

A CRITICAL STUDY OF TOR-TIV V'S ADDRESS TO PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU ON FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICT IN BENUE STATE

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Abstract

Farmers-herders conflict has been a recurring security challenge ravaging lives in Benue State, hence the need to investigate the role of discourse in shaping public perception and opinion on the crisis. Critical discourse analysis is a multidisciplinary approach to the study of language that explores the intersection between language use and social activities. This study conducts a critical discourse analysis of the address delivered by the Tor Tiv to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on farmers-herders crisis in Benue State. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework was adopted. The study employed qualitative method and descriptive research design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select Tor-Tiv's address to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu during his condolence visit to Benue state over Yelewata massacre in June, 2025. The data were analysed using descriptive qualitative content and discourse analysis. The results reveal ideologies such as misinformation, conquest and annexation, divisive politics, and nationalism. The findings further reveal power imbalance between traditional, state and federal governments, as well as Benue people and perpetrators. The study concludes that reliance on federal security intervention and divisive politics constitute the major threats to security in Benue State and recommends that devolution of power and political alliance would enhance security in the State.

Keywords: CDA, farmers-herders conflict, ideologies, power relation

Introduction

The recurring herders' attacks in recent years have posed a great threat to socioeconomic growth and food security in Benue State in particular and Nigeria in general. This conflict between nomadic Fulani herdsman and indigenous rural farmers is marked by herders' invasion of, and grazing on, farmlands and crops. This cripples food production, and has led to severe loss of lives as well as displaced thousands from their communities, thus hampering development and quality of life in many rural areas of the State. According to UNFPA (United Nation Population Fund), in June 2025, herders' attacks claimed at least two hundred and eighteen (218) lives and over four thousand (4000) persons were displaced in Benue State. Similarly, International Organisation for Migration, in a flash report, highlights that between 15th and 16th September, 2025, herders' attack affected one-hundred and sixty-eight (168) persons in four communities

across three Local Government Areas of the State leaving twenty-seven (27) casualties. Ochogwu (2023) argues that one hundred and seventy-six thousand (176,000) persons were displaced between 2001 and 2018 in Benue State.

Discourse plays a crucial role in conflict situations. It has the potential to instigate, escalate or mitigate crises. Courtright (2020) decries how dangerous speech and inflammatory rhetoric by political and religious leaders exacerbate farmers-herders crisis in Nigeria. Thus, through the instrument of language and how a crisis is communicated, the nature of the crisis could be understood. Fairclough (1992) sees discourse as social practice that shapes or is being shaped by social realities. Therefore, critical discourse analysis explores the intersection between language and social context. It takes cognizance of social, environmental and cognitive factors that inform language use. It investigates how ideologies and power dynamics shape and are

being shaped by language. Gramsci (1971) and Galtung (1972) view ideologies and power dynamics as propellers of conflicts respectively. As such, the realities that cause a conflict can manifest in discourses surrounding the conflict.

Critical discourse analysis draws insight from sociology, history and political science to investigate social and environmental factors that underpin language use in meaning-making processes in the society. It uncovers social and ideological context as well as power dynamics to expose inequalities and promote social change through discourse analysis. In conflict times, language serves as a vehicle for conflict representation, communication, mediation and negotiation, thus remains a dependable resource for constructing social harmony and conflict resolution. Critical discourse analysis is a linguistic approach that investigates the role of the society in shaping language use. It is an interdisciplinary field which draws insight from fields such as linguistics, sociology, history and political sciences to uncover how power relations, ideology and socio-context shapes discourse. It views language as discourse, ideology and social practice (Ahmed, Khan, Hussain & Altaf, 2024). The goal of critical discourse analysis is to investigate power dynamics, uncover inequalities and promote social change through discourse analysis. CDA “investigates how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use and how discourse figures in and contributes to existing social realities” (Groff, 2023). In similar context, recent CDA scholarship emphasizes that the field “critically examines how discourse reflects, reproduces, and contests power and ideology across social domains” (Tari, 2021). To further establish this premise, scholars note that CDA focuses on the ways discourse enacts, legitimates, reproduces, or challenges relations of power and dominance in society (Yang, 2023). From these assertions, one of the primary concerns of critical discourse analysis is how power relations manifest through discourse. Thus, the discourse analyst sets to bridge the gap between two parties set apart by power differences.

The foundational principle of critical discourse analysis is that discourse should not be

analysed in isolation. CDA submits that discourse is not just a linguistic construct but inspired and shaped by external non-linguistic factors. This makes the society central to the discourse analysis. CDA investigates the intersection between language and the society that produces it. Contemporary CDA frameworks systematically integrate textual and sociocultural context in the interpretation of discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2025). Also, socio-cognitive approaches highlight that ideologies are shared mental systems that organize social attitudes and influence discourse structures within specific social contexts (Ato, 2025). Ideology is a foundational concept in critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis primarily is concerned with how ideology and power relations shape language use (Groff, 2023). As important as it is to CDA, recent studies define ideology as a system of beliefs and values that underpins and legitimizes power relations embedded in discourse (Al Samer & Al-Maliki, 2023). This implies that ideology shapes how people view the world, interact with social structures, and interpret meaning within discourse. Ideology influences shared beliefs, assumptions, and ways of interpreting social and political reality, making it central to CDA’s aim of uncovering hidden power structures within texts and talk (Yang, 2023). This present study sets to identify ideologies as belief, shared knowledge and assumptions in Tor-Tiv’s address to examine how they contribute to power relation as reflected in the production, reception and understanding of the speeches.

Power relation is another major concept in CDA. This helps to show how language reinforce social inequality (Ato, 2025). Al-Mas’udi & Al-A’mery (2021) notes that Fairclough (1995) views that power is exercised through discourse by controlling access to communicative events and shaping the content and form of texts. Fairclough differentiate between power in discourse as the unequal relations between participants in interaction, whereas power behind discourse deals with the social and institutional structures such as education, family, media etc especially in regard to how they determine who has authority to speak. This approach underscores how dominant groups

maintain power by naturalising their ideologies through language use. This means that dominant groups or social actor(s) control people by making their idea a familiar/natural reality in order to avoid rebellion. For instance, Tor-Tiv counters the description of the conflict in Benue State as “skirmishes,” “reprisal attack,” “farmers-herders clashes”. These terms are used to misrepresent the conflict in discourse in order to shift attention from violence and obscures underlying power dynamics. This possibly withdraws public attention as it shares responsibility between parties thereby abolishing the place of empathy and conflict resolution (Ekanem, 2022). Thus, it would give room for continuous unempathetic killings of Benue people, giving room for perpetrators to unleash their mayhem. In this study, the researchers examine power relation between social actors/parties involved in farmers-herders conflict in Benue State as manifest in Tor-Tiv’s address.

Benue State is one of the thirty-six states in Nigeria. It earns the slogan, “Food Basket of the Nation” from the place of agriculture as the primary occupation in the State. Majority of the residents are farmers, with minorities as fishers, hunters and other occupations. This makes Benue State one of the largest producers of food resources in Nigeria (Achanya and Luma, 2024). Due to the presence of River Benue and its tributaries, water and lush pastures in the State attract herders who face the stinging reality of climate change and harsh weather conditions from the north and Sahara Desert. This mandates the search for grazing land, hence their arrival in Benue State. However, due to their uncontrolled itinerant grazing, it leads to destruction of farm produce, grazing on farmlands and encroaching ponds leading to conflict between farmer/fishers and herders in the State.

As such, farmers-herders conflict become one of the damaging crises ravaging some parts of Nigeria particularly Benue State. Okoli and Atelhe (2014) note that the conflict revolves around competition over land and water resources between farming communities and nomadic pastoralists specifically the Fulani herdsmen. While this seems to be the direct trigger of the crisis, other scholars have identified that rapid

growth in population, environmental degradation and climate change to have significantly worsened this competition (Benjaminsen, Alinon, Buhaug and Buseth, 2012). This crisis escalated in Benue State because majority of the inhabitants are rural farmers as such the competition become fierce and has led to the displacement of thousands from their indigenous homes to IDPs (Ochogwu, 2023).

Farmers-herders conflict has inflicted grievous humanitarian crisis in the State (Ioryue, 2024). According to International Organisation for Migration, as of November, 2024, Benue State hosts 457,66 IDPs making it the State with the highest number of IDPs in Nigeria. Relief Web in June, 2025 reports that between January 2019 and June, 2025, 2,185 deaths were recorded in 287 incidents of herders’ attacks. Amnesty International (2025) documents widespread incidents of violence across Guma, Logo, Agatu, Gwer West, Apa, Okpokwu Local Government Areas. Xinhua (2025, January 28) reporting from the African Union states that “William Ruto ... stated that Africa loses eighteen (18) billion dollar to crisis annually” and Africa presently hosts thirty-five (35) million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), eight point nine (8.9) million refugees, one point one (1.1) million asylum seekers and one (1) million stateless persons. This shows the spate of violent crises across Africa and not Benue State alone, hence the need to investigate the role of discourse in periods of conflict. Nwankwo (2024) submits that in a bid to curb this menace, Benue State Government led by Governor Samuel Ortom (2015-2023) legislate open grazing in the State via the “Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017” to curb herders encroachment and destruction of farm produce thereby tackling the primary cause of the crisis. However, this effort did not have full effect due to lack of support from the federal government.

CDA studies on farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria have focused extensively on newspaper coverage and how they shape public perceptions on the crisis. For instance, Wonuola (2023) posits that newspaper representation of farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria negatively influence stakeholders’ perceptions of the conflict, where the

representation most times reinforces polarisation. In similar vein, (Ajantaye, 2023; Olutayo, 2021) in their studies view that through ideological strategies such as labelling, passivisation and lexicalisation, herders are construed as aggressors, whereas farmers are portrayed as victims. This reinforces Van Dijk's positive self and negative other representation. While these studies uncover ideological representation in media coverage of farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria, they do not give credence to speeches or discourses produced by Political elite nor traditional authorities. Thus, the role of traditional rulers like Tor-Tiv in reproducing ideologies and power relation between social actors remains underexplored. This study bridges this gap by analysing Tor-Tiv's addresses to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, invariably it expands beyond media coverage to traditional political speech.

Objectives

This study is a critical discourse analysis of Tor-Tiv's address to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu during presidency's visit to Benue State over Yelewata massacre in June 2025. The study's objectives are to:

- i. identify the dominant ideologies constructed in Tor Tiv V's address to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.
- ii. examine how power relations between social actors are discursively represented in the address.

Research Methodology

This study relies on both primary and secondary data. The primary data are excerpts from the transcript of Tor-Tiv's address to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu during Presidency's visit to the Benue State over Yelewata massacre in June, 2025. This speech is purposively selected due to its significance in addressing the crippling menace of herders killing in the State. Transcript of the speech was downloaded from *Daily Post* online newspaper on 2nd December, 2025. Excerpts from the address were analysed through qualitative method. Descriptive content and discourse analysis as well as Fairclough's three-dimensional framework (text, discursive practice and sociocultural

practice) of critical discourse analysis were adopted to examine and analyse the address. However, based on the objectives guiding this study, the analysis is delimited to dimension three (sociocultural practice). Ideologies and power relations were analysed using selected excerpts from the speech's transcript. The secondary data are journal, and report articles, textbooks and internet sources.

Theoretical Framework: Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

Fairclough (1992), the founder of the English school of critical discourse analysis developed three-dimensional model of CDA. This school views discourse as social practice and analyses both micro (linguistic or internal) and macro (non-linguistic or external) features of a text as well as uncovers power dynamics and challenge dominant ideologies to promote social change. This approach to discourse analysis is an act of activism. The promoters of this school seek to negotiate inequalities and promote egalitarian society. Other scholars in the English school are Lilie Chouliaraki, Phil Graham and Mary Talbot.

Fairclough (1992) in his work *Discourse and Social Change* developed the three-dimensional model. Influenced by Marxism, Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, Gramsci concept of hegemony, Foucault's discourse and power and Habermas theory of communicative action, Fairclough developed a comprehensive approach that has been widely used till today. Gramsci's concept of hegemony enlightens Fairclough on how dominant ideologies are sustained and reinforced through discourse, and Marxism as well, influences Fairclough to view discourse as a premise for class struggle. This is in close ties with Halliday's view that linguistic choices are context dependent. That is to say, language correlates with the reality of society. Habermas in his theory of communicative action opines that language is embedded in social norms. These were the foundational principles for Fairclough's approach to discourse analysis. Fairclough (1992, p. 63) asserts that "discourse is a form of social practice" and that language both reflects and constructs social realities. He reiterates that "language is a part of society and not

somehow external to it" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 63). In his proposal, Fairclough clearly explained that his approach "seeks to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events, and texts, and wider social and cultural structures" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 132). These form the basis for Fairclough's three-dimensional model.

Other CDA models such as van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (1998, 2001) and Wodak's discourse-historical approach (2001; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) differ from Fairclough's three-dimensional model (1992, 1995). While Fairclough's approach emphasises the relationship between text, discursive practice, and social practice, with a focus on how discourse shapes and is shaped by social structures, van Dijk's approach project the role of cognition, mental models like knowledge, belief, custom etc. the model argues that discourse, ideology, and power are mediated via shared mental models and social representations. Wodak, on the other hand, stresses the historical aspect of discourse. She integrates background knowledge, intertextuality, and socio-political context to explain how discourses evolve over time. Thus, while Fairclough centres on the dialectical relation between discourse and society, van Dijk gives credence to the socio-cognitive interface between discourse and ideology, and Wodak prioritises how historical context shapes the production of discourse (Al-Mas'udi, Al-A'mery, 2021).

In Fairclough's model, at dimension one (text: description), the analysis involves examining or description of the lexical choices, text structure, cohesion, modality and figurative devices in the speeches. At dimension two (discursive practice: interpretation), processes in the production, distribution and consumption of the a discourse as well as intertextuality and interdiscusivity are examined, and lastly at dimension three, ideologies, power relation, hegemony, representation of social institutions, identities and how the speeches contribute to resistance, and social change and development are analysed. This makes fairclough's approach the most comprehensive model. In this study,

ideologies and power relation in Tor-Tiv's address is examined. The analysis at some point, references van Dijk approach to CDA.

Ideologies and Power Relation in Tor-Tiv-V's Speech During President Bola Tinubu's Visit to Benue Dstate in June 2025

Ideologies in Tor-Tiv's Speech

The security crisis in Benue State has become a crucial national security concern. Over the past decades, numerous communities have been displaced to IDPs and thousands have been killed. This affected rural education, agriculture and economy in the state. The speech reflects numerous ideologies that shape the speaker's perception and influence its formation.

Misinformation

Tor-Tiv begins his address by dispelling false representation of the crisis in the State. Tor-Tiv seeks to clarify falsehood and misrepresentation that characterise the crisis. He states thus. "*We do have grave concern with the misinformation and misrepresentation of the security crisis in Benne state. Mr. President, it is not famers, herders clashes. It is not communal clashes. It is not reprisal attack.*" Tor-Tiv employs this as a counter-discourse to existing "falsehood" or misrepresentation of the crisis. To further intensify his point, he states, "*It is this misinformation that has led to suggestions such as remain tolerant, negotiate for peace, learn to live with your neighbour.*" Tor-Tiv points that this is a wrong diagnosis and it perpetuated by misinformation, if not clarified would lead to "wrong treatment." Tor-Tiv's role as the Chairman of Benue State's Council of Traditional Rulers notwithstanding gives his position an impetus as the voice of the traditional institution in the State. He carries firsthand experiences and has critically observed the crisis. In essence, one of the foremost ideologies in the speech is false representation of the crisis in Benue State.

Conquest and annexation

Following his report of misrepresentation of the crisis, Tor- Tiv states that the crisis is an ongoing attempt to conquer and annex Benne state. He emphasised that the crisis is neither a farmer-

herders clashes nor reprisal attacks but a “full-scale genocidal invasion and land grabbing campaign” that is “well calculated” by “herder terrorists and bandits”. These phrases used by Tor-Tiv to describe this crisis allege the intention of “herder terrorists and bandits to annex the state which is evident in the killing and displacement of Benue state indigenes from their rural indigenous homes to several IDP's in the State. The phrases “well-calculated,” “genocidal invasion,” “land grabbing” found in the address depict war and militant actions that have left the state grappling in its effort to stabilise peace and development.

Divisive Politics

The speech is produced within the context of Nigeria’s multi-party system where different political parties scamper for political office and device various means to assume political power. The speech alleged that the crisis has been politicised as some politicians wishes the crisis should continue. Tor-Tiv states that, “Politicians in the state are busy politising the crisis, passing blames instead of joining hands to fight the crisis”. This excerpt reflects disunity among political elites in the state as some seek to capitalise the conflict to advance the political image and aspiration. The speech further states, “We have heard that there are some politicians who would even prefer that the crisis will worsen so that it will be a base for the declaration of state of emergency in Benue State.” This excerpt clearly uncovers the motive of some politicians who desires that the crisis should worsen as it will evidently indicate state failure as such would necessitate the President to declare state of emergency and trip the government in the State. This is borne out of the intention and deep-seated desire to label the ruling government in Benue State incompetent. This would give the herder-bandits the political advantage in their campaigns as they would capitalise on that to influence voters to vote them into power. This is however at the detriment of the people and the state they are craving to govern, thereby exposing greed, selfishness of “some politicians” in the State.

Nationalism

Since the attainment of independence in 1960, Nigeria has been struggling with ethnic and

religious divides. This has informed numerous programmes that engender national cohesion and unity. Shortly, after independence, Nigeria splunges into the mess of civil war preceded by the pogrom inflicted by ethnic tension that was triggered by military rule that terminated the first Republic. The first military coup in 1966 inflicted ethnic and religious tension, mutual suspicion and fear of political domination particularly among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. This is followed by series of millitary coups in Nigeria marking political instability.

The civil war in 1967 to 1970 left scar on Nigerian unity. Since this war, Nigeria grapples with ethno-religious tension till date. In the light of these, any effort that advances Nigeria's consciousness about national unity is viewed nationalistic. Tor-Tiv references the role of Benue people in contributing to national unity in the period of this war. He states, “*Benue state has made a lot of sacrifices to keep this country united. Many of our people died during the civil war. We paid Supreme price to keep this country united.*” This clearly underscores the contribution of Benue State to Nigeria's national unity in the past. This reflects act of patriotism and nationalism that deserve accolades, respect and reciprocation. Tor-Tiv references this to establish why Benue State should not be neglected in this period of conflict. Tor-Tiv highlights extreme sacrifice that Benue State has made to achieve national unity in the past as reflected in clauses such as “our people died during the call war, “paid supreme prices” to achieve national unity.

Power Dynamics in Tor-Tiv's Speech

Tor-Tiv's speech uncovers parasitic relation between herder terrorist and Benue State and imbalance between Federal and State authority. For easy understanding, there are four participants in Tor-Tiv's speech which are represented as: “We,” “Mr. President,” “herder terrorists and bandits,” and “politicians.” Through these representations, Tor-Tiv highlights how power imbalances perpetuate the crisis in the State.

Through the use of “We” Tor-Tiv presents himself as the voice of Benue people. He represents the traditional institution, thus uses this to legitimise his position as a collective voice of

the people of Benue State. The speech presents Benue people as the victim whereas the agency is the herder bandits and terrorists who exercise dominance through physical and coercive power. This reflects parasitic power relation between Benue people who are the victims of repeated massacres.

Another agency that poses a threat to security in Benue State is politicians. Tor-Tiv recounts that "some politicians... would even prefer that the crisis should worsens..." Through this, Tor-Tiv position himself as a non-partisan leader who has the credible report about the conflict and raises alarm about the politicization of the crisis by some of those social actors who sought to capitalise on the conflict for their selfish political gains.

"My President" represents a superior power to whom these issues are reported. While "We," "Benue State" are represented as the victims of war, insecurity and politicisation, "herder terrorists and bandits" are represented as the perpetrator and politicians as opportunistic individuals. Among the four (4) major actors in the speech, each represents various level of power. "Mr. President" is presented as one with absolute national sovereignty who has the capability to end the genocide in the State as Tor-Tiv states, "We know you are capable of doing this Sir." The "We" represent the people who are survivors and victims.

"Herder terrorists and bandits" represent a dominant group who exercises their power through force, terrorism and physical invasion and killing. Though their power is above Benue people but subordinate to that of "Mr. President." This reveals that a State has no power to tackle her security or provide security for her citizens but remain subordinated to the sovereign Federal power which is only capable of tackling security situation across the country. The "terrorist" and "bandit" act as agency that unleash mayhem on the people of Benue State. The "terrorist" and "bandits" act as perpetrators of the genocidal invasion and killings separated from ordinary herders or neighbours to delegitimise the narrative of herdersmen or "mutual clashes." They are constructed as external and out-group parties who whose act of terrorism

and criminality are premeditated.

President Tinubu is addressed as a protector of all citizen in the country and he has the capacity and responsibility to end the crisis. This is clearly shown in the excerpt, "We appeal to you to end the genocide going on in Benue State and insecurity in all parts of Nigeria. We know you are capable of doing this Sir." The speech recognizes the President as a legitimate authority through the choice of respectful term such as "Your Excellency," but challenges his authority to prove his capability by ending the killings in Benue State.

Some politicians are represented as irresponsible, opportunistic and divisive elites who give credence to their self-interest and remain complicit in worsening the crisis. The excerpt, "politicians in the State are busy politicizing the crisis, passing blames instead of joining hands to fight the crisis" creates division between Benue people and their politicians, thereby presenting the people as victims and some politicians as betrayers and opportunists.

Discussion of Findings

By framing the conflict as "genocide," the speech does more than to correct misinformation. It redefines the nature of the crisis by changing the perception of the conflict from a communal dispute to a security threat to the existence of Benue People. This counter discourse delegitimises earlier framing of that presents the conflict as mutually inflicted. In that regard, the speech is in tandem with security principle where issues are framed as threats to people's survival in order to justify urgent and extraordinary intervention. This reflects Fairclough's dimension three, social practice, where discourse functions to reshape or reconstruct social reality by justifying certain political actions (Fairclough, 1992; 1995). This also aligns with the theory of securitisation which explains that issues are discursively elevated, or demonise as existential threats to people in order to request emergency response (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998). The representation of the violent farmers-herders conflict as "annexation" by Tor-Tiv further scales the crisis from a local problem to a challenge to Nigeria's territorial sovereignty, thereby

nationalising the conflict. Such framing creates an intensity that necessitate the urgency of federal response while at the same time portraying previous government interventions as insufficient or inadequate. At the point in textual analysis which is dimension one, lexical choices such as “genocide” and “invasion” show how vocabulary choices reinforces ideology and power relations (Fairclough, 1992).

Misinformation is constructed as the cause of weak Federal Government's intervention. It also performs an ideological function. It transfers responsibility, otherwise blame of Federal Government's inadequate intervention from negligence or marginalisation to discursive misrepresentation. Therefore, the speech suggests that correctly naming the crisis is itself a political diagnosis. This supports Fairclough's view that discourse shapes social reality by controlling how events are understood. This corresponds to Fairclough's notion of discursive practice in dimension two where meaning is shaped by processes of text production and interpretation that gives privilege to certain representations over others (Fairclough, 1995). Studies in CDA similarly show that naming otherwise labelling influence public opinion and perception of policies (van Dijk, 1998). However, this representation also simplifies farmers-herders conflict by foregrounding invasion rhetoric while backgrounding land-use tensions that might have lingered over a period time as well as governance challenges. This illustrates how discourse works through both emphasis and exclusion to create social structure and order. Such foregrounding and backgrounding are recognised CDA strategies of ideological representation (van Leeuwen, 2008).

The portrayal of politicians as actors who benefit from the crisis creates a moral dichotomy between “the people of Benue State” and “political elites in the State.” This aligns with Marxist discursive strategy where elites are delegitimised or demarketted as evil and opportunistic while the masses are portrayed to have purified collective identity in shared struggle and suffering. This resonates with van Dijk's ideological square principle in his socio-cognitive model where positive self-representation and negative other-

representation become a visible order of discourse (van Dijk, 1998). In similar vein, alluding to Benue people's sacrifices during the civil war function as historical way of legitimising the speaker's stance and invoking national historical memory to claim entitlement to security. The use of historical memory as seen in the context of this speech corresponds with Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach that emphasises how past events are discursively gathered to justify present political claims (Wodak, 2001; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). Here, nationalism functions as a strategic way claiming entitlement for rather than a mere reminder about Benue's participation in the past.

Power in the speech is discursively organised. By positioning the President as the supreme problem-solver and the State as well as traditional authority as dependent, the discourse reproduces centralised federal authority. This reflects Fairclough's concept of power behind discourse. This relates how institutional structures, through discourse shape who can speak, to whom, and with what authority (Fairclough, 1995). The construction of Benue people repeatedly as victim establishes the moral need for justice and intervention but also normalises political dependency by suggesting that security can only be achieved through federal intervention. Meanwhile, the labelling of perpetrators as “terrorists” and “invaders” negates any need for negotiation and places herders within criminal or militant domains. This kind of categorisation shows how nomination and predication strategies are used in CDA to assign social roles to social actors and to evaluate or pass moral judgement (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). These representations show how discourse justifies, blames, and reflect agency among social actors, thereby sustaining particular power relations. This validates the claim in Fairclough's model that discourse constitutes and is constituted by social power relations (Fairclough, 1992).

Conclusion

This study is a critical study of Tor-Tiv's address to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on farmers-herders conflict in Benue State. The findings show inordinate power relation between state and traditional authority, state and federal

authority where state and traditional authorities both depend on Federal security intervention. Analysis also shows parasitic power relation between Benue people and herder bandits and terrorists. Ideologies such as misinformation, conquest and annexation, divisive politics, nationalism, oppression, insecurity and federal authority are identified.

This study concludes that power asymmetry between state and federal authorities that makes Benue State rely on federal security intervention creates distance between Benue people and security architecture. Thus, devolution of power and equipping Benue State Government with the requisite security infrastructure, tools and

manpower would improve security in the State. Secondly, politicisation of the crisis has created division among political elites, thus the crisis lacks political momentum and vanguards to tackle it. As such political alliance would improve the security of lives and properties in Benue State. This study extends critical analysis of farmers-herders conflict discourse beyond media coverage to traditional ruler's discourse. It reveals that traditional rulers are ideological actors in security discourse, whereas discourse plays a powerful role in shaping governance trajectory particularly in response to crisis.

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