



Analyze the structure of the economic diplomacy frameworks between Kenya and Ireland

Lucy Cynthia Mugala¹
Sussy Namaemba Kimokoti²
Elijah Onyango Standslause Odhiambo³

lcynthia2002@yahoo.com
skimokoti@mmust.ac.ke
standsauseodhiambo@yahoo.com

^{1,2}Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, ³Bomet University, ^{1,2,3}Kenya

Recommended Reference: Mugala, L. C., Kimokoti, S. N., & Odhiambo, E. O. S. (2026). Analyze the structure of the economic diplomacy frameworks between Kenya and Ireland. *African Quarterly Social Science Review*, 3(2), 132–144.
<https://doi.org/10.51867/AQSSR.3.2.11>

ABSTRACT

The increasing significance of economic diplomacy in international relations has initiated several countries to prudently employ diplomatic channels to achieve their economic goals. Despite a framework of diplomatic engagement, the economic exchanges between these two nations are characterized by a profound and persistent imbalance, reflecting a neo-colonial pattern of trade that undermines the very principles of sustainable and mutually beneficial development. The urgency for targeted study is amplified by the changing global landscape, including the African Continental Free Trade Area, which offers Kenya new platforms for value-added exports. Despite a friendly bilateral environment, the absence of a formalized economic diplomacy framework results in an imbalanced trade structure and missed opportunities in key sectors. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the economic diplomacy frameworks between Kenya and Ireland. This study was anchored on power theory. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The research was conducted within Nairobi County. The study targeted business traders, exporters, the Irish ambassador to Kenya, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade representatives, Irish business networks, trade and policy analysts, trade directors, Customs and Trade officers-KRA, the Kenya Investment Authority representative, and the Kenya Private Sector Alliance [KIPPRA] representative, yielding a total of 247 sampled respondents. Purposive sampling was employed to select the sampled respondents. The primary data were collected using structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. These were complemented by extensive secondary data, including trade reports and academic publications. Quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS version 26, while qualitative data was analyzed verbatim thematically. Quantitative data was presented in the form of tables and figures, while qualitative data was recorded thematically via verbatim. The study findings revealed the existence of a formal institutional framework supporting bilateral relations, which included embassies, trade missions, and bilateral cooperation agreements. The study concludes that economic diplomacy has been achieved through agriculture, especially horticulture; technology; infrastructure; education; and joint trade missions; however, with challenges such as political instability, cultural differences, and lack of strong partnerships and agreements. The study recommended that both governments establish a joint economic commission and formal trade agreements to structure engagement and unlock potential in agriculture, technology, and renewable energy sectors.

Keywords: Bilateral Relations, Economic Diplomacy, Frameworks, Ireland, Kenya

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the modernized and interconnected world economy, economic diplomacy's roles in overseeing globalized trade relations have come into focus (Hocking, 2016). In the globalizing world, diplomacy has a vital function in managing trade relations and establishing cooperation between nations to achieve win-win outcomes (Narlikar & Tussie, 2019). Economic diplomacy is broader than just promoting export/import; it also involves the task of creating the appeal for direct investment to sustain energetic economic relations (Baldwin & Evenett, 2020).

Economic diplomacy is a tool of interest, as it opens opportunities to attract international investors. States actively employ embassies globally and engage themselves and their businesses in trade and investment promotion events to demonstrate their economic prowess, potential, and policies. They try to establish favorable conditions to attract foreign investment, which can increase the rate of economic growth and development (Bayne & Woolcock, 2016). The economic cooperation and integration within the region partnership are because through cooperation, through sharing of resources and sharing of experience, the nations can work together so as to combat various challenge that are common among nations. Such integration processes also assist in strengthening the favorable

prospects of economic growth along with probable contributions toward stability and sustainability in the region (Hettne, 2016; Pant, 2025).

Kenya and Ireland have maintained long-term diplomatic ties since Kenya attained its independence in 1963. Over the years, they both have understood the economic cooperation as a basis of their bilateral relationship. Economic diplomacy between Kenya and Ireland covers a broad range of activities such as negotiations on trade, promotion of investment, development assistance, and cultural exchange. Despite the fact that the details of the MoU may differ slightly, it contains an outline of the joint interests of the two countries regarding agriculture, such as; technology, capacity, research and development, and trade promotion (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). Such agreements are generally aimed at - through the value chains - improving productivity and consequently promoting sustainable agricultural practices. Therefore, the prospects of mutual trade and investment in sectors like agriculture, information technology, and renewable energies are huge. Nevertheless, economic cooperation between Kenya and Ireland is not without its difficulties.

Formal diplomatic missions and state-to-state structures that regulate political and economic cooperation serve as the foundation for Kenya and Ireland's bilateral economic diplomacy structure. At the heart of the bilateral structure is the institutional diplomatic framework, which includes Kenya's Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, the Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry (MITI), and the Kenya Investment Authority (KenInvest). The main conduits for policy discussions, trade facilitation, and investment promotion are the reciprocal diplomatic institutions, the diplomatic of Kenya in Dublin and the Embassy of Ireland in Nairobi, which form the foundation of the system (Republic of Kenya, 2014). These embassies serve important economic purposes, such as arranging trade missions, sponsoring investment forums, and connecting players in the corporate sector with pertinent government agencies. In order to draw in Irish investors and investigate potential markets for Kenyan goods in Ireland and the EU, the Kenyan embassy in Dublin works with the Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry (MITI) and KenInvest.

As Smith (2019) argues, economic diplomacy between unequal partners often prioritizes the interests of the more powerful economy, leading to agreements that sustain rather than challenge existing trade patterns. Furthermore, the role of non-state actors, such as private sector firms and diaspora networks, which could help bridge this gap and foster more equitable partnerships, remains underutilized and poorly integrated into formal diplomatic channels (Wang, 2020). This lack of coordination weakens the potential for economic diplomacy to facilitate knowledge transfer, investment in value-addition industries, and market access for higher-value Kenyan goods beyond the traditional agricultural sector.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There are limited comparative analyses of Kenya and Ireland economic diplomatic strategy frameworks in Kenya and Africa at large (Ye, 2024), as well as insufficient focus on the interplay between economic diplomacy strategies and diplomatic objectives and a lack of studies exploring how economic diplomacy reshapes traditional statecraft in Kenya's unique sociopolitical context (Oloo, 2023b). Therefore, analyzing economic diplomacy structure frameworks in Kenya fills a critical void in the field while this approach offers fresh insights into the dynamics of great power competition (Cohen et al., 2023; DiCicco & Onea, 2023; Hugo, 2021) in Africa and their influence on a key regional player like Kenya. The study bridges the gap between economic diplomacy and diplomatic studies by analyzing how economic structure frameworks are strategically deployed. The increasing use of economic structures in diplomacy requires new theoretical frameworks that go beyond traditional diplomacy studies (Al-Mansouri et al., 2021; Collins & Bekenova, 2019; Twiplomacy, 2020). Kenya serves as an important case study, given its geopolitical significance and diverse partnerships with the UK and Ireland. As a result, this study fills a current gap by identifying literature on the issues through a broad and critical examination of materials from field study, academic journals, reports, and internet sources. The purpose of this study is to provide a theoretical foundation for further research study by identifying and synthesizing relevant concepts from existing literature and field study. The urgency for targeted study is amplified by the changing global landscape, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which offers Kenya new platforms for value-added exports. Research is needed to determine why economic diplomacy with partners like Ireland has not pivoted to align with these new continental opportunities, potentially leaving Kenya locked into outdated export models.

1.2 Research Objectives

The study sought to investigate the economic diplomacy structure frameworks between Kenya and Ireland.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Power Theory

According to Wasike and Odhiambo (2016), “everyone uses theories, whether they know it or not. One cannot analyze data without resorting to causal explanations. The study adopted power theory. Weber (1947) defined power as the probability of one actor within a social relationship being in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance. Nye (2005) explains that the soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values, and its foreign policies. Power theory, which examined how states utilize their economic, political, and strategic advantages to influence outcomes, provides a useful framework for understanding Kenya-Ireland trade relations. While Kenya is a growing economy in East Africa, Ireland is a developed nation with strong ties to the European Union, creating an inherent power asymmetry in their economic engagements. This is the situation Ireland, in its economic diplomacy, claims to offer Kenya’s economic development.

Ireland attracts significant FDI due to its stable economy, skilled workforce, and favorable corporate tax policies, while Kenya relies on external investments to boost sectors like agribusiness and renewable energy (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2021). Irish companies investing in Kenya often bring capital and expertise, but this also creates dependency, as Kenya must accommodate investor demands to sustain economic growth. As Rugman and Doh (2008) argue, such investment patterns often reinforce existing power structures, with multinational corporations from developed nations exerting significant influence over host country policies. However, Ogolla and Odhiambo (2020) suggest that Kenya has begun to leverage soft power strategies to counterbalance these structural disadvantages, particularly through cultural diplomacy and multilateral engagement. This imbalance reinforces Ireland’s economic influence, allowing it to shape investment terms in ways that favor its own interests. This theory therefore, helped the researcher understand the Kenya-Ireland economic diplomacy frameworks, whereby the study focused on investigating the economic diplomacy frameworks adopted by the two states.

2.2 Empirical Review

Economic diplomacy, according to Ruffini (2016), is a method or process by which states use the advantages of cross-border economic activity to implement their national interests. The author notes that economic diplomacy also consists in establishing links between corporate players who export or invest abroad and diplomats who represent the state in the international arena and implement geopolitical decisions. Chohan (2021), suggests that economic diplomacy is a multilateral process that uses economic means to achieve diplomatic goals, and vice versa, through the joint creative involvement of international government managers and other important stakeholders. Economic diplomacy also encompasses fundamentals of power play in which nation-states use economic statecraft positively and negatively such as the use of economic sanctions i.e. trade embargoes as well as aid programs by states and other actors such as the United Nations to pressure other states to cooperate (Davis, 1999; Kunz, 1997; Zimmerman, 1993).

Flissak (2013) considers the place of economic diplomacy in the modern international economy and international economic relations; issues of economic security of Ukraine and organization of activities of economic units of diplomatic missions. The author pays considerable attention to the organization of diplomatic negotiations, the technology of their conduct and the protocol component. It is also worth mentioning Sharov [2019, p. 8], who in his study on economic diplomacy concludes that its task “is to achieve economic goals through diplomacy, regardless of whether it uses economic levers to achieve them”. Shchetinin [2001, p. 15] argues that that “economic diplomacy is an alloy of economics and politics, brought to the level of making and implementing managerial decisions, with the help and through which cooperation and rivalry is carried out in the modern world, forms and methods of development and improvement of the market economy are determined, which becomes an important factor in social development and the solution of key problems of economic and social progress”.

In a global, interdependent economy, the dynamics are different. Economic diplomacy plays a role in a lot more issues. As a result, it expands the possible count of national and systemic players. This is inclusive of one's economic interests. It is also inclusive of those with responsibilities in the diplomatic process (Woolcock & Bayne, 2007). Additionally, there is a relationship between politics and investment, as well as between international trade and investment. Matters related to global economics, politics, and investment have always been on the front line. According to the mercantilists, the idea of promoting exports was of great importance to them (Berridge, 2022). It means that export promotion should involve the opening up of new markets and subsidizing of exports through bilateral relations. In this case, the Mercantilists believed that in trade, the most crucial objective was always to ensure that there was a balance of trade.

Economic diplomacy also seeks to target all the inefficiencies that can play a role in hindering foreign direct investment and international trade. Most times, economic diplomacy aims to influence the decisions that are made on

economic matters that go beyond borders. According to Lin et al. (2017), there are specific characteristics associated with economic diplomacy; Firstly, economic diplomacy should be able to maintain a favorable international policy environment. It should involve multilateral efforts by the involved governments to establish a functional governance system at the global level. In turn, financial and trade flows run smoothly. The second characteristic is that economic diplomacy can influence both national and foreign-based policymaking. It also benefits multinational enterprises based at the domestic level (Lin & Farrell, 2013).

The third characteristic pertains to the stabilization of economic relations and the protection of property rights. It often involves the negotiation of bilateral trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties. The purpose is to strengthen political ties, ultimately leading to a reduction in any potential international flows. Lastly, economic diplomacy focuses on investment and trade promotion, including both imports and exports. In addition, other key factors that are involved include advisory tasks, nation branding, supplying and information gathering, and the promotion of cross-border investments (Berridge, 2022).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

According to Flick (2022), a research design constitutes the basic framework that directs the research, marking a blueprint for data collection, evaluation, and quantification. Technically, the research design is the heart of the study. Additionally, it outlines a researcher's direction from the beginning of the proposal writing to the conclusion. In a bid to achieve its research objective, the study adopted descriptive design. This research design was used because descriptive design is effective as it provides the description of the different characteristics and lived experiences of the respondents. Further, the study adopted mixed method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative data.

Furthermore, this study applied the mixed method approach to avoid selective gathering of information and get a more comprehensive view of the research objectives thus giving a deeper and comprehensive justification to the findings thus improving the credibility of the study. In turn, the use mixed method approach enhances the research by alleviating setbacks and prejudice linked to a given technique, consequently enhancing the representativeness of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2017), descriptive design offers clear descriptions in terms of the characteristics and attributes of the population and a phenomenon of interest; thus, helped in the provision of enough information on the state that is obtainable at the time of study.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Nairobi County, Kenya's capital and a major center for government, diplomacy, and business (Khadiagala, 2017). The focus area of study was particularly on Ireland Embassy and Kenyan government agencies dealing with issues of economic diplomacy, trade and foreign policy within Nairobi City. Kenya's foreign policy and international trade initiatives are formulated and implemented mostly in Nairobi, which makes it the ideal location for an economic diplomacy study (Adem, 2012). In the city, there are headquarters for many ministries, among them the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which is the body that is charged with the duty of policy development and implementation of trade (Hocking, 2016). Moreover, Nairobi is home to many foreign embassies and consulates that act as entry points into the global diplomatic arena and as a hub for cooperation with the rest of the world, aimed at promoting trade between Kenya and other countries (Lee & Hocking, 2010). Kenya and Ireland have seen steady growth in trade volumes, particularly in agricultural products, pharmaceuticals, and technology. Ireland exports machinery, medical devices, and dairy products to Kenya, while Kenya exports tea, coffee, and horticultural products to Ireland. However, trade remains below potential, with non-tariff barriers and logistical challenges hindering expansion (World Bank, 2021). Studying economic diplomacy in this context helps identify policy gaps and opportunities for trade enhancement.

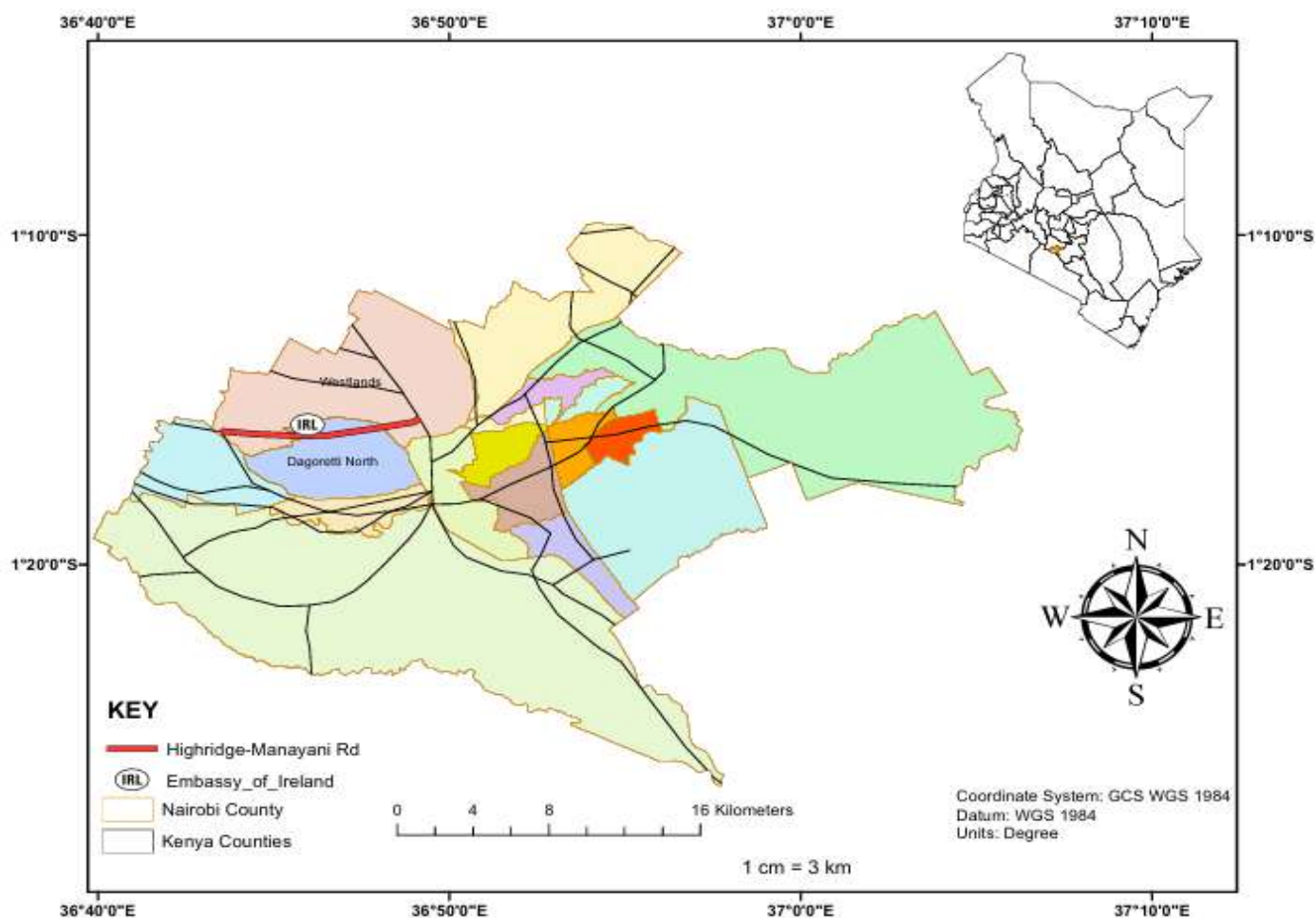


Figure 1
Study Area Map (Nairobi County) - showing Irish Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya
 Source: (GIS Expert-MMUST 2024)

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study encompassed key representatives from government, diplomatic networks, and business sectors who are instrumental in shaping and implementing economic diplomacy and promoting trade relations between Kenya and Ireland. The target population was; Irish ambassador to Kenya, Irish Department of foreign Affairs and trade representatives; Irish Business networks in Kenya; Kenya Trade Directors and ministries representatives; Customs and Trade Policy Officer (KRA); Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) trade representatives); and Kenya Investment Authority Representative. This diverse group of stakeholders plays crucial roles in the bilateral economic interactions and cooperation between the two countries.

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The sampling technique, in this case, means the method through which the researcher picks a sample of the entire population as subjects for the study. It is generally recognized that the minimum sample size for descriptive research would have to be 10% of the population if we follow the recommendation given by (Qing & Valliant, 2025).

The study evaluated the existing population of 300 business leaders in Nairobi and 250 in Irish Embassy assuming that the size of the business community in each and the overview of the industry will have an impact. The population frame of 550 business leaders was constructed by aggregating the listed senior executives in the directories of the Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2020) and Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2021) respectively. To calculate the sample size for a population of 550, the study adopted Cochran's adjusted formula for finite populations (since 550 is a moderate size). Desired confidence level = 95% ($Z = 1.96$), estimated proportion of the population using = 46% ($p = 0.46$) and margin of error = 5% ($e = 0.05$)

$$no = Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p) \div e^2$$

$$n = 1.96^2 \cdot 0.46(1-0.46)$$



$$\frac{0.05^2}{3.8416 \cdot 0.2484 / 0.0025} = 383.70 \approx 384 \text{ business leaders}$$

Adjust for Finite Population (N=550)

$$n = \frac{no}{1 + \left(\frac{no - 1}{N}\right)}$$

n=226 business leaders

The selection of key informants for this study was conducted through a combination of sampling techniques to ensure the inclusion of relevant stakeholders with specialized knowledge of trade relations between Ireland and Kenya. The sampling strategy was designed to capture insights from high-level officials, trade experts, and institutional representatives who play a pivotal role in shaping bilateral trade policies and practices. This included the Irish Ambassador to Kenya, the Trade Diplomacy Director, the Director of Bilateral Trade, the Customs and Trade Policy Officer (KRA), and the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research (KIPPRA) Trade Policy Analyst. These key informants were sampled purposively since they hold critical decision-making authority, thus their inclusion was mandatory to obtain authoritative perspectives on trade diplomacy and policy formulation.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

This study adopted both primary data and secondary data. Primary data collection instruments used were closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires and interviews, while secondary data were collected from relevant publications, reports, journals, theses, and books. The open-ended and close-ended questionnaires were administered to 226 business leaders and exporters to collect the quantitative data from perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to economic diplomacy and trade relationships (Smith, 2019). Besides the questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews were carried out with diplomats, embassy officials, government representatives, and industry experts to collect qualitative data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.6 Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 25 and excel aided in the coding and analysis of the data collected. Quantitative data were first coded and entered into SPSS version 25. Quantitative data were analysed through SPSS version 25 while thematic coding which was both inductive and deductive, was applied on qualitative data--that is, semi structured interviews, and face-to-face discussions. Consequently, after transcription, the data was processed by means of coding which categorized the gathered data into the smooth themes. Quantitative data were presented in form of tables, graphs, and charts, while qualitative data were recorded verbatim.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

The study conformed to the ethical code of conduct during the research. First, the researcher obtained all necessary approvals ranging from school approval, NACOSTI, County Commissioner and Regional Education Coordinator, Nairobi County. The study observed informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were free to participate or withdraw at any time during the research process.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.2 Effectiveness of Economic Diplomacy in Promoting Trade Relations between Kenya and Ireland

The study examined effectiveness of the economic diplomacy in promoting trade relations between Kenya and Ireland as shown in Figure 2.

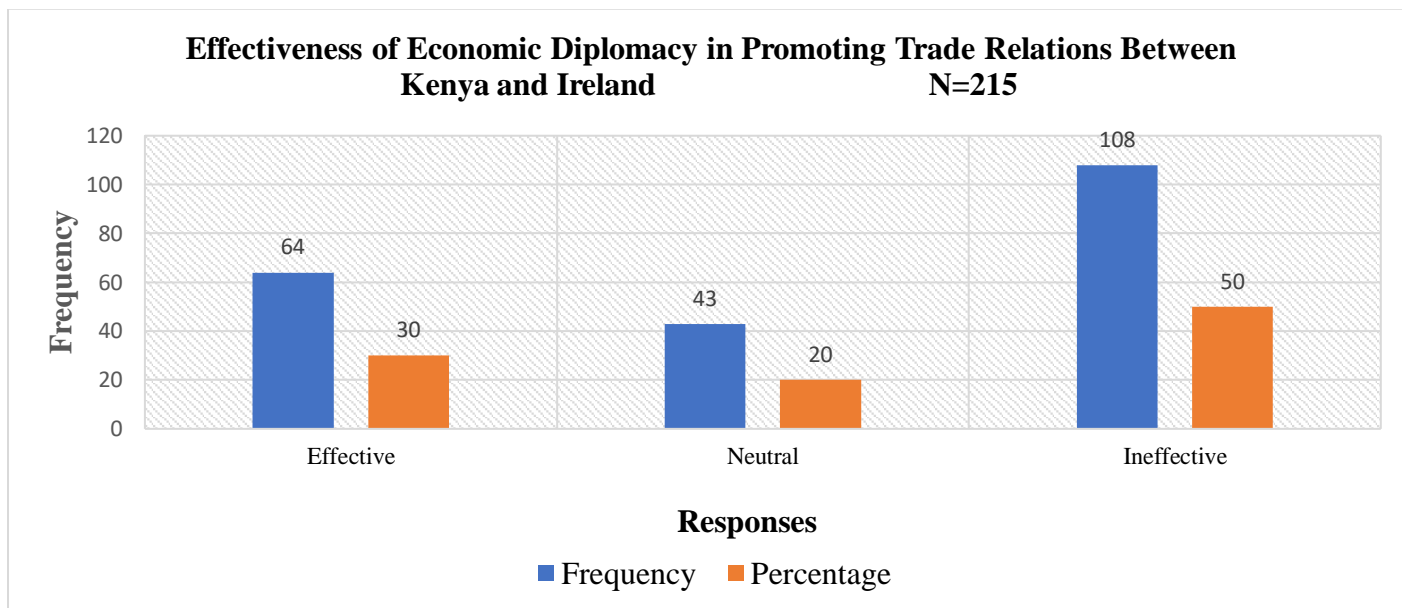


Figure 2
Effectiveness of Economic Diplomacy in Promoting Trade Relations between Kenya and Ireland

The study findings in Figure 2 reveal that 108(50%) of respondents indicated economic diplomacy as ineffective, 64(30%) cited effective while 43(20%) of respondents cited neutral. These findings show that majority of respondents agreed that economic diplomacy strategies are ineffective due to that they are not being felt among the business and exporters as part of bilateral trade. This indicates that most bilateral trades are stated centred and also, policies governing free trade not fully utilized and operationalized. According to a diplomat during an interview, he stated that, “*Kenya and Ireland have had economic ties for some time now, as they work mostly in agricultural exports. These trade partnerships have increased the bilateral relations as some Kenyans are employed in Ireland and Irish also works in Kenya. Private sectors have also benefited effectively.*” (Interview with Diplomat, 20th January, 2025)

These findings are in with Moons and van Bergeijk (2017), in their meta-analysis, noted that diplomatic relation is only as effective as the nature and development scores of the trading partners. The researchers further note that diplomatic representations in developing countries have been utilized as a strategic policy tool that can be utilized to drive the integration and movement of citizens and security forces within member states. Woolcock and Bayne (2007) acknowledge that economic diplomacy is a comprehensive process that can be achieved in four main areas; a bilateral level, a regional level, a multilateral level, and a plurilateral level. These multi-level negotiations can generate a key tool for advancing foreign policy objectives between nations as well as utilizing economic policies as negotiating tools (van Bergeijk et al., 2011). This explained how bilateral relations affect economic diplomacy.

4.3 Factors Influencing the Success or Failure of Economic Diplomacy Efforts

The study sought to assess the perception on the factors influencing economic diplomatic efforts. The findings are as presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Factors Influencing the Success or Failure of Economic Diplomacy Efforts

Factors That Influencing the Success or Failure of Economic Diplomacy Efforts	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Political Stability	79	36.7	1
Economic Incentives	58	26.7	2
Institutional Support	36	16.7	3
Cultural Differences	21	10	4
Others (infrastructure quality, technological readiness)	21	10	5

The results in Table 1 show that 79(36.7%) of respondents cited political stability as the major factor influencing the success or failure of economic diplomatic efforts, 58(26.7%) cited presence of absence of economic incentives. Further, 36(16.7%) indicated institutional support, and while 21(10%) cited cultural differences and other factors respectively. These findings reveal that majority of respondents acknowledge that political atmosphere and

geopolitics shape the economic diplomacy efforts as the shifting of alliances, geopolitics and regimes create tension and uncertainty, drafting of new policies and bilateral agreements. These findings are corroborated by key informant interview with a policy analyst; political instability especially in Kenya has really affected the success of bilateral relations between Kenya and Ireland especially during the Genz’s demonstration. Also, lack of full institutional support and differences in culture makes it hard, however the countries are working towards a mutual agreement.

These findings are corroborated by Cheron (2022), who stated that the two countries have collaborated as Kenya has given economic incentives and teamed up for agricultural development, in turn promoting a conducive environment for trade. In line with bilateral relations, a trade officer agreed that;

"The existing similar cultural heritage has led to having common cultural practices, and this is a strong factor that can help foster a better relationship between the two countries. Additionally, these intense cultural practices and relations between citizens of both nations contribute to free movement to either country to carry out trade or economic investments" (Interview with trade officer in Nairobi on 20.01.2025).

Further, the study was supported by Ogutu (2025) who delved into Kenya-Tanzania trade disputes and noted that imposition of non-tariff barriers, lack of political goodwill, protocol implementation mismatch, and nationalistic ambitions were hindering trade, contributing to slow economic growth and degradation of EAC’s strategic value. The study called for economic diplomacy through embracing fair play and recognizing single customs territories, and sustained effort toward promoting EAC markets to private businesses.

4.4 Existing Trade Agreements or Partnerships between Kenya and Ireland

The study examined whether respondents were aware of existing trade agreements or partnerships between Kenya and Ireland as indicated in Figure 3.

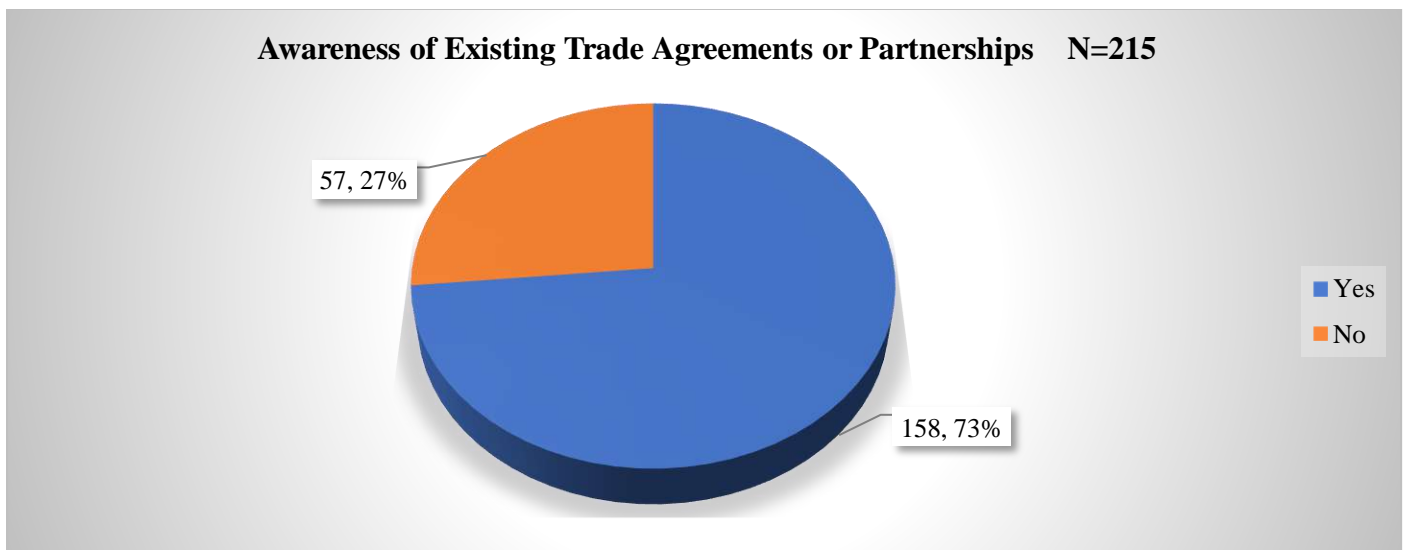


Figure 3
Awareness of Existing Trade Agreements or Partnerships

The results in Figure 3 reveal that 158(73%) of respondents cited being aware of existing trade agreements and partnerships between Kenya and Ireland, while 57(27%) indicated not being aware of any trade agreement or partnerships. These findings indicate that majority of the respondents have either interacted with the trade agreements or witnessed specific areas of partnership such as economic and free trade, exports and labour, movements. However, the minority unaware might be considered having not interacted or facing challenges in bilateral relations. These findings are in tandem with the agreement which states that the two countries shall provide full duty-free and quota-free market access conditions for goods originating in the EAC Partner State(s) into the market of the Ireland on a secure, long-term and predictable basis in accordance with the modalities established in this Agreement; liberalize progressively and gradually the EAC Partner State(s)’ markets for goods originating from the Ireland in accordance with the modalities established in this Agreement.

One of the most notable examples of multilateral trade agreements is the World Trade Organization (WTO), which serves as the principal international body overseeing global trade rules. Through its framework, the WTO aims to promote trade liberalization, reduce trade barriers, and ensure a fair and transparent trading environment. The organization’s multilateral agreements, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), have played a



significant role in reducing tariffs and other trade restrictions, making it easier for countries to engage in cross-border trade. The study argues that multilateral trade agreement, within an evolving framework for global economic interaction, would be one of the key instruments of economic diplomacy, providing a platform through which nations can collaboratively address many of the highly complicated issues related to international trade and work out strategic partnerships. Such increasing frequency of these agreements during the last couple of decades underlines their growing importance as nations strive to expand their trading network, build good economic relationships, and improve their relative competitiveness in the world market (Agbo-Ejeh & Inebu, 2023).

However, this study argues that Kenya will have to renegotiate many trade agreements that were previously included in the cooperation of the Great Britain within the European Union. This applies, among others, to the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) between the European Union and countries from the British Commonwealth, including the East African Community. Under EPA, Kenya is allowed to duty free exports of tea and flowers into the EU and in turn let in manufactured goods (Mwatu *et al.*, 2024). The lack of such an agreement with the European Union would have a particularly negative impact on Kenya, which, unlike most countries in the region, is considered a developing economy, not the least developed economy.

4.5 Strategic Pathways for Deepening Economic diplomacy between Kenya and Ireland

The study sought to understand view of respondents on how economic diplomacy efforts can be improved as shown in Figure 4.

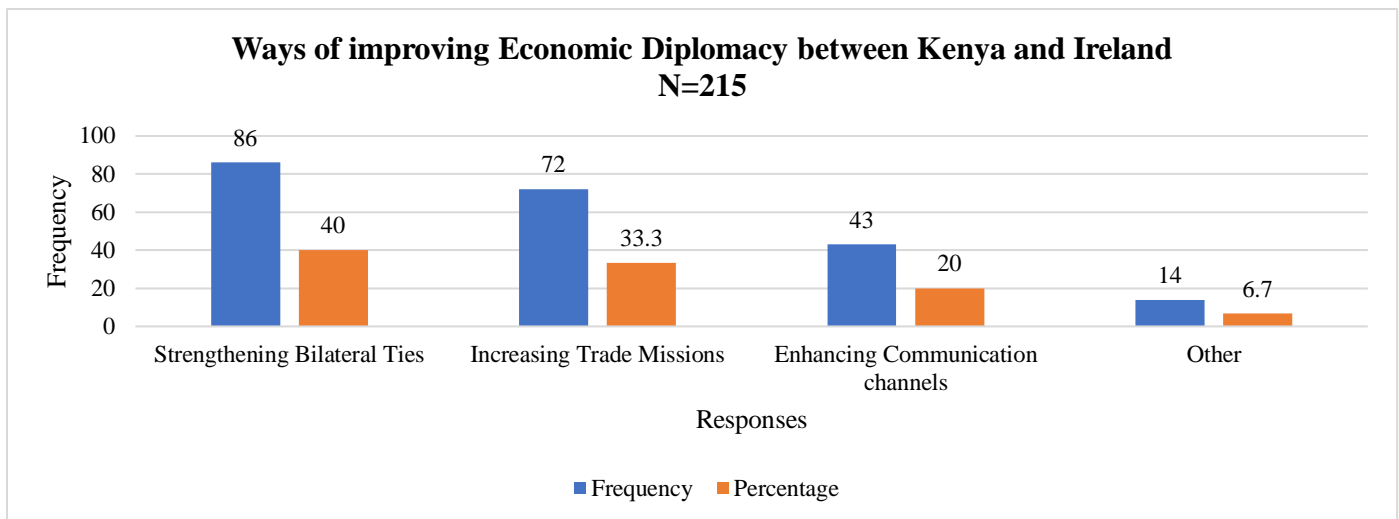


Figure 4
Improvement of economic diplomacy between Kenya and Ireland

The results in Figure 4 reveal that 86(40%) of respondents cited strengthening bilateral ties as a key strategic pathway for improving economic diplomacy between and Ireland, 72(33.3%) indicated increasing trade missions while 43(20%) cited enhancement of communication channels as a means of improving economic diplomacy. These findings show that respondents acknowledges that vitality of strategic pathways for economic diplomacy in fostering bilateral relations and trade between Kenya and Ireland by majority citing strengthening bilateral ties. These findings were supported by Kaminchia who indicated that cooperative arrangements were utilized in order to enhance the development of infrastructure and reduce the levels of trade costs between the two countries (Kaminchia, 2020). Both countries have right-to-work laws that restrict discrimination based on diversity (Cherono, 2022), in turn encouraging their nationals to utilize their skills in both environments. The study argues that Kenya and Ireland should ensure collaboration and partnership in strategic issues like agriculture, trade, technology and education. These collaborations facilitate the co-production of content on important issues, including corruption, governance, human rights, and climate change. These strategic pathways will further the economic diplomacy and relations between Kenya and Ireland, as they create a conducive environment for growth, partnerships and exports.

4.7 Engagement strategies for Trade and Investment Promotion between Kenya and Ireland

The study further examined engagement strategies to promote trade and investment opportunities between Kenya and Ireland. The findings are as indicated in Figure 5.

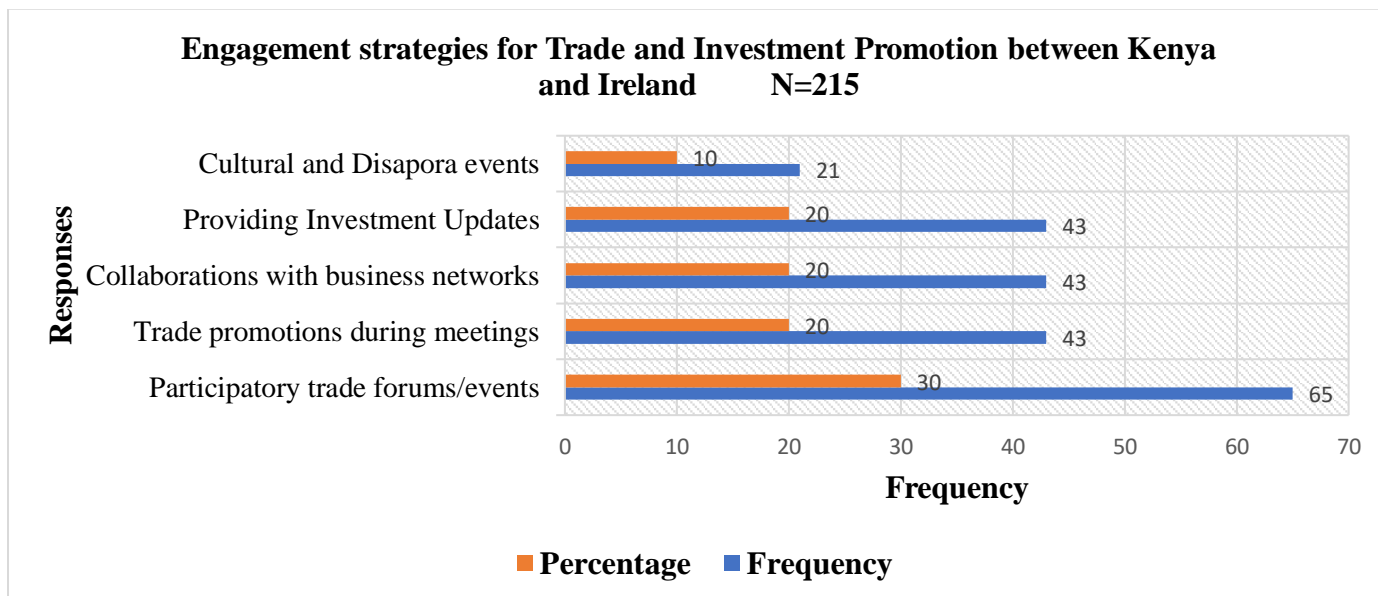


Figure 5
Engagement strategies for Trade and Investment Promotion between Kenya and Ireland

The results in Figure 5 reveal that 65(30%) of respondents cited participatory trade forums as a key strategy for trade and investment promotion. Further, 43(20%) cited trade promotions, collaborations with business networks, providing investment updates respective as other strategies for trade and investment promotion. This finding was supported by a trade representative;

“I have participated in trade and investments forum that are aimed at increasing the bilateral relations and promotion of products, create awareness and enhance policy framework (Interview with a trade representative in Nairobi on 10.01-2025)”.

In an era of rapidly changing economic dynamics, economic diplomacy goes beyond traditional trade negotiations. It involves a broad range of activities, including promoting exports, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), establishing trade partnerships, and fostering international cooperation in addressing economic challenges such as climate change and sustainable development. Kenya and Ireland must navigate complex trade barriers, competition, and geopolitical tensions while striving to protect their economic sovereignty and secure beneficial agreements.

4.8 Trade Promotion Initiatives or Partnerships between Kenya and Ireland

The study examined whether there were successful examples of trade promotion initiatives or partnerships between Kenya and Ireland. The results are as shown in Figure 6.

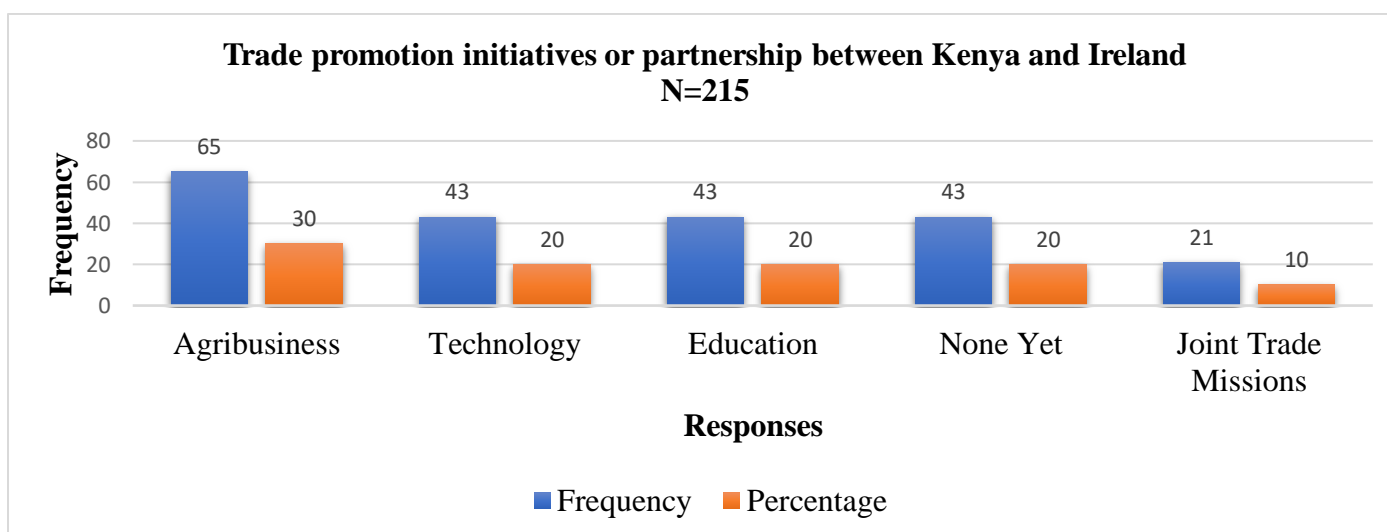


Figure 6
Trade Promotion Initiatives or Partnership between Kenya and Ireland



The results in Figure 6 reveal that 65(30%) of respondents cited agribusiness as key trade promotion initiative, 43(20%) indicated technology, education, and none yet respectively while 21(10%) indicated joint trade missions. The results show that majority of respondents acknowledged the significance of agribusiness as trade promotion initiative followed by technology sharing, education and lastly joint trade missions between Kenya and Ireland. According to Carrère (2006), reduction in trade barriers increases trade amongst the member countries which may further lead to economic growth. Research in political economy and international business explores how economic diplomacy influences international trade. Rose (2007) was the first to empirically test the idea that trade follows the flag" and discovered a strong connection between the presence of foreign consulates and an increase in bilateral exports.

To effectively promote investment, Kenyan and Irish governments must not only offer competitive incentives but also create a conducive business environment. This includes implementing policies that ensure political stability, legal protection for investors, and a favorable regulatory framework. Moreover, nations are increasingly focusing on building robust infrastructure, enhancing the quality of human capital, and fostering innovation ecosystems to make their economies more attractive to foreign investors. In this regard, economic diplomacy extends beyond formal trade negotiations to include fostering relationships with international investors and businesses. Bilateral partnerships, in particular, have become essential in investment promotion strategies.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the bilateral relations between Kenya and Ireland have been enhanced with some unbalanced frameworks in terms of trade. Economic diplomacy has been achieved through agriculture especially horticulture, technology, infrastructure, education and joint trade missions however with challenges such as political instability, cultural differences, and lack of strong partnerships and agreements. Despite these setbacks, economic diplomacy continues to play a pivotal role in fostering trade, investment, and regional integration between the two nations. Bilateral partnerships enhance social cohesion, improve labor mobility, and encourage mutual development. Kenya's position as a regional hub, supported by its active economic diplomacy, highlights the importance of strategic economic planning and cultural ties in shaping diplomatic engagements.

5.2 Recommendation

In an era of rapid economic shifts, digital transformation, and geopolitical changes, economic diplomacy has become increasingly essential for countries seeking to safeguard their economic interests. The ability to navigate complex global networks, form strategic partnerships, and promote investment has never been more crucial. The study therefore, recommends the adoption of innovative diplomatic strategies, and embracing international cooperation, and structured economic frameworks, Kenya and Ireland can not only achieve their economic objectives but also contribute to a more interconnected and prosperous global economy. Therefore, economic diplomacy will remain a powerful even as states continue to navigate the emerging global challenges.

REFERENCES

- Adem, S. (2012). China in Ethiopia: Diplomacy and economics of Sino-optimism. *African Studies Review*, 55(1), 143–160.
- Agbo-Ejeh, C., & Inebu, C. (2023, June 2). Economic partnership agreement between ECOWAS–EU in relation to the principle of economic duress. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4985514>
- Al-Mansouri, T., Al-Mohannadi, H., & Feroun, M. (2021). Digital diplomacy during the first 100 days: How GCC ministries of foreign affairs and ministers tweeted the blockade. *QScience Connect*, 2021(2). <https://doi.org/10.5339/connect.2021.spt.1>
- Baldwin, R., & Evenett, S. (Eds.). (2019). *The role of trade in ending poverty*. CEPR Press.
- Bayne, N., & Woolcock, S. (2016). The future of economic diplomacy. In *The new economic diplomacy* (pp. 330–350). Routledge.
- Berridge, G. R. (2022). *Diplomacy: Theory and practice*. Springer Nature.
- Carrère, C. (2006). Revisiting the effects of regional trade agreements on trade flows with proper specification of the gravity model. *European Economic Review*, 50(2), 223–247.
- Cherono, K. M. (2022). *Economic diplomacy as a strategy of bilateral relations between Kenya and Uganda (2010–2020)* (Doctoral dissertation). Kenyatta University.
- Chohan, U. W. (2021). Economic diplomacy: A review. *CASS Working Papers on Economics & National Affairs*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3762042>



- Cohen, R. S., Treyger, E., Chindea, I. A., Curriden, C., Gunness, K., Holynska, K., Kepe, M., Klein, K., Rhoades, A. L., & Vest, N. (2023). *Great-power competition and conflict in the 21st century outside the Indo-Pacific and Europe*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA969-1.html
- Collins, N., & Bekenova, K. (2019). Digital diplomacy: Success at your fingertips. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-017-0087-1>
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Davis, P. A. (1999). *The art of economic persuasion: Positive incentives and German economic diplomacy*. University of Michigan Press.
- DiCicco, J. M., & Onea, T. A. (2023). Great-power competition. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.756>
- Flick, U. (Ed.). (2022). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research design*. SAGE Publications.
- Flissak, K. (2013). Methodological requirements for informational provision of economic diplomacy. *Economic Annals-XXI*.
- Hettne, B. (Ed.). (2016). *The new regionalism and the future of security and development* (Vol. 4). Springer.
- Hocking, B. (Ed.). (2016). *Foreign ministries: Change and adaptation*. Springer.
- Hugo, J. (2021, November 24). China's quest for greater 'discourse power'. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/11/chinas-quest-for-greater-discourse-power/>
- Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2021). *Bilateral relations: Kenya*. <https://www.dfa.ie/>
- Kaminchia, S. (2020). Effect of transit road quality on trade costs in East Africa. *African Development Review*, 32(3), 316–326.
- Khadiagala, G. M. (2017). Pan-Africanism and regional integration. In *Routledge handbook of African politics* (pp. 375–389). Routledge.
- Kunz, D. B. (1997). The Marshall Plan reconsidered: A complex of motives. *Foreign Affairs*, 76(3), 162–170.
- Lee, D., & Hocking, B. (2010). Economic diplomacy. In *The Oxford handbook of modern diplomacy* (pp. 1–18). Oxford University Press.
- Lin, F., Yan, W., & Wang, X. (2017). The impact of Africa–China diplomatic visits on bilateral trade. *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 64(3), 310–326.
- Lin, X., & Farrell, C. (2013). The internationalization strategies of Chinese state and private sector enterprises in Africa. *Journal of African Business*, 14(2), 85–95.
- Moons, S. J., & van Bergeijk, P. A. (2017). Does economic diplomacy work? A meta-analysis of its impact on trade and investment. *The World Economy*, 40(2), 336–368.
- Mwatu, S. M., Mbaka, C. K., Karanja, J. G., & Muriithi, G. M. (2024). Trade agreements, technical regulations, and standards: Competitiveness implications for Kenyan exporters to the European Union. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 36(2), 381–410.
- Narlikar, A., & Tussie, D. (2019). The impact of globalization on economic diplomacy. In *The Routledge handbook to global political economy*. Routledge.
- Nye, J. (2005). *Soft power and higher education*. Harvard University.
- Ogolla, L., & Odhiambo, S. (2020). Kenya's diaspora engagement strategy: Cultural diplomacy as a tool for national development. *Journal of African Studies*, 15(4), 67–83.
- Ogutu, M. O. (2025). Africa's trade agency in a fragmented landscape: The promise and limits of the AfCFTA in Africa–EU trade. *African Studies Quarterly*, 23(2), 51–75.
- Oloo, O. D. (2023b). The power of websites in shaping narratives during global health crises: A study of COVID-19 by the US, the UK, and China in Kenya. *International Journal of Advanced Mass Communication and Journalism*, 4(1), 21–30.
- Pant, B. (2025). Has India shifted its diplomacy toward Nepal? Analyzing post-blockade relations. *BMC Research Journal*, 4(1), 80–99.
- Qing, S., & Valliant, R. (2025). Extending Cochran's sample size rule to stratified simple random sampling with applications to audit sampling. *Journal of Official Statistics*, 41(1), 309–328.
- Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2020). *Kenya–Ireland bilateral cooperation framework*. Government Printer.
- Republic of Kenya. (2014). *National trade policy: Transforming Kenya into a competitive export-led economy*. Government Printer.
- Rose, A. K. (2007). The foreign service and foreign trade: Embassies as export promotion. *The World Economy*, 30(1), 22–38.



- Ruffini, P.-B. (2016). International trade and foreign affairs: Some reflections on economic diplomacy. *Journal of International Logistics and Trade*, 14(1), 3–28. <https://doi.org/10.24006/jilt.2016.14.1.3>
- Rugman, A. M., & Doh, J. P. (2008). *Multinationals and development*. Yale University Press.
- Sharov, O. M. (2019). *Economic diplomacy: Basics, problems and prospects*. NISD National Institute for Strategic Studies. <https://www.cceol.com/search/book-detail?id=1024838>
- Shchetinin, V. D. (2001). *Economic diplomacy*. International Relations.
- Smith, J. (2019). The role of diplomatic missions in strengthening economic relations: A case study of Kenya–Ireland relations. *Journal of International Relations*, 35(2), 145–167.
- Twiplomacy. (2020). *Twiplomacy study 2020*. <https://www.twiplomacy.com/twiplomacy-study-2020>
- UNCTAD. (2021). *Trade impact of COVID-19: Kenya and Ireland case studies*. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
- Van Bergeijk, P. A., Yakop, M., & de Groot, H. L. (2011). The economic effectiveness of diplomatic representation: An economic analysis of its contribution to bilateral trade. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 6(1–2), 101–120.
- Wang, X. (2020). Leadership-building dilemmas in emerging powers' economic diplomacy: Russia's energy diplomacy and China's OBOR. *Asia Europe Journal*, 18(1), 117–138.
- Wasike, S., & Odhiambo, E. O. S. (2016). A critique of the usefulness of theories in explaining socio-political phenomena. *Asian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 3(2), 29–33.
- Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organization*. Free Press.
- Woolcock, S., & Bayne, N. (2007). *The new economic diplomacy*. Ashgate.
- World Bank. (2021). *Kenya economic update: Navigating the pandemic*. World Bank Group.
- Ye, R. (2024). A comparison of foreign policies between China and the U.S. based on political culture theories. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 187, 04032. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202418704032>
- Zimmerman, R. F. (1993). *Dollars, diplomacy, and dependency: Dilemmas of U.S. economic aid*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.