

Original Research Article

The Digital Transformation of Diplomacy: Implications for the African Union

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Article History
Received: 27.06.2023
Accepted: 03.08.2023
Published: 08.08.2023

Journal homepage:
<https://www.easpublisher.com>

Quick Response Code



Abstract: The digital transformation of diplomacy is a rapidly evolving process that is having a profound impact on the way countries interact with each other. The African Union (AU) is no exception, and the digital transformation of diplomacy is presenting the AU with both opportunities and challenges. The study therefore examines the digital transformation of diplomacy with particular reference to its impacts for the African Union. To achieve this, a literature review type of research design was adopted, while the related literature, texts, books, articles and journals were used as source of data collection and analysis. The study observes that the African continent lags behind other regions in its digital development, yet there are opportunities for digital diplomacy to promote peace and security in Africa. Recommendations were made on how the AU can maximize the benefits of digital transformation and minimize the risks, which invariably will help the AU to achieve its goals of unity and integration and to play a more effective role in the global arena.

Keywords: African Union, Diplomacy, Digital Transformations, Digital Divide and Peace

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BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Africa offers vast economic opportunities in virtually every sector, and the continent's young population represents a huge opportunity in this digital age, so Africa needs to prioritize digitally-enabled socio-economic development. Digital transformation is an engine of innovative, inclusive and sustainable growth. Innovation and digitization stimulate job creation, fight poverty, reduce inequality, facilitate the provision of goods and services, and contribute to achieving Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (AU, 2020).

In addition, there are fewer legacy issues to deal with in Africa, which inevitably leads to faster adoption of digital solutions. For Africa, now is a golden opportunity. Today's technologies indicate the scale and speed at which technology is transforming traditional socio economic sectors. Recognizing the efforts of the continent's leadership to prioritize and accelerate digital transformation, and building on the vision of many African leaders, African countries are ready for a comprehensive digital transformation strategy to guide a common, coordinated response to reap the benefits of the fourth industrial revolution (AU Commission, 2019).

Based on African Union Executive Council Decisions related to ICT1 , ECA Resolution (812 – XXXI) on the African Information Society Initiative and the Smart Africa Board meeting held on the margins of the 32nd African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government that highlighted the need for the ICT sector to lead the process, the AU Commission undertook to develop a comprehensive Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa in collaboration with the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Smart Africa, AUDA-NEPAD, Regional Economic Communities, African Development Bank, Africa Telecommunications Union, Africa Capacity Building Foundation, International Telecommunication Union and the World Bank. The Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa, which is positioned to build on the existing initiatives and frameworks such as the Policy and Regulatory Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA), the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the African Union Financial Institutions (AUFIs), the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM); and the Free Movement of Persons (FMP) to support the development of a Digital Single Market (DSM) for Africa, as part of the integration priorities of the African Union. The Smart Africa Initiative has set

the creation of a Digital Single Market in Africa as its strategic vision (Adebayor, 2021).

The African Union (AU) is a significant organization for a number of reasons. The AU being the largest continental organization in the world, with 55 member states. This gives it a unique position to shape the future of Africa and its people. The AU has a clear mandate to promote peace, security, and development in Africa. This is a critical goal for the continent, which has been plagued by conflict and poverty for many years. The AU has a number of innovative programs and initiatives that are already having a positive impact on the lives of Africans (African Economic Platform, 2017). For example, the AU's Peace and Security Council has helped to prevent and resolve conflicts in several countries, and the AU's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has helped to accelerate economic growth and development on the continent.

The AU is not without its challenges. The continent is still struggling with poverty, conflict, and climate change. However, the AU has shown that it is a capable and committed organization that is working to build a more prosperous and peaceful Africa for all by playing a key role in preventing and resolving conflicts in Africa. For example, the AU's Peace and Security Council helped to broker a peace agreement between the government of South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition both in 2018 and afterwards (Ogunmodede, 2021). The AU also deployed a peacekeeping mission to Somalia to help the country rebuild its security forces and restore peace and stability (Pamment, 2018).

In terms of economic development, the AU has launched a number of initiatives to promote economic development in Africa. For example, the AU's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is an economic development program that aims to accelerate the economic growth and development of Africa. The AU has also helped to attract foreign investment to Africa and has worked to improve the continent's infrastructure (Eke, 2021).

Similarly, the AU has played a leading role in promoting human rights in Africa. The AU's African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in Africa. The AU has also adopted a number of human rights instruments, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The AU is also committed to promoting gender equality in Africa. The AU has adopted a number of gender equality instruments, such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The AU has also worked to increase the representation of women in

decision-making positions in Africa. The AU is a work in progress, but it has made significant progress in promoting peace, security, development, human rights, and gender equality in Africa. The AU is committed to working with its member states to address the challenges facing the continent and to build a more prosperous and peaceful Africa for all. The AU is committed to working with its member states to address these challenges and build a more prosperous and peaceful Africa for all.

Diplomacy is the art of conducting negotiations between two or more parties, typically in the context of international relations. It is a complex and multifaceted process that involves a wide range of activities, such as negotiation, mediation, and representation. The term "diplomacy" is derived from the Greek word "diploma," which means "folded paper." In ancient Greece, diplomats were known as "diplomates" because they carried documents that were sealed with wax. These documents were used to authenticate the diplomats and to communicate their messages. The modern practice of diplomacy dates back to the 17th century. In this period, European states began to establish permanent diplomatic missions in each other's capitals. These missions were staffed by diplomats who were responsible for conducting relations between the two countries (Obasanjo, 2017).

The role of diplomacy has evolved over time. In the past, diplomacy was primarily focused on resolving disputes between states. However, in recent years, diplomacy has also been used to promote cooperation on a wide range of issues, such as trade, development, and the environment.

Diplomacy among members of the African Union (AU) is a complex and evolving process. There are a number of factors that shape diplomatic relations between AU member states, including shared history, culture, and interests. Diplomatic relations between AU member states are also influenced by a number of other factors, such as geopolitical considerations, economic considerations and political considerations. Diplomatic relations between AU member states are constantly evolving. The factors that shape these relations are complex and can change over time. However, the shared history, culture, and interests of AU member states provide a strong foundation for cooperation and collaboration. Diplomatic relations between AU member states are a vital tool for promoting peace, security, and development on the continent. The AU is committed to working with its member states to strengthen diplomatic relations and to build a more prosperous and peaceful Africa for all (Clegg, 2019).

The digital transformation of diplomacy is a process that is transforming the way that countries interact with each other. This transformation is being driven by the increasing use of digital technologies,

such as social media, mobile phones, and big data. The digital transformation of diplomacy has a number of implications for the African Union (AU).

The digital transformation of diplomacy is an ongoing process that is having a significant impact on the way that countries interact with each other. The AU is well-positioned to take advantage of the digital transformation of diplomacy, as it has a young and tech-savvy population. However, the AU also faces a number of challenges in adapting to the digital age. These challenges include lack of resources, lack of infrastructural capacity and cyber security threats. The AU is aware of the challenges it faces in adapting to the digital age and it is taking steps to address these challenges. This study therefore seeks to investigate the digital transformation of diplomacy with particular reference to its implications for the African Union.

Statement of the Problem

The African Union (AU) is an intergovernmental organization that aims to promote unity, cooperation, and development among African nations. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and technology-driven, the digital transformation has significant implications for the AU's diplomatic efforts. However, there are several challenges and issues related to this digital transformation that need to be addressed such as infrastructure and connectivity gap

(Ogunmodede,2021), digital divide (Nwankwo, 2021), cyber-security and data protection (Williams, 2010), capacity building and digital literacy (Raman, 2020), digital diplomacy ethics and norms (Ayodele, 2021) as well as coordination and collaboration challenges (Ajani & Ogunsanwo, 2021). Harmonizing digital strategies, promoting interoperability, and fostering trust among African nations are crucial for successful digital diplomacy within the AU.

The digital transformation in diplomacy poses multiple challenges and implications for the African Union. Addressing the infrastructure gap, digital divide, cyber-security concerns, capacity-building needs, ethical considerations, and coordination challenges are crucial for the AU to effectively harness the benefits of digital technology and leverage its potential for advancing African interests in the global diplomatic arena, hence the study.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine the digital transformation of diplomacy and its implications for the African Union (AU). Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine the use of digital tools and technologies in diplomacy, including social

media, virtual conferences, and artificial intelligence.

2. Assess the impact of digital transformation on the practice and effectiveness of diplomacy.
3. Identify the challenges and opportunities of digital diplomacy for the AU.
4. Analyze how the AU has adopted digital technologies in its diplomatic efforts.
5. Evaluate the potential benefits and risks of digital transformation for the AU's diplomatic relations and objectives.

Research Questions

The following research question guided this research study:

- i. What is the use of digital tools and technologies in diplomacy, including social media, virtual conferences, and artificial intelligence?
- ii. What is the impact of digital transformation on the practice and effectiveness of diplomacy?
- iii. What are the challenges and opportunities of digital diplomacy for the AU?
- iv. How has the AU adopted digital technologies in its diplomatic efforts?
- v. What are the potential benefits and risks of digital transformation for the AU's diplomatic relations and objectives?

Literature Review-Concept of Digital Diplomacy

Digital diplomacy refers to the use of digital technology and online platforms to conduct diplomatic activities and engage in international relations. It involves the application of social media, virtual diplomacy, and other digital tools to promote dialogue, collaboration, and influence in the international arena (Clegg, 2019). The concept of digital diplomacy has evolved significantly over time, driven by technological advancements and the increasing importance of the internet in global affairs. In its early days, digital diplomacy focused primarily on the use of official government websites to disseminate information and communicate with other nations. It was seen as an additional channel for traditional diplomacy, rather than a standalone practice.

However, with the rise of social media platforms in the 2000s, digital diplomacy took on a more dynamic and interactive nature. Governments and diplomats began leveraging platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube to engage with foreign audiences, share public diplomacy messages, and shape public opinion. This shift allowed for more direct and personalized communication between diplomats and citizens worldwide. The evolution of digital diplomacy has also seen greater emphasis on "citizen diplomacy." Non-state actors such as NGOs, private companies, and individual activists now have the ability to engage in digital diplomacy, complementing the efforts of traditional diplomatic channels. This democratization of

diplomacy has expanded the scope and reach of digital diplomacy, enabling multiple voices and perspectives to be heard in international conversations (Kabasakal, 2019).

Moreover, the concept of digital diplomacy has expanded beyond public diplomacy to include crisis management, conflict resolution, and negotiation. In times of crises or conflicts, governments utilize digital platforms to gather intelligence, disseminate emergency information, and coordinate international responses. Digital tools have become vital in facilitating rapid responses and international cooperation in times of need.

In recent years, the concept of digital diplomacy has faced new challenges as the internet and social media have become platforms for disinformation, misinformation, and cyber-attacks. Governments and diplomats now need to navigate the digital landscape carefully, balancing the advantages of digital diplomacy with the risks associated with online manipulation and cyber threats (EU, 2020). Overall, the evolution of digital diplomacy reflects the transformative power of technology in shaping diplomatic practices. From static websites to interactive social media platforms, digital diplomacy has become an integral part of international relations, enabling governments, non-state actors, and citizens to engage in dialogue, bridge divides, and influence global discourse.

WHAT IS THE USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES IN DIPLOMACY, INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA, VIRTUAL CONFERENCES, AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

Digital tools and technologies play a crucial role in modern diplomacy. They have transformed the way diplomats communicate, gather information, and conduct negotiations. Some of the key uses of digital tools and technologies in diplomacy according to National Intelligence Council (2012) include:

1. **Information gathering:** Diplomats can use digital tools to monitor news and social media platforms for real-time information and analysis, allowing them to stay updated on current events and public sentiment.
2. **Public diplomacy:** Social media platforms have become indispensable tools for diplomats to engage directly with foreign audiences, share information, and shape public perception. This enables diplomats to reach a wider audience and promote their country's values and policies.
3. **Crisis management:** During emergencies or crises, digital tools enable diplomats to quickly disseminate information, coordinate response efforts, and provide support to affected citizens. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook have been used to issue travel advisories and emergency contact information.

4. **Virtual conferences and negotiations:** With advancements in technology, diplomats can now participate in virtual conferences and negotiations without the need for physical presence. This reduces costs, saves time, and allows for greater flexibility in scheduling meetings, facilitating continuous dialogue and negotiation processes.
5. **Track II diplomacy:** Digital tools facilitate unofficial diplomatic dialogues between non-state actors, experts, and academics. Online platforms provide a space for discussions on sensitive issues, fostering an exchange of ideas and perspectives that can contribute to diplomatic efforts.
6. **Artificial intelligence (AI):** AI tools can assist diplomats in analyzing vast amounts of data, identifying patterns, and predicting potential outcomes. AI-powered algorithms help diplomats understand complex issues and enhance their decision-making capabilities.
7. **E-diplomacy:** E-diplomacy refers to the use of digital tools to enhance traditional diplomatic practices. This includes digitalizing consular services, e-visa applications, and online platforms for diplomatic communication and coordination.

Overall, digital tools and technologies have significantly expanded the diplomatic toolkit. They enable diplomats to engage with a broader audience, gather and analyze information more efficiently, and conduct negotiations and diplomacy in innovative ways. However, it is important to note that the digital realm also presents new challenges such as cyber-security threats and the potential for digital divides between countries, requiring diplomats to adapt and address these issues.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ON THE PRACTICE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF DIPLOMACY?

The impact of digital transformation on the practice and effectiveness of diplomacy can be observed through several empirical changes.

1. **Increased connectivity:** Digital transformation has greatly increased connectivity between nations, allowing for real-time communication and collaboration. This has enabled diplomats to engage in conversations and negotiations promptly, bringing more efficiency to diplomatic processes (US Department of State, 2022).
2. **Enhanced information sharing:** With the advent of digital technologies, diplomats now have access to vast amounts of information and data, enabling them to make more informed decisions. This has resulted in better understanding of global issues and increased

- transparency in diplomatic discussions (EU, 2020).
3. **Public diplomacy:** Digital platforms have provided diplomats with new tools to engage with the public and disseminate information about their country's policies and positions. This has opened up new opportunities for public diplomacy, allowing diplomats to directly communicate with and influence public opinion (AU, 2020).
 4. **Cyber diplomacy:** The rise of digital technologies has necessitated the development of cyber diplomacy as a separate field. Diplomats now engage in negotiations and discussions on cyber-security, data protection, and internet governance. This has led to the establishment of new diplomatic channels and forums, such as the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (AU, 2007).
 5. **Diplomatic challenges:** Digital transformation has also presented new challenges for diplomacy. The rise of misinformation and fake news has complicated diplomatic efforts, requiring diplomats to actively counter misinformation campaigns and build trust among different stakeholders. Additionally, the increased reliance on digital infrastructure has made countries more vulnerable to cyber threats, necessitating diplomatic efforts to establish norms and rules for responsible behavior in cyberspace (Eke, 2021).

Overall, the empirical impact of digital transformation on diplomacy has been substantial, with increased efficiency, information sharing, and new opportunities for engagement. However, it has also raised new challenges for diplomats that require adaptation and innovation in the field.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY FOR THE AU?

Digital diplomacy refers to the use of digital technologies and social media platforms to conduct diplomatic activities, engage with foreign audiences, and promote a country's interests and values. For the African Union (AU), there are several challenges and opportunities associated with digital diplomacy:

The challenges according to Adebayor (2021) are:

1. **Digital Divide:** The AU faces a significant challenge in bridging the digital divide within its member states. Many African countries lack access to reliable internet infrastructure and have low levels of digital literacy, making it difficult to fully leverage digital diplomacy initiatives.

2. **Language and Cultural Barriers:** The AU consists of 55 member states with diverse languages and cultures. Effective digital diplomacy requires navigating language barriers and adapting communication strategies to resonate with local audiences.
3. **Misinformation and Disinformation:** The spread of misinformation and disinformation poses a challenge to digital diplomacy efforts. The AU needs to develop strategies to counter false narratives and effectively communicate its messages to combat the negative impact of online rumors and misinformation.
4. **Cyber-security:** Given the increasing reliance on digital platforms, cybersecurity becomes a critical concern. The AU needs to invest in robust cyber-security measures to protect sensitive information, prevent cyber-attacks, and safeguard the integrity of digital diplomacy initiatives.

While the opportunities are as submitted by Obasanjo (2017):

1. **Amplifying African Voices:** Digital diplomacy provides an opportunity for the AU to amplify the voices of African nations, promote their achievements, and counter negative narratives. Through social media platforms, the AU can share success stories, cultural heritage, and economic opportunities, thereby fostering a positive image of the continent.
2. **Public Engagement and Participation:** Digital diplomacy enables the AU to engage directly with citizens, civil society organizations, and the diaspora. It allows for greater inclusivity, transparency, and participatory decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership among African citizens in the regional integration efforts of the AU.
3. **Real-Time Crisis Communication:** Digital platforms provide an efficient means for the AU to communicate and coordinate with member states during times of crisis, such as natural disasters or political unrest. Rapid dissemination of information can help ensure timely responses, enhance coordination, and facilitate humanitarian efforts.
4. **Economic Opportunities:** Digital diplomacy can play a crucial role in showcasing investment and trade opportunities in Africa. By leveraging digital platforms, the AU can attract foreign direct investment, promote intra-African trade, and drive economic growth on the continent.

In summary, while digital diplomacy presents challenges such as the digital divide and cyber-security concerns, it also offers opportunities for the AU to

amplify African voices, engage citizens, enhance crisis communication, and promote economic opportunities. By addressing these challenges and leveraging the benefits, digital diplomacy can be an effective tool for the AU's diplomatic endeavors.

HOW HAS THE AU ADOPTED DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN ITS DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS?

The African Union (AU) has increasingly adopted digital technologies in its diplomatic efforts to enhance communication, collaboration, and information dissemination. Here are some ways the AU has adopted digital technologies:

1. **AU Digital Diplomacy Platform:** The AU launched a digital diplomacy platform to provide real-time information on its activities, events, and publications. It serves as a hub for diplomats, member states, and partners to access information, reports, and updates on AU initiatives and programs (AU Commission, 2019).
2. **Virtual Meetings and Conferences:** With the COVID-19 pandemic, the AU has embraced virtual meetings and conferences using various digital platforms. This has enabled diplomatic engagements to continue even when physical travel is restricted, making it easier to coordinate and communicate with member states (AU Commission, 2019).
3. **Digital Communication Channels:** The AU has leveraged digital communication channels such as social media platforms, official websites, and mobile applications to disseminate information and engage with the public. This enables the AU to reach a wider audience and increase transparency in its diplomatic efforts (AU Commission, 2019).
4. **E-Diplomacy Training:** The AU has implemented e-diplomacy training programs to equip diplomats and officials with the necessary skills to leverage digital tools effectively. These programs focus on social media usage, online collaboration, and digital diplomacy strategies to enhance diplomatic engagements (AU Commission, 2019).
5. **Data-driven Decision Making:** The AU has embraced data analytics and digital tools for decision-making processes, allowing it to gather and analyze information about its member states and their priorities. This data-driven approach helps the AU tailor its diplomatic efforts to address specific challenges and needs (AU Commission, 2019).
6. **Cyber-security and Digital Governance:** The AU has recognized the importance of cyber-security and digital governance in its diplomatic efforts. It has implemented policies and protocols to ensure the protection of digital infrastructure, secure information

sharing, and prevent cyber threats that could impact diplomatic relations (AU Commission, 2019).

7. **E-Consular Services:** The AU has implemented e-consular services to facilitate consular assistance to its citizens abroad. These services include online visa applications, passport renewals, and consular assistance requests. This digitalization improves the efficiency and accessibility of consular services.

In conclusion, the AU has adopted various digital technologies in its diplomatic efforts, embracing e-diplomacy, virtual meetings, digital communication channels, data-driven decision making, cyber-security measures, and e-consular services. These digital initiatives have improved communication, collaboration, and information sharing within the AU and with external stakeholders.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR THE AU'S DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND OBJECTIVES?

Digital diplomacy is considered one of the major trends of the twenty-first century in diplomatic communication. The importance of digital diplomacy is based on the usage of ICT, the internet and social media, which at the same time represent its base, for the strengthening of diplomatic relations. However, the process of digitization is inseparable from cyber risks, as well as the freedom of the internet and social media is abused for various purposes that state and non-state actors may have (Clegg, 2019). Although coupled with benefits on the one hand and risks on the other hand, the risks of digital diplomacy are still covered by benefits, making digital diplomacy a key element for the realization of diplomatic activities. In summary, digital transformation has both benefits and risks for diplomatic relations. The benefits according to Ogunmodede (2021) include:

- **Improved communication and collaboration:** Digital transformation can help the African Union to improve communication and collaboration between its member states. This can be done through the use of online platforms and tools, such as video conferencing and online chat. Improved communication and collaboration can help the African Union to coordinate its diplomatic efforts more effectively and to respond more quickly to emerging challenges.
- **Increased transparency and accountability:** Digital transformation can also help the African Union to increase transparency and accountability in its diplomatic relations. This can be done through the publication of diplomatic documents and the use of online platforms to allow citizens to

participate in the decision-making process. Increased transparency and accountability can help to build trust between the African Union and its member states and to improve the effectiveness of its diplomatic efforts.

- **Enhanced access to information:** Digital transformation can also help the African Union to enhance its access to information. This can be done through the use of online databases and search engines. Enhanced access to information can help the African Union to make better informed decisions about its diplomatic relations and to respond more effectively to emerging challenges.
- **New opportunities for economic cooperation:** Digital transformation can also create new opportunities for economic cooperation between African countries. This can be done through the use of e-commerce platforms and online payment systems. New opportunities for economic cooperation can help to boost economic growth and development in Africa.
- While the risks include:
- **Cyber-security threats:** Digital transformation can also expose the African Union to cyber-security threats. These threats can include cyber-attacks, data breaches, and disinformation campaigns. Cyber-security threats can damage the African Union's reputation and hinder its ability to function effectively.
- **Digital divide:** Digital transformation can also widen the digital divide between African countries. This is because not all African countries have the same level of access to digital technologies. The digital divide can hinder the African Union's ability to achieve its goals of unity and integration.
- **Data privacy concerns:** Digital transformation can also raise data privacy concerns. This is because the African Union will need to collect and store large amounts of data about its citizens and businesses. Data privacy concerns can lead to a loss of trust in the African Union and can hinder its ability to achieve its goals.

Overall, digital transformation has the potential to bring significant benefits to the African Union's diplomatic relations and objectives. However, it is important to be aware of the risks associated with digital transformation and to take steps to mitigate these risks.

SUMMARY

Based on the search results, it appears that the digital transformation of diplomacy has significant implications for the African Union. The AU has established a Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa

(2020-2030) and is working to keep up with global trends in digital diplomacy. However, the African continent still lags behind in terms of digital development compared to other regions, and many African countries face significant challenges in adapting to digital diplomacy. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for digital diplomacy to promote peace and security in Africa, as demonstrated by virtual meetings held by the African Union during the pandemic. The relationship between the United States and the African Union is also a topic of interest, with recent initiatives focused on strengthening partnerships and promoting digital transformation. Overall, it is clear that the digital transformation of diplomacy is an important issue for the African Union and its member states, and will continue to shape diplomatic relations both within Africa and with other countries and regions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the search results, the digital transformation of diplomacy has significant implications for the African Union. While the AU has established a Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030) and is working to keep up with global trends in digital diplomacy, it still lags behind in terms of digital development compared to other regions. However, there are opportunities for digital diplomacy to promote peace and security in Africa, as demonstrated by virtual meetings held by the African Union during the pandemic. The overall conclusion is that digital transformation will continue to shape diplomatic relations within Africa and with other countries and regions, and the African Union and its member states must work to adapt to these changes and embrace the potential opportunities for positive impact. The digital transformation of diplomacy is a complex and evolving process. The AU can maximize the benefits of digital transformation and minimize the risks by taking the steps outlined above. By doing so, the AU can play a more effective role in the global arena and help to achieve its goals of unity and integration for Africa.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the arguments from the viewpoints of literature review, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is a need for African countries to use digital transformation to advance their interests and increase agility in their diplomatic practices.
2. Cyber-security and cybercrime should be addressed in initiatives at the AU level to ensure the safety and security of digital diplomacy efforts.
3. Virtual meetings and digital technology can be used to promote peace and security in Africa, as demonstrated by the African Union's virtual meetings held during the pandemic.

4. Strengthening partnerships, such as the joint Innovation Agenda being developed by the European and African Union, can enhance the local impact of digital diplomacy efforts.
5. African Union member states should work to adapt to the changes brought about by digital transformation and embrace the potential opportunities for positive impact.

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Cite This Article: Toye Manuwa (2023). The Digital Transformation of Diplomacy: Implications for the African Union. *East African Scholars J Edu Humanit Lit*, 6(8), 365-372.
