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Networked Diaspora Diplomacy: Digital Diaspora Activism and the Reconfiguration of Nigerian Foreign Policy

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Abstract

This article investigates how digital diaspora networks are transforming contemporary diplomacy and reshaping transnational political engagement. Focusing on African diaspora communities, particularly the Nigerian diaspora, the study explores how social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram enable diasporic actors to influence homeland governance, shape foreign policy narratives, and mobilize international advocacy campaigns. Drawing on Constructivist International Relations theory and Transnationalism, the paper conceptualizes digital diasporas as non-state actors operating within complex networks of influence that transcend territorial sovereignty.Using a mixed-method design, the study combines digital discourse analysis of major diaspora-led campaigns with semi-structured interviews involving diaspora organizers, policy experts, and government officials. Evidence indicates that digital diasporas perform agenda-setting functions, diffuse political norms, mobilize humanitarian and political pressure, and, in some instances, compel state response. The findings challenge state-centric models of diplomacy by demonstrating how digitally connected citizens abroad increasingly shape both domestic and international policy conversations.The article concludes that digital diaspora activism represents a new layer of informal diplomacy that redefines soft power, sovereignty, and state–citizen relations in the 21st century.

Keywords: Digital Diaspora; Transnationalism; Informal Diplomacy; SoftPower; Non-State Actors

Introduction

The transformation of diplomacy in the twenty-first century is increasingly shaped by digital connectivity and the growing prominence of non-state actors operating beyond territorial boundaries. Classical International Relations (IR) theory has historically privileged state-centric understandings of diplomacy, sovereignty, and foreign policy, drawing heavily on realist traditions that conceptualize states as the primary and rational actors within an anarchic international system. [1] Thus, globalization, technological change, and transnational mobility have significantly complicated this model. Contemporary

[1]Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

global politics reveals a more networked landscape in which digitally connected communities, particularly diaspora populations, exercise measurable influence over political narratives and foreign policy processes.[2]

Diaspora communities have historically played roles in homeland politics, particularly through remittances, lobbying, and nationalist movements.[3] Yet the digital age has fundamentally altered both the scale and speed of diasporic engagement. Social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram facilitate instantaneous transnational communication, enabling geographically dispersed populations to mobilize, coordinate, and frame political discourse in real time.[4] As Manuel Castells observes, digital networks generate new forms of "networked power," restructuring authority relations in ways that transcend territorial state control.[5] This transformation challenges conventional diplomatic hierarchies and redefines who participates in international political processes.

Among African states, Nigeria presents a compelling case study. Nigeria possesses one of the largest diaspora populations globally, estimated at over seventeen million individuals, with significant concentrations in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and South Africa.[6] Remittance inflows to Nigeria consistently rank among the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, exceeding billions of dollars annually and constituting a substantial component of national foreign exchange earnings.[7] While these economic contributions have long been recognized, Nigerian diaspora communities have increasingly assumed overt political roles in transnational governance debates.

The institutional recognition of diaspora engagement within Nigerian foreign policy is evident in the establishment of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) in 2019, which formalized state efforts to integrate diaspora actors into national development and diplomatic strategies.[8] Official rhetoric from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs increasingly frames diaspora populations as "strategic partners" in national development and global representation.[9]Such institutionalization reflects a broader global trend in which states seek to harness diaspora capital—economic, social, and political—as instruments of soft power.[10]

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[2]Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
[3]Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[4]Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).
[5]Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).
[6]International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2022* (Geneva: IOM, 2022).
[7]World Bank, *Migration and Development Brief 37* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2022).
[8]Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (Establishment) Act, 2017 (Abuja: Federal Republic of Nigeria).
[9]Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Foreign Policy Review Report* (Abuja, 2020).
[10]Yossi Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Yet beyond formal institutional mechanisms, a more profound transformation has unfolded within the digital sphere. Nigerian diaspora networks have leveraged social media platforms to influence international narratives during critical political moments. The #EndSARS protests of October 2020 represent a watershed event in this evolution. What began as domestic protests against police brutality rapidly escalated into a globally amplified digital campaign, sustained in significant measure by diaspora activism.[11] Nigerian communities abroad organized demonstrations in London, Washington D.C., Toronto, and other major cities, while simultaneously engaging foreign legislators and international media outlets.[12] Parliamentary debates in the United Kingdom and statements from members of the United States Congress illustrate how diaspora mobilization contributed to the internationalization of what might otherwise have remained a domestic governance issue.[13]

These developments complicate traditional distinctions between domestic and international politics. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's theory of complex interdependence anticipated a world in which non-state actors and transnational channels would supplement traditional interstate diplomacy.[14] However, digital diaspora activism extends this logic further by creating decentralized networks capable of exerting reputational pressure on states within global public spheres. Through norm entrepreneurship and narrative framing, diaspora actors may influence foreign policy discourse without holding formal diplomatic authority.[15]

Despite these transformations, mainstream IR scholarship has been comparatively slow to conceptualize digital diaspora activism as a form of diplomacy. Existing studies often frame diaspora engagement primarily through economic lenses, emphasizing remittances, development assistance, or investment flows.[16] Where political dimensions are acknowledged, attention frequently centers on diaspora lobbying within host-state institutions rather than on digitally mediated transnational ecosystems that blur sovereignty boundaries.[17]Consequently, there remains limited theoretical integration of digital diaspora agency into broader debates concerning sovereignty, soft power, and global governance.

This article addresses that gap by advancing the concept of "Networked Diaspora Diplomacy" (NDD), defined as a form of informal diplomatic engagement conducted by digitally connected diaspora communities that shape political discourse, influence policy agendas, and reconfigure state–citizen relations across borders. Drawing upon Constructivist theory, particularly

[11]Ebenezer Obadare, "The Digital Public Sphere and #EndSARS," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 59, no. 4 (2021): 567–589.
[12]BBC News, "End SARS: Nigerians Protest Globally," October 2020.
[13]UK Parliament, "Nigeria: Human Rights and #EndSARS Debate," Hansard, October 2020.
[14]Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 4th ed. (Boston: Longman, 2012).
[15]Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).
[16]Dilip Ratha, "Diaspora Bonds for Development," *World Bank Policy Brief* (2013).
[17]Terrence Lyons and Peter Mandaville, eds., *Politics from Afar* (London: Hurst, 2012).

Alexander Wendt's emphasis on identity and norm construction, [18] and transnationalist approaches to global governance,[19]the study conceptualizes digital diasporas as norm entrepreneurs operating within networked public spheres. These actors engage in what Joseph Nye describes as soft power processes—shaping preferences through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion.[20]

Focusing specifically on Nigeria, this article examines how diaspora networks leveraged digital platforms to influence foreign policy narratives during critical political junctures. It asks: To what extent can digital diaspora activism be conceptualized as informal diplomacy? How does such activism reshape Nigerian foreign policy dynamics? And what implications does this transformation hold for sovereignty in the digital age?

By situating Nigeria within broader debates on digital diplomacy and non-state actors in global politics, the article contributes both theoretically and empirically to IR scholarship. It demonstrates that diplomacy is no longer monopolized by embassies and ministries of foreign affairs but is increasingly co-produced by citizens operating within transnational digital networks. In doing so, the study challenges Eurocentric assumptions that conceptual innovation in diplomacy originates solely in Western contexts and instead positions African foreign policy practice as analytically central to understanding emerging transformations in world politics.[21]

Literature Review

Diaspora and International Relations: From Marginality to Agency

For much of the twentieth century, diaspora communities occupied a peripheral position in International Relations (IR) scholarship. Classical realist and neorealist frameworks conceptualized international politics as an arena structured by sovereign states operating under anarchy, leaving limited analytical space for non-state actors.[22] Diasporas were largely understood through sociological or anthropological lenses rather than as subjects of international political analysis.[23] However, globalization and the intensification of transnational mobility have challenged this exclusion.

Gabriel Sheffer's foundational work on diaspora politics emphasized that diaspora groups function as autonomous political actors capable of influencing homeland politics and host-state foreign policy agendas.[24] Yossi Shain later advanced this argument by demonstrating how diasporas operate as political

[18] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[19] Thomas Risse, *A Community of Europeans?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).
[20] Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).
[21] Siba N. Grovogui, *Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
[22] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).
[23] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).
[24] Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

lobbyists and identity entrepreneurs within liberal democratic systems.[25] These works marked an important shift by recognizing diaspora communities as participants in global political processes rather than passive migrant populations.

Subsequent scholarship broadened the analytical scope to examine diasporas in relation to conflict, development, and democratization. Terrence Lyons and Peter Mandaville argue that diasporas frequently engage in "long-distance nationalism," shaping homeland political trajectories through funding, advocacy, and discursive intervention. [26] In fragile states, diaspora actors may simultaneously promote democratization or exacerbate polarization depending on contextual conditions.[27]This ambivalence underscores the need for nuanced frameworks capable of accounting for diaspora agency within complex political environments.

Yet much of this literature predates the full maturation of digital communication technologies. While earlier studies highlight lobbying, remittances, and nationalist mobilization, they insufficiently theorize the transformative impact of digital platforms on the scale and immediacy of diaspora political engagement. As a result, the intersection between digitalization and diaspora diplomacy remains underdeveloped in mainstream IR scholarship.

Transnationalism and Complex Interdependence

The theoretical groundwork for integrating diasporas into IR analysis lies in transnationalism and complex interdependence theory. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's concept of complex interdependence challenged realist orthodoxy by positing that multiple channels—formal and informal—connect societies across borders. [28] These channels include non-state actors, multinational corporations, advocacy networks, and epistemic communities. Importantly, military force becomes less central in issue areas characterized by dense economic and social interconnections.

Transnationalism further expands this logic by emphasizing sustained cross-border linkages maintained by migrants and diasporic communities.[29]Rather than severing ties with homelands, migrants frequently develop dual political engagements that blur the boundary between domestic and international spheres. Nina Glick Schiller and her colleagues argue that migrants operate within "transnational social fields" that transcend nation-state

[25]Yossi Shain, *Kinship and Diasporas in International Affairs* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).
[26]Terrence Lyons and Peter Mandaville, eds., *Politics from Afar* (London: Hurst, 2012).
[27]Lyons and Mandaville, *Politics from Afar*.
[28]Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 4th ed. (Boston: Longman, 2012).
[29]Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (London: Routledge, 2009).

boundaries.[30]These fields create new spaces for political mobilization and identity negotiation.

However, while transnationalism identifies cross-border networks, it does not fully theorize how digital technologies intensify these connections or alter power hierarchies within them. Manuel Castells' theory of the network society provides an important bridge.[31]Castells argues that power in the information age flows through networks rather than hierarchical institutions. Digital communication technologies facilitate horizontal connectivity, enabling actors outside formal authority structures to shape public discourse. Applied to diaspora politics, this suggests that digitally connected diaspora communities may exert influence disproportionate to their institutional status.

In the Nigerian context, these dynamics are particularly salient. The Nigerian diaspora maintains dense economic and social ties with the homeland, reinforced by remittance flows and cultural networks.[32]Yet digital technologies amplify these ties, allowing diaspora actors to intervene rapidly in domestic political debates and international advocacy campaigns. This transformation demands theoretical synthesis beyond traditional transnational frameworks.

Constructivism, Identity, and Norm Entrepreneurship

Constructivist IR theory provides crucial analytical tools for understanding diaspora influence in the digital age. Alexander Wendt's assertion that "anarchy is what states make of it" emphasizes that international politics is socially constructed through shared ideas and identities rather than determined solely by material power distributions.[33]Norms, discourse, and identity formation are therefore central to political outcomes.

Diasporas are uniquely positioned as identity mediators. Living between host and homeland societies, they negotiate multiple identities that can be strategically mobilized in political discourse.[34]Through digital platforms, these identity negotiations occur publicly and transnationally. Diaspora actors frame homeland events in ways that resonate with global human rights norms, democratic values, or anti-corruption discourses, thereby translating local grievances into globally intelligible narratives.

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink's concept of transnational advocacy networks is especially relevant.[35]They demonstrate how non-state actors use information politics, symbolic politics, and leverage politics to influence state

[30]Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration* (New York: NYAS, 1992).
[31]Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).
[32]World Bank, *Migration and Development Brief 37* (Washington, DC, 2022).
[33]Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[34]Rogers Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1–19.
[35]Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

behavior. Digital diasporas may function as such networks, deploying strategic framing to mobilize international attention and reputational pressure.

In the Nigerian case, diaspora activists during the #EndSARS protests framed police brutality as a human rights violation consistent with global anti-authoritarian struggles. This framing facilitated solidarity protests in Western capitals and engagement from foreign legislators.[36] By aligning domestic grievances with international normative frameworks, diaspora networks effectively internationalized a domestic issue.

Constructivism thus provides a foundation for conceptualizing diaspora actors as norm entrepreneurs—agents who seek to redefine acceptable standards of state behavior.[37] However, the literature has not sufficiently integrated digital amplification mechanisms into this analysis. The speed, scale, and visibility afforded by social media transform norm entrepreneurship into a more immediate and decentralized process.

4. Digital Diplomacy and Informal Power

The emergence of digital diplomacy further complicates traditional diplomatic theory. Governments increasingly use social media platforms for public diplomacy, crisis communication, and image management.[38] Bjola and Holmes argue that digital diplomacy represents both an extension and transformation of traditional diplomatic practice.[39] It enables real-time communication but also exposes states to rapid reputational risks.

Yet the literature largely focuses on state actors' use of digital tools. Less attention is paid to how citizens—particularly diasporas—engage in parallel diplomatic activities. Zeynep Tufekci's analysis of digitally networked movements illustrates how social media lowers coordination costs, enabling rapid mobilization without centralized leadership.[40] Such movements can influence international media agendas and governmental responses.

Diaspora communities, by virtue of their transnational positioning, are particularly capable of leveraging digital tools for cross-border advocacy. Their geographic location within host states allows them to access foreign political institutions directly while simultaneously engaging homeland audiences online. This dual embeddedness enables what may be termed informal diplomatic leverage: influence exerted without formal diplomatic credentials but with tangible reputational effects.

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[36]Ebenezer Obadare, "The Digital Public Sphere and #EndSARS," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 59, no. 4 (2021): 567–589.
[37]Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 887–917.
[38]Corneliu Bjola and Marcus Holmes, eds., *Digital Diplomacy* (London: Routledge, 2015).
[39]Bjola and Holmes, *Digital Diplomacy*.
[40]Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

The Nigerian diaspora's engagement during the #EndSARS protests exemplifies this phenomenon. Demonstrations in London and Washington D.C., combined with digital campaigns targeting Western policymakers, generated international scrutiny of Nigerian governance practices.[41] The Nigerian government's subsequent diplomatic responses—including official statements and embassy communications—indicate recognition of diaspora-driven reputational pressure.

Sovereignty in the Digital Age

The increasing influence of digital diasporas raises fundamental questions about sovereignty. Traditional Westphalian sovereignty presumes the state's exclusive authority within territorial boundaries.[42] However, digital communication technologies erode the practical insulation of domestic politics from external scrutiny. Diaspora activism blurs the distinction between internal and external domains, creating hybrid spaces where domestic issues are contested internationally.

Scholars such as Saskia Sassen argue that globalization produces "denationalized" forms of authority that coexist with formal sovereignty.[43] Digital diaspora activism contributes to this denationalization by diffusing political agency across borders. States remain legally sovereign, yet their reputational legitimacy becomes increasingly contingent upon transnational digital publics.

For Nigeria, this dynamic presents both opportunity and vulnerability. On one hand, diaspora engagement enhances soft power potential and global representation. On the other hand, unregulated digital mobilization can expose governance deficiencies to international scrutiny. Understanding this duality is critical for reconceptualizing Nigerian foreign policy within the digital era.

Literature Gap and Theoretical Positioning

Despite extensive scholarship on diaspora politics, transnationalism, and digital activism, few studies integrate these strands into a coherent IR framework explaining how digital diasporas function as informal diplomatic actors in African foreign policy contexts. The Nigerian case remains particularly under-theorized, often treated descriptively rather than analytically.

This article addresses that gap by synthesizing Constructivism, Transnationalism, and Digital Diplomacy scholarship into the concept of Networked Diaspora Diplomacy. It argues that Nigerian digital diaspora activism represents not merely advocacy but a structural transformation in foreign policy influence mechanisms.

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[41]UK Parliament, "Nigeria: Human Rights and #EndSARS Debate," Hansard, October 2020.
[42]Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
[43]Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

Theoretical Framework: Networked Diaspora Diplomacy

The transformation of diplomacy in the digital age necessitates a theoretical framework capable of integrating three distinct but interrelated developments in International Relations (IR): the diffusion of authority beyond the state, the centrality of identity and norms in political behavior, and the structural impact of digital networks on political mobilization. This article advances the concept of Networked Diaspora Diplomacy (NDD) as a synthetic framework drawing upon Constructivism, Transnationalism, and Soft Power theory to explain how digitally connected diaspora communities operate as informal diplomatic actors within contemporary foreign policy processes.

From State-Centric Diplomacy to Diffused Authority

Classical diplomatic theory is grounded in the assumption that sovereign states monopolize legitimate representation in international affairs.[44] Realist and neorealist traditions conceptualize diplomacy as a function of state power, mediated through formal institutions such as embassies and foreign ministries.[45] However, globalization and technological change have destabilized this exclusivity. Authority in global politics is increasingly diffused across networks that include international organizations, multinational corporations, advocacy coalitions, and civil society actors.[46]

Keohane and Nye's theory of complex interdependence marked an early recognition of this transformation by identifying multiple channels of interaction that supplement traditional interstate diplomacy.[47] These channels include informal contacts among non-state actors and transgovernmental networks operating below the level of heads of state. Importantly, complex interdependence reduces the centrality of military force and elevates the role of information, reputation, and economic interconnection.

Networked Diaspora Diplomacy extends this insight by arguing that digital diaspora communities constitute a distinct form of transnational channel capable of influencing foreign policy narratives. Unlike traditional lobbying groups, digital diasporas operate within decentralized, digitally mediated spaces that enable rapid mobilization without centralized institutional structures. Their authority does not derive from formal recognition but from discursive power and reputational leverage.

Constructivism and the Politics of Identity

Constructivism provides the normative and ideational foundation for understanding diaspora influence. Alexander Wendt's assertion that "anarchy is what states make of it" underscores the socially constructed nature of

[44]Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).
[45]Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).
[46]Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[47]Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 4th ed. (Boston: Longman, 2012).

international politics.[48] State interests are not fixed; they are shaped by shared ideas, norms, and identities. Consequently, actors capable of influencing discourse and identity formation can indirectly shape foreign policy outcomes.

Diaspora communities occupy a unique position in identity politics. Situated between host and homeland societies, they possess hybrid identities that allow them to translate domestic political grievances into globally resonant narratives.[49] This capacity becomes particularly powerful in the digital age, where social media platforms function as transnational public spheres. Through framing strategies, diaspora actors can rearticulate domestic issues in the language of human rights, democracy, or global justice, thereby attracting international attention.

Finnemore and Sikkink's model of norm entrepreneurship is especially relevant here.[50] Norm entrepreneurs are actors who seek to change standards of appropriate state behavior by persuading audiences to adopt new normative frameworks. Digital diasporas function as such entrepreneurs by reframing homeland events within internationally accepted normative discourses. In the Nigerian case, diaspora activism during the #EndSARS protests framed police brutality not merely as a local governance failure but as a violation of universal human rights standards. This reframing facilitated engagement from foreign legislators and international organizations.

Within the NDD framework, diaspora actors are conceptualized as digital norm entrepreneurs whose influence operates through persuasion, visibility, and reputational pressure rather than coercion.

Transnationalism and Networked Political Space

Transnationalism emphasizes sustained cross-border linkages that transcend national boundaries.[51]Migrants and diasporas maintain political, economic, and cultural ties that create transnational social fields.[52] These fields challenge methodological nationalism—the assumption that political processes are confined within territorial states.

However, digital technologies intensify transnationalism by compressing time and space. Manuel Castells' theory of the network society posits that power flows through networks rather than hierarchical institutions. [53] Digital communication platforms reduce coordination costs and enable horizontal mobilization across geographic distances. This network logic produces new

[48]Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[49]Rogers Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1–19.
[50]Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 887–917.
[51]Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (London: Routledge, 2009).
[52]Nina Glick Schiller et al., *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration* (New York: NYAS, 1992).
[53]Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

forms of political organization characterized by fluid membership, decentralized leadership, and rapid diffusion of information.

Networked Diaspora Diplomacy incorporates Castells' insight by conceptualizing diaspora activism as embedded within digitally structured networks. These networks generate what may be termed informational leverage—the capacity to amplify narratives, mobilize symbolic solidarity, and influence international media agendas. Unlike traditional diplomatic channels, which operate through closed negotiations, digital networks operate in public view, increasing the reputational stakes for states.

In Nigeria's case, diaspora networks mobilized protests in major Western capitals while simultaneously engaging online audiences. This dual presence—physical and digital—demonstrates how transnational political space has become hybridized, combining territorial protest with virtual amplification.

Soft Power and Informal Diplomatic Influence

Joseph Nye's concept of soft power further illuminates diaspora influence.[54]Soft power refers to the ability to shape preferences through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. Traditionally associated with states, soft power can also be exercised by non-state actors who shape international narratives and public opinion.

Within the NDD framework, diaspora communities are conceptualized as distributed soft power agents. They influence how homeland states are perceived internationally, thereby affecting diplomatic relationships and foreign policy calculations. Reputational damage generated through sustained digital campaigns can prompt state responses aimed at image management or policy recalibration.

Importantly, this form of influence does not replace formal diplomacy but operates alongside it. Digital diasporas do not negotiate treaties or represent states in multilateral forums; rather, they shape the discursive environment within which diplomatic decisions are made. This indirect influence may nonetheless produce tangible policy consequences, particularly in democratic host states where public opinion affects foreign policy debates.

Sovereignty Reconfigured: The Logic of Informal Pressure

The integration of Constructivism, Transnationalism, and Soft Power theory culminates in a reconceptualization of sovereignty. Stephen Krasner

[54]Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

distinguishes between legal sovereignty and practical authority.[55]While states retain formal sovereignty, their practical autonomy may be constrained by external normative pressures and reputational considerations.

Digital diaspora activism contributes to what Saskia Sassen describes as the denationalization of political authority. [56] Domestic events are rapidly internationalized, reducing the insulation traditionally afforded by territorial boundaries. Within this environment, sovereignty becomes conditional upon compliance with globally recognized norms.

Networked Diaspora Diplomacy therefore operates through what may be termed informal policy pressure mechanisms:

Narrative Amplification – Dissemination of framing narratives across digital platforms.

Norm Alignment – Translation of local grievances into universal normative language.

Reputational Leverage – Generation of international scrutiny affecting diplomatic standing.

Policy Signaling – Indirect prompting of state responses to mitigate reputational risk.

These mechanisms collectively illustrate how diaspora actors influence foreign policy without formal institutional authority.

Conceptual Model of Networked Diaspora Diplomacy

The NDD framework can be summarized as a sequential process:

Digital Connectivity → Identity Framing → Norm Entrepreneurship → Narrative Amplification → Reputational Pressure → Foreign Policy Adjustment.

This model posits that foreign policy outcomes are shaped not solely by material power calculations but by discursive and reputational dynamics generated within networked transnational spaces.

In the Nigerian context, this framework allows for systematic analysis of how diaspora activism interacts with state diplomatic strategy. Rather than viewing diaspora mobilization as episodic protest, NDD conceptualizes it as an emergent structural feature of contemporary foreign policy environments.

[55]Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
[56]Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative explanatory case study design to investigate how digital diaspora activism functions as an informal diplomatic mechanism within Nigerian foreign policy. The methodological approach is grounded in interpretivist epistemology, consistent with Constructivist International Relations theory, which emphasizes the socially constructed nature of political meaning, identity, and norm formation.[57]The objective is not to measure causal effects in positivist terms but to analyze discursive processes, narrative framing, and reputational dynamics through which diaspora networks exert influence.

Research Design

A single-case study design is employed, focusing on Nigeria as a strategically significant and theoretically illustrative case. Case study methodology is appropriate where the research seeks to understand complex social phenomena embedded within real-world contexts.[58]Nigeria offers analytic leverage due to its large diaspora population, institutionalized diaspora engagement framework, and the high-profile digital mobilization surrounding the #EndSARS protests of 2020.

The case is treated as both instrumental and intrinsic. Instrumentally, Nigeria provides insight into broader transformations in digital diplomacy across the Global South. Intrinsically, Nigeria's foreign policy architecture—including the establishment of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM)—makes it a relevant case for analyzing structured and unstructured diaspora-state interaction.[59]

The temporal scope of the study spans 2019–2023. This period captures the formal operationalization of NiDCOM, the #EndSARS protests, and subsequent diplomatic developments, thereby enabling longitudinal analysis of diaspora-state dynamics before, during, and after a critical political event.

Data Collection

The research relies on three primary categories of qualitative data: digital discourse materials, institutional policy documents, and elite interviews.

Digital Discourse Analysis

Digital content was collected from publicly accessible social media platforms, primarily X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram. The dataset focuses

[57]Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[58]Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018).
[59]Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (Establishment) Act, 2017 (Abuja: Federal Republic of Nigeria).

on posts containing the #EndSARS hashtag between October and December 2020, supplemented by subsequent diaspora advocacy campaigns through 2023. Social media content was selected using purposive sampling to identify posts generated by verified diaspora organizations, prominent activists, and coordinated campaign networks.

This approach aligns with digital ethnography methodologies that treat online platforms as sites of political interaction and discursive construction.[60]The objective is not quantitative sentiment analysis but qualitative interpretation of narrative framing strategies, identity construction, and normative appeals.

To ensure systematic selection, inclusion criteria were established: (1) posts originating from accounts self-identifying as diaspora-based; (2) content directly addressing Nigerian governance or foreign policy issues; and (3) posts demonstrating engagement with international audiences, such as tagging foreign legislators or global media outlets.

Institutional and Policy Documents

Official documents were collected from the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NiDCOM publications, parliamentary debates (UK Hansard), and publicly available U.S. Congressional statements referencing Nigeria during the study period. These materials provide evidence of state response and diplomatic positioning.

Document analysis follows qualitative content analysis procedures to identify shifts in official rhetoric, references to diaspora engagement, and discursive responses to international scrutiny.[61] Comparing diaspora narratives with official statements allows for assessment of potential reputational pressure and narrative alignment or contestation.

Elite Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three categories of participants:Nigerian diaspora activists and organizational leaders (United Kingdom and United States-based);Nigerian foreign policy analysts and scholars;Current or former officials within Nigeria's diplomatic institutions.

Interviewees were selected through purposive and snowball sampling to ensure expertise and direct involvement in diaspora advocacy or foreign policy processes.^6 Interviews were conducted virtually and transcribed verbatim. Anonymity was offered to participants to encourage candid reflection on state-diaspora dynamics.

[60]Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (Establishment) Act, 2017 (Abuja: Federal Republic of Nigeria).
[61]Christine Hine, *Virtual Ethnography* (London: Sage, 2000).

The interview guide focused on perceptions of diaspora influence, mechanisms of digital mobilization, engagement with foreign policymakers, and perceived impact on Nigerian diplomatic behavior.

Data Analysis

The study employs thematic coding and discourse analysis to interpret collected materials. Coding was conducted in three stages:

Open Coding: Identification of recurring themes, including human rights framing, sovereignty discourse, reputational concern, and diplomatic response.

Axial Coding: Linking themes to the theoretical constructs of Networked Diaspora Diplomacy—norm entrepreneurship, narrative amplification, and reputational leverage.

Selective Coding: Integration of findings into a coherent explanatory narrative connecting digital mobilization to foreign policy adjustment.

Discourse analysis draws upon constructivist methodology by examining how meaning is constructed through language and symbolic representation.[62] Particular attention is paid to framing strategies that translate domestic grievances into universal normative appeals.

Process tracing techniques are also employed to examine temporal sequences between diaspora digital mobilization and official diplomatic statements.[63] While causality cannot be established in deterministic terms, temporal proximity and rhetorical alignment provide inferential evidence of influence pathways.

Validity and Reliability

To enhance validity, the study employs methodological triangulation by integrating digital content, institutional documents, and interview data.[64] Cross-verification of themes across data sources reduces reliance on any single narrative perspective.

Reflexivity is incorporated into the research process to acknowledge potential interpretive bias. Given the politically sensitive nature of diaspora activism, care was taken to contextualize interview responses within broader documentary evidence.

[62]Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013).
[63]Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[64]Teun A. van Dijk, *Discourse and Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

Reliability is strengthened through transparent coding procedures and explicit inclusion criteria for digital content selection. All data sources are publicly accessible or ethically obtained through informed consent.

Ethical Considerations

Research involving digital content and elite interviews raises ethical considerations regarding privacy and political sensitivity. Although social media posts analyzed are publicly available, the study refrains from disclosing personal identifiers unless accounts are verified public figures. Interview participants provided informed consent, and data storage complies with confidentiality standards.

Given the contentious nature of political activism, particular attention was paid to minimizing potential harm to participants. Statements are reported in anonymized form where requested.

Limitations

The study acknowledges several limitations. First, digital discourse analysis may over represent highly visible activists while under representing less digitally engaged diaspora members. Second, foreign policy adjustments are influenced by multiple variables beyond diaspora activism, including domestic political calculations and bilateral strategic interests. Accordingly, the study does not claim exclusive causality but rather identifies diaspora mobilization as a contributory factor within a broader policy environment.

Despite these limitations, the qualitative explanatory design allows for rich contextual analysis consistent with interpretivist IR scholarship. By integrating digital ethnography, document analysis, and elite interviews, the methodology provides a robust foundation for evaluating the Networked Diaspora Diplomacy framework within the Nigerian case.

Empirical Analysis: Nigerian Digital Diaspora and the Reconfiguration of Foreign Policy

Nigeria's Diaspora Policy Architecture: Institutional Foundations

Nigeria's engagement with its diaspora predates the digital era but intensified significantly in the twenty-first century. Historically, diaspora contributions were conceptualized primarily in economic terms, particularly through remittance flows. According to the World Bank, Nigeria has consistently ranked among the top remittance-receiving countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with inflows reaching billions of dollars annually.[65]These financial transfers have played a stabilizing role in foreign exchange earnings and household income, reinforcing the state's recognition of the diaspora as a strategic asset.

[65]Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Process Tracing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

The formal institutionalization of diaspora engagement culminated in the establishment of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) through the 2017 Act of the National Assembly.[66]The Commission was mandated to coordinate diaspora relations, facilitate investment, and strengthen Nigeria's global image. Official policy discourse increasingly framed the diaspora as "ambassadors at large," signaling a shift from purely economic engagement to symbolic and diplomatic inclusion.[67]

However, this institutional architecture primarily conceptualized diaspora engagement as a state-managed partnership. It did not anticipate the autonomous mobilization capacity enabled by digital platforms. While NiDCOM represented a top-down engagement model, digital diaspora activism emerged as a bottom-up process that sometimes challenged official state narratives. The tension between institutionalized engagement and autonomous activism forms a central empirical dynamic of this case study.

#EndSARS as a Critical Juncture in Digital Transnational Mobilization

The #EndSARS protests of October 2020 constitute a watershed moment in Nigerian digital political mobilization. Initially triggered by allegations of police brutality by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), the protests quickly escalated into a nationwide movement demanding broader governance reforms.[68] Social media platforms, particularly Twitter, served as primary coordination tools for protest logistics, fundraising, and narrative dissemination.

Diaspora communities played a decisive role in amplifying the movement beyond Nigeria's territorial borders. Within days, solidarity protests were organized in London, Washington D.C., Toronto, and other major cities with significant Nigerian populations.[69] Diaspora activists utilized digital platforms to engage foreign policymakers, tag international media organizations, and circulate video evidence of protest repression.

The digital architecture of the movement illustrates the first stage of Networked Diaspora Diplomacy: digital connectivity enabling transnational identity consolidation. Nigerian diaspora communities framed the protests as part of a broader global struggle against state violence, aligning their messaging with international human rights discourses. This framing resonated with audiences in host countries where public opinion is sensitive to democratic accountability norms.

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[66]Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989).
[67]Teun A. van Dijk, *Discourse and Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[68]Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 887–917.
[69]Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

UK parliamentary debates referencing the protests demonstrate the tangible internationalization of the issue.[70]Similarly, statements by members of the United States Congress called for accountability and restraint by Nigerian security forces.[71] These responses indicate that diaspora digital advocacy contributed to elevating a domestic governance issue into the realm of bilateral diplomatic discourse.

Importantly, the Nigerian government's reaction reflected awareness of reputational stakes. Official statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized Nigeria's commitment to reform and stability while cautioning against "misinformation" circulating online.[72] Embassies in London and Washington issued communications aimed at clarifying the government's position, suggesting responsiveness to transnational narrative pressure.

Norm Entrepreneurship and Narrative Amplification

The second stage of Networked Diaspora Diplomacy involves **norm entrepreneurship**—the strategic reframing of domestic events within internationally resonant normative frameworks. Diaspora activists consistently employed the language of human rights, democratic accountability, and rule of law in their digital campaigns.

Analysis of social media discourse reveals recurring appeals to international legal standards and global governance norms. References to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and calls for international investigations positioned the protests within globally recognized normative regimes. This discursive strategy aligns with Finnemore and Sikkink's model of norm diffusion, wherein actors seek to socialize states into compliance with emerging standards of appropriate behavior.[73]

Diaspora networks amplified visual documentation of protest repression, leveraging the viral nature of digital platforms. Manuel Castells' theory of networked communication suggests that visibility constitutes a form of power in the information age.[74] By circulating video evidence and coordinating global hashtags, diaspora activists increased the reputational cost of state inaction.

The Nigerian state's diplomatic rhetoric during this period reveals partial narrative adaptation. Official communications increasingly referenced human rights commitments and investigative panels, signaling discursive alignment with global norms. While these shifts do not establish direct causality, they indicate interaction between diaspora framing and state diplomatic language.

Reputational Leverage and Diplomatic Adjustment

[70]Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 4th ed. (Boston: Longman, 2012).
[71]Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).
[72]Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).
[73]Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).
[74]Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999)

The third stage of the NDD framework—**reputational leverage**—is observable in Nigeria's diplomatic recalibrations following the protests. Although no formal sanctions were imposed by major Western governments, the episode generated heightened scrutiny of Nigeria's governance practices within international forums.

Foreign media coverage expanded significantly during the protest period, reinforcing reputational pressures.[75] Diplomatic engagement between Nigerian officials and host-state governments reportedly included discussions addressing protest developments and human rights concerns. [76] The government's establishment of judicial panels of inquiry into police conduct further reflected attempts to manage both domestic unrest and international perception.

Reputational pressure operates indirectly; it does not compel policy change through coercion but alters the cost-benefit calculations of state actors concerned with global standing. Joseph Nye's soft power framework suggests that reputational credibility influences diplomatic capital.[77] For a state such as Nigeria—seeking foreign investment, regional leadership, and multilateral influence—image management becomes strategically significant.

Diaspora activism thus contributed to what may be termed diplomatic signaling effects. By sustaining international attention, diaspora networks increased the visibility of governance shortcomings, incentivizing state responses aimed at mitigating reputational damage.

Post-#EndSARS Developments: Institutional Adaptation and Strategic Engagement

In the aftermath of #EndSARS, Nigerian authorities intensified formal diaspora engagement efforts. NiDCOM expanded outreach initiatives and public diplomacy campaigns emphasizing diaspora partnership.[78] The government also reiterated commitments to diaspora voting reforms and investment facilitation.

This post-crisis engagement may be interpreted as an institutional learning response. Recognizing the mobilization capacity of digital diaspora networks, the state appears to have sought greater structured engagement to channel activism into cooperative frameworks. Such adaptation reflects the reciprocal nature of Networked Diaspora Diplomacy: diaspora activism influences state behavior, and state responses in turn reshape diaspora-state relations.

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[75]Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
[76]Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 887–917.
[77]Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[78]Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

However, tensions persist. Digital diaspora activism remains largely decentralized and autonomous, resistant to full institutional incorporation. The persistence of critical digital campaigns on governance issues suggests that informal diplomatic influence continues alongside formal state-diaspora collaboration.

The Nigerian case illustrates the hybridization of political space in the digital age. Domestic protest events were rapidly internationalized through diaspora networks, eroding the insulation traditionally afforded by territorial sovereignty. Stephen Krasner's distinction between legal sovereignty and practical authority becomes salient: Nigeria retained formal sovereignty but faced practical constraints imposed by reputational scrutiny.[79]

Digital diaspora activism did not override state authority; rather, it operated within the interstices of global public opinion and bilateral diplomatic relationships. The case demonstrates how sovereignty is reconfigured—not eliminated—under conditions of digital interdependence.

Implications for International Relations Theory

The Nigerian case contributes to broader IR debates in three significant ways.

First, it challenges persistent state-centrism by demonstrating that informal digital actors can shape foreign policy environments without formal diplomatic authority. While states remain central, they no longer monopolize the discursive terrain in which diplomacy unfolds.

Second, it expands constructivist theory by highlighting the acceleration of norm diffusion in digitally networked contexts. Norm entrepreneurship now occurs at unprecedented speed and scale, mediated by algorithmic amplification and global connectivity.

Third, it reframes soft power as distributed rather than exclusively state-driven. Diaspora communities represent a novel category of transnational influence capable of affecting diplomatic reputations and policy signaling.

Collectively, these insights support the analytical utility of Networked Diaspora Diplomacy as a framework for understanding twenty-first-century foreign policy dynamics, particularly within African contexts that have been underrepresented in theoretical innovation.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

[79]Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

This study examined how digital diaspora activism reshapes foreign policy dynamics through informal, networked mechanisms of influence. Focusing on Nigeria, the article developed and applied the concept of Networked Diaspora Diplomacy (NDD)to explain how digitally connected diaspora communities operate as norm entrepreneurs, narrative amplifiers, and reputational intermediaries within transnational political space. The empirical analysis of the #EndSARS protests and subsequent diplomatic responses demonstrates that diaspora activism in the digital age is not episodic mobilization but a structural feature of contemporary foreign policy environments. Three theoretically refined conclusions emerge.

First, digital diaspora activism transforms diplomacy by generating what this study terms *discursive authority* within transnational public spheres.Discursive authority refers to the capacity of actors to shape the dominant interpretation of political events in ways that influence international perception and diplomatic calculation. Unlike formal diplomatic authority—grounded in legal representation—discursive authority operates through visibility, narrative framing, and agenda-setting within digitally networked arenas. The Nigerian case shows that foreign policy discourse now unfolds within decentralized digital spaces where diaspora actors can elevate certain narratives—such as human rights violations—into globally salient frames. While this does not displace the state as the primary legal subject of international law, it constrains the state's ability to monopolize external representation. In this sense, diplomacy is not transformed institutionally but reconfigured communicatively: states must now compete within digitally mediated arenas of narrative production.

Second, the findings extend specific constructivist insights regarding norm diffusion and identity formation. Finnemore and Sikkink's norm life-cycle model conceptualizes norm emergence, cascade, and internalization as processes often driven by organized advocacy networks and institutional gatekeepers. The Nigerian case suggests that digital diaspora activism accelerates the early stages of this cycle by compressing the temporal gap between norm articulation and international visibility. Norm emergence in the digital age may occur through decentralized networked actors rather than identifiable institutional entrepreneurs. This does not invalidate the norm life-cycle model but suggests a modification: digital infrastructures shorten cascade thresholds by amplifying visibility prior to formal institutional endorsement.

Additionally, Wendt's emphasis on identity construction as constitutive of state interests is reinforced but complicated by diaspora positionality. Diaspora activists operate within hybrid identity frameworks—simultaneously embedded in host-state normative orders and homeland political struggles. This dual embeddedness enables what may be termed *translational identity work*: the strategic reframing of domestic grievances into internationally legible normative language. Unlike Wendt's primarily state-to-state identity construction, diaspora identity work occurs across societal and transnational networks, indicating that identity formation in contemporary IR is increasingly multi-layered and socially diffused.

Third, the case refines rather than simply expands soft power theory. Joseph Nye defines soft power as the ability to shape preferences through attraction rather than coercion. In the Nigerian context, diaspora activism during #EndSARS did not primarily generate attraction for the Nigerian state; rather, it exposed governance shortcomings and thereby constrained Nigeria's international image. For this reason, the study reframes diaspora influence not merely as "distributed soft power," but more precisely as *reputational constraint*. Digital diaspora networks act as distributed reputational actors capable of amplifying narratives that affect how a state is perceived abroad. This reputational constraint does not coerce policy change directly, but it alters diplomatic cost-benefit calculations by increasing scrutiny within bilateral and multilateral relationships.

Soft power, therefore, becomes a contested field rather than a unilateral state resource. Diaspora communities may at times enhance national image through cultural diplomacy and economic engagement, but they may also disrupt or recalibrate that image by foregrounding governance failures. The Nigerian case suggests that soft power in the digital era is co-produced and occasionally counter-produced within transnational communicative networks.

Taken together, these findings reinforce the analytical utility of Networked Diaspora Diplomacy as a framework for interpreting twenty-first-century foreign policy dynamics. NDD integrates Constructivism, Transnationalism, and revised soft power theory to account for informal influence pathways operating through digital connectivity. It does not imply the erosion of sovereignty. Rather, it supports Krasner's distinction between legal sovereignty and practical authority: sovereignty persists formally even as discursive and reputational pressures shape how it is exercised in practice.

The Nigerian case thus illustrates a broader transformation in global politics. Diplomacy remains institutionally state-centered, but communicatively networked. Authority remains legally territorial, but discursively transnational. In this hybrid order, diaspora activism constitutes neither revolution nor anomaly—it is an emergent layer of influence embedded within the architecture of contemporary foreign policy.

Policy Implications for Nigerian Foreign Policy

The study's findings carry significant implications for Nigerian foreign policy strategy.

Institutionalizing Structured Digital Engagement

Nigeria's diaspora policy architecture, particularly through NiDCOM, provides a foundation for structured engagement. However, digital diaspora activism demonstrates that informal networks operate independently of institutional channels. Rather than attempting to suppress decentralized mobilization, policymakers should develop mechanisms for continuous digital dialogue with diaspora communities. This may include establishing transparent

communication platforms, digital town halls, and consultative forums that integrate diaspora perspectives into foreign policy deliberation.

Proactive engagement could transform reactive reputational management into collaborative public diplomacy. Recognizing diaspora actors as stakeholders rather than adversaries may reduce tensions during crises and harness diaspora influence constructively.

Integrating Digital Risk Assessment into Diplomatic Strategy

The #EndSARS episode revealed the speed with which domestic events can be internationalized through diaspora networks. Nigerian foreign policy institutions should incorporate digital risk assessment frameworks capable of monitoring transnational narrative trends in real time. Such mechanisms would not function as censorship tools but as analytical instruments to anticipate reputational vulnerabilities and respond with timely, transparent communication.

Digital diplomacy units within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could coordinate with embassies to align messaging strategies during politically sensitive events. This approach acknowledges the hybrid political space in which domestic and international audiences converge.

Leveraging Diaspora Soft Power Constructively

While diaspora activism can expose governance shortcomings, diaspora communities also represent valuable soft power assets. Cultural diplomacy, investment facilitation, and knowledge transfer initiatives can strengthen Nigeria's global image when effectively coordinated. Policy frameworks should therefore balance reputational risk management with strategic partnership cultivation.

Encouraging diaspora participation in multilateral advocacy, regional leadership initiatives, and economic diplomacy may enhance Nigeria's international standing. Structured engagement can convert potential soft power disruptions into diplomatic multipliers.

Advancing Legal and Political Reform to Enhance Credibility

Ultimately, reputational vulnerability arises from underlying governance deficits. Digital diaspora activism amplifies, but does not create, domestic political grievances. Strengthening rule of law institutions, enhancing accountability mechanisms, and protecting civil liberties would reduce the reputational risks associated with transnational digital scrutiny. As Sassen suggests, authority in the global age is increasingly embedded in transnational normative expectations.^6 Aligning domestic governance with these expectations strengthens diplomatic credibility.

Broader Implications for International Relations Scholarship

Beyond Nigeria, this study underscores the need for IR scholarship to incorporate African cases into theoretical innovation. Too often, African foreign policy is treated descriptively rather than analytically. The Nigerian case demonstrates that African digital politics can illuminate broader transformations in global diplomacy.

Future research could apply the Networked Diaspora Diplomacy framework comparatively across African states such as Ghana, Kenya, or Ethiopia to evaluate variation in diaspora-state dynamics. Quantitative analysis of digital engagement patterns and longitudinal studies of reputational impact would further refine the framework's explanatory power.

Final Reflection

Diplomacy in the twenty-first century is no longer confined to chancelleries and treaty rooms. It unfolds within algorithmically mediated public spheres where citizens abroad participate in shaping global narratives about their homelands. Nigeria's digital diaspora activism illustrates how foreign policy is increasingly co-produced by states and transnational citizens operating within networked environments.

Networked Diaspora Diplomacy does not signal the decline of the state but its adaptation to a transformed communicative order. Sovereignty endures, yet it is exercised within a global digital arena where visibility, narrative control, and normative alignment influence diplomatic outcomes. Recognizing and theorizing this transformation is essential for both policymakers and scholars seeking to understand the evolving architecture of international relations.