

IDEOLOGIES ON DISPLAY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF FIRST-TERM GUBERNATORIAL INAUGURAL SPEECHES IN NIGERIA

IDEOLOGÍAS EN EVIDENCIA: ANÁLISIS CRÍTICO DE DISCURSOS DE INVESTIDURA DE GOBERNANTES EN SU PRIMER MANDATO EN NIGERIA

DES IDÉOLOGIES À DÉCOUVERT : UNE ANALYSE CRITIQUE DES DISCOURS D'INVESTITURE DES GOUVERNEURS AU PREMIER MANDAT EN NIGERIA

IDEOLOGIAS EM EVIDÊNCIA: ANÁLISE CRÍTICO DE DISCURSOS DE POSSE DE GOVERNADORES EM PRIMEIRO MANDATO NA NIGÉRIA

Mathias O. Chukwu

Lecturer, University of Nigeria,
Nsukka, Nigeria.

mathias.chukwu@unn.edu.ng

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6358-6449>

David Olorunsogo

PhD candidate, University of Ibadan,
Ibadan, Nigeria.

sogodav@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9353-6864>

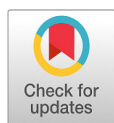
ABSTRACT

The interest of scholars in political discourse has always been drawn to the dynamics of inaugural speeches and the implicit/explicit portrayal of ideologies. Extant studies have explored discourse patterns, thematic orientations, power relations, rhetorical devices, ideologies, and other issues in inaugural speeches. This paper offers a holistic investigation of the recurring ideologies in first-term gubernatorial inaugural speeches across Nigeria. The data for the study are drawn from 25 inaugural speeches made between 2014 and 2015 across the 36 states in Nigeria. The source of the data is *Inaugural Speeches: President and Governors of Nigeria (2014-2017)*. Through the theoretical lens of van Dijk's approach to critical discourse analysis, four ideologies were identified in the speeches. These manifest ideologies in the speeches are idealistic ideology, theistic ideology, messianic ideology, and democratic ideology. They are found to drive the establishment of the authority of the governors through the process of sensitizing the citizens about the governor's interpretation of the election, the presentation of novel principles and perspectives that the new administration would imbibe, and how they would inform governance for the tenure. The reoccurring strategies actualized to project the ideologies are consensus, polarization, lexicalization, presupposition, and metaphors.

Keywords: ideologies, critical discourse analysis, discursive strategies, inaugural speeches, polarization, political discourse

RESUMEN

El interés de los académicos en el discurso político por lo general se ha visto atraído por la dinámica de los discursos de investidura y la descripción implícita o explícita de las ideologías. Pocos estudios han explorado patrones discursivos, orientaciones temáticas, relaciones de poder, dispositivos retóricos, ideologías y otros aspectos de esos discursos de investidura. Este artículo ofrece



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una investigación holística sobre las ideologías recurrentes en discursos de posesión de gobernantes en su primer periodo en toda Nigeria. Los datos del estudio se tomaron de 25 discursos de investidura pronunciados entre 2014 y 2015 en los 36 estados de Nigeria. La fuente de los datos fue *Inaugural Speeches: President and Governors of Nigeria (2014–2017)* [Discursos de investidura: presidente y gobernadores de Nigeria (2014–2017)]. Mediante la perspectiva teórica del método de análisis crítico del discurso de Van Dijk, se identificaron cuatro ideologías en los discursos. Estas ideologías manifiestas en esas alocuciones son idealista, teísta, mesiánica y democrática. Se halló que estas inspiraron la implantación de la autoridad de los gobernantes mediante el proceso de sensibilización de los ciudadanos sobre la interpretación de la elección por el gobernante, la presentación de los nuevos principios y perspectivas que imbuirían la nueva administración, y cómo configurarían estos la gobernanza durante el mandato. Las estrategias recurrentes para proyectar las ideologías fueron consenso, polarización, lexicalización, presuposición y metáforas.

Palabras clave: ideologías, análisis crítico del discurso, estrategias discursivas, discursos de investidura, polarización, discurso político

RÉSUMÉ

L'intérêt des chercheurs pour le discours politique s'est généralement porté sur la dynamique des discours d'investiture et la description implicite ou explicite des idéologies. Peu d'études ont exploré les modèles discursifs, les orientations thématiques, les relations de pouvoir, les dispositifs rhétoriques, les idéologies et d'autres aspects de ces discours d'investiture. Cet article propose une étude holistique des idéologies récurrentes dans les discours d'investiture du premier mandat au Nigeria. Les données de l'étude proviennent de 25 discours d'investiture prononcés entre 2014 et 2015 dans les 36 États du Nigeria. La source des données était *Inaugural Speeches: President and Governors of Nigeria (2014–2017)*. En utilisant la perspective théorique de la méthode d'analyse critique du discours de Van Dijk, quatre idéologies ont été identifiées dans les discours. Ces idéologies qui se manifestent dans ces discours sont idéalistes, théistes, messianiques et démocratiques. Les idéologies qui se manifestent dans ces discours sont idéalistes, théistes, messianiques et démocratiques. Il a été constaté qu'elles inspiraient l'établissement de l'autorité des dirigeants par le biais du processus de sensibilisation des citoyens à l'interprétation de l'élection par le dirigeant, la présentation des nouveaux principes et perspectives qui imprégneraient la nouvelle administration et la façon dont ils façonneraient la gouvernance pendant le mandat. Les stratégies récurrentes de projection des idéologies sont le consensus, la polarisation, la lexicalisation, la présupposition et la métaphore.

Mots clef : idéologies, analyse critique du discours, stratégies discursives, discours d'investiture, polarisation, discours politique

RESUMO

O interesse dos acadêmicos pelo discurso político tem sido geralmente atraído pela dinâmica dos discursos de investidura e pela descrição implícita ou explícita de ideologias. Poucos estudos exploraram os padrões discursivos, as orientações temáticas, as relações de poder, os dispositivos retóricos, as ideologias e outros aspectos desses discursos de posse. Este artigo oferece uma investigação holística das ideologias recorrentes nos discursos de posse do primeiro mandato na Nigéria. Os dados para o estudo foram extraídos de 25 discursos de posse proferidos entre

2014 e 2015 em todos os 36 estados da Nigéria. A fonte dos dados foi *Inaugural Speeches: President and Governors of Nigeria (2014–2017)*. Usando a perspectiva teórica do método de análise crítica do discurso de Van Dijk, foram identificadas quatro ideologias nos discursos. Usando a perspectiva teórica do método de análise crítica do discurso de Van Dijk, foram identificadas quatro ideologias nos discursos. Essas ideologias manifestadas nos discursos são idealistas, teístas, messiânicas e democráticas. Descobriu-se que elas inspiram o estabelecimento da autoridade dos governantes por meio do processo de sensibilização dos cidadãos em relação à interpretação do governante sobre a eleição, a apresentação dos novos princípios e perspectivas que permeariam a nova administração e como isso moldaria a governança durante o mandato. As estratégias recorrentes para a projeção de ideologias foram o consenso, a polarização, a lexicalização, a pressuposição e a metáfora.

Palavras-chave: ideologias, análise crítica do discurso, estratégias discursivas, discursos de posse, polarização, discurso político

Introduction

Political discourse—a breeding space for the investigation of the relationship between language, ideology, and politics—is fashioned to suit the beliefs and opinions of the citizens in favor of political actors or governments (Fagunleka & Olorunsogo, 2022; Odebunmi & Oni, 2012). In McGregor's (2003, p. 7) explanation of language, it is understood that “our words are never neutral. They convey how we see ourselves... our identity, knowledge, values and beliefs, and our truths. Our discourse permeates everything we do.” The expression of ideology, being a fundamental element in political discourse, is reproduced and transferred through language in political speeches (Olorunsogo & Akinade, 2020, Renaldo, 2021: van Dijk, 2006). This implies that, as long as political speeches are performed, there is the guarantee of the continuity of ideologies. Consequently, insights into the knowledge of the political and historical realities and development of a political environment can be accessed through political inaugural speeches (Ugah & Olaniyan, 2020).

The first formal address by an elected political office holder is the inaugural speech, and it is relevant to the political atmosphere of a given physical context. Inaugural speeches are used by elected executive members to perform high ideological and persuasive functions (Biría & Mohammadi, 2012; Olusola, 2020). The persuasive function of political speeches, in general, enables a political actor to assert the politician's or their political party's power, knowledge, and ideology (Odebunmi & Oni, 2012; Renaldo, 2021). Similarly, support from citizens is galvanized in inaugural addresses by justifying the legitimate process of attaining power. This justification is achieved by the expression of various ideologies (Harrison & Boyd, 2018).

The inaugural speech is one of the many types of political discourse that enables the projection and understanding of political ideologies. Political ideologies which are “a set of ideas, beliefs, values, and opinions, exhibiting a recurring pattern that

competes deliberately as well as unintentionally over providing plans of action for public policy making” made visible through text, especially in inaugural speeches (Freedon, 2001, p. 7174). As posited by van Dijk (2006, p. 732), “discourses make ideologies observable in the sense that it is only in discourse that they may be explicitly expressed and formulated.” Political ideologies that manifest in inaugural speeches do not only present the politician's set of ideas, they also “predict citizens' general value orientation” (Jost et al., 2009, p. 324). It is against this backdrop that this paper investigates the political ideologies that manifest in the first-term gubernatorial inaugural speeches in Nigeria, as a means to contribute to the understanding of the political sphere of Nigeria.

Inaugural speeches have attracted the interest of scholars within and outside the Nigerian space and from various research fields. Since this paper is premised within discourse analysis, a few recent studies focusing on discourse and inaugural speeches are hereby reviewed. In the area of discourse patterns, findings of Olorunsogo and Chukwu (2021) and Ezeifeke (2016) reveal that inaugural speeches in Nigeria express the thematic structures which are consciously woven to present the ideological leanings of the newly inaugurated executive members. According to Olorunsogo and Chukwu (2021), these structures are also crafted to establish power and authority. In line with Olorunsogo and Chukwu (2021), Ugah and Olaniyan (2020) reveal that the inaugural speeches of governors in Nigeria are used to explain the roadmap for the future, they possess stances that are used to connect with the people of the state.

Studies on the manifestation of ideologies in political inaugural speeches have established that speakers use the speech to convey both personal and party ideologies through certain strategies. The strategies identified by Biría and Mohammadi (2012) are euphemism, metaphor, victimization and self-glorification while Renaldo's (2021) investigation reveal that fictive, existential, and lexical presuppositions are the salient strategies.

The rhetorical devices that are deployed in two presidential inaugural speeches of one the ex-presidents of Nigeria, as identified by Olusola (2020), are assertion, pronouns, idioms, and allusion. Also, the rhetorical strategies in the speeches of six ex-presidents identified by Oparinde et al. (2021) are metaphor, repetition, hyperbole, modalities, and pronouns. Although both studies establish that presidential inaugural speeches are greatly marked with rhetorical devices which communicate politicians' intentions, Oparinde et al. (2021) posit that the rhetorical tools deployed in the speeches are used for manipulative purposes by politicians.

Previous studies have offered insights into inaugural speeches in the following areas: discourse pattern and thematic orientation (Ezeifeke, 2016; Olorunsogo & Chukwu, 2021; Ugah & Olaniyan, 2020), power relations, rhetoric devices (Olusola, 2020; Oparinde et al., 2021), and ideologies (Biria & Mohammadi, 2012; Renaldo, 2021). However, none of the studies holistically investigate speeches across a country. Hence, the need for the current study which investigates gubernatorial speeches across the states in Nigeria to draw out the shared ideological underpinnings of the political actors and events of the country during the period covered.

Theoretical Framework

This work relies on van Dijk's (2006) socio-cognitive approach to critical discourse analysis. One underlying position of this approach in political discourse studies which recommends it for the present study is the interweaving of politics, ideology, discourse, and cognition. The approach takes the position that the nature of politics as an arena of contests, protests, and competitions implies that it has to run on ideologies. These ideologies find discourse as a habitable space to be reproduced and sustained (Sunday, 2009).

With emphasis placed on the structure of political discourse, van Dijk (2006, p. 732) establishes that the connecting lines between discourse and political ideologies are drawn upon features such as

“biased lexical items, syntactic structures such as actives and passives, pronouns such as us and them, metaphors or topoi, arguments, implications, and many other properties.” Ideology here is understood as the foundational belief system shared by a social group by which their social representations are anchored. Ideology serves as the central coherence force for a social group's relationship with themselves as well as with other ideological groups. It offers access to aspects of the social group's social identity (Chukwu, 2023). Just like language, it is socially owned and shared but individually activated in contexts of use.

The framework consists of two main discursive strategies, positive self-representation (in-group favoritism) and negative other representation (semantic macro strategy of derogation of an out-group), which form the ideological square (van Dijk, 2006, p. 734). The ideological square is a comprehensive framework that can be used to analyze critical discourse. It demonstrates how language may be used to alter public opinion, frequently within the complicated dynamics of power relations. This paradigm consists of four basic techniques used by actors to further their ideological goals through speech. To begin, “Emphasize our good things” entails emphasizing the good traits and successes linked with their own organization or agenda in order to develop a favorable image and generate support. Second, “Emphasize their bad things” focuses on emphasizing opposing groups' or ideologies' negative aspects and perceived weaknesses to damage their credibility. Third, “De-emphasize our bad things” entails downplaying or explaining flaws within their own camp to maintain their reputation. Finally, “De-emphasize their good things” seeks to undermine opponents' positive perceptions by shedding doubt on their accomplishments or motives. Actually, van Dijk's ideological square is an invaluable tool for dissecting how language and discourse shape public opinion.

The discursive strategies are materialized through the deployment of discursive moves. Discursive moves that are relevant to the data and purpose

of study are as follows: actor description (how actors and actions described with references to their positive or negative characteristics), lexicalization (utilization of specific lexical items that overtly reveal the text producer's opinion about the identity of self or other), metaphor (indirect and abstract reference to actors through the characteristics and features of another entity), and presupposition (pointers to assumption of the truth of an unestablished proposition).

For van Dijk, ideology is not only social but cognitive (Sunday & Ilori, 2020). As part of its cognitive nature, it is often abstract until it is captured in a specific context. This context consists in the main, mental models which are both personal and social; personal as a result of individual members' experience of the events, and social as such a model becomes common property of the social group. The mental models are housed in the episodic memory, from where they place a control on the individual members' social practice, including discourse. However, in a kind of inverse relationship, it is through these mental models that discourse bears its influence on its audience and reproduces social cognitions and ideologies using certain strategies, which van Dijk calls ideological strategies. Examining political discourses from this lens, therefore, offers access to the underlying ideologies through which the thoughts of the speakers could be accessed.

Corpus

The data for this study comprise 25 first-term gubernatorial inaugural speeches across Nigeria. The selected speeches are from *Inaugural Speeches: President and Governors of Nigeria (2014-2017; Nigeria Governors' Forum, 2017)*. The book contains the inaugural speeches of the president of Nigeria and governors of the 36 states within the period 2014 to 2017. Out of the 36 gubernatorial inaugural addresses, 25 are first-term speeches while 11 are second term speeches. Even though Nigeria's general elections were held in 2015, there were states that had off-season elections, hence the

reason there were only 25 first-term speeches (out of which 5 were before and after 2015). The general election in 2015 marked a national departure in Nigeria's political space, as many scholars and international observers argue that the 2015 election is the most credible since the fourth republic began in 1999 (Sule et al., 2018).

The 25 speeches were examined and the ideologies that cut across all the speeches were identified and analyzed using van Dijk (2006) approach to CDA. The in-depth reading of the speeches was carried out, and a mapping was made to track the manifestations of the dominant ideologies that are evident in the speeches. The selected excerpts in the discussion section are representational, and they are exemplifications of the manifestation of the identified ideologies in the 25 speeches. Thus, exploring the inaugural speeches of governors around the period is helpful in understanding the political realities of Nigeria.

The ideologies as presented in Table 1 are negotiated contextually with a possible departure from their universal understanding and application. Unsurprisingly, the identified ideologies reflect polarization, and they are interrogated through the ideology square.

Data Presentation and Discussion

In the first-term inaugural speeches, four dominant political ideologies are identified (drawing insights from the socio-cognitive approach to CDA). They are idealistic ideology, theistic ideology, messianic ideology, and democratic ideology.

Idealistic Ideology

Idealism in this study refers to the lofty ideas that could be called ideals but have no empirical evidence to support their being realized. They are good promises which are impossible by virtue of contextual historical antecedents. It is found prominent in the speech of first-term governors. A typical example of this ideology can be seen in Excerpt 1:

Table 1 Manifestation of Ideologies in the Corpus

S/N	Governors	Year	Ideologies			
			Idealistic	Messianic	Democratic	Theistic
1	Gov. Willie M. Obiano	2014	✓	No	✓	No
2	Gov. Okezie Victor Ikpeazu	2015	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Gov. Bindow Umaru Jibrilla,	2015	No	No	✓	✓
4	Gov. Udom Emmanuel	2015	✓	No	✓	✓
5	Gov. Mohammed Abdullahi Abubakar	2015	No	✓	✓	No
6	Gov. Samuel Loraer Ortom	2015	✓	No	✓	✓
7	Gov. Benedict Bengiushuye Ayade	2015	✓	✓	No	✓
8	Gov. Ifeanyi Okowa	2015	✓	No	✓	✓
9	Gov. David Umahi	2015	✓	No	✓	✓
10	Gov. Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi	2015	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Gov. Muhammad Badaru Abubakar	2015	✓	No	✓	✓
12	Gov. Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai	2015	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Gov. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, 2015	2015	✓	No	✓	✓
14	Gov. Aminu Bello Masari	2015	No	✓	✓	✓
15	Gov. Atiku Bagudu	2015	✓	✓	✓	No
16	Gov. Abdulfatah Ahmed	2015	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Gov. Akinwunmi Ambode	2015	✓	No	✓	✓
18	Gov. Abubakar Sanni Bello	2015	✓	✓	✓	✓
19	Gov. Simon Bako Lalong	2015	✓	✓	✓	✓
20	Gov. Nyesom Ezenwo Wike	2015	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Gov. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal	2015	✓	No	No	✓
22	Gov. Darius Dickson Ishaku	2015	✓	No	✓	✓
23	Gov. Godwin Nogheghase Obaseki	2015	No	No	✓	✓
24	Gov. Yahaya Adoza Bello	2016	✓	✓	✓	✓
25	Gov. Oluwarotimi Akeredolu	2017	✓	✓	✓	✓

Excerpt 1 (The 2015 Inaugural Speech of Governor Ben Ayade of Cross River State): In the new Cross River of our dream, there is a place and hope for everyone. There will be jobs for the youth and prosperity for the working class. The resurgent middle class shall find anchor for their roots and everyone shall find independence and pride in their work. The wages of honest labour shall liberate families from the jaws of hardship and no child shall go to bed with an empty stomach. Neither shall any mother be depressed by lack of access to medicare [Health care services] for her children and loved ones. Brothers and sisters, this is our dream! (p. 85)

This is an excerpt from the speech of an incoming governor of Cross River State in 2015. It typifies the flamboyance of political promises by people who seek government positions in Nigeria, particularly those that seek executive offices. Lexically, the word ‘dream’ used by the incoming governor to describe what he is saying to the people of the state places the speech at the level of metaphysics, away from practical reach. By a deft deployment of the ideological strategy of categorization, he talks of “a new Cross River.” This new State with the old name exists at the level of “our dream,” and it is to be understood in the light of the old one which the people have related with. This is to serve the purpose of drawing an emphasis that the inauguration to which the speech is a part is the beginning of a new era with a clear departure from the past.

This is inherent in first-term inaugural speeches as observed in the first inaugural speech of President Obama (Biria & Mohammadi, 2012). In this new state which yet exists in the imagination, the governor promises a space for everyone. However, in order to draw salience by concretization of his promises, he resulted to itemizing what constitutes “everyone.” By the details, nobody in the new state will be faced with the difficulties of living which even developed nations have not resolved. These include access to satisfactory jobs, to food, and to healthcare. All these future plans are salient features of political inaugural speeches (Ugah & Olaniyan, 2020; Olorunsogo & Chukwu, 2021).

In signing off on these promises, the governor switches to the informal mode and deploys the

fraternal expressions “brothers and sisters.” This serves two purposes in the instance of the discourse. First, it serves to endear the people to him. As explained by Ugah and Olaniyan (2020), gubernatorial inaugural speeches contain attitudinal features that are used to connect with audience. Such features in Excerpt 1 include the lexicalization of “brothers and sisters.” Secondly, it serves as basis for deploying the ideological strategy of consensus where the governor insists that the new state being described is the collective imagination of all citizens and not a mere dream of the governor. This is a kind of disclaimer in which the governor suggests that the people take the blame when the dream fails to materialize. It is as if to suggest that nobody should hold the governor or his government responsible for these promises because they were supposed to be made possible by all the people, considering that they all produced the dream.

The ground for shirking responsibility for the colorful promises by the governor himself had been prepared earlier through the deployment of vagueness in the details of the dreamed new State. In speaking about the middle class, the governor names them as “resurgent.” Within the political context of the speech, there is no link to why they are resurging. Since his administration is just starting with the inaugural speech, it cannot be attributed to anything he has done. However, since the facts of the promises are facts of a dream, it is possible to see the resurgence as metaphysical as the dream to which it is a part; hence the governor refers to the middle class finding an “anchor for their roots.” The manner in which the governor has deployed the two metaphors of *anchor* and *roots* sourced from the marines and agriculture, respectively, and with similar purposes, advances the course of the promises as matters of a dream.

Metaphors are instrumental in driving ideologies in political speeches (Biria & Mohammadi, 2012; Oparinde et al., 2021). The two concepts used here as metaphors are meant to provide a stable support system, one to a ship and the other to a plant. While the former is activated as the need

arises, the latter is the very condition of being for plants. In most cases, seeds begin to develop their roots in their embryonic stage, such that the roots are among the first things developed by plants for the sustenance of their life. In the deployment of these two stabilizing systems as metaphors, however, it is suggested that the roots which grow naturally and at the point of emergence are needing another stabilizing system of the *anchor*. This casts further shadow on the phenomenon identified as ‘resurgent middle class’ and explains why they are the ones to find this anchor.

The idealistic ideology of an instant solution to nagging problems can also be seen in a varied form in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2 (The 2014 Inaugural Speech of Governor Willie Obiano of Anambra state): It has always been clear to me that the realization of my dreams for Anambra State depends on how well we tackle these challenges. The good news is that there is hope for Anambra state. We shall aggressively address the challenge of power supply with the proposed citing of ultra-modern Independent Power Plants (IPP) in the three industrial hubs in the state, specifically, in Onitsha, Nnewi and Awka. When fully operational, these plants will generate enough electricity to power the entrepreneurial dreams of our people. (p. 16)

Here in Excerpt 2, we also find the issue of dreaming very prominent; but unlike in excerpt one where the speaker deployed the ideological strategy of consensus to make the dream a collective one, the strategy of polarization is deployed here. In doing this, the governor has his own dreams for Anambra State, while the people have theirs for entrepreneurship. This clearly removes the people from responsibilities of state and places the responsibilities squarely on the governor who owns the dream. By means of implication as a discourse strategy, it also suggests that the people of the state are only interested in their businesses and not in the collective issues that concern governance in the state. This implies further, that the people are selfish, while the governor is selfless, bearing the interest of the entire state, including those who are only concerned about themselves.

As part of his living up to his dreams for the state, the governor brings good news to the people on this first day in office. The good news is built on hope. As a demonstration of the concrete parts of the good news, he further talks about a plan to address the power supply problem in the state, which is known for its industry. In presenting how the problem would be resolved, the governor spoke of ‘the proposed citing of’ power plants in three different economic locations in the State. He assumes in this presentation that the people know about this proposal and thus have believed in it.

This is a tactical move towards consensus where the governor projects the governance system as that which involves the people. He therefore does not see any need to give further details on the proposal beyond the town locations where they would be cited. The idealism in this good news is the fact that these are independent power projects to be financed by privately owned organizations and that it was still a proposal at the time of the speech. That the governor saw no need to give further details of proposed timelines support the fact that it is neither under his control, nor is he sure of their execution. In fact, eight years later, when the governor has completed two terms, none of the projects are in existence.

Messianic Ideology

The messianic ideology is ubiquitous in the inaugural speeches of Nigerian governors. One of the major structures that bear this is to cast a subtle shadow on the outgoing government while presenting the new government and, indeed the new governor, as one who has come to save the people. Interestingly, even in instances where a governor has already praised the outgoing governor to high heavens, he still finds a way to announce himself as the savior who has come to lead the people to Eldorado. As revealed by Olusola (2020), politicians deploy linguistic tools to assert themselves as the messiah. Excerpt 3 offers a typical example of this.

Excerpt 3 (The 2015 inaugural speech of Governor Nasiru Elrufai of Kaduna State): Today, before God

and man, we celebrate the beginning of our liberation. We rejoice in our good fortune and for the opportunity of a new beginning. [...] You have acted to start a new era of hope, and of equality, and of opportunity, and of a brighter future for all our children. As our leader, Muhammadu Buhari, assumes the exalted office of president of our country today, we salute fellow Nigerians for choosing unity over division, humility over excess, honesty over duplicity, and hope over fear. From today, we declare that we are slaves no more. (p. 152)

The temporal time marker, “today,” strategically positioned at the beginning of the first sentence of Excerpt 3, introduces polarization moves aimed at distinguishing between the painful past and the joyful new. It is a symbolic date, not particularly marking the date of the event, but marking the projected difference. It refers to *us* and *our day* in contradistinction to *them* and *their day*. This day is linked to freedom, captured in the speech as “the beginning of our liberation” and “opportunity of a new beginning.”

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When the governor speaks of his inauguration as the beginning of liberation, he implies that hitherto, the people have been in bondage. Since it is his coming in as the governor of the state that ushers in this liberation movement, it means that he is the messiah sent to liberate his people and set them free. This also explains the question of opportunity to begin anew. The state had begun well before, but some state actors led the people into slavery; and now, his coming in as a man with a sense of mission offers the people the opportunity to re-begin their journey. Nonetheless, this beginning spoken of is not the first part of the liberation, for the liberation is already concluded. The messiah has appeared on the scene, so all forms of subjugation has ceased. This is why “from today, we declare that we are slaves no more.”

In order to clearly mark the difference between the present era and the people who drive it and the outgoing government and the personalities that people it, the governor further deploys the polarization strategy through the use of series of binary opposite terms where the new government is

represented with the positive term and the *other* is represented with the negative term. Hence the new government is represented with unity, humility, honesty, and hope; while the *other* is represented with division, excess, duplicity, and fear. It is as if to say that the difference is clear; *we are the light, they are darkness*.

One peculiarity of Excerpt 3 that should be noted at this point is the submerging of the governor into the president. Here the governor abandons his immediate situation and begins to talk about the election of the president, whom he refers to as “our leader.” In other words, people are to see the liberating import of his election in the light of the election of Mr. Buhari, the president. While this may appear as a form of hero-worshipping on the part of the governor, it serves to say that the victory which he is celebrating has a bigger picture; it is not just the liberation of Kaduna State but that of the nation.

In Excerpt 4, another demonstration of this ideology is seen from Kogi State. Here, unlike in Excerpt 3 above, the new governor speaks to his people and about his state without any reference to the new president, who is also his leader by virtue of party affiliations.

Excerpt 4 (The 2016 inaugural speech of Governor Yahaya Bello of Kogi State): Change has come to Kogi State. I may be the torchbearer, and custodian of it, but you, the great united people of Kogi State, are its owners and proprietors. Let us arise together, take our collective destiny in our hands and go forth excitedly to chart our new direction. (p. 328)

The first sentence of this excerpt bears the full force of the messianic positioning of the new governor. Its declarative form imbues it with the power and authority of indisputable fact. While the kernel summary of what the governor perceives to have happened to the state is represented in the ambiguity of the word “change,” the word could be identified to share in what Stibbe (2015, p. 39) calls ‘psychological positivity’ of the unmarked polar pair by its association with the implied “new.” This is to say that *change*, in the context of this speech, refers

to the *new* reality which is to be seen and understood against its contrary *old*. The *new* is the new government, the government of change, while the old is the outgoing government. Thus, the ideological square of *us/them* is already activated from the beginning, and it contextualizes the word *change* to mean something positive, a positive change.

In the second sentence, the governor initiates the first move in hedging by choosing the auxiliary verb “may” instead of “am.” In doing this, the governor does not intend to suggest any uncertainty in his mind as to his messianic position in the *change* that has been declared, but he deliberately intends to show his audience that he is a humble person who does not arrogate much to himself. There are many pointers that confirm this. The first arises from the implications of the first sentence. As has been noted, its declarative form marks certainty without equivocation. That is, the governor is convinced that change has come. This advertised change is not arbitrary; it is tied to his emergence as the new chief executive of the state with all the powers to decide the direction of the state. So, if his election and consequent assumption of office as the governor of the state is tantamount to salvation for the state, then he *is* the bearer of the salvific power.

His allocation of ownership of the change to the people is a strategic deployment of the ideological tool of consensus and serves to index the advertised *new* within democratic ethics. In furtherance of this move, he locates himself within the people by the means of the pronoun “us” which needs to “arise together” to chart “our new direction.” What is seen here, therefore, is a case of a governor who understands his emergence as the mark of his people’s move to the *promised land* with him as the long-awaited leader.

Democratic Ideology

Democratic ideology in the data refers to a common practice of describing the victory of the new governor at the election as having been made

possible by the people. Perhaps this should be expected in such political context, but the implication of such posturing is usually to say that the election was a free and fair one and that the new governor had emerged by majority votes cast by a majority of the actual voters. As opined by Ball et al. (2020, p. 22), “Democracy is so popular that everyone will try to link his or her ideology, whatever it may be, to democracy.” This further hides the fact that many of the elections were characterized by high incidents of electoral fraud, and the supposed victories were still being contested in the courts of law as of the time of the inauguration and of the speech. An example of this can be seen in Excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5 (The 2015 Inaugural speech of Governor Bello Masari of Katsina State): In voting massively for APC, the good people of Katsina State, and indeed the majority of Nigerians, have clearly demonstrated their deep wisdom in judging those unruly dames and the kleptomaniacal gentlemen of PDP by what they do, and not by who they are. That, in effect, manifests the essence and the true direction of democracy—judging people by their actions and not by how the sycophants and the praise-singers paint them. By giving us your votes and your mandate, you have shown that democracy can be deepened, that votes could count, and that electoral malpractices could be overcome. For this, I can never have enough words to express my gratitude to you for your heroism. (p. 170)

The first thing to note here is how the polarization strategy is deployed. There are the *us*, the *them*, and the *you*. The *us* is the governor and his party, both at the state and national levels where they have been declared winners of the election, albeit with protestations from other parties. There is also the *them* (the *other*), which refers to the outgoing government, while the *you* refers to the voters both in this particular state and in other states where the governor’s party has been declared winners. By means of a negative description, the *other* is labelled “unruly dames,” kleptomaniacs, and sycophants. This negative presentation of the *other* suffices as a pointer to the people’s wisdom in rejecting them at the polls, which is to say that no sane person would want to continue to have

such people occupy the governance seat of their state (Olorunsogo & Ige, 2022). Yet this is not just to acknowledge that the people have a justification to cause a change of leadership in their state and nation using the democratic instrument of election; it is a movement of generalization and presupposition in which the governor wants his listeners to take it as a matter of fact that his party has actually won the elections by majority votes of actual voters. This strategy is similar to Renaldo's (2021) position on factitive presupposition as driving tool of politicians' ideologies in inaugural political speeches.

In Excerpt 6, this is achieved through the import of the expression "in voting massively for APC" which the governor strategically fronts at the beginning of the first sentence of the paragraph. He desires his audience to see this as an undisputed fact. Of further interest here is the expression "the good people of Katsina State, and indeed the majority of Nigerians." These are two categories of voters who are being praised for their wisdom and love for democracy, having elected two leaders at two different levels, namely, the governor of Katsina State and the president of Nigeria. While it is the entire people of Katsina State that voted for the governor, it is 'the majority of Nigerians' that voted for the president. This is a subtle discursive disclaimer and is constructed to further portray the governor and his party as democratic.

In line with Biria and Mohammadi's (2012) position that politicians present the previous administration (especially from different political parties) in a negative light in first-term inaugural speeches, the governor represents the old administration as darkness and the people of Katsina as wise so that it should be clear why the whole state should unarguably vote for him "massively." However, for the president who has to face a larger audience, his election has to be by a majority of Nigerians. Having presupposed that their elections came by the popular participation of the people and that they were free and fair, the governor suggests that this has put an end to electoral

malpractice and strengthened democracy. By claiming that the people's votes for his party has destroyed electoral malpractice, the governor further implies that electoral fraud is something associated with the *other* and that their election is the true reflection of democratic principles. Therefore, the voters are heroes of democracy. Evidently then, the governors self-represent themselves as lovers of democracy by informing that the people chose them against other contestants in free and fair elections. This centralization of the voters' role in the elections that bring them into office can also be seen in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6 (The 2015 inaugural speech of Governor Simon Lalong of Plateau State): Never before in our history has our nation witnessed such outpouring of yearnings for change in the direction of governance. Never before have the common people stood up against injustice and impunity of the powers-that-be. Never before have our people demonstrated such unity and resilience against campaigns of calumny, religious and ethnic divisiveness, and massive financial enticement. Never before has an electoral process imbued in the people the capacity for their votes to really count at the polls. Above all, never before has an opposition party been able to oust the incumbent in a peaceful and democratic election in this country. (p. 234)

Excerpt 6 represents the governor as excited. The cause of his excitement is the democratic ideals that he has found to characterize the election which brought him into office. "Almost all agree that democracy is a good thing" (Ball et al., 2020, p. 22). As far as the governor is concerned, the nation has never had it so good. This is evident in the anaphoric structure of the sentences, of which all but one started with the expression "never before." In the first sentence, he talks of the national history, which has no account of people who yearned for change in governance. In his own descriptions, this is an "outpouring of yearnings." This is similar to Harrison and Boyd's (2018) position that ideologies are used by elites to justify their legitimacy in order to motivate people to follow, obey, and support them. The change in governance, referred to by the governor, is his election to office, and, perhaps, those of other

candidates from his party. Hence, he tactfully equates his emergence as governor to change in governance. Meanwhile some of the newly elected governors, including him, had been members of the now opposition and had been part of the governance at some levels, only switching parties as a matter of political convenience. By projecting the outcome of the elections as being due to the people's yearnings, the governor deploys the ideological strategy of presupposition to imply that it was the people that brought him into government. That is, he would not even have contested the election if it were not for the people's yearnings. In this, the governor erases the role of the politicians in the election outcomes, including actions that were anti-democratic.

In the second sentence, there is a clear case of *us/them* polarization where the governor speaks of the "powers-that-be." These powers were characterized with the negative other-description of "injustice and impunity." By the governor's suggestion, it is these two characteristic features of the powers that ruled before now that made democratic elections impossible in the nation. But as of today, in the new beginning, "the common people" have fought against them and won. Put differently, he and his colleagues who have been declared winners of the election are in community with the common people, while the *other, the powers-that-be*, are anti-common people. As one who communes with the common people, he and his colleagues are saintly and are lovers of democracy, while the *other* is not only anti-democracy but also thoroughly corrupt. They do not only attempt to divide the people along religious and ethnic lines; they also attempt to induce the people with money to sway the general public to their side. All of these the people have rejected and insisted on voting him in as the one they have yearned for.

Theistic Ideology

One of the belief systems dominant in societies is Theism (Slife & Zhang, 2014). It is not a surprise that theistic ideology is one of the most

common ideologies found across the speeches of the governors across faiths and regions. It consists of professed belief in God by the governors. The most common pattern in the speeches is to acknowledge God and thank him for the victory in the elections, but it also includes outright quotation from the Scriptures—the Bible or the Quran. Excerpts 8 and 9 below exemplify the first type.

Excerpt 8 (The 2015 inaugural speech of Governor Nasiru Elrufai of Kaduna State): We are grateful to Almighty God who, in His infinite mercy, has decreed this day. (p. 152)

One peculiarity of Excerpt 8 is its structural position in the speech: it is the first utterance of the governor. As is common with most political speeches, the governor deploys the inclusive pronoun "we" to suggest that the belief which he is expressing is commonly held among his audience as well. In this utterance there are three parts, each bearing an implication and, at the same time, contributing to the central perception of the governor on the election and the day's event. The first borders on owing gratitude to God, who is mighty in all things (almighty). The notion of being almighty comes from the adjectival qualification which suggests that it is deliberately deployed to give a character of might to God. As the one who is almighty, he is able to do all things, particularly to those who know him and worship him, like the governor. This becomes the foundation for the second part of the utterance which is a further description of the "Almighty God."

In this second part, it is to be seen that even though this God is full of might over all things, he is also merciful to an infinite degree. This presupposes that even though the governor has won the election through this God's might, it is a kind of unmerited gift to him. That is, the governor wants his audience to see him in his self-abased humility as not being worthy of such elevation. While the governor's reference to "this day" could literally mean the day of his inauguration and of his speech, it ultimately refers to his becoming the governor of his state. So, while he suggests that he has emerged the governor

by means of God’s mercy, he also does not want anyone to lose the point that his becoming the governor is by God’s decree. In other words, even though the election was contested and his emergence was still a subject of litigation at the time of his speech, there is nothing anybody can do to change his emergence because the Almighty God has “decreed” it. The general implication of this act of attributing the victory of politicians to God is to hide the usual desperation exhibited by politicians during elections. It tends to represent them as saints and passive participants in the election, and this could be a form of manipulation. A similar kind of text is presented in Excerpt 9.

Excerpt 9 (The inauguration of Mr Oluwarotimi Akredolu, the governor of Ondo State, 2017): Ladies and gentlemen, for us to see the change we all desire, we must be ready to constitute ourselves into change evangelists with exceptional missionary zeal to succeed. We must know that the man in the mirror is you and I. We need to have faith and find courage in the words of the good scripture that says: Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. (p. 338)

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Like in many of the speeches already seen, the governor’s deployment of the inclusive pronouns “us” and “we” is first to make the task of governance appear as a matter in which the people have great stakes. This fundamental propositioning of the people is done through *topos* wherein the position is taken as the standard view. The implication of representing the people as stakeholders in the state governance may appear to be a demonstration of some democratic disposition on the part of the governor, but it is actually meant to say that state failure is a collective failure. That is, the governor is doing this to find a basis to absolve himself from taking responsibility over the poor performance that might characterize his leadership. In order to cement this, he packages his speech in critically Christian religious discourse, quoting directly from the Bible, albeit without referencing it. The first of this move is his demand that the people must assume the frame of “change evangelists with exceptional missionary zeal.” Evangelists

in Christian theology are known for preaching the message of Christ. Missionaries are usually focused on the same preaching but often with the aim of converting a group of people to their faith. In the political context of the governor’s speech, therefore, the governor is demanding from the people to become his emissaries bearing the message of change, the change that is his emergence as the governor, not anything that he has done yet. They are to bear this message with the zeal that is targeted at bringing others in as converts. For a basis, the governor then refers the people to faith and courage in the Biblical scripture. They need faith because that is what will account for the lack of logical and evidential proof of the message, and courage because there would be no way to bear such a message without being courageous. He then moves to the scriptural text, directing the people’s hope to “the Lord.” In doing this, he practically takes himself away from the position of responsibility for the people’s welfare.

Conclusion

In this paper, the dominant ideologies that permeate the inaugural speeches of first-term governors in Nigeria have been accounted for. The ideologies are idealistic ideology, theistic ideology, messianic ideology, and democratic ideology. The main strategies deployed in the speeches are consensus, polarization, lexicalization, presupposition, and metaphors. Through polarization, there is the utilization of personal pronouns. The first-person pronoun *I* is deployed to establish the authority and commitment of governors, while *we* and *us* are used to motivate social action and social commitment. The third person pronouns are usually used to present out-groups (van Dijk, 2006); and in the context of the selected speeches, these third person pronouns are used to reference the successes and failures (mostly) of previous administrations, and they are also used to negatively project other political parties. Lexicalization is used to project cultural and societal nuances that established the ideological drive of the governors for the term. Metaphors are drawn upon to create mental comparisons.

As established by earlier studies (Biria & Mohammadi, 2012; Renaldo, 2021), the inaugural speeches in this paper are laden with democratic ideology with which the governors appear to suggest their policy directions, but most importantly, erase the conflicts that surround their emergence as governors. Although elections in Nigeria are known to be largely marked with electoral malpractices like violence, voter inducements, and rigging (Abuza, 2020; Awosusi & Fasanmi, 2011), the present study particularly finds that, within the context of Nigerian politics, gubernatorial inaugural speeches are deployed by incoming governors to interpret elections in fine democratic micro-narratives, as it suits their emergence as governors. In other words, the inaugural speeches are mega narratives deliberately constructed to bear sweet tales of unimpeachable elections with the aim of influencing the citizens' personal and social perception.

The implication of this is that because speeches tend to give insights to political realities and histories (Ugah & Olaniyan, 2020), inaugurated governors tend to rewrite the malpractice realities through the deployment of the democratic ideology and false prediction that the outcome of elections represent the popular will of the electorates. A trademark of the political situation in Nigeria is the denigration of opposition parties (Olorunsogo & Ige, 2022), and this is evident in first-term gubernatorial inaugural speeches through the manifestation of the messianic ideology which presents the idea that an incoming administration would restore what an outgoing government has destroyed.

However, if the new governor belongs to the same party as the outgoing governor, both of them are presented as saviors, and the salvation experience is projected as a continuum. This implies that it is easy to project the decadences in the governance of previous administration when the outgoing government is an opposition party. In addition, there are a few possible reasons for resorting to idealistic ideology in the speech of the governors. It is possible that the incoming governors overrate themselves due to ignorance of how things are and

how things work in actual governance. It is also possible that they know about the impracticality of their proposal but still use them to deceive the people and get their immediate goodwill. A third and related explanation is that they are not just aware of the impossibility of their promises but are also aware, that in deploying such ideology to anchor their speeches, they are engaging the audience in a game, a political ideological game. A further study could be carried out to establish the manifestation of the ideologies in second-term inaugural speeches of governors who got re-elected to verify the ideals projected in their first inaugural speeches.

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