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# GCC PUBLIC DIPLOMACY COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN AFRICA

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## List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DIRCO	Department of International Relations & Cooperation
FBOs	Faith-based organisations
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IR	International Relations
KAICIID	King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue
NAGCC	Nigerian Arab Gulf Chamber of Commerce
PD	Public Diplomacy
QFFD	Qatar Fund for Development
QIA	Qatar Investment Authority
RCCG	Redeemed Christian Church of God
SACCI	South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry
UAE	United Arab Emirates

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## 2. Executive Summary

Public diplomacy (PD) is a crucial tool in enhancing diplomatic ties, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states have strategically utilised PD in Africa to enhance their soft power, pursue economic opportunities, and strengthen diplomatic relations. In recent years, the GCC has witnessed heightened engagement in Africa, driven by the continent's geopolitical significance, economic potential, and historical connections to the Gulf. Including investments in various sectors like ports, infrastructure, agriculture, and mining, necessitating strengthened PD efforts for mutual understanding and cooperation (Pilling et al., 2024).

Africa's emerging economies, young population, natural resources, and diverse traditions present both opportunities and challenges for GCC PD (Todman, 2018). Thus, effective communication strategies tailored to local contexts are essential. This report comprehensively analyses and evaluates GCC PD efforts in Africa, focusing on initiatives in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa by Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. It offers a strategic and comprehensive set of recommendations, which include targeted strategies for the cultural, religious, and economic dimensions, for enhancing GCC future PD efforts in Africa based on contextual understanding and case studies.

This report highlights that several PD dimensions, such as culture, religion, and economy are interrelated and essential for productive engagement. It underscores the significance of nuanced approaches in branding, outreach, and economic diplomacy to promote mutual understanding and collaboration. Furthermore, existing challenges such as cultural and religious diversity (Anagondahalli & Zhu, 2016; Yang, 2014), media disparities (Endong, 2020; Causey & Howard, 2014), political sensitivities (Pu et al., 2023; Sun, 2022; Gass & Seiter, 2020), and trust deficits (Okafor & Ahwoareno, 2019) require adaptive and transparent strategies for effective PD. The recommendations below aim to strengthen mutual understanding, promote shared interests, and facilitate beneficial collaborations between the GCC and African nations, fostering long-term partnerships for mutual growth and development:



## Key Recommendations

- A **strategic planning** approach involving fostering a unified front by GCC governments entities and adopting a system approach to public diplomacy.
- A **research and data collection** approach gives access to research findings and involves conducting regular stakeholder needs assessment and sentiment and perception analysis.
- **Outreach programs** promoting inclusive stakeholder engagement and localized approach.
- **Targeted Communication strategies** making efficient use of digital communication platforms, Artificial Intelligence (AI), strengthening the visibility of public diplomacy efforts.
- A cultural PD approach promoting storytelling for cultural collaboration, the inclusion of local cultural leaders and annual cultural festivals.
- A religious PD approach fostering more intellectual and interfaith dialogue on religious commonalities and tolerance and increased transparency on religious and non-religious driven projects.
- An economic approach including increased investment in sports diplomacy initiatives, humanitarian aid, socially impactful projects, targeted allocation of resources and advertisements for large African markets, and transparent monitoring of safeguarding and labor laws.

## Key Takeaways

- In cultural diplomacy, GCC states leverage their diverse strategies to strengthen their influence in Africa, emphasising tolerance, modernity, and cultural diversity (Gołębiowski, 2020).
- Religious diplomacy plays an important role, necessitating sensitivity to diverse religious contexts and a commitment to fostering dialogue and cooperation across religions (Jamil, Atta, and Kalbi, 2024).
- Economic diplomacy focuses on fostering cooperation, attracting investments, and projecting positive global images, with initiatives ranging from humanitarian aid to global partnerships (Todman, 2018; El Amine, 2023; Munyati, 2024).

## 3. Introduction

### 3.1 Background and Context

Public diplomacy (PD) has been a time-tested tool for enhancing a nation's diplomatic ties with other regions. Likewise, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has employed PD strategies in Africa to boost its soft power in the region, pursue economic opportunities, and strengthen diplomatic ties. For example, pursuing a diverse array of cultural and religious collaborations, as well as trade and investment partnerships (Todman, 2018). PD, in its various forms, shapes a country's branding and outreach outcomes, perceptions, diplomatic ties, and more. Moreover, PD initiatives include activities aimed at engaging foreign audiences, favourably shaping public perceptions, and promoting a country's image and interests on a worldwide scale. According to Alhamar (2023) and Rakhmat & Aswar (2023), the GCC states have, in recent years, acknowledged the significance of PD in strengthening their foreign policy and furthering their interests globally.

Due to its geopolitical significance and economic potential, Africa has become a strategic region of focus for PD efforts and strengthened South-South Cooperation (SSC). On one hand, key emerging global south actors like China, India, Turkey and the GCC countries (Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)) have shown strong interest in engaging with their African partners at the bilateral level in the form of foreign aid directed towards education, transportation, agriculture, infrastructure and industry development amongst many others (UNDP, 2017). At a multilateral level, SSC initiatives like the Brazil-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) grouping have become Africa's biggest trading partner, while trade shares with the EU and North America are in decline (Deych, 2015; Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2023). In 2012, 25% of African investments were attributed to the BRICS (Deych, 2015). Furthermore, China and India lead the engagement, making 16.8% and 7.8% of African exports-imports in 2021 compared to 4.9% for the United States and 1.7% for the United Kingdom (Deych, 2015; Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2023). The BRICS has initiated several cooperation initiatives to strengthen ties with the continent and become a trusted partner (Shaw, 2009). Its PD approach encompasses economic, developmental, humanitarian, cultural, scientific, and peace elements (Deych, 2015).

On the Gulf side in particular, GCC engagement in Africa over the years has increased and is targeting key areas such as investments in ports, infrastructure, agriculture, mining development projects, humanitarian aid and more diplomatic initiatives (Todman, 2018; Munyati, 2024). The recent adhesion of the UAE and Saudi Arabia to the BRICS (now BRICS+) presents notable implications (European Parliament, 2024). On one hand, it demonstrates a recognition of the influential position of BRICS in global affairs and SSC (European Parliament, 2024). On the other hand, given the BRICS commitment in Africa, the interest of Gulf countries in joining the grouping reasserted their commitment and interest in strengthening engagement with Africa. Consequently, this research topic is highly relevant and important as it aims to propose ways to cultivate mutual understanding and sustainable cooperation with diverse state and non-state stakeholders through strengthened PD efforts.

The strategic significance of Africa is obvious with its emerging economies, young population, natural resources and geopolitical position (Todman, 2018). However, its diverse cultural and religious traditions present both opportunities and challenges for GCC PD efforts, necessitating nuanced communication strategies tailored to local contexts. Understanding the dynamics of GCC PD strategies in Africa is essential for policymakers, diplomats and researchers. Therefore, this report analyses and evaluates GCC PD efforts in Africa, and the stakeholders involved and offers recommendations to inform and improve future PD strategies. To facilitate comprehension of this complex topic, the report contextualises it through case studies analysis examining the PD efforts of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. These cases were selected based on strong bilateral relations between these African countries and their GCC partners, demonstrating the deep-rooted engagement of the Gulf nations and providing a solid foundation for the subject. Furthermore, their potential in terms of economic, natural, cultural, and human resources offers a wide range of materials and angles for our analysis.

This report consists of six sections. The first section provides a literature review on the cultural, religious, and economic dimensions of PD, an overview of GCC and Africa PD, a stakeholder analysis and the identified research gaps in the literature. The second section outlines the methodological approach, including research design, questions, objectives, case study justification, data collection, analysis strategy, and limitations. The third section analyses GCC

PD strategies in Africa, offering a comparative cross-country and cross-dimensional analysis of Qatar's, Saudi Arabia's and the UAE's efforts in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa through cultural, religious, and economic lenses. The fourth section proposes strategic recommendations based on best practices and insights from research and interviews, suggesting general and targeted approaches for GCC's future PD. The fifth section identifies research gaps and potential ways to address them. Finally, the report concludes with a summary of key findings and insights.

## 4. Literature Review

### 4.1 Definition of Public Diplomacy

According to Gregory (2011), **Public Diplomacy** (PD) is a tool used by states, associates of states, and some sub-states and non-state actors to understand and influence cultures, attitudes and behaviour to mobilise actions which further the states own interests and values (Adesina, 2023).

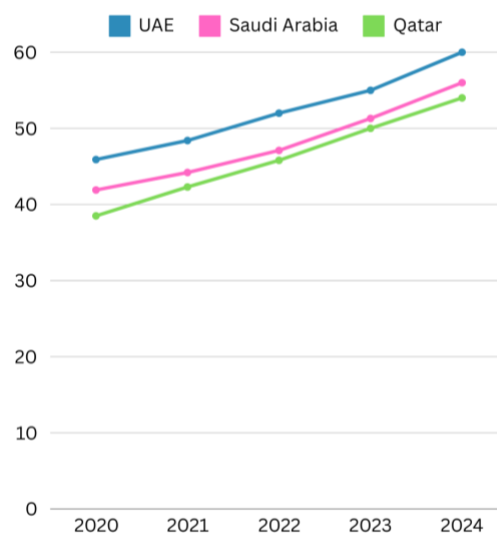
PD differs from traditional diplomacy by engaging directly with foreign publics rather than solely with governments or officials. While traditional diplomacy focuses on government-to-government negotiation (hard power), PD operates on a broader societal level. It includes cultural exchanges, media outreach, and people-to-people interactions to foster mutual understanding and goodwill between nations (soft power). Unlike traditional diplomacy, which often occurs behind closed doors, PD is transparent, aiming to shape global perceptions of a country's values, culture, and policies by influencing public opinion (Nye, 2004; Melissen, 2005). Thus, PD goes beyond traditional diplomacy, focusing on how public attitudes shape foreign policy (Snow & Cull, 2020). Therefore, PD is a vital component of managing a country's global image and reputation, as it includes initiatives such as cultural diplomacy, educational collaborations, and public outreach programs designed to foster positive, long-lasting relationships between nations (Pajtinka, 2014; Özkan, 2014).

## 4.2 Theoretical Framework

### 4.2.1 PD through the Lens of International Relations Theories

PD utilises soft power to influence foreign publics and shape global perceptions. Soft power, defined by Joseph Nye, emphasises a nation's ability to influence others through the attractiveness of its culture, values, and policies (McCorry, 2019). PD serves as a conduit for projecting soft power assets to global audiences, highlighting a country's cultural heritage and societal values (Adesina, 2023). To measure soft power, the Soft Power Index was developed to quantify a country's effectiveness in wielding soft power and, thus, PD on the global stage. Based on Brand Finance's [Global Soft Power Index reports](#) from 2020 to 2024, the following soft power progressions are illustrated:

**Figure 4.1 Global Soft Power Index**



Source: Brand Finance (n.d). Global Soft Power Index.

To contextualise PD within the broader framework of international relations (IR), this section explores the different IR theories including Realism, Neorealism, Liberalism, Positivism and Constructivism and how they relate to PD. First, the use of soft power in PD emphasises the ability to attract and co-opt rather than coerce, contrasting sharply with the hard power focus of realism (Bilgin & Elis, 2008). Realist theory, which centres on state-centric and military power dynamics, might often underestimate the subtle yet potent influence of cultural appeal, values, and diplomacy. However, even realists acknowledge that soft power can complement hard power strategies, enhancing a state's overall influence (Nye, 2012).

Neorealism, on the other hand, focuses on state power and security within an anarchic international system. It recognises that soft power, through economic investments and cultural diplomacy, can enhance influence and secure alliances (Huseynov, 2018; Gallarotti, 2010).

Additionally, Liberalism, focusing on cooperation, institutions, and interdependence, underscores the strategic role of soft power in fostering international alliances and partnerships. Through PD, states engage in dialogue, cultural exchanges, and media outreach, reinforcing mutual understanding and trust. Instruments like the Soft Power Index (see Figure 4.1) measure the effectiveness of these efforts, reflecting how well states leverage their cultural, political, and diplomatic assets (Ohnesorge, 2020; Burchill, 2005). Positivism, with its emphasis on empirical evidence and observable phenomena, supports the evaluation of soft power through quantifiable metrics and systematic analysis (Smith, 1996). By employing tools like the Soft Power Index and public-opinion surveys, positivist approaches validate the impact of PD through measurable outcomes, enabling a more rigorous assessment of its effectiveness (Mcclory, 2019). Lastly, Constructivism, with its emphasis on the social construction of international politics, provides a robust framework for understanding Soft Power. The theory highlights how identities, norms, and discourse shape state behaviour and global interactions. Therefore, from a Constructivist point of view, PD initiatives are instrumental in constructing favourable national narratives and influencing international norms. An example of this is the use of digital diplomacy and leveraging technology and social media to shape public perceptions and engage foreign audiences (Gallarotti, 2010).

In conclusion, PD and soft power have emerged as strategic tools, leveraging culture, national values, and aspirations to shape global perceptions of a country. The various theories presented offer diverse insights into how PD fits in the IR framework. Realism and Neorealism acknowledge Soft Power's complementary role to hard power and its importance in securing alliances. Liberalism emphasises cooperation and international partnerships, while Positivism supports empirical evaluation through metrics and systematic analysis. Constructivism explains the role of PD in shaping state identities and international perceptions. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of PD's contemporary role in IR, showcasing its significance beyond traditional power metrics.

### 4.1.3 Dimensions of Public Diplomacy

PD is a diverse and evolving field, with dimensions that differ across perspectives and contexts. It is important to note that these dimensions are not mutually exclusive, as definitions vary based on perspective and context. Table 4.2 outlines a brief overview of some of these dimensions.

**Table 4.1 Public Diplomacy Dimensions<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup>**

Diplomacy Dimension	Description	Examples
Cultural	It involves exchanging ideas, art, and cultural facets among nations to foster mutual understanding and bridge gaps (Cummings, 2023).	Expo 2020 Dubai, Roads of Arabia Exhibition, Abu Dhabi Film Festival, Ithra Art Prize, World Art Dubai
Sport	The usage of sports to engage, inform and create a favorable image among foreign publics, governments, and organizations (Murray, 2016).	Fifa World Cup 2022 in Qatar
Religion	The use of religion as a way of strengthening ties and fostering mutual understanding, respect for diversity, tolerance, peace and development in multireligious communities (Jamal, Atta & Kalbi, 2024).	Hosting Global Conference of Human Fraternity, Supporting Religious Tolerance Programs, Interfaith Dialogues
Economic	Strategically uses government resources to promote development through trade, investments, and agreements (Teleanu, 2016).	World Government Summit UAE, Qatar Economic Forum, Nigerian Trade House Dubai
Digital	The practice of engaging with foreign publics through social media and digital platforms (Hayden, 2013) in large numbers, in real-time, and with greater impact (Snow & Cull, 2020).	Active presence on social media and/ or digital platforms such as Qatar News Agency

This project emphasises the cultural, religious, and economic dimensions of PD, considering them as the most suitable and relevant based on the presented descriptions and selected countries. Additionally, digital media and soft power will be utilised as tools rather than standalone dimensions. Recognising the interconnectedness of these dimensions is crucial, as effective PD often requires a holistic approach that integrates various elements. The following sections provide an in-depth and contextualised analysis of these dimensions.

<sup>1</sup> [Expo 2020 Dubai](#), [Roads of Arabia Exhibition](#), [Abu Dhabi Film Festival](#), [Ithra Art Prize](#), [World Art Dubai](#),

<sup>2</sup> [Fifa World Cup 2022](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Conference on Human Fraternity](#), [Religious Tolerance Programs](#), [Interfaith Dialogues](#),

<sup>4</sup> [World Government Summit UAE](#), [Qatar Economic Forum](#), [Nigerian Trade House Dubai](#)

#### 4.1.4 Difference within Public Diplomacy: Branding vs Outreach

Nation branding and outreach are both key components of public diplomacy but serve different purposes and employ distinct strategies. Branding is important for governments as it refers to the perceptions the public has or associates with one's country's name (Harris, 2013). Akin to corporate branding but on a national scale, it focuses on creating a positive and consistent image of the country. The UAE does national branding through campaigns such as Dubai Presents<sup>5</sup> or Only in Dubai<sup>6</sup> (Kickham, 2021; The First Group, n.d). Thereby, it highlights cultural heritage, economic opportunities, and political stability. Qatar, on the other hand, utilises communication platforms like Al Jazeera and government entities like the [Qatar Fund for Development](#) (QFFD) to build a national brand that transcends its border. Nation branding aims to raise awareness and disseminate a positive image broadly, functioning more as a one-way communication stream (Szondi, 2010). Conversely, outreach efforts in PD seek direct engagement and cooperation with foreign publics, emphasising dialogue and development (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, n.d). This approach involves targeted efforts such as cultural exchanges, educational programs, and collaborative initiatives such as African music festivals sponsored or hosted<sup>7</sup> by Gulf countries. This approach is interactive, targeted and local, focusing on building relationships and fostering mutual understanding and thus a two-way street, where countries such as those in Africa react and shape those initiatives (Huijgh, 2019).

#### 4.1.5 Challenges and Limitations to Public Diplomacy

##### Challenges

Addressing the complexities of public diplomacy involves navigating various hurdles. Cultural diversity and sensitivity (Anagondahalli & Zhu, 2016; Yang, 2014), media disparities (Endong, 2020; Causey & Howard, 2014), and political sensitivities (Gass & Seiter, 2020; Pu et al., 2023; Sun, 2022) complicate communication strategies. Trust deficits (Okafor & Ahwoareno, 2019)

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<sup>5</sup> The "Dubai Presents" 2021 campaign organised by the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing or Dubai Tourism featured Hollywood stars such as Jessica Alba and Zac Efron in a series of short movies directed by Craig Gillespie, showcasing Dubai's diverse cultural and artistic attractions and aiming to attract global travellers to try and enjoy the experience (Kickham, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the 2019 "Only in Dubai" campaign organised by Dubai Tourism aimed to provide unique discovery experience in the city of Dubai, increase number of visitors to make it the world's most visited city (The First Group, n.d).

<sup>7</sup> One such example is the "[One Africa Music Fest 2019](#)" in Dubai



and digital inequities pose additional challenges while assessing impact proves difficult due to unclear causality (Endong, 2020; Maronkova, 2018).

### Limitations

Public diplomacy efforts encounter several limitations, including perceptions of propaganda (Zaharna, 2004; Hopkins, 2015; Hartig, 2019), policy-reality gaps (Kim, 2017; Bjola et al., 2019), and resource limitations (Raj, 2024; Rudderham, 2008). Immediate outcomes are elusive, and unforeseen events demand adaptable approaches for effective diplomacy (Rasmussen, 2009).

## 4.3 Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy (or diplomacy between cultures) as a concept has existed for centuries. While the term has only emerged recently, the phenomenon has existed since cultural exchanges between different communities began. Cultural diplomacy, according to the 1959 definition of the US Dept of State, entails “the direct and enduring contact between peoples of different nations” designed to “help create a better climate of international trust and understanding in which official relations can operate” (Gienow-Hecht & Donfried, 2010).

In recent times, cultural diplomacy has been critical to maintaining peace and stability in an increasingly globalised and interdependent world, where the expansion of mass communication technologies has resulted in unprecedented levels of interconnection (UNESCO, 2022). Cultural diplomacy, when developed and implemented at various levels, has a unique ability to affect global public opinion and the ideological orientations of people, collectives, and states. The role of cultural diplomacy in soft power is critical in maintaining diplomatic efforts among countries with historically diverse cultures, backgrounds, and geography (Nye, 2004). Diplomacy is constantly evolving based on the changing landscape of international relations, globalisation, and digital infrastructure. It has become increasingly open, with network forms and processes challenging previous hierarchical structures. These networks include several actors apart from governments. This means actors such as

**NELSON MANDELA ALREADY SAID IN 2000:**

**“SPORT HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE THE  
WORLD. IT HAS THE POWER TO INSPIRE. IT  
HAS THE POWER TO UNITE PEOPLE IN A WAY  
THAT LITTLE ELSE DOES. SPORT CAN AWAKEN  
HOPE WHERE THERE WAS PREVIOUSLY ONLY  
DESPAIR. SPORT SPEAKS TO PEOPLE IN A  
LANGUAGE THEY CAN  
UNDERSTAND.” (MURRAY, 2016)**

subnational and regional authorities, interstate organisations, multinational corporations, celebrities, and non-governmental organisations; even the International Olympic Committee and international federations (Kobierecki, 2020).

For example, sports diplomacy contributes significantly to PD efforts among regions. Sport, as a powerful communications tool, can support international efforts to strengthen and renew diplomatic relations in times of crisis (WIPO, 2022). Qatar's investment and projects in the sports industry bolster its economy, create employment opportunities, and enhance its global appeal, thereby strengthening the national brand and positioning it for international success. Over the past decade, Qatar has hosted numerous high-level global sporting events, including the 2019 FIFA World Cup (WIPO, 2022).

#### 4.4 Religious Diplomacy

Historically, religious diplomacy has been successfully employed for various reasons, including mediating conflicts<sup>8</sup> and promoting peaceful coexistence among different religious communities<sup>9</sup> (Khan, 2006; Sandal, 2018). Since the end of the Cold War, particularly after 9/11, religious diplomacy has also emerged as a strategic and inevitable component of foreign policy and public diplomacy strategies of countries like GCC countries, Morocco, China, Russia, and Nigeria (Curanović, 2012; Tadlaoui, 2015; Xu, 2018; Adesina, 2023; Jamil, Atta, & Kalbi, 2024). Fahy (2018) argues that the events of the 9/11 attack changed the relations between the West and the Muslim world, leading them to adopt initiatives promoting tolerance in addition to counter-terrorism measures to foster better relations.

The IR literature has traditionally overlooked the role of religion or mainly focused on its negative aspects, especially post-9/11, but this trend is changing (Haynes, 2021). The concept of religious diplomacy is not as separate from politics as Western secular views might suggest

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<sup>8</sup> Catholic and Protestant groups, for example, were actively involved in the Northern Ireland Conflict (late 1960s - 1990s) peace process through marches, workshops, condemning violence and meeting with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) (Sandal, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Islamic history, the year 622 marks the period of the establishment of the first Islamic state by the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Madina, Saudi Arabia. The "Madina constitution" was adopted to regulate socio-political life and included a principle promoting and encouraging peaceful coexistence between Muslim, Jewish and Pagan communities (Khan, 2006).

(Keiswetter & Chane, 2013; Haynes, 2021). Despite the Western emphasis on separating religion from public affairs, religion has been actively used in traditional and public diplomacy, even by Western countries. For instance, President Obama's 2009 Cairo speech to the Muslim world, as part of its ambition to improve relations between the latter and the United States, highlighted the role of religion in fostering global harmony and interfaith dialogue (Brookings, 2009). In the non-western world, religion plays an important role in public life. Buddhism, for example, has been used for a long time as a diplomatic tool by China, India, and Japan to reinforce its regional or global presence through academic and intellectual events, arts, and cultural activities (Zhang, 2012). According to Desch (2013), modernisation does not necessarily mean secularisation as perceived in the West, and this realisation is changing the belief that Western experiences are universally applicable. Keiswetter and Chane (2013) note that American diplomats have faced difficulties in communicating with the Muslim world due to a lack of understanding of the role of religion in diplomacy, highlighting the need to rethink its status.

Consequently, scholars and policymakers have recognised the importance and potential of integrating religious values and engaging religious leaders and institutions in PD efforts to foster mutual understanding and respect for diversity, facilitate cooperation and cultural exchanges and promote peace and development in societies of different faiths (Jamil, Atta & Kalbi, 2024). Key actors in this venture are usually faith-based and interfaith organisations such as the King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue ([KAICIID](#))<sup>10</sup>, [Caritas Internationalis](#)<sup>11</sup>, [Islamic relief](#)<sup>12</sup> besides governments and related state actors (Jamil, Atta & Kalbi, 2024). China has used interfaith dialogue to strengthen its image as part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) plan. In the Gulf, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have organised interfaith exchanges to enhance their image as part of their nation branding strategy (Zhang, 2022). In other cases, such as in Indonesia, religious diplomacy has also been used to promote economic growth through trade and investment for marginalised communities (Jamil, Atta & Kalbi, 2024).

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<sup>10</sup> Based in Portugal

<sup>11</sup> Based in Vatican City

<sup>12</sup> Based in the United Kingdom

Investment in religious tourism as a way of encouraging interfaith dialogue and showcasing religious heritage to nurture meaningful relationships is also discussed in the literature (Adesina, 2023). Jamil, Atta, and Kalbi (2024) argue that religious diplomacy can be an effective tool to influence public opinion, especially in contexts where religion is important for local groups. Scholars further acknowledged the challenges associated with this practice. While religion can reinforce ties, it can also increase divisions and misunderstandings (Keiswetter & Chane, 2013) if religious sensitivities are not considered. Therefore, a comprehensive, tolerant, and innovative approach that engages grassroots actors and technology can help overcome these challenges.

#### 4.5 Economic Diplomacy

A review of the current literature underscores the absence of a unanimous definition of economic diplomacy, but it is generally agreed that all government agencies that have economic responsibilities and operate internationally are engaging in some form of economic diplomacy, even if they do not describe it as such (Bayne & Woolcock, 2011).

Economic diplomacy is the bedrock of nations' strategic endeavours, deploying diplomatic resources to propel economic interests across the globe. At its essence, economic diplomacy organises governmental assets to enhance trade, entice investments, negotiate pivotal agreements, and pursue economic objectives aligned with foreign policy imperatives. Essentially, economic diplomacy is a tool that helps countries to be economically strong and competitive (Diplomacy, n.d) Therefore, the overall objective of economic diplomacy is to nurture international trade and investments (El-Amine, 2023). Thus, differentiating between economic diplomacy and 'regular' diplomacy can sometimes be very challenging.

Historically, economic diplomacy has evolved from early practices of building diplomatic missions abroad chiefly for trade-centric purposes. Over time, particularly during periods of intense competition between major trading powers, it gained prominence as states tried to secure access to markets, resources, and strategic assets. Thus, diplomatic missions became increasingly involved in supporting businesses and facilitating major investment projects for both political and economic objectives (Diplo, 2023). Consequently, the spread of Islam beyond the Arabian Peninsula is closely linked to trade. (Michalopoulos et al., 2018)

Nowadays, economic diplomacy has become the cornerstone of foreign policy in many nations, mirroring the interconnectivity of economies and the rising significance of global trade and investments. Governments prioritise economic diplomacy to ensure businesses thrive in foreign markets and access vital resources and regions. This effort includes precise coordination between government agencies, business associates, and diplomatic missions to maximise opportunities and mitigate challenges in an increasingly competitive landscape (Diplo, 2023). Governments engage in negotiations, sign trade pacts, dismantle trade barriers, and foster the flow of goods and services across borders. Hence, nations enter global markets, amplify exports, enhance economic advantages, and fortify their competitive advantages by fostering free trade and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). These efforts catalyse knowledge transfer, foster job creation, and spur economic expansion (El Amine, 2023).

Almeida (2015) concludes that economic diplomacy is fundamentally based on four vectors:

Using political influence and strategic relations to promote trade and investment while opening new markets in diverse geographical areas.

Improving the efficacy of specific market facets and correcting existing failures such as cost reduction or lowering the risk of cross-border transactions.

Strengthening the mutual benefit of interstate collaboration and political-economic relations to enhance trade and citizens' security.

Serving as a long-term instrument for resolving bilateral and multilateral conflicts

In the future, the question remains open as to how to efficiently integrate digital diplomacy or technology into investment strategies or economic diplomacy (Bjola et al., 2019).

#### 4.6 Indicator Framework

Table 4.2 illustrates the indicator framework for the analysis across the cultural, sports, religious, economic, and digital dimensions. It includes a description of each dimension, relevant subdimensions, measurement factors, and quantitative and qualitative indicators for a comprehensive evaluation.

**Table 4.2 Indicator Framework**

Diplomacy Dimension	Definition	Subdimension	Factor of Measurement
Cultural	Involves exchanging ideas, art, and cultural facets among nations to foster mutual understanding and bridge gaps (Cummins, 2003).	Art	Art Exhibitions / Festivals organised
		Music	Music Concerts or Festivals held
		Literature	Literature Events or Book Fairs organised
		Food	Culinary Events or Food Festivals organised
		Tourism	Tourist Arrivals or Revenue generated from Tourism
		Education	International Students enrolled in Educational Programs
		Youth & Student Exchange	Youth or Student Exchange Programs facilitated
		Diaspora Engagement	Diaspora Engagement Initiatives or Events organised
		Cultural Exchange	Cultural Exchange Programs or Collaborations
		Heritage Preservation	Heritage Sites preserved or restored
		Culture	Heritage Exhibition
Sport	The usage of sport to engage, inform and create a favourable image among foreign publics, government and organisations. (Murray, 2016)	Sports	International sporting events hosted or participated in
		Sports	Participation Rates, Infrastructure Development, Sport Events, Professional Players, Media Coverage, Government Support
Religion	Use of religion as a way of strengthening ties and fostering mutual understanding, respect for diversity, tolerance, peace and development in multireligious communities (Jamil, Atta & Kalbi, 2024).	Interfaith Dialogue	Interfaith Dialogue Events or Initiatives
		Religious Education	Religious Education Programs or Participants
		Exchange Programs	Religious Exchange Programs or Participants
		Faith-Based Humanitarian / Development Aid	Humanitarian Aid provided by Faith-based Organisations
		Religious Tourism / Pilgrimage Promotion	Religious Tourists or Revenue from Pilgrimage Sites
		Track II Dialogues	Track II Dialogue Sessions or Participants
		Interreligious Exchange	Interreligious Cultural Exchange Events or Collaborations
		Religious Freedom Advocacy	Advocacy Campaigns or Policy Changes related to Religious Freedom
		Youth & Religious Leadership Development	Youth Leadership Programs or Religious Leaders trained
Economic	Strategically uses government resources to promote development through trade, investments, and agreements (Teleanu, 2016)	Trade Promotion & Investment Attraction	Value of Trade Agreements signed or Foreign Investment attracted
		Commercial Diplomacy	Commercial Agreements or Business Partnerships
		Business & Industry Partnerships	Business Collaborations or Joint Ventures
		Entrepreneurships & Startup Ecosystems	Startups launched or supported
		Infrastructure Development & Connectivity	Value of Infrastructure Projects undertaken or completed
		Development Assistance & Capacity Building	Amount of Development Aid provided or Capacity-building Programs implemented
		Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)	Public-Private Partnerships established or Projects initiated
		Digital Economy & Innovation Diplomacy	Digital Economy Initiatives or Innovation Hubs established
		Energy Diplomacy & Resource Management	Amount of Energy Resources traded or invested in
Digital	The practice of engaging with foreign publics through social media and digital platforms (Hayden, 2013) in large numbers, in real-time, and with greater impact. (Snow & Cull, 2020).	Social Media Engagement	Follower or Engagement Metrics on Social Media Platforms
		Digital Content Creation	Digital Content Pieces created or Views generated
		Virtual Events & Webinars	Virtual Events or Webinars conducted
		Digital Cultural Diplomacy	Number of Virtual Exhibitions or Digital Cultural Projects
		Digital Outreach & Influencer Engagement	Effectiveness of Influencer Engagement Strategies or Online Outreach Campaigns
		Data Analytics & Targeted Messaging	Success of Data-driven Messaging or Targeting Strategies
		Crisis Communication & Rapid Response	Effectiveness of Rapid Response Efforts or Crisis Communication Strategies
		Digital Diplomacy Training & Capacity Building	Diplomats or Government Officials trained in Digital Diplomacy
		E-Government Services for Foreign Audiences	E-Government Services provided or Users served
Digital Diplomacy Partnerships & Collaboration	Digital Diplomacy Partnerships or Collaborations established		

## 4.7 Public Diplomacy in GCC Countries

### 4.7.1 Overview of GCC Member States

Established in 1981, the GCC comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (El-Amine, 2023; GCC, n.d). These countries collectively contribute significantly to the global economy, with Qatar and the UAE ranking among the world's highest GDPs (El-Amine, 2023). In recent years, GCC countries have implemented ambitious economic and political diversification plans, such as [Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030](#)<sup>13</sup>, to reduce their dependence on oil. This represents a significant shift and a break from the old paradigm of oil reliance, marking a new era of strategies in the region (Beutel, 2021).

### 4.7.2 Overview Public Diplomacy in GCC

PD in GCC countries, particularly in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, aims to achieve economic diversification, fulfil long-term national visions, and cultivate a global image for mutual understanding, peace, and development (Lirong, 2013; Eggeling, 2017; Alkatheeri & Khan, 2019; Gołębiowski, 2020; Kourgiotis, 2020; Heibach, 2021; Williamson, 2021; Krzymowski, 2022). These objectives stem from the need to promote an image reflecting their wealth and attractiveness amid limited natural resources and rapid economic growth (Zeineddine, 2017). Despite shared goals, each country pursues independent PD strategies.

For instance, the UAE has recently institutionalised PD, influenced by globalisation and foreign policy objectives focused on tolerance and modernity (Gołębiowski, 2020). The emirates of Dubai and Abu Dhabi have also undertaken independent initiatives: Dubai emphasises its role as a technology and commercial hub, such as Expo 2020 Dubai and Digital Dubai, while Abu Dhabi focuses on promoting the emirate as a culture and arts hub through events like the Abu Dhabi Festival on the national, regional and international level (Zeineddine, 2017; Abu Dhabi Festival, n.d). Qatar, on the other hand, aims to establish itself as a progressive nation, leveraging the media (Al Jazeera) and sports (FIFA World Cup 2022) to reinforce its PD influence (Cherkaoui, 2018; Zeineddine, 2017). Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia utilises religious diplomacy and aims to become a global commerce and innovation hub, competing with the

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<sup>13</sup> Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is a strategic framework aimed at diversifying the country's economy, reducing its dependence on oil, and developing sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, and tourism.



UAE (Rakhmat & Aswar, 2023). However, Saudi Arabia's recent PD efforts are also shaped by geopolitical tensions and aspirations for regional leadership, underscoring the complexity of PD within the GCC. In addition, despite concerted efforts, GCC countries encounter challenges in tailoring their strategies to fit local contexts (Heibach, 2021).

#### 4.8 GCC Diplomacy in Africa

Building upon Shiferaw (2016), this report highlights the active engagement of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE in Sub-Saharan Africa. PD efforts in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa focus on economic cooperation and cultural interchange with GCC governments. GCC investments in Kenyan infrastructure projects promote economic growth, while high-level seminars facilitate collaboration. Nigeria prioritises labour investment and commercial partnerships, while Southern Africa engages in joint ventures and economic agreements, particularly with Qatar (Shiferaw, 2016).

Qatar has notably expanded its diplomatic presence in Sub-Saharan Africa, opening 11 new embassies between 2013-2015, while the UAE and Saudi Arabia opened nine and six, respectively, between 2010-2018. Establishing embassies enhances diplomatic relationships and strengthens Gulf states' ability to protect their economic and security interests and coordinate policies efficiently. Saudi Foreign Minister Abdel al-Jubeir's 18 visits to Africa underscore the importance of these relationships. However, during the Gulf crisis, the Nigerian Foreign Minister acknowledged the pressure from both sides to support their positions while striving for neutrality, reflecting the delicate balance of GCC rivalries in Africa (Todman, 2018).

The growing GCC interest in Africa creates a landscape rich in economic opportunities, diplomatic alliances, and intra-GCC rivalries. A diplomatic expert in Qatar<sup>14</sup> emphasised the multifaceted nature of GCC engagement with Africa, extending beyond economic gains to include cultural exchanges and new partnerships. Yet, underlying these interactions are rivalries, notably during the 2017-2021 blockade of Qatar by Saudi Arabia and the UAE<sup>15</sup>. This geopolitical context underscores the importance of understanding GCC PD strategies in Africa.

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<sup>14</sup> Written Interview with a Diplomatic Expert in Qatar (2024)

<sup>15</sup> Interview with a Senior Economic Expert 1 (2024)

Despite extensive discourse on economic and diplomatic ties, there remains a gap in analysing nuanced PD approaches utilised by GCC nations in Africa, indicating a need for further research and examination in this area.

The GCC's activities in **Kenya**, spanning cultural exchange, economic cooperation, and development support, have significantly enhanced bilateral relations. Noteworthy initiatives include the establishment of the East African Centre for Renewable Energy (ECREEE, 2014) and substantial investments in Kenya's infrastructure, tourism, and banking sectors. Furthermore, GCC-backed cultural events and development projects in education, healthcare, and agriculture (Kringen, 2012).

In **South Africa**, the GCC has pursued diverse PD initiatives to foster cultural understanding, economic collaboration, and political communication. These efforts include cultural exchanges, joint economic projects, and political dialogues, such as the visit of Emiratis journalists in 2012 (Brand South Africa, 2012) and the Arab-South African Investment Forum in 2013 (Africa Arab Investment Forum, 2013).

The GCC's PD efforts in **Nigeria** include high-level visits, cultural exchanges, and economic collaborations, such as the inauguration of the Nigeria Trade House. These initiatives, spanning from art exhibitions to educational initiatives and infrastructure investments, aim to deepen mutual understanding and economic ties (Al-Jarallah, 2015; Zawya, 2023). Other countries have also engaged with these African nations. Table 4.3 provides an overview of selected initiatives.

**Table 4.3 Overview and Comparison of Public Diplomacy Efforts by Other Countries in Africa**

Other Countries	African Countries	Projects	Sources
US	Niger	Training Program for Marine Science Students & Agriculture NPO	(U.S. Mission Nigeria, 2023)
Russia	Nigeria	Ajokuta Steel Mill Project and the Aluminium Smelter Company of Nigeria (ALSCON) Revival through Russian Government	(Ibrahim, 2023)
China	South Africa	Chinese-language Media Content for Chinese Diaspora in South Africa	(Freedom House, 2022)
Turkey	Kenya	Broadcasting Turkish Radio and Television Corporation Program in Swahili	(Siradag, 2022)
Korea	South Africa	Korean Culture Center in South Africa (Movies, Concerts & Workshops)	(Korean Cultural Center, n.d)

**4.9 From Public Diplomacy to Public Diplomacy Communication Strategies**

Effective PD strategies aimed at enhancing relations with African nations require robust communication strategies that address diverse sentiments and perceptions prevalent in each country. A comprehensive stakeholder analysis can identify key influencers, opinion leaders, and channels to effectively disseminate narratives that resonate with the target audiences across government, private sector, educational/cultural institutions, and civil society. Assessing PD analysis through tools like sentiment analysis and soft power indices provides valuable insights to tailor the communication approach for different countries. When combining stakeholder analysis with sentiment analysis it enables a nuanced understanding of the perceptions and concerns to address or amplify.

In our study, the sentiment analysis conducted in Kenya indicated generally positive sentiments towards the UAE, suggesting that communication strategies could leverage the admiration for development models like Dubai and the goodwill from high-level visits to amplify economic and trade cooperation narratives. Engaging stakeholders like business chambers, tourism bodies, and cultural institutions will amplify these positive narratives. In contrast, Nigeria's mixed sentiments necessitate a nuanced approach, addressing concerns

over visa issues and foreign worker policies through transparent communication with government agencies and diaspora groups while highlighting investment opportunities and aspirational development models through engagement with the private sector and civil society. South Africa's sentiments, influenced by controversies like the Gupta case (BBC News, 2023)<sup>16</sup> and arms trade issues (Martin, 2022)<sup>17</sup>, require transparent communication to rebuild trust and emphasise shared interests in sectors like sports and food industry investments. Engaging with stakeholders like trade promotion agencies, mining companies, and sports organisations can help reframe the narrative and foster positive perceptions.<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, localising knowledge in PD communication strategies is crucial, ensuring messages engage beyond state institutions and resonate with identified stakeholders, considering cultural, linguistic, and social nuances.

Muhammad (2016) notes successful applications in Sweden and the UK, where localised digital diplomacy approaches, such as Sweden's Arabic Twitter account with tailored messages, effectively engage Arab-speaking communities (195'000 followers), promoting Swedish culture and lifestyle in the Arab region. Therefore, adopting localised PD communication strategies in GCC-Africa relations will facilitate understanding, build trust, and foster long-term relationships.

The following tables 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6 outline key stakeholders in each dimension (culture, religion and economy), encompassing public and private actors such as ministries, corporations, media, CSOs, academia and NGOs. GCC countries must consider these when tailoring messages to their African partners, highlighting the importance of public-private partnerships, including local and grassroots communities, in successful PD efforts.

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<sup>16</sup> The Gupta case involves allegations of state capture in South Africa, with the Gupta family accused of manipulating government decisions for personal gain, and ongoing efforts to extradite them from the UAE to face charges. The UAE turned it down.

<sup>17</sup> Export of weapons on halt due to issues in permit processing for the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

<sup>18</sup> Further details for the Sentiment Analysis can be found in the Annex Chapter 11.3

**Table 4.4 Key Stakeholders in the Cultural Diplomacy Dimension**

Countries	Government Entities	Private Sector	Educational / Cultural Institutions	Civil Society
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	Ministries of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation / Ministries of Culture & Heritage / Tourism Authorities / Investment Promotion Agencies / Sovereign Wealth Funds / Investing in Cultural Projects / Sport Organisations & Teams / Airlines / Media & Broadcasting Companies / Real Estate & Development Companies	Major Corporations sponsoring or investing in Cultural Events / Football Clubs / Event Organisers	Museums / Art Fairs & Festivals / Universities & Research Centers / Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives	Prominent Personalities & Influencers / Diaspora Groups abroad / International NGOs operating Cultural Exchange Programs / Local Cultural Associations & Foundations
<b>Qatar</b>				
<b>UAE</b>				
<b>Nigeria</b>	Federal Ministry of Information & Culture / National Council for Arts & Culture / Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation / State Ministries of Culture & Tourism / National Institute for Cultural Orientation	Cultural Exports (e.g. Nollywood Film Industry) / Afrobeats Music Artists & Record Labels / Fashion & Creative Industry Bodies / Event Organisers	Nigerian Football Federation / Professional Football Leagues / Other Sports Federations / Universities & Research Centers focused on Cultural Studies / National Museum & Monuments / Arts & Crafts Villages & Centers / Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives	Ethnic Communities & Traditional Societies / Prominent Personalities & Influencers in Arts, Culture & Entertainment / Nigerian Diaspora Groups Abroad/ Local Cultural Associations & NGOs / Religious & Faith-based Organisations
<b>Kenya</b>	Ministry of Foreign & Diaspora Affairs / Ministry of Tourism / Ministry of Sports, Culture & Heritage / Kenya Tourism Board / Brand Kenya Board / County Cultural Affairs Office	Tourism Agencies & Tour Operators / Hotels & Hospitality Industry / Arts & Creative Industry Bodies / Event Organisers / Sports Leagues / Media & Broadcasting Companies promoting Kenyan Culture / Corporate Sponsors & Partners investing in Cultural Events	National Museum of Kenya / Cultural Centers / Universities & Research Centers focused on Cultural Studies / Performing Arts Groups & Troupes	Cultural Organisations / Ethnic Communities & Traditional Societies / Prominent Personalities & Influencers in Arts, Culture & Sports / Diaspora Groups of Kenyans abroad / Local Cultural Associations & NGOs
<b>South Africa</b>	Department of Sports, Arts & Culture / Department of International Relations & Cooperation / Provincial & Local Government Cultural Affairs Departments / Brand South Africa / South African Tourism / National and Regional Arts & Culture Agencies / Sports Bodies / National Sport Teams	Event Organisers / Creative Industry / Corporate Sponsors of Art & Cultural Events / Tourism Promotion Agencies	Universities & Research Centers focused on Arts, Culture & Heritage Studies/ Museums & Art Galleries / Performing Arts Groups & Institutions / Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives	Arts & Cultural Organisations / Ethnic Communities celebrating (e.g. Ubuntu Philosophy)/ Prominent Personalities & Influencers in Arts, Culture & Sports / South African Diaspora Groups abroad / Local Cultural Associations & NGOs

**Table 4.5 Key Stakeholders in the Religious Diplomacy Dimension**

Countries	Government Entities	Private Sector	Educational / Cultural Institutions	Civil Society
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Call & Guidance / King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz International Centre for Interreligious & Intercultural Dialogue / Diplomatic Missions & International Organisations (engaged in dialogue on religious matters) / General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques / Council of Senior Scholars (Hay'at Kibar al-Ulama) / Saudi Embassies in Kenya, South Africa & Nigeria	Media Organisations / Private Philanthropies / Charities / Pearl Initiative / Development Banks / Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)	Universities & Research Centers, Think Tanks	Muslim World League (engages in Interfaith Dialogue & Relief Efforts worldwide) / Prominent Personalities & Influencers / Diaspora Groups / International NGOs / Saudi Charities & Foundations
<b>Qatar</b>	Ministry of Awqaf & Islamic Affairs / Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Religious Affairs Department) / Qatar Embassies in Kenya, South Africa & Nigeria	Media Organisations / Private Philanthropies / Tourism Industry / Charities / Development Banks	Qatar Foundation for Interfaith Dialogue / Universities & Research Centers / Think Tanks	Qatar Charity (engaged in international humanitarian & interfaith efforts) / International Center for Sport Security (ICSS) (promoting sports as a tool for interfaith dialogue) / Islamic Organisations & Scholars / Christian Churches & Denominations (Small Expatriate Communities) / Qatar Foundation for Interfaith Dialogue
<b>UAE</b>	UAE Ministry of Tolerance & Coexistence / General Authority of Islamic Affairs & Endowments / Dubai Islamic Affairs & Charitable Activities Department / UAE Fatwa Council / Zayed House for Islamic Culture / UAE Embassies in Kenya, South Africa & Nigeria	Media Organisations / Tourism Industry / Private Philanthropies / Charities / Development Banks / Islamic Development Banks (IsDB) / YallaGive	Hedayat Center (focuses on countering violent extremism through interfaith dialogue) / Zayed House for Islamic Culture / Emirates Center for Strategic Studies & Research (ECSSR) religion	Sharjah Charity International / Christian Churches & Denominations (e.g., St. Andrew's Church in Abu Dhabi) / Hindu Temples / Sikh Gurdwaras & other Religious Institutions (representing Expatriate Communities) / Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Center for Cultural Understanding / Abrahamic Family House
<b>Nigeria</b>	GCC Embassies in Nigeria / The Lagos State Ministry of Home Affairs	Media Organisations / Private Philanthropies / Tourism Industry / Charities	Universities & Research Centers / Sports Organisations / Think Tanks	Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) / Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) / Islamic Organisations & Scholars / Christian Churches & Denominations / Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) / Inter-Faith Activity & Partnership for Peace (IFAPP)
<b>Kenya</b>	GCC Embassies in Kenya / Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Ministry of International & National Administration	Media Organisations / Private Philanthropies / Tourism Industry / Charities	Universities & Research Centers / Sports Organisations/ Think Tanks / School of Religion & Christian Ministry (SRCM) / Africa Nazarene University	Inter-Religious Council for Kenya (IRCK) / Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) / National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) / Islamic Organisations & Scholars / Christian Churches & Denominations / Traditional Religious Leaders & Communities / the LIFE Ministry Kenya / Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB)
<b>South Africa</b>	GCC Embassies in South Africa / Commission for the Promotion & Protection of the Rights of Culture, Religious & Linguistic Communities	Media Organisations / Private Philanthropies / Tourism Industry / Charities	Universities & Research Centers / Sports Organisations / Think Tanks / Center for Human Rights, Faculty of Law / University of Pretoria	Muslim Judicial Council / South African Jewish Board of Deputies / Archbishop Tutu Foundation / South African Council of Churches (SACC) / Prominent Personalities & Influencers / Diaspora Groups / International NGOs / South African Charities & Foundations / Council of Muslim Theologians (Jamiatul Ulama South Africa) / South African Hindu Maha Sabha

**Table 4.6 Key Stakeholders in the Economic Diplomacy Dimension**

Countries	Government Entities	Private Sector	Educational / Cultural Institutions	Civil Society
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Ministry of Energy / Saudi Fund for Development / Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority / Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority / Ministry of Commerce and Investment / Embassies and Consulates	Oil and Gas Companies / Construction, Infrastructure Companies / Investment Banks , Financial Institutions / Telecommunications / Business Chambers / Hospitality Sector	Universities and Research Centers, Think Tanks	Prominent Personalities , Influencers / Diaspora Groups / International NGOs / Saudi Charities and Foundations
<b>Qatar</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Ministry of Commerce and Industry / Qatar Investment Authority / Qatar Fund for Development / Qatar National Tourism Council / Embassies and Consulates	Oil and Gas Companies, Construction Companies / Hospitality Sectors/ Real Estate Developers/ Business Chambers / Banks and Financial Platforms / Telecommunication Companies	Universities and Research Centers/ Sport Organisations/ Think Thanks / Foundations	Prominent Personalities , Influencers / Diaspora Groups / International NGOs / Qatari Charities and Foundations
<b>UAE</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Coordination / Ministry of Economy / Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure / Abu Dhabi Investment Authority / Abu Dhabi Fund for Development / UAE Ministry of Culture and Youth / UAE Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence / Embassies	Tourism Industry, Real Estate Development Companies/ Financial Services / Infrastructure Development Firms / Business Chambers / Telecommunication Companies / Logistics and Transportation Companies	Universities and Research Centers/ Sports Organisations / Think Thanks	Prominent Personalities , Influencers / Diaspora Groups / International NGOs / UAE Charities and Foundations
<b>Nigeria</b>	Ministry of Trade and Investment / Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission / Nigerian Export Promotion Council / Embassies and Consulates / Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning/ Ministry of Petroleum Corporation / Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority	Oil industry/ Agriculture / Telecommunications / Business Chambers / Banks / Construction and Infrastructure Companies / Media and Entertainment Industry	Universities and Research Centers/ Sports Organisations / Think Thanks	Prominent Personalities , Influencers / Diaspora Groups / International NGOs / Nigerian Charities and Foundations
<b>Kenya</b>	Kenya Investment Authority, Kenya Ports Authority/ Embassies and Consulates / Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives / Ministry of Finance / Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife / Export Promotion Council	Banks and Financial Institutions / Business Chambers / Agriculture / Tech Start-ups and Innovations Hubs / Tourism Industry / Manufacturing and Industrials / Media and Entertainment Industry / Telecommunication Companies	Universities and Research Centers/ Sports Organisations / Think Thanks	Prominent Personalities , Influencers / Diaspora Groups / International NGOs / Kenyan Charities and Foundations
<b>South Africa</b>	Department of International Relations & Corporation / Department of Trade, Industry & Competition / Department of Finance / South African National Energy Development Institute / Department of Tourism / Department of Mineral Resources & Energy / Department of Agriculture, Land Reform & Rural Development / Trade Promotion Agencies / Embassies & Consulates / South African Airways / South African Investment Promotion Agency	Mining Industry / Manufacturing / Financial Services / Agribusiness & Food Production Companies / Telecommunication Companies / Media & Entertainment Industry	Universities & Research Centers / Sports Organisations / Think Tank	Prominent Personalities & Influencers / Diaspora Groups / International NGOs / South Africa

The effectiveness of these PD strategies hinges on identifying key stakeholders, understanding diverse audiences and implementing structured guidance processes led by entities like the chamber of commerce, foreign ministries, or dedicated PD councils.

As GCC countries intensify their involvement with Africa, a cohesive and customised PD communication approach, informed by rigorous stakeholder and sentiment analysis, becomes essential, shaping narratives, addressing concerns, and nurturing mutually beneficial relationships across multiple sectors.

## 4.10 Public Diplomacy Communication Strategies in Africa

This section explores the role of traditional and modern media in public and digital diplomacy strategies across Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. The media serves as a crucial link between governments, citizens, and the international community, shaping public opinion, fostering dialogue, combating misinformation, and promoting cultural exchange through its extensive reach and influence.

In **Kenya**, the media has actively contributed to post-conflict peacebuilding efforts, facilitating dialogue and reconciliation while also promoting democratic values and government accountability (Maweu, 2019).

**Nigeria's** media has played a vital role in shaping public opinion and organising support for diplomatic initiatives, exemplified by the #BringBackOurGirls movement, which mobilised global attention through social media and traditional channels (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015; Nnadiukwu, 2020).

In **South Africa**, the media has raised awareness of global issues like climate change and poverty, advocating for African perspectives and fostering cultural exchange to promote unity among African nations (Tagbo, 2010).

These examples underscore the media's significant impact on diplomacy and public discourse in Africa, aligning with each country's foreign policy objectives and contributing to regional and global dialogue and cooperation.

## 4.11 Identified Gaps in the Literature Reviewed

The literature on GCC PD in Africa highlights branding, economic diversification, and peace and development initiatives, yet lacks detailed analysis of challenges and actionable solutions. Stakeholder roles in GCC-Africa relations require further examination, alongside practical application of soft power. Limited insight into previous communication strategies hinders evaluations of success and failure. Given evolving political landscapes, there is a pressing need for tangible solutions and interdisciplinary approaches to enhance GCC engagement with Africa. A comprehensive review of past strategies and critical evaluation of challenges are essential for advancing GCC-Africa PD efforts.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Overview of the Research Design

This project employs a qualitative case study analysis to explore PD and communication strategies tailored to the unique context of GCC countries in Africa. Case studies will examine three key GCC-African relationships, encompassing trade connections, cultural exchanges, significant political relations, substantial GCC involvement in PD, and untapped potential. Insights drawn from these cases may offer broader applicability to other countries across the continent.

### 5.2 Research Questions

This research attempts to answer the following question:

**“How can a GCC country develop a nuanced and targeted public diplomacy communication strategy for African nations that effectively aligns with their unique cultural, economic, and political landscapes to foster mutual understanding, promote its interests, and facilitate beneficial collaborations?”**

Sub Questions:

What are the key cultural, economic, and religious factors GCC countries should consider when developing a public diplomacy communication strategy for African nations?

What are the main strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of seeking a mutually beneficial relationship between GCC member states and countries in Africa?

What are the past initiatives (if any) in public diplomacy between the two parties and recognisable gaps in the process?

What are the most effective channels and messaging strategies for GCC countries to use to communicate with African audiences?

### 5.3 Research Objective

This research initiative aims to fill the gap in effective PD strategies employed by GCC members, providing actionable insights and ideas for strengthening their engagement and positive influence in Africa by:

- Assessing current PD efforts
- Conducting a stakeholder analysis
- Analysing best practices through case studies
- Conducting a gap analysis and providing recommendations



## 5.4 Country Selection

This section outlines the rationale behind selecting the African countries for the case study, based on their current relations with the GCC and their geographic, socioeconomic, and political potential.

**Table 5.1 Country Selection**

Region	Country	Justification
East	Kenya	Kenya's economic prominence in East Africa, coupled with its strategic location, makes it an attractive choice for many countries, especially GCC. The country's political stability distinguishes it as a key player in regional geopolitics, fostering an ideal environment for diplomatic engagement. (World Bank, n.d) Furthermore, Kenya's rich cultural diversity and historic ties with Arab communities provide a solid foundation for durable relationships, enhancing the potential for successful initiatives. Kenya also has many opportunities for collaboration in economic sectors such as infrastructure development, agriculture, energy, etc. (Srivatsava & Ayora, 2011)
West	Nigeria	Often hailed as the "Giant of Africa", Nigeria earns this title through its expansive land, diverse populace, multilingual mosaic, huge population, and abundant natural resources (Sohn, 2020). Standing as the largest oil and gas producer on the continent, Nigeria has extensive trade connections, particularly with GCC countries. The significance of the relationship is underscored by the existence of the Nigerian-Arab Chamber of Commerce (Gumbi, 2019).
South	South Africa	South Africa is among the largest economies in Africa after Nigeria and Egypt and is known as a prominent financial centre and a key player in the industrial sector (Oluwole, 2023). It established and maintains strong diplomatic ties with GCC countries, especially the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, since the mid-1990s ( United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d; Gulf International Forum, 2018; Qatar News Agency, 2023). Collaborative efforts such as the South African Business Group with the UAE, the Joint Economic Commission and Joint Investment Fund with Saudi Arabia and the energy sector with Qatar demonstrate the active involvement of GCC in the region and the openness of South Africa to fruitful partnerships (South African Business Council in UAE, n.d; Fakude, 2017; Dubai Chamber Commerce, 2021).

Due to the project's limited scope, North Africa was excluded, despite its historical and cultural ties with several GCC countries. Extensive research has already explored PD and international relations in countries like Egypt (Maziad, 2021; Butter, 2020; Young, 2017; Farouk, 2014) and Morocco (Maddy-Weitzman, 2024; Malka, 2022; Maestri, 2016; Rousselet, 2014; Achy, 2011). Therefore, the project focuses on exploring new perspectives and insights by examining relations and PD in lesser-known or less-researched Sub-Saharan African countries.

## 5.5 Data Collection

### 5.5.1 Desk Research

The desk research encompassed a comprehensive review of existing literature, reports, academic papers, policy documents, social media posts and newspaper articles pertaining to the relationship dynamics between GCC countries in Africa, especially Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

### 5.5.2 Interviews

A series of over 10 interviews were conducted with a diverse range of African and Middle Eastern scholars, professors, experts of Public Diplomacy, government officials, diplomats, communication experts, businessmen, and consultants. These interviews served to address gaps identified during desk research and to delve deeper into the subject matter, gathering a spectrum of insights and opinions.

### 5.5.3 Survey

To gain a nuanced understanding of how GCC countries are perceived in Africa, four surveys consisting of approximately 12 questions each were administered. These surveys covered general perceptions, as well as specific perceptions regarding the relationship or public diplomacy initiatives between Kenya-GCC, Nigeria-GCC, and South Africa-GCC. Dissemination of the surveys occurred across various social media platforms<sup>19</sup>, emails and through personal contacts. Despite a less-than-optimal response rate, the obtained insights were integrated with desk research and interview findings to enrich the analysis.

### 5.5.4 Sentiment Analysis

News sentiment analysis involves dissecting emotions, opinions and attitudes expressed in news articles or media content. Utilising techniques such as Natural Language Processing (NLP) and text analysis, sentiment analysis aims to categorise these sentiments as positive, neutral, or negative (Dowjones, n.D).

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<sup>19</sup> Instagram and Facebook

In this report, the sentiment analysis was conducted for the UAE regarding their coverage in Kenyan, Nigerian and South African media. The analysis supported literature analysis and surveys, using ATLAS.ti for text analysis with a small sample size of N=100 for each country. Only online articles from popular free English-language online newspapers were being used, limiting access to newspapers and thereby excluding social media and regional languages. This approach, while providing insights, acknowledges its limitations and suggests potential for further research.

### 5.6 Data Analysis

The data in this project underwent thematic analysis, a method well-suited for interpreting qualitative data (Willig & Rogers, 2017). This method helped identify common themes and patterns to extract crucial insights from the information collected. Based on the conducted desk research and interviews, a focus on culture, religious, and economic dimensions was set, given its importance in GCC-Africa PD relations.

The focus on these three dimensions provides an opportunity to explore different PD aspects. Additionally, analysing the selected cases across these dimensions will allow us to compare and contrast findings and suggest nuanced and comprehensive communication strategies tailored to the unique African context.

## 5.7 Limitations

There are three limitations to this study. Firstly, there was limited access to stakeholders from the official, grassroots and local communities of the targeted countries. With only two positive responses received out of over a dozen interview requests to diplomats and government officials. Moreover, in the interviews and surveys the study struggled to gather extensive insights from local perspectives and women. In some cases, requests to Facebook groups of African diaspora communities in the Gulf countries were rejected, which restricted access to civilians and resulted in a small and less inclusive sample size. Secondly, there is a scarcity of official documents outlining PD objectives and clear strategies from African and GCC governments. Most available documents are outdated or not publicly accessible, complicating stakeholders' and researchers' ability to assess past and current efforts. Thirdly, due to local language barriers, the study could only rely on English-language sources, overlooking important cultural nuances and alternative viewpoints, thereby restricting the depth of the study's findings. To overcome these challenges, the study combined all relevant primary and secondary information available and proposed recommendations for future research, acknowledging and aiming to mitigate these limitations.

## 6. GCC Public Diplomacy Strategies in Africa

### 6.1 Cultural Diplomacy

According to our primary research, it becomes evidently clear that cultural diplomacy has become a more direct strategy for PD in the GCC towards African nations. Cultural diplomacy, seen as a form of soft power, involves the global dissemination of a nation's culture and arts through communication. The richness of African culture presents a promising opportunity for enhancing diplomatic efforts. This approach, relatively novel in the foreign policies of many African nations and international public relations, contends that leveraging cultural assets can be a dynamic tool for fostering security as well. By utilising cultural influence as a model for soft power, it posits that trust among nations can be sustained, strengthened, or even initiated (Enaifoghe & Makhutla, 2020).

#### Qatar - Strategic Engagement

Qatar has significantly expanded its cultural diplomacy outreach in Africa in recent years. Qatar opened the largest number of new embassies in sub-Saharan Africa compared to any other country except Turkey, building 11 new embassies between 2013 and 2015 (Todman, 2018). Qatar's National Vision 2030 focuses on sustainable development and projecting an image beyond just an oil exporter to a culturally diverse and inclusive society. Sports diplomacy has been a major thrust area, most notably hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Qatar's relationship with African nations has grown substantially, aided by its embassy expansion and cultural initiatives celebrating African arts and cultures (Todman, 2018). Qatar has used digital technology to boost its PD efforts, hosting educational and diplomatic webinars and engaging global audiences via social media. This approach helped to build diplomatic contacts and create a positive image of Qatar during the pandemic (Kwachuh, 2021). Institutions like Hamad Bin Khalifa University and Al Jazeera Network have notably advanced Qatar's soft power and global influence through digital diplomacy (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, n.d).

Qatar has also actively used digital technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), to strengthen its PD and ensure its economic and strategic future. The country has devised a

comprehensive national AI plan to become a global leader in AI research and innovation (QCAI, n.d)

### **UAE - Multifaceted Approach**

The UAE's cultural diplomacy strategy aims to position the nation as a global cultural hub, focusing on empowering women, social welfare, and economic appeal. Through initiatives like the Soft Power Council and collaborations such as The Africa Institute, the UAE fosters cross-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding with African nations. Between 2010 and 2018, the UAE opened 9 new embassies in sub-Saharan Africa as part of this outreach. The UAE has invested heavily in promoting its artistic and cultural initiatives globally, including in Africa (Smithsonian Magazine, 2018). The UAE leverages digital diplomacy, supported by its superior communication infrastructure and desire for global engagement. It employs digital platforms to advance its foreign policy objectives, such as politics, humanitarian aid, finance, and defence, effectively communicating with other countries and international organisations (Al Mazrouei, 2019).

### **Saudi Arabia - Diversified Approach**

Traditionally more reserved in public diplomacy, Saudi Arabia has undergone a transformative shift with its Vision 2030 agenda. It now embraces diversification by welcoming foreign tourists, hosting various cultural events, and enhancing Islamic pilgrimage sites. Internationally, Saudi Arabia attracts attention through sports diplomacy, with investments in football clubs and hosting events like the LIV golf tournament (Ettinger, 2023). It opened 6 new embassies in sub-Saharan Africa from 2010-2018. (Economist, 2024) Saudi Arabia is also preparing to host the 2034 FIFA World Cup as part of its cultural outreach efforts (The Hindu, 2024).

Saudi Arabia's digital diplomacy includes a strong social media presence, with government organisations and officials using platforms like Twitter/X to promote policies and initiatives globally. (Digital Cooperation Organization, 2023). Additionally, the kingdom employs live-streaming and virtual events to enhance diplomatic outreach and showcase the country's cultural and economic developments on the international stage (Akdenizl, 2019).

Table 6.1 provides an overview of the different sets of branding and outreach strategies taken by Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE when approaching Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa across the cultural dimension.

**Table 6.1 Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE’s Cultural PD strategies in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa**

	UAE	Qatar	Saudi Arabia
<b>Kenya</b>	Music & Arts Festivals showcasing Emirati Culture / Funding for Cultural Exchange Programs (Language & Art)/ Agreed Investments in Digital Infrastructure (AI, Data Centers etc.)	Exhibitions of Qatari Art and Photography, Promoting Traditional Sports like Falconry, Signing Agreements on Tourism, Education, Culture, Training of Kenyan Port Officials, employing Transport and Aviation.	Promoting Islamic Art & Calligraphy, Hosting Cultural Delegations and Tours of Historical Sites.
Focus	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
<b>Nigeria</b>	Sports Sponsorships & Athlete Exchange Programs (with European clubs) / Showcasing Emirati Cinema & Music / African Music Festivals / Artists in Dubai & Abu Dhabi.	Hosting Nigerian Musicians at Festivals / Scholarships for African Students to Study in Qatar / Arabic Language Courses & Cultural Events.	Buying Nigerian Football Players for European Clubs / Potential for Collaborative Art Exhibitions & Cultural Exchange Programs.
Focus	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
<b>South Africa</b>	Sports Collaboration (2019 Special Olympics Summer World Games)/ Participation in Expo 2020 Dubai.	Co-hosting Cultural Festivals with South African Partners, Limited Sports Diplomacy Initiatives like FIFA. Tends to use Branding Techniques.	E-Visa System for South Africans, Plans for Direct Flights, Joint Tourism Marketing.
Focus	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM

### Kenya - Cultural Branding

Kenya blends tradition with modernity, upholding values like humility, compassion, and kinship relationships. With over 40 ethnic groups and 60 African languages, Kenya's rich cultural diversity is a key part of its national identity and global image. The country actively promotes cultural diplomacy to raise awareness of its heritage and inspire interest globally. Key objectives include respecting diversity, encouraging cultural exchanges, promoting Kiswahili language, and leveraging artists/athletes as cultural ambassadors. Festivals like the annual Turkana Cultural Festival celebrate Kenya's ethnic traditions and nomadic communities. Such events reinforce Kenya's brand as the "Cradle of Mankind" (Kenyan Embassy DC, n.d) and a custodian of ancient African cultures. Tourism is an important economic driver, and Kenya capitalises on its cultural attractions through agreements with GCC countries like Qatar on tourism, education, and cultural cooperation (Star, 2017). Qatar

also trains Kenyan officials and employs Kenyans in transport/aviation sectors. Beyond traditional arts, Kenya's growing digital economy and ICT sector represent its modern cultural assets; with a growth of 23% annually (Gulf Today, 2024). Agreements with UAE facilitate investment in digitalization, AI, and data centres - projecting Kenya's image as an African tech hub. Sports like football further Kenya's public diplomacy, with the Kenyan Premier League showcasing talent and uniting communities. GCC investments in Kenyan players reinforce the nation's sporting brand (Kinyili & Chaudhry, 2021). Kenya's digital diplomacy is a rising phenomenon with considerable impact on international relations. By leveraging social media, Kenya promotes regional integration and strengthens bilateral ties with East African Community (EAC) member countries. This approach has expedited communication, making it more efficient and cost-effective, thereby enhancing Kenya's engagement with its neighbours and the international community (Onyango, 2022).

Social media has positively impacted bilateral relations between Kenya and other EAC states, by increasing ease and speed of communication, demystifying borders, and encouraging regional integration (Onyango, 2022). Kenya's digital diplomacy activities also focus on expanding networks, combating misinformation, and safeguarding its international image by engaging with diplomatic actors, heads of state, and online influencers (Oloo, 2023). By strategically promoting its ethnic diversity, ancient heritage, modern innovation capabilities, and cultural exports like sports/arts, it strengthens its national brand and soft power appeal on the global stage.

### **Nigeria - Mixed approach**

Nigeria, beyond its formidable hard power assets, boasts a rich array of soft power elements, including its vibrant cultural exports like Nollywood and Afrobeats, multinational corporations, mega-churches, its vast diaspora, and thriving fashion industry. Especially Nollywood and Afrobeats have been critical to Nigeria's cultural and economic diplomacy, producing around 2,500 films annually and generating \$600 million each year. Nigerian music, with artists such as Wizkid, Davido, and Burna Boy, is admired globally (Tella, 2021). Burna Boy and Wizkid played at the One Africa Festival in 2019, and Burna Boy was named Best International Act at the 2019 BET Awards and Apple Music's Next Artist. The 2024 One Africa Music Fest features only Nigerian musicians, including Wande Coal, 2BABA, and OMAWUMI



(OneAfricaMusicFest, 2024). Additionally, Nigerian football players play in the starting eleven in the Saudi League and the UAE Pro League (Soccerway, n.d.). While GCC countries have not directly invested in Nigerian football, they have acquired Nigerian players for their European teams such as Manchester City FC, Paris Saint Germain FC, and Newcastle United FC (Transfermarkt, 2024).

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society with over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 indigenous languages, with English being the official language. The three dominant ethnic groups are the Hausa/Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Igbo in the southeast. Efforts for national unity have often failed due to cultural intolerance and a north/south dichotomy, deepening divisions and mistrust among Nigerians. (Adetiba, 2022).

Digital diplomacy significantly impacted Nigeria's foreign policy during the COVID-19 epidemic, accelerating the adoption of digital tools by diplomats and officials to maintain communication and engagement with international partners despite travel restrictions. This transition enabled effective interaction and continuity in diplomatic relations, ensuring sustained engagement with stakeholders globally (Olubukola, 2022).

Nigeria's branding through its cultural exports, particularly Nollywood and Afrobeats, has significantly enhanced its global image. The success of Nigerian artists and filmmakers on international platforms underscores the country's growing influence and soft power.

### **South Africa - Robust Engagement**

South Africa, known as the rainbow nation, is culturally diverse with various ethnicities, languages, and traditions (Jackson, 2022). The population includes three main racial groups: Black natives (81.4%), Coloured people (8.2%), and Whites (7.3%) as of 2022 (South African Government, n.d.).

The African philosophy of Ubuntu, meaning "I am because we are," underpins South Africa's cultural diplomacy, emphasising togetherness and solidarity (Ndlovu, 2009; Mnkwa, 2023). This is evident in South Africa's global cultural influence through sports, music, film, and art.

The music genre 'Amapiano' has gained international popularity, with artists like Black Coffee, Tyla, Musa Keys, Master KG, and Nomcebo Zikode receiving international awards such as the Grammys (DIRCO,2024). Domestically, awards like the Ubuntu Sports Diplomacy Award and the Ubuntu Arts and Cultural Diplomacy Award recognise local talent (DIRCO, 2024). Events like the Investec Cape Town Art Fair attract global galleries, enhancing South Africa's cultural diplomacy (DIRCO, 2024). The country also attracts international movie producers, such as the team behind Mission Impossible, highlighting its cultural impact (DIRCO, 2024).

Hosting major sports events, such as the 2010 FIFA World Cup, and supporting Qatar in organising the 2022 FIFA World Cup, illustrates South Africa's sports diplomacy in bridging sociocultural differences. South African sports teams have achieved significant milestones globally, including successes at the 2019 Special Olympics Summer World Games in the UAE and Banyana Banyana's victory at the 2022 Women's Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco (Ford, 2019). The UAE embassy in Pretoria supported the South Africa team's qualification for the Special Olympics by organising events and providing financial support (The Diplomatic Society, 2019). In 2023, Saudi Arabia enhanced cultural diplomacy with South Africa by opening its e-visa system to them, facilitating tourism and religious pilgrimages, including direct flight plans and joint marketing strategies (International Finance, 2023). This move, alongside Saudi Arabia's visa exemption for 90 days, strengthens bilateral relations.

Moreover, South Africa's digital diplomacy has grown significantly, owing to diplomatic missions and government officials' increased use of social media platforms such as Twitter/X to connect with local and foreign nationals (Olubukola, 2022). This shift has facilitated more direct and accessible communication, enhancing public diplomacy efforts. Furthermore, novel diplomacy projects using AI and data analytics have emerged to help diplomatic decision-making (Wekesa et al., 2021). As GCC countries enhance their cultural diplomacy towards Africa, they can draw valuable insights from South Africa's successful cultural promotion strategies.

Table 6.2 provides an overview of the internet penetration in each of the three African countries and comparably illustrates the state of the digital economy

**Table 6.2 Internet Saturation and Digital Economy Comparison in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa<sup>20</sup>**

Country	Internet Saturation / Penetration Rate	Digital Economy
Kenya	54%	M-Pesa, the world's largest mobile-money system; significant mobile phone penetration (52% of the population).
South Africa	54%	Strong digital economy with high mobile phone penetration (80%); significant broadband coverage (99%).
Nigeria	45%	Growing digital economy with increasing mobile phone penetration; significant potential for digital transformation.

**6.2 Religious Diplomacy**

Insights from our primary and secondary research reveal the significant role of religion in Africa and Gulf countries (Wari, 2009). Religious diplomacy has become a key element of soft power and an inevitable factor in the achievement and progress of PD goals, particularly in countries where religion is integral to national identity, such as Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa (Adesina, 2023; Huang, Clancy & Austin, 2024). However, it is important to handle religious diplomacy with care and adopt a diversified approach, considering diverse religious beliefs and sensitivities, as it can shape public perceptions (Antwi-Boasiako, 2024; Troy, 2008). Post-9/11, and with the rise of violent extremism and Islamophobia, Gulf countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have adopted novel religious diplomacy policies to project an image of tolerance and multiculturalism to counter mainstream perceptions that Islam is a constraint in the region (Al Jaber, 2021). This was also an important step in maintaining a positive image to achieve their economic development and foreign policy goals (Monier, 2023). The three Gulf countries adopt diverse branding and outreach strategies:

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<sup>20</sup> (The World Bank Group, 2019)

### **Qatar - Outreach strategy**

Qatar's religious diplomacy focuses on outreach and is deeply intertwined with its international mediation efforts, integrating Islamic principles into humanitarian aid and conflict resolution to promote global peace and stability (Barakat, 2019). Additionally, it organises exchange programs facilitating peer-to-peer learning and cross-cultural education and dialogue (Murtado, 2021 in Rakhmat & Aswar, 2023).

### **Saudi Arabia - Mixed approach**

Comparatively, Saudi Arabia's religious diplomacy is deeply rooted and influential in the Muslim world due to its custodianship of Mecca and Medina, the two holiest sites in Islam. Its religious branding strategies include the annual organisation of the Hajj pilgrimage, which brings millions of Muslims from around the world to Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, from an outreach perspective, it sponsors various Islamic TV channels, radio stations, mosques and charitable foundations as well as religious schools globally and provides scholarships to students studying Islamic studies (Adesina, 2023; Rakhmat & Aswar, 2023). Additionally, it has contributed to promoting interfaith cooperation and understanding by co-founding the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in 2007 together with Spain, Austria, the Holy See and Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu religious leaders (KAICIID Dialogue Centre, n.d). Saudi Arabia, under the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance, has also organised Quran competitions in the Kingdom with participation from countries like Indonesia and overseas such as in Kenya to promote Quranic knowledge and strengthen bilateral ties (Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2023; Saudi Press News Agency, 2024). The three Gulf countries have also adopted diverse branding and outreach strategies in their religious diplomacy approach in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

### **UAE - Branding strategy**

The UAE is the leading country in actively promoting and integrating tolerance in its PD efforts through key institutions like the Ministry of Tolerance established in 2016 and the Abrahamic Family House opened in 2023 (Boubtane, 2021; Alarabiya News, 2023; Monier, 2023) and flagship event like the [Year of Tolerance](#) as part of its branding strategy.

Table 6.3 provides an overview of the different sets of branding and outreach strategies taken by Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE when approaching Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa across the religious dimension.

**Table 6.3 Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE’s Religious PD strategies in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa**

	UAE	Qatar	Saudi Arabia
<b>Kenya</b>	Promote Moderate Islamic values / Funding for Educational Centres aligned with their Interpretation of Islam.	Building Mosques and Funding Iftar Projects.	Support Kenyan Muslim Communities through Quran Memorization Competition / Memorandum of Understandings on Religious Collaboration (Education, Counterterrorism & Iftar Projects) / Funding for Mosque and Religious Schools.
Focus	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
<b>Nigeria</b>	Building of Mosques & Education Centres in Oyo State / Potential for Cultural Exchange Programs with Religious Themes.	Funding of Islamic Centres and Mosque (Al Noor Islamic Center) similar to Kenya, with the Potential for Scholarships in Religious Studies.	Similar to Kenya, with the Potential for Supporting Islamic Media Outlets / Printing the Quran / Sponsoring Islamic Centres / Publishing & Translating Materials that Serve Islam / Supporting Muslims & Utilising Media to Showcase the Kingdom’s Role.
Focus	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
<b>South Africa</b>	Collaboration (Intellectual Dialogues) between Academia, CSO & Government Institutions to promote Tolerance among Different Faiths.	Collaboration Interfaith Intellectual Dialogue on Religious Diversity & Peaceful Coexistence in Qatar.	Visa Relaxation facilitating Travel for Religious and Tourism Purposes / South African Muslim, Jewish & Buddhist Fellows at the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious & Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), Limited Funding for Religious Institutions.
Focus	MEDIUM	LOW	MEDIUM

All three GCC countries have implemented religious outreach programs, funding and building Islamic education centres and mosques and, implementing iftar projects and Islamic educational programs, particularly in Kenya and Nigeria. Considering the large Muslim population – 10.9% in Kenya and 53.5% in Nigeria and only 1.5% in South Africa as of 2018 – these initiatives support the development of Muslim communities in Africa (South Africa’s People, n.d; Sasu, 2023). Additionally, Qatar and the UAE have implemented programs promoting interfaith dialogue and fostering peaceful coexistence among different religions. In 2019, the UAE Embassy in Pretoria collaborated with the Center for Human Rights for a conference titled "The Year of Tolerance: Prospects and Stability in Africa." The two-day event held at the University of Pretoria aimed at fostering tolerance and understanding through knowledge exchange and education on different faiths and engaged Muslim, Jewish, and Christian religious leaders (Center for Human Rights University of Pretoria, 2019).

### **South Africa - Saudi Arabia's mixed approach**

In South Africa, Saudi Arabia implemented a combination of outreach and branding strategy to facilitate tourism and pilgrimages, strengthening bilateral relations. In 2023, the Kingdom introduced an e-visa system for South Africans, the first African country to be eligible, offering a one-year, multiple-entry visa (International Finance, 2023). This move was well received by Tourism Minister Patricia de Lille, who shared that it will be significant for South Africa's Muslim citizens who often travel for religious purposes (International Finance, 2023).

In contrast to Kenya and Nigeria where Islam is strongly present, the dominance of Christianity (79.8%) in South Africa and the existence of Muslim minorities along with other religions such as Hinduism (1.2%) and Judaism (0.2%) requires a different approach reflecting a common recognition of the need for dialogue and understanding among different religious communities to mitigate tensions (South Africa's people, n.d). Nonetheless, this strategy should also be implemented in Kenya and Nigeria considering the strong presence of other religions there, such as Christianity (85.5% in Kenya and 45% in Nigeria) (Sasu, 2023; Cowling, 2023). As noted from an interview with a professor of international relations, this would address misconceptions associated with the promotion of Islam in Africa, which does not resonate well in non-Muslim African communities<sup>21</sup>, and on the contrary, demonstrates a commitment to promoting religious tolerance and development for all.

### **Harnessing Religious Diversity for Diplomacy**

Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa present an important religious pluralism, which includes religious minorities such as Hindus, Buddhists, and Bahá'ís and traditional and indigenous religions (South Africa's people, n.d). The following facts about Kenya and Nigeria's religious diplomacy should be taken into account by GCC countries. Kenya and Nigeria both harness their religious diversity to enhance diplomatic efforts and foster global religious tolerance, Kenya integrates its religious plurality into its diplomatic activities by engaging religious leaders and institutions in foreign policy development, recognizing their significant societal influence. Key organisations like the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK) and the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims are key stakeholders providing insights and suggestions on foreign

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Professor Dêlidji Eric DEGILA, Professor of practice of International Relations (2024)

policy issues that overlap with religious concerns (Inter-Religious Council of Kenya, 2024; Kirui, 2024). Furthermore, Kenya leverages its Islamic heritage to strengthen ties with GCC countries, facilitating initiatives like Hajj arrangements through its embassy in Saudi Arabia to bolster religious and cultural connections (Embassy of Kenya, Riyadh, n.d).

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) and religious tourism play a key role in enhancing Nigeria's soft power and can inform GCC's future religious diplomacy strategies (Berger, 2003; Adesina, 2023). At the local level, FBOs are religious congregations, groups, neighbourhoods, and religious interfaith coalitions (Goldsmith, Eimicke and Pineda, 2006). Governments can work with FBOs by setting up collaborations, community outreach programmes, social media content, hosting events or providing funding to FBOs supporting interfaith dialogue. Nigeria's strategy includes supporting religious tourism by hosting significant events like the Shiloh festival by the Living Faith Chapel (Winners Chapel) and the monthly Holy Ghost service by the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). These efforts foster cultural exchange and improve Nigeria's international image.

### 6.3 Economic Diplomacy

GCC economic diplomacy aims to enhance cooperation, attract foreign direct investment (FDI), and project a positive global image. By leveraging oil wealth, GCC countries seek to diversify economies and form strategic partnerships (Elwereflli & Benhin, 2018) by promoting regional cooperation in banking, tourism, technology and logistics. (El-Amine, 2023). According to a diplomatic expert in Qatar<sup>22</sup> sovereign wealth funds such as the Qatar Investment Authority are pivotal in investing in social and economic infrastructure. Recognizing Africa's strategic potential, GCC countries have intensified engagement with the continent despite risks associated with debt distress and instability (Senior Economic Expert 2<sup>23</sup>; Matheson Kirton & Manful, 2022). UAE companies, in particular, have shown commendable risk tolerance (Pilling et al 2024).

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<sup>22</sup> Written Interview with a Diplomatic Expert in Qatar (2024)

<sup>23</sup> Interview with a Senior Economic Expert 2 (2024)

According to a senior economic expert<sup>24</sup> GCC investments focus on telecommunications, IT, infrastructure, healthcare, technology, and renewable energy. The UAE pledged 97\$bn in new African investment across various sectors, highlighting its strategic pivot towards diversifying its economy with a focus on food security, critical minerals and renewable energy (Pilling et al., 2024). Similarly, Saudi Arabia, a top agriculture investor, seeks food security through investments (Todman, 2018). Another senior economic expert<sup>25</sup> notes that mega investments drive opportunities and relationships, often undertaken by GCC ruling family members. Furthermore, he adds that the reception of these investments varies by region, raising scepticism, resistance or concerns about sovereignty.<sup>26</sup>

Issues such as the exploitation of African migrant workers in GCC countries under the kafala (sponsorship) system or false promises remain a concern (Edeme, 2024; WalkFree, n.d). Nevertheless, their remittance flows are a critical source of income for Africa, representing an important source of GCC state's economic influence in Africa (Todman, 2018). Despite these concerns, Dubai has positioned itself as a gateway to Africa, attracting African companies to establish their base there (Pilling et al., 2024), leveraging private sector investments. The private sector's role in investments is essential, with many GCC private corporations (partly) owned by ruling families<sup>27</sup>. For example, DP World is active in over a dozen African countries with 3\$ billion invested (Pilling et al, 2024). According to a senior economic expert, digital growth in Africa presents a significant opportunity for future GCC investments, focusing on improving internet access and communication infrastructure<sup>28</sup>.

GCC PD initiatives align with economic agendas: Saudi Arabia focuses on global commerce, the UAE on economic cooperation, and Qatar on enhancing its international reputation<sup>29</sup> and cultural exchange (Zulfikar & Aswar, 2023). Financial assistance and development aid enhance GCC economic diplomacy and influence and forge closer ties with key countries (Salisbury, 2018).

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with a Senior Economic Expert 1 (2024)

<sup>25</sup> Interview with a Senior Economic Expert 2 (2024)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Especially due to the 2017-2021 blockade (Ulrichsen, 2014)



## **Qatar - Outreach Focus**

Qatar's economic diplomacy is distinguished by its strong emphasis on outreach, leveraging its considerable wealth to cultivate international partnerships and facilitate cultural exchanges. Central for this strategy are entities such as the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), which play a pivotal role in financing social and economic infrastructure projects (Diplomatic Expert in Qatar, 2024)<sup>30</sup>. For example, the QFFD has funded healthcare and education initiatives in Nigeria (Qatar News Agency, 2024).

Qatar prioritises global partnerships and cultural understanding, positioning itself as a reliable mediator and progressive leader within the Arab world, particularly after the 2017-2021 blockade. Emphasising neutrality and cooperation, Qatar seeks to play an active role in conflict resolution and peace promotion (Ulrichsen, 2014), as well as investing in tourism and entertainment. Such investments in (sport) events like the FIFA World Cup 2022 enhance Qatar's nation branding efforts (Rookwood, 2019; Dubinsky, 2023), alongside branding initiatives like Qatar Airways' global air transportation hub and international sponsorships (Cherkaoui, 2018).

## **Saudi Arabia - Mixed Approach**

Saudi Arabia's economic diplomacy blends nation branding with extensive outreach. Central to its nation branding is Vision 2030, an ambitious plan aimed at diversifying the economy and reducing oil dependency, transforming Saudi Arabia into a global commerce hub with a forward-thinking image. This involves developing tourism, entertainment, and technology sectors to attract FDI (Gołębiowski, 2024).

In addition to its branding, Saudi Arabia emphasises outreach through humanitarian aid and development assistance. The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center ([KSrelief](#)) plays a pivotal role, in delivering financial aid and spearheading development projects across Africa. For example, KSrelief has built over 850 mosques in Indonesia and supported over 20,000 orphans over 12 years. (Wright, 2015) In Africa, KSrelief delivered dozens of tons of dates to Kenya and Nigeria as food supplies (Saudi Press Agency, 2023a) and built six solar-powered water wells in Nigeria, showing Saudi Arabia's commitment to sustainable development and

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<sup>30</sup> Written Interview with a Diplomatic Expert in Qatar (2024)

humanitarian assistance. (Saudi Press Agency, 2023b;2023c). Thereby enhancing economic ties and promoting a positive image (Zulfikar & Aswar, 2023).

Furthermore, the Kingdom undertakes significant infrastructure projects and engages in diplomatic summits such as the Saudi Arabia-Africa summit, cementing its role as a key player in global economic development (Wilson, 2024).

In summary, through this dual strategy, Saudi Arabia not only projects a modern and progressive image but also strengthens its global influence and fosters international cooperation and development.

### **UAE - Branding Approach**

The UAE's economic diplomacy employs branding and outreach strategies, focusing on projecting modernity and innovation through initiatives like free trade zones and economic centres attracting FDI via tax incentives (El-Amine, 2023). These hubs enhance the UAE's reputation as a global business leader. Initiatives like Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs) with Kenya or the Unified Tourist and digital nomad visa further promote the UAE as a tourist and business hub (Reuters, 2024a; Anand & Bakshi, 2024). Such initiatives align with the UAE's broader strategy of creating a dynamic and inclusive economic environment.

Beyond branding, the UAE's outreach includes significant investments and local partnerships such as the International Resources Holding, a unit of Abu Dhabi's \$240bn conglomerate International Holding Company, investing \$1.1bn in Zambia's Mopani copper mine and is exploring further opportunities. In addition to commercial investments, the UAE's outreach efforts include strategic initiatives such as the 25-year monopoly granted to Primera, an Abu Dhabi-based gold trader, for all small-scale gold supplies in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This supports the local economy and integrates African gold through Dubai into the global market, showcasing the UAE's role in facilitating international trade (Pilling et al., 2024; Todman, 2018).

Furthermore, the UAE is a safe harbour for wealthy Africans, including politically exposed persons, with Dubai offering an attractive environment for business, personal investments, and a world-class lifestyle. This enhances its economic ties with Africa and attracts capital from the continent. The UAE also leverages logistics and transportation capabilities to bolster its

outreach efforts, with companies like DP World and Emirates Airlines playing crucial roles in international trade and connectivity, strengthening the UAE's global presence and strategic ambitions (Pilling et al., 2024; Todman, 2018).

In summary, the UAE's economic diplomacy balances nation branding and outreach, enhancing its global influence and fostering international cooperation and economic development.

### **Kenya - Robust Engagement**

The UAE leads as Kenya's largest investor, signifying a strong commitment and bilateral ties. Their CEPA<sup>31</sup> spans sectors like food production, mining, technology, and logistics, underscoring their deep economic relationship. (Reuters, 2024a) Similarly, Saudi Arabia also engages robustly through strategic partnerships and forums such as the Saudi Arabia-Kenya Business Forum (Ministry of Investments, Trade & Industry Kenya, n.d) Saudi Arabia's involvement in CEPA with Kenya underscores its commitment to expanding economic cooperation across various sectors, aligning with Kenya's development goals and Vision 2030. (Reuters, 2024b) In contrast, Qatar focuses on international partnerships and cultural exchanges, with investments through the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) to improve Kenya's social and economic infrastructure.<sup>32</sup>

While Qatar's approach lacks CEPA's, all Gulf countries demonstrate keen interest in Kenya through diverse investment and partnership strategies, supporting mutual goals: Saudi Arabia and the UAE through formal agreements and business forums and Qatar through global partnerships and mediation efforts.

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<sup>31</sup> Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

<sup>32</sup> Written Interview Diplomatic Expert in Qatar (2024)

**Table 6.4 Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE’s Economic PD strategies in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa**

Table 6.4 provides an overview of the different sets of branding and outreach strategies taken by Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE when approaching Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa across the economic dimension.

	UAE	Qatar	Saudi Arabia
<b>Kenya</b>	Largest Investor / Trade & Investment Hub / Infrastructure Projects (e.g., Ports) / Tourism & Business Center / Agriculture Trade / Attractive new Visa.	Energy Sector Investment (LNG) / Infrastructure Projects / Technology Sharing / Agriculture Support.	Development & Food Aid / Agriculture & Food Security Investment / Helping Hand in Export Facilitation / Red Sea-East Africa Corridor Projects.
Focus	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
<b>Nigeria</b>	Gateway to West Africa / Trade & Logistic Hubs / Past Flight Ban & Attractive New Visa / Nigerian Arab Chamber of Commerce / Nigerian Trade House Dubai / Investment & Trade Heavy (esp. Natural Resources) / Infrastructure Projects.	Agriculture & Infrastructure Investment / Oil & Gas Collaboration.	Oil & Gas Collaboration / Construction Project Investment / Development & Humanitarian Aid / High Trade & Investment / Current Visa Denials.
Focus	HIGH	MEDIUM	HIGH
<b>South Africa</b>	Gateway to Southern Africa / Public-Private Sector Partnership: South African Business Council in the UAE / Dubai International Chamber in Johannesburg / Tourism: Direct Daily Flights from Dubai to Johannesburg, Cape Town & Durban / Renewable Energy Collaboration / Natural Resource Trade / Attractive New Visa.	Natural Gas Development / Renewable Energy Investment / Food Trade / Collaboration in Sports Events.	Public - Private Sector Partnership: South Africa - Saudi Arabia Joint Economic Commissions (JEC) / Development & Food Aid / Deepen Economic Ties / Energy & Food Sector Collaboration (potential).
Focus	HIGH	LOW	MEDIUM

### Nigeria - Strategic Investments

The UAE’s economic diplomacy in Nigeria emphasises strategic investment and collaborations facilitated through platforms like the Nigerian Arab Gulf Chamber of Commerce (NAGCC) and the Nigerian Trade House in Dubai. These demonstrate ongoing efforts to strengthen economic ties between the two countries (Business Expert, 2024<sup>33</sup>).

Saudi Arabia’s outreach efforts include humanitarian initiatives like wells and food supplies (Ksrelief, 2024b; Ksrelief 2024c). Despite challenges like Nigerian visa cancellations in Saudi Arabia and previous UAE visa bans, both GCC countries actively promote trade and investments in Nigeria as well as the integration of Nigerians into their economies (Princewill, 2023).

<sup>33</sup> Written Interview with a Nigerian-Gulf States Business Expert (2024)

Comparatively, Qatar's economic diplomacy in Nigeria is less pronounced but emphasises international partnerships and cultural exchanges. Nevertheless, Qatar's role in Nigeria's economic development cannot be overlooked.<sup>34</sup>

Collectively, these Gulf countries demonstrate a strong commitment to Nigeria's economic development through varied strategies: The UAE focuses on FDI, Saudi Arabia on humanitarian aid, and Qatar fosters global partnerships and cooperation, all contributing to Nigeria's economic growth and resilience.

### **South Africa - Multifaceted Approach**

Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE employ distinct strategies in their economic diplomacy with South Africa, enhancing trade relations and fostering economic growth through tailored approaches.

The UAE emphasises strategic partnerships, utilising platforms like the South African Business Council in the UAE and the Dubai International Chamber in Johannesburg to facilitate business expansion and trade relations (Dubai Chamber Commerce, 2021; Dubai Chamber, 2023). Joint economic commissions further reinforce the UAE's commitment to long-term economic collaboration with South Africa.

Similarly, Saudi Arabia engages through joint economic commissions such as the South Africa-Saudi Arabia Joint Economic Commissions (JEC), connecting business leaders to explore investment opportunities in sectors like agro-processing, renewable energy, and infrastructure (Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, 2022).

Qatar, through initiatives like the Memorandum of Understanding with the South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SACCI) by the Qatari Businessmen Association, aims to promote economic and commercial relations and collaboration in investment areas (Qatar News Agency, 2022) According to a diplomatic expert in Qatar<sup>35</sup>; Qatar also prioritises international partnerships through platforms such as the [Qatar-South Africa Business Matchmaking Platform](#), leveraging institutions like the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and

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<sup>34</sup> Written Interview with a Diplomatic Expert in Qatar (2024)

<sup>35</sup> Written Interview with a Diplomatic Expert in Qatar (2024)

the QFFD to invest in global social and economic infrastructure projects, thereby contributing to South Africa's economic development.

Collectively, these Gulf countries strengthen economic relations with South Africa, each bringing unique strengths to the partnership: the UAE focuses on strategic business expansion, Saudi Arabia on sector-specific investment opportunities, and Qatar on fostering international collaboration and partnerships.

In conclusion, the economic diplomacy of GCC countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE plays a crucial role in shaping their relationships with African nations. The UAE's strategy primarily focuses on branding and innovation, positioning itself as a global leader with an image of modernity and openness. Saudi Arabia adopts a mixed approach, blending branding efforts with significant outreach initiatives, while Qatar places a strong emphasis on outreach and global partnerships. These strategies have significant implications for their engagements with African countries. Overall, understanding these diverse approaches helps stakeholders navigate the complexities of global economic relations and leverage opportunities for mutual benefit through strategic investments and partnerships.

## 7. Strategic Recommendations

Based on the research analysis illustrated in Chapter 6, the report categorises actionable recommendations for both general and targeted approaches in the following section. The recommendation section is designed to provide clear and practical strategies that can be implemented to enhance overall effectiveness and efficiency. General recommendations focus on broad initiatives that can benefit stakeholders as a whole, such as improving communication channels, creating accessible data mechanisms and fostering a culture of innovation. In contrast, targeted recommendations are tailored to specific dimensions (cultural, religious and economic) identified in the analysis.

### 7.1 General Recommendations

#### 7.1.1 Strategic Planning

##### **1. Unified Front by Government Entities:**

- Foster collaboration and coordination among different government entities involved in public diplomacy efforts.
- Establish clear and consistent objectives and strategies across all entities.
- Present a unified front to avoid conflicting messages and ensure coherent communication.

##### **2. Systems Approach to Public Diplomacy:**

- Adopt a systems approach to public diplomacy, similar to China's model, which integrates various elements and stakeholders.
- Establish a comprehensive framework that aligns public diplomacy efforts with broader national strategies and objectives.
- Ensure coordination and collaboration among different sectors, including government, private sector, and civil society organisations.

## 7.1.2 Research

### **3. Research, Data Collection, and Accessibility:**

- Invest in research and development to gather relevant data and insights for informed decision-making.
- Enhance data collection mechanisms to capture comprehensive information from various sources.
- Ensure accessibility to data and research findings for all stakeholders involved in public diplomacy efforts.

### **4. Diversified Stakeholder Needs Assessment:**

- Conduct comprehensive needs assessments to understand the diverse needs and expectations of various stakeholder groups.
- Gather insights from multiple sources, including surveys, focus groups, and community consultations.
- Utilise the findings to tailor public diplomacy messages and strategies to effectively reach and resonate with diverse audiences.

### **5. Sentiment and Perception Analysis:**

- Implement regular sentiment and perception analysis to gauge public opinion and attitudes towards public diplomacy efforts.
- Conduct behaviour mapping to understand audience preferences, consumption patterns, and engagement levels.
- Utilise the insights gained to refine messaging, communication strategies, and outreach approaches.



### 7.1.3 Outreach

#### **6. Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement:**

- Actively involve diverse stakeholders, including youth, women, civil society organisations, and NGOs working in the regions.
- Seek their input and perspectives to inform decision-making processes and bridge information gaps.
- Foster collaborative partnerships with these stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of public diplomacy efforts.

#### **7. Engagement with Thought Leaders:**

- Identify and engage with influential thought leaders, public figures, celebrities, and artists from Africa within the GCC region.
- Leverage their platforms and networks to promote stronger cultural ties and digital engagement.
- Collaborate with these thought leaders to amplify public diplomacy messages and initiatives.

#### **8. Bottom-Up Approach and Localization:**

- Adopt a bottom-up approach to public diplomacy, emphasising local perspectives and needs.
- Engage with local communities, grassroots organisations, and civil society groups to understand their concerns and priorities.
- Localise public diplomacy initiatives and messaging to resonate with specific cultural and social contexts.

## 7.1.4 Communication Strategies and Tools

### 9. Targeted and Accessible Strategy for African Countries:

- Develop a clear and accessible public diplomacy strategy tailored for each African country individually.
- Analyse past engagement and future opportunities with each country to inform targeted approaches.
- Ensure the strategy is easily understandable and accessible to the intended audiences in each region.

### 10. Strengthen Visibility of Public Diplomacy Efforts:

- Increase the visibility and awareness of public diplomacy initiatives through strategic communication campaigns.
- Leverage various media channels, including traditional and digital platforms, to reach wider audiences.
- Highlight the impact and achievements of public diplomacy efforts to build credibility and trust.

### 11. Efficient Use of Digital Communication Platforms:

- Utilise digital communication platforms effectively for public diplomacy campaigns.
- Develop targeted and consistent messaging tailored for different digital channels and audiences.
- Employ data-driven strategies to optimise reach, engagement, and impact on digital platforms.

### 12. Promote Digital Interaction:

- Facilitate and promote business-to-business (B2B), person-to-person, and political interactions on digital platforms.
- Leverage digital tools and platforms to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and networking opportunities.
- Encourage the use of digital channels for diplomatic engagement, cultural exchange, and economic cooperation.

### 13. Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI):

- Utilise AI tools and technologies to counter visual-based disinformation and advance analysis of negotiation patterns.
- Facilitate the development and adoption of AI tools within foreign ministries to enhance public diplomacy efforts.
- Promote joint development plans with international partners to establish shared visions and strategies for AI in public diplomacy.
- Harness digital platforms and AI-powered tools to reach targeted audiences, gauge audience engagement, and reinforce offline diplomatic goals.
- Adopt fact-checking mechanisms and tools employed by organisations like the BBC to counter disinformation effectively.

## 7.2 Targeted Recommendation

### 7.2.1 Culture

**Engagement with More Diverse Stakeholders - Private/Public Partnerships:** Foster collaborative partnerships with private and public entities like Emirates Airline, Jumeirah Hotels, and FIFA to amplify public diplomacy efforts through joint campaigns, cross-cultural exchanges, and reputation enhancement.

**Using Storytelling as a Tool for Cultural Collaboration:** Leverage innovative storytelling formats such as interactive video content, animations, illustrations, and open mic events to convey cultural narratives, promote cross-cultural understanding, and facilitate meaningful exchanges.

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**Localising Campaigns with Regional Languages:** Localise messaging and content by incorporating regional languages to bridge cultural gaps, resonate with target audiences, and demonstrate respect for local cultures.

**Inclusion of Local Cultural Leaders:** Involve respected cultural figures, artists, writers, musicians, and community elders in strategy development to ensure culturally sensitive and relevant initiatives aligned with local values and traditions.

**Annual Cultural Festivals:** Organise immersive and interactive annual cultural festivals to showcase the GCC's rich heritage, promote intercultural dialogue, inspire young people to appreciate diverse cultures, and foster connections among artists and creative professionals.

## 7.2.2 Religion

**Organising Intellectual Dialogues on Religious Commonalities and Tolerance:**

Organising intellectual dialogues to discuss religious commonalities and ways to promote tolerance and mutual respect, including respect for one another's differences, can foster understanding and harmony among diverse religious communities.

**Active Collaboration with Faith-Based Organizations and Academia:**

Encouraging active collaboration between academia, governments, faith-based organisations, interfaith organisations such as UAE Abrahamic house, Interreligious council of Kenya, KAICIID, academia, and civil society organisations can promote diversity of perspectives and facilitate constructive dialogues on religious matters.

**Organizing Cultural Activities Showcasing Religious Diversity:**

Organising cultural activities such as exhibitions and performances that showcase diverse religious traditions can promote cultural exchange, appreciation for religious diversity, and foster a deeper understanding of different belief systems.

**Tailoring Communication Strategies to Religious Sensitivities:**

Tailoring communication and public diplomacy strategies to religious sensitivities can ensure that messaging is respectful, inclusive, and resonates with various religious communities, promoting effective engagement and avoiding potential misunderstandings or conflicts.

**Increasing Transparency on Religion-Driven Projects:**

Increasing efforts to clearly distinguish between religion-driven and non-religion-driven projects can help alleviate concerns among non-Muslim communities that the GCC is attempting to export religion to their societies, fostering trust and openness.

**Organising more intellectual dialogues:**

in collaboration with interfaith organizations like UAE Abrahamic house, Interreligious council of Kenya, KAICIID, to discuss religious commonalities and ways to promote tolerance, mutual respect including respect of one another's differences.

### 7.2.3 Economic

**Increasing Budgets for Humanitarian Aid:** The GCC countries should increase their budgets allocated for humanitarian aid to address the growing needs and crises in various regions, including Africa. This will demonstrate their commitment to global humanitarian efforts and strengthen their influence in the international community.

**Investing in Sports Diplomacy:** Investing in sports diplomacy initiatives, such as hosting sports events, tournaments, and supporting African athletes, can foster cultural exchange, promote positive perceptions, and strengthen ties between the GCC and African nations.

**Economic Diversification for Better Branding and Perception:** The GCC should prioritise economic diversification strategies to create a more positive and well-rounded branding and perception, moving away from an over-reliance on the oil industry. This will enhance their global reputation and appeal.

**Creation and Monitoring of Safeguarding and Labor Laws:** Establishing and effectively monitoring robust safeguarding and labour laws for international workers in the GCC is crucial to protect their rights, ensure fair treatment, and promote a positive image as a responsible and ethical employer.

**Targeted Resource Allocation for Large and Complex Markets:** When engaging with large and complex markets like Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa, the GCC should adopt a targeted approach to allocate resources effectively, considering the unique challenges and opportunities in each market.

**Autonomous and Non-Exploitative Investment Approach:** The GCC should adopt an autonomous approach for each African country, promoting equal and non-exploitative ways of investing. This approach should prioritise long-term collaborations over short-term return on investment (ROI), fostering sustainable partnerships.

**Socially Impactful Investment Strategies:** Developing socially impactful investment strategies that prioritise the well-being of local communities and contribute to sustainable development in African countries can enhance the GCC's reputation and foster stronger relationships.

**Increasing Academic and Policy Research on Investment:** Investing in academic and policy research related to investment in African countries can provide valuable insights, inform decision-making processes, and contribute to the development of effective strategies.

**Joint Development Plans for Shared Visions:** Instead of pursuing independent government strategies, the GCC should collaborate with African nations to create joint development plans that establish shared visions and promote mutual growth and prosperity.

**Targeted Advertising in African Countries:** Implementing targeted advertising campaigns in African countries can raise awareness about the GCC's partners, initiatives, and opportunities, fostering greater engagement and collaboration.

## 8. Research Gaps and Future Directions

### 8.1 Addressing Research Gaps

During the research, this project identified several gaps that limited our findings and should be taken into consideration in future research.



The **absence and/or inaccessibility of official public diplomacy strategies** that are specific to the GCC or the Gulf countries that were studied in this project made it difficult to evaluate past and present concrete and known strategies and propose recommendations based on existing strategies.



The difficulty of **connecting with and identifying officials, academics, scholars and CSOs members** working on GCC-Africa public diplomacy relations and focusing on the countries selected for this project led to **generalistic interviews** that did not provide satisfactory nuanced and in-depth insights to inform the recommendations.



The lack of **women's perspectives** limited our understanding about gender dynamics in this field and prevented us from making informed gender-sensitive recommendations.



The **low response rate from the survey** limited our ability to garner sufficient insights from locally based citizens of Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa or from the diaspora. While we aimed for 20-50 responses, we got 18 responses only. With insufficient feedback and limited time, the project could not identify trends, patterns and perspectives that would have helped in measuring the impact of GCC public diplomacy efforts in Africa and public attitudes.

## 8.2 Future Research

In addition to the suggestions above, this project recommends looking into the following to strengthen future research and efforts on public diplomacy:



**Education diplomacy:** education diplomacy is a growing important element of public diplomacy with a strong potential of shaping a country's image positively. It has been used by many countries such as the United States, China, Russia, Kosovo, South Africa and GCC countries as a public diplomacy tool to build bridges and promote mutual understand between countries (De Lima, 2007; Ibnouf et al, 2014; Ogunnubi & Shawa, 2017; Vaxevanidou, 2018; Mulvey, 2019; Hajdari et al., 2023). Considering that GCC and their African partners such as Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa always mention education in the key areas of their future partnerships, there is an opportunity for GCC to leverage the young African population to pursue this goal through education diplomacy.



**Multilateral collaboration:** strengthening research taking into consideration perspectives of governments, NGOs, CSOs, academia, businesses for example to establish comprehensive and inclusive public diplomacy strategies that will cater the needs of different stakeholders in the country.



**Localisation of knowledge:** investing in more localised research targeting different countries and their local communities will provide more insights on local dynamics such as cultural sensitivities. This will ensure future strategies are more impactful, sustainable and context relevant.



**Build on sentiment analysis and surveys:** expanding the sample size for sentiment analysis and the survey and exploring more diverse dissemination strategies s will be key to collecting sufficient and satisfactory insights to provide generalizable and accurate results.

## 9. Conclusion

This research outlines the complex landscape of PD in the GCC countries' engagement with Africa, highlighting the multifaceted strategies employed to enhance cultural, religious, and economic relations. GCC's increased focus on Africa is driven by geopolitical significance, economic potential, and historical connections, prompting investments in various sectors and necessitating robust PD efforts. However, challenges such as cultural diversity, media disparities, and political and religious sensitivities underscore the need for tailored communication strategies.

The report evaluates PD strategies of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa, highlighting the importance of holistic but nuanced approaches that encompass branding, outreach, and cultural, religious, and economic diplomacy. While the economic dimension remains pivotal and receives significant attention, the cultural and religious dimensions offer unique opportunities to foster deeper connections with foreign publics and cultivate a positive international image.

Lessons from successful initiatives in these African nations offer valuable insights, underscoring the importance of targeted communication, stakeholder engagement, and inclusive, localised strategies within a multidimensional PD framework. As GCC-Africa engagement intensifies, coordinated efforts and nuanced approaches become critical for fostering mutual understanding, promoting interests, and facilitating beneficial collaborations.

While substantial progress has been made, the interviews and surveys reveal that there is ample room for further improvement as there exists a vast untapped potential for deeper engagement and mutual understanding between GCC and African countries.

Although the path ahead is long, the benefits of strengthened cooperation are immeasurable.





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## 11. Appendices

The indicator framework (Table 4.2) and tables from Chapter 6 (Table 6.1, 6.3 & 6.4) can be found online in higher quality at the following link:  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1aWDdNGwyvH3lzB-3PYdLjz9Q0l6gwg4?usp=sharing>

## 11.1 Indicator Framework

Diplomacy Dimension	Definition	Subdimension	Factor of Measurement	Quantitative	Qualitative
Cultural	Involves exchanging ideas, art, and cultural facets among nations to foster mutual understanding and bridge gaps (Cummings, 2003).	Art	Art Exhibitions / Festivals organised	Nr. of Art Exhibitions or Festivals organised	Depth of Participation, Testimonies, Diversity, Impact on Attitude and Perception
		Music	Music Concerts or Festivals held	Nr. of Music Concerts or Festivals held	
		Literature	Literature Events or Book Fairs organised	Nr. of Literature Events or Book Fairs organised	
		Food	Culinary Events or Food Festivals organised	Nr. of Culinary events or Food Festivals organised	
		Tourism	Tourist Arrivals or Revenue generated from Tourism	Nr. of Tourist Arrivals or Revenue generated from Tourism	
		Education	International Students enrolled in Educational Programs	Nr. of International Students enrolled in Educational Programs	
		Youth & Student Exchange	Youth or Student Exchange Programs facilitated	Nr. of Youth or Student Exchange Programs facilitated	
		Diaspora Engagement	Diaspora Engagement Initiatives or Events organised	Nr. of Diaspora Engagement Initiatives or Events Organised	
		Cultural Exchange	Cultural Exchange Programs or Collaborations	Nr. of Cultural Exchange Programs or Collaborations	
		Heritage Preservation	Heritage Sites preserved or restored	Nr. of Heritage Sites preserved or restored	
		Culture	Heritage Exhibition	Nr. of Museums and Art Institutions	
Sport	The usage of sport to engage, inform and create a favourable image among foreign publics, government and organisations. (Murray, 2016)	Sports	International sporting events hosted or participated in	Nr. of International Sporting Events hosted or participated in	Depth of Participation, Testimonies, Diversity, Impact on Attitude and Perception
		Sports	Participation Rates, Infrastructure Development, Sport Events, Professional Players, Media Coverage, Government Support	Nr. of Professional Athletes, Tournaments, Participants/Watchers, Media Coverage, Investments	
Religion	Use of religion as a way of strengthening ties and fostering mutual understanding, respect for diversity, tolerance, peace and development in multireligious communities (Jamil, Atta & Kalbi, 2024).	Interfaith Dialogue	Interfaith Dialogue Events or Initiatives	Nr. of Interfaith Dialogue Events or Initiatives	Innovation and Value Creation, Job Creation & Economic Growth, Sustainability & Responsible Practices, Strengthening Economic Relationships
		Religious Education	Religious Education Programs or Participants	Nr. of Religious Education Programs or Participants	
		Exchange Programs	Religious Exchange Programs or Participants	Nr. of Religious Exchange Programs or Participants	
		Faith-Based Humanitarian / Development Aid	Humanitarian Aid provided by Faith-based Organisations	Amount of Humanitarian Aid provided by Faith-based Organisations	
		Religious Tourism / Pilgrimage Promotion	Religious Tourists or Revenue from Pilgrimage Sites	Nr. of Religious Tourists or Revenue from Pilgrimage Sites	
		Track II Dialogues	Track II Dialogue Sessions or Participants	Nr. of Track II Dialogue Sessions or Participants	
		Interreligious Exchange	Interreligious Cultural Exchange Events or Collaborations	Nr. of Interreligious Cultural Exchange Events or Collaborations	
		Religious Freedom Advocacy	Advocacy Campaigns or Policy Changes related to Religious Freedom	Nr. of Advocacy Campaigns or Policy Changes related to Religious Freedom	
		Youth & Religious Leadership Development	Youth Leadership Programs or Religious Leaders trained	Nr. of Youth Leadership Programs or Religious Leaders trained	
Economic	Strategically uses government resources to promote development through trade, investments, and agreements (Teleanu, 2016)	Trade Promotion & Investment Attraction	Value of Trade Agreements signed or Foreign Investment attracted	Value of Trade Agreements signed or Foreign Investment attracted	Innovation and Value Creation, Job Creation & Economic Growth, Sustainability & Responsible Practices, Strengthening Economic Relationships
		Commercial Diplomacy	Commercial Agreements or Business Partnerships	Nr. of Commercial Agreements or Business Partnerships	
		Business & Industry Partnerships	Business Collaborations or Joint Ventures	Nr. of Business Collaborations or Joint Ventures	
		Entrepreneurships & Startup Ecosystems	Startups launched or supported	Nr. of Startups launched or supported	
		Infrastructure Development & Connectivity	Value of Infrastructure Projects undertaken or completed	Value of Infrastructure Projects undertaken or completed	
		Development Assistance & Capacity Building	Amount of Development Aid provided or Capacity-building Programs implemented	Amount of Development Aid provided or Capacity-building Programs implemented	
		Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)	Public-Private Partnerships established or Projects initiated	Nr. of Public-Private Partnerships established or Projects initiated	
		Digital Economy & Innovation Diplomacy	Digital Economy Initiatives or Innovation Hubs established	Nr. of Digital Economy Initiatives or Innovation Hubs established	
		Energy Diplomacy & Resource Management	Amount of Energy Resources traded or invested in	Amount of Energy Resources traded or invested in	
Digital	The practice of engaging with foreign publics through social media and digital platforms (Hayden, 2013) in large numbers, in real-time, and with greater impact. (Snow & Cul, 2020).	Social Media Engagement	Follower or Engagement Metrics on Social Media Platforms	Nr. of Followers or Engagement Metrics on Social Media Platforms	Depth & Nature of Interactions, Reach beyond immediate Followers, Sentiment Analysis, Behavior Change, Real-World Impact
		Digital Content Creation	Digital Content Pieces created or Views generated	Nr. of Digital Content Pieces created or Views generated	
		Virtual Events & Webinars	Virtual Events or Webinars conducted	Nr. of Virtual Events or Webinars conducted	
		Digital Cultural Diplomacy	Number of Virtual Exhibitions or Digital Cultural Projects	Nr. of Virtual Exhibitions or Digital Cultural Projects	
		Digital Outreach & Influencer Engagement	Effectiveness of Influencer Engagement Strategies or Online Outreach Campaigns	Effectiveness of Influencer Engagement Strategies or Online Outreach Campaigns	
		Data Analytics & Targeted Messaging	Success of Data-driven Messaging or Targeting Strategies	Success of Data-driven Messaging or targeting Strategies	Strength & Sustainability of Partnerships, Diversity & Inclusivity of Partnerships, Shared Goals & Objectives, Effectiveness of Collaboration, Impact on Broader Relationships
		Crisis Communication & Rapid Response	Effectiveness of Rapid Response Efforts or Crisis Communication Strategies	Effectiveness of Rapid Response Efforts or Crisis Communication Strategies	
		Digital Diplomacy Training & Capacity Building	Diplomats or Government Officials trained in Digital Diplomacy	Nr. of Diplomats or Government Officials trained in Digital Diplomacy	
		E-Government Services for Foreign Audiences	E-Government Services provided or Users served	Nr. of E-Government Services provided or Users served	
Digital Diplomacy Partnerships & Collaboration	Digital Diplomacy Partnerships or Collaborations established	Nr. of Digital Diplomacy Partnerships or Collaborations established			

## 11.2 Interviews

### Key themes:

- African public diplomacy and foreign policy
- GCC Public diplomacy drivers
- Key stakeholders, their role and priorities
- Perception about GCC in Africa and vice-versa
- Cross-cultural communications initiatives
- Strategies to bridge cultural and religious gaps
- Role of economy, religion, culture and sports in public diplomacy
- Digital diplomacy communication strategies and their effectiveness
- Challenges in implementing public diplomacy strategies in Africa and the way forward
- Best practices from other regions
- Future trends

### Questions guideline:

1. Could you tell us a little more about your experience working in both the African and Gulf regions? Which MEA countries did you work with? Have you worked with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE on the one side and Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa on the other side?
2. What are the key drivers influencing public diplomatic ties between the GCC countries and African nations? In particular Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.
3. Can you elaborate on the type of key stakeholders involved on both sides (GCC initiators and Kenyan, Nigerian and South African recipients)? How do the priorities of the initiators and recipients differ?
4. How is the current perception of the Gulf region in Africa, and vice versa? Do you know / Did you notice specific differences in e.g. Kenya, Nigeria or South Africa? And how has it evolved over the last years?
5. Can you provide examples of successful cross-cultural communication initiatives between the GCC and African countries, and what made them effective?
6. What strategies have you seen employed to bridge cultural and religious gaps in diplomatic engagements between these regions?

7. How do economic factors contribute to shaping perceptions and attitudes towards the Gulf region among African nations, and vice versa?
8. How do you assess the role of digital communication platforms in shaping public perceptions and attitudes towards GCC-Africa relations?
9. How do you measure the effectiveness of PD communication strategies in the context of GCC-Africa relations?
10. What are some of the main challenges faced by GCC countries in implementing their PD initiatives in African countries?
11. Are there best practices from other regions that could be applied to this context?
12. What trends do you foresee in the future when it comes to PD in the regions? (tools, platforms, channels)

### 11.3 Country Survey Template

#### **GCC - [Nigeria/Kenya/South Africa] Public Diplomacy Communication Strategy**

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your input will help us better understand the public diplomacy communication strategies employed by GCC countries, namely Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Kenya/Nigeria/South Africa and ensure how they can sustain a more consistent and nuanced bilateral public diplomacy strategy. We aim to evaluate GCC's public diplomacy in Africa, analysing strengths, stakeholders' perspectives, successful case studies, and proposing actionable recommendations for improvement. Your responses are valuable and will be kept confidential.

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-64
- 65 and above

3. Occupation / Profession

4. Country of Residence

5. How well is the United Arab Emirates perceived by Kenyans/Nigerians/South Africans (linear scale)?

- [Terrible Image 1-5 Super Positive Association]

6. How well is Qatar perceived by Kenyans/Nigerians/South Africans (linear scale)?

- [Terrible Image 1-5 Super Positive Association]

7. How well is Saudi Arabia perceived by Kenyans/Nigerians /South Africans (linear scale)?

- [Terrible Image 1-5 Super Positive Association]
8. How similar do you think GCC and Kenya/Nigeria /South Africa are in terms of culture, religion and economics? (Select all that apply)
- Complete opposites
  - Some economic similarities
  - Some cultural similarities
  - Some religious similarities
  - Very alike
9. Have you come across any public diplomacy communication initiatives or activities by GCC countries (Qatar, Saudi Arabia,UAE) in Kenya/Nigeria /South Africa? If yes, please specify
- Yes
  - No
10. How effective do you perceive the public diplomacy communication strategy of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE in Kenya/Nigeria/South Africa (linear scale)?
- [Not Effective 1-5 Very Effective]
11. In your opinion, what are the primary objectives of GCC countries' public diplomacy efforts in Africa (Kenya/Nigeria/South Africa)? (Select all that apply)
- Economic Exploitation
  - Economic cooperation and investment promotion
  - Political influence and alliance
  - Humanitarian aid and development assistance
  - Positive Image of GCC countries
12. Which communication channels do you believe GCC countries predominantly use to convey their messages in Kenya/Nigeria/South Africa? (Select all that apply)
- Social Media Platforms
  - Television and radio broadcast
  - Diplomatic visits and exchanges
  - Educational and cultural exchanges
  - Public events (sports, music, etc.) and exhibitions (science, art etc.)
  - Religious get-togethers
13. In your opinion: Which should they use?
- Social Media Platforms
  - Television and radio broadcast
  - Diplomatic visits and exchanges
  - Educational and cultural exchanges
  - Public events (sports, music, etc.) and exhibitions (science, art etc.)
  - Religious get-togethers
14. What did you find a convincing public diplomacy initiative/ event in Kenya/Nigeria/South Africa from another country? (open question)
15. What kind of religious, economic or cultural public diplomacy initiative/ event would you like to see in Kenya/Nigeria/South Africa from GCC countries? (open question)
16. Do you have any additional comments or insights regarding the public diplomacy communication strategies of GCC countries in Africa you would want to share?

## 11.4 Sentiment Analysis

### Kenya

Emotion	Value	Examples
Negative	11%	Exploitative and one-sided relationship
Neutral	42%	Natural Resource Trade, Economics, President Visits, COP28
Positive	47%	Dubai, its status and amenities as a role model for Kenyan cities

### Nigeria

Emotion	Value	Examples
Negative	25%	Mostly regarding travel bans, visa schemes and mistreatment of workers
Neutral	40%	Infrastructure and energy investment projects, Nigerian Startups in Dubai,
Positive	35%	Dubai and its economic and infrastructural transformation, Dubai as a role model for Nigerian cities, Work opportunities

### South Africa

Emotion	Value	Examples
Negative	13%	Exploitative Relationship, Arms Trade & the Non-extradition and intransparency considering the Gupta brother case
Neutral	56%	Investment in sports and the food industry
Positive	31%	Football, COP28