



**EXPLORING THE ROLE OF DIPLOMACY IN
TRANSITIONING FROM ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTESTS TO
REFORMS IN NIGERIA**

BY

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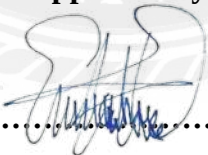
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Abstract

The study aimed to fill the knowledge gap by examining the role of diplomacy in facilitating the transition from anti-government protests to reforms in Nigeria, with key objectives of identifying the major issues for diplomatic engagement in the peaceful transition from anti-government protests to reforms in Nigeria, exploring the views of Nigerians and international major stakeholders on the role of diplomacy in promoting positive reforms, and analyzing the role of diplomatic activities in facilitating this transition. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, using a survey as the quantitative component and an in-depth interview as the qualitative component, both conducted online using Microsoft Forms and an interview guide. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach with 12 government officials and international diplomats. The survey population was adults in southeast Nigeria, with an estimated population of 23,488,500. Using the Yamane Taro sample size calculator, the study arrived at a sample size of 400. Based on the findings of the study, it can be said that the diplomacy in Nigeria activities, especially with relation to protest transition to positive reforms, is very low as many unfulfilled political, social, economic, and security promises and reforms are still the order of the day, irrespective of the human and national resources being destroyed oftentimes during these protests.

Keywords: diplomacy, anti-government protest, peaceful transition, reform

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SYLVESTER CHIKA NWACHUKWU

DEDICATION

This Independent Study is dedicated to God Almighty for his guidance and to my late father, Late Mr. Michael Osondu Nwachukwu.



DECLARATION

I, Mr. Sylvester Chika Nwachukwu, with student ID 6517800008, do hereby declare that this research is entirely my own work and that it is original unless specific acknowledgements state otherwise. I did this as an independent study under the close supervision of an advisor.



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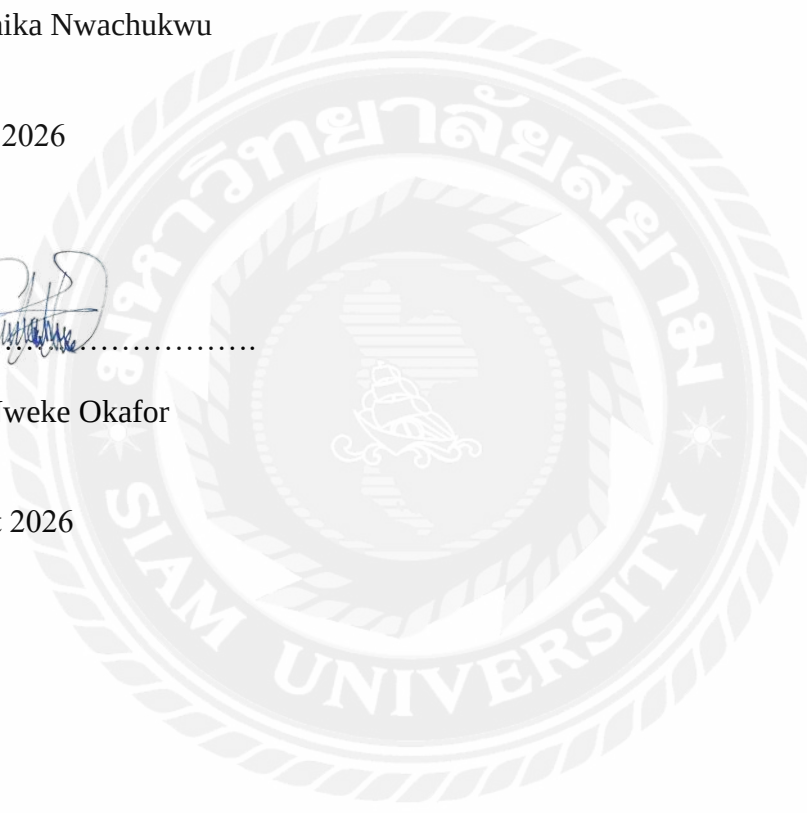


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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Significance of Research

Recurrent waves of anti-government protests have plagued Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, for decades. These protests are fueled mainly by public anger at perennial corruption, growing economic disparity, and the plethora of human rights issues (Adam & Zachariah, 2015). And while these kinds of protests have succeeded in drawing national attention to urgent social and political issues, they have also occasionally been associated with increased tension, outbreaks of violence and increasing political instability. These factors have contributed towards the erosion of the social contract that exists between the citizens and the state of Nigeria (Camilla, 2018). The citizens have become disillusioned with government institutions and have started questioning the legitimacy of the state. Therefore, the effect of protest movements on the quality of democracy has continued to remain an important topic of debate in political science.

Given this situation, the importance of diplomacy in resolving conflicts generated by anti-government protests as well as effecting peaceful change has risen significantly. Rather than using coercion, diplomacy in the form of dialogue, negotiations, mediation, confidence-building, and other related methods can offer governments and protesters an avenue to resolve their issues amicably. This will ensure that conflicts are not escalated but rather are resolved peacefully and trust is reestablished between the citizens and government. This study therefore explores the role of diplomacy in transitioning anti-government protests into sustainable political and institutional reforms in Nigeria.

Tarrow (2011) argued:

Contentious politics are influenced by particular historical, cultural, and power conditions of their society, and in turn, they also shape these conditions. It is the power of all these ordinary people put together, after all; they are the ones (as individuals and in groups) who confront those in power, create solidarities, and matter when it comes to specific populations and contexts as well as how that generates national cultures (Tarrow, 2011, p. 8).

Tarrow's argument proves that protests are more than just forms of discontent among the people but also a political process through which governance and institutional changes can be achieved. While protests may result in instabilities, they present an opportunity for discussion and policy-making. The argument resonates well with the core issue of this study in that it explores how diplomacy is employed to turn protest movements into a reform process and not protracted political conflicts. Similar views have been advanced by Branch & Mampilly (2015) who noted that protests in Africa cannot be seen as mere reflections of the protests in Western democracies but as protests for accountable governance, economic justice, and citizenship rights. The case in Nigeria calls for diplomatic methods to bring about cooperation between governmental representatives, civil society, protest leaders and other external parties to bring about the desired reforms.

Mass demonstrations in the past have helped determine the politics in many countries not just in the continent but outside it as well, right from anti-colonial movements to post-independence labor demonstrations. In Nigeria, demonstrations have emerged as one of the most crucial mediums through which citizens vent their grievances against the government. As observed by Ikelegbe, "protests in Nigeria have often been the only viable means for communicating dissent when faced with unresponsive state structures" (Ikelegbe, 2001, p. 441). Although demonstrations

are an effective means for conveying citizen discontent, they do not necessarily lead to any significant changes.

The “2012 Occupy Nigeria protests,” protesting the removal of fuel subsidies, reflected this aspect. Besides challenging the economic policy of the government, the citizens were demanding increased transparency, accountability, and responsiveness from the government. Though the protest made the government partially reinstate the fuel subsidy program, lack of dialogue and negotiations hampered more structural reforms from being effected. Similarly, the “EndSARS protests of 2020,” which revealed the level of public dissatisfaction with police brutality, poor governance, corruption, and youths' marginalization in political decisions, culminated in the disbandment of SARS, but most of its other reform demands remain unresolved. This further affirms Osaghae's claim that the “Nigerian state's reaction to citizen dissent is not reform but the perpetuation of coercion” (Osaghae, 1995, p. 153). The examples show that protests alone are incapable of achieving any sustainable reforms without a credible diplomatic process, which translates the demands of the citizens into reforms.

Other case studies from around the world support the above view. For example, the “Fees Must Fall” protests in South Africa showed how youth-led protests could impact social justice and education inequalities within a nation while also indicating the necessity of negotiations between the government and the protestors in the process of conflict resolution (Luescher et al., 2017). Likewise, the Arab “Spring Uprisings” have shown that even though mass protests may lead to the collapse of authoritarian regimes, the lack of negotiations, mediation, and political dialogue could lead to prolonged conflict (Bayat, 2017). Therefore, through the examples above, it becomes evident that diplomacy acts as an important link between the two processes.

There is a parallel democratic dilemma in Nigeria. The 1999 Constitution provides for freedom of speech and assembly, but these rights are often compromised by legal constraints and the use of force against protesters. Omololu explains this paradox in his assertion that "the Nigerian state is always measuring the rhetoric of democracy in spite of vacating its practice" (Omololu, 2020, p. 31). The gap between the constitutional promise and the political reality creates the dilemma about the role that demonstrations play in building or destabilizing the democratic process. Most importantly, it calls for an investigation of ways in which diplomacy can be used to diminish confrontation.

Despite the availability of much academic literature on protest movements, democracy and political instability in Nigeria, there is not much empirical evidence that shows the impact of diplomacy on the ability of protest movements to influence political change in such countries as Nigeria. Most of the available literature tends to focus on the role of diplomacy in the realm of international politics or views protests as single political incidents that do not consider the role of diplomacy in shaping their outcome. This implies a gap both theoretically and empirically with regards to the role of dialogue, negotiations and mediation in handling political conflicts in the domestic environment. There is also limited literature on the prevalence of civil agitation and unrest in Nigeria, especially the southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

In an attempt to bridge these gaps, this study aimed at critically analyzing the importance of diplomacy in facilitating the transition of anti-government protests into peaceful and sustainable reforms in Nigeria. This research focuses on how diplomacy can turn the civic discontent into a catalyst for institutional reform and democratic consolidation. In addition, this study provides more insight into how citizens' discontent can be managed through negotiation and how government can better respond to citizens' demands through participatory democracy. Through its

interdisciplinary approach that combines diplomacy, political science, conflict resolution, and democratic governance, this research makes an academic contribution not only on the national but also international levels.

1.2 Research Statement

Protesting in Nigeria is a significant form of democratic participation, but on the other hand, it is a catalyst for authoritarian reaction. Even though the constitution guarantees freedom of assembly and speech, the government tends to use force, control and monitor protesters. This research attempts to find out whether there is a chance that using diplomacy could bring about a move from confrontation to peaceful transitions and finally to the progress of democracy. The research aims to explore what kind of driving forces will be necessary for Nigeria to make such a move.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

There is substantial reputational damage from the response of the Nigerian government to the protests owing to the responsive nature of the government in question, whereby they respond to the dissent by trying to quell it instead of responding to their demands. Nonetheless, the response fails to address the root causes of these protests. Different diplomatic initiatives have struggled to tackle the fundamental grievances leading to anti-government demonstrations, and international institutions appear unable to effectively necessitate aid for Nigeria's reform efforts, such as addressing issues like corruption, economic inequality, and lack of basic services that fuel public discontent. This trend has had a far-reaching impact in the aftermath of Nigeria's failure to step beyond anti-government demonstrations towards substantive reform; with protests of this common

kind occurring repeatedly, growth within the country has suffered. Its global image has suffered over the years.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How can diplomatic activities facilitate a peaceful transition from anti-government protests to reforms in Nigeria?
2. What are the major issues for diplomatic engagement in the peaceful transition from anti-government protests to reforms in Nigeria?
3. How do Nigerians' and international major stakeholders' views the role of diplomacy towards the promotion of positive reforms?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the role of diplomatic activities in facilitating a peaceful transition from anti-government protests to reforms in Nigeria.
2. To identify the major issues for diplomatic engagement in the peaceful transition from anti-government protests to reforms in Nigeria.
3. To explore Nigerians' and international major stakeholders' views on the role of diplomacy towards the promotion of positive reforms.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Research

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey research with qualitative interview research. Data collection was done through qualitative interview research methodology using semi-structured interviews (n = 12) with government officials and international diplomats to capture individual perceptions on the role of diplomacy in promoting positive political and social reform pertaining to protests as one core human right for citizens of countries. The quantitative survey research methodology employed a Microsoft online questionnaire, which was distributed to the participants using a secure link.

The research investigated the impact of diplomacy in helping to facilitate the transition from anti-government demonstrations to reforms within the country, taking into account Nigeria's Fourth Republic that took place between 1999 and the current year. The following protest movements were considered for their role in this process of transformation, such as "Occupy Nigeria" movement of 2012, "Bring Back Our Girls" campaign of 2014 and "End SARS" movement of 2020. These examples were selected in the light of their significance for citizen demonstrations against the problems of governance in the country. In order to provide credible and reliable findings for the study, multiple sources of data were used, such as academic literature, journal articles, policy papers, media sources and interview data. However, the research faced several limitations. The limitation applied to only the chosen protest movements and did not account for all cases of civil unrest within Nigeria. Additionally, the study was based on a cross-sectional design and, thus, focused on collecting participants' responses and perceptions at one point in time and could not show the evolution of the experiences as well as their consequences over time. Lastly, part of the literature review was built on the secondary data analysis that would be affected by reporting biases.

1.7 Definition of Terms

It is necessary to define key terminology to enhance understanding of the study's content.

Diplomacy: The act and practice of conducting productive negotiations between nations; in this instance, it refers to the Nigerian government's interactions with its people.

Anti-Government Protest: A firm, yet legitimate discontent and opposition by Nigerians against Nigerian government approaches to a few developmental and societal issues.

Peaceful Transition (Non-violent Change): A state of peacefulness in which the citizens of Nigeria migrate from mere frustration, suffering and public grievances through protests or civic action to real and meaningful responses by the government through dialogue, reform, and accountability.

Transition: The process through which anti-government protests form the basis for constructive engagement with politics, institutions and processes of mediation, dialogue, negotiation and broader political reform.

Reforms: The reformation of the Nigerian government to include legal, social or political changes to ensure that the foundational issues for the protest are not allowed to remain, such as addressing corruption, improving public services, and enhancing citizens' rights and participation in governance.

Bring Back Our Girls 2014: This is a hashtag ("BringBackourgirls2014") associated with a Nigerian-based protest and advocacy movement leading up to the October 2013 kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State, by the Islamist

militant group Boko Haram in April of that year that grew into an international campaign about state accountability and human security as well as citizen diplomacy.

End SARS 2020: This was a hashtag (“EndSARS2020”) for a nationwide Nigerian protest movement against police brutality and widespread human rights abuses by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), which grew into a more general youth-led call for accountability, governance reform and respect for democratic rights.

Occupy Nigeria (2012). This is hashtag (“OccupyNigeria2012”) used for a countrywide, mass protest organized by citizens in Nigeria when rising fuel prices made daily survival increasingly difficult and spurred citizen frustration into coordinated action demanding fairness, accountability, and a more responsive government.

Giant of Africa: Nigeria is known for its large population, economic potential, and cultural impact on the continent. It is characterized by incomparable ethnic and cultural diversity. The Republic of Nigeria occupies a land area of about 923,769 square kilometers as one of the largest countries in both Africa and Asia.

Artisan: A respondent whose primary occupation involves skilled manual or technical work acquired through vocational training, apprenticeship, or practical experience. Examples include carpenters, plumbers, electricians, welders, mechanics, tailors, and masons.

1.8 Justification and Contribution of the Study

The rise in protests against the Nigerian government in recent years, with examples like “EndSARS2020” and “BringBackOurGirls2014,” is an indication of the growing citizen demand for accountability and justice. The fact that these citizen protests have been able to highlight major

governance issues both locally and internationally is also an indication of the failure of the government to translate the citizens' demand for change into sustainable changes. Although this issue is extremely important, only a small number of empirical studies have focused on exploring the potential of diplomacy in converting protest movements into dialogue and consensus. It justifies the need to analyze how diplomatic tools such as dialogue, negotiation, mediation, and other forms of involvement of stakeholders can be used as efficient instruments for conflict mitigation, peaceful participation in political life, and democratic reforms. From this perspective, the contributions made by this research are valuable from both academic and policy-making points of view regarding democracy, diplomacy, conflict resolution and governance in Nigeria and Africa. Theoretically, the research makes an important contribution to the field of contentious politics through the globalized perspective of protest movements in Nigeria (Tarrow 2011; Branch & Mampilly 2015). Empirically, the research fills an important gap in Nigerian political science by analyzing anti-government protests as a part of diplomatic efforts towards democratic reforms.

This study also brings forward information on how dialogue, negotiation, mediation, and other forms of diplomacy could help bridge the divide between public dissatisfaction and government responsiveness, thus leading to peaceful conflict resolution and institutional reforms. The insights gained from the research will be helpful for policy makers since they will emphasize the significance of moving away from coercive approaches to dealing with civil dissent and introducing approaches that will ensure public dialogue and involvement in the governance process. Other stakeholders such as NGOs, activists, diplomats, and development agencies will also be able to get an idea of the role diplomacy could play in fostering civil engagement and contributing to sustainable reform outcomes. Overall, it can be stated that the results of this

research show that democratic consolidation in Nigeria is not possible merely through holding elections.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The second chapter covers the connection between social movement, protests, and diplomacy in Nigeria. Consequently, four related theories are employed as a basis for this investigation: Social Movement Theory, Resource Mobilization Theory, Political Process Theory, and Framing Theory in order to understand how grievances turned into movements and finally into negotiation and reforms. In this way, this chapter aims not only at reviewing the existing literature but also at developing the research within the framework of well-developed theoretical background linking protest and diplomacy/reform together. The combination of these theories results in an interactive process where grievances give rise to collective action which in turn interacts with political opportunities and is mediated by strategic framing through diplomacy resulting in reforms.

2.2 Social Movement Theory

Diplomacy, protest, and reform are essential for achieving political and social change in any society, but this is especially true in Nigeria, a country plagued by historical political instability and episodes of sociopolitical upheaval. This research is based on Social Movement Theory developed by Tilly (2004), focusing on the nature of collective action – including protesters’ motivations and tactics as well as how a movement impacts society. Social Movement Theory accounts for the phenomenon of movements like “EndSARS2020”, “EndBadGovernance2024”, and “BringBackOurGirls2012”, whose focus is police brutality, governance deficit, terrorism and corruption. As Tilly Charles noted:

‘Thus social movement emerged from the new and consequential synthesis of three elements: a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities (let us call it a campaign); employment of combinations from among the following forms of political actions: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstration petition drives, statements to and in public media, and pamphleteering (let us call the variable ensemble of performances the social movement repertoire); and participants’ concerted public representations of WUNC: worthiness, unit numbers, and commitment on their part/their constituents’ (Tilly, 2004, pp. 3-4).

The argument by Tilly has provided an essential basis from which one can explain the emergence of collective actions from personal grievances. The focus by Tilly on campaign struggles, varied political acts, and worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment provides that movements get political significance once people have united and organized themselves on certain issues and have been pressing upon the authorities. The argument by Tilly is essential in explaining the situation in Nigeria, where various social movements such as “EndSARS2020” and “BringBackOurGirls2012” showed the capability of citizens to unite and press for demands regarding common grievances. Nevertheless, the emergence of social movements does not provide an assurance of getting significant reforms since the outcome of collective actions is influenced by various factors including the resources of the movements, effective leadership and networks, the political environment, and the reactions of state institutions.

Social Movement Theory offers an effective tool to analyze the circumstances in which the citizenry engages in protest, the methods used by the citizenry to protest, the sources through which such collective actions are sustained, and the reaction of governments to the protest. Through the use of Social Movement Theory, this research is able to look at such protests not as individual outbursts but as organizational protests that could have an impact on politics and possibly create a

political opportunity structure. This is especially true in the case of Nigeria as the reaction from the government could lead to a constructive or confrontational process.

The theory also serves as a platform for moving beyond the process of mobilization by looking at diplomacy as a tool that translates collective demands into reforms. In this study, diplomacy serves as a means that could be used to generate channels of dialogue, negotiation, mediation, and consensus between the protesters, government institutions, civil society organizations, and other relevant actors. It is, therefore, clear that where Social Movement Theory is concerned with explaining the translation of grievances into civic actions, diplomacy could be used to explain how such an action may be directed into engagement and institutional reforms. This way, the relationship could be seen as a process where collective grievances lead to mobilization, where mobilization interacts with political opportunities and where diplomacy may generate avenues to translate the demands of the protest into policy or institutional reforms.

Social Movement Theory is thus applicable to the cases of “EndSARS2020” and “BringBackOurGirls2012” among others to the experiences of Nigeria in terms of anti-government and civic movements because it creates an analytical framework that allows us to examine both the successes and shortcomings of the use of protest in bringing about political changes. Civic mobilizations have been seen to be capable of making the issues of citizens reach the state apparatus and cause the government to act in response to their demands. However, the challenges associated with this process of turning protest demands into sustained reforms are also seen in these movements. This shows that social movement theory gives theoretical backing to the hypothesis of this study that the process of going from anti-government protests to reforms calls for more than just civic mobilizations; it calls for diplomatic engagement and political involvement to ensure that the citizen’s demands reach the government and cause a corresponding response.

Concepts associated with Social Movement Theory include a number of interrelated aspects of the way in which protests are formed, organized and impact politics and social change. Instead of seeing protests as a spontaneous response to public complaints, the theory emphasizes the role of the interaction between such variables as resource mobilization, political opportunity structure, framing process and collective identity in the success of social movements. The components work together to determine the success and outcomes of the movements. Resource mobilization stresses the significance of having adequate resources like organization, leadership, money, communication networks, and others to sustain protests. Political opportunity structures stress the availability of political environment that will either facilitate the engagement and reform efforts by creating opportunities or will create conditions that lead to the repression and resistance of movements. Framing processes stress the importance of the strategic process through which a common meaning is constructed that helps in defining the complaint, getting public support and legitimizing claims of the movement. Likewise, collective identity contributes to unity among the members of a movement. In the context of this study, these dimensions are particularly relevant because they help explain not only how anti-government protests are organized and sustained in Nigeria but also how diplomatic engagement can influence the transition from collective action to peaceful political and institutional reforms. Using these seven elements to analyze the Nigerian protests, like “EndSARS2020” or “OccupyNigeria2012”, shows us how resourceful mobilization, public framing and perceived opportunity combined in various ways to influence an outcome of reform/repression.

In contrast, Political Opportunity Structures are particularly concerned with the external context influencing tactics of protests. Tilly wrote: “The openness or closure of political institutions, the state’s capacity for repression, and the presence of allies shape movements’

trajectories” (Tilly, 2008, p. 225). In Nigeria’s hybrid democracy, elite capture and state repression produce hostile Political Opportunity Structures, leading protesters to radicalization or global advocacy and allowing diplomatic intervention. Framing processes were about building stories and connecting them with the public. “Effective framing”, Snow and Benford claim, “involves diagnosing a problem, presenting a solution or remedy, and motivating collective action” (Snow & Benford, 1988, p.198). “EndSARS2020” presented police brutality as a systemic failing, affording national and global solidarity. Diplomacy lies between protest demands and institutional responses; diplomats, international Non-Governmental Organizations, and local authorities intervene in the Political Opportunity Structures by enabling dialogue (diplomats), pressuring governments (international Non-Government Organizations), and legitimizing civic voices. As Iwuoha and Ernest note: “Nigerian diplomatic institutions were uninvolved before or during “EndSARS2020”, indicating a lack of preparedness” (Iwuoha & Ernest, 2021, p. 14). Consistent with Social Movement Theory’s interrelated assumptions, collective identity theory better elucidates how collective resources (shared experience of injustice) build solidarity between protesters and enhance resilience in the face of repression. Social Movement Theory places diplomacy within the protest-reform continuum, finding common ground between elite-oriented reforms and granting recognition of protesters as legitimate actors in democratic reform.

2.3 Resource Mobilization Theory

Representing one of the original frameworks under Social Movement Theory, Resource Mobilization Theory, by contrast, asserts that success and sustainability hinge not on grievances alone but rather on effective strategizing of available resources. McCarthy and Zald (1977) argued:

‘The resource mobilization approach places emphasis on both societal support and constraining forces of social movement phenomena.’ It explores the range of resources

that need to be mobilized, the connections between social movements and other collectives, the dependence of such movements on external support for success, and also what tactics authorities pursue in order to contain or co-opt movements' (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1213).

This theory implies that the success of any social movement depends on its potential for using material, human, organizational, information, and social resources, as well as on the political context in which it operates. The concept of societal support and constraints is especially valuable in this respect, as movements do not function separately from the state or society. The success of their mobilization efforts can be facilitated through support of civil society organizations, professional organizations, media, diasporas, and other third parties, and constrained by governmental constraints, repressions, and cooptation efforts. Resource Mobilization Theory is thus an effective framework for analyzing both the internal organization of social movements and their interactions with other agents.

The “EndSARS2020” campaign in Nigeria is one such instance that applies this principle: coordination, mobilization, and visibility was possible through the use of digital platforms, civic groups, crowdfunding mechanisms, and diasporic networks. Only organized and resource-endowed institutions, such as the “Feminist Coalition” and “Stand to End Rape Initiative,” played stabilizing roles in fundraising, providing legal assistance, emergency response, and messaging efforts. Resource Mobilization Theory is a subfield of Social Movement Theory that claims “success results not simply from the intensity of grievance, but also from access to material, human and organizational resources” (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1215). Civil society networks, digital media and diaspora countries have all been crucial here in Nigeria, as seen in the coordination of “EndSARS2020” on Twitter and Instagram and logistical support from the “Feminist Coalition”.

Resource Mobilization Theory makes clear that social movements are professionalized, with well-resourced campaigns operating like formal organizations, having defined roles within them, a division of labor and coherent objectives. In Nigeria, movements frequently ally with Non-Governmental Organizations and legal professionals or international advocacy groups for greater credibility, media attention, and protection from state repression.

Movements with resources, organizational skills and strategic alliances are stronger and make the political impact more likely (Tilly, 2008, p. 242). Critics say Resource Mobilization Theory downplays the roles of emotion, identity and spontaneity that animate grassroots African protests and are central to explaining the drivers behind these movements, as well as their capacity to mobilize millions at a moment's notice. Resource Mobilization Theory nevertheless demonstrates how structured planning and resource mobilization transformed public outrage into sustainable advocacy approaches which may prove useful for diplomatic engagement.

Providing strong institutional frameworks and mobilizing resource channels help to turn protests into organized campaigns that can make demands for democratic reform. Dealing With Large-Scale Movements in Context While Resource Mobilization Theory can be applied to contexts in terms of practice, some other aspects of the theory include dealing with the use of social movements to make use of political opportunities to further their goals.

2.4 Political Process Theory

Political Process Theory stresses the role of politics in the occurrence and results of a protest. It is the political environment, its nature and timing that play the central role in the formation of a movement to become reformist or rebellious. An open, inclusive, and responsive political environment triggers state definitions, as shown by the introduction of Political Process

Theory to the discussion. When there is openness in the political environment for negotiations, there are diplomatic relations that result in the organization of protests as structured dialogues. However, when the political structures do not respond to the demands of the society, there are increasing protests and chaos. This can be seen from Nigeria, for example, when the political opportunities arose during the period of the “EndSARS2020” protests. By embedding this analysis within the study of diplomacy, the theory shows how state structure, elite alignment and civic space combine to impact mobilization success and reveals that peacebuilding and reform are not simply dictated by citizens’ actions but politics as well. Incorporating this discussion means meeting the theoretical obligation of situating the political environment in the larger scheme of things.

Tarrow (2011) asserted:

Movements are rarely led by a single figure or organization — how can they maintain collective commitments to resist individual fear or egotism, social disorganization and state repression? This is the conundrum that has driven collective action theorists and social movement scholars for a few decades now. My first and strongest argument will be that public political opportunities and constraints, rather than long-standing social correlates of collective mobilization, provide the incentives to trigger new phases of contention for people with collective claims. In turn, these actions open up new possibilities both for the original insurgents and latecomers alike, and eventually for enemies and power holders. The contention cycles — and, rarely, revolutions — that result from the externalities those actors have and produce. The results of these waves of contention are unlikely to be determined by the righteousness of the cause or even one movement’s persuasive power but rather by their breadth and elite and other group responses (Tarrow, 2011, p. 12).

Tarrow's argument is useful because it shows that having legitimate grievances does not, by itself, determine the outcome of a protest movement. What also matters is the political environment and the reactions of those in positions of power. When political conditions create room for participation, movements may gain greater opportunities to organize and influence government

decisions. On the other hand, when those opportunities are restricted, protest movements may struggle to maintain their activities or may face increased repression. The theory therefore helps to explain why similar grievances can produce different outcomes depending on the political circumstances in which they arise

The application of Political Process Theory in Nigeria illustrates that the timing of “EndSARS2020”, coincided with government failures, divisions among elites, rising unemployment levels, and increasing internet connectivity, which facilitated alternative narratives and coordination. Political Opportunity Structure is one of the central themes within Political Process Theory. This refers to the external influences that provide opportunities or impose restrictions on collective action. Political opportunities, according to the definition given within the framework, refer to structural and situational opportunities that allow room for the growth of activism; political opportunities could come in different ways, such as responsiveness from the government, division among the elites, favorable media attention, or international attention. Communication opportunities in Nigeria offered by digital technology amid “EndSARS2020” have helped the protesters to mobilize.

However, as tolerance from the state grew weak, the channels became blocked, leading to a confrontation and decline in activists' ability to organize themselves and get their messages out there. It is important to identify and analyze those variable elements that can help us understand why some protest movements are successful, whereas others are not. This research demonstrates how institutionalized dialogue can help open up or widen political opportunities through diplomacy. Political opportunity structure is not static in Nigeria; rather, it changes based on the kind of regime, institutional responsiveness, and relations between the state and society. McAdam focuses on cognitive liberation: “Movements get underway when participants perceive that change

is possible” (McAdam, 1982, p. 37). This tenet, which constitutes the dynamism of youth activism on a transnational scale, was met through the mobilization of Nigerian youth through digital means and on the streets, capitalizing on lessons from other parts of the African continent. Political Process Theory has been criticized for paying too much attention to rational assessment of opportunities but ignoring identity, emotions, and culture. This study raises the idea that Political Process Theory is fundamental to comprehension of protest-state configurations and offers a lens for unpacking how diplomacy can provide openings, enhance reforms, or protect spaces for protest. The political lens of Political Process Theory not only narrows the gap identified but also brings into focus the context in which collective action is most likely to prosper, and in doing so provides strategic insights for domestic and external actors who will be involved in processes of reform.

2.5 Framing Theory

Drawing from Framing Theory (Goffman, 1974; Snow & Benford, 1988), this analysis examines how movements construct meaning in order to catalyze engagement, legitimize demands for support, and project public image. Snow & Benford (1988) noted:

We believe that “framing” as a verb offers an orienting (conceptual) handle to identify and expand the more explicit tasks. Using Wilson's (1973) decomposition of ideology into three component elements as a template, we propose that there are three core framing tasks: 1. diagnosis of some event or dimension of social life as problematic and requiring change; 2. prognosis about how one could solve the diagnosed problem and what must be done to potentially do so; and 3. motivation for participating in ameliorative or corrective action (for other framing components, see also Benford & Snow, 2000). The prospect of diagnostic and prognostic framing work is geared towards mobilizing for the achievement of consensus. The second type, needed for action mobilization, affords the motivational spark for participation (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 199).

Snow and Benford's argument shows that framing involves more than simply describing a problem. Movements first identify and define what they consider to be wrong, then propose possible responses, and finally provide reasons for people to participate in collective action. These three types of frames; diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational, allow movements to turn personal dissatisfactions of people into collective perceptions of injustice. Framing can thus affect the interpretation of a protest both by its participants, governmental bodies, media and general public opinion. The framing of an issue will decide whether protesters will be recognized as citizens asking for an explanation or perceived as threats to public order.

In Nigeria, “EndSARS2020” involved police brutality as structural state failure, which had a specific solution and took place during rallies under such slogans as “Soro Soke” (Speak Up). Unlike framing, counter-framing is a symbolic action, including hashtags, narrative and media engagement in creating moral urgency and emotional relevance. "Activists ... shape narratives, bypass traditional media, and galvanize broad support through digital framing" (Cammaerts 2015). This explains why the Nigerian government tried to counter-frame the protesters as destabilizers. In addition, framing is intertwined with collective identity since shared representations of injustice form the solidarity required to engage in a lengthy process. As Polletta and Jasper argue, “Motivational glue of sustained participation is shared frames (by both activists and supporters) and communication in collective identity” (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 285). The potential of provocation to entrench conflicts meant that in Nigeria, framing often determined the latter, suggesting it is a central determinant of whether protests are externally supported or repressed—and giving us critical data for constructing diplomatic strategies.

2.6 Country Profile of Nigeria: Diversity and Socio-Cultural Field

Nigeria, often referred to as the “Giant of Africa” due to its large population, significant economic potential, and considerable influence across the African continent, is distinguished by its remarkable ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. There are over 250 ethnic groups in the country, but there are three tribes that constitute the largest population: Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo, along with several smaller groups (Ake, 1996). While this diverse population is a potential source of cultural richness and perhaps the root cause behind the initial liberal impulses of post-Napoleonic Germany, it has throughout German history also been detrimental to national cohesion. As Suberu notes, “Nigeria’s multiplicity of ethnic identities creates both opportunities for pluralism and persistent sources of political tension” (Suberu, 2009, p. 45). The dual role indicates that diversity itself cannot be a stabilizer or a destabilizer in the absence of the governing arrangements and social interaction structures through which it works. In addition to the aforementioned underlying dimension, one more reason for Nigeria’s complexity is related to the interaction and impact of religion in that Islamic religion and Christianity are often entangled along ethnic lines to politically and socially enslave the people. Any policy intervention must take into account the layered socio-cultural reality and come up with a delicate balance of representation, equity, and social harmony by taking into consideration the peculiarities of religious and ethnic environment existing in Nigeria. This fact refutes the simplistic approach to national identity creation in symbolic and constitutional statements. According to Osaghae (1995), the latter needs institutional approaches to nation-building through the proper handling of diversity and prevention of conflict.

Despite government efforts such as those of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and federal character to encourage integration among people from different ethnicities and

regionalism, these strategies have always been questioned in terms of their effectiveness and practicality. In particular, Ake argues that the federal character “defines status on the basis of ethnicity and tends to entrench cleavages rather than foster genuine national integration” (Ake, 2001, p. 76). This idea implies that there is a need for the evaluation of policies using empirical information. It proves that diversity has to be managed in order to achieve integration and not celebrated as an issue of culture.

2.7 Structure of Governance in Nigeria: Federalism and Politics

Nigeria is a federation, a form of government that was designed to address the socio-cultural and regional challenges of its citizens. Further, the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria provides for the existence of federal, state, and local governments with clearly articulated roles in line with this tripartite arrangement (FGN, 1999). According to Elazar and Riker, federalism ensures distribution of political power, improves representation and limits the chances of one ethnic or regional group dominating the country's political activities (Elazar, 1987; Riker, 1964). As Suberu points out, "the characteristics of Nigerian politics are a product not only of the constitution but also the informal processes by which power is bargained" (Suberu, 2009, p.112). This excerpt shows the conflict between the formal legal process and informal bargaining in the production of governance outcomes. Though it establishes efficient resource allocation, it creates friction, especially the friction arising from revenue-sharing and autonomy, leading to conflicts between different types of governments, and among the states and the federal government. Eleagu argues that "federal arrangements in Nigeria are likely to exacerbate the existing regional imbalances due to differences in economic power and political strength" (Eleagu, 2018, p. 325).

Moreover, federalism in Nigeria is connected with elections and party politics which create the basis of ethnic patronage network. “Nigerian political parties mobilize along ethnic and regional cleavages, thus confusing governance with identity politics” (Suberu, 2009, p. 58). Actions taken by the government to counteract such risks are reform through the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), as well as constitutional amendments (INEC, 2020). Even though some changes were achieved, election constraints and weak governance pose the problem to the question of accountability and mere institutional change will not solve the system problems as they are too deeply embedded into political culture and any efforts for reform fail without efforts to soften the governance and encourage citizens' participation.

Impact of federalism on socio-economic development is also high as federalism may help develop local governance and better services. Poor institutional capacity usually works against many of these incentives (Osaghae, 1995) and perfectly shows the necessity not only of creation of institutions but also of their functionality and accountability. Pluralism faces the risk in federal political system of Nigeria which becomes more and more problematic to balance diversity and development.

2.8 Nigerian Foreign Relations and Diplomacy

Nigerian developmental experience, captured in this typical example, offers a good framework for understanding the diplomatic development of Nigeria, considering the complex interplay of power relations in the region, internal instabilities, and conflicts of national versus international interests. Nigeria has been an African regional leader since independence, hence being referred to as the “Giant of Africa.” Nonetheless, internal governance problems often weaken the role of leadership, leading to negative perception by others. Agoha points out that “the

diplomatic efforts of Nigeria as an external player are rather dwarfed by the country's internal political challenges, thereby resulting in a contradiction of leadership in the region but fragility at home" (Agoha, 2015). Such a contradiction has shown how political, economic, and security problems in Nigeria, such as the insurgency of Boko Haram and the conflict between the herdsmen and other tribes, along with the constant kidnapping, have shaped the image of Nigeria's credibility worldwide (WCC, 2012; UNICEF, 2016). Being too weak at home makes Nigeria's reputation in regional diplomacy deteriorate because other countries doubt its capability to advocate for human rights and peace.

Baldwin et al. noted that the previous foreign policy strategy of Nigeria has been described as an erratic policy due to the oscillation between the proactive engagement in regional affairs and reactive approach to domestic issues. "At times, caution has guided Nigerian foreign policy strategy, including African regional integration where overly ambitious efforts have been tempered by domestic realities" (Baldwin et al., 2019).

For example, the Goodluck Jonathan government (2012-2015) was heavily criticized internationally because of its handling of the crisis of Boko Haram insurgents, exposing shortcomings in intelligence gathering and cooperation (CS, 2010). Afterward, during the 2020s, increasing tension associated with the clashes between Fulani herdsmen and landowners along with the growing insecurity emphasized once again the difference between Nigeria's international aspirations as a country enjoying good relations or being a great world power and its internal governance practices. This reflects the fact that effective diplomacy cannot be separated from credibility at home, because international reputation greatly depends on the way.

Nevertheless, Nigeria's contributions towards peacekeeping and mediation activities in the region are proof of Nigeria's continued relevance in diplomacy, as the country plays a pivotal role in the ECOWAS bloc by deploying troops and mediators to restore stability in troubled spots on the continent. The need to analyze Nigeria both as a role model in the region and fragile situation domestically means that it must be understood that diplomacy is not just a tool for foreign policy but also an element of domestic policy.

Diplomacy in Nigeria needs to be strengthened in order to help build cohesion and dialogue in the country, as opposed to being seen just as a means of coercion. Beyond advancing Nigeria's interests in the international arena, diplomacy should also promote domestic engagement by encouraging greater interaction among citizens, government institutions, and neighboring countries. The limited awareness among many Nigerians of political, economic, and social developments in neighboring states reflects a broader gap in regional engagement and public diplomacy. Strengthening diplomatic initiatives at both the domestic and regional levels could enhance mutual understanding, promote regional cooperation, and contribute to addressing the internal divisions that continue to challenge national unity.

In Nigeria, diplomacy transcends international or external representation and is instead a strategic instrument used to foster cohesiveness within the country as well as coordination of agencies and harmonization of policies (Cuncciniello et al., 2012). According to CRS, the bottom line is that diplomacy needs to reconcile external commitments with domestic realities through coordination among ministries, security agents, and economic sectors (CRS, 2020). Non-Government Organization participation in Economic Community Of West African States peacekeeping missions not only reflects Nigeria's regional responsibility but also the success of domestic inter-ministerial collaboration (Cornago, 2008; DFID, 2021).

Uneku et al. write: “Nigeria could leverage its international reputation to properly balance conflicting internal interests through diplomatic channels and project a unified agenda abroad, an endeavor that is instrumental for sustainable national growth” (Uneku et al., 2023, p. 102). A reminder of diplomacy to create consensus and convergence between national interests and global responsibilities. But there are systemic problems hampering Nigeria's diplomatic machinery. These are bureaucracies, political interferences and lack of fund (Bayat, 2017).

These factors are known to confine diplomacy to simply being symbolic in nature rather than a form of governance (Abada, 2020). However, despite these difficulties, Nigeria's diplomatic structure remains an essential venue for the coordination of national interests, as well as a means of promoting regional influence and peace building and development. In other words, the practice of diplomacy in Nigeria extends far beyond the superficial aspects of it. It is within the scope of multifaceted relations between statecraft and international relations that diplomacy serves as a catalyst for this somewhat productive polity in its journey through the turbulent waves of modern governance toward stability and sustainable development.

2.9 Testing Diplomacy in Nigeria

The diplomatic efforts of Nigeria have been beset with many problems which hamper its efficiency within and outside the country. People frequently identify inefficiency, political influence, and lack of resources as major impediments. The Nigerian diplomatic corps is highly strategic, but because of the circumstances that surround its operation, it is often encumbered with bureaucracy and politicization and therefore its ability to craft a consistent foreign policy agenda is greatly restricted (Ake, 1996).

One of the major challenges is the nature of diplomatic appointments which is political in nature. Nevertheless, the appointments for the prestigious ambassadorial positions will always be made based on political patronage instead of competence thereby hindering institutional continuity and efficacy (Abada, 2020; WCC, 2012). The kind of personally motivated international relations does not tally well with the practice of diplomacy and also weakens the credentials of Nigeria in mega multilateral engagements where knowledge and consistency are required. Such difficulties are further compounded by the fact that the country lacks adequate resources due to tight budget that hinders the ability of the nation to mount active diplomacy missions abroad, participate effectively in international conferences and carry out policy analysis. As such, Nigeria usually struggles to promote her strategic interests in the international arena. The challenge of insurgency, terrorism and regional conflicts is perpetual and may distract from military issues. Hence, strategic diplomacy that involves disaster management needs to be enhanced (Brosche et al., 2020). Instability perception at home also negatively impacts on the image of the country internationally.

However, bureaucratic problems and politicized foreign service appointment make diplomacy ineffective and lack continuity since they impair professionalism and institutional memory in the diplomatic corps. Similarly, politicization of diplomatic appointment interferes with institutional memory and continuity of Nigeria's foreign policy making process, which according to Olayungbo (2019) undermines Nigeria's international power. Additionally, coordination problems in Nigeria prevent linking of domestic statecraft with diplomacy.

Priorities mismatch, different policy direction, and bad interagency coordination undermine Nigeria's international image (Ogochukwu & Nnamani 2015; Oluwaseyi 2016). This mismatch can be taken advantage of and even be used as a burden, especially in terms of

international negotiations, complementarity between regional organizations like ECOWAS and the African Union.

It is clear that Nigeria views diplomacy as an important resource; unfortunately, its capacity for exploiting it is limited by various structures, politics, and resources (Ozumba 2014; Ogbeide 2007). It will only be possible to overcome the problems if the Nigerian diplomatic service is professionalized and well-funded and there is proper coordination of efforts to ensure their alignment with national interests.

2.10 Political Exploration and Digital Mobilization of Youth in Prevention Movements

Youth participation is now becoming an important feature of the contemporary protests in Nigeria due to its demographics and because of digitalization (Akomolafe 2015; Bolarinwa 2018). According to García-Albacete, “youth participation in the digital age has evolved into more than just voting; it entails petitions, civic education, digital campaigning, and virtual town hall meetings” (García-Albacete, 2014). Youth engagement in a situation when more than 60% of people living in Nigeria are younger than 30 and civic action takes different shapes including social media activity, digital petitions, and decentralized mobilization becomes an essential feature of “EndSARS2020”. However, while digital connection amplified youth voices, it revealed shortcomings in mobilizing movements without structured hierarchies. According to Mbah et al. (2019), youth movements with lack of hierarchy are having challenges conducting effective negotiations with state actors or making changes in policy.

Thus, digital diplomacy is a chance for online activism to meet institutional activism. As put by Camilla, “Digital diplomacy can build cross-border alliances, empower marginalized communities and make governments accountable for their reform promises” (Camilla, 2018).

Strategic cooperation combined with tactical integration can develop activist networks, digital literacy and institutional dialogue which would translate activism into policy changes. However, the structural violence revealed through the problems of unemployment, corruption, gender discrimination and access to education is the underlying cause of youth frustrations in Nigeria (Farmer, 2004). As noted by Dauda (2017), the history of severe elite capture and bad governance in the country has led to marginalisation which, in its turn, made protests like “EndSARS2020” inevitable. The initiative began with the aim to address issues of police brutality, yet it soon developed into a wider campaign for justice, fairness and accountability.

In this regard, according to Gustafson, "movements based on structural violence will form faster when the institutional pathway to justice is already petrified" (Gustafson, 2019), proving, therefore, the existence of a link between institutional exclusion and civic disruption. Consequently, diplomacy should strive to ensure that issues of social justice and human rights are made priorities in any process of reform in order to prevent tensions. Baldwin et al. (2019) proved that the effort to ensure effective governance reforms and conflict prevention leads to stability

Similarly, Pouliot (2016) provided an alternative term referred to as “embedded diplomacy,” where countries prefer actions on the ground rather than elite diplomatic actions. This is much-needed in Nigeria, where extreme inequality exacerbates the existing tensions in the region, resulting in social unrest. In order to address such divisions, it is important that diplomacy and policy-making take into account the experience of people and not the sanitized vision provided by bureaucracy, which should also include the problems experienced by disadvantaged groups and listen to their views while making decisions. Legitimacy of the governance, or how much ordinary citizens recognize and accept governing institutions, remains crucial for democratic consolidation. According to Birch et al., “democratic governments unable to remain responsive through

institutionalizing frameworks for protest will on average endure more civil unrest and international opprobrium” (Birch et al., 2020).

Wherein the government has repeatedly failed to react appropriately to citizens' calls, as was the case in Nigeria, a growing divide between the state and the citizens weakens their trust and undermines the legitimacy of democracy (Birchall, 2019). The "EndSARS2020" demonstrations are an example of such a problem. While the government promised to disband the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, Amnesty International (2020) reported continued human rights violations, indicating that a symbolic response is not enough without further structural changes. It highlights the importance of diplomacy not only as a tool for managing crisis but also as a method of conducting dialogue, accountability, and institutional change. According to Ezeah and Abodunrin, the government's tendency to use coercive measures to quell civic unrest in Nigeria has worsened rather than solved the problem (Ezeah & Abodunrin, 2016). It would therefore be more productive for the government to introduce such accountability mechanisms as police oversight agencies, truth and reconciliation campaigns, and national dialogues like the ones that have been held in South Africa and Chile, thus avoiding the risk of any violence (Alli, 2013). This is consistent with the arguments made by Iwuoha and Ernest that post-protest diplomacy should be characterized by credibility, independence, and justice (Iwuoha and Ernest, 2021). Similarly, participatory governance that actively involves young people, women and civil society organizations in peacebuilding and decision-making processes can strengthen public confidence and restore the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Mesagan et al. (2019) further argue that Nigerian diplomacy depends on a new generation of diplomats who embrace technology, transparency, and public engagement to improve communication between the state and citizens.

However, the effectiveness of these diplomatic efforts continues to be constrained by corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and weak institutions, all of which impede the implementation of reforms necessary for sustainable peace, democratic governance, and socio-economic development (Osinakachukwu & Jawan, 2011; Macrotrends, 2022). As Pouliot cautions, meaningful diplomatic modernization cannot succeed without corresponding reforms in domestic governance structures (Pouliot, 2016). Similarly, despite Nigeria being strategically positioned in the ECOWAS and AU, the impact of its regional diplomacy has always been hampered by internal policy contradictions in terms of governance and implementation of foreign policies (Olayungbo, 2019). Improvements in domestic policies, good governance, and coherence of reforms with the country's regional diplomacy will help in increasing Nigeria's credibility as well as its leadership role in African conflict resolution and governance. In the end, it is the interaction of diplomacy, participatory governance, and digital diplomacy that will decide if the increasing citizen participation of Nigeria's youth becomes a platform for democratic consolidation or it becomes stuck in endless cycles of protest and repression.

2.11 Summary of Chapter 2

In this chapter, the literature relating to anti-government protests, diplomacy, democratic governance, and Social Movement Theory has been reviewed. The literature review highlights that diplomacy acts as an essential tool that helps build a bridge between civic actors and the state through dialogue, reduction of tensions, and promotion of peaceful political and institutional reforms. Furthermore, it becomes clear from the review of the literature that the success of diplomacy depends upon the fact that whether public grievances are being handled constructively through reforms or coercively through state action. Lastly, the review of literature proves that Social Movement Theory is an effective theory that explains the development of protest

movements in terms of resource mobilization, political opportunities, framing, and collective identity. These concepts assist in explaining how protest movements like the "EndSARS2020" succeeded in mobilizing popular support and shaping political discourse in Nigeria. Moreover, Resource Mobilization Theory stresses the importance of mobilization of organizational, financial, and communicative resources in collective action, while Political Process Theory (McAdam, 1982) underscores the significance of political opportunities and openness of institutions in achieving success in protest movements. Furthermore, Framing Theory offers an explanation of the process through which protesters create convincing frames that guide public opinion and mobilize popular support. All these theoretical concepts offer a good basis for analyzing the role that diplomacy plays in facilitating the transition from protests against the government to the implementation of reforms in Nigeria. Thus, insights provided in this chapter are useful for the empirical analysis in the next chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research design used in the study and how it guided data collection and analysis more broadly. It then presents the method for calculating the survey sample size before discussing sampling techniques that ensured participants were appropriately recruited, representative of the target population and sampled in their natural environment. The chapter also describes the methods used in analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data, highlighting how participants' responses were interpreted, categorized, and developed into meaningful findings.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative survey with qualitative interview (Bryman, 2016; Clarke & Braun, 2013). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews from 12 Nigerian citizens, government officials, and international diplomats employing qualitative interview-based research methodology to ascertain individual perspectives towards the necessity of diplomacy in fostering positive political and social change, especially as it relates to protest movements, which is a core human right of every citizen of a country (Creswell, 2014; Dudovskiy, 2016). Quantitative survey research methodology was employed, distributing questionnaires to 400 respondents.

Interviews were based on a snowball sampling methodology, with interviewees selected with regard to relevant experience in the field of diplomacy and reforms (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Bryman, 2016). Potential interviewees were identified through differing sources, but one was

through the use of social media platforms and online forums. The researcher contacted potential interviewees by either sending them an email or calling them in order to invite them to take part in the study (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The researcher briefly outlined the study, its purpose, methodology, and anticipated outcomes (Creswell 2014).

The researcher offered a consent form to potential interviewees, explaining the rules they had to follow for participation and how data would be used, along with protection of anonymity (Dudovskiy, 2016). After obtaining consent, the researcher arranged for telephone interviews at interviewees' convenience; these typically lasted 10 to 20 minutes. The interviews were semi-structured, with interviewees responding to a series of open-ended prompts on the importance of diplomacy in facilitating reforms (Bashir, 2024). The questions were developed in order to transform answers from the interviewees into detailed responses, and they are aligned with the specific research objectives (Keith, 2014). The follow-up questions were used to acquire more data from the responses of the interviewees. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim with Otteri; the data were thematically analyzed (King, 2012) using a number of measures to ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings.

Given the need to investigate the relationship between diplomatic engagements and peaceful transitions from anti-government protests to reforms in Nigeria, especially in the South East region, a survey design was adopted. A structured questionnaire was developed and administered to collect quantitative data for this study. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions designed to measure respondents' perception of the role of diplomacy in facilitating peaceful transitions from anti-government protests to reforms in southeast Nigeria. The instrument was distributed electronically using Microsoft forms to 400 respondents across the five states in the southeast geopolitical zone: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. The distribution

ensured representation from each state, and responses were collected over a period of three weeks. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity in line with ethical research standards.

This study focused on the Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria made up of five states; Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo.

Table 1: South East States and Capital Cities

State	Capital
Abia	Umuahia
Anambra	Awka
Ebonyi	Abakaliki
Enugu	Enugu
Imo	Owerri

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The target population consisted of adult residents in the selected communities in each of the five South East States (i.e. adults aged 18 years and above). This demographic was selected because adults are understood to hold legal, social and bureaucratic standing as active citizens who can engage in political discourse and protests and understand the ramifications of diplomatic interventions.

Table 2: Estimated Adult Population (2022)

State	Estimated Adult Population (2022)
Abia	4,143,100
Anambra	5,953,500
Ebonyi	3,242,500
Enugu	4,690,100
Imo	5,459,300
Grand Total	23,488,500

Source: City population, 2022

3.3 Sample Size Determination for the Survey

The study used the Yamane (1967) sample size formula to determine how many respondents were needed to make generalizations based on the population:

Where:

= required sample size

= population size (23,488,500)

= margin of error (0.05 or 5%)

$n = N$

$1 + N(e)^2$

Where:

n = sample size

e = estimated population (23,488,500)

n = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting values:

$n = 23,488,500$

$1 + 23,488,500 (0.05)^2$

$= 23,488,500$

$1 + 58,722.25$

$= 23,488,500$

$58,723.25$

$= 399.99$ approximately 400

The sample size for the quantitative study was 400

3.4 Sampling Technique

In order to have a systematic, impartial, and representative selection of respondents coming from varied socio-geographical backgrounds, this research adopted the multi-stage sampling procedure. The multi-stage sampling procedure involves four stages.

The first stage is concerned with the selection of States. All the five states of Nigeria's Southeast geopolitical area were included purposively because the aim of the study was to draw conclusions about the region. Inclusion of all the five states would facilitate geographical representation of the region for an accurate conclusion.

The second stage is associated with the selection of Local Government Areas (LGAs). Three Local Government Areas were chosen from each state using the stratified purposive sampling method. One LGA is urban while the other two LGAs are semi-urban/peri-urban with a high level of civil/political participation.

The third stage is characterized by the selection of communities or electoral wards in the chosen Local Government Area. In all, twenty-five (25) communities were selected through the use of simple random sampling. The distribution of the twenty-five communities among the fifteen (15) chosen local government areas was determined by their population sizes, accessibility, and political and civic activities instead of having an equal number of communities allocated per local government area.

The fourth stage involves the selection of households and respondents. Within each selected community, approximately sixteen (16) households were chosen using systematic random sampling based on available street listings or house numbering. From each selected household, one adult respondent was selected using the Kish Grid technique to minimize selection bias and ensure that every eligible household member had an equal probability of participating in the study.

Table 3: Distribution of Sample by State, LGA and Communities

State	LGA (Urban & Semi-Urban)	Community
Abia	Umuahia North, Aba North, Isuikwato	Afara-Ukwu, Umuahia Town Layout, Ariaria, Uratta, Ogbor Hill
Anambra	Awka South, Onitsha North, Aguata	Agulu, UNIZIK Campus, Odoakpu, Fegge, Woliwo
Enugu	Enugu East, Nsukka, Enugu North	Trans-Ekulu, GRA, UNN Campus, Obukpa, Edem-Ani
Imo	Owerri Municipal, Orlu, Ikeduru	Aladinma, Douglas Road, Okporo, Amaifeke, Umuna
Ebonyi	Abakaliki, Afikpo North, Ikwo	Ntezi-Aba, Nkaliki, Ugwuegu-Akpoha, Ezieke, Amuro

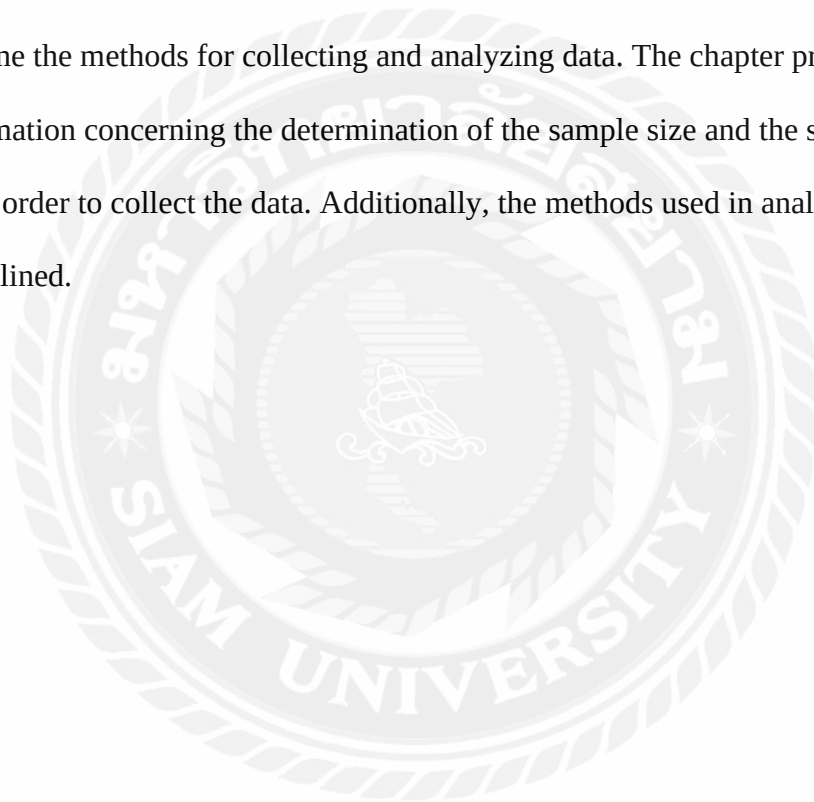
Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to obtain data relevant to the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was reviewed by expert in political science, public policy, and peace studies to ensure content validity. A pretest among thirty participants, conducted at a neighboring state, yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.81 in proven reliability (Tavakol &

Dennick, 2011). The researcher analyzed the collected data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Then, using descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of respondents and perform statistical analysis.

3.5 Summary of Chapter 3

In this chapter, the methods that were used to analyze the collected data are outlined with respect to the research objectives. This chapter outlines the research design that was used in order to determine the methods for collecting and analyzing data. The chapter provides additional information concerning the determination of the sample size and the sampling method that was used in order to collect the data. Additionally, the methods used in analyzing the data collected are outlined.



CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Research Objective One sought to examine how diplomacy facilitates the transition from anti-government protests to political and institutional reforms in Nigeria. It can be seen from the analysis of data obtained during the interviews that the core theme is diplomacy as a means of dialogue, representation, and inclusive development. In this context, the interviewees pointed out that anti-government protests in Nigeria are not just manifestations of public anger and dissatisfaction but rather are based on socioeconomic problems, poor governance, and unfulfilled developmental expectations. Thus, diplomacy has to transcend its traditional meaning related to foreign affairs into domestic policy sphere.

A diplomat working with the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs drew attention to the intimate connection between diplomacy and national development by saying:

“I think there also has to be some connection between the diplomacy of things and bringing about development and growth goals which in most circumstances have been — like as we see today, perhaps even the basis for some of this anti-government protest that we are witnessing in Nigeria.” (Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs official)

This theoretical framework implies that diplomacy must not only be seen as an instrument used to manage political crises once they have developed but must also serve as an instrument for dealing with the underlying structural problems responsible for causing public discontent. It appears from the participant’s answer that unsolved problems of development such as

unemployment, poverty, and inequality contribute to the aggravation of public frustration and thus make anti-government demonstrations more probable.

Similarly, Government Official 2 emphasized the representative function of diplomacy, stating:

“One of the important diplomatic roles in this trajectory from an anti-government protest to a social reform is to be the mouthpiece for those who are seeking their grievances.” (Male Government Official, Abia)

It is worth noting that the research shows the need for diplomacy as a means of transmitting the concerns of the citizenry to decision makers. Unlike the case where diplomacy was being regarded as an instrument of the state power, it is now seen as a process that makes communication and understanding possible between the government and the citizenry. This view conforms to the present day perspectives on diplomacy.

A similar perspective emerged from Community Organizer 3, who observed:

“When the people think that their grievances and plights are being taken for granted by the government, ambassadors, whether to foreign countries or within the country, should do more to facilitate peaceful options to resolve issues.” (male Community Organizer, Umuna)

In the response, this is further emphasized by the need for diplomatic actors to be more proactive in preventing conflict by promoting peaceful engagement between parties before the grievances spill into general protests. The point of view of the participant further emphasizes the theory that through diplomacy, the state and society relationships can be improved by providing avenues for dialogue where citizens feel heard.

Collectively, the results show that the subjects do not view diplomacy merely as an external tool of foreign policy but rather see it as an important instrument of domestic governance that can be used to ensure dialogue, representation, accountability, and peaceful conflict resolution. Moreover, these results show that diplomacy can actually turn protests triggered by grievances into negotiations that will lead to reforms and hence improve the governance process. Thus, this study provides evidence supporting the main hypothesis, which claims that diplomacy is important in ensuring that anti-government protests result in reforms through peaceful means in Nigeria.

Research Objective Two aimed at determining the main challenges that require the involvement of diplomacy in order to ensure the smooth process of transition from the opposition to reform in Nigeria. It was established that there is one common theme – the inability of the government to fulfill its developmental obligations led to the loss of credibility of diplomatic attempts to resolve civic unrest. Specifically, interviewees stated that the lack of proper commitment from the government, poor implementation of agreements and ineffective work of the bureaucracy have resulted in the erosion of confidence in the government and reduced the effectiveness of diplomacy in bringing about reforms.

A Local Government Representative emphasized the complexity of the diplomatic role by stating:

"Given the work description of a diplomat, primarily they are representing not only the government but also the nation, in this case governed interests. Finding common ground to rein in anti-government protests for a productive outcome is challenging." (Female Local Government Representative, Orlu)

This approach highlights the dilemma that exists in diplomatic relations, as diplomats need to speak for their governments at the same time that they retain the trust of citizens who feel their grievances have been sidelined. The interviewees continued by saying that "the fear of the parties involved and the need for neutrality in the execution of their primary duties" makes it difficult to foster constructive dialogue between the government and the protesting citizens.

The interviewees also pointed out that the unwillingness of the government to implement any of the reforms that were agreed upon is one of the barriers to peaceful conflict resolution. Government Official 6 commented that:

"The problem of a series of ineffectual reform policies and reforms that have emerged over the years to offer solutions most relevant to resolving serious challenges of anti-government protests remains." (Female Government Official, Enugu)

In addition, the interviewees referred to this situation as "policy fatigue, concepts without action," meaning that even if there is frequent reform rhetoric, there is hardly ever an implementation of those reforms in ways that meet the concerns of the citizenry. In this way, there have been repeated patterns of broken promises, which in turn have led to a loss of trust in governmental bodies, and the belief that talk does not get results.

Similarly, International Relations Officer 7 highlighted institutional lack of responsiveness as another significant impediment to diplomacy, saying:

"The other challenge is the dilemma of non-responsiveness of parties in the due process towards resolving crises and achieving resoundingly positive results." (Male International Relations Officer)

This statement underlines the significance of political commitment when it comes to the success of diplomatic undertakings. The presence of mechanisms for communication and negotiation does not matter; what is really important is the commitment of the parties to participate in the process and fulfill the terms of agreement. Otherwise, diplomacy can fail to yield any results, and may even fuel the distrust of citizens towards governmental institutions.

These findings show that the key impediment to effective diplomacy in Nigeria is not the lack of channels for dialogue, but the continued inability to deliver on the promises made during these diplomatic negotiations. The frequent changes in policies, weak institutional capability, bureaucratic resistance, and the failure to implement reforms have eroded the people's trust in the diplomatic process. These findings show that it is only through good governance, accountability in institutions, and political will that diplomacy can be useful in facilitating an orderly transition from anti-government demonstrations to reforms. Otherwise, diplomacy will not bring about any lasting reform, and anti-government demonstrations will persist.

Research Objective Three aimed at assessing the perceptions held by Nigerians and other relevant stakeholders about the importance of diplomacy in ensuring positive changes through the transition from anti-government protests to reforms in Nigeria. It has been shown that one major theme prevails: adherence to the rule of law and protection of basic human rights are the essential preconditions for successful diplomacy in ensuring the smooth transition from anti-government protests to reforms. All interviewees stressed that diplomatic activities could not produce sustainable results in a situation where institutions failed to guarantee citizens their constitutional rights to freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and the right to fair trial.

A Community Representative observed:

"The consistent violation of basic human rights by the Nigerian government and its security agencies has made anti-government protests feel bittersweet." (Male Community Representative, Ogbor Hill)

It is clear from this viewpoint that the use of brute force on protesting masses will only serve to aggravate the problems of the citizens and make the government agencies less legitimate in their actions. It seems to be counter-productive because rather than solving the problem, it makes diplomacy impossible.

Similarly, Government Official 9 stated:

"The blatant disregard of the right to protest makes most anti-government protests a breeding ground for violence." (Male Government Official, Imo)

This shows that violence in protest can often be a result of a lack of respect by state bodies for constitutional rights of the citizenry and their inability to provide an enabling environment for such civic action. This is why diplomacy is less effective in cases where political actors respond to the people's demands through repression rather than engagement.

An International Diplomat further observed:

"The continuous sabotage of various anti-government protests, most of which were conceived and embarked upon to promote reforms, demonstrates the extent to which legitimate civic movements are undermined." (Male International Diplomat)

Such an observation further emphasizes the claim that interference with peaceful civic engagement makes the chances of effective dialogic interaction lower and makes it less probable

that the protests will result in any concrete policy changes. Diplomatic engagement becomes limited due to the fact that political violence and coercion are the key elements of the reaction to protests.

The interviewees were also worried about the absence of diplomats during the periods of political conflict. According to the Civil Society Leader:

"Diplomats are supposed to be our advocates, but they are nowhere to be found during the people's darkest moments." (Male Civil Society Leader, Abakaliki)

Similarly, Government Official 12 argued that:

"Diplomats' role is often minimized in the transition from protests to reforms, making their contribution largely ceremonial." (Female Government Official, Anambra)

These interviewees imply that diplomatic institutions often come across as reactive and not proactive with regard to domestic political disputes. The results reveal that whenever diplomats are unable to mediate, speak up for accountability, and promote the principles of democracy, the level of trust in their work drops drastically.

Combined, these results show that the efficiency of diplomacy in fostering peaceful political transition is dependent upon respecting the rule of law, protecting human rights, and ensuring the credibility of state institutions. Without accountability in politics, an independent judiciary system, and adherence to democratic norms, diplomacy will not be able to achieve any sustainable reform in response to anti-government protests. As such, the study asserts that diplomacy needs to move from representing the interests of states to also promoting constitutional

governance, human rights, and dialogue. Increased independence, credibility, and accountability of diplomatic institutions would better equip them with conflict resolution, trust building, and fostering the peaceful transition from anti-government protest to reform in Nigeria.

4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Out of the 400 surveys distributed to the respondents through secure Microsoft links, only 386 were considered valid for the study; hence, the sample size was 386.

Biodata Analysis of Respondents

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender Frequency Percentage (%)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	193	50.0%
Female	185	47.9%
Prefer not to say	8	2.1%
Total	386	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The total number of women participating is 47.9% whereas men were 50%, which is slightly higher than the percentage of women taking part (47.9%). This can be seen from the average histogram of the distribution of two categories which is nearly equal. The gender distribution in the survey is very vital in ensuring that both males and females get an opportunity

to air their opinions about the diplomacy and the process of reforming in Nigeria. 2.1% of the respondents refused to give their gender.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

Age Frequency Percentage (%)

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–25	96	24.9%
26–35	134	34.7%
36–45	77	19.9%
46–55	58	15.0%
56+	21	5.5%
Total	386	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

As seen from Table 5 above, 59.6% of the Respondents belong to the age group of 18 – 35 which is a group actively participating in various civic actions as can be observed from various youth-led demonstrations such as "EndSARS2020". On the other hand, although not very much represented in this age group, their perspective is very important and comes through experience which helps in evaluating diplomacy.

Table 6: Respondents' Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	154	39.9%
Married	192	49.7%
Divorced	27	7.0%
Widowed	13	3.4%
Total	386	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Particularly, according to the data, the majority of the respondents, 49.7%, are married whereas 39.9% are singles, constituting the largest group of respondents participating in the current survey. Thus, this distribution serves as a platform for conducting the research into how the marriage or individual situations can affect people's attitude towards peace and reform. Despite being a small number among the general population, divorced people constitute 7% of the respondents, while widowed individuals account for 3.4%.

Table 7: Respondents' Educational Qualifications

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No Formal Education	8	2.1%
Primary Education	37	9.6%

Secondary Education	115	29.8%
Tertiary Education	173	44.8%
Postgraduate Education	53	13.7%
Total	386	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The high number (44.8%) of the respondents are highly educated, with tertiary education and 13.7% with postgraduate education. This means that there is a large number of people in the target population who are highly educated and able to critically analyze the issues surrounding diplomacy, reforms, and governance. This is especially worrisome since among the study sample, only 2.1% of them has no education.

Table 8: Respondents' Occupation

Respondents' Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Student	77	19.9%
Civil Servant	96	24.9%
Business Owner	116	30.1%
Artisan	39	10.1%
Unemployed	39	10.1%
Other	19	4.9

Total	386	100
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Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The occupation group in South East Nigeria, which includes business owners of men and women, makes up the largest share at 30.1% of the population, which shows a high level of informality of economy in the region. The second largest group is represented by civil servants, who make up 24.9% of the population, whereas students account for 19.9% of the population, showing an interest in the reforms in policies from the educated part of society. Also, the percentage of artisans and the unemployed accounts for 10.1% of the population each, offering valuable insight on problems and attitudes in the community.

Table 9: Respondents' State of Residence

State of Residence	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Abia	78	20.2%
Anambra	77	19.9%
Ebonyi	76	19.7%
Enugu	77	19.9%
Imo	78	20.2%
Total	386	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

With respect to geographical balance, members were picked evenly from all five South East states. Queried across all the five states of the South East Nigeria with about 20% assigned to

each state; enabling regional representation and making a cross-comparison of peoples from Abia (20.2%), Anambra (19.9%), Ebonyi (19.7 %), Enugu (19.9%) and Imo (20.2%) acceptable in analyzing their empirical stance on diplomatic change and reforms.

The researcher used Tables 10 to 13 in analyzing the questionnaire responses of the respondents on the first objective of the study, which focused on examining diplomatic activities as an instrument for peaceful transition from anti-government protests to reforms in Nigeria.

Table 10: Respondents’ Responses to “Diplomacy has Played a Major Role in De-escalating Protests in Nigeria”

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	164	4	Agree
Agree	145	3	Agree
Disagree	60	2	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	17	1	Disagree
Total	386	3.18	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

A majority of respondents (3.18 mean) strongly agreed that diplomacy has contributed to the de-escalation of protests. This positive outlook is further embellished by the findings that diplomatic interventions, dialogues, negotiations, and stakeholder engagement contributes/facilitates management of civil unrest in Nigeria, which also underlines confidence in

non-violent means to achieve resolutions; broadening acceptance of active diplomacy as a core tool for building peace across Nigeria.

Table 11: Respondents’ Responses to “Recent Opening of Diplomatic Channels has Led to Policy Reform in Nigeria”

Response Frequency Mean Score Decision

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	160	4	Agree
Agree	142	3	Agree
Disagree	60	2	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	24	1	Disagree
Total	386	3.13	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Consensus on the fact that diplomacy has provided opportunities for change can be observed from the fact that there is a strong degree of agreement as well as an agree score from most of the respondents. This is further substantiated by the fact that the average score is 3.13 which shows that diplomacy is a requirement for making windows for institutional changes; these points show the preventive value of diplomacy in encouraging non-coercive methods of improvement of governance.

Table 12: Respondents’ Response to “The Government Institutionalizing Diplomatic Dialogue for Reform”

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	153	4	Agree
Agree	152	3	Agree
Disagree	67	2	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	14	1	Disagree
Total	386	3.15	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

This is shown by the mean score of 3.15 in terms of the scale of agreement, which is an indication that the respondents agree with this, since this reveals that there is enough support from the public regarding the need for the creation of diplomatic dialogue through which gradual but continuous engagement can take place between the citizens and the government.

Table 13: Respondents’ View of “Diplomatic Efforts Often Prevent Escalation of Violence in Nigeria”

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	153	4	Agree
Agree	158	3	Agree

Disagree	52	2	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	23	1	Disagree
Total	386	3.14	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Assuming that clear majority of respondents think that diplomacy is central to containing violence, the mean score of 3.14 implies that a huge number of respondents willing to side with downtime-style prevention through talks in volatile political situations boils down to and strengthens arguments for peace diplomacy with(a) traditional leaders, (b) international envoys or (C) conflict mediators. Timely interventions are expected to halt the bloodshed, encourage the disbandment of violent groups, restore civil order, and create conditions for sustainable peace.

The questionnaire responses were analyzed, as shown in Tables 14, 15, 16 and 17 to achieve the second aim of this study: identifying the key barriers to diplomatic engagement in Nigeria's peaceful transfer from anti-government protests to reforms.

Table 14: Respondents' Responses to "Issues Raised in Protests are Adequately Addressed Diplomatically"

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	35	4	Agree
Agree	41	3	Agree
Disagree	150	2	Disagree

Strongly Disagree	160	1	Disagree
Total	386	1.87	Disagree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Most respondents strongly rejected the claim that diplomatic mechanisms adequately address allegations raised by protest. A mean score of 1.87 indicates the lack of confidence in finding a solution to the root cause problems behind the protests (governance issues and high youth unemployment) through diplomatic channels.

A negative rating underscores the importance of diplomatic dialogue in bridging the gap between civil unrest and systemic responses and in fostering trust in peaceful grievance resolution. However, such measures have yet to be taken by the relevant authorities and the Nigerian government.

Table 15: Respondents’ Responses to “Diplomatic Engagement Reflect Citizens’ Demands for Justice and Equity”

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	147	4	Agree
Agree	161	3	Agree
Disagree	61	2	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	17	1	Disagree
Total	386	3.13	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The response pattern reveals strong public perception that diplomacy incorporates the people's quest for justice and equity, with a mean score of 3.13 and majority of respondents agreeing, diplomatic engagement is considered a legitimate avenue for channeling popular demands, supports ongoing use of inclusive diplomacy involving marginalized groups, youth, and civil society in peace and reform negotiations, ensuring that outcomes are grounded in public interest.

Table 16: Respondents' Responses to "Diplomacy Include Grassroots and Marginalized Voices in the Reform Process"

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	157	4	Agree
Agree	158	3	Agree
Disagree	50	2	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	21	1	Disagree
Total	386	3.16	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, it appears that there is a certain level of agreement among the respondents regarding the inclusion of marginalized perspectives in diplomatic procedures. The presence of high mean score (3.16) suggests that there is a great level of consensus among the respondents and very likely the factor will become increasingly popular in practice of inclusive diplomacy. On the other hand, the presence of the high median value (3.16) indicates that there

might be a great level of consensus among the general population on the nature of inclusive diplomacy, which explains the high potential applicability of the concept.

Such a finding underscores the importance of co-producing reforms with communities, particularly those that have been historically excluded from structures of governance. As such, the findings further solidify the power of participatory dialogue in achieving sustainable resolutions to systemic injustice and legitimizing state acts.

Table 17: Respondents' Views on “Role of Diplomacy in Promoting Civic Trust in Nigerian Government Operations”

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	159	4	Agree
Agree	149	3	Agree
Disagree	50	2	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	28	1	Disagree
Total	386	3.14	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The researcher observed a dominant agreement from the mean score of 3.14 that diplomacy has a positive impact on civic trust in relation to the activities of the Nigerian government. As far as citizens are concerned, diplomatic approaches whether they be discussions or non-violent engagements indicate openness and responsibility. Consequently, this observation corroborates the

notion that civic participation, which is fostered through diplomatic channels, strengthens the social contract between the government and its populace.

Furthermore, the researcher analyzed the respondents' responses to the questionnaires in Tables 18, 19, 20, and 21, of the third objective of the study, which is to explore Nigerians' and international major stakeholders' views on the place of diplomacy towards the promotion of positive reforms.

Table 18: Respondents' Responses to “International Stakeholders’ Help Facilitate Peaceful Diplomatic Engagements in Nigeria”

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	152	4	Agree
Agree	164	3	Agree
Disagree	57	2	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	13	1	Disagree
Total	386	3.18	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Majority of respondents agreed (mean = 3.18) that international stakeholders play an essential role in diplomacy related to peaceful transitions in Nigeria, therefore highlighting the perceived legitimacy of external actors such as the UN, UNICEF, ECOWAS, and foreign embassies in moderating tensions and proposing non-violent solutions, suggests that Nigerians welcome international partnerships as credible contributors to reform dialogues as synergy

between local demands and global diplomacy may be a viable strategy for conflict transformation and institutional change.

Table 19: Respondents' Views on “How Diplomatic Pressure from Global Entities Affects Local Reforms in Nigeria”

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	165	4	Agree
Agree	137	3	Agree
Disagree	66	2	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	18	1	Disagree
Total	386	3.16	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The mean score of 3.16, proves that the external pressure exerted by foreign players on a country is what causes internal reforms. Most participants have agreed that there is influence by sanctions, advice, and lobbying by international organizations. The data prove that international diplomacy plays an important role in ensuring democratic behavior. This is done through increased influence without being seen as interference, but rather as a way of increasing internal calls for reform.

Table 20: Respondents' Responses to “Foreign Diplomatic Missions Contribute to Reform Policy Advocacy in Nigeria”

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	160	4	Agree
Agree	155	3	Agree
Disagree	55	2	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	16	1	Disagree
Total	386	3.19	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The majority of respondents strongly believed (mean=3.19) that foreign diplomatic posts like the embassies play an active role in advocating for reforms in Nigeria, indicating the perception of such foreign diplomatic missions as advocates for accountability, human rights, and good governance; this shows the increase in cooperation between the Nigerian civil society and the foreign diplomatic missions in advocating for reforms, thus confirming the claim of the power of external diplomacy in complementing internal movements.

Table 21: Respondents' Responses to “Diplomacy Promotes Peaceful Coexistence During Post-Protest Reforms in Nigeria”

Response	Frequency	Mean Score	Decision
Strongly Agree	154	4	Agree

Agree	160	3	Agree
Disagree	54	2	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	18	1	Disagree
Total	386	3.17	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Results from this table demonstrate that diplomacy acts as a core element of peace in times of reform after protests, with a mean of 3.17 implying the strength of belief in using diplomacy as a means to maintain social cohesiveness. The survey participants agree that diplomacy, negotiations, and mediation form the way out of conflict into making policies. This highlights the importance of having a well-developed mechanism for discussion in order to avoid future conflicts.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's findings related to its research objectives, which directly follow from the data analysis conducted in Chapter Four. This study employed qualitative and quantitative data to examine how these diplomatic activities have contributed to the peaceful transition from anti-government protests to reform in Nigeria. The issues that need to be addressed through diplomacy are detailed by the combination of statistical results derived from survey responses and insights from qualitative analysis. It also sheds light on the views of Nigerians and major international stakeholders regarding the role of diplomacy in advancing positive, sustainable reforms. In general, the analysis is discussed in relation to existing research on both diplomacy and social movements so as to ensure that there are strong linkages between the analytical framework, data analysis and result interpretation.

5.2 To Analyze the Role of Diplomatic Activities in facilitating a Peaceful Transition from Anti-Government Protests to Reforms in Nigeria

The findings of this study indicate that diplomatic activities play a significant role in facilitating the peaceful transition from anti-government protests to political and institutional reforms in Nigeria. The results obtained from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses indicate that diplomacy is an instrumental process that helps to enhance dialogue and engagement between the government and its people. The interviewees pointed out that diplomats, irrespective of the domestic or international nature of their operations, have an important role to play in ;facilitating communication and building consensus amongst stakeholders. This implies that the

process of diplomatic engagement is an integral component in ensuring that protests do not escalate into violence.

The quantitative findings confirm this assertion. The average score of 3.14 confirms that most respondents agreed that diplomacy is an important means through which peace is achieved as the transition from anti-government protests into reform takes place in Nigeria. Specifically, the average score of 3.18 confirms the high degree of agreement among the respondents that diplomatic endeavors such as negotiations, dialogues, and neutral mediations have helped achieve peace. This finding confirms that the respondents view diplomacy as more than just a foreign policy tool but as an important domestic tool for crisis management.

The qualitative evidence also corroborates the above findings. During the interviews, the significance of negotiations, stakeholder involvement, and mediation in coping with the antiregime protests was emphasized, especially with regard to the "EndSARS2020" campaign. It was noted that the negotiations involving government representatives, NGOs, community leaders, and other stakeholders led to the de-escalation of tensions and offered some room for peaceful negotiations although most of the proposed changes remained unimplemented. Nevertheless, it was also stated that the use of diplomacy in Nigeria was largely reactive and not preventive, taking place only after the outbreak of the protests had reached the level of major political crisis.

These findings corroborate the findings from previous studies. According to Itodo and O'Regan (2018), many anti-government demonstrations in Nigeria have resulted from ongoing corruption, poor governance, and the demand by the citizens for political accountability and socio-economic reforms. Likewise, Birch et al. (2020) indicated that diplomacy carried out by civil society organizations and other stakeholders was significant in shaping public discourse and

minimizing the chances of large-scale conflicts during the “EndSARS2020” protest. Moreover, Camilla (2018) highlighted the increasing significance of diplomatic initiatives through digital means in fostering peaceful advocacy and policy dialogue. Overall, these studies reinforce the current findings about the role that diplomacy can play in peaceful conflict resolution through dialogue and engagement.

The results also corroborate the preconditions in Social Movement Theory, which suggests that protests succeed not just through grievances but also through organizing and mobilizing resources, taking advantage of political opportunities, and engaging strategically. For instance, the "EndSARS2020" protests show that although public grievances formed the background for the movement, it was civic engagement, strategic communication, and negotiations with both local and foreign actors that determined its direction and success. In turn, Framing Theory can be used to explain how the frame "Soro Soke" (Speak Up) helped build common identity, mobilize public support, and put pressure on the government to engage in dialogue. Finally, the findings also align with Political Process Theory, which claims that windows of opportunity for reforms are created when political institutions become responsive to negotiation and public pressure. According to the interviews, however, such windows of opportunity have been fleeting as diplomatic interventions in Nigeria are still reactive rather than institutionalized.

In general, these findings clearly show that diplomacy can be an effective tool in ensuring the peaceful transition from anti-government protests to reform in Nigeria. However, its effectiveness will largely depend on the availability of well-institutionalized channels of dialogue, mediation, participation of the relevant stakeholders, and political will to implement such reforms. Thus, the research concludes that the reinforcement of diplomatic institutions in Nigeria and

setting up conflict-sensitive channels of dialogue in the country will help to improve the ability of the country to convert public discontent into political and institutional reforms.

5.3 To Identify the Major Issues for Diplomatic Engagement in the Peaceful Transition from Anti-Government Protests to Reforms in Nigeria.

The key findings of the study have indicated a number of important factors that have restricted the effectiveness of diplomatic interventions in managing the process of a peaceful transition from protests to reforms in Nigeria. It was found out that political intervention, the poor level of commitment on the part of institutions, the lack of trust in the state-run negotiation process, ineffective implementation of reforms, and the lack of participation mechanisms are the main barriers that restrict the effectiveness of diplomacy.

The statistical data presented above further proves the thesis. Mean scores higher than 3.10 obtained from the survey prove that participants agreed that diplomatic initiatives at the earlier stages were important to prevent escalation of protests into violent conflicts. At the same time, it was noted that the efficiency of the aforementioned initiatives was often hindered by inconsistent actions of the government, lack of fulfilled commitments to reforms and failure to take further actions after negotiations. Thus, although diplomacy is recognized as an important tool of conflict management, it is contingent on the government's compliance with agreements.

Moreover, the findings from the qualitative study support the above results. Firstly, the interviewees mentioned ineffective reform policies, inefficient bureaucracy, and failure to follow through on agreements reached as some of the factors that make diplomatic negotiations challenging. It was noted that people's trust in the diplomatic process has diminished due to the failure of the government to take action based on its promises made during the periods of political

crises. This makes the people view the diplomacy as being more of a symbol of transformation rather than the real thing, hence making dialogue less credible as a tool for political conflict resolution. The participants also indicated that diplomats are faced with difficult political climates.

This observation corroborates Ali's theory (2015) in the sense that he suggests that diplomacy in the Nigerian public service should help to establish an enabling environment for policy formulation, public participation, and sustainable governance. However, the current findings reveal that this goal has become difficult because of institutional weaknesses, lack of political will, and poor means of monitoring the implementation of negotiated reforms. Therefore, diplomacy has not always led to any positive political and institutional changes based on the public complaints.

The current findings also confirm the assumptions of Resource Mobilization Theory in the sense that collective action is possible only if there are sufficient organizational resources and capabilities, leaders and coordination among actors. This study shows that diplomacy becomes difficult when the government fails to offer institutional resources and political will for implementing the agreed reforms. Under these conditions, diplomatic actions do not lead to any tangible results regardless of the level of dialogue and mediation.

Likewise, the results support Political Process Theory, whereby the success of any movement is contingent upon how open the political institutions are to the demands of the citizens. The study shows that negotiations in Nigeria take place under political systems that are closed and where government responds to any protest only after there is much domestic and international pressure. Even though there was an increase in international and domestic attention due to the use of technology in “EndSARS2020” protest, failure to conduct any institutional negotiation and

follow up led to public dissatisfaction and made people perceive the government as non-responsive (Akkuş et al., 2020).

The study finds that the key obstacles to successful diplomatic engagements in Nigeria are less due to the lack of dialogue than to poor institutional capacity, politicization of diplomatic endeavors, lack of public involvement, and continuous non-implementation of negotiated reforms. Thus, the research concludes that the development of institutions that are capable of performing their functions in an accountable manner, the creation of platforms for dialogue that would include all the interested parties, and the implementation of the negotiated reforms are important prerequisites to the success of diplomacy in transforming protest against the government into actual political and institutional reforms.

5.4 To Explore Nigerians' and International Major Stakeholders' Views on the Role of Diplomacy Towards the Promotion of Positive Reforms

The findings from the research conducted were meant to establish the perception held by Nigerians and other major international actors regarding the use of diplomacy in bringing about necessary reforms after anti-government demonstrations in Nigeria. From the findings, it is clear that the people are aware of the importance of using diplomacy as a way through which peace and reforms could be realized in the process of transition from one regime to another. It is however apparent that they have a lot of doubts about the effectiveness of their diplomatic institutions. In their view, the diplomats and envoys sent to mediate between the government and citizens during times of political crises are not independent enough.

The results from the quantitative study provide evidence for this finding. While the respondents were largely in agreement on the positive impact that diplomacy can have on political

and institutional reform, they had more faith in the involvement of the international diplomatic community than the local diplomatic structures. The international actors, including the United Nations, Economic Community of West African States, and foreign diplomatic representatives, had higher scores, averaging at 3.18, which implies that the respondents believe that the international community plays a more active role in encouraging negotiations, advocating human rights, and resolving conflicts peacefully.

Qualitative findings further support the above results. The interviewees in the study were repeatedly unsatisfied with the existing diplomatic approach in Nigeria as they claimed that the domestic diplomats did not take an active part in creating dialogue, establishing accountability and encouraging implementation of the reforms after protests. According to the interviewees, domestic diplomatic institutions had been under political influence to some extent, which made it impossible for diplomats to act as neutral intermediaries in the relations between the state and protesters. Hence, people's trust in domestic diplomacy was deteriorated.

This is in agreement with Iwuoha and Ernest (2021), who hold that there must be structural changes in post-protest diplomacy that will enhance accountability and avoid cases of unnecessary use of force by security operatives in civil protests. In addition, Alli (2013) posited that international diplomatic players have the ability to engage in advocacy and discourse on issues of reform by way of strategic communication, especially through the use of digital media channels to generate public discourse and responsiveness from the government. This research finding confirms this assertion because the respondents believe that the international actors play a major role in generating reform demands.

These results also resonate with those found by Anyaechie and Areji (2015) who argued that the success of diplomatic practices is predicated on the presence of credible and independent domestic institutions. The study indicates that in the absence of independent institutions and public trust, diplomacy may fail to deliver sustainable reforms irrespective of how much backing the practices have from the international community. Hence, the importance was placed on making sure that Nigeria has effective domestic diplomatic institutions through increased professionalism, transparency and independence.

Theoretical analysis shows that these results correspond to the ideas developed by Framing Theory, which states that the use of strategic communication helps international actors strengthen the narrative of protests and thus makes civic demands more visible. The findings also match Social Movement Theory that identifies international organizations and allies outside of the country as vital assets for sustaining protest movements and pressuring them towards institutional reforms. In addition, these results correspond to the ideas advanced by Resource Mobilization Theory that says the efficiency of collective action depends on organizational resources, institutional capacity, and outside assistance. In the case of Nigeria, the findings show that the low credibility and institutional capacity of the domestic diplomatic institutions hinder them from making reforms despite the availability of international assistance.

On the whole, the results prove that diplomacy is still an important tool for bringing about a smooth political transition towards democracy in Nigeria. Nevertheless, this can be achieved through the development of professionalism, independence, and credibility of domestic diplomatic structures and through continuous cooperation with foreign counterparts. This study shows that diplomacy needs not only foreign help but also the existence of solid domestic structures which

would promote dialogue, human rights protection, accountability, and citizens' demands to translate them into political changes.

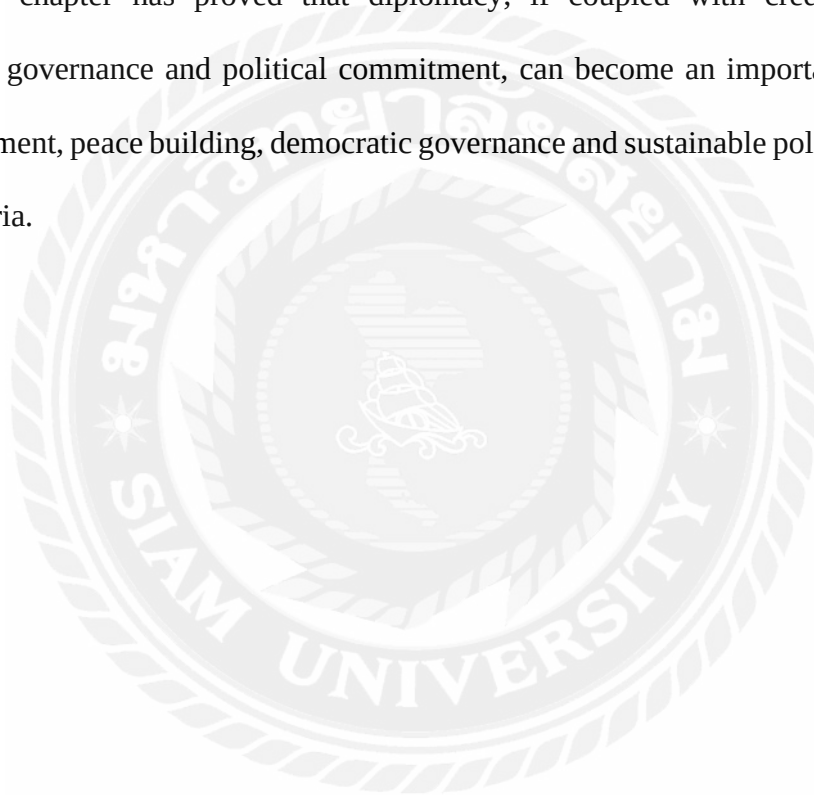
5.5 Summary of Chapter 5

In this chapter, the research findings about the role of diplomacy in the process of peacefully transitioning from protest to reforms in Nigeria have been discussed. The results derived from the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data showed that diplomacy plays a significant role in ensuring dialogue and negotiation between conflicting parties, reducing tensions and helping achieve peaceful conflict resolution. At the same time, the analysis conducted within this study revealed the problems associated with the inefficiency of diplomatic interventions in Nigeria. It is evident that diplomacy in Nigeria is viewed as being symbolic, reactionary and inadequate; thus, it does not ensure the successful transition of public grievances to institutional changes. Even though the respondents were aware of the presence of diplomatic actors during the major protest movements, especially “EndSARS2020,” they did not believe that there was enough coordination, consistency, accountability and implementation in diplomatic actions.

The survey additionally uncovered the drop in trust in dialogue led by the government because of the failure to deliver on the promises made for reform, continuous abuse of basic human rights, and lack of accountability for abuses that were carried out in the course of peaceful demonstrations. This led to a large number of participants having increased faith in international diplomacy entities, including the United Nations and others, who were seen as more neutral, consistent, and dedicated to human rights and reforms.

Also, the results showed the importance of institutionalizing diplomacy through the creation of sustainable and inclusive channels for dialogue and negotiation. According to the

participants of the study, the platforms for dialogue should include not only government officials and diplomats, but also non-state actors like civil society groups, traditional leaders, young people, women and other marginalized groups. This way, greater involvement of these groups in the process of governance and reforms will be assured. The findings reflect the assumptions of Social Movement Theory, which states that the effectiveness of protest movements is dependent on organizational capacity, communication strategies, political opportunity structure and external assistance. This chapter has proved that diplomacy, if coupled with credible institutions, inclusiveness in governance and political commitment, can become an important instrument of conflict management, peace building, democratic governance and sustainable political institutional reforms in Nigeria.



CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

This study contribute greatly in the provision of reliable data on the dynamics of diplomacy, protest movements against government, and reform in Nigeria. It must be noted, however, that while protests are becoming a true expression of civil dissatisfaction with the regime, there have been no institutions or structures through which these voices could translate into action and reforms. The consistent refusal to engage constructively with the protestors has led to mistrust from the part of the people of Nigeria who see themselves as ignored, oppressed, or betrayed by the government.

The research presents the idea of diplomacy as a vital instrument of domestic policy, which can assist in the resolution of conflicts and facilitation of reform peacefully despite the domination of international relations discourse in general. In Nigeria, diplomatic practices are either politicized or ceremonial and have little impact due to their limited scope. The problem of homegrown diplomacy in transition periods after protests is complicated by the absence of clear mandate, political will, and appropriate platforms for diplomacy. Diplomacy conducted in a positive and respectful manner by international actors may help add credibility and power to local demands, making the government more responsive. It takes time for a real change to occur and this change should come from within the country. In other words, there is an urgent need for institutionalizing homegrown diplomatic mechanisms, which employ an inclusive and just approach to diplomacy.

Managing the move from the protests to the reforms without violence involves cooperation among the citizens, government actors, and international partners. This research moves into the

emerging discourse of participatory governance and it maps out strategies to change the protest culture of Nigeria into one that can help achieve reforms and heal the nation, making it possible to create an environment where citizens can be engaged.

6.2 Recommendations

The recommendation coming out of this research provide a basis for designing reasonable systems for constructive dialogue between the people of Nigeria and government bodies. The governments will be able to establish diplomatic councils made up of community members including civil society members, youth, and traditional and local government leaders who will act as non-political forums to discuss policy issues. This will particularly happen during and right after protest movements.

Additionally, training of diplomatic missions on de-escalation skills and human rights can prove to be highly beneficial for security departments and governmental structures. This would help to decrease violence against demonstrators and establish trust between the authoritarian regime and its citizens. Diplomatic missions operating in Nigeria can also make use of this study for the creation of diplomatic response kits for regions, such as the South East, taking into account regional specificities and cultural peculiarities of their activities. Furthermore, civil society groups can take advantage of this study in order to lobby for laws that would protect the right of citizens to demonstrate peacefully. Again, this study empowers stakeholders with tools to turn protests from reactionary affairs into vehicles for inclusivity and sustainability in Nigeria.

It highlights an urgent need for more proactive engagement on behalf of diplomats and government authorities to diffuse the risk of the public taking to the streets, especially when demands are unclear or not sufficiently articulated. However, management of protest activities

such as the transition from nonviolent demonstration to multilateral violence and loss of life or destruction of property should not be over-micromanaged because security arm agencies should bear in mind that their primary objective is maintaining law and order and protecting lives. As representatives and mediators, diplomats should ensure that the terms agreed to by all parties are sensible and mutually acceptable while still advocating for sustainable reform and policy actions by the government, so citizens' grievances are addressed significantly rather than vaporized. Of course, there is still a glaring need for scholarly intervention into Nigerian protest movements to continue well beyond the eventual demise of this current movement, including specifics on the degree to which diplomatic engagement has been entertained and what positive reforms have come about thus far. Future studies in this area should enable these types of analyses, specifically with mixed-methods research approaches, to include a wider, more representative portion of the population to substantiate findings relevant to the primary aims of the study.

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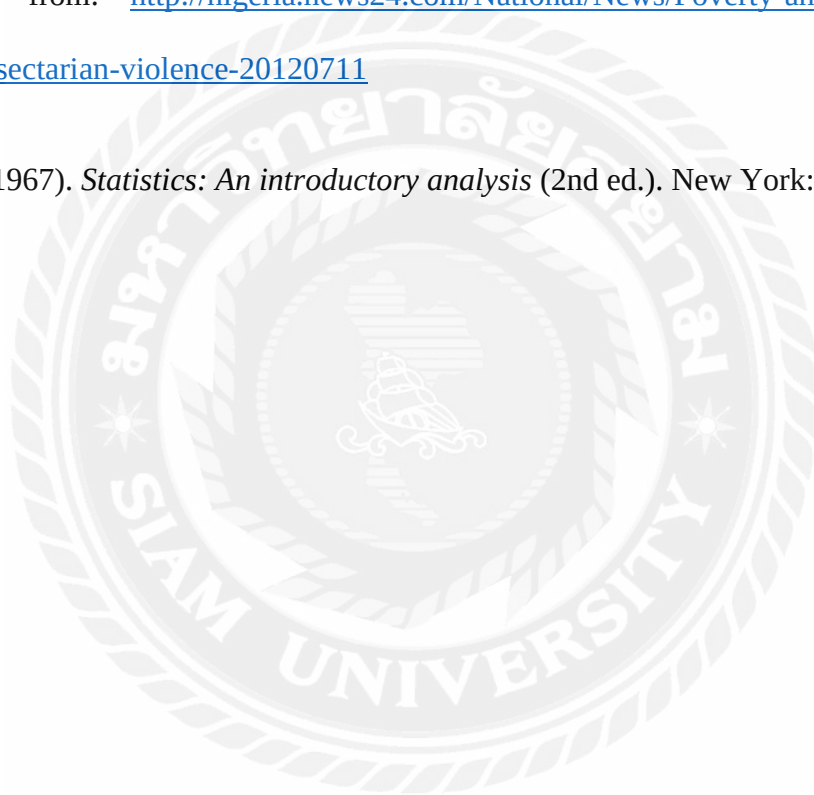
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Appendix I

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Participants must be of the legal age of 18 years or older to participate in the study.
2. Participants must be Nigerian citizens or have lived in Nigeria for several years.
3. Participants must be fluent in English, as the interviews were conducted in English.
4. Participants must have expertise in diplomacy, international relations, or a related field.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Participants who are under the age of 18 were excluded from the study.
2. Participants who are not Nigerian citizens and have not lived in Nigeria for at least several years
3. Participants who lacked fluency in English were excluded from the study.
4. Participants who do not have expertise in diplomacy, international relations, or a related field will be excluded from the study.

Appendix II

SECTION A: BIODATA (Demographic Information of Respondents)

1. Gender

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say

2. Age

☐ 18–25 ☐ 26–35 ☐ 36–45 ☐ 46–55 ☐ 56 and above

3. Marital Status

☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed

4. Educational Qualification

☐ No Formal Education ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Tertiary ☐ Postgraduate

5. Occupation

☐ Student ☐ Civil Servant ☐ Business Owner ☐ Artisan ☐ Unemployed ☐ Other

6. State of Residence

☐ Abia ☐ Anambra ☐ Ebonyi ☐ Enugu ☐ Imo

SECTION B: DIPLOMACY AND PEACEFUL TRANSITION

Instruction

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement below.

SA = Strongly Agree | A = Agree | D = Disagree | SD = Strongly Disagree

7. Diplomacy has played a major role in de-escalating protests in Nigeria.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

8. The Recent opening of diplomatic channels has led to policy reform in Nigeria.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

9. The government should institutionalize diplomatic dialogue for reform.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

10. Diplomatic efforts often prevent the escalation of violence in Nigeria.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

11. The issues raised in protests are adequately addressed diplomatically.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

12. Diplomatic engagement reflects citizens' demands for justice and equity.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

13. Diplomacy includes grassroots and marginalized voices in the reform process.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

14. Diplomacy play a role in promoting civic trust in Nigerian government operations.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

15. International stakeholders help facilitate peaceful diplomatic engagements in Nigeria.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

16. Diplomatic pressure from global entities affects local reforms in Nigeria.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

17. Foreign diplomatic missions contribute to reform policy advocacy in Nigeria.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

18. Diplomacy promotes peaceful coexistence during post-protest reforms in Nigeria.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ D ☐ SD

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