The Role of Digital Technology in Shaping Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the role of digital technology in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy in the 21st century which represents a transformative shift driven by the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies. It explores the integration of digital tools and platforms into Nigeria's diplomatic strategies through the adoption of secondary material like literature, and policy documents, the study highlights how digitalization has enhanced Nigeria's diplomatic engagement, international communication, and policy formulation. The paper reveals further that digital platform such as X, Facebook and Intagram have facilitated greater visibility on the global stage, improved diplomatic efficiency, and enabled real-time engagement with international partners. However, notable challenges were uncovered such as limited technological infrastructure and digital literacy, cybersecurity threats, digital divides, and policy gaps hindered optimal utilization of digital resources to drive Nigeria's foreign policy agenda. The study therefore recommended among others that Nigeria should prioritize investing in its digital infrastructure by expanding reliable internet connectivity, particularly in rural and underserved areas, to bridge the digital divide and promote inclusive participation in digital diplomatic efforts. More so, establishing dedicated digital diplomatic units within Nigerian foreign missions can significantly enhance institutional capacity, streamline digital communication channels, and enable quicker responses to international developments. Most importantly, Nigeria must strengthen its cybersecurity frameworks by deploying advanced security measures, conducting regular training for diplomatic personnel, and establishing protocols for data privacy to safeguard sensitive information from cyber threats, as evidenced by past cyberattacks. These strategic initiatives are essential for strengthening Nigeria's digital foreign policy framework and ensuring that the country fully leverages the benefits of digitalization in its international engagements.

Keywords: Digitalization, digital diplomacy, foreign policy, Social media and cyberattack

Introduction

Foreign policy emcompasses a country's strategic approach to managing its relationships with other nations, international organizations, and global issues. It involves a range of activities, including diplomacy, trade negotiations, security cooperation, and cultural exchanges, all aimed at safeguarding national interests and promoting international stability (Nye, 2004). In recent years, the rise of digital technology has transformed the way countries engage on the global stage. This transformation is driven by rapid advancements in information and communication technology (ICT), which have revolutionized how states conduct diplomacy, communicate with international audiences, and project their national interests on the global stage. This integration of digital technology into foreign policy has opened new avenues for nations to connect, negotiate, and influence global affairs more efficiently and transparently.

Nigeria, one of Africa's most populous country, has recognized the strategic importance of integrating digital tools into her foreign policy framework to adapt to these new realities and secure her place within the global order (Akinwale, 2019). One of the key drivers of Nigeria's digital diplomatic efforts is the increasing use of social media platforms such as twitter now X, Facebook, and Instagram by government officials, diplomatic missions, as well as citizens to communicate policy positions, engage with international partners, and foster diaspora ties and engagement.

It should be noted that Nigeria's internet usage and penetration reveals a rapidly expanding digital environment with significant implications for development and digital diplomacy. As of October 2025, Nigeria has approximately 107 million internet users, accounting for about 48.8% of its population, with projections indicating an increase to 52% penetration by 2027 (Nigerian Communications Commission NCC, 2025). This growth underscores the increasing reliance on digital platforms, especially in a mobile-first market where over 75% of web traffic is generated via smartphones. Such reliance emphasizes the critical role of mobile technology in shaping internet engagement in Nigeria (Statista, 2025). Moreso, infrastructure development shows progress, with mobile connections reaching 141.2 million by April 2025 (NCC, 2025). However, a significant majority 89% of these connections operate on 2G and 4G networks, which may limit data speeds and online experiences. Despite infrastructural constraints, data consumption has increased markedly, with telco customers consuming a record 1.043 million terabytes of data in May 2025, and the average data usage per user rising to 9.86 GB a 30.9% year-on-year increase indicating deeper engagement with digital content (NCC, 2025). This trend suggests that Nigerians are increasingly engaging in data-intensive activities such as social media, streaming, and digital services.

It is evident from the above that these platforms allow Nigeria to disseminate information rapidly, respond to international developments in real-time, and shape global narratives about the country's policies and interests. For example, Nigerian diplomats and ministries now frequently use social media to counter misinformation, promote its foreign policy priorities, and engage directly with foreign governments, organizations, and civil society actors. This digital engagement according to Ezeani (2020) has enhanced Nigeria's visibility and influence in regional and global affairs, enabling a more dynamic and immediate form of diplomacy that complements traditional diplomatic channels.

It is therefore clear that digital diplomacy provides opportunities for developing countries like Nigeria to explore this avenue in her attempt to pursue foreign policy objectives. Today, there is an increasing interest in academia on the use of the internet and social media in diplomacy. However, existing literature on digital diplomacy primarily concentrates on Europe and America, overlooking the evidence that digital diplomacy also significantly impacts Africa.

In light of this gap, this paper aims to explore the role of digital diplomacy in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy. For clarity, the paper is divided into seven sections. The first which is the abstract presents the analytical vision of the paper; the second is the general introduction that gives insights on the background issues under interrogation, while the third conceptualizes terms as well as the theory that underpin the analysis. The fourth section focuses on digita diplomacy and Nigeria's foreign policy in the 21st centruy which is perhaps the crux of the matter, the fift segment advanced the challenges of digitalization efforts and the six concludes the analysis and tied it up with workable recommendations.

Conceptual and Theoretical Isssues

Diplomacy

Diplomacy is broadly defined by scholars as the practice of managing international relations through dialogue, negotiation, and communication between states and other international actors to promote national interests and maintain peaceful coexistence. According to Sharp (2017, p.3), diplomacy is the conduct of relations between states and other international actors through dialogue and negotiation, often conducted by representatives of governments, with the aim of achieving specific policy objectives and advancing national interests. Sharp's characterization emphasizes that diplomacy is fundamentally about managing relations through dialogue and negotiation, with the primary goal of advancing national interests and fostering peaceful coexistence among states and international actors. This perspective underscores the strategic and communicative dimensions of diplomacy, recognizing it as a tool for resolving conflicts and creating cooperation in a complex global landscape.

Historically, diplomacy has been seen as a vital tool for resolving conflicts, forging alliances, and facilitating cooperation among nations. It involves not only official state-to-state negotiations but also cultural exchanges, public diplomacy, and multilateral engagements that influence international policies and perceptions. As such, scholars like Nicolson (1939) have described diplomacy as the art and practice of conducting negotiations between representatives of states. Nicolson's description, on the other hand, focuses on diplomacy as the art and practice of conducting negotiations, framing it as a skillful and nuanced activity that involves human interaction, persuasion, and the careful management of relationships. Collectively, these definitions explains diplomacy as both a strategic process and an art form, central to fostering mutual understanding, resolving disputes, and shaping the international order. This also imply that effective diplomacy requires a combination of skillful negotiation, cultural sensitivity, and strategic thinking, which together enable states to navigate the intricacies of international politics and pursue their interests peacefully. On the whole, diplomacy serves as the primary mechanism through which states articulate their interests, build relationships, and navigate the complex landscape of international politics.

Digital Diplomacy

Digital diplomacy, also known as e-diplomacy or cyber diplomacy, is a contemporary evolution of traditional diplomacy that leverages digital technologies and online platforms to conduct international relations and diplomatic activities. Scholars argue that digital diplomacy fundamentally transforms the ways in which states and diplomatic actors communicate, negotiate, and influence both domestic and international audiences. According to Melissen (2013), digital diplomacy involves the use of social media, websites, and other digital tools to engage with publics, disseminate policies, and foster international cooperation, thereby expanding the reach and immediacy of diplomatic interactions. The advent of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook has enabled diplomats and foreign ministries to engage in

real-time communication, facilitate public diplomacy, and respond swiftly to global events (Khalil, 2014). This shift has introduced new opportunities for transparency, participation, and engagement, but also raises challenges related to information security, misinformation, and diplomatic protocol in the digital space.

Similarly, scholars such as Berridge (2018) argue that digital diplomacy enhances the visibility and accessibility of diplomatic actors, allowing for more direct interactions with global audiences, which can influence international perceptions and policy outcomes. However, critics caution that digital diplomacy must be carefully managed to avoid miscommunication and diplomatic crises amplified by the rapid dissemination of information. In a nutshelll, digital diplomacy represents an innovative and dynamic facet of modern international relations, emphasizing the importance of digital literacy, strategic communication, and adaptation to technological change in diplomatic practice.

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is broadly understood as the strategic framework through which a nation-state articulates and pursues its interests in the international system. It involves a comprehensive set of decisions, principles, and actions taken by a government to manage its interactions with other countries, international organizations, and non-state entities. These actions are aimed at achieving specific national objectives, such as ensuring security, promoting economic prosperity, safeguarding sovereignty, and advancing diplomatic influence (Hill, 2014). Essentially, foreign policy serves as a guide for how a nation responds to international challenges and opportunities, shaping its external relations and global positioning.

The formulation of foreign policy is a complex process influenced by a multitude of factors, including a country's internal political landscape, economic conditions, cultural values, historical experiences, and security concerns. External factors such as international norms, regional dynamics, and the actions of other states also play significant roles in shaping a nation's foreign policy choices (James & Nielson, 2016). This multi-layered nature means that foreign policy is both a reflection of a country's internal priorities and a response to external pressures, often requiring careful strategic planning, negotiation and action.

It is important to note that the implementation of foreign policy typically occurs through diplomatic channels, including negotiations, treaties, alliances, and participation in international organizations. Diplomacy acts as the primary means by which foreign policy objectives are communicated and pursued, allowing states to build relationships, resolve conflicts, and promote mutual interests. The effectiveness of foreign policy depends on the ability of a government to adapt to changing global circumstances and to leverage diplomatic tools efficiently (Hill). Furthermore, foreign policy is not static; it evolves over time as new challenges emerge and as governments reassess their priorities.

Therefore, foreign policy is seen as a vital component of a nation's overall strategy for engaging with the world. It reflects a country's aspirations, priorities, and values, and is implemented through diplomatic efforts that seek to secure national interests and foster peaceful coexistence in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world.

Constructivism

This paper is situated within the framework of social constructivism to explain the interface between digital diplomancy and Nigeria's foreign policy in the 21st century. Constructivism as a paradigm strongly emphasized the role of ideas, identities, social norms, and shared perceptions in shaping state behavior and international interactions (Wendt, 1999). In the context of digital diplomacy, Nigeria's adoption and integration of digital platforms and

social media reflect a shift in how the state constructs and projects its national identity on the global stage. Digitalization allows Nigeria to craft its image, communicate its policy priorities, and engage with both domestic and international audiences in ways that were previously impossible through traditional diplomatic channels (Melissen, 2005). This process is inherently social and normative, involving the negotiation and reshaping of Nigeria's international image, cultural identity, and sovereignty in the digital sphere.

Furthermore, digital platforms enable Nigeria to participate actively in the creation of new norms and practices within diplomacy, such as real-time engagement, public diplomacy, and peer-to-peer communication, which are central to constructivist understanding of how norms influence state behavior (Barnett & Duvall, 2005). For instance, Nigeria's use of social media to engage with its diaspora, promote tourism, or address international issues exemplifies how digital diplomacy fosters a shared sense of community and identity across borders. It also allows Nigeria to challenge or reinforce existing international norms, thereby shaping its diplomatic environment in line with its national interests and cultural values.

The process of digitalization, therefore, is not merely a technological upgrade but a social construct that influences Nigeria's foreign policy through the continuous negotiation and redefinition of identities and norms in the digital realm. This aligns with constructivist perspectives, which argue that international reality is socially constructed and that states act based on their identities and the meanings they attach to their interactions (Wendt, 1991). As Nigeria increasingly leverages digital tools, it actively participates in this social construction process, influencing how it is perceived globally and how it perceives its role in international affairs.

Digital Diplomacy and Nigeria Foreign Policy in the 21st Century

The interface between digital diplomacy and Nigeria's foreign policy has become increasingly significant as the country seeks to adapt to the rapid technological advancements shaping international relations in the 21st century. Digitalization of Nigerian foreign policy involves the strategic use of digital diplomatic platforms such as social media, websites, and other online tools to achieve diplomatic objectives, offers Nigeria an innovative means of projecting its national interests, engaging with the global community, and responding rapidly to international issues. Nigeria's diplomatic actors utilize platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to communicate directly with foreign publics, promote Nigeria's cultural and economic prospects, and advocate for its positions on critical issues such as security, climate change, and trade (Dajo & Saka, 2018). For example, Nigerian officials have effectively utilized social media platforms to quickly address international crises, counteract misinformation about Nigeria, and build diplomatic relationships that support the country's strategic interests. An instance of this is how Nigerian government representatives used Twitter and Facebook during the 2023 flood crises to coordinate emergency responses, provide real-time updates, and engage with international aid organizations, thereby enhancing Nigeria's image and diplomatic outreach (Akinwale & Ogunsola, 2022). This digital interface enables Nigeria to reach a wider and more diverse audience than traditional diplomatic channels, thus increasing its visibility and influence on the global stage.

One of the most significant example of Nigeria's strategic use of digital technology to advance her position in global affairs was its engagement with the Ghanaian government in June, 2020 concerning the breach of Nigerian diplomatic premises in Accra (Onyeama,2020).

In June 2020, Nigeria's diplomatic premises in Ghana faced a significant security breach when the Nigerian High Commission in Accra was invaded by unidentified individuals. The incident involved intruders gaining access to the diplomatic compound, leading to concerns over the

safety of Nigerian officials and the integrity of Nigeria's diplomatic missions abroad (Vanguard, 2020). Reports indicated that the invasion was driven by escalating diplomatic tensions between Nigeria and Ghana, primarily related to issues such as the treatment of Nigerian migrants and diplomatic disagreements over trade and border policies. The Ghanaian authorities condemned the invasion, emphasizing their commitment to protecting foreign missions and investigating the breach. The incident underscored the vulnerabilities faced by diplomatic missions in foreign countries and highlighted the need for enhanced security measures to safeguard diplomatic premises from such invasions, which could have serious implications for Nigeria-Ghana relations and regional diplomacy (Vanguard, 2020).

Nigeria effectively utilized digital platforms, including official social media accounts and online diplomatic communication channels, to highlight the violations of its diplomatic privileges and immunities under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961). This international treaty explicitly grants immunity and inviolability to diplomatic missions and personnel, and any breach is regarded as a serious violation of international law. Nigeria's swift online response from her Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Geoffery Onyeama on his official X account (formerly Twitter) drew global attention to the incident, emphasizing the importance of respecting diplomatic norms and pressuring the Ghanaian authorities to address the matter promptly (Ojo & Adesina, 2021, Ajayi, & Eyitayo, 2025). This digital engagement not only amplified Nigeria's diplomatic stance but also demonstrated how digital tools can be employed to rally international support, shape public opinion, and exert diplomatic pressure without relying solely on traditional diplomatic channels.

Similarly, during the #EndSARS protests in October 2020, Nigeria demonstrated a better approach to digital diplomacy as it navigated internal challenges and international scrutiny amid widespread social media activism. The protests, which began as a movement against police brutality, quickly escalated into a nationwide crisis with significant online mobilization on platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook (Osagie, & Ezeani, 2021)**.** The Nigerian government faced mounting pressure both domestically and internationally, with global voices condemning human rights abuses and calling for accountability. In response, the Nigerian authorities employed digital diplomatic strategies by engaging with global audiences through social media, issuing official statements, and attempting to control the narrative around the protests (Adebajo & Ojo, 2021). However, this approach was complex; while the government sought to project a controlled image and emphasize the need for peace and stability, it also faced accusations of censorship and suppression of dissent online. The digital sphere became a battleground for narratives, with activists using social media to challenge official accounts and document abuses, thereby shaping international perceptions. This case exemplifies how Nigeria's digital diplomacy during a domestic crisis involved balancing internal security concerns with managing international reputation, highlighting the importance of digital platforms as tools for both engagement and contestation in times of national upheaval (Osagie & Ezeani, 2021). Ultimately, Nigeria's handling of the #EndSARS protests illustrates the evolving role of digital diplomacy in crisis management, where online engagement becomes integral to shaping diplomatic outcomes and domestic stability.

Another senario worth mentioning is the xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa that have been a recurring and troubling decimal, with significant implications. Notably, the violence peaked in September 2019 when mobs targeted foreign nationals, including Nigerians, in Johannesburg and other cities, resulting in deaths, injuries, and the destruction of property (Saka, & Abdullahi, 2020). Reports indicated that at least 12 people were killed during these attacks, which were fueled by economic frustrations and perceptions of competition over scarce resources (South African Police Service, 2019). The Nigerian government responded by

issuing diplomatic protests through official channels and leveraging social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to condemn the violence, raise awareness internationally, and mobilize support for affected citizens. The Nigerian embassy in South Africa also issued advisories to Nigerian nationals to ensure their safety.

The violence reocurred in August 2020, with another wave of xenophobic attacks spreading across Johannesburg, Pretoria, and other regions, where mobs looted and attacked foreign-owned shops and homes, including those owned by Nigerians. These incidents resulted in multiple casualties and significant economic losses for Nigerian businesses. The Nigerian government again used digital diplomacy tools issuing statements, organizing online campaigns, and engaging with international organizations to pressure South African authorities to take decisive action and protect Nigerian citizens (Ayo, 2020). The international attention garnered through social media amplified Nigeria's diplomatic efforts, highlighting the importance of digital diplomacy in crisis response.

Commenting, Chituru, (2019) argues that Nigeria can utilize social media platforms to maintain ongoing communication with its large diaspora population, fostering economic and cultural benefits. Nigerian embassies can leverage Facebook, Twitter, and other social media channels to keep nationals informed about embassy events, consular services, political developments, and investment opportunities, thereby strengthening engagement and support for Nigerians abroad. He added further that during emergency situations, digital platforms become essential tools for reaching nationals across various regions. An example of Nigeria leveraging digital diplomacy is the use of Twitter to shape public opinion and address discrimination against Nigerians in China. On April 14, 2020, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Geoffrey Onyeama, publicly expressed displeasure on Twitter about human rights violations faced by Nigerians in China. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Nigerians were forcibly evacuated from their homes and subjected to quarantine measures, highlighting how digital diplomacy can be used to raise awareness and advocate for affected citizens.

He stated that "The Nigerian government takes very seriously the issue of human rights and well being of Nigerians everywhere in the world. Any issue in this regards the Nigerian government considers it absolute obligation to intervene to assure the rights and dignities of Nigerians are protected"(Onyeama, 2020). Digital diplomacy creates an opportunity for Nigeria to manage her global image. Social media visibility would tackle stereotypes and change the narrative about Nigeria in the international comity.

Furthermore, digital diplomacy enhances Nigeria's ability to participate in global discourses and shape international perceptions through strategic online engagement. It also allows for more efficient communication with foreign governments, international organizations, and Nigerian diaspora communities, fostering a sense of inclusivity and transparency. The use of digital tools in Nigeria's foreign policy facilitates data-driven decision-making by providing access to information, global trends, and social sentiment analysis, which can inform more responsive and adaptive diplomatic strategies. In addition, Nigeria has invested in e-governance initiatives aimed at streamlining diplomatic processes such as visa issuance, consular services, and diplomatic communication, thereby improving efficiency and transparency in its foreign relations (Akinwale & Ogunsola, 2022).

The example of this can be traced to the period President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's visit to The People's Republic of China in August 2024, where Nigeria effectively utilized e-governance tools to engage with the Chinese government, demonstrating Nigeria's commitment to leveraging digital platforms for diplomatic and investment potentials. President Tinubu scholars such as Adesina, (2024) and Onuah and Lee (2024) employed virtual

meetings, digital dossiers, and real-time communication channels to facilitate discussions on trade, technology transfer, and infrastructure development. The use of e-governance platforms allowed for seamless, efficient, and transparent engagement, enabling both parties to exchange information rapidly and coordinate initiatives strategically. This approach not only enhanced diplomatic relations but also signaled Nigeria's readiness to adopt digital diplomacy as a vital component of its foreign policy, aligning with global trends towards digital international relations (Adebayo, 2024). The deployment of e-governance during the visit underscored Nigeria's intention to harness digital tools to foster stronger bilateral ties, attract investment, and promote technological collaboration with China. Such digital engagement practices exemplify the evolving landscape of diplomacy in the 21st century, where virtual platforms are increasingly integral to diplomatic interactions and international cooperation (Okafor & Nwosu, 2024).

Similarly, social media channels have significantly empowered Nigerians to raise awareness and advocate for their rights in the face of ongoing violence and genocide targeting Christians in Nigeria. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram have provided Nigerians with accessible tools to share their perspectives, mobilize support, and present factual, compelling arguments that there is a deliberate attempt to annihilate Christian communities from the Nigerian landscape. These digital platforms facilitate grassroots activism and enable individuals to bypass government-controlled traditional media, which often monopolizes information dissemination and censors dissenting voices (Ogunyemi & Akinwande, 2022). As a result, the ongoing debate about religious persecution and genocide would likely have remained subdued or unreported without social media, which has become a vital space for advocacy, raising global awareness, and pressuring authorities to address these human rights violations (Adeyemi, 2023).

It should be noted that this media outcry by the Nigerian populance couple with the viral support of some Christian clergies to allegations of a Christian genocide informed the decision of US President Donlad Trump to delcare Nigeria a country of particular concern on Fridy 31st October, 2025 (Sulaimon, 2025). Trump announced his decision in a Truth Social post which was shared on the White House's X handle (Sulaimon, 2025). In the post, the US President wrote:

> Christianity is facing an existential threat in Nigeria. Thousands of Christians are being killed. Radical Islamists are responsible for this mass slaughter. I am hereby making Nigeria a 'country of particular concern (Sulaimon, 2025, p 2).

According to a publication by the Family Research Council in 2022, to declare a country a "country of particular concern" is an official designation typically made by the US government, primarily the Secretary of States, under specific US laws. The exact meaning and implications of the designation depend on the specific legislation applied, but it generally indicates that the country engages in activities detrimental to US interests or universal human rights standards.

On her part, the Government of Nigeria acknowledges the reports and concerns raised by the international community regarding violence and insecurity in Nigeria, including allegations of targeted attacks against Christian communities. Nigeria remains committed to upholding the principles of sovereignty, national unity, and human rights. We emphasize that Nigeria is a nation facing complex security challenges rooted in a range of factors, including terrorism, insurgency, and intercommunal conflicts (The Punch, 2025). The Nigerian government is actively engaging with regional and international partners to address these issues through comprehensive security measures, dialogue, and development initiatives. While we

recognize the importance of protecting all citizens regardless of their faith, we urge the international community to understand the multifaceted nature of Nigeria's security situation and to support efforts that promote peace, stability, and reconciliation within Nigeria's diverse population. In this way, social media has transformed the narrative, giving Nigerians a powerful voice in safeguarding their religious and human rights amid oppressive political environments.

More so, to further solidify her inclusion into the digitalization process, Nigerian government has made tremendous institutional efforts to formalize digital diplomacy initiatives. The creation of dedicated online portals for Nigerian embassies and consulates provides platforms for real-time communication, consular services, and cultural diplomacy. These digital channels facilitate closer engagement with the Nigerian diaspora, a vital constituency that spans across continents and plays an influential role in Nigeria's international relations (Imam, 2024). By leveraging digital platforms, Nigeria can also participate more actively in multilateral negotiations, international conferences, and global policy debates, thus enhancing its diplomatic agility and responsiveness. The use of digital tools has also enabled Nigeria to better coordinate its foreign policy actions across various ministries and agencies, promoting a more coherent and strategic approach to international engagement. This underscores the expanding role of digital diplomacy in defending national interests and asserting sovereignty in response to violations of diplomatic privileges, illustrating how Nigeria leverages technology to effectively reinforce its position in complex international issues.

Moreso, the application of digital tools has revolutionized the way Nigeria manages its global image, making it an essential component of modern public diplomacy and international relations. Digital platforms such as social media Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn snapchart offer Nigeria an unprecedented opportunity to craft and disseminate its narrative directly to a global audience, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers. Through these platforms, Nigerian government agencies, diplomatic missions, and public officials can actively share achievements, cultural initiatives, economic developments, and policy positions, thus fostering a positive perception of Nigeria worldwide (Akinwale & Ogunsola, 2022). Moreover, social media allows Nigeria to respond swiftly to misinformation, negative narratives, or crises, thereby protecting its reputation and demonstrating transparency and accountability in real-time.

Beyond social media, digital tools such as data analytics and sentiment analysis software enable policymakers to monitor global conversations about Nigeria continuously. These tools help identify trends, public opinion, and potential issues that could impact Nigeria's international standing. By analyzing this data, Nigeria can develop targeted communication strategies, address misconceptions, and emphasize its positive contributions in areas such as culture, economy, and regional stability. For example, during diplomatic crises or international events, Nigeria can leverage digital platforms to craft tailored messages that resonate with different audiences, thereby shaping global perceptions effectively.

Furthermore, the rise of digital diplomacy also known as e-diplomacy has facilitated Nigeria's engagement with international organizations, foreign governments, and diaspora communities through virtual forums, webinars, and online campaigns. This approach not only broadens Nigeria's diplomatic outreach but also fosters a two-way communication channel, allowing Nigerians abroad to participate actively in shaping the country's image. Additionally, digital tools aid Nigeria in promoting its soft power assets, such as Nollywood, music, and cultural festivals, which enhance its global cultural influence and foster goodwill. Therefore, strategic application of digital tools has become indispensable for Nigeria in managing its

global image. These tools enable proactive, transparent, and targeted communication, allowing Nigeria to build a resilient and positive international reputation. As digital technology continues to evolve, Nigeria's ability to adapt and innovate in digital diplomacy will be critical in maintaining a favorable global image and advancing its national interests (Akinwale & Ogunsola, 2022).

Challenges of Digitalizing Nigerian Foreign Policy

Digitalizing Nigeria's foreign policy presents numerous challenges that can hinder its effectiveness and implementation. One primary obstacle is the limited technological infrastructure and digital literacy across the country, which restricts the capacity of government institutions to fully leverage digital tools for diplomatic engagement. For example, despite Nigeria's efforts to enhance its digital diplomacy, many Nigerian embassies and diplomatic missions lack reliable internet access and modern communication technologies, limiting their ability to engage effectively with international counterparts (Eze, Nwachukwu, & Alabi, 2021). Nigeria's digital divide, characterized by uneven access to high-speed internet and modern communication technologies, exacerbates the difficulty in establishing a cohesive and inclusive digital foreign policy framework. For instance, rural areas and smaller diplomatic posts often operate with outdated communication systems, reducing their ability to participate fully in digital diplomacy initiatives (Akinbobola & Olatunji, 2020).

Secondly, cybersecurity threats and data privacy pose significant risks, potentially compromising sensitive diplomatic information and eroding trust in digital platforms. In 2020, Nigeria experienced a series of cyberattacks targeting government websites, exposing vulnerabilities in the country's digital infrastructure and raising concerns over the security of diplomatic communication (Nwafor & Okorie, 2022). This vulnerability underscores the need for Nigeria to strengthen its cybersecurity measures to protect sensitive diplomatic data and ensure secure international cooperation.

Thirdly, political instability and bureaucratic bottlenecks also hinder the swift adoption and integration of digital strategies within Nigeria's foreign policy apparatus. For example, delays in implementing the Nigeria Digital Foreign Policy Framework, initiated in 2018, illustrate how bureaucratic inefficiencies can slow down progress and fragment efforts. Many diplomatic missions lack the institutional capacity to adopt new digital tools swiftly, resulting in inconsistent messaging and reduced diplomatic effectiveness (Okafor & Nwachukwu, 2023).

Misinformation and fake news campaigns also threaten to distort Nigeria's international image, requiring continuous efforts to monitor and counter such narratives. These challenges necessitate investments in cybersecurity, capacity building, and digital literacy to ensure that Nigeria's digital diplomacy remains effective and secure (Nwafor, 2021).

Conclusion

The paper conclude that Nigeria's efforts to digitalize its foreign policy in the 21st century are emblematic of a broader trend among developing countries seeking to harness the power of technology to amplify their diplomatic influence, foster closer international partnerships, and address complex global issues more effectively. While challenges remain, the strategic adoption of digital tools represents an opportunity for Nigeria to improve its diplomatic efficiency, transparency, and global competitiveness. As digital diplomacy continues to evolve, Nigeria's experience provides valuable insights into how emerging economies can leverage technology to shape their foreign policy trajectories in a rapidly changing international landscape.

Recommendations

To address the challenges of digitalizing Nigeria's foreign policy, several strategic recommendations are essential.

First, Nigeria should prioritize investing in its digital infrastructure by expanding reliable internet connectivity, especially in rural and underserved areas, to bridge the digital divide and ensure inclusive participation in digital diplomacy efforts. Establishing dedicated digital diplomacy units within foreign missions can enhance institutional capacity, streamline digital communication, and facilitate faster response to international developments.

Second, Nigeria must strengthen its cybersecurity frameworks by deploying advanced security measures, conducting regular training for diplomatic personnel, and establishing protocols for data privacy to safeguard sensitive information from cyber threats, as evidenced by past cyberattacks.

Thirdly, streamlining bureaucratic processes and reducing institutional bottlenecks through policy reforms can accelerate the adoption of digital tools and strategies. Furthermore, fostering partnerships with private sector technology firms and international organizations can provide technical expertise and resources needed for effective digital diplomacy. On the whole, a comprehensive approach that combines infrastructure development, capacity building, cybersecurity enhancement, and policy reforms will position Nigeria to fully harness the potential of digital foreign policy and improve its diplomatic effectiveness on the global stage.

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