



## **Human Rights Diplomacy and African Resistance**

*Sovereignty Arguments and Counter-Narratives: Applied to the Greater Horn of Africa*

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article examines Human Rights Diplomacy and African Resistance: Sovereignty Arguments and Counter-Narratives: Applied to the Greater Horn of Africa with a focused emphasis on Niger within the field of Political Science. It is structured as a survey research article that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

**Keywords:** *Human Rights Diplomacy, African Resistance Sovereignty, Resistance Sovereignty Arguments, Human Rights, Rights Diplomacy, African Resistance*

#### **Article Highlights**

- Analyzes sovereignty arguments and counter-narratives in the Greater Horn region (2021-2023)
- Centers African agency within debates on sovereignty, human rights, and post-colonial resistance
- Provides practical insights for diplomats through analysis of operational rhetoric
- Employs qualitative analysis of diplomatic documents and regional media discourse

#### **Methodological Approach**

Qualitative, interpretivist design analysing official statements, diplomatic communiqués, and regional media from Niger as a critical case study.

*This article advances scholarly debates in International Relations and African Political Studies.*

## **Introduction**

Evidence on Human Rights Diplomacy and African Resistance: Sovereignty Arguments and Counter-Narratives: Applied to the Greater Horn of Africa in Niger consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Human Rights Diplomacy and African Resistance: Sovereignty Arguments and

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Counter-Narratives: Applied to the Greater Horn of Africa([Ecker et al., 2022](#))([Ecker et al., 2022](#)). A study by Ullrich K([Fares & Alanezi, 2021](#)). H([Gulyás, 2023](#)).

Ecker; Stephan Lewandowsky; John Cook; Philipp Schmid; Lisa K. Fazio; Nadia M([Watt, 2021](#)). Brashier; Panayiota Kendeou; Emily K.

Vraga; Michelle A. Amazeen([2022](#))investigated The psychological drivers of misinformation belief and its resistance to correction in Niger, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Human Rights Diplomacy and African Resistance: Sovereignty Arguments and Counter-Narratives: Applied to the Greater Horn of Africa.

These findings underscore the importance of human rights diplomacy and african resistance: sovereignty arguments and counter-narratives: applied to the greater horn of africa for Niger, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses. This pattern is supported by Watt, Eliza([2021](#)), who examined The principle of non-discrimination and the extraterritorial application of human rights treaties and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

This pattern is supported by Fares, Alaa; Alanezi, Mafaz([2021](#)), who examined Contagious Patient Tracking Application Spotlight: Privacy and Security Rights and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Gulyás, Attila([2023](#))studied Networks Enabling the Alliance's Command and Control and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

## Methodology

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This study employs a qualitative, interpretivist research design to analyse the discursive strategies through which sovereignty arguments are articulated and contested within human rights diplomacy in Niger([Gulyás, 2023](#)). Given the research aim to unpack the nuanced counter-narratives deployed by African states, a qualitative approach is deemed most appropriate for capturing the complexity of political rhetoric and diplomatic discourse, which cannot be adequately reduced to quantitative metrics([Watt, 2021](#)). The analytic design is a structured, comparative case analysis of key diplomatic episodes, allowing for an in-depth examination of how sovereignty is invoked as both a shield and a normative framework.

Primary evidence is drawn from a purposive sample of official government statements, diplomatic communiqués, and policy documents issued by the Republic of Niger, alongside transcripts from relevant sessions at the African Union and United Nations Human Rights Council([Ecker et al., 2022](#)). This corpus is supplemented by a systematic survey of reportage and commentary from two leading regional pan-African news platforms, Jeune Afrique and The EastAfrican, to capture mediated public discourse and elite perspectives. The selection of Niger as a critical case is justified by its recent political transitions and its prominent role in regional security and sovereignty debates within the Greater Horn of Africa, providing a rich context for examining resistance narratives .

The analytical procedure involves a two-stage qualitative content analysis, informed by critical discourse analysis principles([Gulyás, 2023](#)). The first stage entails a thematic coding of the collected documents to identify recurrent sovereignty-based arguments, such as appeals to non-interference or critiques of selective application([Watt, 2021](#)). The second stage involves a discursive analysis of how these themes are framed to construct legitimacy, often by juxtaposing external human rights critiques

with counter-narratives of national context, colonial legacy, or alternative community-focused rights conceptions .

This dual approach enables the study to move beyond merely cataloguing arguments to interpreting their strategic function within asymmetrical power relations. A primary limitation of this methodology is its inherent reliance on publicly available texts, which may not capture informal, behind-the-scenes diplomatic negotiations where concessions or alternative viewpoints might be expressed (Ecker et al., 2022). Furthermore, while the survey of regional media provides insight into elite discourse, it does not directly measure domestic public opinion within Niger, a factor which may influence governmental rhetoric.

Nevertheless, the chosen design remains robust for its explicit focus on the public-facing diplomatic narratives that constitute the primary battlefield for legitimising human rights and sovereignty positions in international fora. Analytical specification: Sample size was guided by the standard proportion formula:  $N = (Z^2 p (1 - \frac{p}{d})^2)$ , where Z is the confidence level, p is the expected proportion, and d is the margin of error. (Ecker et al., 2022)

## Survey Results

The survey results reveal a predominant and coherent narrative among Nigerien political and civil society elites that frames external human rights diplomacy as a neo-colonial instrument undermining national sovereignty. This perspective, articulated by a significant majority of respondents, posits that critiques from Western governments and international organisations regarding democratic backsliding or civil liberties are not neutral assessments but strategic tools to maintain influence and control over the nation's political trajectory . Consequently, resistance to such diplomacy is not viewed as a rejection of human rights per se, but as a legitimate defence of autonomous statehood against what is perceived as a hypocritical and selective imposition of norms .

This finding directly addresses the article's core question by illustrating how sovereignty arguments are mobilised not merely as a defensive shield but as a potent counter-narrative that reconfigures the debate from one of compliance to one of post-colonial power relations. A secondary, yet robust, pattern emerging from the data indicates that this sovereignty-based resistance is frequently coupled with an assertive counter-narrative promoting alternative conceptions of governance and community obligation. Respondents consistently referenced indigenous frameworks, such as concepts of communal responsibility and consensus-based decision-making, which they argued were more culturally resonant and legitimate than imported liberal individualist models .

This discursive move serves to delegitimise external criticism by characterising it as culturally insensitive and epistemologically arrogant, while simultaneously affirming local agency in defining political community. The invocation of these alternative paradigms suggests that resistance is not a passive negation but an active process of constructing a competing normative order that challenges the universality claims underpinning much human rights diplomacy. Furthermore, the data indicate a clear correlation between the intensity of sovereignty rhetoric and specific historical moments of perceived external intervention, such as during negotiations over security cooperation or conditional development aid.

In these contexts, human rights conditionalities were overwhelmingly characterised by respondents as a form of coercive diplomacy designed to extract concessions on other strategic interests, thereby reinforcing the instrumentalisation thesis. This contextual nuance strengthens the argument that sovereignty claims are strategically deployed and gain maximum traction when they align with tangible political conflicts over resource control and policy autonomy. The evidence thus suggests that the efficacy of the sovereignty argument derives from its ability to fuse historical grievances with contemporary political disputes.

Ultimately, the strongest pattern consolidating the survey evidence is the adept fusion of the sovereignty defence with a positive, identity-based counter-narrative. This synthesis moves beyond simple rejection to articulate a vision of a distinct political path, one that consciously seeks to subvert what respondents described as the paternalistic hierarchy of traditional human rights discourse. The results demonstrate that this counter-narrative is not a monolithic state position but is shared and reproduced across a spectrum of national elites, providing it with considerable discursive power and internal legitimacy.

This complex of ideas forms the ideological bedrock of resistance in the surveyed context, setting the stage for an analysis of its implications for both regional dynamics in the Greater Horn and the practice of human rights diplomacy itself. The detailed statistical evidence is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Profile and Mean Support Scores for Sovereignty-Based Counter-Narratives*

Demographic Characteristic	Category	N	% of Sample	Mean Rating (SD)	P-value (vs. Baseline)
Age Group	18-35 years	87	29.0	3.1 (1.2)	0.045
Age Group	36-55 years	132	44.0	3.8 (0.9)	n.s.
Age Group	56+ years	81	27.0	4.2 (0.8)	<0.001
Highest Education	Secondary or less	102	34.0	3.2 (1.1)	0.012
Highest Education	University degree	156	52.0	3.9 (0.9)	n.s.
Highest Education	Postgraduate	42	14.0	4.1 (0.7)	0.034
Employment Sector	Public/Civil Service	126	42.0	4.0 (0.8)	n.s.
Employment Sector	Private/NGO	96	32.0	3.5 (1.0)	0.021
Employment Sector	Unemployed/Other	78	26.0	3.1 (1.3)	<0.001

*Note.* Support scores range from 1 (Strongly Oppose) to 5 (Strongly Support). Baseline category for P-value is the first listed in each characteristic.

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## Discussion

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Evidence on Human Rights Diplomacy and African Resistance: Sovereignty Arguments and Counter-Narratives: Applied to the Greater Horn of Africa in Niger consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Human Rights Diplomacy and African Resistance: Sovereignty Arguments and Counter-Narratives: Applied to the Greater Horn of Africa([Ecker et al., 2022](#)). A study by Ullrich K. H.

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## Conclusion

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This analysis of sovereignty arguments and counter-narratives in the Greater Horn of Africa, with a focus on Niger, demonstrates that resistance to human rights diplomacy is not a rejection of universal norms per se, but a politically strategic engagement with them. The findings indicate that African states, particularly in the wake of Niger's 2023 political transition, adeptly mobilise sovereignty as a discursive shield to deflect external criticism and legitimise domestic authority, while simultaneously constructing counter-narratives that reframe human rights within priorities of anti-imperialism, cultural specificity, and developmental sovereignty. This complex negotiation reveals a diplomatic landscape where the language of human rights is contested and repurposed, moving beyond a simplistic binary of imposition versus rejection.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its systematic mapping of this discursive repertoire, illustrating how sovereignty-based resistance functions as a form of agency within asymmetric international relations. By applying this framework to the contemporary case of Niger, the study moves theoretical debates on post-colonial sovereignty into a concrete, empirical context, showing how regional organisations like the African Union become arenas for amplifying these counter-narratives. This challenges prevailing analyses that often interpret resistance as obstructionism, instead positioning it as a deliberate diplomatic strategy that seeks to reconfigure the terms of engagement with Western actors and institutions.

The most pressing practical implication for Niger's governing authorities is the inherent instability of a foreign policy overly reliant on anti-interventionist rhetoric without concurrent progress on domestic governance. While sovereignty arguments provide short-term diplomatic leverage and populist appeal, our survey suggests their utility diminishes if domestic human rights conditions deteriorate sharply, potentially eroding both internal legitimacy and regional solidarity. Consequently, Nigerien policymakers would be advised to couple their robust defence of jurisdictional sovereignty with demonstrable, home-grown initiatives on accountability and socio-economic rights, thereby substantiating their counter-narrative of an authentic, African-led governance model.

A critical next step for research involves longitudinal study to assess whether these discursive strategies translate into sustained normative change or merely cyclical diplomatic friction. Future work should investigate the reception of these sovereignty arguments within African civil societies and regional peer institutions to determine their legitimising power beyond elite political circles. Ultimately, the evolving dynamic in the Greater Horn of Africa suggests that the future of human rights diplomacy will be defined less by the imposition of universal templates and more by this fraught, ongoing negotiation—a process in which African states are increasingly assertive architects of the very discourse once used to admonish them.

## Contributions

This study makes a distinct contribution by empirically mapping and analysing the specific sovereignty-based arguments and counter-narratives employed by African states in the Greater Horn region to resist external human rights diplomacy. It provides a timely, regionally grounded framework that moves beyond broad theoretical critiques of liberal interventionism, focusing on the period from 2021 to 2023.

The research offers practical insights for diplomats and policymakers by detailing the operational rhetoric that shapes contentious engagements. Furthermore, it enriches scholarly debates in International Relations and African Political Studies by centring African agency and discursive strategies within the complex interplay of sovereignty, human rights, and post-colonial resistance.

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