an institutional review board (IRB) or ethics committee as required.

To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms such as "respondents" were used throughout the study, and transcribed data were anonymized using numerical identifiers. Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time without consequences. Transcripts and interview recordings were securely stored, with only the researcher having access for analysis relevant to the study.

No personal information was used beyond analyzing themes related to the research questions. Aggregated findings could be shared or presented, but direct quotes were not attributed to individuals without their prior consent. The well-being and rights of participants remained the study's top priority.

1.8.8 Limitations

One of the limitations encountered during the study was the difficulty in scheduling interviews with key stakeholders. Many of the participants had busy schedules due to their professional commitments, making it challenging to arrange suitable times for interviews. Additionally, some participants were unavailable for extended periods, which led to delays in data collection. This limitation affected the timeline of the study, as some interviews were rescheduled multiple times. Despite these challenges, adjustments were made by prioritizing flexibility and adapting to participants' availability, ensuring that valuable insights were still obtained from those who were able to participate.

1.9 Arrangement of Chapters

This dissertation is structured into four chapters.

- Chapter One will provide the background to the research.
- Chapter Two will offer an overview of Ghana's diplomatic history, the current state of digital diplomacy, and the prospects and challenges associated with it.
- Chapter Three will focus on presenting the research findings regarding the use of digital diplomacy in advancing Ghana's foreign policy agenda.
- Chapter Four will summarize the findings, draw conclusions, and offer recommendations based on the research outcomes.

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CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF GHANA'S DIPLOMACY HISTORY AND CURRENT STATE OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY.

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a dual perspective on Ghana's diplomatic evolution, tracing its history from pre-independence to the present, and then examining present status of digital diplomacy. It sheds light on the tools, achievements, and challenges of digital diplomacy while comparing it with traditional approaches. Understanding Ghana's diplomatic history is crucial as it informs the principles guiding its modern-day diplomacy and helps contextualize the shifts in strategy over time. The chapter emphasizes the importance of historical context in adapting traditional diplomatic practices to the digital age, offering valuable insights for the effectiveness of digital diplomacy.

2.1 Ghana's Diplomacy History

Ghana's diplomacy has evolved through various phases, reflecting the country's historical experiences and its aspirations on the global stage. This section provides a detailed exploration of Ghana's diplomatic history, beginning with the pre-colonial era, where indigenous states engaged in complex diplomatic relations, moving through the colonial period, which imposed European diplomatic norms, and culminating in the post-independence era, where Ghana emerged as a key player in African and global diplomacy. Understanding this historical trajectory is essential for contextualizing Ghana's current diplomatic strategies, including its engagement with digital diplomacy.

2.1.1 Pre-Independence Diplomacy

Diplomacy involves managing relations between sovereign nations through representatives stationed domestically or internationally. In contemporary times, diplomacy extends beyond

interactions between states to include engagements with non-state entities like supranational organizations and international bodies.

Ghana's diplomatic history traces back to the pre-colonial era where frequent interactions were maintained through envoys who traveled between neighboring communities. These envoys often consisted of Couriers and trading trains.

The activities of the Ashanti Empire were particularly significant in regional diplomacy. The Ashanti Empire, located in present-day Ghana, was one of the most powerful and sophisticated states in West Africa during the 18th and 19th centuries. According to Arhin, Baxter, Brokensha, Ortiz, Eades, Halpern, & Schildkrout, (1983), the Ashanti engaged in complex diplomatic relations with neighboring states, including alliances, trade negotiations, and military pacts. These diplomatic engagements were crucial for maintaining the empire's dominance in the region and securing its economic interests.

The colonial period brought significant changes to Ghana's diplomatic practices. The imposition of British colonial rule disrupted indigenous diplomatic systems, replacing them with European norms and practices though they did not possess several features of modern diplomacy, such as embassies, international law, or professional diplomatic services. As noted by Boahen (1987), colonialism introduced a new dimension to Ghanaian diplomacy, where local rulers were often forced to navigate the complex dynamics of colonial administration, including the negotiation of treaties that frequently favored British interests. This period laid the groundwork for the modern diplomatic structures that would emerge in the postindependence era, although it also created challenges related to sovereignty and self-determination that would later influence Ghana's foreign policy.

2.1.2 Post-Independence Diplomacy

The post-independence era marked a significant shift in Ghana's diplomatic strategies, particularly under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, the country's first president. Nkrumah's vision of Pan-Africanism and his commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement were central to Ghana's foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s. As highlighted by Biney (2011), Nkrumah was a strong proponent of African unity and was instrumental in the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which later evolved into the African Union (AU).

His diplomatic efforts were aimed at promoting African solidarity, decolonization, and independence from both Western and Eastern blocs during the Cold War.

Key milestones in Ghana's foreign policy during this period included its active participation in global organizations like the United Nations (UN) and its efforts to mediate conflicts in Africa. Nkrumah's strategy was to position Ghana as a leader in African and global diplomacy, which he believed was essential for the continent's liberation and development. This period also saw Ghana establishing diplomatic relations with a wide range of countries, from the United States and the Soviet Union to other newly independent African states. Nkrumah's diplomatic approach was marked by a vigorous ideological commitment to non-alignment and antiimperialism, which continues to influence Ghana's foreign policy today.

2.1.3 Evolution of Ghana's Diplomatic Relations

Since independence, Ghana's diplomatic relations have evolved significantly, reflecting changes in both domestic and international contexts. One of the key diplomatic relationships that Ghana has maintained is with the United States. According to Owusu, Reboredo, & Carmody (2019), this relationship has been characterized by cooperation in areas such as trade, security, and development, although it has also faced challenges, particularly during periods of

military rule in Ghana. Similarly, Ghana's relationship with the United Kingdom, its former colonial ruler, has remained important, particularly in terms of trade and education exchanges. Over the decades, Ghana has also adapted its foreign policy strategies to reflect changing global dynamics. For instance, during the 1980s and 1990s, Ghana shifted its focus towards economic diplomacy, seeking to attract foreign investment and strengthen economic ties with other countries. As argued by Tarp & Aryeetey (2000), this period was marked by Ghana's efforts to liberalize its economy and engage more actively with global financial bodies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Ghana's role in international organizations has also been a key aspect of its diplomatic evolution. The country has been an active member of the United Nations, contributing to peacekeeping missions and advocating for matters like sustainable development and human rights. Additionally, Ghana has had a major influence in regional organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), where it has been involved in mediation efforts and conflict resolution. As noted by Dapaah-Agyemang (2003), Ghana's participation in these organizations has been driven by its commitment to regional stability and integration, which remains a central pillar of its foreign policy.

2.2 The Emergence of Digital Diplomacy

As international connectivity expands through digital technologies, the practice of diplomacy has also evolved to incorporate these innovations. Digital diplomacy, also known as ediplomacy or cyber-diplomacy, represents a significant shift in how states conduct their foreign affairs, leveraging digital tools to enhance communication, public engagement, and international relations. This section explores the concept of digital diplomacy, examining its definition and scope, the global trends that have shaped its development, and its adoption across Africa. By understanding these aspects, we can gain insight into how digital diplomacy is

transforming traditional diplomatic practices and its implications for global and regional governance.

2.2.1 Definition and Scope of Digital Diplomacy

Digital diplomacy can be broadly defined as the use of digital technologies and platforms, particularly the internet and social media, by states and diplomatic actors to achieve their foreign policy objectives. It encompasses a range of activities, including public diplomacy, strategic communication, crisis management, and consular services, all facilitated through digital means. These activities often involve the use of digital tools and social media platforms such as Twitter (now X), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Reddit, Telegram, zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Messenger as well as official government websites and blogs, to engage with both domestic and international audiences (Holmes ,2015)

The key difference between traditional and digital diplomacy lies in communication speed and reach. Traditional diplomacy typically involves formal, confidential negotiations between states, often conducted through embassies and official channels. In contrast, digital diplomacy operates in a more public and immediate space, allowing real-time dissemination of information to a global audience. As Manor (2019) points out, this shift has democratized diplomatic communication, enabling states to directly engage with foreign publics, counter misinformation, and influence international narratives. However, challenges remain, such as balancing transparency with confidentiality and managing information overload.

2.2.2 Global Trends in Digital Diplomacy

Digital diplomacy has become a global phenomenon, with many countries integrating digital tools into their foreign policy strategies. The United States has been at the forefront of this movement, with initiatives like the Digital Outreach Team, which engages with online communities, especially in the Middle East. Hanson (2012) notes that social media has enabled the U.S. to promote American values and respond to crises globally.

The European Union (EU) also leads in digital diplomacy, using its digital platforms to promote European integration, human rights, and development goals. Melissen & de Keulenaar (2017) highlights the EU's comprehensive digital strategy, which includes multilingual social media engagement and data analytics to inform policies. Similarly, China uses platforms like Weibo and WeChat to promote the Belt and Road Initiative and counter criticism, as Domski (2022) suggests, helping it reshape the global information environment.

2.2.3 Africa's Adoption of Digital Diplomacy

Africa's adoption of digital diplomacy is still developing but rapidly growing. Many African countries are recognizing the potential of digital tools for public diplomacy, crisis communication, and diaspora engagement. Ayodele (2021) notes that African governments increasingly use social media to communicate with citizens abroad, address international crises, and promote cultural and economic interests.

However, challenges like the digital divide, cybersecurity threats, limited digital literacy, and lack of cohesive strategies hinder effective digital diplomacy. Nyirenda-Jere and Biru (2015) argue that these factors limit Africa's ability to fully capitalize on digital diplomacy. Despite these hurdles, opportunities exist as internet access improves, and more African governments embrace digital diplomacy in international relations.

2.3 Current State of Digital Diplomacy in Ghana

Ghana has begun to integrate digital tools into its diplomatic strategies. This section explores the government's initiatives, the platforms used, achievements, and challenges hindering the realization of digital diplomacy in the country.

2.3.1 Introduction to Ghana's Digital Diplomacy

Ghana's digital diplomacy has been marked by gradual, strategic efforts to use digital platforms to advance foreign policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration has been central to these initiatives, using digital tools to communicate with international partners, engage the diaspora, and enhance Ghana's image globally. These efforts align with broader governmental efforts to modernize the public sector and adapt to the digital age.

2.3.2 Ghana's Digital Diplomacy Tools and Platforms

Ghanaian diplomats utilize various digital platforms, with social media being the most prominent. Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are frequently used to share information, engage with citizens and stakeholders, and promote national interests. Quartey & Smith (2020) notes these platforms help project a positive image, engage with the diaspora, and respond to global events promptly.

Websites, particularly the official Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration site, play a significant role, offering resources such as policy documents and event updates for both domestic and international audiences. Opoku (2023) argues that the site is crucial for transparency and public engagement, enabling direct communication with a global audience. Additionally, virtual meetings and webinars have gained importance, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining diplomatic engagement despite travel restrictions.

2.3.3 Key Achievements and Milestones

Ghana has achieved significant milestones in digital diplomacy, particularly in engaging the diaspora. The Ministry's use of platforms like Facebook and Twitter to interact with Ghanaians abroad has strengthened national unity and identity, as Taylor (2019) observes.

Ghana has also participated in global digital diplomacy campaigns, such as the #UN75 campaign celebrating the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. This engagement

demonstrated Ghana's commitment to multilateralism and showcased its ability to leverage digital platforms for global advocacy (Barrinha, 2024).

2.3.4 Challenges Facing Ghana's Digital Diplomacy

Despite successes, Ghana faces several challenges. Cybersecurity is a primary concern, with the increasing risk of cyber-attacks potentially compromising sensitive diplomatic communications. Akuche (2024) argues that Ghana lacks robust cybersecurity measures, which poses a significant risk.

Digital literacy is another obstacle, limiting effective use of digital tools among diplomatic staff and the public. Caulcrick-Odebo (2022) points out that this gap hinders the potential impact of digital diplomacy efforts. Additionally, insufficient resources and infrastructure hamper the implementation of digital strategies in Ghanaian diplomatic missions.

Finally, the traditional bureaucratic structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can slow the adoption of digital tools, as noted by Caulcrick-Odebo (2022). Resistance to change and lack of training further complicate efforts to modernize diplomatic practices.

2.4 Comparative Analysis: Traditional vs. Digital Diplomacy in Ghana

This section compares traditional and digital diplomacy within the Ghanaian context, exploring the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches.

2.4.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of Traditional Diplomacy

Traditional diplomacy, characterized by face-to-face interactions and formal negotiations, has been the cornerstone of Ghana's foreign relations since independence. Westermann-Behaylo, Rehbein, & Fort (2015) argues that traditional methods build trust and foster personal relationships, crucial for resolving complex international issues. However, traditional diplomacy can be slow, resource-intensive, and less responsive to the fast-paced changes of the modern world, as Asante (2016) notes.

While traditional diplomacy excels in confidential negotiations and relationship-building, it is often exclusive, failing to engage non-state actors and the general public.

2.4.2 Benefits and Limitations of Digital Diplomacy

Digital diplomacy allows for real-time communication, broader outreach, and greater transparency. Aboagye & Nunoo (2024) highlights its ability to engage a global audience instantly, benefiting public diplomacy. Moreover, it is more cost-effective than traditional methods, reducing the need for travel and infrastructure. Quartey & Smith (2020) argues that digital diplomacy enables Ghana to participate in global conversations and respond to developments swiftly.

However, digital diplomacy faces challenges such as misinformation, cybersecurity threats, and misinterpretation of messages. Barrinha (2024) suggests that digital diplomacy requires high digital literacy, a barrier in countries with limited access to education and infrastructure. Additionally, the lack of personal interaction may hinder trust-building.

In conclusion, both traditional and digital diplomacy have strengths and weaknesses. A hybrid approach that integrates both methods may provide the most effective strategy for Ghana to achieve its foreign policy goals.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined Ghana's diplomatic history, the integration of digital diplomacy, and its challenges. While digital diplomacy offers significant opportunities, such as enhancing Ghana's global presence, it also faces challenges like cybersecurity, digital literacy, and infrastructure gaps. Further research is needed to assess the effectiveness of digital diplomacy in Ghana and explore how to integrate traditional and digital approaches for better diplomatic outcomes.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON LEVERAGING DIGITAL DIPLOMACY IN GHANA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of findings based on the study's research questions and objectives. It explores how digital public diplomacy differs from traditional diplomacy and examines how Ghana's foreign policy agencies have evolved over the years in their institutional structures to operationalize digital public diplomacy. The study investigates how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration leverages digital diplomacy, assessing the benefits, challenges, and risks associated with Ghana's foreign policy drive in public diplomacy efforts. The chapter is developed using primary and secondary data, and the findings are presented according to themes that emerged from data collected through in-depth, open-ended interviews with participants. To ensure anonymity, the study uses codes to refer to participants instead of their real names.

3.1 Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration

Role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration is the key government entity responsible for the development, formulation, coordination, and management of Ghana's foreign policy. It, along with its diplomatic missions abroad, constitutes the Ghana Foreign Service. The Ministry also oversees the direction and coordination of the nation's external relations. In addition to diplomatic missions, the establishment of honorary consulates further supports the Ministry's work, particularly in promoting investment, trade, tourism, and fulfilling consular functions in regions with substantial Ghanaian populations (Taylor, 2019).

3.2 How Digital Public Diplomacy Differs from Traditional Diplomacy

Digital public diplomacy marks a notable shift from conventional diplomatic methods, transforming how countries interact with one another and their global audiences. While traditional diplomacy relies on face-to-face meetings, confidential discussions, and structured hierarchies, digital public diplomacy utilizes technology to improve accessibility, transparency, and real-time communication. This section explores the operational distinctions delving into the human resource requirements and management, and capacity-building needs.

Operational Distinction

Traditional diplomacy has historically relied on physical communication and interpersonal engagement, often involving labor-intensive tasks such as delivering letters and documents. Respondent 1 described the meticulous process of writing, sealing, and physically delivering official letters, emphasizing the significant time and resource demands (Respondent 1, personal interview, 2024). In-person interactions were crucial for sensitive matters like trade negotiations and conflict resolution, as trust, cultural sensitivity, and interpersonal skills were indispensable (Respondent 2, personal interview, 2024). Similarly, Respondent 3 noted that traditional diplomacy was characterized by "formal, confidential, and closed-door meetings," supported by structured communication and protocols (Respondent 3, personal interview, 2024). Academic literature supports this view, with Berridge (2022) noting that traditional diplomacy often hinges on face-to-face interactions to establish trust and facilitate nuanced negotiations.

Face-to-face interactions and extended negotiation periods were critical for high-level engagements. Respondents 6 and 7 underscored the importance of personal relationships and trust in managing delicate negotiations (Respondent 6 & Respondent 7, personal interview, 2024). However, traditional methods often struggled with the limitations of slower communication and reliance on physical resources, as noted by Respondents 4 and 5

(Respondent 4 & Respondent 5, personal interview, 2024). Rana (2011) corroborates this, highlighting the time and resource-intensive nature of traditional diplomatic practices, which often constrained their agility in responding to global challenges.

Digital diplomacy, by contrast, introduces speed, accessibility, and broader engagement. Platforms like Twitter and email enable real-time communication, allowing Ghana to "reach millions in real time" and engage with a global audience instantaneously (Respondent 9, personal interview, 2024). These tools reduce delays and eliminate bureaucratic obstacles, facilitating cost-effective interactions through platforms like Zoom (Respondent 10, personal interview, 2024). This aligns with Melissen (2005), who emphasizes the transformative potential of digital technologies in modernizing diplomatic communication.

Additionally, digital diplomacy fosters direct connections with audiences, bypassing intermediaries and enabling immediate responses. As Respondent 10 explained, these platforms allow for more inclusive and interactive engagement with stakeholders (Respondent 10, personal interview, 2024). This democratization of diplomacy aligns with Bjola and Holmes (2015), who argue that social media has redefined how governments interact with both domestic and international audiences by making diplomacy more transparent and participatory.

By democratizing engagement and enhancing the scope of Ghana's foreign policy initiatives, digital diplomacy complements traditional methods while addressing their limitations (Respondents 9 & 8, personal interview, 2024). It is particularly significant in reducing costs and time, as digital meetings and rapid communications offer significant advantages over traditional diplomatic methods (Hocking et al., 2012).

Human resource requirements and staff training

The transition from traditional to digital diplomacy has introduced notable changes in human resource requirements and staff training within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This shift has necessitated a blend of traditional diplomatic skills with the technical expertise required to operate digital tools effectively. Traditional diplomacy relied heavily on human resources for logistical tasks, such as the physical delivery of documents and communications. As Respondent 1 explained, digital diplomacy has streamlined these processes, with tools like email reducing the need for physical transportation and significantly speeding up correspondence (Respondent 1, personal interview, 2024). Despite this shift, adherence to diplomatic protocols and proper authorization remains critical. To adapt to these changes, the Ministry provides ongoing training to ensure that staff effectively use digital tools while upholding the required diplomatic standards (Berridge, 2022).

Digital diplomacy has expanded the scope of responsibilities for staff, introducing new roles in social media management and online communication. As Respondent 3 emphasized, digital literacy is essential for diplomats to manage virtual interactions and monitor public discourse effectively (Respondent 3, personal interview, 2024). Respondent 4 also highlighted the importance of engaging global audiences through social media platforms, which requires expertise in content management and providing real-time feedback (Respondent 4, personal interview, 2024). This aligns with Melissen (2005), who underscores the critical role of digital communication in modern diplomatic practice, particularly in fostering direct engagement with public audiences.

Recruitment practices have evolved to reflect the growing demands of digital diplomacy. Respondent 9 noted that the Ministry now prioritizes personnel who are not only skilled in traditional diplomatic tasks but also have expertise in digital communication and analytics (Respondent 9, personal interview, 2024). In response to these evolving demands,

Respondent 7 mentioned capacity-building programs, such as online training, workshops, and collaborations with technology experts (Respondent 7, personal interview, 2024). This shift reflects broader trends in diplomacy, where digital skills are becoming as essential as traditional negotiation skills in managing international relations (Berridge, 2022).

This evolution in skillsets underscores the changing nature of diplomacy. Respondent 10 pointed out that the new roles in digital diplomacy require diplomats to combine traditional negotiation and communication skills with technical proficiency in digital tools. This combination enables diplomats to handle crisis communication and promote foreign policy in real-time (Respondent 10, personal interview, 2024). According to Hocking et al. (2012), this transformation is crucial for modern diplomatic practice, where digital tools facilitate more rapid and efficient communication, especially during crises.

The integration of digital diplomacy has not only modernized Ghana's approach to foreign relations but also transformed the human resource landscape within its Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Diplomats are now required to adapt to rapidly evolving technological landscapes, which demands continuous learning and flexibility in adopting new platforms and strategies (Holmes, 2015).

Capacity building

The transition from traditional to digital diplomacy has led to significant changes in the training and capacity-building priorities within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Traditional diplomacy focused primarily on skills such as face-to-face negotiations, strategic planning, and personal engagement, with an emphasis on in-person communication and physical document handling. Respondent 1 notes that before the digital era, diplomats were trained in formal communication techniques and document management, but their exposure to technology was limited. However, with the rise of digital diplomacy, there has been a marked shift in the skills diplomats need to

develop. Now, capacity-building efforts focus on areas like social media management and digital communication tools, with training programs emphasizing how to maintain adherence to diplomatic protocols while leveraging technology for efficient communication (Respondent 1, personal interview, 2024).

The shift to digital diplomacy has altered diplomatic capacity-building priorities by highlighting the dual need for traditional negotiation skills and technical expertise in digital platforms. Respondent 2 stresses the importance of diplomats mastering both diplomacy's core interpersonal skills and the technical aspects of digital platforms to communicate effectively in the modern age. Similarly, Respondent 3 emphasizes the growing significance of digital literacy, particularly in managing public engagement and addressing crises in real-time. This shift in focus complements, rather than replaces, the personal diplomacy that remains central to high-level negotiations (Respondent 2 & 3, personal interviews, 2024).

Digital platforms have expanded the scope of public diplomacy, as these tools enable quicker and more effective engagement with global audiences. As Respondent 5 points out, tools like social media have allowed Ghana to enhance its diplomatic outreach by promoting tourism, sharing important information, and engaging with international publics in real-time. Respondent 4 adds that diplomats are now being trained in countering misinformation and managing online discourse to maintain Ghana's positive image, which further highlights the growing importance of digital literacy in the diplomatic space (Respondent 5 & 4, personal interviews, 2024).

Continuous learning and professional development are key components of adapting to the digital era. Respondent 9 explains that training programs are now tailored to include emerging trends such as cybersecurity and crisis management, ensuring diplomats are prepared for the unique challenges of digital engagement. Furthermore, international partnerships with tech experts and institutions are instrumental in helping Ghana's Ministry stay ahead of

technological advancements in diplomacy (Respondent 9, personal interview, 2024). Respondent 10 emphasizes the flexibility offered by online training programs, which allow diplomats to balance their diplomatic duties with continuous professional development, ensuring they remain competitive in the evolving digital landscape (Respondent 10, personal interview, 2024). This model supports Ghana's efforts to equip its diplomatic corps with the skills needed to navigate the complexities of digital diplomacy effectively.

3.3 Institutional Adaptability

This section highlights how institutions adapt to evolving diplomatic landscapes by embracing diplomatic operations and producers, the establishment of specialized bureaus and partnerships, and the development and accessibility of digital tools and infrastructure.

Diplomatic operations and procedures

Diplomacy operates within strict boundaries to ensure clarity, consistency, and the protection of sensitive information. As Respondent 1 highlights, “You’re not allowed to share sensitive information. If you ever feel like you’ve crossed a line, you have to report it back to the ministry immediately” (Respondent 1, personal interview, 2024). Diplomats must adhere to well established processes, requiring explicit approval for actions and communications. Even posts on social media undergo a rigorous vetting process before being shared with the public to ensure compliance with diplomatic standards and security protocols.

The introduction of digital tools has significantly transformed diplomatic operations. Respondent 2 points out that remote meetings and virtual conferences became essential, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing Ghana’s diplomatic engagements to continue seamlessly. This shift has elevated Ghana's digital diplomacy, providing a new dimension to its foreign relations (Respondent 2, personal interview, 2024). Respondent 4 elaborates on this transformation, noting, “Traditional diplomacy used to focus on face-to-face engagements, like the Permanent Joint Commission for Cooperation (PJCC), but now, social

media and the internet have created a more interactive way to communicate, reaching broader audiences instantly” (Respondent 4, personal interview, 2024). The use of digital platforms has opened avenues for more immediate and global outreach, significantly enhancing the speed and scope of diplomatic communication.

The evolution of diplomatic procedures is also evident in information gathering. Respondents 5 and 7 recall a time when diplomats had to rely on physical resources, such as walking to libraries to prepare speeches or gather relevant briefs. Today, the internet has streamlined these processes, allowing access to vast amounts of information at the click of a button. Respondent 5 notes, “Instead of traveling to the library, I can quickly find what I need online. This has made public diplomacy more effective and efficient” (Respondent 5 & 7, personal interview, 2024). Digital resources have made information retrieval faster and more accessible, improving the efficiency of diplomatic operations.

Digital diplomacy has also contributed to reducing bureaucracy and costs. Respondent 10 illustrates, “If there’s an important issue to highlight, diplomats can simply tweet or post a message, reaching people instantly” (Respondent 10, personal interview, 2024). This direct engagement eliminates the need for intermediaries, enabling faster and more cost-effective communication. For example, discussions on visa waivers, which once required travel to Geneva can now take place via Zoom, saving both time and resources. Furthermore, Respondent 10 adds, “We had a training program from the Office of the Head of Civil Service that was entirely online. It was convenient and flexible, allowing us to access material at our convenience” (Respondent 10, personal interview, 2024). This shift to online training reflects the growing accessibility and efficiency of digital tools in diplomatic capacity-building.

The role of digital diplomacy in shaping foreign policy communication has also been transformative. Respondent 9 explains that Ghana’s foreign policy can now be disseminated

globally in real time via tweets, Facebook posts, and live-streamed events, making it more accessible to a global audience (Respondent 9, personal interview, 2024). This shift has required revisions to traditional protocols, integrating online platforms into diplomatic practices to reflect the changing nature of global communication.

In summary, the transition to digital diplomacy has modernized diplomatic operations by enhancing efficiency, accessibility, and reach. While it has transformed how diplomacy is conducted, it continues to operate within the framework of traditional protocols and operational procedures. Institutions like Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs are adapting to this dual framework, balancing innovation with procedural integrity to ensure effective diplomacy in the digital age

Creation for specialized bureaus and departments

The evolution of diplomacy in Ghana has led to the establishment of specialized bureaus and departments within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to manage the increasing role of digital tools in diplomatic work. Respondent 1 notes, "Our Information and Public Affairs Bureau manages our social media, especially Facebook, where we regularly communicate updates" (Respondent 1, personal interview, 2024). Each diplomatic mission now has a dedicated desk for digital communication, supported by a robust IT department that tailors' solutions to meet the Ministry's specific needs. The recent implementation of an IT policy ensures consistency and effective management of technology-related activities across all Missions guaranteeing that only accurate information is shared. These efforts are bolstered by strict limitations on the use of social media based on the suitability of the platform and message.

Respondent 2 highlights the creation of a digital communication strategy designed to equip all diplomatic missions with the tools necessary for real-time diplomacy. This strategy aligns the Ministry's missions with modern diplomatic demands, fostering greater efficiency in global engagement (Respondent 2, personal interview, 2024). Similarly, Respondent 3 elaborates on

the Ministry's restructuring, stating, "The Ministry has restructured departments like the Information Bureau, ICT, and the Information and Public Affairs Bureau to specifically handle digital communications" (Respondent 3, personal interview, 2024). This restructuring ensures that while maintaining a strong online presence, the Ministry can continue to protect sensitive information effectively. For instance, the Director of the Information and Public Affairs Bureau plays a pivotal role in overseeing the Ministry's digital communications, ensuring their security and confidentiality. The IT department provides ongoing training programs that equip staff to securely share information and mitigate potential data leaks. To facilitate this transition, the Ministry also implemented a change management strategy to demonstrate the tangible benefits of digital diplomacy, referencing successful case studies from other nations (Respondent 3, personal interview, 2024).

Respondent 7 notes the establishment of a specialized unit under the Office of the Minister to oversee the strategic use of digital tools in diplomatic efforts. "This unit monitors social media and conducts digital engagement while ensuring these initiatives complement traditional diplomatic strategies" (Respondent 7, personal interview, 2024). This integration of digital and traditional diplomatic methods creates a unified approach to modern diplomacy. Similarly, Respondent 9 underscores the importance of coordination, explaining, "These units coordinate our social media strategy and ensure that digital efforts align with broader diplomatic objectives" (Respondent 9, personal interview, 2024). This alignment is essential for ensuring that Ghana's foreign policy is effectively projected across multiple digital platforms.

The Ministry's Information Bureau, including the Information and Public Affairs Bureau, plays a critical role in supporting diplomatic operations. It is responsible for producing print media such as posters, leaflets, and magazines, covering press events, creating documentaries, and archiving video footage of major events. Additionally, the Bureau organizes photo exhibitions and disseminates content on the Government of Ghana's official portal. The primary goal of

these efforts is to establish a responsive, two-way communication channel between the government and the public, which helps promote government investment and development programs while supporting good governance (Taylor, 2019).

On the other hand, the IT Bureau within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays a crucial role in supporting the Ministry's digital diplomacy initiatives. It is responsible for implementing and managing IT policies to ensure the proper and secure use of technology across all diplomatic missions. The IT Bureau also develops customized digital tools, such as integrated communication platforms, to facilitate secure and efficient information sharing among Ministry staff. By providing regular training programs, the Bureau ensures that employees are well equipped to use these tools while maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive information. Furthermore, the IT Bureau works closely with the Information and Public Affairs Bureau to synchronize digital strategies with broader diplomatic goals, enhancing the Ministry's online presence and ensuring cohesive diplomatic operations (Taylor, 2019). This collaborative approach underscores the IT Bureau's essential role as the technological backbone of the Ministry, ensuring seamless and secure digital diplomacy.

Overall, Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has adapted to the evolving demands of digital diplomacy through strategic restructuring, enhanced training, and the creation of specialized bureaus to effectively manage the Ministry's digital presence while maintaining adherence to traditional diplomatic protocols

Development of digital tools and infrastructure

Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made substantial progress in adopting digital tools and enhancing its infrastructure to support modern diplomacy. Respondent 1 notes, "We've upgraded our digital infrastructure, incorporating tools for video conferencing, secure document exchange, and social media engagement" (Respondent 1, personal interview, 2024).

These upgrades, including a comprehensive digital communication strategy, ensure that all diplomatic missions are equipped with the necessary tools to engage in real-time diplomacy, making diplomatic operations more effective and timely.

Respondent 5 highlights the improvements in internal communication, explaining, "The government's adoption of Microsoft tools like Outlook and Teams has made internal communication much more efficient. All ministries are now connected via a shared Microsoft platform, making it easy to search for contact information and collaborate" (Respondent 5, personal interview, 2024). The use of Microsoft Teams, in particular, has improved meeting efficiency by ensuring only invited participants can join, protecting the confidentiality of discussions. The Ministry's secure email system further streamlines internal and external communication, facilitating better coordination among stakeholders.

Digital tools have also proven essential for maintaining ties with Ghanaians abroad. Respondent 6 points out, "Ghana has relied on digital tools in reaching Ghanaians in the diaspora as well as for communication between Embassies and the Foreign Ministry" (Respondent 6, personal interview, 2024). These tools have allowed for more direct and efficient communication between the Ministry and Ghanaians overseas, strengthening diplomatic and consular relationships.

Respondent 7 discusses the launch of an online portal for consular services, which facilitates tasks such as passport renewals and visa applications for Ghanaians abroad. "This initiative enables Ghanaians to access services from the comfort of their homes," making processes more convenient and reducing the need for in-person visits (Respondent 7, personal interview, 2024). Similarly, Respondent 9 mentions that the Ministry has worked on developing specialized platforms, such as the online consular service portal, allowing Ghanaians to renew passports and apply for visas digitally (Respondent 9, personal interview, 2024). These advancements

have made consular services more accessible and aligned with Ghana's broader digital diplomacy objectives.

Respondent 10 highlights the significance of widely used digital tools, such as Zoom and Microsoft platforms, in facilitating global communication. "We use tools like Zoom to stay connected with our missions across the globe, and platforms provided by Microsoft to communicate with our staff worldwide" (Respondent 10, personal interview, 2024). While these tools are not specifically developed by the Ministry, they play a critical role in maintaining effective communication and engagement on a global scale.

The Ministry's development of secure communication platforms and online consular services has greatly enhanced the efficiency of its diplomatic operations. These digital innovations showcase the Ministry's dedication to modernizing its approach to diplomacy and improving engagement with both internal stakeholders and the international community.

3.4 Benefits, Challenges, and Risks of Digital Diplomacy

Digital public diplomacy has revolutionized how countries interact with global audiences, offering notable advantages, challenges, and potential risks. In the case of Ghana, this shift highlights an increasing dependence on digital platforms to expand diplomatic influence, optimize resources, and address emerging challenges. Nonetheless, the transition is not without its difficulties, especially in areas like cybersecurity and the spread of misinformation. This section delves into these aspects, drawing insights from interview responses and scholarly literature.

Diplomatic reach and effectiveness

Digital tools have significantly transformed Ghana's diplomatic outreach, enhancing its global visibility and communication efficiency. Respondent 1 observes, "Digital tools, especially social media platforms like Facebook, have really transformed how Ghana communicates with

both its local and international audiences. It's made everything quicker and more direct, from announcing new appointments to sharing updates on foreign policy or responding to urgent situations, like when we had to help evacuate Ghanaians during the Ukraine crisis" (Respondent 1, personal interview, 2024). This highlights how digital platforms have improved both day-to-day communication and rapid responses in crisis situations, amplifying Ghana's diplomatic presence in real time.

Respondent 2 emphasizes the broader benefits of digital diplomacy: "The benefits of digital public diplomacy for Ghana are substantial. Digital tools have greatly expanded our diplomatic reach, allowing us to engage with a wider audience, including global influencers, foreign governments, and the diaspora. These tools also enable more efficient and effective communication with international stakeholders, facilitating collaboration across borders" (Respondent 2, personal interview, 2024). The ability to reach diverse groups and foster cross border collaboration demonstrates the value of digital diplomacy in enhancing Ghana's international influence.

Respondent 3 adds that, "Digital diplomacy enhances Ghana's global visibility by enabling faster communication with international audiences and facilitating real-time engagement on matters of national interest" (Respondent 3, personal interview, 2024). This shift has positioned Ghana as a proactive participant in global discussions, improving its visibility on international issues.

The effectiveness of these digital tools is also underscored by Respondent 4, who notes, "The shift to digital platforms has definitely made our work much easier, especially in terms of communication and information sharing. For example, being able to quickly get in touch with someone from another ministry has made collaboration far more efficient" (Respondent 4, personal interview, 2024). This internal efficiency improves coordination within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, enhancing diplomatic operations.

Respondent 5 provides a concrete example, stating, "One of the key benefits I've seen is how digital tools give us greater visibility. In the past, we had to send documents or papers back and forth, sometimes waiting for days to get the message across. Now, we can instantly upload information to our websites or share it on social media platforms. For example, when South Africa announced a visa waiver for Ghanaians, the news quickly spread through social media, instantly notifying the public" (Respondent 5, personal interview, 2024). This immediacy exemplifies the speed and efficiency of digital platforms compared to traditional media channels.

Respondent 6 emphasizes that digital tools enable real-time engagement, noting, "Promote and facilitate real-time engagement with global audiences, allowing for quicker responses to international issues and crises" (Respondent 6, personal interview, 2024). This capability has proven essential in responding promptly to global developments.

Respondent 7 elaborates on the broader impact of digital diplomacy: "Digital diplomacy has dramatically expanded Ghana's reach, especially in areas like public diplomacy and soft power. For instance, during COP26 (2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference), Ghana used Twitter and Instagram to communicate its positions on climate change, engaging directly with key global stakeholders" (Respondent 7, personal interview, 2024). This example illustrates how social media platforms have become integral in shaping Ghana's stance on global issues and reinforcing the country's influence in international forums.

Respondent 9 further asserts, "Digital diplomacy has exponentially expanded Ghana's diplomatic reach, enabling us to engage with not just government officials but also civil society, the private sector, and the general public globally. Platforms like Twitter and LinkedIn allow Ghana to influence global discourse, advocate for our development priorities, and establish Ghana as a thought leader on issues such as democracy, trade, and climate change" (Respondent

9, personal interview, 2024). This broader engagement strengthens Ghana's diplomatic influence and its role in global discussions.

These insights align with Nye's (2004) argument that digital diplomacy is a powerful tool of soft power, enabling nations to promote their cultural and political values. By integrating digital tools, Ghana has been able to communicate more efficiently and assertively on the global stage, advocating for its national interests and values

Resource utilization

The shift to digital tools has significantly enhanced resource utilization in Ghana's diplomatic efforts. Respondent 1 observes, "Gone are the days of sending physical letters through drivers. Now, we can quickly email or post updates online, which saves a lot of time and resources" (Respondent 1, personal interview, 2024). This transition to digital communication has reduced the need for physical mail, cutting both time and costs associated with traditional communication methods, optimizing resource allocation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Respondent 2 highlights the cost-efficiency of digital diplomacy: "Digital diplomacy has proven to be a cost-effective alternative to traditional diplomacy, reducing the need for frequent travel, which can be resource-intensive. This is especially significant for countries like Ghana, where budgetary constraints may limit diplomatic outreach" (Respondent 2, personal interview, 2024). By reducing the necessity for costly travel, digital tools have allowed Ghana to extend its diplomatic reach without stretching its limited resources.

Similarly, Respondent 6 states that digital diplomacy "reduces travel and logistical expenses associated with traditional diplomacy, enabling more efficient use of resources in diplomatic efforts" (Respondent 6, personal interview, 2024). Virtual meetings have further alleviated the financial burden of travel, allowing Ghana to engage with international partners without incurring the associated expenses.

Respondent 7 emphasizes this cost-saving aspect, stating, "Digital diplomacy allows Ghana to achieve more with less. It reduces the need for physical travel and can streamline consular services and public outreach. It also helps optimize time and financial resources, particularly when engaging with international partners through virtual meetings" (Respondent 7, personal interview, 2024). This has enabled Ghana to maximize its diplomatic engagement while managing resource constraints effectively.

Respondent 9 agrees, noting, "One of the main advantages of digital diplomacy is the cost efficiency it offers. Rather than relying on the travel-heavy schedules typical of traditional diplomacy, digital tools allow us to communicate effectively without the need for extensive budgets or logistics when there isn't the need for traditional diplomacy" (Respondent 9, personal interview, 2024). This resource optimization is particularly important for developing countries like Ghana, where financial constraints can limit the scope of diplomatic activities.

Despite these advantages, Respondent 3 highlights a challenge in resource utilization, stating that "limited infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, and budget constraints hinder our ability to invest in advanced digital tools, putting us at a disadvantage compared to other countries" (Respondent 3, personal interview, 2024). While digital diplomacy presents clear benefits, these challenges underscore the need for ongoing investment in digital infrastructure to ensure that the potential advantages of digital diplomacy are fully realized.

Respondent 4 emphasizes the time-saving benefits of digital tools, stating, "It's especially beneficial when it comes to meetings or discussions that would traditionally require travel or lengthy communication exchanges" (Respondent 4, personal interview, 2024). Digital tools allow for more efficient communication and meetings, cutting down on time-consuming travel and logistical coordination.

Respondent 10 mentions a specific initiative developed by the Ministry, a mobile app designed to track Ghanaians abroad. The app enables Ghanaians to register their locations, allowing the Ministry to locate them in emergencies. However, as Respondent 10 points out, "Unfortunately, the app hasn't gained much traction with the public, as many Ghanaians are reluctant to register, which makes it difficult to maximize its potential" (Respondent 10, personal interview, 2024). This illustrates how technological initiatives, despite their promise, can face barriers such as public reluctance to adopt new tools, limiting their effectiveness.

In line with these findings, Aboagye and Nunoo (2024) observed that the adoption of digital platforms has enabled Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct virtual meetings and conferences without the financial burden of in-person engagements. However, as Endong (2020) notes, countries with limited access to stable internet connectivity may not fully realize the resource-saving potential of digital diplomacy. The challenge of infrastructure remains a critical issue for fully maximizing the potential of digital tools.

In conclusion, while digital diplomacy has proven to be a more resource-efficient approach for Ghana, offering significant cost savings and streamlining communication, challenges related to infrastructure and public engagement persist. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring that digital diplomacy continues to deliver on its promise of more efficient, cost-effective diplomatic engagement.

Balancing Transparency, Diplomatic Discretion, and Combating Misinformation on Digital Platforms

Respondents emphasized the importance of striking a delicate balance between transparency, diplomatic discretion, and addressing misinformation in the digital age. Respondent 1 noted, "We adhere to strict procedures when engaging in digital communication, just as we do with traditional methods. We fully understand the potential risks of digital diplomacy and take every

precaution to mitigate them. If there's any indication of a breach, we immediately circulate alerts to all staff to remain vigilant" (Respondent 1, personal interview, 2024). This reflects the Ministry's commitment to ensuring that sensitive diplomatic information is securely handled while maintaining vigilance in managing digital communications.

Respondent 2 highlighted the importance of securing information while maintaining transparency: "A system of checks and balances is instituted to ensure that all information processed within my mission is properly secured. I can ensure that all sensitive data remains protected and secure, thereby maintaining the integrity of my diplomatic work" (Respondent 2, personal interview, 2024). They further emphasized the need for discretion, stating, "While digital platforms allow for more immediate communication and transparency, sensitive diplomatic matters must still be handled with the utmost discretion. The Ministry actively combats misinformation and disinformation through monitoring and counter-narrative strategies" (Respondent 2, personal interview, 2024).

For managing sensitive information, Respondent 3 explained, "For sensitive communications, we use secure encrypted channels, while public messaging is shared through official social media and websites. We rely on our strategic communication team to craft messages that ensure transparency without compromising diplomatic confidentiality" (Respondent 3, personal interview, 2024). Furthermore, Respondent 3 pointed out the Ministry's efforts to combat misinformation: "We have a dedicated team within the Information and Public Affairs Bureau that monitors online narratives and quickly counters false information through verified sources. We collaborate with local media and participate in online fact-checking initiatives to ensure the accuracy of information shared with the public" (Respondent 3, personal interview, 2024).

Respondent 4 shared a real-life example of how the Ministry responded to misinformation: "A recent example that comes to mind is when there was a publication by Hon. Samuel Okudzeto

Ablakwa regarding passport and visa intermediaries, which mentioned large sums of money. This created confusion and public concern. As soon as the issue came up, the Ministry moved quickly to address it. We immediately issued a communiqué to clarify the situation and set the record straight, ensuring that the facts were aligned, and the public was properly informed" (Respondent 4, personal interview, 2024).

Respondent 5 also acknowledged the need for discretion, stating, "There's still a recognition that diplomacy requires a certain level of caution. Some things just can't be rushed or thrown out too quickly, especially when it comes to sensitive matters. The need for discretion is always at the forefront. In digital diplomacy, once something is shared, it can't be taken back, so we have to be very careful about what we publish" (Respondent 5, personal interview, 2024). This highlights the balance between real-time information and thorough verification, ensuring that diplomatic integrity is maintained.

Respondent 6 emphasized the importance of clear guidelines: "We have clear guidelines on what information can be shared publicly and what should remain confidential, ensuring that sensitive topics are handled discreetly. The issue of misinformation or disinformation on digital platforms is handled through a rapid debunking of fake news via press releases to avoid misinformation, propaganda, and misleading narratives" (Respondent 6, personal interview, 2024).

Respondent 9 highlighted the Ministry's broader efforts to counter misinformation: "The proliferation of fake news on social media is a major concern. The Ministry actively collaborates with international partners to counter disinformation and works to create a media literacy campaign to help the public differentiate between credible and non-credible information" (Respondent 9, personal interview, 2024).

Finally, Respondent 10 detailed the Ministry's proactive measures: "When it comes to discretion in diplomatic communications, it's all about creating awareness within the Ministry. We handle sensitive information regularly, and we're constantly reminded of the importance of discretion. The Ministry's administration bureau does a great job of keeping us updated on our responsibilities, and we take oaths of secrecy and allegiance to underscore how seriously we take our duty to protect the integrity of the information we manage" (Respondent 10, personal interview, 2024). They further emphasized the Ministry's role in combating misinformation: "The Ministry has an active Public Affairs Bureau, which is always ready to tackle false information and set the record straight. Addressing misinformation is a key part of our public diplomacy strategy. If false information slips through, we act swiftly to correct it whether it's from media outlets or individuals" (Respondent 10, personal interview, 2024).

In conclusion, balancing transparency with discretion in digital diplomacy is a complex but essential task. Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs employs strict procedures, secure communication channels, and proactive misinformation management strategies to ensure that sensitive diplomatic matters are handled appropriately. The Ministry works closely with local media, international partners, and the public to combat disinformation and promote accurate, reliable information. This approach is crucial for maintaining trust and integrity in Ghana's digital diplomacy efforts.

Cybersecurity and Data Privacy

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ghana prioritizes cybersecurity and data privacy, ensuring the protection of sensitive diplomatic information through collaborative efforts, advanced technologies, and adherence to international standards. Respondents collectively emphasized the Ministry's reliance on encryption, secure communication channels, partnerships with key institutions, and ongoing training to safeguard digital assets.

A critical element in the Ministry's cybersecurity strategy is its collaboration with the National Information Technology Agency (NITA), which oversees its technology and data storage. As Respondent 1 explained, "The Ministry depends on NITA for managing its technology and data storage. Additionally, we collaborate with key agencies like National Security, Cybersecurity, the Ministry of Information, and the Ministry of Communication and Digitalization to ensure robust data protection" (Respondent 1, personal interview, 2024). This collaboration strengthens the Ministry's cybersecurity infrastructure, ensuring comprehensive protection of sensitive data.

Respondents 2 and 6 noted the Ministry's implementation of a "robust cybersecurity framework, including encryption tools, firewalls, and regular security audits," which ensures the integrity of digital information. These proactive measures help secure communications, particularly in an era of increasing cyber threats (Respondents 2 and 6, personal interviews, 2024). The Ministry also invests in staff training, which is emphasized by Respondents 3, 7, and 9. Regular cybersecurity training equips staff with the skills to identify and respond to potential risks. Respondent 7 highlighted, "Ghana has a dedicated cybersecurity unit that ensures digital platforms are secure. Training sessions focus on recognizing threats, using encryption tools, and maintaining data integrity" (Respondent 7, personal interview, 2024).

International standards, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), are another cornerstone of the Ministry's approach to data privacy. Respondent 7 stressed, "Data protection is a key concern, particularly with personal information handled through consular services. The Ministry has adopted strict data privacy protocols and aligns with international standards like the GDPR to safeguard citizens' information" (Respondent 7, personal interview, 2024). This alignment with global data protection frameworks strengthens the Ministry's efforts to maintain the confidentiality and security of personal data.

Real-time collaboration with government entities such as the Signals Bureau enhances the

Ministry's ability to secure data and combat cybercrime. Respondent 10 explained, "The Signals Bureau plays a key role in securing data and combating cybercrime. The Ministry also collaborates with NITA for internet connectivity and data protection, ensuring that sensitive diplomatic matters remain confidential" (Respondent 10, personal interview, 2024). The Ministry's partnerships with both local and international cybersecurity firms further fortify its defenses, allowing it to stay ahead of evolving digital threats.

The collaboration between the Ministry and NITA, which provides internet services and ICT policy implementation, ensures that Ghana's government institutions maintain secure, reliable internet access for their digital operations. NITA plays a crucial role in facilitating the Ministry's adoption of efficient ICT policies and regulatory frameworks (Taylor, 2019). This partnership underlines the importance of a multi-faceted approach to cybersecurity, combining technology, training, and strategic collaborations to safeguard Ghana's diplomatic communications in the digital age.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ghana employs a proactive, multifaceted approach to cybersecurity and data privacy, ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of its digital communications. This strategy involves collaboration with key agencies, investment in secure technologies, adherence to international standards, and regular staff training, all of which contribute to the Ministry's ability to effectively protect sensitive diplomatic information.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter examines Ghana's digital diplomacy efforts, highlighting its evolution, challenges, and opportunities. Digital diplomacy complements traditional diplomacy by enabling broader reach, real-time engagement, and transparency. It has enabled Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to connect with global audiences, respond to crises effectively, and showcase the country's achievements on the international stage. Social media platforms like Twitter and

Facebook have amplified Ghana's soft power in areas like peacekeeping and sustainable development.

However, digital diplomacy also presents significant challenges, such as cybersecurity risks, misinformation, and infrastructural limitations. These issues require robust policies, indigenous infrastructure, and skilled personnel to sustain and enhance digital diplomacy efforts. Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and blockchain offer strategic and secure diplomatic engagements, but their integration requires targeted investments, training programs, and policy frameworks.

Ghana stands at a critical juncture where it can leverage its experiences and emerging technologies to refine its digital diplomacy initiatives. Addressing identified gaps, such as enhancing cybersecurity measures, bridging the digital divide, and investing in local infrastructure, can position Ghana as a regional leader in digital diplomacy. Sustaining efforts to harmonize traditional and digital approaches will ensure that Ghana's diplomatic practices remain resilient and adaptive in a rapidly changing global landscape.

Digital diplomacy is not a replacement for traditional diplomacy but a powerful complement that enhances its reach and impact. By embracing innovation, fostering collaboration, and addressing challenges head-on, Ghana can maximize the potential of digital diplomacy to achieve foreign policy objectives and strengthen its role on the global stage.



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CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Summary of Findings

The research findings are derived from the objectives established at the outset of the study, which include:

1. Explain how digital public diplomacy differs from traditional diplomacy.
2. Investigate how the foreign policy agencies of Ghana evolve their institutional structures to operationalize digital public diplomacy.
3. Examine the benefits, challenges, and risks that Ghana's foreign policy agencies face in the implementation of digital public diplomacy.
4. Analyze how Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration adapted to the exigencies of its digital public diplomacy efforts; and offer suggestions as recommendations for improving upon Ghana's digital public diplomacy efforts.

4.1.1 Objective 1: The Extent to Which Digital Diplomacy Differs from Traditional Diplomacy

The study found several key differences between digital public diplomacy and traditional diplomacy, highlighting how the rise of digital tools has transformed diplomatic practice. Key findings include:

1. Speed and Real-Time Communication:

- **Digital Public Diplomacy:** One of the most significant differences is the speed at which digital diplomacy operates. Through digital tools like social media, email, and video conferencing, the Ministry can engage in real-time communication with foreign

governments, citizens, and international stakeholders. This allows for faster responses to global events, immediate dissemination of information, and timely engagement with the public and international community.

- **Traditional Diplomacy:** Traditional diplomacy, in contrast, typically operates at a slower pace, with information often transmitted through formal channels such as official letters, meetings, or diplomatic cables. The time lag between communication and response can delay diplomatic efforts and the resolution of issues.

2. Direct Access and Public Engagement:

- **Digital Public Diplomacy:** Digital platforms enable direct access to a global audience, allowing the Ministry to engage with not only foreign governments but also individuals, civil society groups, and the general public. Social media channels like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram provide a space for the Ministry to share updates, engage in dialogue, and present a nation's perspective on international matters without intermediary layers.
- **Traditional Diplomacy:** Traditional diplomacy relies on formal channels, such as embassies, consulates, and diplomatic correspondence, which are often limited to interactions between state actors or government officials. This means that the broader public is generally less involved in traditional diplomatic processes.

3. Accessibility and Inclusivity:

- **Digital Public Diplomacy:** Digital platforms have democratized access to diplomatic communication, allowing anyone with internet access to engage in or observe diplomatic discussions. This inclusivity enhances transparency, as governments and

diplomatic missions can directly interact with a diverse range of audiences, including the diaspora, local communities, international organizations, and the general public.

- **Traditional Diplomacy:** Traditional diplomacy is typically more exclusive, as it tends to be confined to formal, government-to-government interactions. Access to diplomatic information is often restricted to those within the political and diplomatic circles, with limited outreach to non-state actors and the general public.

4. Multidimensional Interaction:

- **Digital Public Diplomacy:** Digital diplomacy allows for multidimensional interactions, where the Ministry can engage in various forms of communication including text, video, and interactive content such as webinars, podcasts, or live Q&A sessions. This variety enables the Ministry to reach different audiences in different formats, improving the quality and depth of engagement.
- **Traditional Diplomacy:** Traditional diplomacy is largely restricted to verbal or written communication in formal settings, such as meetings, negotiations, or summits. While these formats can be highly effective in specific diplomatic contexts, they do not offer the same breadth of interactive and multimedia engagement that digital platforms provide.

5. Cost and Resource Efficiency:

- **Digital Public Diplomacy:** Digital tools are often more cost-effective and resource efficient compared to traditional diplomatic processes. Social media and digital communication channels allow the Ministry to reach large audiences with minimal financial investment, reducing the need for extensive travel, venue rentals, and physical meetings that are common in traditional diplomacy.

- **Traditional Diplomacy:** Traditional diplomacy often requires significant financial investment in hosting events, official travel, and maintaining diplomatic missions abroad. These costs can limit the frequency and scale of diplomatic engagement.

6. Flexibility and Informality:

- **Digital Public Diplomacy:** Digital diplomacy tends to be more flexible and informal. Through platforms like Twitter or Facebook, diplomats can engage in casual exchanges, express opinions, and address issues quickly, allowing for more spontaneous and fluid interactions with the global public. This flexibility is particularly important for addressing urgent global events or crises.
- **Traditional Diplomacy:** Traditional diplomacy, on the other hand, is more formal and structured, with an emphasis on protocol, diplomacy, and long-established processes. Official diplomatic statements and negotiations tend to be more formal, with less room for spontaneous or informal engagement.

7. Risk of Misinformation and Security Challenges:

- **Digital Public Diplomacy:** While digital diplomacy provides greater reach, it also comes with the challenge of misinformation, cyberattacks, and digital security threats. False information can spread rapidly on social media, requiring the Ministry to invest resources in monitoring and countering disinformation campaigns.
- **Traditional Diplomacy:** Traditional diplomacy, though more secure in some ways, is not immune to challenges like espionage and leaks. However, it is less vulnerable to the immediate spread of misinformation, as information flows more slowly and is typically more controlled.

8. Public Opinion and Image Management:

- **Digital Public Diplomacy:** The rapid dissemination of information through digital platforms allows the Ministry to shape public opinion and manage the nation's image on a global scale. Digital platforms provide an immediate space for the Ministry to respond to crises, promote Ghana's national interests, and counter negative perceptions, all while monitoring public reactions in real-time.
- **Traditional Diplomacy:** Traditional diplomacy typically involves longer processes for managing public opinion, such as through press releases, official statements, or bilateral meetings. While these methods can be effective, they do not offer the immediacy or interactivity of digital platforms.

The study found that digital public diplomacy differs from traditional diplomacy in several keyways, including speed, accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to engage directly with the public. While digital diplomacy offers greater flexibility and outreach, it also presents challenges such as the risk of misinformation and security concerns. Traditional diplomacy, while more formal and structured, offers a level of control and security that digital platforms do not. Both approaches have their unique strengths, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ghana, as the study suggests, has leveraged digital diplomacy to complement and enhance its traditional diplomatic efforts, adapting its institutional strategies to the changing dynamics of global communication.

4.1.2 Objective 2: The Evolution of Foreign Policy Agencies' Institutional Structures to operationalize Digital Public Diplomacy

The study found that Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration has evolved its institutional structures to operationalize digital public diplomacy in several important ways.

These adaptations have enabled the Ministry to effectively integrate digital tools and strategies into its diplomatic operations. Key findings include:

1. Institutional Adaptation to Digital Diplomacy:

- **Digital Tools and Infrastructure:** The Ministry has made significant strides in adapting its infrastructure to incorporate digital tools, such as video conferencing, secure document exchange, and social media platforms. These tools have been integrated into daily operations to ensure that Ghana can engage effectively with international stakeholders in real time.
- **Development of Ministry-Specific Digital Solutions:** The Ministry has created tailored digital solutions to meet its specific needs in foreign diplomacy. This includes the development of custom platforms for communication, enhancing the efficiency of diplomatic processes.

2. Organizational Changes:

- **Creation of New Departments and Roles:** As part of its adaptation to digital diplomacy, the Ministry has established new departments and specialized roles to focus on digital engagement. For example, the Information and Public Affairs Bureau, supported by a strong IT department, manages the Ministry's digital communications and online engagement.
- **Expansion of Human Resources:** The Ministry has recruited personnel with expertise in digital tools, such as social media management, cybersecurity, and content creation. This shift has led to a focus on training diplomats and staff in digital literacy, ensuring they are equipped to handle the new demands of digital diplomacy.

3. Training and Skill Development:

- **Digital Literacy and Skill Enhancement:** The Ministry has placed emphasis on training its diplomats and other staff members in digital literacy, recognizing that modern diplomats need to be proficient in using digital tools for communication and engagement. Training programs have been implemented to ensure staff members can effectively use digital platforms, manage online content, and navigate digital security protocols.
- **Capacity Building:** There has been a significant effort to build capacity within the Ministry to ensure that employees are well-equipped to handle the challenges and opportunities of digital diplomacy. This includes providing continuous education on digital tools, social media best practices, and cybersecurity measures.

4. Strategic Communication and Real-Time Diplomacy:

- **Digital Communication Strategy:** The Ministry has developed a comprehensive digital communication strategy to ensure that all diplomatic missions are equipped with the necessary tools for real-time diplomacy. This strategy focuses on the use of social media and other digital platforms for communication and engagement with foreign governments, citizens, and international organizations.
- **Real-Time Connectivity and Information Sharing:** The Ministry has embraced real-time connectivity through digital tools, allowing diplomats stationed at missions abroad to communicate efficiently with the Ministry in Accra. This development has significantly improved information sharing, enabling the Ministry to stay up to date on global developments and diplomatic matters quickly.

5. Overcoming Resistance to Change:

- **Addressing Resistance:** The study found that the Ministry had to address resistance to change within its ranks as digital tools were introduced. This resistance was overcome through strategic leadership, training initiatives, and a clear demonstration of the benefits that digital diplomacy could bring. The shift towards digital diplomacy required careful management to ensure that the Ministry's staff embraced these changes and adapted to new technologies.
- **Flexibility and Adaptation:** The Ministry has shown flexibility in adapting its organizational structure and strategies to meet the challenges posed by the digital age. This includes being open to incorporating new technologies and approaches to diplomacy as they become available.

6. Enhanced Communication and Outreach:

- **Social Media Engagement:** The Ministry's adoption of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), and others has facilitated regular communication with both domestic and international audiences. This has enabled more frequent updates and interaction with citizens, foreign governments, and international organizations.
- **Public Diplomacy via Digital Platforms:** The Ministry has increasingly used digital platforms to communicate public announcements, such as visa waivers and Ghana's stance on global issues, which has strengthened its role in public diplomacy. This direct communication has proven to be especially effective in countering misinformation quickly, something traditional diplomatic channels were less able to do.

The study found that Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made significant efforts to evolve its institutional structures to operationalize digital public diplomacy. This has been achieved through the adoption of modern digital tools, the creation of new roles and departments focused

on digital engagement, extensive training in digital literacy, and the development of tailored digital solutions to meet specific diplomatic needs. These efforts have enhanced the Ministry's ability to communicate effectively, engage with international stakeholders, and project Ghana's image on the global stage, all while adapting to the demands of the digital age.

4.1.3 Objective 3: Benefits, Challenges, and Risks in the Implementation of Digital public Diplomacy

The study found several key benefits, challenges, and risks associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration's implementation of digital public diplomacy in Ghana:

Benefits:

1. Increased Diplomatic Reach and Effectiveness:

- Digital diplomacy has significantly enhanced Ghana's diplomatic reach, enabling faster and more efficient communication with both local and international audiences. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have helped disseminate information quickly, keeping stakeholders informed about important announcements, foreign policy updates, and urgent situations.

2. Resource Utilization:

- The shift to digital tools has optimized resource use, reducing the need for expensive and time-consuming travel for diplomatic meetings and events. This has also made international engagement more cost-effective.

3. Global Engagement and Transparency:

- Digital platforms have opened new avenues for transparency in Ghana's foreign relations. The Ministry can now communicate directly with citizens abroad, strengthen its relationship with international organizations, and share updates on Ghana's stance on global issues more openly.

4. Improved Communication During Crises:

- During crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, digital tools allowed for virtual meetings, facilitating continued diplomatic engagement without the need for inperson meetings.

5. Promotion of Investment and Knowledge Exchange:

- Digital diplomacy has helped promote investment opportunities and facilitate knowledge exchange, enhancing Ghana's ability to engage with global business leaders and educational institutions.

Challenges:

1. Cybersecurity Risks:

- The increasing reliance on digital platforms has raised concerns about cybersecurity threats, including the protection of sensitive diplomatic data. The Ministry has had to implement secure communication channels and encrypt sensitive discussions to safeguard information.

2. Balancing Transparency with Diplomatic Discretion:

- While transparency is important in public diplomacy, the Ministry has faced challenges in balancing openness with the need for confidentiality. Clear guidelines for social media usage and content review processes have been put in place to avoid disclosing sensitive information.

3. Misinformation and Disinformation:

- The proliferation of fake news and misinformation on digital platforms is a significant challenge. The Ministry has had to combat this by monitoring online discourse and developing counter-narratives to address false information.

4. Over-reliance on Digital Platforms:

- There is concern that over-reliance on digital platforms could lead to superficial engagement or miscommunication, particularly with complex diplomatic issues that require in-depth, face-to-face discussions.

5. Limited Infrastructure and Budget Constraints:

- The Ministry faces challenges in fully integrating digital diplomacy due to limited infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, and budget constraints. These limitations hinder the ability to invest in advanced digital tools, putting Ghana at a disadvantage compared to other nations with more resources.

Risks:

1. Security and Data Protection Issues:

- The risks associated with cybersecurity, such as hacking and unauthorized data access, pose a threat to the confidentiality of diplomatic communications. The Ministry has had to invest in robust cybersecurity measures, including encryption tools and regular staff training on data protection.

2. Risks of Misinformation:

- The rapid spread of misinformation on social media presents a constant risk to the Ministry's reputation and diplomatic efforts. While efforts are being made to address this, managing the fast pace of misinformation remains a significant challenge.

In conclusion, the study found that while digital public diplomacy has provided the Ministry with numerous benefits, including enhanced diplomatic reach and resource efficiency, it has also introduced several challenges and risks, particularly around cybersecurity, misinformation, and infrastructure limitations. The Ministry's ability to address these challenges through training, secure communication practices, and strategic use of digital platforms has been crucial in managing the risks and leveraging the benefits of digital diplomacy effectively.

4.1.4 Objective 4: The Ministry's Adaptability to the Exigencies of Digital Public Diplomacy

The study found that Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration has demonstrated significant adaptability to the exigencies of digital public diplomacy. Several key findings highlighted the Ministry's proactive steps in adjusting to the digital era, ensuring that it remains effective in its diplomatic efforts:

- 1. Implementation of Strict Protocols:** The Ministry has introduced clear rules and protocols for engaging with digital platforms to ensure that information shared aligns

with security and confidentiality standards. This allows for efficient communication without compromising the Ministry's diplomatic interests.

2. **Adoption of Digital Tools:** The Ministry has successfully integrated digital tools like social media platforms and secure communication channels into its operations. These tools help in reaching wider audiences and ensuring real-time communication with international stakeholders, which is crucial for addressing global issues promptly.
3. **Challenges with Digital Infrastructure:** One of the major challenges faced by Ghana, and Africa as a whole, is the lack of ownership over critical digital infrastructure. Much of the internet infrastructure is not controlled by African countries, which limits data flow control and raises security concerns. To fully leverage digital diplomacy, Ghana would need to invest in and develop its own technological infrastructure.
4. **Complementary Role of Traditional Diplomacy:** While digital diplomacy has become integral to the Ministry's functions, traditional diplomacy still holds importance. Digital platforms supplement face-to-face interactions, particularly in administrative and lower-level diplomatic functions. However, for more complex negotiations and relationship-building, in-person meetings are still indispensable.
5. **Strengthening International Relations:** Digital diplomacy has helped Ghana enhance its global visibility, improve communication during crises, and strengthen relationships with international partners. The use of social media and digital platforms has allowed the Ministry to highlight Ghana's diplomatic initiatives and engage with global powers like the UK, the US, and China more effectively.
6. **Regional Leadership in Digital Diplomacy:** Ghana has set a precedent in West Africa by being an early adopter of digital diplomacy. This has positioned the country as a

leader in regional diplomacy, particularly within the African Union, and has allowed Ghana to project a proactive image in African and global forums.

Overall, the Ministry's adaptability to digital public diplomacy has been marked by its ability to balance digital tools with traditional diplomatic methods, address challenges related to digital infrastructure and effectively communicate Ghana's foreign policy goals on a global stage. The Ministry's progress in adapting to digital diplomacy underscores its potential to continue influencing regional and international relations in the digital age.

4.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights the transformative impact of digital public diplomacy on Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its approach to international relations. Digital diplomacy has redefined traditional practices by offering speed, accessibility, cost effectiveness, and direct public engagement. While these innovations have enhanced Ghana's global reach and efficiency, they also come with challenges, including misinformation, cybersecurity risks, and infrastructure limitations.

The Ministry's significant efforts to adapt its institutional structures through modern digital tools, new roles, comprehensive training, and tailored solutions reflect its commitment to embracing the demands of the digital age. These efforts have not only enhanced communication and stakeholder engagement but have also positioned Ghana as a proactive player in global diplomacy. Balancing digital tools with traditional methods, the Ministry has demonstrated its ability to manage risks and leverage the benefits of digital platforms effectively.

Ultimately, the Ministry's adaptability and strategic use of digital diplomacy underscore its capacity to project Ghana's image on the global stage, strengthen international partnerships, and influence regional and global relations in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. Its progress

serves as a model for integrating modern technology into diplomacy while safeguarding the core principles of traditional diplomatic engagement.

4.3 Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of this research, the following recommendations are proposed.

4.3.1 Enhancing Digital Infrastructure

Ghana's digital diplomacy is impeded by external ownership of digital infrastructure, compromising data security. To address this, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must collaborate with key stakeholders to invest in secure, indigenous digital infrastructure. This includes establishing locally owned data centers, internet exchange points (IXP), and telecommunications networks through fostering public-private partnerships and regional cooperation to mobilize resources for infrastructure development.

4.3.2 Promoting Integrated Diplomacy

The promotion of Ghana on the global stage necessitates a shift in the perception of diplomacy as a collective responsibility rather than the sole domain of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To enhance Ghana's international presence, it is essential to integrate diplomacy across all government sectors and society at large. This approach must empower officials from various ministries to represent the nation effectively during international engagements, equipped with the necessary understanding of Ghana's values and interests. Furthermore, it is imperative that citizens, when traveling or interacting online, embrace their role as ambassadors for Ghanaian culture and values. By fostering a diplomatic mindset throughout all sectors and amongst the populace, Ghana will improve its global standing, solidify its international relationships, and cultivate a unified national identity, thereby positioning itself as a significant global player reflective of its rich heritage and aspirations.

4.3.3 Public Diplomacy Engagement

To enhance public engagement and awareness of diplomacy, Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs must communicate its broader role beyond services like passport issuance. Affiliated to this endeavor is the need for Ghanaians, particularly those abroad, to recognize the significance of their embassies, especially in times of crisis. A comprehensive strategy is required, which includes educational initiatives through media, seminars, and digital platforms to elucidate how diplomatic efforts bolster Ghana's economic and security interests. Introducing foreign relations topics into educational curricula without the need to be a specialized course will cultivate an understanding of international diplomacy in future generations. Additionally, strengthening the connection between Ghanaians overseas and their embassies is crucial; many citizens remain unaware of available services. Encouraging regular contact and notifying embassies of their presence abroad can enhance emergency support. By fostering a more informed citizenry and facilitating engagement with diplomatic entities, Ghana can improve its diplomatic standing and promote national pride, ensuring competitiveness and security on the global stage.

4.3.4 Restructure Expenditure

Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is advised to prioritize digital diplomacy to address its resource constraints effectively. By reallocating funds from expensive international travel to digital initiatives, the Ministry will enhance its international engagement while focusing on pressing domestic and diplomatic concerns. Although in-person meetings are vital for building relationships and achieving significant diplomatic outcomes, many interactions can be efficiently conducted via digital platforms such as video conferences. A strategic approach that determines the necessity of face-to-face meetings versus the use of digital tools will enable the Ministry to sustain its diplomatic efforts while ensuring optimal cost-efficiency.

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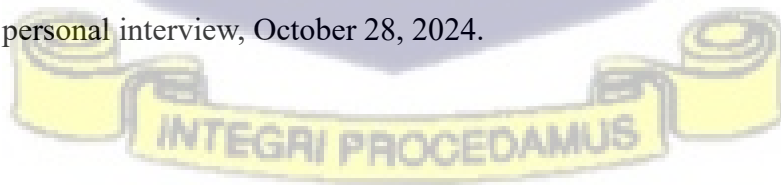
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Respondent 9, personal interview, October 1, 2024.

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APPENDIX



LEGON CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DIPLOMACY

INTERVIEW GUIDE

TOPIC: LEVERAGING DIGITAL DIPLOMACY IN GHANA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

NAME: Henrietta Djabatey

Email Address: henriettamensah002@gmail.com

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background and Introduction

1. Could you share your experience in Ghana's foreign policy and diplomacy efforts, including how long you've been in this field and when you first encountered digital diplomacy as a concept?

Digital vs. Traditional Diplomacy

2. What key differences exist between digital and traditional diplomacy, and how has this shift transformed Ghana's foreign relations, particularly in terms of:
 - Human resource requirements and management
 - Capacity building needs
 - Diplomatic operations and procedures
3. Can you provide specific examples of how digital tools have been used in Ghana's diplomatic efforts and their practical impact?

Institutional Adaptation

4. How has Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs adapted to digital diplomacy in terms of:
 - Available digital tools and infrastructure
 - Development of ministry-specific digital solutions
 - Organizational structure and new departments created
 - Staff training programs and skill development initiatives
 - Strategies implemented to overcome resistance to change

Benefits, Challenges, and Risks

5. What are the main benefits and challenges of digital public diplomacy for Ghana in terms of:

- Diplomatic reach and effectiveness
 - Resource utilization
 - International engagement opportunities
6. How does the ministry address key concerns such as:
- Cybersecurity risks and digital threats
 - Balance between transparency and diplomatic discretion
 - Misinformation and disinformation on digital platforms
 - Data protection and privacy issues

Implementation and Evolution

7. Could you describe:
- Specific digital diplomacy initiatives Ghana has implemented
 - How their effectiveness is measured
 - Key performance indicators used to assess impact
8. How has Ghana's digital diplomacy approach evolved compared to other African nations, and what impact has this evolution had on:
- Regional African affairs
 - Relationships with major global powers
 - Regional leadership and influence
9. What have been the notable successes and challenges in Ghana's digital diplomacy efforts, and to what extent does digital diplomacy complement or replace traditional diplomatic functions?

Future Directions and Recommendations

10. Regarding future development: - What areas of Ghana's digital public diplomacy need improvement? - Which emerging technologies will be important for future diplomatic efforts? - How is the ministry preparing for these technological changes?
11. What specific recommendations do you have for:
- Enhancing Ghana's digital diplomacy strategy
 - Improving digital diplomatic capabilities
 - Strengthening Ghana's position in digital diplomatic space
 - Future role evolution in Ghana's overall foreign policy

Closing

12. Are there any other significant aspects of Ghana's digital diplomacy efforts that we haven't discussed or any additional insights you'd like to share?