

Rhetorical Tropes of Nationhood in Nigeria's Presidential Campaign Speeches

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Abstract

This paper examines the rhetorical tropes of nationhood in the 2015 presidential campaign speeches of Goodluck Jonathan. Drawing from Wodak et al. (2009) discourse-historical approach, Aristotelian classical rhetoric, and Mignolo (1995) decolonial approach, the paper provides insights into how Goodluck Jonathan uses the affordances of metonymy, metaphor and personification to articulate his version of national consciousness. The findings show that through the metonymic use of personal names such as Mustapha, and Christopher, Ade and Ada, Timi and Bunmi, Nnamdi and Namadi mostly from the three major ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba), and the use of a number of personifications, such as “womb,” “thirsts,” and “destined,” positioning these words with Nigeria, Jonathan attempted to construct unification, unity, sameness and oneness in the midst of crises and diversity. Unfortunately, these ideas of unity follows the colonial government strategy of divide and rule where there is a preference to have a clear-cut division that coincided with three ethnic groups for easy administration. Thus, the depiction of Nigeria as comprising just three ethnic groups through the metonymic use of names has become an incentive for political competition and group formation in national politics.

Keywords: nationhood, metonymy, personification, rhetoric, decolonial.

Introduction

One of the tools in the hands of the dominant class in the fashioning of the common conception of the world is the critical role of language in everyday politics. In politics, language is essential in evoking patterns of meaning that reflect any given ideology. According to Edelman (1985), “[w]hile coercion and intimidation help to check resistance in all political systems, the key tactic must always be the evocation of meanings that legitimate favored courses of action and threaten or reassure people so as to encourage them to be supportive or to remain quiescent” (p. 390). Though the argument can be made that not every use of language is ideological and manipulative, the business of politics is carried out mainly through the use of language. This paper’s understanding of the term politics is largely drawn from Chilton’s (2004) two broad conceptions of politics. First, politics is “the struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it.” Second, it “is cooperation, as the practices and

institutions that a society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, influence, liberty, and the like” (p. 3). Whether as a struggle for power or ability to reach consensus, politics is intrinsically and fundamentally constituted and executed largely through language. This means that politics is both formed and operated through language.

However, even though language is central to politics, language is powerless in itself in the workings of politics. As Weiss and Wodak (2003) posit, “language gains power by the use powerful people make of it” (p. 11). This power behind language, according to Chilton (2004) “can produce the effects of authority, legitimacy, consensus, and so forth that are recognized as being intrinsic to politics” (p. 5). This paper therefore focuses on the role of language in articulating a common conception of nationhood in a complex country such as Nigeria. Specifically, the paper analyzes the different rhetorical troupes Goodluck Jonathan used in his 2015 campaign speeches to articulate his idea of nationhood.

Previous works have looked at the

relationship between language and politics from different approaches, such as from social cognitive (van Dijk, 1997, 2005), critical social (Fairclough, 2015), cognitive linguistics (Chilton, 2004), discourse-historical (Wodak & Meyer, 2016), and argumentation (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). Among Nigerian scholars, we have Ademilokun & Taiwo 2013, Ajilore, 2014, Adegaju & Oyebode, 2015, Chilwa & Odeunmi, 2016 and Omidiora, Ajiboye & Abioye, 2020. However, these researchers have rarely considered two important things: how the intersection of language and rhetoric can be a productive interdisciplinary enterprise in the analysis of politics, and how to bring the critical language of decolonization into the analysis of politics where the analysis conceives hegemonic discourse in a Nigerian context as neither autonomous, nor flowing from a single dominant power, but constituted by multiple, heteroglossic and complex processes that connect the local and the global. This interdisciplinary approach is problem-oriented, as it recognizes “that no single discipline can satisfactorily address any given problem on its own. As a result disciplines are seen as interdependent, and research projects involve team work with specific divisions of labour and specific integrative principles” (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 8).

Critical Discourse Studies

The interest in the critical analysis of language began as a consequence of what has been called a linguistic turn in philosophy in the twentieth century, where significant interests were drawn to the study of language and its role in the representation of reality. The most significant thing that took place during that time, however, “was not the linguistic turn itself, rather the beginning of a thoroughgoing rethinking of certain epistemological difficulties which have troubled philosophers since Plato and Aristotle” (Dallmayr, 1984, p. 16). These epistemological problems centered on the challenge of understanding reality unmediated by language. The consensus among scholars across disciplines in the social sciences and humanities is that the relationship between language and the world is not merely referential but is shaped by the discursive representation of the world (van Dijk, 2005).

In linguistics, the current consideration is

no longer whether reality can exist outside the discursive representation of language, but whether the use of language to represent reality is a transparent or neutral medium. The main contention on the neutrality of language in the description of the world is between the formalist and the functionalist approaches in linguistics. The formal approach focuses on the structure of language, emphasizing the formal properties of the language system (generative rules, algorithms) and affirming that these linguistic elements are neutral and can be studied from a scientific point of view (see Chomsky’s 1957 distinction between competence and performance). The functionalists, on the other hand, focus on the communicative properties of language and the way that ideas are organized within it. They emphasize that the communicative function of language is influenced by its social context and that it must be studied from such a view. Drawing from Halliday’s analysis, Fowler, Hodge, Kress, and Trew (1979) stressed that language is not a transparent medium of thought, especially when one considers the fact that language “encodes” and “expresses” social structure, and is moreover an “instrument” of legitimizing that structure (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew 1979, p. 146). Language, then, can be influenced by the ideological structures within which it operates, and it is possible to uncover it through linguistic analysis. The current interest in using linguistic analysis to reveal the structures of power in discourse started with critical linguists (see Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew 1979). Although systemic functional linguistics paid much attention to the use of language in context, the ideological study of language started with the publication of *Language as Ideology* by Hodge and Kress, 1980.

The role of ideology and power in language has been influenced by earlier philosophical movements, such as the Frankfurt School, The Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham, and scholars such as M.A.K. Halliday and Michel Foucault, among others. These various influences provided a fertile ground for the offshoot of a network of scholars called Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) (Wodak and Meyers, 2016), which is “primarily interested in the way social power abuse, dominance, and

inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 249). CDS as a network, therefore, aims at understanding how language enacts inequality and advocates for change based on its findings.

Before the advent of CDS, Marxist scholars had spoken in a similar fashion (e.g. Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Fuchs, 2014; Kperogi, 2015) that the forms of social life are not given, but rather an outcome of historical and social choices, therefore subject to change. Although CDS is also a critique of the existing social reality, it begins with the analysis of discourse. According to Fairclough (2015), "CDA combines a **critique** of discourse and **explanation** of how it figures within and contributes to the existing social reality, as a basis for **action** to change that existing reality in particular respect” (p. 6, emphasis in the original). This combination of critique and explanation is central to CDS. It not only identifies various features and types of language use that are manipulative and hegemonic, but it further seeks to find answers to why discourse is the way it is, and ascertain its role in shaping the way people think of their society and themselves. The underlying assumption is that without a close and critical analysis of language, language would not readily yield its hegemonic and ideological undertones. CDS practitioners have mostly focused on the elite because it is they who have institutional, political and economic power and who in their exercise of power have created other forms of inequality including class, political, racial, gender and ethnic differentials. While it is true that in order to dominate, the economically and politically dominant class must forge alliances with other classes through the integration of the masses in “a system of absorption and neutralization of their interests in such a way as to prevent them from opposing those of the hegemonic class” (Mouffe 1979, p. 182), most CDS practitioners believe that the reason for the inequality rests primarily on the elite who use different strategies at their disposal, such as the monopoly on the “legitimate” use of violence. Moreover, the alliances usually do not genuinely embrace the interests of the dominated class, but, rather, allow for the dominant class to sustain its

tendencies to dominate. The ideological unity is imposed on the allied groups by the influential roles the dominant group has in articulating the interest of the group's reality through ideological struggle that gets accepted by other classes as “common sense” (Gramsci, 1999).

It follows that CDS analysts focus on the large body of politicians' talk and speeches because of the influential roles these have in shaping the consent of the masses. Oparinde et al. (2020) opines that “one can argue that politicians are presented with a deliberate selection of lexical choices which are coupled with their tactical use of language” (p. 1). But one might argue that Gramsci's idea of hegemony does not refer to a single dominant class but it is an unstable and shifting alliances of different classes, a bloc of social forces. In this sense, focusing only on the elites' discourse excludes “critical challenges that arise from none elites who [tend to] resist the restrictive reproduction of power” (Bergvall and Remlinger 1996, p. 454). As rightly pointed out by Bergvall and Remlinger (1996), what constitutes the elites is a complex question because there are several levels of elitism. Our notion of elites focuses on those members of the ruling class who have been elected to occupy positions in Nigerian politics, such as the president, governors, and the members of the legislative arm.

Rhetoric

By its nature, politics involves making choices between (in most cases) two polar approaches (represented as good and evil), and persuasion is integral to helping people make appropriate decisions. The ability to change people's minds from uncertainty to making a final determination often involves transformations through argument. In this paper rhetoric is explored in a contemporary Nigerian social and political life to assess its benefit as a tool of political theory. According to Martin (2014):

There are many ways to persuade, no doubt, and threatening violence is one of the most common. But human communities are unique in their use of speech in making persuasion a matter not always or exclusively of brute force, but also of mutual understanding, shared perceptions and

interpretations. (p. 1)

Thus, rhetorical analysis offers us a key to understanding the nature of how the soft power of the pen (and words) at certain times works more effectively than the blunt power of the sword (and weapon). This phenomenon, therefore, demands that we examine the ways in which people are discursively manipulated.

This paper draws largely from Aristotelian (classical) models, such as the genres of rhetoric (ceremonial, forensic, and deliberative), rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos), stasis, enthymeme, and apologia to indicate the different ways through which rhetoric can help us understand politics. Rhetoric, in this case, is the adaptation of Aristotle's sense as the "ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion" [Aristotle 1356a]. The means of persuasion available to speakers according to Aristotle are speakers' credibility and trustworthiness (ethos, while Aristotle says that ethos consists of good will towards the audience, good sense, and good moral character), their persuasive arguments (logos), and the speaker's appeal to the emotions of the audience (pathos). The classical rhetorical traditions have a significant influence on how rhetoric is conceived in Africa, however, the rhetorical canon has been challenged and elaborated upon and Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian are no longer the last word on rhetoric.

Among the new conversations, this paper is situated within the cultural and comparative rhetorical understanding of rhetoric as an attempt to "understand meaning-making as it is situated in specific cultural communities" (Powell et al, 2014, p. 4). The cultural and comparative rhetorical perspectives bring to bear Nigeria's colonial experience and the various traditions that informed and emanated from this experience. However, we are aware of the potential tension between the classical and cultural/comparative rhetoric as some approaches to cultural rhetoric try to articulate a kind of cultural studies that would cast off the classical tradition as unnecessary or even inappropriate for understanding non-Western rhetorics. This study believes that using both is significant in the analysis. The classical tradition "provides a method for looking at rhetoric as a

human phenomenon, for learning how to use it, and also for a system of criticism, in that the features of speech that Aristotle describes can be used not only to construct a speech, but also to analyze and evaluate other forms of discourse" (Kennedy 2007, p. 20). And the cultural/comparative is significant in bringing attention to the "practices of meaning-making" in a particular culture and "how particular practices— ways of thinking, ways of problem solving, ways of being in the world—are valued (or not) within specific cultural systems and/or communities" (Powell et al, 2014, p. 6).

The Rhetoric of Nationhood in Nigeria

The new African states created out of territories under colonial administration successfully instilled the spirit of the nationalist movement to fight colonialism but failed to do the same in nation-building. Although nation-building is a continuous process that can never be finished within a particular period, the sense of purpose which enveloped the pre-independence nationalists' struggle in Nigeria began to shift to how to solve the problems of deep ethnic rivalries and hostilities in Nigerian politics. This issue featured prominently in the speeches of the people involved in Nigeria's first military coup. Nzeogwu, one of the protagonists of the first military coup said in his coup speech that the enemies of Nigerian state are "those who seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as Ministers and VIPs of waste; the tribalists; the nepotists" (Mazrui and Tidy, 1984 p. 239).

After a series of coups and secession attempts (see Adebani and Obadare, 2010 for full lists of all the military coups and secession attempts since the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914), Nigeria appeared to have headed towards disintegration. Apart from maintaining the inherited federal system and military service, there were different structures put in place in an attempt to keep Nigeria as one united country. For example, a new national anthem and nation pledge were composed after independence to emphasize Nigeria's unity. Phrases such as "one nation bound in freedom, peace, and unity" and "to defend her unity" were emphasized. Moreover, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was established in

1973 after the civil war, a creation aimed at strengthening Nigeria's unity. It requires Nigerian university and polytechnic graduates to be posted to cities in states other than their state of origin (so as to appreciate other ethnic groups) for one-year mandatory national service. Another institution aimed at ensuring a united Nigeria is the Federal Character Commission (FCC), established in 1996 with the responsibility of enforcing "fairness and equity in the distribution of public posts and socio-economic infrastructures among the various federating units of the Federal Republic of Nigeria" (federalcharacter.gov.ng). Another very important symbol of unity but hardly discussed is the Nigerian currency notes. According to Morgan (2020), Nigerian "Naira is one of many currency notes that bear huge significance on national and ethnic issues of its people" (p. 1) because they "are relayed from one person to another and are delimited by national boundaries" (Morgan 2020, p.1).

Anderson's (2006) concept of "imagined community," which presupposes imagined connections or shared experience, might be at odd with Nigeria's experience because most Nigerians are yet to perceive themselves as part of the nation. The agitation for the state of Biafra by some Igbo ethnic groups and even in recent times, the agitation for the Yoruba nation is a clear example. Therefore, some people called Nigeria the "mistake of 1914" or "a mere geographical expression" (Adebanwi and Obadare, 2010, p. 381). This is because there is not yet a collective consciousness where the citizen's first allegiance is to the entity Nigeria rather than to ethnic groups, religious affiliates or regional forces. In other words, national cohesion remains elusive. The nationalists' collective consciousness that helped defeat colonialism is yet to end the multiple strata of internal divisions. Although collective identity is a constant and never ending process of negotiation, there is as yet no clear path to a national culture that transcends ethnic, religious, and regional differences. In other words, Nigeria must work towards building a nation where what unites people matters more than what divides, a reflection of unity in diversity. Nigerian leaders have made some attempts at various stages in the country's existence to keep the country united and

forge a national spirit among disparate ethnic nations, where loyalty will be first to the nation-state before and above loyalty to any other group. As recently as January 2017, past Christian heads of state and deputy heads of state were featured together in a music video produced at the behest of the country's current government on the theme of national unity. But because of Nigeria's historical antecedence, the celebrated poet Niyi Osundare insisted that "Nigeria has no unity to negotiate or not to negotiate" (*Guardian*, August 1, 2016) since most ethnic groups are not part of Nigeria by any prior negotiation in the first instance but by colonial accident.

Some groups of people remain part of the union not voluntarily but through the price of their people's blood as in the case of Igbo from the South-Eastern region of Nigeria. In 1967, the Igbo ethnic group, led by Odumegwu Ojukwu, declared the secession of Igbo land from Nigeria to form an independent country called Biafra. The declaration led Nigeria into three years of civil war from 1967 to 1970. Biafra was incorporated back into Nigeria after it was clear that the Nigerian military power had defeated the Biafran army. Chinua Achebe, in his memoir recounting his personal view about the Nigerian civil war, insisted that Biafra was actually a country, not just an agitation, and that since 1966, "[t]here was much discussion of the difficulties of coexisting in a nation with such disparate peoples and religious and cultural backgrounds" (Achebe, 2012, p. 83). The movement for the secession of Igbo land is still ongoing, led today by Nnamdi Kanu. Even though the Nigerian government has incarcerated the leader of the agitation, the fact that there is such a movement casts doubt on Nigeria's unity and reminds us of Achebe's (2012) comment: "If the Berlin Conference sealed [Nigerians'] fate, then the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates inextricably complicated Nigeria's destiny" (p. 2).

From the above review it is clear that the contemporary Nigerian political structures are constellations of many factors such as religion, ethnicity, civil war and etc. These constellations have influenced the forms and contents of Nigeria's political rhetoric. What is interesting in the foregoing discussions is the recognition of the

significance of contextualizing and relaying political ideas in Nigerian context and how such an endeavor in the analysis of political speech would significantly foreground our awareness that the meaning of the speeches politicians make are embroiled and rooted within and among multiple contexts, histories and knowledge systems. More importantly, speeches made by politicians are not merely simple speeches to be analyzed; rather, they are an integral part of our political system, which extends beyond us and cannot be confined to an individual. “[A political speech] is always a part of a larger community, a larger conversation, a network of relations” (Powell et al., 2014, p. 23). It is based on this complex formation of Nigeria’s nationhood that this paper intends to explore the paradox inherent in the articulation of a common conception of nationhood in these political concepts in a postcolonial context by offering a rigorous analysis of our leaders’ political rhetoric, specifically Goodluck Jonathan’s Campaign Speech.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is driven by an interdisciplinary approach that draws from Critical Discourse Studies, Rhetoric and Decolonial. The critical discourse approach draws largely from Wodak et al. (2009) discourse-historical approach. Particularly from their book that discusses the discursive construction of national identity. One of the basic assumptions of the approach is that national identities as a form of social identities are constitutive of discourses. Thus, national identities are produced and reproduced, as well as transformed and dismantled discursively (Wodak 2009 et al.). Using this approach to examine the discursive management of nation-building crisis in Jonathan’s campaign speeches is appropriate, since Jonathan’s framing and the management of nation-building crisis is done majorly through discourse. Moreover, the objective of Wodak’s (2009) approach works well for our data as the approach seeks “to conceptualize and identify the various macro-strategies employed in the construction of national identities and to describe them” (p. 30). The selected macro-strategies analyzed in Goodluck speeches are the rhetorical trope of personification and metonymy. The main focus is on how Goodluck Jonathan makes use of

these figures of speech to construct unification, unity, sameness, and difference.

The analysis also draws from the classical rhetorical especially “details that facilitate communication and persuasion” (Andrus 2013, p. 4976). Specifically, the analysis investigates how the former President of Nigeria Goodluck Jonathan, who as an incumbent seeking reelection, used different rhetorical and linguistic strategies to pursue his political goals. We do this by drawing concepts such as *deliberative rhetoric* and *ethos* to examine the pervasive and mediating role of political speeches in the Nigerian political context. The focus is on those patterns that reveal a speaker’s strategies of persuasion. Rhetoric was broadly examined not only as the art of persuasion but also as a way of understanding the different ways language functions in the establishment of social relationships and social identities in a non-Western context, particularly in Nigeria.

Decolonial theories provide us with tools to analyze and criticize colonial legacies with the aim of understanding the relationship between existing political structures and other elements of colonial and global structures that are related to the Western idea of modernity and promises of economic growth. According to Mignolo (1995) “reflections on colonial experiences are not only corrective exercises in understanding the past but helpful tools in speaking the present” (p. 314). While some political analysts have made references to postcolonial conditions (e.g., Kamalu and Agangan, 2011), the decolonial analysis was not their main concern.

Thus, in this paper, we argue that understanding the mechanism of domination and inequality requires that we engage on two levels of critique simultaneously: (1) the internal critique of hegemonic powers and (2) the critique of colonial powers that are now codified in the globalization discourse. This dual approach is necessary because contemporary Nigerian language of politics not only serves the interest of the ruling class, but can also be seen as a discursive residue of colonialism (Mignolo, 2011). Thus, the forms of social struggles that are above and below the nation-state are places of intervention that might be ignored when the emphasis of the analysis privileges just the nation-state.

Methodology

This paper analyses two 2015 electoral campaign speeches of Goodluck Jonathan presented at two major campaign events. The first was made on Tuesday November 11, 2014 on his declaration of intent to run for the 2015 presidential elections on the platform of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) at Eagle Square, Abuja. The second speech is Jonathan's Thursday, January 8, 2015 remarks at the start of the PDP 2015 campaign in Lagos. The first speech was made to gain the nomination by his party where the choice was between Jonathan and other PDP bidders and the other was after being nominated where the contest was between him and other parties' candidates. The transcription conventions for the extracts used in this paper are as follows: Jonathan's original speech extracts are italicized, while embedded comments in the data are in plain texts inserted in square brackets, and the words emphasized are bold-faced. The extracts are numbered in ascending order for easier identification.

The choice of Goodluck Jonathan's campaign speeches is predicated on the fact that the first democratically elected president who is from a minority ethnic group, the Ijaw group. This unique achievement deserves particular attention to understanding the nature of his rhetoric, particularly how the idea of nationhood is discursively and rhetorically instantiated. Moreover, it looks at whether such discursive and rhetorical construction has some relationship with the major ethnic groups.

Analysis

The Use of Personification

Personification functions to change the metaphorically inanimate into animate. According to Wodak et al. (2009) "a personification is a special form of metaphor as it links two differing conceptual fields, i.e. a concept with the semantic feature [- human] with a concept [+ human]" (p. 44). Personification is one of the important means Jonathan employs to construct discursively nation and national identity. The following excerpts contain some of the examples of personifications of Nigeria he used:

*We must never forget our common bond,
one people from the womb of*

one Nigeria. (A 78)

*In moving forward, I see a Nigeria that
thirsts for progress with children
across the nation, eager for knowledge
and safely in schools! (A 78)*

*My people, Nigeria is destined for
greatness. (A 109)*

Here we find a number of personifications, which are revealed by words, such as "womb," "thirsts," and "destined." By positioning these words with Nigeria, Nigeria is depicted in a humanized form. This humanization gives life and action to Nigeria and works to serve as a strategy of animation. The metaphor of womb and thirsts, for example, signify that Nigeria is not only "already-born" nation but also has the desire, especially a good desire for a drink rather than desires for mundane things. Moreover, the metaphor of "destiny" means that Nigeria is not purposeless but is destined to achieve a goal in this world. In terms of how these personified words are used to construct nation and national identity, the symbol of the womb, for instance, reflect an idea of Nigeria as a single whole, and as participants in this womb, no Nigerian is separate from one another. This oneness is emphasized through the choices of the phrases "one people" "from the womb of one Nigeria." In this sense, by personifying Nigeria Jonathan tends to force identification of the entity called Nigeria while skillfully ignoring intra-national differences based on ethnicity, religion, and class – considerations that will recall some of Nigeria's real problems. This discourse of sameness frequently occurs in Nigeria's political rhetoric. However, with the glaring inequality and class difference in Nigeria, "who is in" and "who is out" in the discursive reification of one Nigeria? The womb metaphor also signals potentials and loyalty. Like children to their mother, the ultimate loyalty in African cosmography, Nigerians are appealed to be loyal to their mother. As for the womb, it means Nigeria she shall give birth to progress and development if Jonathan's mandate is refreshed.

Metonymic Use of Personal Names

Another way nation and national identity was constructed was with names as a metonymic representation of the three major ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba) in Nigeria. According

to Wodak et al., (2009) metonymy comes from the Greek for “name change” and “replaces the name of a referent by the name of an entity which is closely associated with it in either concrete or abstract terms” (p. 43). Jonathan employs metonymy as a discursive strategy primary to create an idea of sameness. Here are some of the metonymies used in Jonathan’s speeches.

43. I see a Nigeria where the children of Mustapha, and Christopher, Ade and Ada, Timi and Bunmi, Nnamdi and Namadi, do not go hungry! I see a Nigeria where all, no matter their beliefs, live in peace and harmony! (A 102)

These names metonymically represent Hausa/Muslim (Mustapha, Namadi), Igbo/Christian (Ada, Nnamdi), Yoruba (Ade, Bunmi), and other ethnic groups such as Ijaw (Timi). The rhetorical merit of such metonymic use of names is an attempt to reduce the relevance of ethnic attachments as a means to success, and instead appeal to unity and equality in the distribution of goods and services. For Jonathan from an ethnic minority playing the ethnic card would not help his political agenda; he needed an ethnic coalition more than any other president did. Reducing the salience of ethnicity as coalition factor dominated Jonathan’s first campaign speech presented in October 2010. In the speech, Jonathan emphasized his candidacy’s capacity to represent a moderate or non-ethnic candidate. This excerpt from his 2010 declaration-of-intent speech summarizes that philosophy:

My story symbolizes my dream for Nigeria. The dream that any Nigerian child from Kaura-Namoda to Duke town; from Potiskum to Nsukka, from Isale-Eko to Gboko will be able to realize his God-given potentials, unhindered by tribe or religion and unrestricted by improvised political inhibitions.

In all subsequent speeches, Jonathan has used different strategies to deemphasize ethnicity. The metonymic use of personal names and place however, presents an essentialist view of ethnicity where there is an assumption that personal names and places is a marker of either ethnicity or

religion or even both. In trying to increase his support, he inadvertently reminded Nigerians of their disparities. Though it is true to some extent, that there is a relationship between names and ethnic groups or religions in Nigeria, the reality is more nuanced and complicated than discursively constructed as fixed categories. There are different dimensions to ethnic identities that cannot be mutually integrated into just names. For instance, many individuals bear the name of Mustapha and other Arabic names yet they are neither Hausa nor Muslims. Moreover, the names of minority groups reflect more complexity or problems in the metonymic use of names to represent ethnic or religious groups. Many ethnic minorities take up names from Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba who yet still maintain their links with their local traditions even with names from the dominant ethnic groups. This supports Bucholtz & Hall’s (2005) discussion on identity: that identity should be seen not as deriving from “fixed social categories” (p. 586) and suggests that when we approach identity, we should approach it from a “broad and open-ended” (2005, p. 586) perspective. Hence, Jonathan’s representation of ethnic identity with individual names might be misleading and shows how names is used as stereotypes.

Other problems can be associated with the metonymic representation of ethnicity in Nigeria. The problem is that Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba cultural orientations are privileged above the others, and are considered eminently constitutive of Nigeria as a nation, hence, that cultural orientation is subsequently stressed as result of public mediation in politics. The assumption of Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba as a representation of some Nigeria’s ethnic groups is one of the ways colonial experience has been influential in the ways Nigerians come to see and understand themselves. According to Mazrui and Tidy (1984) the idea that Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba represent Nigeria’s ethnic groups follows the colonial government preference to have a clear-cut division that coincided with ethnic groups for easy administration and achieve their strategy of divide and rule. Since then, the depiction of Nigeria as comprising just three ethnic groups has become an incentive for political competition and group formation in national politics.

There is another way metonymy is used to construct nation and national identity. This deals with the metonymies of the type where the name of a place stands for the person(s) living at the place, which also in Jonathan speeches depicts ethnicity. According to Wodak et al., (2009) because of the effectiveness of metonymies of place to forge intragroup sameness, it has been used as a means for referential annexation, assimilation, and inclusion. As indicated earlier, Jonathan's 2010 campaign speech has some good examples of these:

*44. My story symbolizes my dream for Nigeria. The dream that any Nigerian child from **Kaura-namoda** to **Duke town**; from **Potiskum** to **Nsukka**, from **Isale-Eko** to **Gboko** will be able to realize his God-given potentials, unhindered by tribe or religion and unrestricted by improvised political inhibitions.*

Also Jonathan uses "Nigeria" to stand for its people as it is shown below:

46. Nigeria has undertaken a most transparent and corruption free bidding process, attracting global commendation. (A 11)

47. Nigeria is now exporting cement. We are moving forward! We must produce what we consume and consume what we produce. (A 56)

48. Nigeria is the first country in the world to develop an e-wallet system to reach farmers with subsidized farm inputs on their mobile phones. (A 39)

That blocked Nigerians from even going to Britain at a time and the relationship between Nigeria and Britain... the whole world isolated Nigeria. (A 33)

The use of "Nigeria" to stand for its people has the tendency of hiding the human agents behind various actions associated to Nigeria. This serves primarily to render the dominant human forces who were responsible for actions or who benefit from government's major policies anonymous. Let us take the statement that "*Nigeria is now exporting cement.*" The company that is engaged in the exportation of cement is called Dangote

Cement, and it belongs to one-man Aliko Dangote. By using Nigeria as the responsible agent, Aliko Dangote remains anonymous even though he is the primary beneficiary in the exportation of cement. The discursive construction of nation and national identity is not peculiar to Jonathan's rhetoric but a dominant feature of Nigeria's political rhetoric. Even with all the rhetoric of nation building, yet there exists no bond, which could bring all Nigerians together irrespective of the differences in ethnicity and religion, cherished by all the different groups. Many decolonial scholars would argue that the idea of a nation in postcolonial states is a false assumption of a nation that is constructed in the language of modernity. According to Mignolo (2009) the rhetoric of modernity preaches salvation and progress but the decisions about the salvation and progress are not constituted by free decisions made by free people but are based on top-down approach. Hence, the idea of a nation follows that logic of modernity where we witness a colonial creation of nations without regard to the complex nature of the people or their consent. Because of this lack of free will decisions on the status of nations, the task of nation building out of multiethnic entities is proving to be difficult. The discursive construction of nation in political discourse might be less for genuine nation-building purpose than for Jonathan and politicians generally to achieve their political goals. That is why the emphasis in Jonathan's speech is on a journey to progress or as he puts it "march of progress as a united and democratic country." This journey to progress emphasizes economic growth measured by statistics while ignoring the social agents.

Conclusion

One cannot ignore the role of rhetoric in influencing how nationhood is conceived and interpreted. As our politicians construct a system of language and meaning that shape people's interpretation of these political ideas (ethnicities, religion, the national bourgeois, and nation-state and nationalism) and move people to action, the politicians have the opportunity to position themselves as nationalist, transformationist and divinely ordained, unifiers, developers. It can be concluded that politics is a social activity that finds its true expression through the medium of

language. As politicians articulate, rearticulate and dearticulate different political ideas, language becomes more than simply a means of communication, but a political arsenal deploys to convey political intents for power, authority, and legitimacy. However, and importantly, because of the place of Nigeria in the history of the world, the

meaning of political terms such as politics, nation, state and nationalism, among others cannot be taking for granted. The words might exist in Nigeria's political rhetoric, but their manifestation and actual existence in the lived experience of Nigerians is highly contentious and raises some questions.

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