

PERSONA CONSTRUCTION IN TINUBU'S TWEETS TO WORLD LEADERS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Oladele John Toluhi

Department of English and Literary Studies

Federal University Lokoja (Nigeria)

E-Mail: oladeletoluhi@gmail.com

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3584-072X>

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Abstract

Political communication on social media now functions not only as a channel for information dissemination but also as a site for identity and persona construction. In Nigeria, however, existing studies on political discourse have largely focused on campaign speeches, domestic policy statements, and official addresses, with limited attention to how political actors construct personas in digital spaces. This study addressed this gap by examining how Nigeria's President, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, implicitly constructs his political persona through tweets directed at or concerning world leaders. Adopting a Critical Discourse Analysis approach, the study analysed ten purposively selected tweets covering diplomatic congratulations, condolences, regional security statements, bilateral engagements, and foreign policy announcements. Using Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the analysis explored textual features, discursive practices, and broader socio-ideological implications within the context of digital diplomacy. Findings revealed that Tinubu projected a multifaceted persona characterised by authority and resolve in matters of democratic governance and regional stability, empathy in moments of shared grief, diplomatic courtesy in bilateral relations, and visionary leadership in advancing foreign policy agenda. These identities are constructed through strategies such as institutional self-positioning, affective personalisation, positive evaluation of international counterparts, symbolic representation of Nigeria and Africa, and policy branding. Ideologically, the discourse aligns with liberal democratic values, constitutionalism, pan-African solidarity, and developmental cooperation, thereby legitimising Nigeria's leadership role in West Africa. Power asymmetries are mitigated through inclusive and reciprocal language, positioning Nigeria as a responsible regional leader and credible global partner. The study

contributes to scholarship on digital diplomacy, political persona construction, and African political discourse in online spaces.

Keywords

tweets 1; political persona 2; discursive strategies 3; ideological positioning 4; power relations 5; digital diplomacy 6; pan-African solidarity 7

1. INTRODUCTION

Political communication has increasingly shifted from traditional diplomatic channels to digital platforms, particularly social media. Heads of State and government now routinely use platforms such as X, formerly Twitter, to address both domestic and international audiences. These short messages function not only as information-sharing tools but also as strategic sites for identity construction. Scholars have noted that social media enables political actors to manage impressions, cultivate legitimacy, and personalise power through carefully crafted discourse (Enli, 2017; KhosraviNik, 2017). Within this broader digital turn in political communication, the notion of political persona has gained prominence. Political persona refers to the public identity constructed through repeated discursive choices, including tone, address forms, evaluative language, and representations of self and others (Corner & Pels, 2003). On social media, persona construction is intensified by brevity, immediacy, and global visibility. Tweets directed at world leaders, in particular, serve a dual purpose: they perform diplomacy while simultaneously projecting an international image to a mass audience.

Against this backdrop of digitally mediated political interaction, the use of Twitter by African political leaders warrants closer scholarly attention. In the Nigerian context, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has made consistent use of Twitter to congratulate, console, and engage with global political figures. These messages are not neutral diplomatic courtesies. They are ideological texts that reflect power relations, foreign policy orientation, and self-positioning within the global political order. To study these dimensions effectively, an analytical framework that foregrounds language as a site of power is required. Critical Discourse Analysis provides such a framework, as it explicitly examines the relationship between discourse, ideology, and social power (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008).

Despite the relevance of this perspective, existing studies on Nigerian political discourse have largely concentrated on campaign speeches, domestic policy statements, or election-related communication. While these studies have offered valuable insights into ideology, persuasion, and power, they tend to overlook international-facing discourse on social media. Similarly, research on political communication on Twitter often focuses on Western political actors, leaving African political leadership underrepresented in global scholarship (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). This gap is particularly evident in the study of persona construction. Although Tinubu's tweets to world leaders are publicly accessible and discursively rich, they are often treated as routine diplomatic gestures rather than as

strategic texts that construct identity and authority. The absence of systematic Critical Discourse Analysis of these tweets means that the ideological meanings, power relations, and self-representations embedded in them remain underexplored. Without such analysis, understanding of Nigeria's digital diplomacy and the linguistic construction of presidential persona at the international level remains incomplete.

It is this scholarly gap that the present study seeks to address. The study aims to achieve two objectives. The first is to identify and analyse the discursive strategies used by Tinubu in tweets addressed to world leaders in order to construct his political persona, and the second is to examine how ideological positioning and power relations are linguistically encoded in the purposively selected tweets within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis.

The pursuit of these objectives is justified on both scholarly and contextual grounds. From an academic perspective, the study responds to calls for more discourse-analytic research on non-Western political actors in global digital spaces. By focusing on international-facing tweets, it extends political discourse analysis beyond domestic concerns to include digital diplomacy and global self-representation. Contextually, social media has become a key arena for shaping international perceptions of political leadership. Understanding how a Nigerian president constructs political persona in this space has implications for studies of foreign policy communication, national image-building, and power negotiation in global politics. The study is therefore relevant to scholars in linguistics, political communication, media studies, and international relations.

Within this context, the study contributes to knowledge in several ways. First, it expands the application of Critical Discourse Analysis to international political communication on social media within an African context, an area that remains under-researched. Second, it provides empirical insights into how political persona is discursively constructed through short-form digital texts directed at global actors. Third, the study enriches existing literature on political discourse by demonstrating how ideology and power operate subtly within ostensibly polite and ceremonial diplomatic messages. In doing so, it positions social media diplomacy as a significant site for ideological analysis rather than a peripheral communicative practice.

2. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

This section reviews the key concepts that underpin the study, namely persona construction, mediated authenticity, digital diplomacy, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and demonstrates how their intersection provides a suitable framework for examining President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's tweets addressed to world leaders.

Political persona refers to the publicly projected identity that political actors construct through strategic communicative practices. Rather than being a fixed or natural representation of the self, persona is discursively produced through repeated linguistic and

symbolic choices, including tone, forms of address, evaluative expressions, imagery, narratives, and intertextual references. According to Corner and Pels (2003), political persona emerges at the intersection of politics, media, and performance, where political authority is increasingly shaped by visibility, representation, and audience engagement. In contemporary politics, public leaders are not only expected to govern but also to cultivate recognisable identities that resonate with diverse audiences. Social media platforms have intensified this process by enabling politicians to communicate directly with citizens and international stakeholders without relying exclusively on traditional media gatekeepers.

Closely connected to persona construction is the concept of mediated authenticity. Enli (2017) argues that authenticity in digital political communication is not merely an inherent personal quality but a communicative performance strategically enacted through media practices. In the context of social media, political actors seek to appear sincere, relatable, transparent, and accessible while simultaneously maintaining authority and control over their public image. This phenomenon, which Enli terms mediated authenticity, reflects the paradoxical nature of contemporary political communication, where carefully curated messages are designed to create impressions of spontaneity and genuineness.

According to Enli (2017), social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) encourage perceptions of authenticity because they facilitate direct and seemingly unmediated interactions between political leaders and audiences. Through personalised language, emotional expressions, informal greetings, and timely responses to events, political actors can project a sense of proximity that reduces the symbolic distance between leaders and followers. However, these performances are often highly strategic and professionally managed. What appears to be a spontaneous or personal expression may therefore serve broader political objectives, including reputation management, image repair, legitimacy building, and audience mobilisation. Enli's work is particularly relevant to the present study because presidential tweets addressed to world leaders often blend formal diplomatic conventions with personalised expressions of goodwill, congratulations, solidarity, or empathy. Such messages contribute not only to diplomatic engagement but also to the construction of an international political persona that appears both authoritative and approachable.

The construction of political persona through mediated authenticity is inseparable from the transformation of diplomatic communication in the digital age. This transformation is captured within the literature on digital diplomacy and Twitter diplomacy, which emphasises that social media platforms are not merely channels for information dissemination but important sites for the performance of foreign policy. Digital diplomacy refers to the use of digital technologies and social media platforms by state actors to achieve diplomatic objectives, manage international relations, and influence foreign publics. Bjola and Jiang (2015) observe that digital platforms have reconfigured diplomatic practice by increasing the speed, visibility, and interactivity of political communication. Through these platforms, political leaders can communicate directly with foreign

governments, international organisations, domestic audiences, and global publics simultaneously.

The rise of digital diplomacy has also altered the nature of diplomatic texts. Tweets addressed to world leaders function as hybrid communicative acts that combine the formal characteristics of diplomacy with the personalised and public nature of social media discourse. Such messages often perform multiple functions simultaneously: they express diplomatic courtesy, signal ideological alignment, strengthen bilateral relations, project national interests, and construct favourable public images of political leadership. Consequently, diplomatic communication on social media should be understood not merely as information exchange but as a performative practice through which political identities and international relationships are continually negotiated.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides the analytical framework necessary to examine how persona construction, mediated authenticity, and digital diplomacy are realised linguistically in these texts. CDA is concerned with the ways discourse reflects, sustains, and challenges power relations and ideological structures within society. Fairclough (1995) argues that discourse constitutes a form of social practice through which social realities are produced and reproduced. By examining lexical choices, grammatical structures, rhetorical strategies, and patterns of representation, CDA reveals how language contributes to the construction of identities, relationships, and systems of power.

Recent developments in CDA have extended its analytical tools to digital communication environments, recognising that social media discourse possesses distinctive characteristics shaped by platform affordances, interactivity, visibility, and audience participation. Digital texts therefore require analyses that account for both their linguistic features and their broader socio-technological contexts. Applied to Tinubu's tweets addressed to world leaders, CDA facilitates a critical examination of how diplomatic language is strategically employed to construct political persona, perform authenticity, communicate ideological positions, and project Nigeria's role within the global political order.

The concepts of political persona, mediated authenticity, digital diplomacy, and CDA are therefore mutually reinforcing. Political persona provides the object of analysis, mediated authenticity explains the communicative strategies through which that persona is rendered credible and relatable, digital diplomacy situates these practices within contemporary international communication, and CDA offers the methodological tools for uncovering the ideological and power dimensions embedded in the discourse. Together, these concepts provide a coherent framework for analysing how President Bola Ahmed Tinubu constructs and performs his international political persona through tweets addressed to world leaders.

3. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Empirical studies on political communication have demonstrated the analytical value of examining persona construction on Twitter, particularly in relation to high-profile political leaders. Research on Donald Trump, for instance, shows how unconventional tone, direct address, and provocative framing can disrupt mainstream media agendas and generate a highly recognisable political persona that blends celebrity, grievance, and dominance (Ruffa, 2019). Comparative research on other executive leaders, notably Narendra Modi, reveals a contrasting mode of persona construction. Rather than provocation, these studies highlight strategic brand-building, curated visual imagery, and the instrumental deployment of emotional appeals to project a disciplined, modernising, and development-oriented persona. Such findings suggest that persona construction on Twitter is shaped not only by individual leadership style but also by party ideology, campaign strategy, and the broader national media ecosystem in which communication occurs (Pal & Vydiswaran, 2016).

The role of Twitter in moments of crisis further underscores the performative dimensions of persona construction. During the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders' social media activity intensified, and scholars documented how Twitter was used to assert competence, reassure publics, and frame policy responses. These crisis-oriented studies demonstrate how short-form political messaging functions as a site for legitimacy-building, where persona is reinforced through performances of control, empathy, and responsibility (Haman, 2020).

Methodologically, these empirical studies have increasingly adopted mixed approaches that combine Critical Discourse Analysis with corpus-assisted techniques, discourse-historical methods, and multimodal analysis. Such combinations enable scholars to manage large volumes of tweets while maintaining sensitivity to micro-level rhetorical strategies. In this regard, KhosraviNik and others advocate a Social Media Critical Discourse Studies approach that explicitly accounts for platform affordances such as hashtags, retweets, mentions, and embedded media. This methodological development positions CDA as particularly well suited for analysing persona construction on platforms where textual form and circulation are technologically shaped.

Within the Nigerian context, empirical research indicates a strong uptake of Twitter as a tool for political campaigning, agenda-setting, and image management. Recent studies, including Joe (2023), Olabanjo et al. (2023), Ibanga et al. (2023), and Kwakwe (2024), examine Twitter use during the 2023 general elections, focusing on party communication strategies, audience engagement, and presidential messaging related to governance and security. Earlier research on President Muhammadu Buhari's Twitter account provides a proximate precedent, illustrating how presidential tweets function performatively to project authority and manages public perception in Nigeria.

More recent empirical works and postgraduate theses have begun to examine Bola Ahmed Tinubu's use of Twitter during the 2023 election campaign and the immediate post-election period. However, these studies largely prioritise campaign strategy, sentiment

analysis, or engagement metrics, rather than close linguistic and ideological analysis. As a result, tweets addressed specifically to world leaders are often excluded or treated as peripheral diplomatic gestures. Collectively, while these studies establish Twitter as a significant arena for Nigerian political communication, they leave a notable gap in scholarship on the discursive construction of international political persona by African leaders. This gap necessitates a Critical Discourse Analysis of Tinubu's international-facing tweets in order to uncover how ideology, power relations, and persona are linguistically produced in digital diplomacy.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a framework that provides a systematic means of examining the relationship between language, power, and social practice. CDA, as conceptualised by Fairclough, is concerned with how discourse both reflects and constitutes social realities, particularly in contexts where power relations and ideology are at play. Given the focus of this paper on persona construction in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's tweets addressed to world leaders, Fairclough's model offers an appropriate and robust analytical lens for interrogating how linguistic choices function within broader socio-political processes.

Fairclough's three-dimensional model conceptualises discourse as a simultaneously textual, discursive, and social phenomenon. The model comprises three interrelated dimensions: the textual level, the level of discursive practice, and the level of social practice. These dimensions enable the analyst to move beyond surface-level linguistic description to a critical interpretation of how texts are produced, circulated, and embedded within wider structures of power and ideology.

At the first dimension, discourse is analysed as text. This level involves a close examination of the formal properties of language, including vocabulary, grammar, transitivity patterns, modality, pronoun usage, and rhetorical strategies. In the context of Tinubu's tweets to world leaders, textual analysis focuses on how specific lexical choices, evaluative language, and syntactic structures are deployed to project particular personal and political attributes. Features such as self-referential pronouns, expressions of authority or solidarity, and strategic politeness are examined to uncover how persona is linguistically constructed within the constrained and highly visible space of social media discourse.

The second dimension concerns discursive practice, which relates to the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption. At this level, the study examines how Tinubu's tweets are shaped by the conventions of diplomatic communication and the affordances of the social media platform formerly known as Twitter (now X). This includes attention to intertextuality, that is, how the tweets draw upon, echo, or recontextualise existing diplomatic norms, political narratives, and global discourses of leadership. Discursive practice analysis also considers the intended audiences, both the explicitly addressed world leaders and the broader international public, and how these audiences

influence the construction of a credible, authoritative, and globally oriented presidential persona.

The third dimension, social practice, situates the discourse within its wider socio-political and ideological context. This level of analysis explores how Tinubu's tweets are connected to broader structures of power, international relations, and Nigeria's positioning within the global political order. Persona construction is interpreted here as a strategic social practice through which presidential authority, legitimacy, and ideological alignment are negotiated on the international stage. The analysis takes into account the historical context of Nigeria's diplomatic engagements, contemporary global political dynamics, and dominant ideologies surrounding leadership, sovereignty, and cooperation.

By integrating these three dimensions, Fairclough's model allows for a comprehensive analysis of persona construction that links micro-level linguistic choices to macro-level social processes. The framework is particularly suited to the study of political communication on social media, where discourse operates simultaneously as text, interaction, and social action. In applying Fairclough's three-dimensional model, this study demonstrates how Tinubu's tweets to world leaders function not merely as communicative acts, but as ideologically loaded discourses that actively shape and project presidential persona within the global political arena.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is particularly suitable for this because it foregrounds the relationship between language, power, ideology, and social context, all of which are central to political communication in digital spaces. The study is interpretive in orientation, aiming not to quantify linguistic features but to critically explain how discursive choices contribute to the construction of presidential persona within international diplomatic discourse.

The data for this study consist of ten (10) purposively selected tweets drawn from a total of thirty (30) tweets posted by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on his verified X (formerly Twitter) account, @officialABAT, between mid-2023 and mid-2025. The selected tweets are explicitly addressed to world leaders and were produced during the first half of his tenure as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This temporal delimitation ensures that the data reflect his official institutional role and strengthens the interpretive validity of the analysis by situating the discourse within a diplomatic context.

The tweets were selected based on the following criteria: direct mention or tagging of foreign heads of state or government, references to bilateral or multilateral relations, and relevance to international diplomatic engagements. Furthermore, the selected tweets contain clear instances of self-representation and persona construction, making them particularly suitable for addressing the objectives of the study.

The analysis follows Fairclough's three-dimensional framework. At the textual level, the tweets are examined for salient linguistic features such as lexical choices, evaluative

expressions, and rhetorical strategies. These features are analysed to identify how authority, solidarity, leadership, and international alignment are linguistically encoded in the construction of presidential persona. At the level of discursive practice, the study examines processes of text production, distribution, and consumption. Attention is paid to intertextuality and interdiscursivity, particularly how the tweets draw on established conventions of diplomatic discourse, political rhetoric, and social media communication. The analysis also considers the multiple audiences of the tweets, including the explicitly addressed world leaders and the wider global public, and how audience design influences persona construction. At the level of social practice, the findings from the textual and discursive analyses are interpreted within broader socio-political and ideological contexts.

The study relies exclusively on publicly available data gathered from President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's official and verified X account, @officialABAT. As such, no issues of informed consent or participant anonymity arise. Nevertheless, the analysis is conducted with scholarly responsibility, avoiding misrepresentation and ensuring that interpretations remain faithful to the textual and contextual evidence.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

Each tweet is analysed below as a text:

Text 1



Source: @officialABAT

This text was tweeted in response to the military coup that ousted the democratically elected government of Niger that time. In it, President Tinubu constructs a firm and authoritative political persona through language that blends institutional legitimacy, moral certainty, and regional leadership. The opening reference to his role as Chairperson of ECOWAS foregrounds institutional power, while expressions such as "without equivocation" and the strong modal "shall not waver or flinch" encode resolve and close down alternative positions. Nigeria is personified, in the text, as a unified moral actor through the declarative "Nigeria stands with the elected government in Niger," suppressing internal dissent and projecting national coherence.

This text draws on diplomatic, security, and democratic governance discourses, particularly through the ideologically loaded statement "defend and preserve constitutional order," which aligns President Tinubu with globally legitimised norms against military rule. The language used naturalises Nigeria's hegemonic role within West Africa by presenting

intervention as a moral obligation rather than a political choice, thereby reinforcing asymmetrical power relations between Nigeria and Niger while framing ECOWAS authority as both legitimate and non-negotiable.

Text 2

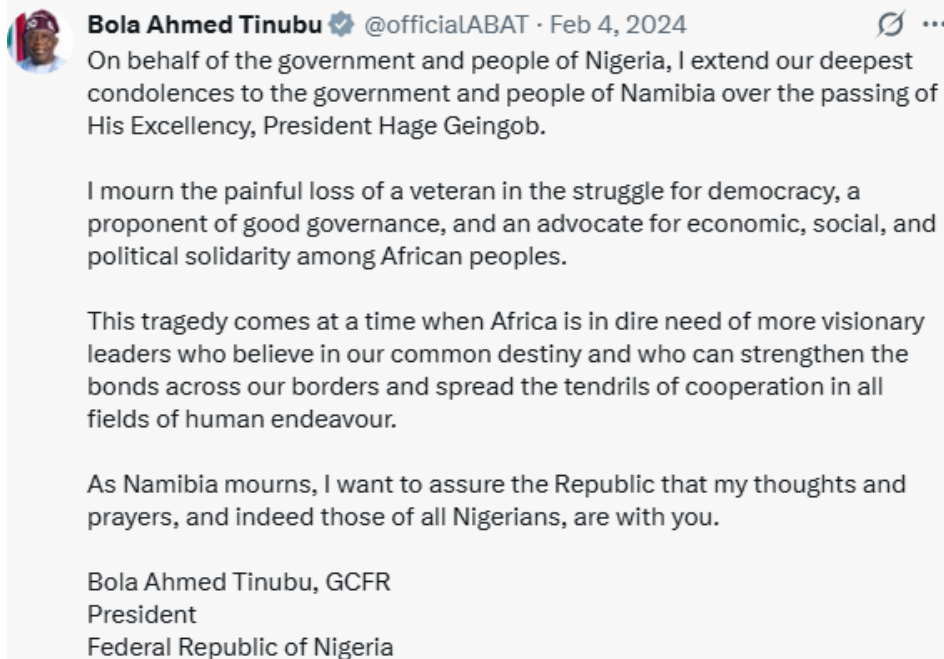


Source: @officialABAT

This text constructs a diplomatic and aspirational political persona anchored in legitimacy, representational authority, and strategic global engagement. At the textual level, expressions such as “deep appreciation” and “for hosting” employ positive evaluative language that conveys diplomatic courtesy and positions Tinubu as a respectful and cooperative participant in global governance. His self-identification as “the President of the most populous black nation on earth” functions as a discursive strategy of symbolic representation, projecting Nigeria as a demographic and geopolitical heavyweight while implicitly claiming a representative voice for Africa within international forums. The forward-looking verb phrases “look forward to meeting” and “forging strong alliances” encode agency, intentionality, and optimism, presenting leadership as proactive, collaborative, and future-oriented rather than reactive.

At the ideological level, references to a “brighter future” and the articulation of the “renewed 4D foreign policy objectives” draw upon dominant discourses of development, democracy, and international cooperation, thereby aligning Nigeria with globally valued norms and aspirations. The formulation of the 4Ds also serves as a strategic branding device, simplifying complex foreign policy goals into a coherent and memorable leadership vision. At the level of social practice, the text reproduces prevailing global power structures by acknowledging the G20 as a legitimate centre of international influence. Simultaneously, however, it seeks to negotiate Nigeria’s status within this order by positioning both Nigeria and Africa as indispensable partners in global affairs. Through inclusive and future-oriented language, the tweet projects soft power and reinforce claims to continental leadership without resorting to overt assertions of dominance or coercion.

Text 3



Source: @officialABAT

In this text, Tinubu constructs a compassionate yet authoritative political persona through ritualised diplomatic language, collective representation, and the invocation of pan-African ideals. At the textual level, the opening formula, "On behalf of the government and people of Nigeria," establishes institutional legitimacy and a collective voice, positioning Tinubu as the embodiment of national sentiment rather than a private individual. The repeated lexical pairing, "government and people" in reference to both Nigeria and Namibia foregrounds reciprocity, solidarity, and mutual respect between the two nations. Similarly, evaluative expressions such as "veteran in the struggle for democracy," "proponent of good governance," and "advocate for economic, social, and political solidarity" draw upon democratic and developmental discourses to construct the deceased as a moral and political exemplar.

The text intertwines condolence discourse with political idealisation, transforming an expression of mourning into an opportunity to reaffirm shared African values and leadership ideals. Ideological positioning is most evident in references to "our common destiny" and "the bonds across our borders," which invoke pan-Africanism and a collective continental identity. These expressions subtly de-emphasise national boundaries in favour of a broader vision of African unity and interconnectedness. Power relations are softened rather than eliminated, as Nigeria's regional influence is exercised through moral authority, symbolic inclusion, and diplomatic reassurance rather than through directive or coercive language. Consequently, the text enables Tinubu to project leadership through empathy, shared loss,

and a commitment to continued continental cooperation, thereby reinforcing both his statesmanlike image and Nigeria's role as a key actor in African affairs.

Text 4



Source: @officialABAT

Bola Tinubu, in this text, constructs a courteous and statesmanlike political persona through diplomatic politeness, institutional respect, and regional partnership discourse. At the textual dimension, the formal address, "Dear President Ramaphosa," and the repeated use of the verb "congratulate" enact recognition and legitimacy, while the positive evaluation of the election as "peaceful and successful" aligns him with democratic norms and electoral integrity.

The message draws on the genre of congratulatory diplomacy, where praise of the electoral process functions not only as an expression of goodwill but also as an ideological endorsement of constitutional democracy. The declarative statement, "I call for the strengthening of bilateral ties," encodes agency and leadership without coercion, presenting cooperation as mutually beneficial rather than hierarchical. Ideological positioning is further evident in the construction of Nigeria and South Africa as "strategic partners in Africa," which symbolically elevates both states as key actors on the continent, while the aspiration for "the overall advancement of the continent" invokes pan-African solidarity and collective progress.

At the level of social practice, power relations are negotiated through balanced and inclusive language, projecting Nigeria's regional influence through partnership and shared democratic values rather than dominance or directive authority. Consequently, the text constructs a leadership identity that derives legitimacy from diplomacy, cooperation, and a commitment to continental development.

Text 5



Bola Ahmed Tinubu @officialABAT · Jul 5, 2024



I warmly congratulate Prime Minister Keir Starmer on the victory of the Labour Party in the United Kingdom general election.

As a former leader of the opposition in Nigeria, I specially note the determination and courage that the Prime Minister demonstrated throughout his years in the opposition and as the leader of the Labour Party.

The party's ability to reform, mobilize, and position itself for victory after 14 years affirms the leadership qualities of Sir Starmer.

I also congratulate the citizens and the government of the United Kingdom for being an abiding model of democracy.

I look forward to deepening relations between Nigeria and the United Kingdom in mutual areas of interest and in strengthening democratic institutions, as well as in building a safer and more prosperous future for the people of both countries.

H.E. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR
President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Source: @officialABAT

In this text, President Tinubu constructs a reflective and democratically grounded political persona through personal alignment, institutional respect, and normative endorsement of liberal democracy. At the textual level, the repeated use of "congratulate" performs diplomatic recognition, while the evaluative lexis "determination," "courage," and "leadership qualities" attributes moral and political competence to Prime Minister Starmer. The self-referential clause "As a former leader of the opposition in Nigeria" is a key discursive strategy of identification, allowing him to build experiential solidarity and credibility by drawing parallels between political trajectories across national contexts.

The text blends congratulatory diplomacy with autobiographical legitimation, subtly repositioning President Tinubu as an insider to democratic struggle rather than a distant observer. Ideological positioning is reinforced through the description of the United Kingdom as "an abiding model of democracy," which aligns him with established democratic norms and elevates the UK as a benchmark to be emulated. Power relations are encoded through soft diplomacy, as the call to "deepen relations" and "strengthen democratic institutions" frames Nigeria–UK relations as cooperative and mutually beneficial, while implicitly acknowledging asymmetrical democratic capital by invoking the UK's institutional authority without challenging it, thereby asserting Nigeria's agency through shared values rather than overt power.

Text 6



Source: @officialABAT

In the text above, President Tinubu constructs a warm yet authoritative political persona through personalised diplomacy, symbolic recognition, and narratives of mutual respect. At the textual level, the direct address “my dear friend” humanises interstate relations and projects Tinubu as personable and confident, while expressions such as “profound honour” and “distinguished Indian delegation” employ elevated evaluative language that reinforces diplomatic courtesy.

The text blends ceremonial state discourse with relational diplomacy, particularly through the act of conferring the GCON, which functions as a symbolic exercise of sovereign power while framing it as friendship rather than hierarchy. Ideologically, the repeated references to “shared history,” “democratic values,” and “common aspirations” align both nations within liberal democratic and developmental discourses, and present cooperation as natural and value-driven. The praise of India’s “transformative leadership” and success in managing “a complex democracy” simultaneously legitimises India’s global standing and reflects aspirational identification. Power relations are linguistically softened through reciprocity and mutuality, yet Nigeria’s authority is subtly asserted through the bestowal of a national honour and the framing of partnership as “enduring,” allowing leadership to be enacted through symbolic capital, shared values, and ceremonial affirmation rather than overt political dominance.

Text 7

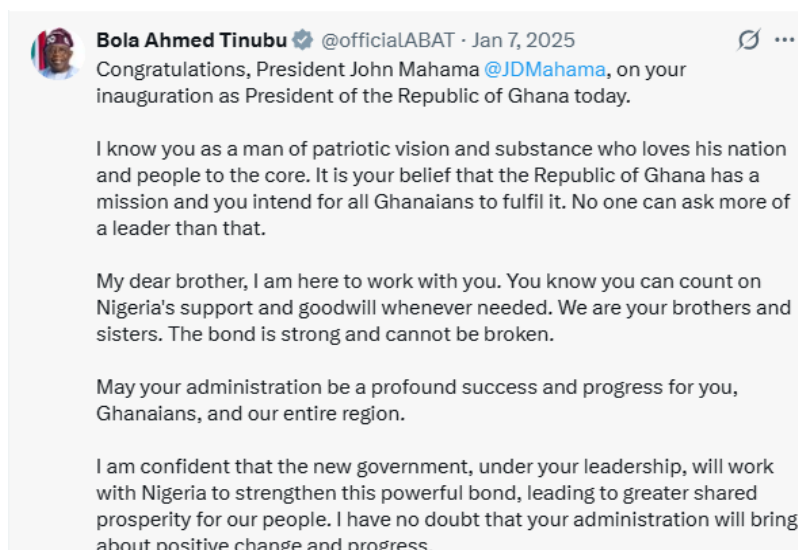


Source: @officialABAT

In this text, there is a construction of a cordial and forward-looking political persona through personalised diplomacy, cooperative framing, and soft power alignment. At the textual level, expressions such as “heartfelt gratitude,” “my friend,” and “gracious welcome” employ affective and relational lexis that humanises interstate relations and presents President Tinubu as approachable yet confident within elite diplomatic circles.

The tweet draws on the genre of courtesy diplomacy typical of state visits, where appreciation and anticipation of dialogue function to signal goodwill and readiness for cooperation rather than negotiation or contestation. Ideological positioning is encoded through the reference to a “rich history of collaboration,” which naturalises bilateral relations as stable and mutually beneficial, while the forward-looking clause “explore new avenues for partnership” aligns with development and strategic cooperation discourses. Power relations are managed through balanced language that avoids hierarchy, framing Nigeria and France as equal partners whose engagement is driven by shared interests and reciprocal benefit, thereby projecting leadership through consensus-building and diplomatic civility rather than assertion or coercion.

Text 8



Source: @officialABAT

President Tinubu builds a fraternal and reassuring political persona through affective language, moral evaluation, and regional solidarity discourse in this tweet. The repeated congratulatory and affirming expressions such as “patriotic vision and substance,” “loves his nation and people,” and “profound success” positively evaluate the Ghanaian leader’s character, while the inclusive pronouns “we,” “our,” and “us” used dissolve rigid national boundaries in favour of collective identity.

The tweet blends inauguration congratulatory discourse with kinship rhetoric, most clearly in the address “my dear brother” and the assertion “we are your brothers and sisters,” which reframes international relations as familial rather than purely diplomatic. The ideological stance in the text is strongly pan-African, foregrounding shared destiny, mutual support, and regional integration as natural and desirable norms. Power relations are linguistically encoded through assurances of support and goodwill rather than directives, yet Nigeria’s regional influence is implicitly affirmed by positioning it as a dependable partner whose backing is readily available. Leadership is thus enacted through moral endorsement, emotional proximity, and the promise of cooperative action, presenting regional authority as relational and consensual rather than hierarchical.

Text 9



Source: @officialABAT

President Tinubu constructs a compassionate and responsible political persona through empathetic language, collective representation, and solidarity discourse in this text. At the textual level, affective expressions such as “deeply saddened,” “heartfelt condolences,” and “profound loss” foreground emotional alignment, while the adverbial “On behalf of Nigeria” positions President Tinubu as the authorised voice of the nation. The commendation of “courageous efforts” and “selfless work” draws on valorising humanitarian lexis, reinforcing moral authority and respect for civic duty.

The tweet follows the genre of international condolence diplomacy, where expressions of grief function to maintain and strengthen diplomatic bonds during moments of crisis. Ideological positioning in the text is encoded in the emphasis on unity, resilience, and hope,

particularly through the declarative “Nigeria stands in solidarity with the United States,” which aligns both nations within a shared moral community that transcends borders. Power relations are managed through equality and reciprocity rather than hierarchy, as Nigeria’s global presence is asserted not through political leverage but through moral support and symbolic alignment, projecting leadership through empathy, shared humanity, and international responsibility.

Text 10



Source: @officialABAT

The President constructs a visionary and proactive political persona in this text through assertive agency, regional leadership framing, and developmental discourse. At the textual level, declaratives such as “I pledged to champion,” “I am proud to announce,” and “this is where vision meets action” foreground personal and institutional agency, projecting Tinubu as a decisive and committed leader. Also, President Tinubu uses evaluative and promotional language, such as “bold step,” “prosperous, integrated West Africa,” “real solutions and unlock real opportunities” to frame the initiative as transformative and morally and economically necessary.

In the text, President Tinubu blends policy announcement, promotional rhetoric, and diplomatic invitation, thereby positioning the summit as both a domestic achievement and an avenue for global engagement. Ideological stance is encoded through narratives of regional integration, trade, innovation, and youth empowerment, which align Nigeria and West Africa with modernisation, development, and global competitiveness discourses. Power relations are linguistically asserted through leadership over the region and agenda-

setting authority, yet framed inclusively via invitations to “the world” and emphasis on partnerships, thereby constructing Nigeria as a central actor whose influence is exercised through facilitation, collaboration, and vision rather than coercion.

7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined ten purposively selected tweets by Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu addressed to world leaders through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It explored how language constructs political persona, ideological positioning, and power relations. Findings reveal consistent linguistic patterns through which President Tinubu projects a multifaceted identity within global digital diplomacy. The analysis integrates Fairclough’s textual, discursive, and social practice dimensions in addressing the two research objectives.

For the first objective, which focused on discursive strategies in persona construction, the analysis shows that Tinubu constructs an identity that is simultaneously authoritative, compassionate, visionary, and relational. The first strategy used is institutional self-positioning. He foregrounds roles such as “Chairperson of ECOWAS” (Text 1), “President of the most populous black nation” (Text 2), and “former leader of the opposition” (Text 5). These references merge personal biography with institutional authority, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of his voice. Declarative expressions such as “I state without equivocation” (Text 1) and “I am proud to announce” (Text 10) further reinforce this blend of personal agency and state authority.

The second strategy involves affective and relational diplomacy. Expressions such as “my dear friend” (Text 6), “my dear brother” (Text 8), and “heartfelt gratitude” (Text 7) personalise diplomatic interactions and create relational proximity. Positive appraisals of counterparts, such as “determination and courage” for Keir Starmer (Text 5) and “transformative leadership” for Narendra Modi (Text 6), construct solidarity through association. In condolence-oriented tweets (Texts 3 and 9), lexis such as “deeply saddened” and “profound loss” projects empathy while reinforcing moral authority.

Forward-looking rhetoric also strengthens his persona through formulations such as “look forward to meeting” (Text 2), “explore new avenues” (Text 7), and “vision meets action” (Text 10). The “4D Foreign Policy objectives” (Democracy, Development, Demography, Diaspora; Text 2) operate as a branding mechanism, compressing policy direction into a memorable framework that links institutional governance to personal leadership identity. Collectively, these strategies construct a hybrid persona that is firm in democratic defence, empathetic in solidarity, and visionary in international partnership.

For the second objective, which examined ideological positioning and power relations, the findings indicate that ideology and power are embedded in alignments with both global and regional norms. President Tinubu repeatedly invokes democratic governance and pan-African solidarity, framing political actions as moral and collective imperatives. Statements such as “...defend and preserve constitutional order” (Text 1) and references to “peaceful and successful” elections (Text 4) position Nigeria as a defender of democratic stability

within the region. Pan-African ideology is expressed through phrases such as “our common destiny” (Text 3), “strategic partners in Africa” (Text 4), and “a stronger, more united West Africa” (Text 10), reinforcing continental integration and shared identity.

Power relations are constructed through softened hierarchies and rhetorical reciprocity. In engagements with global powers such as the United Kingdom (Text 5) and France (Text 7), President Tinubu acknowledges established democratic traditions while emphasising “deepening relations” and “shared prosperity,” thereby framing diplomacy as mutually beneficial rather than hierarchical. In interactions with African counterparts (Texts 3, 4, and 8), solidarity-oriented language positions Nigeria as both a peer and a supportive regional actor. This inclusive rhetoric simultaneously masks asymmetries while subtly reproducing leadership hierarchies.

At the level of social practice, these discursive choices reflect Nigeria's negotiation of its position within a multipolar global order. References to “global competitiveness” (Text 10) and “mutual respect” (Text 6) align with broader development narratives that frame African states as emerging actors in global governance. While pan-African elements foreground continental agency, the projection of national coherence may also marginalise internal plurality, revealing tensions inherent in digital diplomacy between state authority and democratic diversity. Nigeria's regional influence is grounded in its economic capacity, demographic weight, and historical role within ECOWAS stability efforts, although this position is constrained by domestic challenges and shifting geopolitical interests.

Mediated authenticity (Enli, 2017) offers a useful interpretive lens for these findings. Authenticity in digital political communication is performative, as leaders curate sincerity, immediacy, and relatability within institutional constraints. Tinubu's tweets reflect this through decisive authoritative positioning, expressions of national pride articulated in personal voice, emotionalised diplomatic engagement, interpersonal closeness through relational address forms, narratives of shared destiny, and strategic self-branding via the 4D framework and summit-oriented announcements (Texts 2 and 10). Together, these features construct a leader persona that is simultaneously resolute, empathetic, relational, and forward-looking.

8. CONCLUSION

This study applied Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to ten purposively selected international tweets by Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to examine how language constructs political persona, ideological positioning, and power relations within the context of digital diplomacy. The analysis demonstrates that Tinubu deploys a range of discursive strategies, including institutional self-positioning, affective and relational language, forward-looking rhetoric, and policy branding, particularly through the “4D” foreign policy framework of Democracy, Development, Demography, and Diaspora, to project a hybrid persona that is authoritative, empathetic, visionary, and relationally engaged. Through these strategies, the president personalises statecraft while simultaneously aligning Nigeria

with democratic norms, regional cooperation, and global engagement. The branding of the 4D framework is especially significant because it functions as a bridge between institutional foreign policy objectives and Tinubu's personal political identity, allowing complex diplomatic agendas to be communicated through a recognisable and personalised narrative that enhances his public appeal and leadership image.

At the ideological level, the tweets embed power relations within ostensibly egalitarian and reciprocal language. References to "common destiny", "shared prosperity", and mutual respect soften hierarchical distinctions with global powers while symbolically positioning Nigeria as a benevolent regional leader. Such constructions reproduce neoliberal development discourses and pan-African ideals, even as they obscure structural asymmetries and marginalise alternative perspectives. Drawing on Enli's (2017) concept of mediated authenticity, the study further demonstrates how these tweets cultivate an illusion of immediacy and direct access to the president's vision, emotions, and decision-making. Through carefully crafted expressions of empathy, optimism, gratitude, and resolve, Tinubu's digital communication presents institutional policy positions as extensions of personal conviction, thereby narrowing the perceived distance between political leadership and public audiences.

This research contributes to CDA scholarship by extending its application to African digital diplomacy, a relatively underexplored area of inquiry. While much existing research on political discourse focuses on Western leaders or traditional media environments, this study highlights the distinctive ways in which African heads of state utilise global digital platforms to negotiate identity, legitimacy, and influence. The findings demonstrate how mediated authenticity operates within postcolonial and multipolar contexts, where political leaders must simultaneously assert national and regional agency, conform to international liberal norms, and cultivate compelling personal brands. By integrating Fairclough's textual, discursive practice, and social practice dimensions of CDA, the analysis reveals the micro-linguistic and rhetorical mechanisms through which digital diplomacy both challenges and reproduces existing global power structures, particularly the tension between pan-African solidarity and neoliberal globalisation.

The study also advances understanding of how social media increasingly collapses the distinction between personal and institutional voice in African presidential communication. Through this convergence, leaders are able to perform authenticity, strengthen relational bonds with audiences, and simultaneously advance strategic foreign policy objectives. Practically, the findings offer insights for scholars of political communication, diplomatic practitioners, media literacy educators, and strategic communication professionals by illustrating the persuasive and legitimising functions of language in contemporary digital statecraft.

The conclusions drawn from this study are not intended to be generalisable to all African or global leaders' social media practices. Rather, they illuminate distinctive patterns within Tinubu's international digital discourse. Future research may build on these findings

through comparative studies of African political leaders, longitudinal analyses of evolving diplomatic rhetoric, multimodal investigations incorporating images and videos, and audience reception studies that examine how such curated messages are interpreted by domestic, regional, and international publics.

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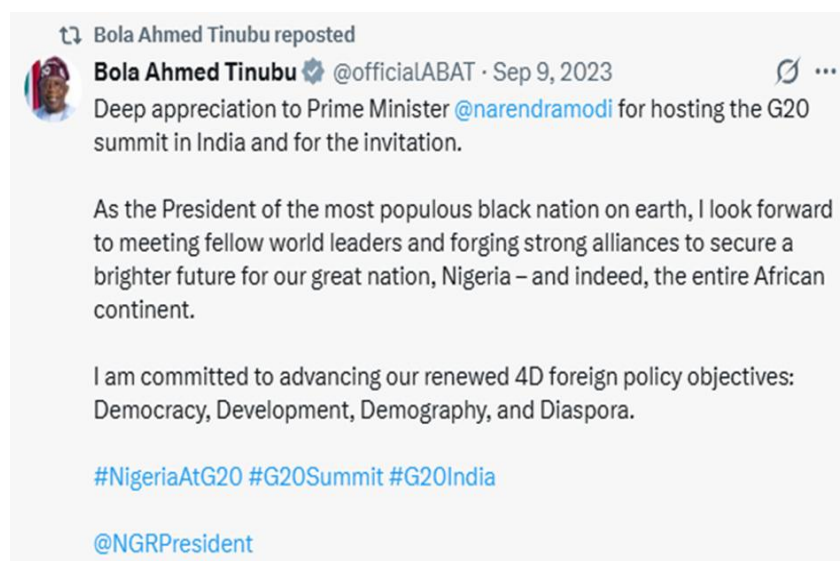
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APPENDICES

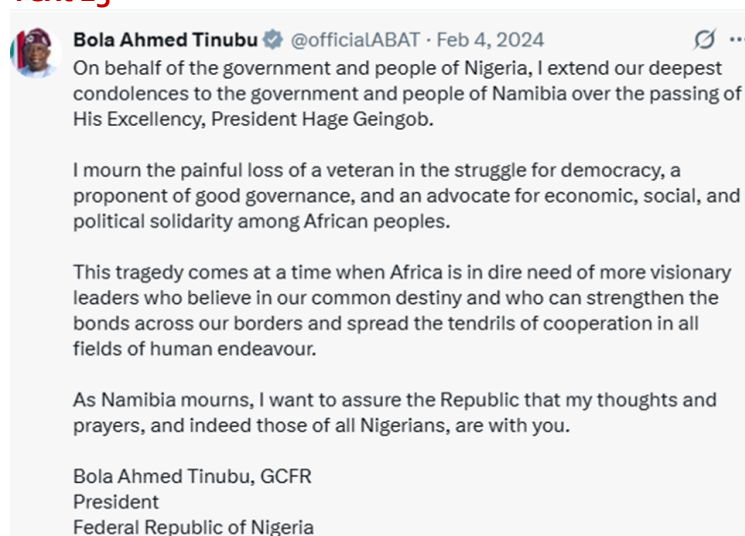
Text 11



Text 12



Text 13



Text 14



Bola Ahmed Tinubu  @officialABAT · Jun 15, 2024  

Dear President Ramaphosa,

I extend my warm congratulations to you on your re-election as President of South Africa.

I also congratulate the people of South Africa on the peaceful and successful conduct of the general election.

I wish you a successful term in office and call for the strengthening of bilateral ties between Nigeria and South Africa as strategic partners in Africa for the overall advancement of the continent.

[@CyrilRamaphosa](#) [@NGRPresident](#)

Text 15



Bola Ahmed Tinubu  @officialABAT · Jul 5, 2024  

I warmly congratulate Prime Minister Keir Starmer on the victory of the Labour Party in the United Kingdom general election.

As a former leader of the opposition in Nigeria, I specially note the determination and courage that the Prime Minister demonstrated throughout his years in the opposition and as the leader of the Labour Party.

The party's ability to reform, mobilize, and position itself for victory after 14 years affirms the leadership qualities of Sir Starmer.

I also congratulate the citizens and the government of the United Kingdom for being an abiding model of democracy.

I look forward to deepening relations between Nigeria and the United Kingdom in mutual areas of interest and in strengthening democratic institutions, as well as in building a safer and more prosperous future for the people of both countries.

H.E. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR
President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Text 16



Bola Ahmed Tinubu  @officialABAT · Nov 17, 2024  

My dear friend, Prime Minister [@narendramodi](#), it was indeed a profound honour to welcome you and the distinguished Indian delegation to Abuja. Your visit marks a continuation of the shared history, democratic values and common aspirations that unite Nigeria and India. The respect we hold for your transformative leadership, your economic reforms, and your success in steering a complex democracy to new heights is immense and deeply mutual.

Today, I was proud to confer upon you Nigeria's national honour, the Grand Commander of the Order of Niger (GCON), as a testament to our friendship and the enduring partnership between our nations. For decades, India has stood with Nigeria across various fronts. Our collaboration, enriched by shared history and diversity, signifies more than just diplomatic ties—it represents a powerful union of mutual respect and shared commitment to progress.

Text 17



Bola Ahmed Tinubu

 @officialABAT · Nov 28, 2024
 


I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my friend, President Macron [@EmmanuelMacron](#), for the gracious welcome this splendid morning at the start of my state visit to France.

Nigeria and France have a rich history of collaboration across various sectors. I am eager to engage in our bilateral discussions and explore new avenues for partnership that can benefit both nations. 🇳🇮 🇫🇷

[#NigeriaFrance](#)
[#StateVisit](#)
[#PBATInParis](#)

Text 18



Bola Ahmed Tinubu

 @officialABAT · Jan 7, 2025
 


Congratulations, President John Mahama [@JDMahama](#), on your inauguration as President of the Republic of Ghana today.

I know you as a man of patriotic vision and substance who loves his nation and people to the core. It is your belief that the Republic of Ghana has a mission and you intend for all Ghanaians to fulfil it. No one can ask more of a leader than that.

My dear brother, I am here to work with you. You know you can count on Nigeria's support and goodwill whenever needed. We are your brothers and sisters. The bond is strong and cannot be broken.

May your administration be a profound success and progress for you, Ghanaians, and our entire region.

I am confident that the new government, under your leadership, will work with Nigeria to strengthen this powerful bond, leading to greater shared prosperity for our people. I have no doubt that your administration will bring about positive change and progress.

Text 19



Bola Ahmed Tinubu

 @officialABAT · Jan 30, 2025
 


I am deeply saddened by the tragic incident in Washington, D.C.

On behalf of Nigeria, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, the people of the United States, and all affected by this profound loss. I commend the courageous efforts of first responders and emergency teams for their selfless work in harsh conditions.

Nigeria stands in solidarity with the United States Government and its People, united in grief and hopeful for a new day.

Text 20**Bola Ahmed Tinubu** @officialABAT · May 30, 2025

Two years ago, I pledged to champion a foreign policy prioritising our people, our prosperity, and our place in the world.

Today, I am proud to announce the West Africa Economic Summit (WAES) 2025, which will be held in Abuja on June 20–21, with the theme “Unlocking Trade and Investment Opportunities in the Region.”

This summit is not just an event. It is a bold step toward a prosperous, integrated West Africa powered by trade, innovation, and our most valuable asset: our people.

WAES 2025 will bring together Heads of State, CEOs, investors, entrepreneurs, youth innovators, and development partners to craft real solutions and unlock real opportunities.

From the Presidential Roundtable to the Deal Room, from youth empowerment showcases to regional project partnerships — this is where vision meets action.

I invite the world to join us in Abuja as we build a stronger, more unified, and globally competitive West Africa.

waes2025.org

~ PBAT