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Digital Climate Diplomacy on X: Perceived Outcomes, Opportunities and Challenges in Kenya and the United States

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Abstract
This study examined how platform visibility and engagement by themselves, demonstrate no diplomatic influence. It examined the perceived outcomes, opportunities and structural challenges associated with Kenya's and the United States' use of X for climate diplomacy during the Africa Climate Summit (ACS) and COP28. The study employed a qualitative, interpretivist comparative case study research design that drew on 16 semi-structured interviews with diplomatic and senior government actors (eight from each country) and a documentary corpus of 284 posts from four official government X accounts, supplemented by summit documents. Analysis was informed by Strategic Narrative Theory, Framing Theory, the Dialogic Communication Model and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Participants associated Kenya's communication with equity, historical responsibility, African leadership and climate justice, while United States communication was described as more continuous and solution-oriented. Across both cases, interviewees identified diplomatic presence, narrative projection and access to policy conversations as potential benefits. Still, they stressed that these were conditioned by staffing, approval procedures, coordination, media systems and geopolitical position. Participants also cautioned that visible engagement cannot establish changes in public perception, media uptake or negotiation outcomes without independent evidence. The study recommends an outcome-oriented, platform-specific framework for analysing how communication mechanisms interact with institutional and geopolitical conditions. It also recommends closer coordination between negotiators and communicators, stronger capacity for responsive and multilingual communication, and evaluation beyond vanity metrics. The study's significance lies in an outcomes-oriented, platform-specific framework for evaluating diplomatic communication without conflating visibility with influence.

Key words: Digital climate diplomacy, diplomatic outcomes, framing, strategic narratives, Xplomacy.

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INTRODUCTION

This study examined how platform visibility and engagement by themselves, demonstrate no diplomatic influence. Despite governments' growing use of digital platforms, it remains difficult to determine what platform-based communication achieves diplomatically. Public diplomacy increasingly takes place in environments where governments communicate with international organisations, journalists, civil society and publics while also participating in conversations shaped by other states and non-state actors (Cull, 2019; Manor, 2019). Yet the ability to publish directly does not mean a message changes perceptions, influences policy, or builds relationships. This distinction matters especially in climate negotiations, where public communication operates alongside complex diplomatic bargaining.

X, formerly Twitter, is particularly significant in this transformation because of its capacity for real-time communication, rapid redistribution, hashtag-based issue formation, multimedia communication and interaction among political, diplomatic, media and public actors. Its significance for climate diplomacy is especially pronounced because climate negotiations involve competing interpretations of responsibility, vulnerability, justice, financing, adaptation, mitigation and global leadership. Governments therefore use digital platforms not only to communicate positions but also to frame problems, project identities, influence international narratives and engage audiences during moments of heightened diplomatic attention.

Yet the growing use of X raises an important analytical problem. Visibility and engagement do not necessarily constitute diplomatic influence or substantive outcomes. A post may receive extensive attention without changing perceptions, influencing policy discussions or contributing to diplomatic objectives. Conversely, a post with relatively limited visible engagement may be amplified by journalists, incorporated into policy debates, noticed by diplomatic actors or contribute to longer-term relationship building. Assessing digital climate diplomacy therefore requires moving beyond activity and engagement metrics towards a broader examination of perceived diplomatic outcomes.

This study addresses this gap by comparing Kenya and the United States during the Africa Climate Summit (ACS), held in Nairobi in September 2023, and the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28), held in Dubai in November–December 2023. Existing scholarship has examined digital diplomacy, platformisation, and mediated public diplomacy. Still, comparative, event-specific evidence remains needed on how diplomatic practitioners interpret outcomes, opportunities, and constraints across states with markedly different resources and geopolitical positions. Kenya provides a Global South and African perspective in which climate diplomacy is closely connected to equity, development, historical responsibility and African agency. The United States has greater diplomatic and communication resources and a highly influential position in global climate governance. The comparison is not intended to treat either country as internally uniform or to assume that national position alone determines communication practice.

The study asks what outcomes, opportunities and challenges diplomatic practitioners associate with X-based climate diplomacy in Kenya and the United States during ACS and COP28, and how institutional and geopolitical conditions shape these interpretations. It distinguishes reported or perceived outcomes from demonstrated effects and does not assume that platform activity causes policy change or alters international perceptions.

Three arguments guide the analysis. First, X can function as a condition of diplomatic presence when relevant diplomatic, media and policy actors already use the platform. Second, it offers opportunities for narrative projection, audience access, and possible media circulation, while creating challenges related to speed, coordination, capacity, misinformation, and reputational risk. Third, similar platform affordances may be used differently because their significance is mediated by institutional resources, geopolitical position, media systems and the coordination of digital communication with diplomacy conducted offline.

The study critically reviews research on platform-based public diplomacy and the four theoretical perspectives, explains the comparative qualitative methodology, presents interview and documentary findings, discusses the findings in relation to theory and prior scholarship, and concludes with an outcomes-oriented XPlomacy framework and practical implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital and Platform-Based Public Diplomacy

Digitalisation has altered public diplomacy by expanding direct communication and creating new opportunities for interaction beyond conventional media intermediaries (Manor, 2016, 2019). Duncombe (2017) shows that digital diplomacy also involves identity, emotion and relationships, not merely information transmission. However, access to a platform does not remove the influence of institutional resources or existing international hierarchies.

Social media combines communication, visibility and network formation. Golan et al. (2019) examine how governments engage foreign stakeholders through paid, earned, shared and owned media, while Manor and Segev (2020) show that digital networks may create opportunities for diplomatic actors to increase their centrality. These studies establish the importance of networks but do not equate online centrality with policy influence.

Platforms are not neutral channels. Gillespie (2018), van Dijck et al. (2018) and Poell et al. (2022) show how platform infrastructures and attention systems shape visibility and circulation. For climate diplomacy, this means message exposure depends not only on government strategy but also on networks, media amplification, and platform conditions; these conditions can reproduce inequalities in international communication.

The present study applies this platform perspective to two climate summits, asking how practitioners interpret the relationship between platform activity and diplomatic outcomes rather than assuming that real-time publication produces influence.

Strategic Narratives and Diplomatic Outcomes

Strategic Narrative Theory explains how political actors construct stories about international order, national identity and preferred policy responses (Miskimmon et al., 2013; Roselle et al., 2014). In climate diplomacy, these narratives connect understandings of the climate system with a country's claimed role and the policies it presents as legitimate.

Kenyan narratives may foreground African agency, equity, historical responsibility and climate finance, positioning Kenya as an agenda-seeking actor rather than only a vulnerable state. United States narratives may emphasise leadership, collective action, implementation and capacity. The analytical question is not which narrative is inherently stronger, but how participants perceive these narratives to operate and what evidence would be needed to demonstrate uptake.

The study therefore treats narrative circulation, recognition and media uptake as possible outcomes to investigate, not as effects that can be inferred from posting frequency alone.

Framing and Climate Diplomacy

Framing Theory examines how communicators select and emphasise aspects of reality. Entman (1993) identifies four framing functions: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral evaluations and suggesting remedies. Climate diplomacy makes framing consequential because responsibility, vulnerability, justice, development and policy responses are contested.

Kenyan communication may foreground equity, historical responsibility, African vulnerability and solidarity, while United States communication may emphasise implementation, technology, partnerships and leadership. These are analytic expectations, not fixed national categories; the empirical analysis checks them against the posts and interview accounts.

Nisbet (2009) argues that frames make complex climate issues meaningful to particular audiences. On X, brevity and competition for attention can improve clarity but also compress negotiation positions and marginalise alternative interpretations. Framing is therefore analysed as a mechanism that links strategic narratives to the representation of climate problems, responsibility, and solutions.

Dialogic Communication and Digital Diplomacy

The Dialogic Communication Model offers a relational lens on digital public diplomacy. Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002) emphasise interaction, responsiveness, openness and relationship development rather than one-way dissemination. Applied to X, this perspective focuses on whether governments respond to questions, recognise other actors, participate in conversations, and sustain relationships. Yet the platform's technical interactivity does not guarantee dialogic practice: approval procedures, staffing and diplomatic sensitivities may limit responsiveness.

The study consequently distinguishes the potential for audience access from evidence of reciprocal engagement. Likes, reposts or comments alone cannot establish that dialogue, trust or relationship development occurred.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Digital Climate Diplomacy

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines discourse as a socially situated practice through which language constructs and reproduces identities and power relations (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). It asks not only what is said, but how responsibility, leadership, vulnerability, and solutions are represented; whose perspectives are legitimised; and which assumptions are normalised.

CDA is relevant to climate diplomacy because negotiations occur amid historical inequalities in emissions, finance, technology and geopolitical influence. Communication about climate responsibility is therefore not politically neutral.

CDA helps interpret Kenya–United States differences without assuming that platform access produces equal communicative power. It is used alongside—not instead of—the other theories: strategic narrative analysis identifies broader stories, framing analysis examines issue selection, dialogic analysis considers interaction, and CDA interrogates power and ideology.

Integrated Theoretical Perspective

The four perspectives complement one another: Strategic Narrative Theory examines broader diplomatic meaning, Framing Theory identifies selective representations, the Dialogic Communication Model focuses on interaction and relationship formation, and CDA critically examines power, inequality, and representation.

Analytically, the study moves from diplomatic context to strategic narratives, issue framing, dialogic communication, critical discourse interpretation and perceived outcomes.

Together, the theories support an analysis of what governments communicate, how climate issues are framed, whether interaction is reciprocal, how power relations are represented, and how practitioners interpret the possible diplomatic significance of these practices.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative, interpretivist comparative case study examined X-based climate diplomacy in Kenya and the United States during ACS and COP28. The documentary corpus comprised 284 climate-related posts retrieved from the official X accounts of the Presidency of Kenya, Kenya's Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, the White House and the United States Department of State. Posts were included when they addressed climate diplomacy, the summits, climate finance, adaptation, mitigation, leadership, or related policy positions, summit documents, and other relevant official communications that provided context. The study also drew on 16 semi-structured expert interviews conducted between May and August 2026: eight participants from Kenya and eight from the United States.

Criterion-based purposive sampling selected diplomatic actors and senior government or communication practitioners with direct experience of climate diplomacy or related communication during the study period. The interview guide covered platform use, narratives, framing, audience interaction, institutional constraints, media relationships and perceived outcomes. Analysis followed five stages: corpus organisation, familiarisation, deductive coding informed by Strategic Narrative Theory, Framing Theory, the Dialogic Communication Model and CDA, inductive coding for emergent themes, and cross-case comparison and triangulation. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) general approach. Consent was obtained, and interviewees are anonymised using K1–K8 and U1–U8. The balanced sample supports in-depth cross-case comparison rather than statistical generalisation. The corpus is limited to recoverable public material, and the design does not establish causal effects.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

X as a Condition of Diplomatic Presence

Participants described X as an increasingly important environment for diplomatic presence because journalists, policymakers, diplomatic actors and international organisations were already active on the platform. K2 summarised this institutional logic: "It had already become an established channel for diplomatic signalling. Absence would have been conspicuous" (K2). This supports the interpretation of X as a place where diplomatic actors seek to remain present, not evidence that presence automatically produces influence.

The significance of X therefore extended beyond the ability to publish messages. Its value derived partly from the ability to be present where diplomatic conversations were taking place. Participants indicated that absence from the platform could reduce governments' ability to observe and participate in rapidly developing conversations.

The perceived value therefore extended beyond publishing messages: it included the possibility of observing and entering rapidly developing conversations. Nevertheless, participants distinguished being present or visible from achieving broader diplomatic effects. Presence is best understood as an enabling condition for possible outcomes rather than a diplomatic outcome in itself.

Kenya: Visibility and Narrative Agency under Constraint

Kenyan participants described institutional capacity and approval procedures as important influences on communication. K4 explained that "Live updates less so, honestly, because of capacity and how long approval can take" (K4). At the same time, participants regarded selectivity and message discipline as possible strengths rather than simply evidence of weakness. K5 described message discipline as "a strength, not merely a constraint" (K5).

From a Strategic Narrative perspective, selective communication enabled Kenyan actors to reinforce particular narratives concerning equity, historical responsibility, African leadership and climate justice. From a framing perspective, these themes helped position Kenya within international climate debates by emphasising states' differentiated experiences and responsibilities.

Participants also viewed X as an access mechanism through which Kenya could participate in policy conversations involving more powerful international actors. Thus, platform communication provided opportunities for narrative agency even within an unequal international communication system.

Participants perceived X as helping Kenya articulate positions and participate in wider climate conversations, although the interviews do not independently demonstrate changed international perceptions. K1 reported: "We've seen better visibility, especially after the Summit, for Kenya as a leader on this issue in Africa" (K1). This reflects a practitioner's assessment of visibility and leadership positioning, not proof that foreign audiences changed their views. Potential outcomes remained dependent on diplomatic networks, media systems and wider geopolitical structures.

United States: Reach, Policy Communication and Coordination Challenges

Participants associated the United States with greater institutional communication capacity, continuity and international reach. U1 described COP-week communication in these terms: "During a COP week we're basically posting constantly. Statements, live threads while our negotiators are in the room, video, graphics" (U1). This account illustrates a perceived difference in communication volume and continuity; it should not be read as a complete quantitative comparison of the two countries' posting practices.

However, greater capacity also created coordination challenges. The volume and speed of communication associated with a large diplomatic apparatus could require coordination across institutions and officials. Participants emphasised that communication volume did not necessarily translate into stronger diplomatic outcomes.

The finding is significant from a dialogic perspective. While greater resources can increase capacity for interaction and responsiveness, communication capacity does not guarantee coherent or relational communication. Institutional coordination, consistency and credibility remain important.

The comparison also revealed a point of convergence: United States participants praised Kenya's focused communication. U2 described Kenya's ACS communication as "tightly aligned with the politics of the summit itself, very on message" (U2). This suggests that selectivity can support coherence, even when it is partly shaped by resource constraints. Institutional capacity affects communication opportunities but does not determine effectiveness in a simple linear manner.

Narrative and Framing Outcomes

The two countries displayed distinct narrative and framing emphases. Kenyan communication was associated with equity, historical responsibility, African leadership and climate justice. K1 contrasted the two

styles: "The Americans sound more confident, solution focused, you know, 'we are fixing this.' Ours is more careful, we talk more about fairness, about historical responsibility" (K1). The quote captures a participant's interpretation of the narrative contrast, rather than a claim that every post from either government used the same frame.

United States communication was more strongly associated by participants with action, solutions, implementation and leadership. U1 similarly observed: "We're more, I'd say, assertive, solution focused, 'here's what we're doing.' Kenya leans more into equity, African leadership, justice language" (U1). These patterns indicate differences in emphasis, not mutually exclusive national positions; each country's communication may contain multiple frames.

Strategic Narrative Theory explains how these themes contribute to broader representations of national identity and international role. Framing Theory explains how complex climate issues were condensed into particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral positions and policy responses. This produced the articulation and circulation of competing understandings of climate responsibility and leadership. Rather than treating these differences as merely stylistic variations, the findings indicate that platform communication reflected bigger differences in geopolitical position and diplomatic priorities.

Media Amplification and Narrative Influence

Participants challenged the assumption that visible platform engagement is a sufficient measure of diplomatic influence. Likes, reposts and comments were treated as indicators of attention, not direct evidence of policy impact or changed perceptions. U1 said that "the big one is whether foreign media or a foreign government references our content. That's when you know it landed" (U1). This statement records a practitioner's preferred indicator; the present study does not claim to have independently verified all instances of such uptake.

Interviewees identified media uptake as one possible pathway through which posts might acquire significance, particularly when journalists or diplomatic actors refer to content beyond X. U1 cautioned that "people underrate how much traditional media still matters here. One post that gets picked up by a major outlet does more than a thousand likes ever will" (U1). This supports treating X as part of a hybrid communication environment, while distinguishing a plausible pathway from a demonstrated effect in any specific instance.

This finding demonstrates the importance of understanding X within a broader hybrid communication environment. A diplomatic message may originate on X but acquire greater significance through mainstream media, diplomatic networks, policy communities or offline interactions. X-based diplomacy may therefore unfold indirectly. Narrative diffusion, media amplification and elite attention can represent meaningful forms of diplomatic influence even when direct platform engagement remains modest.

Negotiator–Communicator Gap

Participants distinguished public communication about negotiations from the substance of negotiation itself. K7 described the gap directly: "the gap between what negotiators discuss in the room, and what the public actually sees online, is still too wide sometimes. I think about that a lot" (K7). X may make positions visible and help frame issues, but it does not determine negotiating outcomes on its own.

X can make diplomatic positions visible, frame issues and shape public discourse, but it does not independently determine negotiating outcomes. Negotiations remain influenced by institutional bargaining, diplomatic relationships, economic interests, domestic political considerations and formal decision-making processes.

This finding places an important boundary around claims concerning digital diplomatic influence. X-based communication may support, reinforce or contextualise diplomatic objectives without directly causing agreements or policy change. K5 recommended strengthening "real time coordination between negotiators and communicators" (K5), identifying coordination as a practical institutional issue rather than a platform feature alone.

From the perspective of the four theoretical lenses, strategic narratives and frames can shape the communicative environment around negotiations, dialogic engagement can facilitate relationships and feedback, and CDA can reveal the power relations underlying competing representations. Nevertheless,

substantive diplomatic outcomes remain embedded within broader political and institutional processes.

Institutional Capacity, Simplification and Misinformation

Interviewees identified staffing, approval delays, inter-agency coordination and disinformation as persistent constraints. K1 described the combination of limited capacity and rapidly changing narratives: "Not enough people to do the work, honestly. And how fast a story can shift on you. Also, disinformation" (K1). K4 also worried that "complex climate issues get flattened into something too simple online" (K4). These accounts show that speed and brevity are not only opportunities; they can also reduce responsiveness, strip negotiation issues of context, and expose governments to misleading interpretations. The interviews establish that practitioners perceived these risks, but do not quantify the prevalence of disinformation or demonstrate its effect on audiences.

Comparative Interpretation of Outcomes

Table 1. Comparative Outcomes of X-Based Climate Diplomacy in Kenya and the United States

Dimension	Kenya	United States
Primary outcome orientation	Narrative agency, visibility and access	Global leadership, policy communication and reinforcement
Institutional condition	Resource and approval constraints encouraging selectivity and message discipline	Greater communication capacity creating reach but increasing coordination demands
Narrative emphasis	Equity, historical responsibility, African leadership and climate justice	Action, solutions, implementation and leadership
Media position	Greater reliance on external media amplification	Established international media visibility
Main opportunity	Strengthening African agenda-setting and communicative access	Reinforcing global policy narratives and diplomatic reach
Main challenge	Unequal resources, visibility and platform dependence	Coordination, polarisation and reputational scrutiny
Interpretation of metrics	Engagement is insufficient without wider influence	Reach is insufficient without coherence, credibility and wider uptake

Note. *The comparison summarises interview-based interpretations of perceived diplomatic outcomes and the institutional conditions shaping X-based climate diplomacy.*

The comparison demonstrates that the same platform can create different communicative possibilities under different institutional and geopolitical conditions. Kenya's use of X was more strongly associated with narrative agency and communicative access, whereas the United States' use was associated with continuity, reach, and policy communication. Participants in both countries also stressed staffing, approval, coordination, misinformation, simplification and measurement challenges. Neither pattern should be interpreted as inherently more effective. The findings are interview-based interpretations triangulated with the post corpus, not a causal ranking of diplomatic performance.

Discussion

From Visibility to Multidimensional Diplomatic Outcomes

The findings challenge a narrow understanding of digital diplomacy based on visibility and engagement metrics. X creates an enabling environment for diplomatic presence, but the significance of presence depends on what happens beyond publication. The evidence supports a multidimensional account of perceived outcomes—presence, narrative projection, possible media circulation, access, and relationship-building—but does not show that every mechanism produced a measurable diplomatic effect.

These findings reinforce the platform perspective: visibility and circulation are shaped by network structures, media amplification and platform infrastructures (Gillespie, 2018, van Dijck et al., 2018, Poell et al., 2022).

The outcomes participants identified exist along a continuum rather than as a single measurable variable. Posting, interaction, multimedia communication and network participation are mechanisms; visibility, narrative agency, media amplification, audience access and relationship development are possible outcomes. Establishing actual effects would require independent evidence such as systematic media tracking, audience research, documented policy references or longitudinal measures of perception.

The findings therefore suggest a distinction between platform mechanisms and diplomatic outcomes. Posting, interaction, multimedia communication and network participation are mechanisms. Visibility, narrative agency, media amplification, audience access and relationship development are potential outcomes.

Strategic Narratives and National Positioning

Strategic Narrative Theory helps explain why the two countries used the platform to communicate different understandings of climate diplomacy. Kenya's emphasis on equity, historical responsibility, African leadership and justice reflected a strategic narrative in which climate diplomacy is connected to fairness and Global South agency. The narrative can position Kenya not only as a climate-vulnerable state but also as an actor seeking influence over the international climate agenda. K1's account of the Nairobi Declaration posts as helping position Kenya "as the host that actually set the agenda, not just the venue" (K1) illustrates this perceived agenda-setting function; it does not independently establish the extent of international uptake.

United States messaging emphasised action, implementation, solutions and leadership, reflecting its stronger institutional and geopolitical capacity. Digital platforms provide another arena in which existing national identities and international positions are articulated and contested.

Framing Climate Responsibility and Solutions

Framing theory further explains the observed differences. Climate change is too complex to communicate in its entirety through individual X posts. Diplomatic actors must select particular aspects of the issue for emphasis. Kenya's framing foregrounded questions of justice, responsibility and African vulnerability. The United States' framing foregrounded action, solutions, and implementation. Each frame makes some aspects of climate politics more visible while placing others in the background.

Brevity and competition for attention can clarify a message but also compress complex positions and marginalise alternative interpretations. Framing thus links strategic narratives to issue-specific representations of climate problems, responsibility and policy responses.

Dialogic Communication and Audience Relationships

The findings also support the importance of the Dialogic Communication Model. X offers technical opportunities for interaction, responsiveness and relationship building, but institutional conditions determine whether these possibilities are realised. Kenya's approval procedures and resource limitations could restrict rapid interaction. The United States had greater communication capacity but faced coordination demands tied to the size and complexity of its diplomatic communication system.

These findings suggest that dialogic capacity cannot be inferred from platform affordances alone. An interactive platform does not necessarily produce interactive diplomacy. Institutional culture, approval structures, staffing, communication priorities and political sensitivities shape whether governments listen and respond as well as whether they publish. Participants' accounts therefore support a distinction between potential audience access and demonstrated reciprocal engagement.

Consequently, audience engagement should be understood relationally. Meaningful engagement may involve sustained interaction, recognition, trust and relationship formation rather than simply visible reactions to individual posts.

CDA, Power and North-South Communication Inequality

CDA adds a critical dimension to the comparative findings. The differences between Kenya and the United States cannot be fully explained by communication strategy alone. They also reflect unequal access to institutional resources, international media systems,

technological capacity and geopolitical influence. Kenya's more limited communication resources and participants' concerns about media amplification illustrate continuing inequalities in the international communication environment. X may provide access, but access does not necessarily equal communicative power. Conversely, the United States' greater reach does not eliminate constraints: visibility can expose diplomatic communication to scrutiny, polarisation and reputational risk. These interpretations align with CDA's attention to the relationship between discourse, institutional power, and geopolitical context.

Similarly, the United States' greater international visibility does not eliminate constraints. Greater visibility can expose diplomatic communication to intensified scrutiny, polarisation, and reputational risk. CDA therefore helps avoid technological determinism. Digital platforms can create new communicative opportunities while operating within pre-existing structures of power. The digital environment may broaden participation without necessarily producing equality of influence.

Hybrid Media and Indirect Influence

The findings support understanding X as part of a hybrid communication ecology (Chadwick, 2017). Diplomatic content may move from X into mainstream media, policy networks, diplomatic conversations and offline interactions. The interviews identify these as possible routes to influence, but this study does not claim that each route occurred for every post. Future evaluation should trace particular posts across platforms and institutions rather than infer circulation from engagement counts alone. This means that diplomatic outcomes may be distributed across multiple communication environments. A post may have limited visible platform engagement but still generate media coverage or elite attention. Conversely, a highly visible post may produce little sustained diplomatic consequence. The study therefore supports an outcomes-oriented approach in which platform metrics are interpreted as indicators of communication activity rather than definitive measures of diplomatic influence.

The Negotiator-Communicator Relationship

The distinction between public communication and substantive negotiation provides an important boundary condition for digital diplomacy research. X may shape the communicative environment around negotiations without determining outcomes. This distinction matters for climate diplomacy, where public narratives about responsibility, finance, and leadership coexist with complex interstate bargaining. Digital communication can reinforce negotiating positions, build legitimacy and influence perceptions, but formal outcomes depend on processes beyond the platform.

The study therefore identifies perceived pathways through which X may contribute to diplomatic objectives, while avoiding causal claims unsupported by the design. Evidence of actual influence would require additional data connecting particular posts to media coverage, policy discussion, audience interpretation or negotiation processes.

Outcomes-Oriented Xplomacy Framework

The findings inform an outcomes-oriented conceptualisation of XPlomacy. In this article, XPlomacy refers to the strategic use of X by governments and diplomatic actors to construct and circulate foreign-policy narratives, frame international issues, engage networked publics and project national identity within a platform-mediated diplomatic environment. It is proposed as a platform-specific analytical lens, not as a claim that X is the only platform relevant to digital diplomacy.

The concept is not presented as another synonym for digital diplomacy. Instead, it highlights the platform-specific conditions through which diplomacy is communicated and interpreted on X.

The analysis identifies six interconnected XPlomacy dimensions:

Strategic narrative construction – the development and circulation of narratives concerning national identity, international systems and preferred policy directions.

Real-time diplomatic engagement–timely communication and participation in developing diplomatic conversations.

Networked influence – the ability to connect diplomatic communication with journalists, policymakers, institutions, experts and networked publics.

Digital soft power – projecting attractiveness, credibility, legitimacy, and national identity through digital communication.

Algorithmic visibility – the role of platform architecture and attention structures in determining exposure and circulation.

Public interaction–communication with audiences through responses, exchanges, recognition, feedback and relationship development.

These dimensions are mechanisms, not diplomatic outcomes in themselves. Their significance is conditioned by institutional capacity, geopolitical position, coordination, media systems, platform architecture and audience characteristics. The framework should therefore be used to generate questions and guide comparative analysis, not as a validated causal model.

Table 2. Outcomes-Oriented XPlomacy Framework

Platform-mediated mechanism	Mediating conditions	Potential diplomatic outcomes
Strategic narrative construction	Institutional capacity, political context	Narrative agency, policy visibility
Real-time diplomatic engagement	Approval procedures, responsiveness	Diplomatic presence, audience access, timely positioning
Networked influence	Media systems, diplomatic networks	Amplification, wider narrative circulation
Digital soft power	Reputation, credibility, geopolitical position	Legitimacy, international influence
Algorithmic visibility	Platform architecture, competition for attention	Reach, exposure
Public interaction	Audience characteristics, polarization, trust	Engagement, relationship building

Note. *The framework conceptualises platform dimensions as mechanisms whose diplomatic significance depends on institutional, geopolitical, media and platform conditions.*

The framework can therefore be represented conceptually as: Platform-mediated XPlomacy mechanisms → Institutional, geopolitical, media and platform conditions → Diplomatic communication processes → Perceived diplomatic outcomes.

Strategic narrative construction → Framing of climate issues → Real-time diplomatic engagement and public interaction → Networked and media circulation → Critical contestation, interpretation and visibility → Perceived diplomatic outcomes

Moderating conditions: institutional capacity, geopolitical position, coordination, media systems, platform architecture, audience characteristics.

Figure 1. Outcomes-Oriented XPlomacy Framework

The framework incorporates the four theoretical perspectives used in the study. Strategic Narrative Theory explains narrative construction, Framing Theory explains the selection and emphasis of climate issues, the Dialogic Communication Model explains interaction and relationship-building, and CDA provides the critical interpretation of power, inequality, representation and contestation. The framework therefore positions XPlomacy as a platform-specific mechanism whose outcomes depend on the interaction between communication strategy and structural context.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to two countries, two summit settings and a purposive sample of 16 practitioners. Interview evidence captures professional interpretations, not direct measures of audience perception; the analysis also cannot establish whether particular posts changed policy or negotiation outcomes. Public platform records

may be incomplete as posts are deleted, accounts change, or archived material becomes inaccessible. Future studies should combine archived post analysis with systematic media tracking, interviews across a wider range of institutions, and audience-based or longitudinal evidence to test the pathways proposed here.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: Drawing on 284 official X posts and 16 practitioner interviews, the study concludes that X was valued as an environment for diplomatic presence, narrative projection and possible access to wider policy and media conversations. Participants associated Kenya's communication with equity, historical responsibility, African leadership and climate justice, while describing United States communication as more continuous and solution-oriented. These are comparative patterns in the corpus and practitioner accounts, not uniform descriptions of every post.

The study also concludes that platform opportunities are shaped by institutional capacity, approval procedures, coordination, geopolitical position and media systems. The study therefore distinguishes perceived outcomes from demonstrated effects and does not claim that X caused policy change or altered audience perceptions.

The four theories show how narrative construction, issue selection, interaction and power relations can be examined together. The proposed XPlomacy framework treats platform mechanisms as conditional pathways, not guaranteed effects. Priorities include closer negotiator–communicator coordination, adequate staffing, clearer approvals, multilingual content and evaluation beyond platform metrics. Future research should use audience evidence and longitudinal tracking to test whether perceived outcomes translate into measurable effects.

Recommendations: The study recommends that practitioners coordinate climate negotiators, policy teams, and account managers before and during summit windows; establish expedited approval pathways for time-sensitive posts; allocate trained staff for monitoring and multilingual adaptation; and maintain a shared message architecture across government accounts. Evaluation should combine platform metrics with systematic tracking of media citations, references by diplomatic institutions, documented stakeholder feedback and follow-up with negotiation teams. These measures would improve accountability without treating online engagement as proof of policy influence.

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