THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIESIN PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY IN THE WEST AFRICAN SUB-REGION

By

Matthias Zechariah* and Vicki Lawal**

Abstract

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have incredibly transformed the arena of diplomatic activities, ranging from exchange of information and ideas to pacific settlement of disputes. In this article, the authors undertook a panoramic assessment of the role of ICTs in preventive diplomacy in (the mainly theoretical context of)the West African sub-region. It is argued that ICTs, particularly the social media, havenot only jettisoned the monopoly and secrecy of information associated with traditional diplomacy but have also, increasingly, involved the participation of non-state actors in diplomacy, including preventive diplomacy. Though the social media platforms potentially serve as veritable avenues for diplomatists to leverage on, they come with huge drawbacks, given the despicably prevalent cases of abuse of the Internet: hacking, spread of falsehood and hate speech as well as dissemination of propaganda and misinformation. However, diplomatic interlocutors can explore the best aspects of ICTs and work hard at checkingtheir abuse.

Key words/phrases: information and communications technology, social media, preventive diplomacy, peace, security, West Africa.

* LL.M., BL, LL.B, Lecturer in Public International Law, Faculty of Law, University of Jos, Jos, Nigeria

** PhD, Law Librarian, University of Jos Library

INTRODUCTION

The search for lasting peace and security has been an age-long desire of the international community. The deadly consequences of the First and Second World Wars among others, is evidence that peace is not an option but rather a necessity to be pursued, realised and sustained. Thus, the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations states in part:

> WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED
> to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our   life-time has brought untold sorrow to mankind...
> AND FOR THESE ENDS
> To practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good   neighbors, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to   ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that   armed   force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ machinery for the promotion of the economic and social   advancement of all peoples...
> HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS.

The provisions of Chapter 1 of the Charter also underscore the need for Members of the United Nations to act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the organization, one of which is the maintenance of international peace and security[1032]. At the regional and sub-regional levels, peace and security are also prioritised and promoted because it is necessary for development, among other benefits.

Diplomacy has been used as a veritable instrument for the realization of peace and security, for example, by the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). 'Preventive diplomacy'seeks to

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[1032] See Arts 1 and 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, 24 October 1945, 1 UNTS XVI.

resolve tensions and crises before they escalate.[1033] The rationale for this practice is that when disputes, tensions and crises are nipped in the bud, it has the potential to save lives and protect development gains at a low cost to the international community. [1034] Various methods may be used to achieve preventive diplomacy, among which are the use of ICTs, particularly the Internet and other communications media as the radio, television and, more recently,the social media. Communication is critical to diplomacy; hence, where the media are effectively utilised, they have the potential to enhance easy coordination and networking as well as provide early warning signals of conflict or insecurity for prompt action. Perhaps not all conflicts can be prevented;however, it makes sense to deploy all possible means and strategies that would lead to conflict prevention.

The purpose of this article is to examine the impact of modern technology as a tool for advancing preventive diplomacy in the West African sub-region. To achieve this, the article is divided into three broad parts. The first part provides definitions and descriptions of some of the major concepts/terms used in the paper, for example, preventive diplomacy, African diplomacy and ICTs. The second part focuses on the workings of preventive diplomacy particularly in relation to modern communication technologies. The final part examines the limitations of ICTs in fostering preventive diplomacy. The article is concluded with some recommendations to guide policy makers and the public on how to mutually pool resources and networks to prevent conflicts before they degenerate, thereby threatening international peace and security.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS
Diplomacy
The term 'diplomacy'has several definitions, most of which are inter-related.Some of these definitions are as follows: 'The activity of managing

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[1033] United Nations Department of Political Affairs, 'Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results'
<www.un.org Promoting Peaceful, Political Solutions to Conflict>Issues> Preventive Diplomacy> accessed 25December 2014. See also Art.1 para.1 of the UN Charter.
[1034] UN Department of Political Affairs, ibid.

relations between different countries; the skill of doing this'.[1035]It 'comprises the procedures and processes of negotiating agreements, usually between sovereign states'.[1036]It is '[T]he art and practice of conducting of negotiations between national governments.'[1037]Otolosays the essence of diplomacy is to conduct official business among states and achieve results without rancour.[1038]

The weaknessof the above stated definitions is that they limit diplomacy to the activities of states and governments. In its comprehensive package, diplomacy encompasses other actors. According to Gasiokwu, diplomacy means: 'the management of international relations through the application of intelligence and skill by the representatives of states and other subjects of international relations, for the purpose of achieving desired goals through peaceful means.'[1039]It is said that in the 20th century (and, of course, since then) diplomacy has expanded to cover summits and other international conferences and the activities of such entities as the United Nations, the Red Crescent, the Red Cross and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).[1040]

The lay person perceives diplomacy as the use of friendly, peaceful and tactful approach or the use of persuasive words to get something done or to win someone's goodwill. Diplomacy may be defined as a non-violent method and practice used by states, international organisations and non-state actors to negotiate and promote their goals, interests and goodwill for mutual benefits or

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[1035]AS Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary of Current English* (7th edn, Oxford University Press 2006) 40.

[1036]*Encyclopaedia Americana* (Vol. 7, Grolier Incorporated 1988) 141.

[1037]Bryan A Gardner and others (eds.), *Black's Law Dictionary* (9th edn, Thomson Reuters 2009) 529.

[1038]JAOtolo, "Diplomacy as an Instrument of Good Governance in Nigeria: Delta State as a Case Study" in MOUGasiokwu, *Law Politics and Diplomacy in Contemporary Nigeria – Essays in Honour of Professor B.I.CIjomah* (Chenglo Limited 2010) 552.

[1039] Martin Uzochukwu Gasiokwu, 'Diplomacy: History and Development from Antiquity' in MOUGasiokwu and DakasC.JDakas (eds.), *Diplomatic and Consular Law Selected Essays with Basic Documents* (2nd edn, Chenglo Limited 2006) 2. According to Nasir, 'diplomacy is geared towards the support of peace initiative': JMNasir, 'The Role of Diplomacy in Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes' (2014) Vol. 2 No. 1 University of Jos Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence, 2.

[1040]*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Vol 17, 15th edn, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 2005) 114.

for the purposes of maintaining and sustaining cordial international relations and human relationships generally. Diplomacy is both an art and a science.

The goal of diplomacy,however,has not changed.Essentially, its scope has widened over the years, necessitated by the ever growing dynamism of human society and the diversities of the contemporary world. Thus, according to the New Encyclopedia Britannica,

> ...diplomacy had expanded to cover summit meetings and other international conferences, parliamentary diplomacy, international activities of the supranational entities, unofficial diplomacy by non-governmental elements and the work of international civil servants.[1041]

Similarly Gasiokwu says:

> ...although the basic idea or function of diplomacy has a permanent nature, diplomacy has undergone and has continued to undergo development in relation to its subjects. The scope of diplomacy in modern times has extended to include not only relations between states but also now encompasses the activities of international organisations, non-governmental organisations and eminent personalities whose activities influence governmental decisions.[1042]

Some diplomats have acquired specializations in training and education while in some instances negotiations are conducted with the support of specialist negotiators.[1043] It is in the context of the widened scope of diplomacy that related concepts have emerged such as African diplomacy, preventive diplomacy, citizens' diplomacy, parliamentary diplomacy, sports diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, dollar diplomacy, gunboat diplomacy, nuclear disarmament, shuttle diplomacy, and international diplomacy (that is, conference diplomacy, or multilateral diplomacy), economic diplomacy[1044]; etc.

[1041]Ibid, 330. See also p.114.

[1042]Gasiokwu (n 8) 21.

[1043] See, e.g. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (n 9) 114.

[1044]Encyclopaedia Americana (n 5) 150. See also 'Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results' *Report of Secretary General of the United Nations* S/2011/552, 26 August 2011, 10, 16, 22;

Diplomacy is distinguishable from foreign policy in the sense that the former is the instrument through which the objectives of the latter are implemented; and the former is generally conducted in secret though with visible results.[1045]However, it seems that nowadays, the practice of diplomacy is becoming more and more public especially given the active involvement of non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations and professional negotiators as well as the instrumentality of ICTs. A diplomat or a diplomatist is one authorized to conduct diplomatic negotiations.

Preventive diplomacy

Preventive diplomacy simply means 'diplomatic action taken to prevent disputes from escalatiang into conflicts and to limit the spread of conflicts when they occur'.[1046] It is practised in both public and privatefora, with examples being

> ...the work of diplomatic envoys dispatched to crisis areas to encourage dialogue, compromise and the peaceful resolution of tensions. Preventive diplomacy can also encompass the involvement of the Security Council, the Secretary General and other actors to discourage the use of violence at critical moments.[1047]

The essence of preventive diplomacy is to ensure that war is stopped from breaking out with its attendant cost in terms of loss of lives as well as security and humanitarian costs.[1048]It is said that 'prevention is better than cure'.

George Noulas, 'The Role of Parliamentary Diplomacy in Foreign Policy' (2011) *Foreign Policy Journal*<www.foreignpolicyjournal.com> accessed 11 July 2014.

[1045] Ibid.

[1046]Ibid. The term 'preventive diplomacy' is said to have been coined by Dag Hammarskjold, one time UN Secretary General: see 'Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results' (n 13) 2.

[1047] UN Department of Political Science, 'Preventive Diplomacy Report: Q & A' <www.uniorg> accessed 25 December 2014. For more information on the role of the Secretary General in preventive diplomacy, see, generally, 'Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results' ibid.

[1048] Ibid.

Nevertheless, it has been suggested that in the current world, conflict preventive action transcends traditional preventive diplomacy to include a wide range of issues (in this context, coordinated by the UN entities): poverty eradication and development, human rights and the rule of law, elections and building of democratic institutions and the control of small arms, and so on.[1049] The point is that crises or violent conflicts are caused by a number of factors; therefore, to prevent them from erupting, the underlying factors that cause or otherwise fuel them have to be addressed. Military power alone may not prevent a conflict from degenerating into conflict or a war situation; hence the need to take holistic action to solve the problem.

African diplomacy

The contribution of Africa to diplomacy is traceable to ancient Egypt.[1050] What then is African diplomacy? According to Shoyele, 'African diplomacy, as an index of continental cum regional diplomacy is cardinally perceived as a primary strategy towards overcoming continental underdevelopment and the empowerment of sovereign African states on the international scene'. [1051]

Africa has her values and priorities; these values are projected and protected in global diplomatic discourse. Since the subjects and interests of diplomacy change or widen over time (similar to foreign policy issues), the same is true of African diplomacy. For instance, the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) marked a watershed in the history of African diplomacy as it became a platform to champion decolonization, dismantling of Apartheid in South Africa, strengthening the territorial integrity of African states, and resolution of conflicts through diplomatic channels.[1052] With the formation of the African Union (AU) as successor to the OAU, a new vista of African diplomacy was opened with focus on not only regional integration but also on the need to ensure that member states

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[1049] UN, 'Global Issues: Peace and Security' <www.un.org/en/globalissuespeacesecurity> accessed 25 December 2014. See also,

[1050] See Gasiokwu (n 8) 9-10. See also Encyclopaedia Americana (n 5) 141, The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (n 9) 331.

[1051] Olugbenga A Shoyele, 'African Diplomacy: A Reflective and Analytical Survey' in Gasiokwu and Dakas (eds.) (n 8) 88.

[1052] See e.g. ibid: 94-97.

respect human rights, democracy and constitutional change of government. Emphasis is also laid on economic integration and partnership with the wider world. Expectedly, most of these development paradigms are situated within the context of the United Nations policies on development and of international peace and security. The AU is a member of the global community;therefore, the basic framework of its diplomatic policies must not contradict the principles of the UN. The sub-regional entities that make up the AU (such as the Economic Community of West African States, East African Economic Community and Southern African Development Community) are expected to key into the arrangements of the AU in terms of maintenance of peace and security, economic development and entrenchment of democracy and good governance.[1053]

Shoyele is of the view that the political and economic aspect of African diplomacy as pursued by the AU is inseparably connected with the regions' diplomacy and 'perceptible within the framework of the continent's palpable economic disadvantages when juxtaposed with the dynamics of global economic relations'.[1054]

Peace

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, peace means 'a situation or a period of time in which there is no war or violence in a country or an area'.[1055]However another view looks at it from a much broader perspective, thus:

> ...Peace is a social and political condition that ensures development of individuals, society and nation. It is a state of harmony characterized by the existence of healthy relationships. It is a condition related to the social or economic welfare, development and equality of individuals, community/society and nation. It is also related to working political order that serves the interests of all. In the context of intra-national and

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[1053] See, e.g. 'Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results' (n 13) 19, 20.
[1054] Shoyele (n 20) 97.
[1055] Hornby (n 4) 1071

international relations, peace is not merely the absence of war, but also the presence of socio-cultural and economic understanding and unity.[1056]

Theoretically, peace connotes a state of complete tranquility or absence of war. Ideally, a peaceful environment is devoid of war, violence, conflict or crisis. However, it seems that such features are unattainable in this world especially at the national or international levels. Human beings even individually hardly enjoy absolute peace of mind let alone as groups. Therefore, a more realistic notion of peace depicts it as a state of mind or a condition that is relatively calm and conducive for social interactions and development.It should be noted that peace starts with the individual before it becomes a collective identity and condition.

Security

It has several meanings.One of it is that it is the 'activities involved in protecting a country, buildingor person against attack, danger, etc.'[1057]Another definition says it means 'protection of a person, building, organization, or country against threats such as crime or attacks by foreign countries.[1058]'

Generally, it means:

...a secure condition or feeling free from fear. It also means the safety of an individual, an institution, a region, a nation or the world. However, in its most basic form, security implies freedom from extremely dangerous threats. It also relates to threats that endanger core values like human rights.[1059]

From the above definitions, we can say security is protection of an individual, a group, an institution a nation from threats, danger, fear, attacks or harm and other adverse situations. It also includes the protection of property, e.g. from being damaged, destroyed or stolen.

[1056]'Cotemporary India: Issues and Goals' *Social Science: Module – 4, 263.*
[1057]Hornby (n 4) 1320.
[1058]*Cambridge Dictionary. 'Security'* Cambridge University Press. <dictionary.cambridge.org/../security> accessed 22 March 2015.
[1059] 'Contemporary India: Issues and Goals' (n 25) 264.

Just as absolute peace is unattainable, so also is absolute security. Usually, the terms 'peace' and 'security' are used together to refer to

> ...condition where individuals, institutions, regions, nationsand world move ahead without any threat. In this condition, regions or nations are generally more stable domestically, likely to be democratically governed and respectful to human rights. [A] Conflict not only generates threat and fear, but also hampers economic, social or political advancement.[1060]

Peace and security is necessary for diplomatic intercourse and for international relations generally. Thus, diplomats need a stable atmosphere to effectively represent their states or organizations and to maximize the activities of negotiation, mediation and expanding and sustaining business relations, among others.

Traditional and Contemporary Notions of Peace and Security

The international community has shifted from the narrow perception of peace and security to a more elaborate one. The new notion of peace and security transcends protection from threats of attacks or harm or from actual attacks or harm. Instead, it has to do with those things that are pre-requisite for peace and security to thrive: socio-economic development, protection of human rights and human dignity. It includes 'freedom from wants, diseases and epidemics, environmental degradation, exploitation and sub-human treatment.'[1061]There are threats to peace and security which confront the human race beyond the threats of military attacks: 'these threats may be from terrorism, insurgency, genocide, denial of human rights, health epidemics, narcotics trade and irrational use of natural resources.'[1062]

The onset of globalization and evolution of information and other technologies have not only opened up the world to unbounded accessibility but have also created social security issues which have been the concern of the new concept of

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[1060] Ibid.
[1061] Ibid. 265.
[1062] Ibid.

peace and security. Now, the world has to contain with issues such as food crises, poverty, diseases, environmental pollution and refugee problems. [1063] Information and communication technologies can perform incredibly powerful roles in actualizing and consolidating both the old and new forms of peace and security.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Communication is defined as the 'the transfer of information and some means of ensuring that what is sent is received.[1064] The key words found in this definition are 'information', 'transfer', and 'received'. As information is transmitted through a medium or channel, it is processed from one end and received on the other. According to Technopedia,

> Information and Communication Technology (ICT) refers to all the technology used to handle telecommunications, broadcast media, intelligent building management systems, audiovisual processing systems and network-based control and monitoring functions.[1065]

It continues that '...ICT has recently been used to describe the convergence of several technologies and the use of common transmission lines carrying diverse data and communication types and formats'.[1066]

[1063] For more information, see, e.g. ZenonasTziarras, 'Themes of Global Security: From the Traditional to the Contemporary Security Agenda' *The Globalized World Post*<thegwpost.com/2011/08/04/themes-of...> accessed 22 March 2015. For further information on security, human rights and development, see Jerome DalongGamaliel, 'Human Rights, National Security and Development' (2012) Vol 4 No. 2 *Journal of Public Law and Constitutional Practice*, 236-54.

[1064] Directorate of Education and Human Resource Program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 'Communication Technologies'*Science Netlink*<sciencenetlinks.com/lessons/> accessed 29 December 2014. In this article, the plural form: 'information and communication technologies (abbreviated as 'ICTs') is used interchangeably with the singular form: information and communication technology (abbreviated as 'ICT'), though the former is generally the preferred term.

[1065]Technopedia, 'Information and Communication Technology ICT' <www.technopedia.com/definition...> accessed 29 December 2014.

[1066] Ibid.

Technology not only aids but also facilitates the transfer and exchange of information and ideas.The more advanced the technology is, the more quickly and more efficiently information is transmitted or transferred. As remarked by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, '[T]echnology increases the ways in which information can be communicated, the speed of transmission and the total volume that can be handled at any time.'[1067]

Advances in ICT have, therefore, brought about a lot of progress in diverse aspects of human engagements; for example, economic growth and development, job creation, social networks and diplomatic communications.[1068] Governments, international organizations and individuals use ICT in their daily interactions. The commonest ones include radio sets, television sets, mobile phones, computers and the Internet. Of particular interest are computers and the Internet.[1069]

Advances in ICTs are part of the concept of globalization – a process of communication and interaction that reduces the world to a 'global village' in terms of accessibility to information, resources and development. Globalization

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[1067]Directorate for Education and Human Resource Program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (n 33).

[1068] See World Bank, 'Information and Communication Technology Overview' <www.worldbank.org/../overview accessed 29 December 2014.

[1069]The computer is an electronic device which is used in making fast and complex calculations, detecting weather conditions, and storing and retrieving information. There are different types of computers, depending on their makes, sizes and functions, for example, mini-computers and micro-computers. The function of a computer is enhanced if it is connected to the Internet. For instance, the micro-computer connects you far and wide with the world through a networking system known as the World Wide Web (WWW). The Internet moves ideas and information fast through an imaginary highway or cyberspace – the space of electronic movement of ideas and information: see e.g. Timothy J O'Leary and Linda O'Leary, *Computing Essentials: An Introductory Edition* (Irwin McGraw-Hill, Inc. 2000-2001) 9. As O'Leary and O'Leary noted, '[T]he web provides an easy-to-use, exciting multi-media interface to connect to the Internet and access the resources available in cyberspace': see O' Leary and O' Leary, ibid. 172-73. Letters can be sent via the Internet called emails. Communications and connectivity can be facilitated through the following means: fax machines, emails, voice messaging systems, Skype/video conferencing systems, shared resources and online services. The Internet service providers work round the clock to ensure that these services are adequately provided effectively.

covers the economic, political, social and cultural and other spheres of engagements. [1070] The reasons for globalization are summarized thus: internationalization, liberalization, universalism, modernization and deterritorialization.[1071]

Globalization and the Internet in particular, have collapsed 'walls of barrier that ever restricted interactions and relations amongst states, international institutions, organisations (governmental and non-governmental) and leaders especially in foreign relations and in knowledge sharing.'[1072]The advancement in technology extends to telephone services. In fact, some telephones, particularly mobile phones are connected to the Internet, thus enabling users to browse and partake in social networking communications: Facebook, MyMFB, vk.com, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, LinkedIn, Hi5, What's Up, My space, Friendster, Shazam, Instagram, Xing, Renren, Snapchat, Tumbir, Pinterest, Twoo, Vine, Meetup, Opinion Poll and so on. Also, some media stations such as BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and CNN (Cable News Network) broadcast on radio, television and online. Satellite-linked televisions play a key role in information dissemination. But developing accessibility to television sets is more difficult than to transistor radio; hence the radio remains the greatest medium of information dissemination in the West African sub-region.

The UN Dispute Settlement Procedures
The Charter of the United Nations makes elaborate provisions for pacific (i.e. peaceful or amicable) methods of settlement of disputes. The purpose for this procedure is to ensure that international peace, security and justice are not

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[1070] See e.g. Craig Hayden, 'Social Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy and Network Power' in ShanthiKalathil and Others (eds.), *Diplomacy, Development and Security in the Information Age* (Institute for the Study of Diplomacy 2013) 27. <Diplomacy-Diplomacy-Security-in-the-Information-Age-pdf.> accessed 30 December 2014. See also Sylvia MwintomeSoliku, '*Globalization and Regional Integration in Africa: An Assessment of ECOWAS* (Master of Arts Degree Dissertation, University of Ghana, Legon 2013) 62-3, available at <http://ugspace.ugspace.ug.edu.gh> accessed 30 December 2014.
[1071]Soliku, ibid. 63.
[1072] Eugene N Nweke, 'Diplomacy in Era of Digital Governance: Theory and Impact' (2012) Vol. 2 No. 3 *Information and Knowledge Management* <www.iiste.org> accessed 18 February 2015.

endangered.[1073]Accordingly, Article 33 paragraph 1 of the Charter states that parties to any dispute which could threaten international peace and security (i.e. one that could lead to war) shall first of all seek solution by any of the following means of settlement: negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements or other peaceful means of their choice.[1074]In the event that parties cannot settle a dispute of the nature stated in Article 33, they shall refer it to the Security Council.[1075] It is only when actions threaten peace, breaches of peace, and acts of aggression that the Security Council will take coercive actions (usually sanctions and use of military force) pursuant to Chapter VII of the Charter.

Dispute Settlement in the African Union Framework

The African Union has fourteen objectives and sixteen principles. Some of the objectives of the Union, as contained in Article 3 of the Constitutive Act of the AU 2000, are promotion and defending of 'African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its peoples;' [1076] encouraging international cooperation, 'taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;'[1077] promotion of 'peace, security, and stability on the continent;'[1078] establishing 'the necessary conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations...'[1079].Under the principles, Article 4 (e) provides: 'peaceful resolution of conflicts among Member States of the Union through such appropriate means as may be decided upon by the Assembly;' and 4(f) provides:

[1073] See, e.g. Art. 2 (3) of the UN Charter.

[1074]Para. 2 provides: 'The Security Council shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties to settle their disputes by such means.' The role of the Security Council extends to Arts. 36 to 38. Moreover, a dispute or any situation of a nature referred to in Art. 34 of the Charter may be brought to the attention of the Security Council by a Member, or by a non-member of the UN. See also 'Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results' (n 13) 7-9, 15-16, 19-21. For further details on peaceful settlement of international disputes, see Nasir (n 8) 4-19.

[1075]Para.1 of Art. 33.

[1076]4 (d).

[1077]4 (e).

[1078]4 (f).

[1079]4 (i).

'prohibition of the use of force or threat to use of force among Member States of the Union...' Therefore, the maintenance of peace and security is very critical in the A.U. system. Unsurprisingly, without peace and security many other things will fall apart.

ECOWAS and its Mandate in Peace, Security and Conflict Resolution

The Revised Treaty of ECOWAS 1993 provides the 'Fundamental Principles' of the Community as 'maintenance of regional peace, stability and security;'[1080] 'peaceful settlement of disputes among Member States...'[1081]etc. Member States of ECOWAS also 'undertake to work to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the region.'[1082]Similarly, the (ECOWAS) Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security 1999 contains provisions on peace and security, including the pacific settlement of disputes. Member States of this Protocol reaffirm their commitment in the principles of the UN and of the OAU (now AU) and of some other international instruments.[1083]

Some of the objectives of theProtocol(or Mechanism) are to:

> strengthen cooperation in the areas of conflict prevention, early warning, peace-keeping operations, the control of cross-border crime, international terrorism and proliferation of small arms and anti-personnel mines...promote close cooperation between Member Statesin the areas of preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping...[1084]

The Protocol also provides for the establishment of 'Council of Elders': '...a list of eminent personalities who, on behalf of ECOWAS, can use their good offices and experience to play the role of mediators, conciliators and

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[1080] Art. 4 (e).
[1081] Art. 4 (f).
[1082] Art. 58 (1).
[1083] See, e.g. preamble: para. 4; Art. 2.
[1084] See Art. 3.

facilitators'.[1085]Instructively, a structure, known as the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has been established 'composed of several Stand-by multi-purpose modules (civilian and military) in their countries of origin and ready for deployment.'[1086]The missions of ECOMOG include: observation and monitoring; peace-keeping and restoration of peace; humanitarian intervention; enforcement of sanctions; preventive deployment; peace-building, disarmament and demobilization; policing activities; etc.[1087]

The costs of peace-keeping and peace enforcement or restoration of peace are enormous. Therefore, prevention of conflict remains a better option, and information and technology (ICT) can be used to do this. What are the implications of ICT for preventive diplomacy in West Africa? The next part of this article engages this fundamental question.

Imperative of ICTs in Preventive Diplomacy in the West African Sub-Region
West Africa has faced a series of challenges: civil wars, election malpractices, unconstitutional changes of government, anti-government demonstrations, terrorism and so on. Some of these crises have split over to neighbouring countries,creating refugee problems and other effects. Among countries that

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[1085] Art. 20 of the Protocol. The Protocol was done at Lome, Togo, on December 1999.
[1086] Art. 21.
[1087]Art. 22. For details on ECOMOG: its formation and first mission in Liberia in 1990, see Michelle Pitts, 'Sub-Regional Solutions for African Conflict: The ECOMOG Experiment' (1999) vol. 19, No. 1 *The Journal of Conflict Studies*<journals.hil.unb.ca> Home > accessed 22 March 2015;
Human Rights Watch, 'Waging War to Keep the Peace: The ECOMOG Intervention and Human Rights' (1993) Vol. 5, Issue No.6 <www.hrw.org/reports/1993/liberia/> accessed 15 March 2015.
For further reading, see EboeHutchful, 'The ECOMOG Experience with Peace-Keeping in West Africa' (1999) No. 36: Monograph: Whither Peace- Keeping in West Africa? Available at <www.issafrica.org/../ECOMOG.html> accessed 22 March 2015; AdekeyeAdebajo, *Liberia's Civil War: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and Regional Security in West Africa; Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau* (Lynne Rienner 2002), cited in Foreign Affairs: <www.foreignaffairs.com/rticles/586...> accessed 22 March 2015.

have experienced these challenges include Ghana, Nigeria, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Niger,and Cote D'Ivoire.[1088]

Communication technology was not as strong in Africa in the 1950's to 1990s as it is in the 21st century.The role of informal diplomacy in today's Africa or in West Africa is apparent and ever increasing. In the area of formal diplomacy, diplomats use modern technology to exchange information. Similarly, 'diplomatic training is much easier because of the availability of information on the Internet.'[1089] In essence, modern diplomacy is not confined to the traditional communication lines;instead, modern communication networks have been established even within the West African borders and their efficiency has been enhanced. [1090] Even traditional media (radio, television, magazines and newspapers) have been repackaged as it were, to facilitate global reach. Thus, broadcasting can now be done online and on satellite. It is in realization of the critical role played by the media that Muthaura stated that:

[T]he role of the media in mobilizing public opinion and support for the Pan African   agenda is critical. Leaders and diplomats require media support in the difficult task of driving national reforms, integrating Africa and making African voice better heard in   global forums.[1091]

Diplomats are human, so they are naturally interested in social media communications. They cannot ignore information disseminated on social media, because weighing public opinions on issues has diplomatic significance. Given the fact that ICTs have tremendously 'permeatedalmost every aspect of human

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[1088] See Francis KirimiMuthaura, 'Role of Diplomacy in Emerging Africa' (Being a speech at the launch of the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies, Alumni Chapter Nairobi University on 7th June 2013 at Nairobi Safari Club), 5, 6, 8:
<idis.unonbi.ac.ke/sites/default/files> accessed 30December 2014. See also, Saied TafidaSulaiman, 'International Integration' (2010) Studies of International Affairs and Diplomacy, available at<diplomacywritings.blogspot.com/2010/07> accessed 30 December 2014: Soliku (n 39) 32, 55.
[1089]Mathaura, ibid. 10.
[1090]For Instance ECOWAS website contains channels of communication with the public and has a computer centre: see <www.comm.ecowas>
[1091]Muthaura (n n 57) 14.

life in the current information age',[1092]diplomatic circles cannot be isolated from this burgeoning trend.

Participants share views on one another's challenges and how these challenges can be overcome. Strategies for conflict prevention management are shared (e.g. through negotiation, mediation, conciliation, good offices), which can be adopted by other regions confronted by similar security challenges. It has been found that ICTs have 'a great potential for peace-building'.[1093]Through E-(i.e. electronic) diplomacy, information powered by the Internet facilitates free flow of content and information, thereby breaking monopoly of information once enjoyed by governments.[1094]While the 'secret characteristics' associated with traditional diplomacy diminish, 'new characteristics emerge.'[1095]The globalized form of communications take on the following patterns:

- Investment opportunities.
- Aiding and/or publicizing protest movements.[1096]
- Exposing of human rights violations, electoral malpractices, corrupt practices and bad governance.
- Exposing security threats, e.g. the activities of terrorists.
- Bridging of social boundaries across the world.
- Visa processing.

[1092] Joseph Osodo, Israel Kibirige and CherotichMung'out, 'The Role of State, Non-State Actors and Information and Communication Technologies in Peace-Building in Mt. Elgon Region, Kenya' (2014) Vol 5 No. 3 *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 358. Available at <www.mcser.org/.../2152> accessed 17 March 2015.

[1093]Ibid. 364.

[1094]Nweke, 'Diplomacy in Era of Digital Governance: Theory and Impact' (n 41) 24.

[1095] Ibid.

[1096] For instance, see Heather Brown, Emily Guskin and Amy Mitchel, 'The Role of Social Media in the Arab Uprisings' *Pew Research Centre, Journalism & Media* (Washington, D.C., 28 November 2012) <www.journalism.org/2012/11/28/role...> accessed 22 March 2015; HLWWIKI, 'Role of Social Media in the Arab Spring' *HLWIKI International* (Canada, last modified 23 October 2014) <hlwiki.slails.ubc.ca/index.php/The_R...> accessed 22 March 2015; Stacy Beck, 'Networking and Revolution: How Social Media Has Shaped the Arab Spring' (2013) Honors Theses, Paper 1, abstract available at <scholarlycommons.obu.edu/.../11> accessed 23 March 2015.

- Expansion of diplomatic representation and presence in more countries and in international organizations.
- Access to otherwise secret information,etc.

The sharing of information and ideas on social networks enables authorities to monitor activities of citizens and other actors and identify any potential threat to peace and security,and thereby prevent it before it escalates: that is preventive diplomacy. In other words, data obtained from public opinions (coupled with other sources of information, e.g.security intelligence information) can be carefully collated and analyzed to be able to gauge what may likely endanger national and/or international peace and security, which will in turn serve as an early warning signal for preventive diplomacy.[1097] Individuals and organizations also help to report activities of governments on the role of civil organizations. Muthaura says they 'have become actors in mobilizing public opinion in support of or rejection of government initiatives in Africa'.[1098]

The implication of this for diplomacy is that efforts should be made to identify opinions on how people are governed so that policies and actions that are liable to spark off public discontent arepromptly addressed through diplomatic channels. It is important to note that political instability, crises and constitutional changes of government have far reaching implications for diplomatic relations.We now proceed to look at the impact of ICT in conflict prevention in the West African sub-region.

Potentials of ICTs in Helping to Minimise Conflicts in the West African Sub-Region

Almost every facet of human endeavour has experienced profound transformation due to the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Within the last few decades, advances in the telecommunications industry have had a major impact on the global economy.

[1097] On the issue of early warning signal system, see e.g. ECOWAS Protocol (n 43): Art. 22, Chap. IV. See also 'Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results' (n 13) 19.
[1098] Muthaura (n 57) 14.

The influence of the Internet and the explosive growth of mobile wireless access to information have meant that mobile technologies are creating greater opportunities for access to information irrespective of time or space. In higher educational institutions, for example, mobile technologies are creating a lot of opportunities and the potential to improve and facilitate learning among a growing community of students. In the health sector, the application of ICTs has significantly improved quality, access and efficacy of healthcare system by addressing challenges arising from infectious diseases in various countries. In agriculture also, ICTs have been used to develop more innovative ways for enhancing agricultural practices to assist farmers particularly in the rural areas.[1099]

ICTs have also had a profound influence on governance among countries particularly with respect to issues of foreign policy. Nweke noted that the information revolution has altered the roles of countries, companies, non-governmental actors, and international institutions in the conduct of international relations economically, socially and otherwise.[1100] Policy and decision-making have become a more information-intensive process due to easy access to information by individuals. Global information networks have eroded the monopoly of information in the hands of governments: firms, journalists, and non-governmental organizations often have better information sources than governments and are able to use it to influence the implementation of government policy at various levels.The consequence of this on foreign policy is that governance has become more complicated.

Diplomacy and ICTs

Diplomacy owes its development in part to the invention of speedy communication devices in the form of airplanes, radio, telegraphs, and so on. The advent of instantaneous and global communication technology such as satellite

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[1099]Victoria Lawal, 'Diplomacy and the Ideals of International Peace and Security (Thesis, Master of Arts, Law and Diplomacy, University of Jos 1997) 10.

[1100]Eugene N Nweke, 'International Relations in Era of Digital Technology: The Change and Implications for African Nations' available at <http://www.nai.uu.se/ecas-4/panels/1-20/panel-18/Eugene-Nweke.pdf> accessed 10 January 2015.

television and the cyberspace have given greater promise to the idea of global interaction and the opportunity for the news media to exert greater influence in international relations more than ever before. Currently, the mode and practice of diplomacy in the 21st century has necessarily been modified to fit with technological changes in the information age.[1101]The concept of 'e-diplomacy', a term coined to indicate the increasing adoption of digital technology to diplomacy has come to characterize the nature of international relations among nations today. It incorporates the use of global information networks in fostering more efficient diplomatic interaction between countries. In this respect, traditional methods and practice of diplomacy have changed beyond the formally prescribed rules of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961.The role of the diplomat as an observer and reporter who is primarily responsible for gathering information and sending analysed results back to his home office has declined. Diplomats are constantly struggling to change their practices and discourses to respond to the influence of technology particularly the media. With the consistent currency of the Internet, the journalistic power of international media to marshal and sway world public opinion is at its height. In foreign policy circles today, one often hears of the 'CNN Curve' or the 'CNN Factor'[1102]- a term indicating that the power of instantaneous and global technology has given the news media far greater influence in international relations, thereby blurring the professional status of the diplomat.[1103]The rise in global terrorism, the war in Syria and the persistent uprising for democratic governance in various countries particularly the 'Arab Spring' in 2011, for example, are widely viewed as proof that media technology is driving diplomacy and diplomatic action across the globe.

E-Diplomacy and the Information Age
The history of diplomacy has demonstrated continuity in every aspect; the exigencies of dialogue between communities and rulers, states and international

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[1101] Ibid.

[1102] Johanna Neuman. 'The Media's Impact on International Affairs Then andNow' *The National Interest* (Washington 1995) 109.

[1103]Jonathan Aronson, 'Communications, Diplomacy and International Relations' (1991) RelazioniInternazionali, 101.

organizations have fostered its growth.The 21st century has witnessed developments in a much different dimension. The content and context of diplomacy and diplomatic practice and theory have been marked by certain transitions namely –

- A growing sense of the international community of nations,
- an increasing appreciation of the importance of world public opinion i.e. public diplomacy and
- the rapid increase in ICT.

All of these have done much to modify the practice of diplomacy. To understand this, it would be imperative to consider changes to the content of diplomacy in the digital age and the role that ICT has played in minimizing conflict. The central issue here is the need to have a better understanding of the implications of these developments and how ICT has contributed towards conflict resolution, reconciliation and preventive diplomacy particularly in the West African sub-region.

Multilateral Diplomacy

The real nature of diplomacy consists of the techniques and procedures for conducting relations among states. Diplomacy operates through the establishment of foreign offices, embassies, consulates, and special missions all over the world; it is commonly bilateral in nature. Diplomatic relations were at the first conducted on a bilateral basis; but today, multilateralism has become one of the main features of modern diplomacy. The exercise of multilateral diplomacy is more closely felt through international meetings whether they are ad-hoc meetings held with the aim of solving global problems or periodic meetings of international organizations.[1104] Developments in ICTs and the means of transportation demand more multilateral solutions among countries; this is because today, there are few problems which only affect the relations between two single countries. The impact of technology in international relations and diplomatic services has introduced a new thinking among nations that is indicative of the increasing adoption of e-diplomacy as a new way for more interactive engagement. Presently, governments are able to operate virtual

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[1104]Lawal (n 69) 61.

embassies which provide better opportunities for increased participation and knowledge sharing.[1105]Global connectivity has also served to aid diplomatic processes of negotiation and mediation among countries.Mediation processes can now be conducted through such media as teleconferencing, collaborative work done on shared documents, emails, chatting, and so on, thereby providing greater leverage in participation and encouraging transparency in the diplomatic process.The increasing development of multilateral diplomacy has been perceived by some writers like Keith Hamilton to result in the decline of traditional bilateral diplomacy[1106]. There can be no doubt that bilateral diplomacy can no longer cope with the responsibility of trying to solve the wide range of issues which are bound up with international relations between countries and ICT today.

Public Diplomacy

The emergence of ICT constitutes one of the most influential trends in modern diplomacy due to its ability to facilitate change in the way that states and individuals mobilise the expression of public opinion.The term 'public diplomacy' has come to support the idea of non-violent communication in the international domain by connecting individuals, government agencies and organisations through the media. Public diplomacy suggests a dimension of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy and indicates the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction outside the framework of government of groups and interests in one country with those of another.[1107]The availability of digital connectivity in countries has provided platforms by which information sharing is easily transferred through various channels. Electronic communication in the form of social media platforms in particular, has enabled the creation of online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other media content such as videos.

[1105]Ibid. 62.

[1106]Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its Evolution, Theory and Administration* (Routledge 1995) 1, 2.

[1107] Nicholas J Cull, 'Public Diplomacy before Gullion: the Evolution Phase' in Nancy Snow and Phillip Taylor (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (Taylor and Francis 2009) 19.

ICT has been the main driver of public diplomacy as it has re-structured the nature of access and use of information by empowering citizens to constantly evaluate, and upgrade socio-economic and political contexts; this has also compelled government agencies and diplomats to play an adaptive role in instituting systems and best practices to protect their national interests.[1108]Richelieu observed that no policy could succeed without the support of the opinion of the whole country and that it was absolutely necessary not only to inform the public but also to guide their opinion as a group.[1109]Through public diplomacy, states or governments are able to make their foreign policies known to their subjects, analyse similar activities of other foreign governments and gauge their influence on public opinion in the formulation and implementation of their own foreign policies. While the advent of social media has brought about significant impact on daily life particularly in the ways in which people stay connected, they have also served as a powerful medium for people to demand accountability from governments particularly in the area of transparency and service delivery in governance.

Preventive Diplomacy

Diplomacy functions as an important symbol of the existence of the international community by providing them with non-violent means of pursuing their individual objectives. The machinery of diplomacy in the past few years has responded to changes in the entities it represents particularly on issues that have to do with the international community and the maintenance of international peace and security. The realization that war is an ineffective means of pursuing national interests has raised the profile of diplomacy as a better substitute to the present global state system which has become more complex and more interdependent as a result of scientific and technological advancements.

[1108] AsangaAbeyagoonasekeraand ThilankaRanasinghe 'ICT for Diplomacy in the 21st Century Information Society' <www.lankaweb.com/news/items/2012/04/30/ict-for-diplomacy-in-the-21st-century-information-society-speech-by-mr-asanga-abeyagoonasekera-executive-director-lkiirss-26th-april-2012/> accessed 10 January 2015.

[1109] Nacimento E Silva–*Diplomacy in International Law*.(Al Sijthoff, 1979) 193.

In an era of uncertainties where maintaining peace and security in a multi-polar world is important, the necessity for organized dialogue has increased the pace of diplomatic activity between nations. In recent years, the number of armed conflicts across countries and regions has increased globally resulting in massive human casualties and the destruction of economic infrastructure. A major concern of the international community in this regard, is how such conflicts can be managed or better still prevented through dialogue, peace building, reconciliation and the promotion of human rights among communities.[1110]Preventive diplomacy is a method of minimizing the human and economic toll in protecting populations from violence; it operates through a broad range of diplomatic tools such as good offices and mediation, negotiation and conciliation, arbitration and judicial settlement of disputes. In practice, itrequires the political will of disputing parties to resolve conflicts through peaceful means and if need be, accept external assistance to facilitate these processes[1111].

Among the strategies of preventive diplomacy is the need to address the root causes of conflict and not merely the symptoms. This is done through the establishment of early warning signals as well as the development of other conflict prevention tools in communities.[1112] Information is a key factor in conflicts around the world and technology has been used as a very important tool in identifying trouble-prone areas for the purpose of understanding the potentials for addressing such conflicts. ICTs, particularly the media, have been used as a negative or positive tool of engagement between competing entities either as an instrument for violent propaganda or a means of disseminating useful information to placate violent situations in times of conflict. The practice by terrorists for example, to employ the Internet to convey belligerent information, recruit members or channel aggression towards states or

[1110] Robert Muggah and Natasha White, 'Is there a Preventive Action Renaissance? The Policy and Practice of Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Prevention' NOREF 2013 Available at: <http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/00175abccdb1df5f006c8e40da206643.pdf> Accessed 25 January 2015.

[1111] AmitavAcharya 'Preventive Diplomacy: Issues and Institutions in the Asia Pacific Region' (Paper Presented to the Eighth Asia-Pacific Roundtable, Kuala Lumpur, June 6-8, 1994).

[1112] Ibid, 22.

governments has witnessed a surge in recent years. However, ICT is seen by many to have a greater role in promoting peaceful co-existence by minimising conflict among peoples through improving communication, facilitating negotiations, increasing transparency, and building trust among people[1113]. Social networking platforms for example, have also been used in creating awareness among communities of the need to easily identify causes of conflict and inform authorities timeously. The revolution in ICT is therefore seen as a double edged sword for both developed and developing countries by providing opportunities for rapid development and increasing competitiveness in the practice of diplomacy.

Preventive Diplomacy and Regional Organizations

The proliferation of regional organisations is one of the most significant developments of contemporary international relations. Regionalization of the world society today has gone along the various processes of internationalization and globalization. A regional organization could be simply defined as a segment of the world bound together by common set of objectives based on geographical, social, cultural economic, religious or political ties and possessing a formal structure provided for in formal inter-governmental agreements[1114]. Regionalism as an institutional form of international cooperation is often identified with the number of security agencies that have developed since 1945 such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation(NATO), SEATO(South East Asian Treaty Organisation) and the Warsaw Pact.

Challenges, Drawbacks in Use of ICTs for Diplomatic Purposes

Despite the numerous benefits of ICT (particularly the Internet) for diplomatic purposes, there are some disadvantages inherent in its usage. Some of them are enumerated as follows:

[1113]Aronson (n 7)105.
[1114]'Two Decades of Peace Processes in West Africa: Achievements – Failures – Lessons' (ECOWAS International Conference, Monrovia, Liberia 22-26 march 2010 - Conference Report).

- Cyber security threats: hacking/leakages.[1115] Information on the Internet can be hacked by criminally-minded persons. Government/diplomatic cables/websites are not spared from this act; e.g. the Wikileaks incident.[1116]On the other hand, states also hack the websites of other states or of organizations[1117], or tap telephone conversations of state officials or world leaders.[1118]

- The warmth of interpersonal relationship between/amongst diplomats may be jettisoned by over-reliance on ICTs. For instance, there are certain diplomatic actions or activities that are better carried out informally, or on person-to-person basis and/or in utmost confidentiality, e.g. security and intelligence matters, mediation, and use of good offices.Therefore, ICTs are not and cannot be a cure-it-all.

- A digital gap among states is a critical factor.[1119] Some states have low level of digital competence hence they cannot cope with the complexity of modern communications. Some factors responsible for this gap, especially with respect to West Africa, include low access to internet facilities, illiteracy in ICTs inadequate infrastructures, for example, power supply.

[1115]Nweke, 'Diplomacy in Era of Digital Governance: Theory and Impact' (n 41) 24.
[1116]ShanthiKalathil, 'Transparency and Voltility: International Relations in the Information Age' in Kalathil (ed) (n 39) 3; Scott Shane and Andrew W Lehren, 'Leaked Cables Offer Raw Look at U.S. Diplomacy' New York Times (New York, 28 November 2010) <www.nytimes.com/2010/11/29/world/29...> accessed 22 March 2015; See Wikileaks website for further insights: <wikileaks.org> See also Nduka C Njoku, 'Electronic Surveillance, Interception of Communication and National Security: Wither the Right of Privacy (2014) Vol. 1 NOUN Journal of Legal Studies, 100-110. 'NOUN' stands for National Open University of Nigeria.
[1117] Erick Schonfeld, 'WikiLeaked Diplomatic Cables Confirm China's Politburo was behind Google Hacking Incident' <techcrunch.com/2010/11/28/wikileak...> accessed 22 March 2015.
[1118] For example, see James Ball, 'NSA Monitored Calls of 35 World Leaders After US Officials Handed over Contacts" The Guardian (London, 29 October 2013) <www.theguardian.com>News The NSA files> accessed 22 March 2015.
[1119]Nweke 'Diplomacy in Era of Digital Governance: Theory and Impact' (n 41) 24; LA Ogunsola and Hezekiah Oluwasanmi, 'Information and Communication Technologies and the Effects of Globalization: Twenty-First Century "Digital Slavery" or Developing Countries – Myth or Reality?' (2005) v. 6 no. 1-2 Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship<southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/con...> accessed 22 March 2015.

- For public policy reasons, some states are sceptical in using ICTs and they restrict their citizens from having access to the Internet for political, security or moral reasons.[1120]
- Some persons use the social media to spread hate speech/abusive and inciting language, lies, misinformation and destructive propaganda. This will not be a reliable source for diplomatic engagements.

With the presence of voluminous information comes the arduous task of sifting the wheat from the chaff as it were. The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon has alluded to this fact:

> Although early warning has expanded and improved, its context has changed over the past decade. Only a few years ago, information on brewing situations around the globe was scant; the challenge was to obtain more of it. Today, the challenge is, in some ways, the reverse: information is voluminous and must be sifted, evaluated and integrated.[1121]

A major drawback for preventive diplomacy is the tendency by states, through their regional bodies, to be more concerned about the interests of member governments to the detriment of non-state actors in those regions.[1122]This tendency can be actuated by adherence to strict notion of national security, regional solidarity and non-interference.[1123]This negative trend has the potential to create lop-sided policy issues and actions that can thwart rather foster attempts at conflict prevention.

Conclusion

In Africa, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (currently the AU) was formed to promote the economic, political and social wellbeing of the continent.

[1120]The Lawyers Chronicle, 'The Internet, Free Speech and National Laws'
<thelawyerschronicle.com/the-interne...>accessed 23 March 2015.
[1121] Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results' (n 13) 19.
[1122]See Muggah and White (n 79) 8.
[1123] Ibid.

Presently, there is an extensive network of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations in different regions dealing with problems that are similarly the concern of the United Nations. Article 53 of the Charter states that –

> ...nothing in the present charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action, provided that such arrangements or agencies and their activities are consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations....

Nevertheless, Articles 53 and 54 of the Charter definitely establish the subordination of regional arrangements to the United Nations. The role of regional organisations in containing conflicts has come to the fore due to their ability to produce positive results through joint efforts. It is very common to find that nations that increasingly see and do things the same way (economically, politically and socially) are nations that should find it easier to talk together to build processes and institutions together and advance common interests or resolve common problems.[1124]Sub-regional groups too such as ECOWAS have been able to champion interventions to prevent the escalation of conflicts within the West African sub-region. The challenge however, has been the need to design and develop post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building framework that can be enforced in the sub-region[1125].

It is highly imperative that for the world community to prevent violent ethnic or national conflicts, the international community must combine the forces of internationalization, globalization and regionalization with purposeful measures to provide different ethnic groups and nationalities with real opportunities to

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[1124]Ibid 77.

[1125]G.OYabi, 'The Role of ECOWAS in Managing Political Crisis and Conflict: The Cases of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau' <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/nigeria/07448.pdf> accessed 17 January 2015.

exert an influence on economic, social, cultural and humanitarian aspects of their lives. Every nation or ethnic group should have the opportunity to determine voluntarily the scale of its involvement in the internationalization processes and also the conditions of its involvement; such opportunities can be provided through the processes of preventive diplomacy and with the aid of ICTs.

ICTs have engendered explosive impacts on the world to a degree that is overwhelming. The monopoly is fast diminishing,giving way to liberalization of information. Participants in diplomacy can leverage on this information revolution to bolster their reach across erstwhile limited boundaries and to facilitate the practice of preventive diplomacy. But this new trend comes with its challenges and drawbacks.

- Experts in ICTs should work harder to build devices that will eliminate hacking or tapping of information.
- Governments should ensure that necessary facilities are provided for internet services. Moreover, citizens should not be unduly restricted from accessing or using the Internet.
- Users of internet facilities (especially the social networks) must not use abusive or inciting language, or spread falsehood and misleading information.
- States and international organizations should draw up a treaty on cyber security in order to ensure a more responsible use of this medium.