



‘We are Committed to the Change Agenda’: Tracking Ideological Strategies in President Buhari’s 2019 Independence Day Speech

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Received: 18.10.2019 Accepted: 10.04.2020
Date of Publication: June, 2020

Abstract: This study critically examines ideological strategies in President Buhari’s 2019 *Independence Day* Speech with a view to demonstrating how the speech subtly but pragmatically functions beyond being a yearly ritualistic exercise but equally projecting the Buhari-led administration’s commitment to its ‘change’ agenda. With insights from van Dijk’s (2004) model of Critical Discourse Analysis, relevant excerpts of the speech were purposively selected for analysis in this study. Findings reveal that the speech is characterised by two ideological strategies: positive self-representation and negative other-representation. While the former is deployed to project his administration as people-oriented, the latter is deployed to blame, berate and condemn the past governments in the country. **Key words:** discourse, critical discourse analysis, ‘Change’ agenda, Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria.

Introduction

The ‘change’ agenda was the political slogan as well as rhetoric device deployed by the current Buhari administration to appeal to Nigerian masses in 2015 when the country was in the democratic process of moving from one civilian regime to another. Against the backdrop of the perceived peculiar problems of the country at that period, including corruption, insecurity, and unemployment, the slogan became strategic for the All Progressives

Congress (APC), on whose platform the current administration got to power to ending the sixteen-year straight rule of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Since the beginning of the administration in 2015, all efforts to represent the APC-led government as committed to the ‘change’ agenda as promised have been foregrounded in all political activities and speeches, including the Independence Day Speech of President Muhammadu Buhari on October 1, 2019. Perhaps what

necessitated the reiteration of the ‘change’ mantra in the speech was to strategically appease ‘angry Nigerians’ who believed they had been let down by the administration (see Ajayi 2018, 2019). From observations, there have been criticisms from different quarters among Nigerians, including Nigerians in the diaspora that the promise of change has not been fulfilled. They argue that the current administration has not only failed to fulfil their promises but has also failed at every front. Activists and public analysts have also taken to the conventional and social media to launch serious campaigns against the government (Ajayi, 2019). In particular, the Buhari-led government has been heavily criticised as being selective in their fight against corruption. They have also been viewed as being intolerant to freedom of speech, despotic, and essentially anti-masses.

Political discourse in Nigeria and beyond

The link between language and politics has been established (see Fairclough and Fairclough 2012; Chilton 2004; Ajayi and Ajayi 2014; Ajayi, 2018; Akinrinlola 2015). The relationship between language and politics explains why the field of politics has enjoyed the attention of language scholars, especially discourse analysts and pragmaticians; hence, the many and different approaches to the investigation of the relationship between the two both within the Nigerian context and beyond. As noted by Ajayi (2018), some of the works that have explored the relationship between language and politics in Nigeria include Ayeomoni

(2005), Jorda (2007), Adetunji (2009), Okpanachi (2009), Taiwo (2010), Alo (2012), Michira (2014), Akinkurolere (2015), Akinrinlola (2015 and 2017), Al-Dilaimy and Khalaf (2015), Halim (2015), Korhonen (2017), Mcclay (2017), and Obiero (2017), among others. These studies provide the foundation upon which the current study is laid.

For instance, Ayeomoni (2005) notes that political discourse as evident in the language of Nigerian political elite, differs from everyday language use. Jorda (2007) drawing data from the British political context, observes that political discourse features preponderant use of impoliteness strategies, especially in parliamentary debates. Adetunji (2009) gives insights into how pragmatic strategies could be deployed to achieve political goals by countries’ presidents, particularly as evident in the inaugural speeches of former presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and George Bush of the United States of America. Okpanachi (2009) examines the manipulative rhetorical cues in the national address speech of former President Olusegun Obasanjo delivered on October 8, 2003 in response to the 2003 Labour Congress agitation in Nigeria. Taiwo (2010) is a critical exploration of the deployment of metaphorical expressions for ideological construction by political actors, especially in the Nigerian context. Alo (2012), operating within the purview of Aristotelian rhetoric and Fairclough’s model of critical discourse analysis, submits that African political leaders employ persuasive strategies to seek

peoples' cooperation and accomplish governmental programmes.

Michira (2014) analysing data from the Kenyan political space, demonstrates how linguistic- persuasive strategies manifest in the campaign speeches of the presidential candidates in the 2013 presidential election in Kenya. Al-Dilaimy and Khalaf (2015), reinforcing the submission of Jorda (2007), demonstrate how political discourse in the media particularly with insights from the 'Opposite Direction' aired on Al-Jazeera Channel), is characterised by impolite expressions. Akinkulore (2015) explores how cohesive devices are deployed by political actors to achieve their political goals with emphasis on the Nigerian political space. Akinrinlola (2015) comments on the use of rhetorical devices by President Buhari in his 2015 inaugural speech delivered to launch Nigerians into the 'change era'. Akinrinlola (2017), again giving credence to the observation of Jorda (2007), notes that impoliteness strategies feature in political discourse, as evident in the linguistic practice of the two major contestants - Muhammadu Buhari and Goodluck Jonathan in the 2015 Nigerian Presidential Election. With reference to Trump's campaign speeches in the 2016 US Presidential Election, Korhonen (2017) notes that rhetoric is employed by political actors to appeal to the sentiments of the electorate. Otieno (2017) engages Trump's deployment of linguistic tools to contest unequal power relations in his campaign speeches. Ajayi (2018) focuses on how the Nigerian electorate deployed impoliteness strategies in their Facebook

comments on the Nigerian political space, preparatory to the 2019 Presidential Elections in the country. Ajayi (2019) is a critical appraisal of stance and engagement in the Facebook posts of Nigerian electorate on the topical issue 'the gang-up to deal with Buhari' as published in national dailies in the country. Bamgbose (2018) with particular reference to the Nigerian democratic space, submits political actors sometimes make recourse to cultural norms as a politicking strategy, especially during campaigns.

While these studies have examined political discourse in the Nigerian context and beyond, essentially from the discourse and pragmatic perspectives, the present study is a critical discourse analysis approach to political discourse, with particular reference to how political ideologies are achieved in President Buhari's 2019 Independence Day speech.

Analytical tool: Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) takes its roots in Classical Rhetoric, Text Linguistics and Socio-linguistics, as well as in Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics (Weiss and Wodak, 2002). As observed by van Dijk (1998 and 2001), CDA is a form of cultural and social practice, and as such it allows the description and interpretation of social life as it is represented in talk and texts. He further argues that CDA revolves round, particularly, the nexus between power and discourse, especially how 'social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and

political context' (van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). In other words, it is an approach to language analysis that is interested in studying and analysing written and spoken texts in order to show or depict the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. To Fairclough (2001), a critical discourse analyst seeks to tease out the social and cultural assumptions and ideologies embedded in all forms of language that people use. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), some of the basic principles guiding the operation of CDA include: the construction and reflection of social and political issues in discourse, the negotiation and performance of power relations through discourse; the reflection and production of social relations through discourse, and the production and reflection of ideologies through discourse. Taking cognizance of these principles of CDA, Reisigl and Wodak (2009) conclude that it is mainly concerned 'with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language'.

In this study, given its relevance, van Dijk's (2004) model of CDA is adopted for analysis. van Dijk's (2004) framework comprises two main discursive ideological strategies: positive self-representation (semantic macro-strategy of in-group favouritism) and negative other-representation (semantic macro-strategy of derogation of the out-group). These two strategies manifest through the analysis of actor description, authority, categorization, comparison, and consensus among others. Although the list is exhaustive,

the two basic categorisations made by van Dijk can accommodate some of the other ideological discursive strategies identified in this study but which are not on the list.

Methodology

Data for the study were drawn from the 2019 Independence Day Speech of President Muhammadu Buhari. In line with the thematic focus of the study, relevant excerpts of the speech were purposively selected for analysis. Data were subjected to qualitative critical discourse analysis within van Dijk's (2004) conception of CDA. Data are presented for analysis based on van Dijk's (2004) categorisations of ideological strategies in discourse.

Analysis and Discussion

Positive self-representation

Following the view of van Dijk (2004), this ideological discursive strategy is employed by a discourse actor to project him/herself positively with the aim of achieving a particular goal. A critical appraisal of Buhari's 2019 Independence Day Speech reveals the preponderant use of the positive self-representation strategy and sub-strategies such as identification of Nigeria's common problems, self-glorification, promise of a better (future) national life, and expression of belief in collective governance to persuade and appeal to the conscience of Nigerians.

Identification of Nigeria's problems

One of the indices that can be used to measure the competence and popularity of a government, especially in a democratic state is the ability of such a government to demonstrate their

knowledge of the problems or issues facing the state (see Guerin *et al.*, 2018). This knowledge is pragmatically demonstrated by Buhari in his speech in order to represent his administration as a responsible and people-oriented one, which is not insensitive to the plights of Nigeria and Nigerians. This is illustrated with the examples below:

Example 1

...In the last four years, we have combatted **the terrorist scourge of Boko Haram...**

Example 2

...We remain equally resolute in our efforts to combat **militant attacks on our oil...**

Example 3

...Our attention is increasingly being focused on **cyber-crimes** and the abuse of technology through hate speech and other divisive material being propagated on social media.

Example 4

...This Administration inherited **a skewed economy**

It is common knowledge among Nigerians that part of the fundamental security problems of the country is the nefarious activities of the Boko Haram sect (see Chilwa 2015). Since its emergence in 2002, its activities, including suicide bombing, wanton killings and abduction, have claimed lives of many Nigerians, especially in states like Borno, Yobe, and Abuja. Given the national embarrassment the

activities of this sect have caused Nigeria, the 'change' agenda of the administration in 2015 included promises to overcome the activities of this deadly group. Another issue identified in the speech is the activities of militant groups who are allegedly responsible for the destruction of 'oil and gas' facilities in the Niger Delta region, considered to be the source of the commonwealth of the nation. These faceless 'destroyers' were accused on several occasions of being responsible for some of the economic problems of the country. Similarly, President Buhari highlighted cybercrimes as part of the problems. As reported by Chawki (2009) and Ajayi and Bamgbose (2018), cybercrime has posed a major security and economic threat to the global community and dented the image of Nigeria in the comity of nations of the world. Unstable and bad economy is another major issue among the many problems of the country highlighted in the speech. This is evidenced in the form of unemployment among the youth and poverty among Nigerians generally.

As a matter of fact, the continued existence of these problems, even after four years of the Buhari administration has generated mixed reactions from Nigerians with many condemning the perceived ineptitude and incapability of the current administration in solving them.

Self-glorification

As an ideological discursive strategy, self-glorification is employed by a discourse actor to demonstrate and emphasise the good they have done. The use of this strategy features prominently

in the speech of the President. Examples are presented and illustrated below:

Example 5

Good Governance and Economic Development cannot be sustained without an enabling environment of peace and security. In the last four years, we have combatted the terrorist scourge of Boko Haram. We owe a debt of gratitude to our gallant men and women in arms, through whose efforts we have been able to achieve the present results. We are also grateful to our neighbours and allies – within the region and across the world – who have supported us on this front.

Example 6

We remain equally resolute in our efforts to combat militant attacks on our oil and gas facilities in the Niger Delta and accelerate the Ogoni Clean-up to address long-standing environmental challenges in that region... The recent redeployment of the Niger Delta Development Commission from the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, to the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs underscores our commitment to enhance the living standards of our communities in the Niger Delta, through coordinated and appropriate programmes.

Example 7

The Ministry of Police Affairs has been resuscitated to oversee the development and implementation of strategies to enhance internal security. My recent assent to the Nigerian Police Trust Fund (Establishment) Act has created a legal framework to support our Police with increased fiscal resources to enhance their law enforcement capabilities

Example 8

These initiatives are being complemented by the ongoing recruitment of 10,000 constables into the Nigeria Police Force. This clearly demonstrates our commitment to arrest the incidence of armed robbery, kidnapping and other violent crimes across our nation.

Following the identification of Nigeria's problems in excerpt 5, Buhari presents his administration as being active in solving the identified economic and security problems. For instance, Buhari claims that the military has succeeded in combating the activities of Boko Haram particularly through the strategic alliance of the military with neighbouring countries in Africa and beyond. As far as the administration of Buhari is concerned, the Boko Haram sect has been reduced to a toothless bulldog whose biting power has been 'taken' from it. In excerpt 6, Buhari further claims that the activities of the Niger-Delta militant groups have been

tamed, also through the coordinated efforts of the Army under his administration. He argues that his administration has further redeployed the Niger Delta Commission from the office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation to the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs ‘in order to strategically take care of the interest of the people of the region effectively’. Also, as a way of sustaining the ‘achievements’ recorded so far, especially in the area of security, the administration has resuscitated and further equipped the Ministry of Police Affairs to oversee the development and implementation of strategies to enhance internal security (excerpt 7). The administration has also approved the recruitment of 10,000 constables into the Nigeria Police Force (excerpt 8).

As can be deduced from excerpts 6, 7, and 8, in particular, the President indirectly argues that, if the issues of the vandalisation of the nation’s oil facilities, armed robbery and kidnapping were addressed, which his administration has ‘seriously’ embarked on, no doubt, the economy of the country would witness a major boost; and there would be peace and order in the Nigerian nation. All these are ideological discursive strategies by Buhari to depict his administration as being responsible, people-oriented, and ultimately committed to the promised ‘change’ in 2015. With all these ‘achievements’ specifically mentioned, the President hopes to appeal to the sentiments of many aggrieved Nigerians who appear to have lost confidence in his administration.

Promise of a better national life and future

Among the fundamental dividends of democracy is better life for the citizenry in particular and the State in general. As such, a democratically elected government is expected to work towards the realisation of these, among some other benefits. Buhari, in his speech, alludes to this as he promises a better future both for the citizens and the Nigerian state. This is illustrated in the examples below:

Example 9

Our journey to food security and self-sufficiency is well underway. We have made remarkable progress in almost all segments of the agriculture value chain, from fertilizers to rice, to animal feed production. We shall sustain these policies to ensure additional investments are channeled, thereby creating more jobs in the sector. We must not go back to the days of importing food and thereby exporting jobs.

Example 10

I recently constituted an Economic Advisory Council to advise me on inclusive and sustainable macroeconomic, fiscal and monetary policies. This independent body will work with relevant Cabinet members and the heads of key monetary, fiscal and trade agencies to ensure we remain on track as we strive for collective prosperity.

Example 11

Our population growth rate remains amongst the highest in the world, presenting both challenges as well as opportunities. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that we provide adequate resources to meet the basic needs of our teeming youth...Accordingly, we shall continue to invest in education, health, water and sanitation, as well as food security, to ensure that their basic needs are met, while providing them with every opportunity to live peaceful, prosperous and productive lives.

Example 12

We are resolute in reforming the power sector. In August this year, we launched the Presidential Power Initiative to modernize the National Grid in 3 phases: starting from 5 Gigawatts to 7 Gigawatts, then to 11 Gigawatts by 2023, and finally 25 Gigawatts afterwards. This programme in partnership with the German Government and Siemens, will provide end-to-end electrification solutions that will resolve our transmission and distribution challenges.

As evident in the excerpts above, President Buhari pragmatically deploys the 'promise of a better life and future' as an ideological strategy to positively

present his administration in the said speech. In excerpt 9, for instance, he claims his administration has done all that is required to ensure future food security and sufficiency. Hence, Nigerians should look forward to a country, which in the nearest future, would have food in surplus - where hunger and lack of food would be a thing of the past. He further promises his administration's commitment to sustaining this policy which is to be complemented with additional investments that would ensure there are more jobs in the country. This sounds like good news to the teeming Nigerian youths who are unemployed. In excerpt 10, the President hints that within his cabinet, certain competent individuals have been saddled with the responsibility of manning some important trade and monetary agencies so as to ensure the country attain a height of 'collective prosperity'. What this pragmatically translates to, therefore, is that, other things being equal, with the inputs of these competent hands in the key positions they have been made to function, the country and her citizenry would soon experience the so much desired national prosperity. In excerpt 11, the President ideologically depicts his administration as one that takes cognizance of the rapid population growth experienced in the country, and as such is futuristic in her plans to address the problems that might likely be associated with it. In particular, he reiterates the commitment of his administration to the 'change' agenda with a promise it shall remain committed to providing adequate resources that would meet the needs of

the growing population, mainly constituted by the youths. The administration promises to invest in education, health facilities, water and sanitation, and ultimately ensure there is food security. It equally promises to provide every opportunity for the citizens to live peaceful, prosperous and productive lives (as seen in excerpt 11). In excerpt 12, the Buhari-led administration promises a future Nigeria where the problem of power outage would be gone as there would be constant supply of electricity, reiterating her 'noble' efforts in ensuring this is achieved.

These promises are ideological strategies pragmatically deployed by Buhari to regain the confidence of Nigerians in him and his administration, especially those who have become disenchanted with it. This is highly essential, particularly given the fact his party, the APC, would, in the next three years, turn to Nigerians for their votes. However, a critical appraisal of these promises, particularly within the context of the political trajectory of Nigeria, would reveal they might just be political statements which could be described as empty and mere rhetoric. For instance, many Nigerians still wonder why the president is still sounding futuristic in his administration's proposal to proffer solution to the problems of education, security, and health, among others (as itemized in his speech) in the country after four years of being in power. One would remember that President Buhari repeatedly promised in his campaign speeches that he was prepared to tackle these problems as soon as he got to power (see Akinrinlola, 2017).

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Expression of belief in collective governance

As observed by Ajayi and Filani (2014) and Ajayi (2017), pronouns and pronominals can be pragmatically deployed in discourse as markers of in-group and out-group identities. Following from the position of these scholars, there is the identification of the preponderant use of the inclusive 'we' and pronouns such as 'our and us' to identify Buhari and members of his cabinet/administration, and also used to identify with Nigerians and essentially express his belief in the collective efforts of Nigerians to achieve a haven-like country, perhaps following the basic tenets of democracy as 'the government of the people, by the people and for the people' (Abraham Lincoln, 1809 - 1865). Some instances of this are illustrated in the examples below:

Example 13

The Ministry of Justice, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission will continue to address this menace. **We** are determined to ensure that transparency and good governance are institutionalized in public service.

Example 14

Furthermore, **we** partnered with our friends abroad to combat tax evasion, smuggling, terrorism and illicit financial flows.

Example 15

We must commit to installing a culture of Good Governance in all we do. This Administration has fought against corruption, by investigating and prosecuting those accused of embezzlement and the misuse of public resources. We have empowered teams of prosecutors, assembled detailed databases of evidence, traced the proceeds of crimes and accelerated the recovery of stolen funds.

Example 16

On fighting corruption, **our** institutional reforms to enforce the Treasury Single Account policy, introduce the Whistle-blowers' Initiative, expand the coverage of the Integrated Payroll Personnel and Information System as well as the Government Integrated Management Information System have saved billions of Naira over the last four years, and deterred the rampant theft and mismanagement of public funds that have plagued **our** public service.

As evident in these excerpts, President Buhari employs the use of pronouns and pronominals to express his belief in collective governance (following the principles of democracy). In excerpts 13 and 14, Buhari uses 'we' exclusive to

create an executive identity for himself and members of his cabinet as well as other arms of the government. In doing this, he hopes to assure Nigerians he is not running a one-man show in which the president operates with executive order, without due recourse to the other arms of government and essentially members of his administration. In the excerpts, the statement with the exclusive 'we' projects the Buhari-led administration as comprising men and women of integrity, who are determined to ensure transparency and good governance, especially in public and political offices. In excerpt 14, in particular, Buhari projects his administration, including the cabinet members, as one that has struck a deal with friends abroad who have expertise on how tax invasion, smuggling, and illegal financial activities can be combated.

In excerpt 15, the President uses the 'we' inclusive to identify with Nigerians, expressing the notion that achieving and installing a culture of good governance in the country requires the collective efforts of every Nigerian. This assertion is made to make an average Nigerian believe they are part of the government, even when they are not directly given specific political appointments to function in one capacity or the other. This is with the ultimate aim of giving them (Nigerians) the impression that the government is not so far from them. In excerpt 16, 'our' is used to qualify 'institutional reforms' to give Nigerians the feelings that the reforms are for the benefit of all and sundry and not just for the Buhari-led administration. This strategy is also

deliberately used in the last line of the excerpt to give Nigerians the impression that the public service is the heritage of the government and the governed.

Beyond the use of pronouns and pronominals by Buhari to express his belief in collective governance, there is the express call on Nigerians to join in the State's fight against corruption, one of the greatest banes of the country. This is evident in the excerpt below:

Example 17

I will also call upon all Nigerians, from every walk of life, to combat Corruption at every turn. By choosing to question and confront corrupt practices, by reporting unethical practices or through whistle blowing. Together, we can overcome corruption and will no longer be a country defined by corruption.

With this express call on all and sundry to join hands with the government to fight corruption in the country, Buhari hopes to convince Nigerians his administration does not pretend to project itself as one that can single-handedly solve all Nigeria's problems, corruption especially. Meanwhile, it has been difficult to convince many Nigerians that the Buhari-led administration is really serious in its fight against corruption. For instance, contrary to the impression that the administration is such that gives free hands to the other arms of the government such as judiciary and legislature, to operate, many Nigerians have expressly argued that the 'unconstitutional' removal of a former Chief Justice of the country, Walter

Onoghen, weeks to the 2019 Presidential Election, was a move to prepare the ground for electoral fraud that Buhari and his party were ready to perpetrate. This is in addition to many insinuations and allegations that the administration is full of corrupt individuals. Thus, in the estimation of many Nigerians, the Buhari-led administration is only paying lip service to the fight against corruption in the country.

Negative other-representation

This ideological discursive strategy is often deployed to emphasise the negative aspect of the 'other' in a discourse. As evident in our data, this strategy is purposefully employed by Buhari to discredit the administrations of the PDP, which preceded his. The sub-discourse strategies used to achieve this negative other-representation include blaming, and comparison.

Blaming the previous governments

As observed by Akinrinlola (2017), blaming is a discourse strategy that is very common among political actors in Nigeria. According to this scholar, political actors often blame their opponents for their own failures. This discourse strategy is glaringly used by Buhari in his speech to cast aspersions on the past administrations of the PDP - the strongest opposition party to Buhari's political party, the APC. Blaming is illustrated in the excerpts below:

Example 18

This Administration inherited a skewed economy, where the Oil Sector comprised only 8% of Gross

Domestic Product but contributed 70% of government revenue and 90% foreign exchange earnings over the years. Past periods of relatively high economic growth were driven by our reliance on Oil Sector revenues to finance our demand for imported goods and services. Regrettably, previous governments abandoned the residual Investment-driven Non-Oil Sector, which constituted 40% of Gross Domestic Product and comprised agriculture, livestock, agro-processing, arts, entertainment, mining and manufacturing activities that provide millions of jobs for able-bodied Nigerians and utilize locally available raw materials and labour for production.

Against the backdrop of the complaints by many Nigerians who have lost interest in the Buhari-led administration, particularly as a result of the perceived poor economy of the country, the President sees this speech as an opportunity to further exonerate his government's responsibility to the 'sorry' state of the nation's economy. As presented in the opening sentence of the excerpt above (excerpt 18), the past government(s), especially the PDP-led past administrations should be blamed. According to the speech, the current administration inherited the present 'skewed' economy of the country. Following the observations of Ajayi (2018 and 2019), for instance, it is common knowledge among Nigerians

that the APC used the economic index to score the PDP administrations low in order to 'sell' their party to Nigerians in 2015. In particular, the APC emphasised that the PDP government had performed woefully in managing the Nigerian economy, and as part of her 'change' agenda, promised to salvage the situation. Hence, as can be gleaned from Buhari's speech, the problem of poor economy, which 'his administration is making concerted efforts at addressing', was created by the previous governments. This notion is reiterated in the concluding part of excerpt 18 presented above as Buhari blames the previous governments for abandoning other non-oil sectors of the country which could have contributed immensely to economic growth.

These other sectors include agriculture, livestock and agro-processing, arts, entertainment, mining and manufacturing among others. The failure of the past PDP-led governments to explore these other sources is said to be mainly responsible for the high level of unemployment. However, one of the many questions still being asked by many Nigerians for almost five years that his administration has been in charge of the country is, which of these sectors, particularly among has received adequate attention under his administration? As far as many are concerned, the Buhari-led administration is as guilty as the previous ones (Ajayi 2019).

Comparing the good self with the bad other

As a way to further tarnish the image of the past PDP-led government,

describing them as being ‘penny-wise but pound-foolish’, President Buhari systematically juxtaposes his ‘good’ administration with the ‘bad’ previous ones. This illustrated in the excerpt below:

Example 19

Learning from the mistakes of the past, this Administration is committed to responsibly managing our oil wealth endowments. We will continue to prudently save our oil income and invest more in the non-oil job-creating sectors.

In this excerpt, Buhari projects his administration as one that is prudent and ingenuous and as such has been able to identify the mistakes of the past administrations. As a ‘prudent’ administration, the Buhari-led administration claims in the excerpts to have made calculated efforts and moves to manage the resources of the country, particularly her oil wealth endowments. Thus, the administration is poised to ‘judiciously’ save and manage oil income, and invest more in the non-oil sectors to create more jobs. This strategic comparison of the ‘good self and bad other’ by Buhari to graphically dissociate himself and his administration from ‘bad governance’ that allegedly characterised the past PDP-led governments, is one of the efforts at ensuring victory for his political party in future elections. With the clear distinction made between his administration and the past ones, Buhari indirectly warns Nigerians against ever trusting the PDP with the governance of

the country, as doing so portends unwise economic decisions, poor economic judgement, and ultimately unpalatable living experience for the masses, especially the youths, who are often the worst hit by poor economic policies.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has examined the use of ideological strategies in President Buhari’s 2019 Independence Day Speech. In particular, the study has shown that the speech is not just a ‘yearly ritual’ that marks the celebration of the country’s independence. Rather, the speech is used by Buhari as a pragmatic and face-saving strategy to disabuse the minds of aggrieved Nigerians of the notion that his administration is not committed to his ‘change agenda’ that promised economic growth, peace and order, adequate security and better life for Nigerians. Following van Dijk’s (2004) model of critical discourse analysis, two discourse ideological strategies: positive self-representation (with sub-discourse strategies such as identification of Nigeria’s problems, self-glorification, and expression of belief in collective governance), and negative other-representation (with sub-discourse strategies as blaming the previous government(s), and comparing the good self with the bad other) are identified as the discursive strategies by Buhari, not just to emphasise his administration’s commitment to its ‘change’ agenda, but also as strategic moves to secure victories for his party in future elections.

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