

## Language as a Tool of Manipulation in Nigerian Political Discourse

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### **Abstract**

*Using Fairclough's three-dimensional models of Critical Discourse Analysis, this work critically examines the inaugural speeches of Nigerian presidents; Muhammad Buhari (2015) and Bola Ahmed Tinubu (2023). The analysis investigates how political leaders use language to manipulate public perception and legitimize political power. The analysis reveals that both speeches employ manipulative language to strategically shape public opinion and push ideological agendas. Linguistic and rhetorical devices such as metaphors, hyperbole, emotional appeals and religious references are used beyond informative and inspirational purposes to manipulate audience reaction, downplay opposition and legitimize power. Occurring in a context of social and economic anxiety, the speeches demonstrate how manipulation operates as a political tool strengthened by carefully selected rhetorical choices.*

**Keywords:** Language, Political discourse, Inaugural speeches, Manipulation, Critical Discourse Analysis

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### **Introduction**

Language is a system for transmitting ideas, emotions and intentions through an agreed set of symbols, sounds and/or gestures that have meaning (Zadeh, 1975; Tseng, 2018). Beyond its role in communication, language is also a means of interaction within a community and a vehicle for cultural values and ideologies. Ullman and Pierpont (2005) opine that language is an arbitrary system of sound and symbols that allows us to share thoughts and emotions with each other, showing the social importance of language in fostering mutual understanding.

Giving credence to the aforementioned, Knott and Sanders (1998) state that language is the best way to convey messages, emotions and opinions. This reinforces the primary function of language as a tool for human interaction. Isphording and Otten (2014) take it further by saying language is not only a tool for interaction but that it also shapes thoughts, influences actions and exercises power. This means language is not a neutral tool but an active force in forging human relationships and establishing social structures.

Language and power are intimately connected in the world of politics. This relationship becomes evident in political discourse, where strategic language use is a means of influence and control. Political discourse, at its core, revolves around power, the power to make decisions, control resources, and influence public behavior and values. Politicians carefully craft their language, recognizing its potential to shape public thought. Beard (2000) express how language is deliberately employed by those seeking to acquire and maintain political power, especially through speeches and public discourse. Lakoff (1990) reinforces this notion by asserting that language is

politics, politics assigns power, and power governs how people talk and how they are understood. The linguistic choices made by politicians shape social hierarchies, wherein implicit power structures dictate what is emphasized and what remains unspoken. This form of language use is distinctive, as it both initiates and interprets power dynamics. (Lakoff, 1990). Widdowson (2007) affirms that all communication, to some extent, is an exercise in control, as speakers seek to assert their positions and persuade their audiences. This perspective aligns with the principles of linguistic relativity, which suggests that language influences thought and perception.

Language as the primary means of political communication enables politicians to construct narratives and express ideologies while persuading listeners through language. According to Opeibi (2009), political candidates deploy language as a strategic tool to present their political platforms and spread ideological beliefs while building support. This demonstrates that language serves not only to communicate but also acts as a powerful instrument for political influence. According to Akinkurolere (2011) political discourse succeeds through persuasive delivery rather than content alone because politicians must use language skillfully to gain electoral support.

Political power consolidation relies on language functions that reach beyond rhetorical skills and encompass governance and control mechanisms. According to Chilton (2004), political activities like debates, speeches and governmental discussions rely fundamentally on language. Similarly, Kakisina et al. (2022) state that political leaders create social and political realities by making specific linguistic choices which lead to altered public perception. Thus, according to Fischer & Gottweis (2012), political discourse serves dual functions as both a communication tool and a method for establishing dominance and guiding public thought. According to Lakoff (2001), power provides linguistic authority to its possessors while linguistic authority serves to bolster that power. Oparinde & Mheta (2021) demonstrate that politicians carefully shape language to control political discourse and show how language functions both as a means of communication and as a strategic tool for power acquisition and maintenance.

### **Manipulation in Political Discourse**

To understand political discourse, it is essential to know the difference between persuasion and manipulation. Persuasion is about using clear thinking and solid evidence to encourage people to agree or take action on their own. It is a fundamental part of political communication, allowing leaders to mold public opinion through logical reasoning (Braca & Dondio, 2023). Often times, political leaders employ persuasive rhetoric during campaign speeches and debates, to gain the support of the masses and make them agree with their policies and ideologies (Burnell & Reeve, 2009). In politics, this is typical, as persuasion is perceived as the standard rhetorical technique, while manipulation, due to its deceptive nature, raises ethical concerns. Manipulation takes a subtle approach, using deceptive tactics like propaganda, coercion and emotional appeals to sway public views. (Whitfield; 2020, Ali & Rashid; 2022). The delicate balance between persuasion and manipulation is clear, while persuasion can be used to further clarify and engagement, it is susceptible to exploitation, with the intent to mislead or distract the masses from significant issues. Oparinde and Mheta (2021) submits that manipulation threatens democracy through fact misrepresentation and deceptive public opinion formation.

One prominent trait of political discourse is its tendency to manipulate. Abraham (2020) views manipulation as a persuasive strategy in favour of the speaker, intended to persuade the audience. Van Dijk (2006) makes a clear distinction between persuasion and manipulation by focusing on the degree of agency afforded the audience. Persuasion gives freedom to the audience to assess

discourse and make informed decisions while manipulation clouds the communicator's real intentions, restricting the audience's ability to see the complete picture of the message.

Ayeomoni (2005) describes manipulative language in political discourse as a cunning strategy to stir emotions, build loyalty, and maintain political power. Akopova (2013) explains that linguistic manipulation involves using both spoken words and non-verbal signals to sway an audience's behaviour, perceptions, and intentions. This implies that manipulation works by weaving subtle, hidden linguistic patterns into what appears to be neutral conversation (Beard, 2000).

Van Dijk (2006) offers a critical perspective, claiming that manipulation is not just a show of power but rather a misuse of it. In his opinion, manipulation involves using discourse to wield undue influence over people, leading them to act against their best interests, to suit the speaker's agenda. He emphasizes that the discursive aspects of manipulation involve a clear divide between positive self-presentation and negative representation of others. In order to do this, the speaker boosts their own credibility by undermining the audience using emotional appeals to back up their claims.

Manipulation therefore is just an exercise in deception, where the target audience unknowingly acts in ways that benefit the manipulator. Abuelwafa et al. (2021) explain that manipulation is about controlling someone's behavior without them being aware of it, often through subtle twists on the truth to get specific results. This covert nature of manipulation raises important ethical concerns, especially in politics, where transparency and informed decision-making are essential for democracy to thrive. In the end, manipulation in political communication erodes public trust, distorts reality, and threatens the principles of fair dialogue.

### **Inaugural Speeches as a Form of Political Discourse**

Inaugural speeches are an important aspect of political discourse, indicating the beginning of a new administration, providing insight into the leader's political policies and ideologies, while also emphasizing the validity of their leadership. According to Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2017), inaugural speeches signify the completion of a political term and the start of a new government. The speeches presented are essential as they present the mission declaration and projected direction of the new administration.

Inaugural speech has been conceptualized by different scholars. According to Alimole (2004), it is the first open speech presented formally to introduce the business of the new administration. Precisely, an inaugural speech is the first ceremonial speech of a new head of state, indicating the opening of a new term officially. In this view, Allen (1986) agrees in conceptualizing the inaugural address as a speech presented by the newly elected president, which enlightens the public of the president's intentions.

Beyond its ceremonial functions, inaugural speeches perform both persuasive and ideological functions. They are thoughtfully written rhetorical tools that allow politicians position themselves and their political party's ideological stands. (Olusola, 2020). Inaugural addresses as a form of political speech serves as a tool for persuasion, helping leaders to shape public opinion and gather support for the government (Odebunmi & Oni, 2012). Harrison and Boyd (2018) add that inaugural speeches validate the means of gaining power and emphasizes the legality of the new administration. It affords newly elected leaders the opportunity to address the nation, promote their ideologies and set the tone for their governance (Nnamdi-Eruchalu, 2017).

### **Theoretical Framework: Critical discourse Analysis**

The primary objective of Critical Discourse Analysis is to reveal meanings hidden in discourse. It is a method used to analyze how language is used to construct and maintain power in social situations. Van Dijk (2001) describes CDA as an approach that critically examines how text and talk produce or reveal social power and dominance. Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA was published in 1989 in his text *Language and Power* and has since become widely accepted in the field of discourse analysis. This approach is a framework that navigates the dialectic relationship between power, language and ideology in social situations.

Fairclough views language as a significant aspect of social life. The interaction between language and social realities is proven through social events, social practices and social structures (Fairclough, 2003). This method of analysis aims to bring to light ideological patterns in text. Fairclough provides a three-dimensional framework for the analysis of text and discourse: Text analysis/ Description, Processing Analysis/ Interpretation and Social Analysis / Explanation. Text is considered to be any product of communication that can be analyzed, which can include articles, speeches and so on. Text analysis involves a linguistic description of the formal properties of the text. This dimension focuses on the analysis of the linguistic features in the speech to determine how meaning is constructed.

The interpretation dimension sees the text as the product of a process of production and as a recourse in the process of interpretation. The focus here is to examine how language is used in social and cultural contexts. This involves examining the process of creating texts and the linguistic choices made by speakers in the selection of content and language use. In political discourse for instance, speakers may carefully select certain languages to appeal to specific groups or to entrench particular political ideologies. The dimension also considers the process of the audiences' interpretation of texts and the impact these interpretations have on social practices.

The Social analysis dimension involves the examination of discourse against the social and cultural realities in which it is produced. This could be social, historical and economic realities. The focus is on how power relations and ideology are reinforced by social structures and how discourse is shaped by these social structures.

The dimensions offered by Fairclough enable a deeper understanding of how language is used. Political speeches are intended to covertly imprint ideological messages on the hearts of hearers through carefully selected language. This makes Fairclough's model of CDA significant as the notion of hidden agenda is needed in revealing the strategies politicians use in controlling the narrative in order to maintain dominance (Riasati et al., 2011)

In the opinion of Emeka-Nwobia (2014), CDA provides a platform for the disadvantaged within societies by investigating the speeches of powerful members of society. Fairclough's model provides a critical lens for examining power dynamics in discourse, making it a suitable framework for this study.

Applying Fairclough's model to presidential inaugural speeches in Nigeria, this research intends to uncover the rhetorical strategies employed by newly elected Nigerian presidents to determine whether language in the Nigerian sociopolitical context is constructed to potentially manipulate public opinion.

To support the CDA model, Pratkanis & Aronson's (2007) work on propaganda offers a complementary perspective for identifying how rhetorical choices of political speeches can go beyond revealing power structures through persuasion to become tools of manipulation. The aim

of manipulative communication is to influence its targets into accepting a biased appeal as though it were their own point of view (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2007).

## Methodology

This qualitative study used documented inaugural speeches of President Muhammadu Buhari (2015) and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (2023). Only written speeches were subjected to analysis. Excerpts were drawn from both speeches and analyzed using Norman Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis to reveal how political discourse employs manipulative linguistic choices to sway the audience.

## Data Analysis and Discussion

### Metaphors

Metaphors makes use of vivid language to pass across messages and ideas. It adds depth to language by conveying complex ideas. Beyond its figurative functions, metaphors can be used to convey ideologies. Soares da Silva, (2016) submits that metaphors are instrumental in framing political issues and serving ideological purposes. Metaphors in Nigerian inaugural speeches are employed for this purpose. Additionally, metaphors are employed for the purpose of manipulation. This position is supported by Charteris-Black (2014), who argues that political metaphors are employed to present information in specific ways, thereby manipulating the readers by influencing perception. Shagbanova (2020) supports this stance by naming metaphor as a means of implementing manipulative influence. In the selected excerpts presented below, metaphors are carefully chosen linguistic choices aimed to manipulate the readers into seeing newly elected leaders as the symbol of hope, a new beginning, heroes and figures of rescue.

Text 1: *Spoilt children breaking everything and bringing disorder to the house* - Buhari

Text 2: *The past is prologue* - Buhari

Text 3: *Hope is back, Nigeria is ready to advance* - Tinubu

Text 4: *We are here to further mend and heal this nation...* - Tinubu

Text 5: *Fuel subsidy is gone* - Tinubu

Text 6: *The nation's government belongs to you and not to itself* - Tinubu

Buhari's *The past is prologue* is a subtle reference to history, specifically the history of past failures by the government. The aim of this is to absolve or detach himself from the shortcomings that may be tied to previous administrations as well as imply a new start. This creates the impression that his leadership is a rescue mission, drawing attention to both the failures of the past and incur hope for the present. It also shows that his government is benevolent enough to overlook misgivings although he has been treated poorly, he is magnanimous enough not to behave like his opposition. President Tinubu's *Hope is back, Nigeria is ready to advance* serves the same purpose, implying that hope was lost and that previous administrations have made the nation backward. This positions him as the sole restorer of hope and figure of rescue to Nigeria. Van Dijk (2006) noted the discursive characteristic of manipulation as a clear divide between positive self-presentation and negative representation of others. This implies that the choice of metaphors employed serves the purpose of manipulating the audience/ readers.

This figure of rescue is also implied in *Spoilt children breaking everything and bringing disorder to the house*. Past administrations are presented as immature, disorderly and destructive while the new president who is to be a supposed elder has come to clean up the children's messes. The audience are being manipulated into believing that the new presidents are the permanent solutions

to Nigeria's problems. This heroic identity that president Buhari assumed is also used in the metaphoric language used by President Tinubu in *Hope is back, Nigeria is ready to advance, we are here to further mend and heal this nation...*, *Fuel subsidy is gone*. With the abruptness of *fuel subsidy is gone*, President Tinubu presents fuel subsidy as a national burden which the president has borne for the nation. Soares da Silva, (2016) claims that the cognitive powers of metaphors makes it a viable tool for manipulation. Through metaphoric choices, the newly elected presidents present themselves as the restorer of hope and wellness to an otherwise ailing nation as well conveying messianic ideologies, with the intention of shaping the perception of the audience into seeing them as such.

### **Hyperbole**

Hyperboles are basically extravagant exaggerations which serves the purpose of laying emphasis on points. Clark (1996) noted that politician exaggerate to magnify the social and political importance of happenings. Primarily a device for emphasis, hyperbole can blur the line between exaggeration and manipulation in political discourse. This is because the intent of the linguistic choice is to strategically distort perception. Clark further notes that hyperbole distort perception by magnifying events beyond their actual state. In the speeches under consideration, hyperboles were found in the excerpts below:

Text 7: *No single cause can be identified to explain Nigeria's poor economic performance over the years than the power situation* – Buhari

Text 8: *Continuous tinkering with the structures of power supply and distribution and close on \$20b expanded since 1999 have only brought darkness, frustration, misery, and resignation among Nigerians. We will not allow this to go on.* – Buhari

Text 9: *Captured several towns and villages covering swathes of Nigerian sovereign territory* – Buhari

Text 10: *Nigeria affirms its rightful place among the world's great democracies. There, Nigeria shall reside forever*– Tinubu

Text 11: *Since the advent of the Fourth Republic, Nigeria has not held an election of better quality* – Tinubu

Saying Nigeria's depressed economy is tied solely to the power situation is an exaggeration of the impact of the electric instability in the country. It also suggests a singular cause for a complex economic issue. While power constitutes a major challenge in Nigeria, it cannot be said to be the sole reason for economic depression and presenting it as such, is a tactic at influencing the perception of the audience into believing Nigeria's economic failures are not multifarious. The intent of this is to show that by solving this singular issue, the new administration will provide a solution to the economic problems of the country. Henkemans (2013) sees hyperbolic statements such as this as obviously exaggerated and therefore untrue and unwarranted. The despair of Nigerians as a result of power failure is overstated through words like *misery, frustration and resignation*. This is used to amplify the actual state of things in order to present previous administrations negatively and present a positive self-representation for the newly elected government. Sharndama (2016) noted politician amplify the shortcomings of their opponents in order to appear as better alternatives.

In reference to insecurity posed by the Boko Haram, President Buhari magnifies the Boko Haram's influence by suggesting through the word *swathes* that a vast expanse of Nigeria's land has been captured by Boko Haram who now has territorial control. This exaggeration cast aspersions on

previous governments who must have performed so badly that the country's sovereignty was seriously breached. It also presents President Buhari as the necessary solution to the insecurity challenges. With no solid implementation on ground, the speech is intended to give false assurance that the issue of insecurity posed by the Boko Haram will be dealt with. This manipulation is achieved by intensifying fear, discrediting previous administrations and legitimizing President Buhari's government.

President Tinubu asserts that Nigeria has gained its *rightful place among the world's great democracies*. This is a deliberate attempt to overstate Nigeria's democratic performance by completely avoiding its challenges. While Nigeria has a democratic structure and an impressive handing over of government devoid of violence, it still faces major democratic deficits such as electoral irregularities, judicial inefficiencies, distrust of public institutions (leading to the End-Sars protest), suppression of protests allegedly claiming several lives during the End-Sars protests for instance, as well as low voter turnout. It is therefore overreaching to claim that Nigeria is one of the world's greatest democracies. This exaggeration is intended to manipulate audience perception through bypassing critiques and overlooking systemic issues in order to legitimate governance.

President Tinubu's use of absolute claims in *Since the advent of the Fourth Republic, Nigeria has not held an election of better quality* is an exaggeration of the political realities in Nigeria. Here, the president chooses to ignore public skepticism, irregularities noted by various media outlets during the elections and even the concerns raised in court by opponents. Declaring the elections as the best leaves no room for contrary opinions. This is a core example of manipulative exaggeration aimed to make criticism appear less credible, thus marginalizing alternative points of view.

### **Emotional Appeals**

Emotional appeals aim to arouse emotions such as fear, hopes and desires in the audience in order to influence their beliefs. According to van Dijk (2006), carefully crafted words can arouse and appeal to people's emotions. Rohach and Rohach (2021) noted that these appeals can relate to the values and belief system of a people and are so subtle that there is no awareness on their impact in shaping our opinions. Selenya (2022) sees the use of emotive language as a strategy employed by politicians to manipulate voters by creating an emotional association between the people and their party as well as and policies. In the speeches under consideration, some of the emotional appeals used were fear-based and legitimizing appeals.

### **Fear-based Emotional Appeals**

Text 12: *At home, we face enormous challenges. Insecurity, pervasive corruption, the hitherto unending and seemingly impossible fuel and power shortages are the immediate concerns. We are going to tackle them head-on-* Buhari

Text 13: *Boko Haram became a terrifying force taking tens of thousands of lives and capturing several towns and villages covering swathes of Nigerian sovereign territory-* Buhari

Text 14: *With depleted foreign reserves, falling oil prices, leakages and debts the Nigerian economy is in deep trouble and will require careful management to bring it round and to tackle the immediate challenges confronting us, namely; Boko Haram, the Niger Delta situation, the power shortages and unemployment especially among young people. -* Buhari

Text 15: *The question we now ask ourselves is whether to remain faithful to the work inherent in building a better society or retreat into the shadows of our unmet potential.-* Tinubu

Text 16: *For many years, Nigeria's critics have trafficked the rumour that our nation will break apart, even perish.* - Tinubu

President Buhari paints a dreary state of affairs in the nation. Words like *enormous challenges, insecurity, pervasive corruption and unending power and fuel shortages* indicate a state of hopelessness the country has been plunged into which will be lifted by his administration. The purpose of evoking fear is to create an emotional reliance spurred by the sense of urgency of the situation.

With words like terrifying force, capturing towns, a vivid picture of terrorism and insecurity is painted. Fear here is amplified to show [political strength that can neutralize this terrifying group. The audience are influenced into accepting the government as the solution to the challenges of insecurity, corruption and economic downturn the country experiences. Depleted foreign reserves, debts, deep trouble also instills fear and the economic vulnerability of the nation. This positions the audience to be prepared for hardships that cannot be attributed to the new government, since the deep trouble has existed before their administration.

National collapse and segregation has been a recurrent topic in the Nigeria political space with many sectors vying for independence. Words like break apart, perish are used to evoke emotional and manipulate the audience into believing agitators of secession are enemies state committed to the collapse of the nation.

President Tinubu also presents a fear based manipulative rhetoric by presenting a false binary between the faithful's who support his political agenda and the cowards who retreat into shadows.

### **Legitimizing**

In order to present themselves as the legitimate leader, politicians often resort to a democratic ideology. Chukwu & Olorunsogo (2024) noted that it is a common practice for governors to present their victories as having been made possible by the people. Harrison and Boyd's (2018) posits that leaders use ideologies to validate their legitimacy in order to motivate people to follow, obey, and support them. There is, however, a close link between legitimization and coercion because legitimization establishes the right to be obeyed, therefore becoming manipulative (Chilton; 2004). The extracts below capture how the speeches reflected legitimization as an emotional appeal.

Text 17: *I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody* –Buhari

Text 18: *This is the proudest day of my life. But this day does not belong to me. It belongs to you, the people of Nigeria*- Tinubu

Text 19: *It was a hard -fought contest. And it was also fairly won* - Tinubu

Text 20: *The outcome reflected the will of the people.* - Tinubu

Text 21: *I stand before you honoured to assume the sacred mandate you have given me* - Tinubu

To legitimize their candidacy, emotional appeals through the use of unifying, people-centric language are used by both presidents. *I belong to everybody and I belong to no one* portrays a neutral and inclusive leader while *this day does not belong to me, it belongs to you*. This unifying language shifts the focus of the audience from viewing the outcome of the elections as a personal victory for the presidents but as a national pride. The sense of collectiveness is a subtle manipulation to alter perception for a sense of shared ownership, thereby deterring criticism.

Emotional appeal is also employed to legitimize the electoral outcome especially in the speech of president Tinubu. Words like *hard contest, fairly won, outcome reflecting the will* of the people and the sacred mandate *you have given me* establish the validity of electoral victory. This is manipulative as it preempts dissents and aims to silence allegations of electoral malpractice,



concealing the fact that many of the elections were allegedly marked by fraud and the mandate as at the time of the inaugural speech was being contested in court. The repetition of the electoral outcome as a purely democratic process aim to manipulate public perception and quell doubts.

### **Reference to Religion**

Theism is one of the dominant belief systems in our societies (Slife & Zhang, 2014), making religious expressions an easy, manipulative tool to influence the thoughts of the audience. Pals (2014) described religion as a belief in a supernatural power above nature with no scientific explanation. As one of the social institutions of influence, it is impossible to separate religion from politics in Nigeria as it has become a tool to brainwash, manipulate and play “divide and rule” politics Anifowose, (2017). The reference to religion is evident in both Presidents Buhari and Tinubu’s speeches, as presented below:

Text 22: *I am immensely grateful to God who has preserved us to witness this day and this occasion-* Buhari

Text 23: *Boko Haram is a mindless, godless group who are as far away from Islam as one can think of -* Buhari

Text 24: *Having just a few minutes ago sworn on the Holy Book, I intend to keep my oath –* Buhari

Text 25: *My love for this nation is abiding. My confidence in its people, unwavering. And my faith in God Almighty, absolute-* Tinubu

Text 26: *This nation’s journey has been shaped by the prayers of million-* Tinubu

Text 27: *This handover symbolizes our trust in God -* Tinubu

Text 28: *May God bless you and May He bless our beloved land -* Tinubu

Nigerians are very religious people and this means they submit to the authority of God. The president’s reference to the Holy Book and to God portrays them as pure and godly people and therefore trustworthy. President Buhari’s constant reference to God suggests divine support for his leadership. His description of Boko Haram as a godless group not only condemns their actions but also serves as a way of distancing himself from the group. The group has been said to be associated with Islam, which is the religion of the president. His statement is to show that he does not associate with the group and also denied their connection to the religion he practices.

President Tinubu also aligns himself with the spiritual values of the people, declaring his love for God, and associating with the millions who pray for the country. While this shows their similarity to a majority of Nigerians, there are subtle elements of manipulation.

The intention of the president is to present their victory as ordained by God, thereby silencing opposition as having a contrary view will make one disobedient to God’s divine plan. Additionally, presenting a united front through shared faith in God makes critical thinking unlikely, therefore influencing perception.

### **Discursive and Social Practices**

The inaugural speeches draw from several discursive practices to establish political identity that promotes unity, hope and moral authority. It draws on democratic ideology by reference to the will of the people, constitutional values, and unity. The speech also made reference to history and religion, focusing on past legacies, divine mandate and emotional appeals. This makes for a connection between the speakers and the broader inter-textual traditions within the Nigerian political space. The discourse positions the presidents as godly individuals, who are products of a democratic tradition as well as custodians of a national heritage.

The context in which the speech is situated is a Nigeria riddled with public distrust in political institutions, economic downturn, and grave security issues. This situation informs the messianic ideology presented in the speeches. Both presidents present themselves as the solution to the problems ailing the country. They glorify the electoral process despite the public contestation and evidence of electoral fraud. The socio-economic anxiety and a yearning for good governance in the country are conditions that make the nation prime for manipulation

### **Conclusion**

Language is a means of expressing as well as influencing thoughts and ideas. In politics, language is used to express ideologies through persuasion. However, politicians employ linguistic resources to shape the thoughts and influence the perception of the public, usually to serve their own interests. Manipulative language is the practice in Nigerian politics with such discourses geared towards reproducing power.

Manipulation occurs when the hearers are not privy to the hidden agenda or intent of the speaker. It's often a subtle tool aimed at reshaping thought and currying public favour through the instrumentality of language. As presented in this paper, the use of figurative language such as metaphor, hyperboles as well as emotional appeals are tools used by Nigerian politicians to surreptitiously manipulate the public.

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