



The role of digital platforms in shaping political discourse and international relations: Evidence from Kazakhstan's X (Twitter)

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ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 15 December 2025

Revised: 13 March 2026

Accepted: 26 June 2026

Published: 24 July 2026

Keywords

Digital diplomacy

Digital platforms

International relations

Multilingual engagement

Political discourse

Soft power communication.

Digital platforms (DPs) have become central arenas for political communication and the construction of international narratives. This study examines how DPs shape political discourse and international relations in Kazakhstan, a multilingual and geopolitically strategic state situated between Eastern and Western power blocs. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach and combines quantitative analysis of 1,332 posts collected from X (formerly Twitter) with qualitative thematic analysis of 90 multilingual posts related to two major diplomatic events in 2023: Kazakhstan's mediation initiatives in Afghanistan-related peace talks and the Astana International Forum. Inferential statistical techniques, including chi-square and correlation analyses, are applied to examine relationships between language use, engagement levels, and online visibility, while thematic analysis is used to identify dominant frames and value orientations in digital discourse. The findings indicate a strong association between major offline diplomatic events and increased online activity, suggesting that DPs amplify diplomatic engagement. English-language posts, although fewer in number, generate significantly higher levels of interaction than Kazakh- and Russian-language content, highlighting their effectiveness in reaching international audiences. Qualitative results reveal recurring narratives portraying Kazakhstan as a neutral mediator, a geopolitically cautious actor, and an emerging soft-power broker. Linguistic differences further show that Kazakh- and Russian-language discourse emphasize sovereignty and security concerns, and English-language content focuses on international cooperation and diplomatic branding. The study demonstrates that DPs function not only as communication tools but also as arenas where foreign policy narratives are constructed and contested, offering practical insights for digital diplomacy in multilingual and semi-authoritarian contexts.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by explaining how digital platforms shape political discourse and diplomacy in Kazakhstan. This study uses an integrated mixed-method estimation approach combining inferential statistics and thematic analysis. The paper's primary contribution is finding that multilingual X discourse varies across language contexts in Kazakhstan settings.

1. INTRODUCTION

Innovation is viewed as an optimization device and the means of enhancing the efficiency of results. Due to the shifting world, innovation is introducing efficiency, service delivery, and social-economic outputs enhancement (Rodinova, Pylypchuk, Domashenko, Havrylyuk, & Androsovykh, 2024). It is now believed that the implementation of new technologies is the key to sustainable development and evolution, as well as the enhancement of governance systems (Liu, Jiang, Khurshid, Saleem, & Calin, 2026; Sieriebriak & Kozhushko, 2023). In respect of this, digital platforms (DPs) have transformed the production, circulation, and interpretation of political communication in a more effective way in the last twenty years (Awan, Saleem, & Khan, 2024; Li, Wang, Khurshid, & Saleem, 2025).

It is redefining public discourse and altering conventional political practices (Barman, 2024; Battista & Mangone, 2025). These DPs, including X (Formerly Twitter), Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram, sustain an information ecosystem marked by speed, algorithmic reordering, and selective filtering (Krause, Freiling, & Scheufele, 2025; Vainola, 2024). Much of the descriptive work is done on digital political behavior, but very few studies combine statistical testing with the interpretation of the meaning systematically. The present study is supposed to eliminate this weakness through the use of both inferential quantitative testing and qualitative thematic interpretation. The point of doing so is to grasp the structural and symbolic forces of discourse in digital media in Kazakhstan. These DPs have become central arenas in which political discourses are created, ideological disputes are pursued, and diplomacy is made (Tufekci, 2017). All over the world, DPs are significantly exploited to serve the political and diplomatic goals.

The transformation between these current changes and the previous changes in the political communicative is the loss of hierarchical authority and the decreasing roles that formerly belonged to the state actors and traditional media. Having a smartphone, one can create or increase the message and can reach the entire globe within minutes. This interaction brings into play a different form of politics, international interaction, and digitally mediated negotiation between stakeholders (Shaul-Cohen & Lev-On, 2020). Thus, the officials and the common people communicate more and more in a common online public space where they are often placed rhetorically on the same level, although the real power relations are unequal (Habermas, 2022). Thus, actors such as influencers, activists, and foreign actors have become a threat to states in the form of competition to shape domestic arguments and international views (Hedling & Bremberg, 2021).

These dynamics are also formed by the architecture of platforms themselves. The posts on X, forwarding on Telegram, and visual storytelling on Instagram are controlled by hashtags, which govern the speed of messages, their salience, and their framing. The channel feature of Telegram, such as, helps to promote the massive spread of politically sensitive information under the banner of privacy and encryption, which in most cases can go unnoticed by the state (Barlow, Akbarzadeh, & Nasirpour, 2024). Similarly, the trending features and retweet functions of X have the capacity to bring localized events into the international spotlight in hours, frame the development, provide credibility, and shape international understandings of disputes (Freelon & Wells, 2020; Mazumdar, 2024). Moreover, ministries of foreign affairs, diplomatic missions, and political leaders are becoming more common in these spaces. Simultaneously, antagonistic agents use the same networks to carry out disinformation campaigns, external influence, and reputation attacks, which obliterates the line between information warfare and the projection of soft power (Bjola & Manor, 2022; Diaz, 2025).

Kazakhstan can be an interesting location to investigate these mechanisms. Being the largest landlocked state in the world with a population of over 19 million people and an estimated internet penetration rate of over 88% in 2023 (World Bank, 2023), it is a fast-digitizing society that stands at the border between Eastern and Western forces. Telegram has a rather powerful impact, offering an opportunity to comment on politics anonymously and disseminate news outside of usual censorship practices (Knox & Sharipova, 2024). The internet blockages and media restrictions in the country during the country-wide unrest of January 2022 caused the switch to encrypted platforms as the center of information circulation (Ternov, Nurtazina, & Serikzhanova, 2024). Similar dynamics are observed in the times of

elections when the ruling regimes, opposition movements, and foreign reactions are vying on the online platform, and therefore, the digital space in Kazakhstan is a competitive environment of strategic communication (Machavariani, 2025). The fact that it borders on Russia, China, and Central Asian states only adds to the importance of its digital sphere in the politics of the region and the world at large.

In keeping with its multi-vector approach to foreign policies, the digital media have evolved beyond the domestic political messages to an exclusive partnership with the EU, the US, Russia, China and the Muslim countries, and have become a part of the overall foreign policy, i.e. the strategy of the country to be diplomatically active in the region, to act as a mediator, and to counter-influence activities (Anceschi, 2020; Nyshanbayev, Bekov, Baizakova, & Amangeldy, 2025; Zhunissoy, Uderbaeva, Kurmangali, Darkenbayev, & Tazhikov, 2025). Digital activism, cyber diplomacy, and authoritarian media control have been thoroughly examined, but hybrid systems, i.e., the electoral pluralism of Kazakhstan that exists alongside centralized governance, have not been studied much (Serikzhanova, Nurtazina, Serikzhanova, Bukharbay, & Taitorina, 2024).

The current literature largely focuses on Western democracies or fully authoritarian contexts, including Russia and China (Chevé, 2025) leaving a gap regarding how DPs operate in multilingual, semi-authoritarian, post-Soviet environments where civic engagement, identity politics, and press freedom are contested. Few studies examine multilingual digital diplomacy in hybrid regimes like Kazakhstan, where centralized control coexists with selective pluralism, and domestic and international communication are often treated separately. This study addresses this gap by integrating inferential statistics with thematic analysis to explore how multilingual digital content shapes political discourse and foreign policy narratives in Kazakhstan, providing a distinctive empirical example of how DPs influence both domestic legitimacy and international reputation.

To answer the above concerns, this paper explores how the DPs have contributed to the development of political discourses and foreign policy discourses in Kazakhstan. The research design utilizes a mixed-methods approach: the quantitative part relies on massive data from X, Telegram, and Instagram, reflecting patterns of posting frequency, intensity, and sentiment polarity of engagement; the qualitative approach is based on the discourse and thematic analysis of politically relevant events, showing how users use platform-specific characteristics to target their goals.

Accordingly, the study formulates the following research questions.

- How do political players employ DPs to build, reinforce, or resist political descriptions in Kazakhstan?
- In what ways do citizens engage with and react to political messaging on DPs during high-stakes events?
- How do linguistic and cultural factors shape the reception and interpretation of political communication?
- What are the consequences of digital interactions for Kazakhstan's digital diplomacy and its political positioning?

The existing practice is conceptual and practical. Theoretically, the proposed study further develops the existing discussion of DPs by demonstrating how they exist as political communication and international negotiation spaces in a semi-authoritarian, multilingual, and strategically complex environment. Practically, the conclusions will be applicable to policymakers, media workers, foreign office workers, and citizens who desire to circumnavigate the bewilderment of digital politics communication in such environments. With Kazakhstan striving to build its presence on the regional and global levels, the capacity to influence and maneuver its online presence is becoming more essential. Understanding how political discourses are circulated and developed within the country's digital realm will be useful in influencing communication practices that can increase inclusivity, flexibility, and strategic effectiveness within internal politics and the system of international relations.

After this introduction, Section 2 will consider literature relevant to the study, Section 3 will outline the methodology and data details, etc. Section 4 will present the results, Section 5 will discuss the results and implications, and finally, Section 6 will conclude the study with future directions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Digital Platforms Relationship with Political Discourses*

There is an increasing scientific corpus that acknowledges that digital DPs have transformed the way in which political stories are created, distributed, and decoded. According to many researchers, DPs open new areas of political interaction because it enables leaders to interact directly with citizens and stakeholders (Alonso-Muñoz, Tirado-García, & Casero-Ripollés, 2022; Karakikes, Alexiadis, & Kotis, 2024). Also, it is empirically demonstrated that the X platform is an evolving arena of framing of new events and counter-narrative formation during elections and times of political instability (Peng, Wu, & Sun, 2026). The encrypted channels of Telegram have been discussed in terms of their twofold ability to provide credible information and distribute politically sensitive or destabilizing information anonymously as well (Díaz & Ricaurte, 2024; Wijermars & Lokot, 2022). This all describes how DPs are transformational with regard to political communication. And demonstrating the way they attract new forms of engagement, de-institutionalize old media, and support institutional and grassroots forms of creating narratives. The X is more concentrated on the aspect of immediacy in terms of the agenda and mobilization, and Telegram is a set of safe communication affordances and the possibility to spread controversial content.

The recent research has transcended the earlier positive perception of digital media with its dualistic and paradoxical implications (Tazhibekova, Shametova, Maharramov, & Makar, 2023). The technologies amplify the voice of the subjugated and promote civic mobilization (Ortiz et al., 2019). They are also equally powerful tools of surveillance and manipulation, and conducting disinformation campaigns (Kalathil, 2020). Some of these terms include networked authoritarianism, which is the tendency of governments to use digital tools strategically to create the image of openness and responsiveness, but at the same time select and control what is posted (Karatzogianni, Miazhevich, & Denisova, 2017). Similarly, the research on computational propaganda presents the application of bots, trolls, and algorithmic targeting to shape opinion and influence the storyline in massively large scale (Bösch & Divon, 2024; Khan, Perren, & Quintanilla, 2024; Urman & Makhortykh, 2025). This underscores the importance of placing digital politics and the application of DPs in broader formations of power and warns against the tendency of seeing online interaction as either democratic or emancipatory in nature.

It is also important to understand that the political influence of DPs is not just based on their technological design but also on the cultural and institutional environments in which they operate. Comparative analyses across Southeast Asia and East demonstrate that local languages, idioms, and symbolic repertoires intersect with state capacity and media ecosystems to influence communicative practices (Recuero, 2024; Sun, Zhong, Zhang, Wang, & Zhu, 2024). The current literature generates the idea of specific attention to localized traditions of digital expression, such as local forms of expression and symbolism embedded within cultures and therefore hidden or appearing in the process of political meaning-making, diffusion, and dispute in the online variety (Adebayo et al., 2025).

2.2. *Relationship of International Relations with Digital Diplomacy*

Moreover, the field of digital politics has experienced an increased academic interest in the way countries utilize DPs to enhance planned communication, carry out public diplomacy, and crisis management. Presently, DPs have become a component of foreign affairs. They can influence the world opinion at ministries, embassies, and international institutions, safeguard the national reputations, and react quickly to the changing geopolitical trends (Barman, 2024; Mazumdar, 2024; Parthenay, 2024). This phenomenon highlights the fact that diplomacy is becoming more important in the digital realm, as opposed to the traditional diplomatic arenas. It is also highlighting the fact that there is a necessity for theoretical models that include the use of communication technologies in the wider study of international relations. This is clearly depicted by the literature on conflict-related diplomacy. To illustrate, when the Russian forces invaded Ukraine, DPs became the priority zones of narrative contestation, advocacy campaigns, and state image projection (Henriksen, 2024; Hu, 2025). More importantly, these dynamics are not confined to the leading actors; even minor countries have engaged in digital politics in order to improve their image and resist the

pressures made on them by bigger players in the region (Maksymova, Sheludiakova, Vyshnevskaya, & Kulishov, 2025). However, regardless of this growing literature, studies have largely concentrated on Western and conflict-prone environments, with relatively little attention paid to mid-sized, semi-authoritarian states, including Kazakhstan, that practice multi-vector diplomacy.

2.3. Digital Public Sphere of Central Asia

The issue of digital transformation of Central Asian societies has become subject to growing academic attention, especially in the context of authoritarian sustainability, media control, and online activism. Researchers also note the increasing importance of Telegram civic groups, trends of political discussion on X, and the impact of Instagram celebrities who are increasingly becoming informal participants in the political life of the Kazakhstan context (Ponczek, 2022; Sarmurzin, Baktybayev, Kenzhebayeva, Amanova, & Tulepbergenova, 2025). Social media has been playing a very significant role during crisis situations like the one that happened in 2022, as well as during elections and international summits. Nevertheless, the specificities of digital space development in Kazakhstan are determined by certain factors such as its bilingualism (Kazakh & Russian), inconsistent media liberalization processes, and the role of foreign media systems, especially Russian and Western ones (Khislavski, 2022; Mukherjee, 2025). These papers point to the increasing intersection of foreign policy strategies and digital technologies. They also propose that the practice of good diplomacy in the modern world needs as much skill in the online discourse as in the art of statecraft. Nevertheless, with this expanding literature, the nature of online discourse in Kazakhstan has not been studied in detail, especially the ways in which various actors use the sites to negotiate legitimacy, oppose authority, or construct alternative readings. Scarcely any consideration has been given to the ways in which the discourse of domestic online intersects with the international activity of Kazakhstan, including its mediation, soft-power diplomacy, or management of its image on the international level.

2.4. Research Gap and Contribution

Some gaps, however, exist even within the rich and growing field of digital politics and diplomacy, particularly concerning hybrid regimes such as Kazakhstan. A significant portion of existing literature divides into two groups: liberal democracies and authoritarian states, with little systematic focus on cases where centralized control coexists with selective pluralism. The specific contribution of digital platforms (DPs) to shaping narratives in such systems has not been adequately theorized. Additionally, Kazakhstan's multilingual digital space, characterized by the simultaneous presence of Russian and Kazakh languages, obscures the construction, dissemination, and perception of narratives, a topic rarely addressed in monolingual-focused scholarship. The existing literature tends to examine domestic and international communication separately, neglecting how states like Kazakhstan utilize common online platforms to bolster internal legitimacy and pursue external diplomatic advantages. This dual role underpins Kazakhstan's multidimensional approach to diplomacy, which remains insufficiently conceptualized in current research. This paper aims to fill these gaps through empirical research on the digital discourse of both the linguistic and political aspects of Kazakhstan. It adds to the associated literature as it dwells on a geopolitically significant country, which is also under-researched regarding its contribution to the sphere of politics. The cultural and linguistic richness of this research is another addition to the existing models of digital communication by incorporating bilingual sources. It also demonstrates how Kazakhstan uses DPs to create a sense of internal and external narratives because it connects both domestic and global views.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The paper takes a mixed-method approach that traces the impact of DPs on different political issues of Kazakhstan. The study design of this paper is a combination of a quantitative study of the online behavior and a

qualitative discourse analysis. It is based on the convergent parallel model of study that conceptualizes the two strands to be implemented separately and then fused. This methodology allows performing triangulation and achieving a more detailed picture of the results (Rizakhojayeve et al., 2017). This work deals with the descriptive and inferential analysis in the quantitative part. It consists of chi-square testing with the purpose of determining significant differences among languages and correlation tests to determine the relationship between engagement variables. Also, the qualitative section has a thematic aspect analysis mechanism at the end of interpreting the meanings and finding the value-based categories, and unraveling the latent patterns through multilingual posts. Unlike previous studies that primarily rely on either descriptive statistics or qualitative content analysis, this research adopts a convergent mixed-methods design to capture both numerical engagement patterns and the thematic content of multilingual posts. Data were collected during two key diplomatic events in 2023: the Astana International Forum (5–12 June) and the Kazakhstan-mediated dialogue on Afghanistan (1–30 October). Posts were selected based on their relevance to Kazakhstan's foreign policy, regional relations, or international image, and only those expressing clear stances, those that were supportive, critical, or neutral, were included. Limitations include reliance on publicly available posts on X, manual coding for Kazakh-language content due to software constraints, and focus on only two events, which may affect the generalizability of the findings.

3.2. Data Sources and Sampling

When it comes to any empirical study, the sampling process and data collection precautions are regarded as crucial. It will be determined by the validity of the results provided based on an accurate collection of the right data in the right manner. This study is based on qualitative and quantitative information of X, one of the most important platforms of political discussions, diplomatic interactions, and debates in Kazakhstan. Its organizational metadata allows systematic gathering and analysis, as well as giving a solid base to the study of how online interactions tie into overall political and diplomatic forces.

In addition, this work has embraced an event-based purposive selection strategy that is used to target the instances of increased political importance, including presidential elections, Astana Peace Process, international summits, street demonstrations, and times of increased national press attention to regional conflicts. The design has guaranteed that the dataset itself was contextual and time-based, as the objectives of the study required it to be.

The quantitative strand relies on data collected mainly with the help of the X API, as well as trusted public repositories and specialized search queries in case of access restrictions.

Posting times, hashtags, mentions, reposts, and engagement figures (likes and shares) are variables used to track visibility, audience responsiveness, and the adaptability of online debates to changes in domestic politics and Kazakhstan's international posture. After obtaining a descriptive picture, this work calculated chi-square results to determine whether significant differences existed in engagement patterns among different language groups and event types. Correlation analysis was also performed to assess the strength of the relationship between posting frequency and user interaction.

Besides, to be included in the qualitative strand, 50 to 100 posts, comments, and threads were chosen in Kazakh, Russian, and English. The inclusion criteria were content related to foreign policy, regional relations, or global image, and articulating clear standpoints such as supportive, critical, or ambivalent to the international practices of Kazakhstan. This specific collection allows for analyzing the narration framing, rhetoric at work, and tone of the conversation about the country's diplomacy in more detail.

The data collection was tapped using both automated and manual approaches with great ethical considerations. All the content was filtered according to topicality, anonymized, and kept in a place of safety, as per the institutional procedures and the legislative norms of digital communication, cybersecurity, and privacy in Kazakhstan.

3.3. Data Analysis

The strands of data analysis are two. The quantitative analysis is a mixture of the descriptive and inferential methods. Chi-square tests are used to identify significant differences between languages and event phases, as well as correlation tests used to quantify relationships between posting frequency, likes, and reposts, which are used to supplement frequency and cross-tabulation analyses. Among the techniques, there are the analysis of hashtag frequency, testing of the correlation between posting and engagement, and the time-based analysis of discourse peaks related to political events. Python libraries like Pandas and NumPy are used to organize the dataset, and the matplotlib and Seaborn libraries are used to produce a graphical representation of the results.

In the qualitative part, this study followed the thematic analysis mechanism of Braun and Clarke (2006). That mechanism has six phases. The coding was done to capture the recurring ideas that were grouped into three main themes. Those are national identity and pride, sovereignty and geopolitical balance, Kazakhstan as a neutral mediator, and citizen-state negotiation of legitimacy.

Thematic discursive analysis of qualitative analysis starts with the open coding of repetitive aspects, and then the axial coding goes into major concepts of nationalism, sovereignty, opposition to Western narratives, or the promotion of multilateral co-operation. The tone of the posts made by the candidates is also rated as aggressive, Satirical, or oppositional, and the rhetorical resources, such as metaphors and symbolic language. Comparative analysis of the materials written in Kazakh, Russian, and English shows that framing among the language communities varies. NVivo software is applied to aid in systematic coding and theme tracking, but in order to retain interpretive richness, manual coding is still applied, especially to multilingual texts, where automated tools can be inaccurate. The integration step combines the results of the two streams of data, building a comparative quantitative dynamic versus qualitative meanings.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Effective ethical protection is incorporated in the project. All the data are collected solely based on the contents that are publicly available, and no attempt has been made to follow or reveal personal information at an individual level. All identifiable information, including usernames, profile photos, or any other identifiable items, is anonymized or removed during coding and publication. The terms of service given by X are followed, and so are the requirements of any tool to be used in data extraction. The research is in line with the ethical standards of the institution. This is because political communication in Kazakhstan is sensitive due to the semi-authoritarian regime of the country, which further implements policies to protect the privacy and cybersecurity of the platform users.

Moreover, the study explicitly attributes infrastructural and political restrictions on internet usage in Kazakhstan, such as the lapses in the service or the choking of access or monitoring by the state. These limitations are accepted as part and parcel of the data collection process as well as of the interpretation of results.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Quantitative Outcomes

To analyze the way in which online resources facilitate and amplify political discourses in terms of the contribution of Kazakhstan in international relations, quantitative data were collected on X (formerly Twitter). The information was assembled through the sampling of two significant political institutions in Kazakhstan in 2023 (the Astana International Forum in June and the Kazakhstan-mediated dialogue on Afghanistan in October). The data were collected within two months throughout these events to have both anticipatory and retrospective discourse. In these two collection windows, 1332 posts were determined and analyzed properly using the indicators of engagement (likes and reposts), distribution by language, and topicality. This allowed evaluating the degree of digital activity as well as its structure. Table 1 gives a breakdown of the frequency of posts specifically mentioning Kazakhstan in the international relations contexts. As Table 1 presents, a significant share of the posts, over one-third of them, depicted

Kazakhstan as a neutral diplomatic mediator with special focus on the balancing act of the country between the spheres of Russian and Western interests. Besides, the rates of engagement (Measured in terms of likes and reposts) grew considerably on the days when the two diplomatic events were organized, which speaks to the degree to which the real-life course of political events has everything to do with the distribution of online focus.

In line with it, Figure 1 illustrates the number of posts that mention the foreign policy of Kazakhstan concerning X on the Astana International Forum in 2023 (5-12 June). The figure demonstrates a sharp increase in the activity of the core days of the summit, which indicates that the milestones of the work of diplomats can be viewed as a stimulus of further digital interaction and attention. This tendency emphasizes the high level of interdependence between offline diplomatic efforts and online promotion. It also indicates that the world of Kazakhstan is becoming more and more negotiated on real-time in the online world.

Table 1. Theme-Wise frequency of posts.

Theme	Posts	Percentage
Neutral mediation Role of Kazakhstan	453	34.0
Regional alliances participation	338	25.4
The foreign policy related to Russia & China	206	15.5
Criticism of the policy of Kazakhstan	161	12.0
Engagements and diplomatic summits	174	13.1
Total	1332	100

Source: Based on data retrieved from X during critical diplomatic events in 2023.

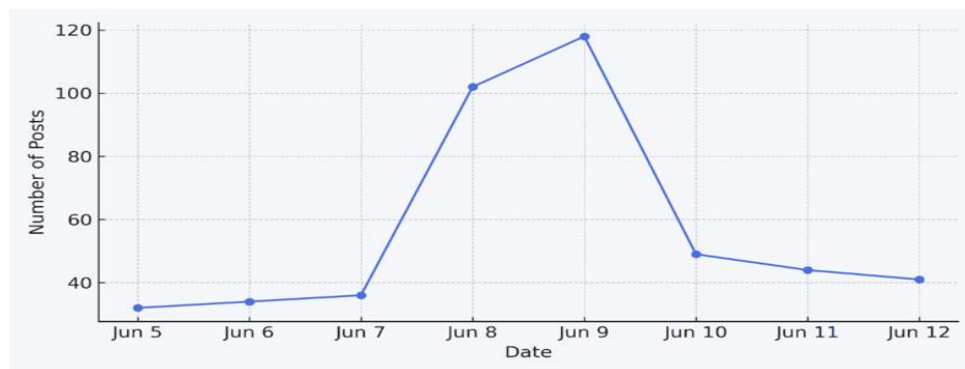


Figure 1. Daily posts during the Astana International Forum.

Source: Data collected from X using Tweepy API.

In order to further elaborate on the analysis, the posts were analyzed based on the language of publication as well as the performance of engagement, which was measured by the average quantity of likes and reposts. This was done to assess the effects of linguistic variation in the interaction of the audience with political rhetoric about Kazakhstan. Results of such an evaluation are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Metrics of language and engagement.

Language	Posts	Averages of likes/Post	Averages of reposts/Post
Russian	702	24.3	13.1
Kazakh	426	20.1	9.5
English	204	32.3	16.1

Though the portion posted in English was a smaller portion of the total database, they enjoyed a relatively greater level of engagement, especially when citing the involvement of Kazakhstan in mediating the Russia-Ukraine conflict and its role in the Astana Peace Process. The trend indicates that the content that is created in order to attract an international audience has a larger reach and more visibility. The English language content performed better than

both the Kazakh- and Russian-language content, as shown in Figure 2, which represents the engagement rates through average likes and average number of reposts. Although English-language input was the least common, it was nevertheless the most effective based on the interaction rates, which highlights the ability of the latter to influence the perception of the global audiences and improve the international image of Kazakhstan.

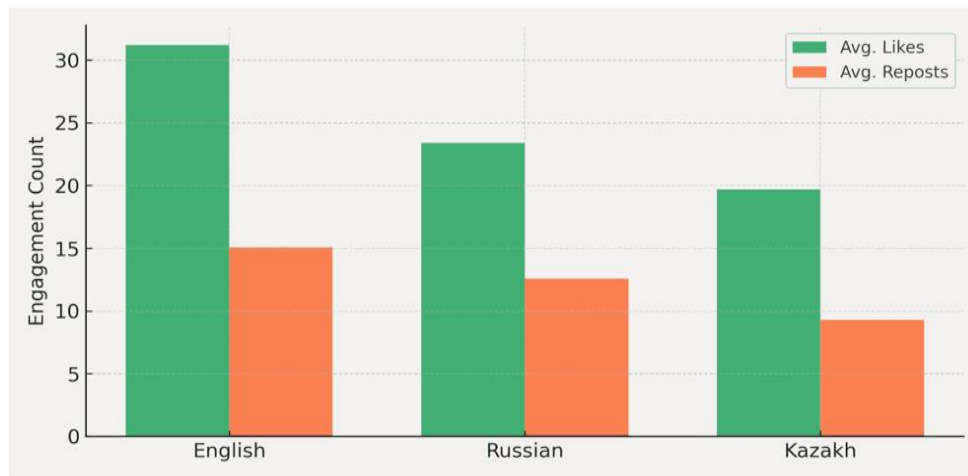


Figure 2. Language-based engagement trends in 2023 on X.

Source: Based on data of X.

The Pearson chi-square and correlation tests were conducted on the dataset of 1,300 posts. The purpose was to examine whether engagement patterns differed significantly across languages and events. Outcomes are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Inferential analysis of engagement patterns by language.

Statistical test	Variables compared	Value	df	p-value	Interpretation
Pearson χ^2	Language * Engagement Level	9.82	4	0.043	Significant variation in engagement across languages
Pearson r	Post Frequency * Average Likes	0.62	–	< 0.01	Positive correlation between posting frequency and audience response
Pearson r	Post Frequency * Average Reposts	0.57	–	< 0.01	Frequent posting is linked to broader diffusion

Note: The symbol * indicates the statistical relationship or cross-tabulation between the variables tested.

Source: X dataset (June 2023 to October 2023).

As shown in Table 3, there is a significant difference between engagement by language, and greater visibility and response are being created by English posts. The outcomes of correlation prove that an increase in the posting activity of the diplomatic events will lead to broader audience coverage and diffusion of the content.

In addition to the descriptive patterns, such findings depict major processes of digital diplomacy and soft power. The increased use of English-language posts can be interpreted as a higher level of online content that Kazakhstan can utilize to confirm a positive image of that country, as well as increase the number of its diplomatic stories to the international community as a form of soft power.

The peaks in the activity of posting also correspond to major events and are signs of agenda-setting processes when the timing and framing of the material in online spaces influence the audience's attention and prioritize some types of diplomatic discourse over others. It means that DPs are not merely means of information distribution but instruments of actively creating and building a national identity, shaping an image abroad, and making the efforts of state-led diplomacy more global.

4.2. Qualitative Outcomes

A discourse analysis was performed on these 90 posts and discussion threads. The content was ethnographically coded based on thematic and linguistic tags to evaluate the representation of the international role of Kazakhstan in internet discourses.

Three dominant frames were identified.

1. Neutral Mediator: The country is often portrayed as a mediator between the West and the East. This theme was common in all languages, highlighting ideas of constancy, dialogue, and peace facilitation. Example (Anonymized English post): “Kazakhstan proves again that it can host peace. Astana is becoming the Geneva of the steppe.”
2. Geopolitical Caution: These are posts, mostly in Kazakh and Russian, that often stated concern or skepticism regarding the political positioning of Kazakhstan, with references to the challenges of balancing relations with the West and Russia. Example (Anonymized Kazakh post): “A country's neutrality is not a weakness, but it is difficult to sit on two chairs.”
3. Diplomacy Branding and Image-Building: English-language posts frequently echoed official narratives and promoted hashtags like #AstanaDiplomacy, #KazakhstanPeace, and #MultivectorPolicy, signaling a deliberate effort to construct Kazakhstan’s image as a soft power actor in the international arena.

Language choice also influenced rhetorical strategies.

1. Russian-language content was pragmatic, addressing security concerns and critiquing policy toward Russia.
2. Kazakh-language discourse invoked sovereignty, pride in own culture, and pan-Turkic solidarity.
3. English-language contributions favored diplomatic and technical vocabulary, using terms such as “neutral facilitation,” “regional architecture,” and “confidence-building.”

The hashtag analysis further highlighted selective framing: Russian posts employed more oppositional labels (e.g., #NotOurWar, #ForeignPolicy), whereas English-language posts leaned heavily on promotional and official hashtags.

It is worth noting that uneven engagement was due to a small group of high-visibility posts (Less than 5 percent of the sample). These influential posts, frequently by reporters, opinion analysts, and policy makers, strengthened the role of Kazakhstan as a mediator in the region.

- Example (Anonymized): “Central Asia needs stability, and Kazakhstan is stepping up. The Astana Process is not perfect, but it’s something.” [English, 2100 plus likes and more than 600 reposts].

Such posts were frequently cross-linked with international media articles, underlining the interplay between DPs and formal diplomatic channels.

Qualitative analysis indicates that the digital presence of Kazakhstan at the major events was dominated by three frames of narratives, namely, neutrality, caution, and branding. English-language texts were always rated higher in terms of interaction, and powerful actors among media and policy-making elites played a key role in the formation of the external image of the country and the capital of soft power.

Following Braun and Clarke (2006) methodology, the thematic analysis is done. It produced four dominant frames.

- National identity and pride.
- Kazakhstan as a neutral facilitator in regional disputes.
- Emphasis on sovereignty and geopolitical balancing.
- Diplomatic branding through soft-power narratives.

The posts in the Kazakh language are largely focused on cultural independence and unity. The Russian language post stressed security and pragmatism. And the English language posts reflected a positive world image of Kazakhstan. Mood swings ranged from aggressive patriotism to reserved optimism. So is mimicking how online discourse is reflected and constitutes the perceptions of national legitimacy.

4.3. Discussion

Results of recent studies prove that DPs- and especially X- gained prominence as platforms of political discourse formation and the ways of shaping the image of Kazakhstan on the international level. The present paper takes into account the need to increase the analytical depth by including and obtaining the quantitative findings using both descriptive measures and testing in an inferential manner. Chi-square and correlation analysis showed statistically significant differences between languages and types of events in terms of engagement. This confirms that the patterns of interaction over DPs are organized as opposed to having no structure. The quantitative analysis showed that there were sharp spikes of online activity that went hand in hand with major diplomatic events in 2023. The highest degree of posting was observed on major days of these events, which indicates that DPs do the work of an expedited multiplier of diplomatic actions, allowing the audience to participate, react, and challenge the stories.

Linguistic features carry variations that influence engagement and framing across different audiences (Aubakirova, Jubatova, Zhiyekbayeva, Zhumazhanova, & Mustafayeva, 2016; Zhamankozova, Tusupbekova, & Kazhikenova, 2023). The excessive filling with posts in the English language, and especially those that portrayed Kazakhstan as a neutral mediator, was also a tendency. This implies that DPs do not merely mirror the national discourses but are a tool of exporting the national discourses to the exotic world. This study not only considers the frequency patterns, but it goes an extra mile in determining the inferential testing in order to support the meaning of the linguistic variation as an efficient manipulator of the engagement. Considering the example, English-language posts might get significantly more reposts and likes, which means that the language may be used as a tool of digital diplomacy. The correlation analysis also indicates that there is a common movement of posting frequency and intensity of engagement in the same direction, with the presence of significant political events. This is a pointer to the fact that digital mobilization is a multiplier of the offline diplomacy.

The qualitative component of the analysis contributes to the analysis by identifying the three recurring frames of digital discourse, namely neutrality, geopolitical harmonizing, and diplomatic stamping. The dynamics of different languages were unevenly spread out. The posts in the Russian and Kazakh languages are usually ambivalent and should point out fears connected to the necessity to find a balance between maintaining neutrality and strategic vulnerability. And primarily, the material of the English language is positive and supports the official discourses. This is an example of the role of language as a filtering mechanism of how the articulation of political identity is formulated to various audiences in Kazakhstan. English is a common language, and it is also exercised when it comes to Kazakhstan. To further investigate the insights on the qualitative interpretation, this paper carried out the thematic content analysis. This was done to determine latent meanings and patterns of multilingual posts. There were four themes found. They are national identity and national pride, mediator neutrality, geopolitical equilibrium, and diplomatic branding. These frames are repeated in other languages with different degrees of emphasis, exposing the fact that digital discourse in Kazakhstan both constructs identity and operates strategically simultaneously.

The general findings of this paper indicate that DPs reflective and constitutive of the changing role of the global role of Kazakhstan in politics and diplomacy. Astana, becoming the Geneva of the steppe, is the identified metaphor of the Astana Forum that reflects the aspirational nature of the online discourse in this sense. Also, the overlap between high-engagement posts and mediation narratives leads to the conclusion that the identity of Kazakhstan's foreign policy is being created by the state, as a part of a larger struggle between online users across the world.

These study results are consistent with the practices established worldwide in regard to politics and diplomacy (Murzagaliev, 2024). The studies done on the international level are also informing about the ways in which social media influences politics, as well as bringing out the special circumstances in Kazakhstan. As an example, Twitter has become very much embedded in the electoral campaigning and political polarization in the US and UK (O'Boyle & Pardun, 2021; Yaqub, Chun, Atluri, & Vaidya, 2017). And even in China, platforms such as Weibo are highly monitored and serve more to act as an appendage of state power, even though they still allow some minor, limited, controlled dissent (Cui, 2025). Kazakhstan finds itself in the intermediate zone as it is not an open digital environment

nor a completely censored one. Rather, it is a desirable commodity where enabling and constraining discourses vie to be purchased. This is aligned to the perspectives of Bjola and Manor (2022) on opposed digital diplomacy, federations control the image production in a competitive communication that is environment based. Moreover, Marigliano, Ng, and Carley (2024) observe that amplified beneficial framings can be achieved using amplification strategies, such as hashtags, posting organization via a particular account, and automation. The same trend is followed in the critique of the English language discussion of the Kazakhstani diplomacy.

As far as the Western world is concerned, online debates usually focus on party divisions or problems with election results and campaigns. However, in Kazakhstan, DPs show more about identity, regional role, and building the nation's image in its political views. This comes from its history as a post-Soviet state and its position as a multilingual power that must balance between China, Russia, and the West. The online discussions in Kazakhstan reveal the actual political situation and also shape how people perceive the outside world, making it crucial to examine digital politics from both geopolitical and communication perspectives.

These results have a crucial meaning. Within the nation, locations such as X offer an avenue on which individuals, and most particularly young urban and multilingual users, numbering about 3.5 million, challenge the government narrative, to argue as well as take part in the country-building process. Most posts in Kazakh language using words such as sovereignty, like the hashtag #u'lyida, reflect national pride, whereas posts in Russian are more practical, focusing on security and foreign policy. These trends demonstrate that digital politics contribute to opinion formation, conveying elite messages, and even partially to policy formulation, as legitimacy is no longer pursued by the state alone but exists in networks.

Digital media is a tool of soft power and diplomacy in the global arena. There are multilingual posts, hashtags, and symbols, to mention but a few, which are the tools that Kazakhstan applies to appear at least neutral, and even powerful as a mediator in the region. The English online communication is also required, as it helps to shape the country's image among the international participants in media and diplomacy. DPs can facilitate contact between correspondents and professionals across boundaries, and local messages can reach much further beyond Kazakhstan. Through this, the foreign policy objectives of nations are linked to the digital world.

The study contributes to the literature on digital diplomacy and political communication in the field of international relations. It demonstrates that DPs are not passive objects but are also active in constructing identity and legitimacy in diplomacy. The findings align with constructivist perspectives in international relations, which posit that power results from conversations and communication. It also advances the concept of multivocal diplomacy, where governments and citizens compete to define how a nation is perceived and portrayed. In the case of Kazakhstan, digital diplomacy shows that middle powers can utilize online space to develop a strategic identity during challenging geopolitical periods.

The study has some limitations. The data was limited and relied on one platform, and there were problems with the post-marketing process. It was also not easy due to language variety because automatic software, such as Python or NVivo, could not easily handle Kazakh phrases, so one had to hand-code. The research analyzed only two important events, which might not reflect long-term trends. The largest number of users lived in large cities such as Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent, so the view of rural environments is lacking. The focus was also restricted to public posts, not private chats in Telegram or WhatsApp. These boundaries imply that the results should be read with caution, but they also provide some new directions to consider.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper has discussed the influence of online resources such as X on political conversations and the image of Kazakhstan in the global arena. The work employed the figures of more than 1,300 posts, and 90 multi-lingual posts were read thoroughly. The findings indicate that online action rises to a new high during significant diplomatic/political events, and foreign policy has become more observable in the online arena. However, English

posts were better covered in numbers, which suggests that they are essential in the international communication of Kazakhstan. These findings suggest that the digital sphere is closer to a mirror, although a driver of the image of the nation in the world. These observations are supported by the inclusion of inferential statistical findings, since it proves that there is a measurable difference in the engagement between languages. The thematic content analysis also contributes to the picture of interpretation and demonstrates that the process of identity and diplomacy co-construction takes place online in Kazakhstan.

The current research identified three primary elements in the qualitative section of the analysis. Kazakhstan has been discovered as an unbiased intercessor in local battles, a prospect of upholding equilibrium in geopolitics, and the nation has been prolific in selling itself in diplomacy on the international front. Nonetheless, these features differed across languages. Various languages in Kazakhstan work towards the construction of political identity over the Internet. This puts digital diplomacy at the core of diplomacy in Kazakhstan, as well as the way middle powers establish themselves in the online realm of diplomacy.

This research makes a contribution in the sense that it introduces a new perspective in the field of digital politics, political communication, and national image-making through DPs. One example of a digital space that is mixed, with state practices overlapping it and sometimes even intersecting, is Kazakhstan, because of the increasing public expression. The results show that geopolitics, in addition to a multilingual environment, should be considered when studying political communication in the digital era. This work also offers the opportunity to consider the functioning of digital diplomacy in semi-authoritarian, non-Western environments that tend to balance the interests of the world giants. It contributes to the research of the diplomacy of the contested by demonstrating that the state is not the only actor that creates the image of Kazakhstan in the international arena, but citizens do this as well.

5.1. Policy Implications

According to their results, the following are suggested as policy implications that can be adopted by policy-makers, especially in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.

- They can monitor and selectively react to well-trafficked internet posts in critical political episodes to manage narratives.
- Also, can develop and disseminate multilingual materials, particularly in English, consistently projecting Kazakhstan's foreign policy priorities.
- They are proposed to train diplomats and ministry officials on digital outreach and storytelling to enhance the country's online international visibility.

This study also suggests the future direction of similar types of research, like.

- The differential dynamics of various DPs can be examined to consider differences in discourse setups and find the most effective one.
- Can also do longitudinal analyses to investigate how DPs evolve due to different reasons and instances.
- Researchers can also use network analysis to examine how the various digital accounts of influential figures influence the ecosystem of foreign policy discourse.
- Additionally, the level of technology affecting the use of DPs in various countries and regions can be explored.

These suggestions imply that digital diplomacy must be brought closer to Kazakhstan's foreign policy and implemented more frequently. Common and simple outreach in numerous languages can not only help Kazakhstan diplomats dominate the narrative but also elevate their soft power to a higher level.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has some limitations, including reliance on a single platform (X), focus on only two 2023 events, challenges in processing Kazakh-language content, and overrepresentation of urban users, which may limit

generalizability. Future research could examine how other middle powers, such as Uzbekistan, Turkey, or Finland, use digital tools for diplomacy, explore emotional and visual content through sentiment analysis and memes, and include platforms popular with youth like Instagram and TikTok. Expanding datasets across multiple events and platforms, improving multilingual coding tools, and assessing the impact of digital content on international perceptions would provide deeper insights into digital diplomacy and soft power strategies.

Funding: The authors received no financial support for the research.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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