



Representation of “Us” and “Them” in Atiku Abubakar’s 2023 Presidential Declaration Speech

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Abstract

Language is a vehicle used in expressing one’s ideology, especially when it comes to telling people to agree with your viewpoints. Politicians across the world do this and Nigeria is not an exception. There is a myriad of studies on the ideological representation of “Us” and “Them” in political, protest, conflict and religious discourses. There is, however, need for the investigation of representation of “Us” and “Them” in select presidential interests declaration leading to the 2023 general elections. This study was, therefore, designed to investigate representation of “Us” and “Them” in Atiku Abubakar’s presidential declaration speech of March 23, 2022 (downloaded from the website of *Business Day*). Van Dijk’s (1998) notion of ‘ideological square’ served as theoretical anchorage for the study. The data were subjected to critical discourse analysis and revealed that Atiku Abubakar represented his party (PDP), his supporters and himself positively through “Us”, while “Them” was used to represent negatively the APC administration and their supporters who seem to be the major contenders with PDP in the 2023 presidential elections.

Keyword: electorate, general elections, ideology, Nigeria, negative, positive

Introduction

Language has been used from time immemorial as an instrument by which ideas and actions of individuals are communicated (McClay, 2017). Since human beings practice politics and language being an

indispensable tool of their communication, the importance of language in political affairs of man cannot be overlooked. Language is the instrument that various aspirants to political offices use to express their political ideologies. There are a lot of

studies that revealed how the human language has been used in order to show the power structure in society (van Dijk 1998; Wodak & Fairclough, 1993).

Those ideologies are meant to position an aspirant better than his or her opponent. Ideology is a concept that is common to van Dijk's approach to CDA. However, many scholars have given varied explanations. Some scholars see it as a concept that is common with social science. They therefore define ideology as the verbal means of constructing the society (Downs, 1967). Like the way we say literature mirrors the society, ideology deals with how language is used to picture the society in a particular way. This picture of the society can either be good or bad. To Thompson (1990:37), "ideology, according to the epiphenomenal conception, is a system of ideas which expresses the interest of the dominant class but which represents relations. The above shows ideology as a system which power is showcased by the powerful members of the society in an illusory form". Van Dijk's (1995: 138) neutral view shows that one can easily determine ideologies as systems that are at the basis of the socio-political understandings of communities.

On the Nigerian political scene before 2023, quite a number of political candidates came out to make their intentions known to the electorate. Political candidates are people who have interest in governing the country, from the state house of assembly, national assembly, house of senate, governorship and the presidency (Ayo, 2006). Both politicians and electorate in Nigeria are observed to be engrossed in the political activities surrounding 2023 general elections. One of the things that attracted those candidates to members of the electorate who were supporting them was the way they presented themselves through the use of language, showing how they should be preferred to

other candidates. Furthermore, given the evolving nature of Nigeria's democracy and past experiences of the electorate with those who have been in government, many things seemed to be changing, and candidates are making frantic efforts to prove their worth to the electorate. In a bid to endear themselves to the populace and prove their competence, politicians were doing everything within their reach, through the use of different discourse strategic patterns to express their ideologies. It is against this backdrop that the current study examines the representation of "Us" and "Them" in Atiku Abubakar's 2023 presidential declaration speech. The aspirant used for the study has been a prominent member of the major opposition party for more than a decade.

There are several studies on the representation of "Us" and "Them" (Cikara and Barel, 2017; McClay, 2017) and on campaign speeches (Azuma, 2012; Al-Faki, 2014; Al-Majali, 2015; Sedláková, Lapčík and Burešová, 2019; Addy and Amo Ofori, 2020). There is, however, need for the investigation of representation of "Us" and "Them" in select speeches on declaration of interest in the presidency, especially in Nigeria's current political dispensation. This study therefore investigates the representation of "Us" and "Them" in Atiku Abubakar's presidential declaration speech.

Atiku Abubakar was born on 25th November, 1946. He is a businessman and educationist. He has contested for the presidency under the SDP (1993) the ACN (2007), the the APC (2015) and the PDP (2019 and 2023).

Literature Review

Addy and Amo Ofori (2020) investigated the campaign speech of Ghana opposition leader, Nana Akufor-Addo. The study aimed at discovering how he used language to show identity and solidarity. The data used

for the study was his speech at the manifesto launch of his party. The study used Fairclough's approach to CDA, especially discourse as text. The investigation shows that pronoun and repetition were used to avoid monotony. Also, the pronoun "I" was used to show responsibility; "you" used in cajoling the electorate; "our" shows identification and solidarity and the inclusive pronoun "we" was used to indicate him as a voice, authority and representation of the party in the presidential election. Furthermore, there is the use of "us" and "them" to show dichotomy between the party and their opponents. Also, Cikkara and Barel (2017) considered how the Democrats and Republicans represent themselves. The data for the study comprised forty-eight (48) participants from both sexes. The participants shared themselves as "The Eagles" and "The Rattlers". The study used Multivoxal Pattern of analysis and Evolutionary Psychology served as theoretical anchorage for the study. Result of the study indicated the Republicans and the Democrats representing themselves that in-group target is between than out-group derogation to group perception and cognition. Also, the result of the study showed that social concepts rely on domain-general circuitry associated with encoding stimuli's valence or functional significance.

From discourse perspective, McClay, (2017) analysed the campaign speeches of Donald Trump. The study covered Trump's campaign speeches from 2015-2016. Both Systemic Functional Linguistics and van Leeuwen's (2008) Network of Social Actors served as theoretical frameworks for the study. From the study, it has been observed that Trump's speeches are embedded with ideologies that framed his reality. Also, the study also shows that his speeches depicted the strategic pattern of the representation of "us" and "them".

Relating to the representation of Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton through the use "us" and "them", Sedláková, Lapčík and Burešová, (2019) studied how Czech Radio represented them in different programmes. The data comprised five (5) programmes with seventy-five (75) episodes. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were deployed in the analysis. The result showed that there was biased representation of each candidate, especially Clinton. This is to give support to Trump. The attack on the Republican was thematised. Also, Trump's supporters were presented as low, incomplete/insufficient educated persons, unemployed and drug addicts. In addition to the negative representation of Trump, there were lots of disqualifying labels used against him. Furthermore, Trump is positively represented as someone with financial and economic expertise, just to damage Clinton's candidacy.

Baker (2006) investigated the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. The aim of the paper was to consider how some newspapers in the UK represent them. The data for the study comprised a corpus of 150 million words from 12 national and 3 UK newspapers within the span of ten years. The study is both qualitative and quantitative in its mode of analysis. Some approaches of CDA were adopted as theoretical anchorages. The result of the study shows how they were represented by association. It was also observed that the refugees and asylum seekers were represented based on identities. Farag and Eid (2006) considered the representation of the powerful and powerless in parliamentary discourse. The aim of the study was to investigate the linguistic features. Some debates in Egyptian parliaments served as data for the study, which consists of a corpus of interpellations like approval of bills, government policy or draft agreements. The study used CDA, especially

van Dijk's approach to ideology as a theoretical framework. The study observed there is representation of interaction and conflict of us and *them*, *self* and *others*, *in-group* and *out-group* in the discourse.

Rahimi (2006) examines positive self-representation and negative representation of others in Iranian and Western media. Discourses on religion and politics in the media served as data for the study. Van Dijk's notion of ideology was used as the theoretical mirror for the study. The results of the study show that the discourses are characterised with polarization of in-group vis-a-vis out-group. The ideological representation by each religion and political party was to enhance self, mitigate and avoid others. It is used also to exacerbate and issue concerning misrepresentation by an out group.

Relating to racism on the representation of "Us" and "Them", Augoustinos and Riggs (2007), looked at the representation of the whites and Aboriginal in Australia. The study used social representation theory. The work focused on how the white participants wielded racial categories. The result of the study shows that the white held tightly to their dominance by denying the alternate representation on the accounts of the Aboriginal, and the white Australians are represented as good people, while the Aboriginal and other races were represented as bad. Also, the study shows that there is high level of hegemony in terms of the relationship between the whites and the Aboriginal. In addition, the whites show superiority in terms of sense of belonging or ownership as defended territory.

Theoretical framework

Van Dijk's notion of 'ideological square' is used as a theoretical guide to achieve the aim of the study. To van Dijk (1998: 69) ideologies are representations of who we

are, what we stand for, what our values are, and what our relationships are with other groups. These are particularly our enemies or opponents; that is, those who oppose what we stand for, threaten our interests and prevent us from equal access to social resources and human rights such as residence, citizenship, employment, housing, status and respect, and so on. Ideologies could either be positive or negative. Positive ideologies like feminism, anti-racism could be seen as forms of opposition and resistance against domination and any form of social inequality; while the negative ideologies could have element of polarization such as the difference between "Us" and "Them" (van Dijk, 1998). In other words, an ideology is a self-serving schema for the representation of "us" and "them" as social groups. This means that ideologies probably have the format of a group schema, or at least the format of a group schema that reflects our fundamental social, economic, political or cultural interests (van Dijk, 1998).

Elaborating on his thesis, van Dijk (1998) contributes a useful theoretical concept he calls the "ideological square". The ideological square has two strategies known: positive in-group description and negative 'out-group' description. According to van Dijk (1998:33) the double strategy of this binary opposition is often manifested in discourse by lexical choice and other linguistic features (van Dijk, 1998:33). Van Dijk maintains that many group ideologies involve the representation of "self" and "others", "us" and "them". Many therefore seem to be polarized – we are good and they are bad, and the "ideological square" functions to polarize in- and out-groups in order to present the "we" group in a favorable light and the "they" group unfavorably (Kuo and Nakamura, 2005:410). Thus, as van Dijk (1993) clarifies an additional strategy used to

express assimilationism is to represent the “other” in a negative light which is known as “negative other presentation” (Tardy, 2009). This ideological polarization may be implemented by a large variety of forms such as the choice of lexical items that imply positive or negative evaluations, as well as in the structure of whole propositions and their categories (as in active/passive, etc.). This strategy of polarization consists of "emphasizing our good properties/actions; emphasizing their bad properties/actions, mitigating our bad properties/actions; and mitigating their good properties/actions" (Kuo and Nakamura, 2005). It is common in racist discourse and even in political discourse especially during campaign where candidates see their relationship with others as how they categorise themselves and others. The same position can also be seen in political propaganda, religious teachings and some social movements.

Methodology

The study is descriptive and qualitative in its nature of analysis. The study used Alhaji Atiku Abubakar’s presidential declaration which was released on March 23, 2022. The transcribed text was downloaded from the website of Business Day). The study used van Dijk’s (1998) notion of ‘ideological square’ to see how those campaign speeches are characterised with ideological patterns of “Us” and “Them” in them. The researchers chose Atiku’s Abubakar’s speech because it meets the focus of the research, that is, it has the elements of binary classification of “us” and “them”. Another reason for choosing Atiku’s declaration speech is that it con The theory is relevant, as it helps the researchers to see how the Atiku’s declaration speech portrays the use of “Us” and “Them” as ideological representations. The data in the study were subjected to thorough critical discourse analysis.

Analysis and results

The data for this study is investigated through van Dijk’s (1998) notion of ‘ideological square’. It should be noted that the analysis is done with little modification to cater for the aim of the study. So, in this segment, how candidates represent themselves positively and others negatively through the use of ideological patterns “Us” and “Them” are presented and analysed through some lexical items that show strength, antecedents, competence and so on.

We are agents of peace; they are agents of insecurity

Since the inception of democracy in Nigeria, most of the leaders that have been voted into public offices have not proved their competence in terms of handling insecurity (Ayo, 2006). Nigeria has been bedeviled by insecurity right from independence; however, it has never gone out of hands like the way we are experiencing right from the time there was change in government in 1999 from military to civilian rule. This insecurity ranges from Niger Delta Militancy in the South-south, Boko Haram in the Northeast, Banditry in the Northwest and some parts of North Central like Niger State, Fulani Herdsmen and farmer crises in the North Central, IPOB in the Southeast and some general cases like kidnapping which cut across all the geopolitical zones (Osisanwo, 2020). So, most of the candidates vying for the position of the presidency have tried to persuade Nigerians that truly they, those candidates, possess the competence in making insecurity a thing of the past. In this this segment, selected extracts depicting the representation of Atiku and his party as agents of peace while others, especially the ruling party, APC, as agents of insecurity are presented and analysed. From extract 1, we can see how Atiku represents himself as the solution to insecurity while he represents his opponent

(s), especially the current administration as agents of insecurity:

Extract 1: *Why security? Because national security is the first sign of a functional government, and where it does not exist, we must not blame those who threaten it. We can only blame a government that allows it to be threatened. And if I am elected as your President, insecurity is one thing I will not tolerate* (Presidential Declaration of Atiku Abubakar, March 23, 2022, *Business Day*).

From extract 1, Abubakar Atiku has represented the current administration on the negative. He sees them as incompetent in handling insecurity. He sees a functional government as a government that is able to fight anything that threatens the national security. The well-being of the populace is dependent on their security. It is also one of the things that assure the development of a nation. Through the representation of “Us” and “Them”, Atiku has shown that the government lacks the competence of how to tackle insecurity, but represent himself and his supporters as those who possess the capabilities of handling the issue of insecurity. Moreover, he uses the inclusive pronoun “we” to show solidarity with his supporters and telling them that those to be blamed for the insecurity of Nigeria are those in leadership currently. He represented himself in the positive light as the candidate who would make security an uttermost priority when voted in come 2023.

Extract 2: *The APC administration has failed in its fundamental responsibility of protecting the lives and*

properties of Nigerians. The most significant human right is the right to life, which has not been protected under the APC administration

(Presidential Declaration of Atiku Abubakar, March 23, 2022, *Business Day*).

Following the trend in the representation of “Us” as the panacea to the challenges of insecurity, while “They” is being represented as the cause of insecurity, Atiku Abubakar sees this administration as a failed administration, especially when it comes to the protection of the Fundamental Human Right, right to life. He sees the current administration as a failed government for not protecting the lives of Nigeria, and even protecting their properties. So, from extract 2, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar has represented the ruling party, APC, as a party that has failed Nigeria in terms of protection of lives and properties, and so, the party should not be given another chance come 2023. Apparently, he sees himself and members of his party, PDP, as people that would never joke with the lives and property of Nigerians when given the mandate to govern.

Extract 3: *They want to distract us from holding them responsible for the insecurity and rising poverty* (Presidential Declaration of Atiku Abubakar, March 23, 2022, *Business Day*).

Also, relating to the case of insecurity, Atiku represented the public and those who are canvassing for him as “us, while those in those in the ruling party are regarded as “they”. Those in the current administration are represented negatively as the main causes of insecurity. Atiku advised his supporters not to be allowed to be distracted

by “they” after the problem they have brought on the country. He says they must be blamed for the insecurity challenge Nigeria is facing. So, from extracts 1-3, Atiku has represented the ruling on the negative as those who are incompetent of curbing insecurity, who brought insecurity and who should be blamed for the security challenge Nigeria is facing.

They are clueless on leadership; we have ideas on what leadership is all about

Leadership entails proffering solutions to what befalls a group, and also having ideas on how to handle critical issues. Like in the case of Nigeria, a leader that has the leadership qualities that would proffer solutions to the problems the country finds itself such as insecurity, economic meltdown, inadequate health services, falling standard of education, bribery and corruption, secession and so on would receive the support of the citizenry. Atiku through his campaign speeches has represented the current administration as one that is clueless on what to do to proffer solutions to Nigeria’s challenges. He represented himself as the chosen one who has the capacity to deliver Nigerians from what seems impossible with the current administration. This representation of “Us” as having the clues on how to salvage Nigeria, and “They” not having the clues on how to go about the problems of Nigeria is seen in the extracts below:

Extract 4:

*The 2023 election is not just like the usual elections; it is a referendum to decide whether we want **greatness** or continuous **destruction**. It is a choice between two paths: the path of **unity and progress** or the path of **division and backwardness**. We need a new kind of leadership that*

*will steer us to a positive path. In 2023, we want a **President who has ideas on how to fix Nigeria**. We want a president who **understands**, who **inspires** and is **empathetic** (Presidential Declaration of Atiku Abubakar, March 23, 2022, *Business Day*).*

The first element used by Atiku to represent himself and his opponent is comparison. We have the words “greatness and destruction” and the structures, “unity and progress” and “the path of division and backwardness” antithetically presented to the readers/listeners. The word “greatness” and the structure “unity and progress” were used to represent Atiku, PDP and Nigerians in the support of his election as the next president on the positive, while the current administration headed by Buhari and his party APC, and all those vying for the number one seat or the other in Nigeria on the flagship of APC, are represented on the negative. Atiku has represented himself and his party PDP through “Us” as an epitome of greatness, unity and progress, while by using “Us” his opponents are represented through “Them” as agents of continuous destruction, division and backwardness. This typically characterised Nigeria’s politics where an opponent is character-wise assassinated by a fellow contestant, in order to prove that he, the opponent, is better in all aspects than his fellow contestant (s). With the sentence “We need a new kind of leadership that will steer us to a positive path”, Atiku represented the current administration as the one that uses archaic method in ruling its people despite the new trends in leadership that have been practised by other nations. He so believed that when given the chance, he, being a new leader with new idea, will take Nigeria through a positive path that would make her take her place with other developed nations

of the world. Finally, the extract also buttresses the use of the inclusive “we” to tell characterize the current administration negatively and the opposition party positively. This he did by mentioning the kind of leader that Nigerians must vote into governance come 2023.

The structure, “President who has ideas on how to fix Nigeria” tells us that the current president lacks the clue on how to fix Nigeria. Borrowing from the concept of “shared knowledge” from Hyland’s (2005) Stance and Engagement Theory, we can deduce that the listeners or Nigerians know the deplorable condition of the country and seek a president that would fix it. Moreover, the words “understands”, “inspires” and “emphatic” also indicate that the current administration is inadequate on how to go about some challenges confronting Nigerians. Atiku believes that a president must understand the plight of his people and inspires them in different ways. He represented these as attributes that the ruling party lacks. Assuredly, he is telling Nigerians that when voted in, his administration will be efficient in those aspects that the ruling party is deficient.

Extract 5: *There should not be any limit to what you want to achieve if you are willing to work for it. That is my dream for Nigeria. However, that is not possible without credible and visionary leadership, and that is what I want to offer to Nigerians.... Under my presidency, I want to focus on five key areas: Unity of Nigeria, Security, Economy, Education and devolving more resources and powers to the federating*

units (Presidential Declaration of Atiku Abubakar, March 23, 2022, Business Day).

Extract 5 has really buttressed Atiku’s representation of “They are clueless on leadership; we have ideas on what leadership is all about”. With this he represented the current administration negatively through “Them” as leaders that are not credible and lack vision on how to foster development in Nigeria, while he represented himself as a credible and visionary leader. In those key areas he mentioned to be tackled when voted in, he has also portrayed the ruling party negatively. Since Nigeria is a country with many ethnic nationalities, some ethnic groups who feel marginalized are clamouring for secession. This thereby endangers the unity of the country. Atiku sees it as a failure of the current administration to proffer solution to this problem which has led to the call of the disintegration of Nigeria. Atiku represented himself as one who has the initiative on how to settle this problem by making those aggrieved regions enjoy what other regions are enjoying without discrimination.

Extract 6: *Presently, Nigeria is a sinking ship; it must be rescued urgently. That is why I am happy to announce my candidacy for the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, under the platform of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). I offer myself to rescue the sinking ship. Under my captainship, this ship will sail to a brighter course by the grace of God (Presidential Declaration of Atiku Abubakar, March 23, 2022, Business Day).*

To wrap it up on the representation of Atiku's opponent on the negative, he represented the current administration as a bad captain. Here, Nigeria is depicted as a ship on a voyage which is sinking due to lack of a competent sailor or captain. So, Atiku represented himself as a candidate under whose captainship will save the sinking would be saved. Mentioning the name of the party he is contesting from is another way to show that he and the members of his party (PDP) are not like the ruling party (APC) which lacks clues on how to save Nigeria from sinking. In conclusion, extracts 4-6 used van Dijk's notion of 'ideological square' to represent the ideologies Atiku has about his party, supporters and himself. He represented his party, supporters and himself as "Us" to show solidarity and competence in terms of governance, while the current administration, members of the ruling party as "Them", which characterised them with negative attributes.

They are agents of disunity; we are catalysts of unity

As earlier pointed out that Nigeria is a nation with lots of ethnic nationalities, some some of the ethnic nationalities are feeling marginalized, thereby making them to seek secession. Especially in the case of Indigenous People of Biafra and Oduduwa Republic whose leaders Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Adeyemo have been Nnamdi arrested for clamouring for secession of their regions respectively. At the moment the leader of IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu has been arraigned by court for treasonable felony and other offences. Atiku believes such is bred because the government has been nepotic, tribalistic and religious instead of adhering to Federal Character.

Extract 7: *As the election is fast approaching, we should not*

*be distracted from the devastating conditions we are in now. **The ruling party wants to divide us; they want to divide us along the political, ethnic, and religious lines so that we forget to blame them for the rising inflation.... They want us to be facing each other and hating one another. We should focus on the issues, not our differences. Let us unite and fight our common enemies: the lack of unity, insecurity, poverty, inflation, and unemployment** (Presidential Declaration of Atiku Abubakar, March 23, 2022, *Business Day*).*

In terms of jobs, political appointments, admissions in schools and others, the measures used are sometimes not visible and equitable. Against this backdrop, Atiku has represented the ruling party, APC as agent of division. "They" is used to show the activity of APC, which is bringing division to Nigeria through religious, political and ethnic dichotomies especially in relation to the ruling party's controversial Muslim-Muslim ticket. The Atiku uses that to drive home his ideology of not being biased religiously. The ruling party is also represented negative as supporter of ethnic marginalisation. Since Dr Nnamdi Azikwe became a ceremonial president in 1960, no Igbo man has been near the number one and two topmost seats in Nigeria. Atiku has passed this ideology to gain acceptance that he and his party members are not in support of that. It could be seen that during the 2019 Presidential election, he chose Peter Obi as his running, and presently, Okowa who is from the Igbo nationality. This represents

him as a candidate who is not bound to tribalism, and the current administration as one which encourages tribalism. Another extract represents the ruling party as agents of division while the opposition is an agent of unity:

Extract 8: *Throughout my life, I have never looked at Nigerians as divided people. In my eyes, all Nigerians are the same. When I see you, I don't see Yoruba or Hausa or Igbo or Fulani or a northerner or southerner; when I see you, I only see a Nigerian, and I expect the best from you....Why is unity a priority? Well, we must work to strengthen our unity as my dear friend and brother, Chief Alex Ifeanyiichukwu Ekwueme, once said. National integration, he continued, will not come as a gift. It is the role of government to work very hard and promote it* (Presidential Declaration of Atiku Abubakar, March 23, 2022, *Business Day*).

Atiku portrays the present administration as an agent of division while he represents himself as a unifier. He sees the current administration as working against strengthening the unity of the country and depicts himself as one who is against such trend and is ready to unite Nigeria.

We understand what human right is; they do not.

Fundamental Human Rights are enshrined in democracy and any democratic nation must value and practise it. The Nigerian

constitutions: Republican, 1979, 1989 and 1999 recognise human rights without reservations. However, in the current administration, the right to life, education, movement, religion, right to vote and be voted for, association and even expression have been politicised. Nigerians are left on daily basis with the fear of the unknown. Worst of it, human right activists are also denied the right to speak about the dehumanization and suppression that have become the new order in this administration. Atiku represents himself as one who knows the importance of human rights, especially the right to speech and association. This is seen in the constant arrest of some aggrieved Nigerians like Sowore, Nnamdi Kanu, Sunday Igboho and others. In extract 9, Atiku represents himself as a candidate who understands how to tackle issues regarding human right.

Extract 9: *Since the civil war, the unity of Nigeria has never been threatened as it is today. Nigerians are losing hope in the oneness of this country. My fellow Nigerians, I am the unifier that is coming to bond the broken union....We will open doors for dialogue to hear the grieving voices of all Nigerians. Under my presidency, there will be a new Nigeria, where everybody has an equal voice and is heard* (Presidential Declaration of Atiku Abubakar, March 23, 2022, *Business Day*).

Atiku believes the right way to settle the grievance of some Nigerians is not through constant arrest and detention. He believes the strategy the current administration adopts only affects human rights. Through the sentence, "We will open doors for dialogue to hear the grieving voices of all

Nigerians”. Atiku represents as a leader who understands the way to go about settling grievances of the public. He believes when voted in, his administration would allow for freedom of expression to all Nigerians. He believes everyone has the right to express his or her opinion without being taken against him or her by the government.

They do not know how to create jobs; we do

Nigeria is one of the countries in the Sub-Saharan where there is constant exodus of people to other African nations or other continents of the world in search of greener pastures. The reason for this mass exodus is not far to see as the rate of unemployment is on the increase even for those who have jobs, the minimum wage does not cater for the ever increasing prices some household commodities. The current administration is represented as one which lacks the ideas on how to create jobs for the teeming population of Nigeria.

Extract 10: *More than 100 million Nigerians are either unemployed, underemployed, or unemployable. How could our ever-increasing population be of added value if we do not create opportunities for our people? I know how to create jobs. I built several successful businesses and companies within Nigeria, and as a result of which thousands of people are gainfully employed. If I can manage my businesses well, I can manage the Nigerian economy well (Presidential Declaration of Atiku*

Abubakar, March 23, 2022, *Business Day*).

From the little statistics given by Atiku, the population of Nigerians who are not employed about 50% considering the estimate of about 200 million people. He accrued the condition of unemployment to lack of clue on how to create job by the current administration. He represents himself as the one who has the abilities to create job, especially from his experience as a businessman. He believes from his experiences garnered as a businessman when it comes to be an employer of labour, if given the chance to rule, will create job for Nigerians unlike the current administration which lacks experiences on how to go about solving the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. Atiku mentioning that he has companies across Nigeria that provided jobs for thousands of people, believes that he cannot be compared to the ruling party who cannot boast of a company which has employed thousands of people.

No functional economy in this administration

Nigeria is a country with lots of human and natural resources in Africa. In terms of Gross Domestic Product, Nigeria is the richest country in Africa. And it is one of the largest producers of crude in Africa. However, it has the poorest economy currently.

Extract 11: *All the macro-economic indicators are not favorable under the APC administration. APC inherited single-digit inflation; they now increased it to about 16%. When APC came into power, unemployment was around 9%; now, unemployment is more*

than 33%. The Exchange Rate was N197 to a Dollar in 2015, but in the hand of APC, Naira suffered the worst devaluation ever. As we speak, the exchange rate is more than N400 to a dollar, the official rate. That was not the change we wanted. If we get elected, we will create alternative sources of foreign exchange supply to Nigeria and reduce importation to increase the value of the Naira (Presidential Declaration of Atiku Abubakar, March 23, 2022, *Business Day*).

Extract 11 puts both the opposition and the ruling parties side-by-side: the ruling party is classified negatively while the opposition being led by Atiku Abubakar is represented positively. Through the use of “Them” the ruling party is representing as a group that lacks the ideas on how to improve the Nigeria’s economy. The use of “not favourable” represents the ruling party in a negative light; thereby, labeling it as the cause of the malfunctioning of the Nigeria’s economy. Atiku also used shared knowledge to remind Nigerians or his supporters per se, about the condition of the economy before the APC took over power from PDP through statistical representation of the Nigeria’s economy before and what is obtainable now. Also, depicts APC negatively, criticizing it for its inability to develop the Nigeria’s economy, a situation that that has led go increase in the rate of unemployment by 24% which was initially 9%, but currently 33%. Atiku also looked at how poor the ruling party in handling the economy which has led to the fall in the value of Naira. Before APC got into power, the exchange

rate was ₦197 but is currently more than ₦400. The structure “that was not the change we wanted” is a representation of the disappointment of Nigerians who wanted change but got some else. When APC was the opposition party, Nigerians were promised sudden change in all facets. The party assured Nigerians that the weaknesses of PDP would be worked upon. But currently from the presidential declaration of Atiku, the ruling party is lampooned and represented as a deceptive party.

In what is seen as a positive representation of Atiku, PDP and his supporters, the inclusive pronoun “we” is used to show that they are ready to change everything and work on the weaknesses of their opponents – bringing down the exchange rate and reducing the rate at which things are being imported into Nigeria thereby boosting the economy. Through the positive representation of “Us” and negative representation of “Them” Atiku has represented his party, supporters and himself as those who possess the expertise in making the Nigeria’s economy work. Another representation of how the economy of Nigeria has suffered negatively in the current administration is exemplified below:

Extract 12: *When APC came into power, Nigeria’s debt was N12 trillion, and now they increased it to N32 trillion. They still want to borrow more. Under my leadership, we will reduce government borrowing. Too much borrowing comes at the detriment of future growth. We will operate a liberal economy that allows small businesses to grow through lower taxes and charges for small businesses and low-income earners. We will*

encourage the expansion of the private sector to spur economic growth

(Presidential Declaration of Atiku Abubakar, March 23, 2022, Business Day).

The excerpt represents how the Nigeria's debt increased under APC due to the party's inability to improve the economy. There is also comparison between PDP and APC by Atiku Abubakar in terms of debt incurred on behalf of the nation. The ₦12 trillion debt APC inherited from PDP has currently risen to ₦32 trillion, with the difference of ₦20 trillion. This has really positioned APC on the negative while the PDP is represented positively. It has promoted Atiku's ideology and his party, PDP in terms of handling the economy, while demoting APC when it comes to handling the economy. Furthermore, Atiku represented APC as "They" negatively associating them with the verb "borrow". He sees the act of borrowing as a poor way to handle the economy, which has negative effects on the country. He promises his supporters to reduce borrowing in order to promote and stabilise the economy. Again, Atiku also brings his expertise in terms of promoting small scale business. This to him is one of the failures of the current administration which has endangered the Nigerian economy.

Conclusion

So far this study has investigated the representation of "us" and "them" in Atiku Abubakar's 2023 presidential declaration speech. It used the transcribed text downloaded from the website of *Business Day*. Dijk's (1998) notion of 'ideological square' served as its theoretical anchorage. The findings of the study reveals that Atiku Abubakar represented his party (PDP), supporters and himself positively through "Us", while "Them" represented the current APC administration and their supporters.

Results also reveal that there is ideological representation of the speaker and his opponent such as: we are agents of peace; they are agents of insecurity, they are clueless on leadership; we have ideas on what leadership is all about, we understand what human right is; they don't, they are agents of disunity; we are catalysts of unity and no functional economy in this administration. The study concludes that the political speeches of political aspirants in Nigeria are characterised with the ideological representation of "Us" positively and the representation of "Them" negatively. Politicians do this in a bid to gain the confidence and invariably the votes of the electorate. The study recommends that more should be investigated on political speeches relating to the 2023 General Election in Nigeria especially of major contenders like Bola Tinubu, Peter Obi, Rabiu Kwankwaso and others.

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