

## NIGERIAN POLITICAL RHETORIC ON APC'S 2023 MUSLIM-MUSLIM CANDIDACY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DOGARA'S AND SHETTIMA'S DISCOURSE

Adamu IDRIS, PhD&Adamu Isah BABURA  
Department of English and Literary Studies,  
Bayero University, Kano  
[aidris.eng@buk.edu.ng](mailto:aidris.eng@buk.edu.ng)

### Abstract

Language is considered a vital weapon in the armory of political orators, who often deploy different rhetorical tactics aimed at swaying audience and winning them over to preferred positions. This thus, remains a major focus of attention among discourse analysts. The Muslim-Muslim presidential candidacy in Nigeria during the 2023 general elections formed a political incident that attracted heated rhetoric, especially between the Muslims and Christians in the North. In relation to this, this study bridged some gaps in research to explore how the vice-presidential candidate, Kashim Shettima and Yakubu Dogara, the northern Christian advocate, deployed rhetorical tactics in attempts to influence Nigerians. Therefore, this study drew on Critical Discourse Analysis through Van Leeuwen's legitimation and deligitimation theory to analyze Shettima's and Dogara's speeches on Muslim-Muslim ticket. Results discovered that while Shettima employed variety of rhetorical tactics to rationalise the Muslim-Muslim candidacy and encourage Nigerians to support it, Dogara deployed numerous tactics to delegitimise it and urged Christians to work against its success in the Nigeria's 2023 general elections.

### 1.1 Introduction

Nigeria is believed to be the most populous multi-lingual African country with about 200 million people and over 450 languages (NPC 2006; Kperogi, 2015). The country comprises six geo-political zones within the northern and southern enclaves having three zones each. Northern Nigeria is said to be dominated by Muslims followed by Christians while Christians are said to dominate the southern enclave then Muslims and traditionists coming in the distant third. Nigeria has proven petroleum and other natural resources, large fertile land for farming apart from the established human capital. This bounty could be said to have turned into a curse in disguise because the country has become more difficult to govern due to tribal, regional and religious interests (Bello & Mele, 2014). The growing cynicism and distrust among politicians and public office holders threw the country into several episodes of military rule from 1966 to 1999.

Nigerians are now enjoying their longest uninterrupted civilian rule since independence. However, politicians and public officials continue to steal public funds with impunity and inculcate sectional and religious intolerance in the masses to perpetuate in power using propaganda and rhetoric. In their speeches, politicians exploit any sectional divide (tribal, regional and religious) in struggling to keep or gain power and sell up their ideologies without having any recourse to the repercussions their actions and inactions might cause. As such, competence and ability to deliver which should be the guiding principles and constitutional requirements for electing political office holders are disposed for primordial interests and mediocrity. Nigeria politicians arranged for themselves a power shift between northern and southern enclaves and religious combination in especially joined tickets for sectional inclusion. In most presidential elections for instance, a Muslim from the North is joined with a Christian from the South and vice versa in one ticket.

However, determined to win the 2023 presidential election after losing out to APC in 2015, the PDP has jettisoned its zoning principle and moved the presidential candidate to the North perhaps, on the assumption that a northern candidate would appeal to northern voters. Similarly, the APC opted for Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu from the South and Kashim Shettima from the North in what is call Muslim-Muslim ticket, citing competency, capability and perhaps the voting strength of the northern Muslims as factors that largely influenced their choice of muslim Vice Presidential candidate for 2023 election. There was heated rhetoric between Kashim Shettima and Yakubu Dogara on this issue of Muslim-Muslim candidacy of the APC. The northern Christians feel that they are being sidelined for not given a chance to contest for either presidential or vice-presidential seat. Therefore, Shettima and

Dogara are in many instances engaged in expressing their 'warring' views. They use *rhetorical tactics* to legitimise and delegitimise the APC's Same-Faith ticket in order to attract audience's sympathy to reason why their arguments are substantial and should be accepted. As such, this paper employs Van Leeuwen's (1999) legitimisation theory in Critical Discourse Analysis as the theoretical framework to investigate Dogara's and Shettimas' speeches. The essence is to dissect how each of the speakers frames a supposedly self-prejudiced stance in expressing their positions to the target audience and use rhetorical force of such views in attracting sympathy and support of the Nigerian public. Also, the paper identifies and discusses the *rhetorical tactics* the speakers deployed to.

## 1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Review of Empirical Studies

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is perceived to have been emanated from critical tradition of Gramsci and believed to be the melting point of different disciplines (van Dijk, 1993; Dellinger, 1995; Luke, 1997; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; McGregor, 2004; Wardhaugh, 2006). CDA is a research premise that examines the relationship between language and social reality. Language, as Kress (1990) posited is a sort of social practice people deploy to construe their ideological underpinnings and worldviews by consciously or unconsciously being vague, ambiguous, emphatic, presumed innocent, pitiable or having over-emphasising and inflammatory content to elevate or subvert certain societal segments.

The main thrust of CDA rests on the premise of identifying, expounding and opposing social exclusion, power abuse, discrimination, inequality and domination in language use. In an analysis of media discourse, van Dijk (1993) examined how social power is framed for domination and inequality. Van Dijk noticed that while dominant ideology is in charge, the dominated is made to think and see everything as correct and alright. This way, powerful people, institutions and systems define, redefine and manipulate public opinions in their interest (Bello & Mele, 2014). Jones (2001) asserted that ideology works at the institutional, subjective and textual levels to position people in certain ways. Exposing such manipulations to achieve personal, tribal, religious or any sectional agenda against the interest of the masses constitutes the centre stage of CDA.

CDA focuses right from its inception on political texts, media discourse and social semiosis. For example, there are researches on ideology and political discourse (Hudson, 1978; Geis, 1987; Sharndama, 2015; Idris, 2017), interface between politics, government and the media (van Dijk, 1993; Negrin, 1994; Fairclough, 1998, 2000), ideology, power and gender (Kitch, 1998; Fairclough, 2001; Aremu, 2011). On this premise, Van Leeuwen's (1999) theory explored the ways in which discourses are used to legitimise or challenge social structures, ideologies and hierarchies in different discourse types through four categories of legitimisation which include **authorisation** which posits reference to the authority of custom, tradition and law of persons in whom institutional authority is vested; **moral evaluation** legitimisation by reference to discourse value, how language legitimises ways of thinking; **rationalisation** legitimisation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalised social actions; **mythopoesis** legitimisation conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate ones. The essential relevance of Legitimation theory to this study lies within the premise of how certain linguistic structures such as imperative markers, transitivity processes and personal pronouns are chunked in propositions and construed as rhetorical patterns explicitly in the enactment and sustenance of power as well as the reproduction of domination.

Recent research in political speeches in Nigeria cut across examining how process choice decipher the ideological underpinnings of political leaders in mostly their inaugural addresses (Koussouhon & Dossoumou, 2015; Idris, 2017; Lagu, 2021) and how speech act types deployed project meaning (Abuya, 2012). While Koussouhon and Dossoumou (2015) identified material, mental and verbal processes as the main peddlers of Buhari ideology, Lagu (2021) discovered that the persuasive strategies deployed in Nysom Wike's speeches are chunked with thoughts that appeal for unity and promise to return power to the people in the conduct of common affairs. Meanwhile, Bello and Mele (2014) examined within the broad theory of CDA the use of rhetorical tactics in post-election speeches to ascertain the way politicians criticise and defend elections. Findings revealed that politicians legitimate worst publically adjudged elections in their favour and vice versa. In another development, Igwebuike and Chimuanya (2021) employed van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimisation theory

and investigated digital peddling of fake news in the social media to achieve political influence in Nigeria's 2019 general elections. The study argued that van Leeuwen strategies are effective persuasive tools due their use of discourse markers that appeal to emotions, rational conclusions and hateful comments. However, none among the reviewed studies compared two pre-election speeches using van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimation theory and this signals a research gap. Thus, this paper unravels the way rhetorical strategies are foregrounded and/or backgrounded to achieve domination, discrimination, inequality and power sustenance.

### 1.3 Methodology

The data for this research are political speeches delivered separately by Honourable Yakubu Dogara, a former Speaker House of Representatives and Kashim Shettima, the APC Vice Presidential candidate for 2023 election. Dogara's speech was given during the northern Christians Leaders' Summit while Shettima's acceptance speech was delivered at the official unveil of the APC's Vice Presidential candidate. The speeches were downloaded from Shettima and Dogara's Facebook pages. Excerpts of rhetorical strategies were culled from these speeches and presented for the analysis. Dogara's speech was categorised as Christians' protest and an attack to the APC's decision to field Muslim-Muslim candidates while Shettima's text was classified as counterattack to Dogara's speech. This classification can be seen as easy and reliable because the contexts of these texts explicitly highlighted the protest and defense through deploying *rhetorical tactics* of foregrounding and back grounding respectively. Based on this, excerpts reflecting the four identified Van Leeuwen (1999) categories in the selected speeches are presented for analysis before conclusion.

## 1.4 Results and Discussion

### 1.4.1 Dogara's Rhetorical Tactics

Dogara's 26<sup>th</sup> paragraphs speech exhibited certain rhetorical tactics and expressions to legitimise Christians' reproach to the APC's same faith ticket and delegitimise the party's choice of Kashim Shettima to deputise Bola Ahmed Tinubu in 2023 election. This is to arouse sympathy and obtain favourable public judgement. Below are the excerpts identified following Van Leeuwen's (1999) legitimation categories.

**Authorization:** This strategy implies making reference in the discourse to the authority of custom, tradition and law of persons in whom institutional authority is vested.

#### **Muslim-Muslim Ticket Subverts Peace and Religious Inclusion**

Following appreciation as in most speeches, Dogara clearly expressed his concern about Muslim-Muslim ticket and how it affects Christianity, the tradition of political inclusion at the centre and the danger it further poses to the fragile security situation in Nigeria.

*"I understand we are here to talk about our nation and how political choices may impact our faith and likely exacerbate the escalating parlous security situation and stymie our march towards an inclusive, peaceful and prosperous nation." Pg 1*

The expression *...political choices may impact our faith...* successfully opens the speech by emphasising Christians' right to reject whatever affects their faith and the mutual understanding between Muslims and Christians. Knowing how sensitive religion is in Nigeria, Dogara effectively creates an impression that Muslim-Muslim ticket poses danger to any Christian faith and thus, should be rejected. Another tact in same expression reads *... and likely exacerbate the escalating parlous security situation....* This clearly implies that APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket seems an aberration to the tradition of Nigerian politics and can plunge Nigeria into another civil disobedience and lawlessness because of the present security challenges. Dogara posits that only justice, fairness, tolerance and progressive politics to religious plurality in Nigeria can match Nigeria to greatness and lead to peaceful co-existence and economic prosperity.

Dogara uses sensitive words at the moment such as *faith, security and prosperity* to frame a tact of warning to both the APC and the candidates that infringing Christians' right to produce the next Vice President as has been in the tradition of Nigeria politics simply means denying Nigerians an improved security and economic prosperity. Thus, to Dogara, achieving maximum security and economic

prosperity at the moment requires surrendering the Vice Presidential slot to the northern Christians. This seems a serious warning to the APC government and the candidates as Dogara explicitly indicts them for any eventual security breach and economic collapse should the Muslim-Muslim ticket wins.

*“What gives me hope about the Nigeria project is that there are many of our Muslim brothers and leaders who did not only warn APC, but have had to call out the APC....Pg 2*

In the above excerpts, Dogara remarks that numerous Muslims also warn and even call out the APC not to field a same-faith ticket for justice, equity and fairness but the party explores this path of division to win election. This stratagem signals an appeal to the conscience of other Muslims that want justice and fairness to prevail on the APC and also reject Muslim-Muslim ticket. This attempt according to Dogara shows that the fight is not for Christians alone but for every true Nigerian that believes in fairness to stand firm against the perceived injustice dole out to Christians, thus, a Nigeria project. In another tact, Dogara makes an analogy of picking a Christian as Vice Presidential candidate as bringing Muslim and Christians together and that whoever refuses Christians this slot is deliberately pushing Nigerians into a war. Dogara pursues his deeply covert agenda of wanting political power under the guise of patriotic righteousness enacted by the discourse of protesting Same-Faith ticket.

**Moral Evaluation:** This tactics posits legitimization by reference to discourse value, that is how language legitimises ways of thinking.

**Christians large enough to determine who wins or loses**

Another tact Dogara employed corrects the impression which undermines the voting strength of Nigerian Christians and insists that Christians in Nigeria are large enough to determine election victory and defeat, thus, APC should reverse this aberration for power sustenance and inclusivity in Nigerian politics. This is exemplified in the following excerpt.

*“Other unhelpful framings of the debate by the so-called pundits posits that Christians in the north are so small in number that their votes don’t count. This strange argument seeks to reinforce the satanic agenda of dividing the Church in Nigeria into north and south, and also ignores the fact and reality that Nigeria is evenly split into religious lines.” Pg 3*

The APC and the proponents of Same-Faith ticket as Dogara alleges, plot to divide Nigerian Christians into north and south forgetting the fact that they share same faith thus, cannot be broken easily. However, these proponents as Dogara claims, have also forgotten the reality that the population of Nigeria is fairly split into these two major religions. Therefore, any effort to deny Christians what Dogara considers as their birth right brims the APC into losing power at the centre and Christians should reject it out rightly.

**Muslim-Muslim ticket breeds division, disunity and may lead to revolution**

It is known that politicians enact different linguistic tactics to push for power grab and extend their hidden agenda. This can include drawing public attention for possible national unrest resulting from any perceived unfairness and injustice rendered to any societal segment that may block their ways to power grab. In his speech, Dogara pursues power by alerting the public that Muslim-Muslim ticket breeds division and disunity which can lead to revolution if not reversed.

*“:It is a bad decision because it breeds division which is ccountre-productive to our collective aspirations for a united and prosperous nation... Of course our strength is not in numbers but unity. You are not strong because you are many you are strong because you are united. Nigeria cannot survive if we merely tolerate each other or if the happiness of one group is the unhappiness of the other group.” Pg 6*

After branding APC’s decision for Muslim-Muslim ticket as bad with the potency of fueling division and disunity, Dogara’s attempt here shifts blame to the APC and its presidential candidates for any eventual misfortune on Nigeria. The first tact effectively pursues power through highlighting the APC’s intolerance to accommodate Nigeria’s diversity for unity and economic prosperity. The enactment of the second tact reiterates another fact that division fuels inequality which makes revolution inevitable. The argument here is that Muslim-Muslim ticket has the potency to breed

inequality and Christians are the supposed victims. Thus, if Muslim-Muslim ticket is not reversed, Dogara warns that revolution may be inevitable to destroy inequality.

**Rationalisation:** This refers to legitimation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalised social actions.

### **Our Protest is not personal or anti-Islam**

Another tact Dogara deployed seeks to convince the public that this protest is not personal or even anti-Islam as it may suggest but a just course to salvage the nation plunging into chaos. This can be seen in the excerpts below.

*“When we talk about a Muslim-Muslim ticket; God forbid that we should be understood to be objecting to Muslims or that we don’t want Asiwaju Bola Tinubu to be president. It is not about Senator Kashim Shettima either, but it is about what is right and what is wrong. It is about justice, fairness and equity...”Pg 1*

The above extracts attempt to enlighten the public, the Presidential and the Vice Presidential candidates that Christian protest is not personal or anti-Islam as Dogara insists that they do not have any religious or personal grudge with each of them. The expression *“it is about what is right and what is wrong”* buttresses the need for understanding, righteousness and patriotism from the stakeholders as the following expression exemplifies *“it is about justice, fairness and equity”*. However, Dogara’s emphasis enacted another push for power to serve personal ambition under the mask of seeking justice, fairness and equity to Nigerian Christians. It is almost clear for any informed individual that politicians especially in Nigeria fight for personal gain, for personal ambition which may be to perpetuate in power under the guise of sectional interests to the detriment of the masses. As such, this may not be a different case to lure masses into possible physical confrontation as can be implied in the extract below.

### **Debate poses danger but it is unavoidable**

In the following excerpt, Dogara admits the negative implication of playing religious card in Nigerian politics but pursues power using same means.

*“...not a few worry that the debate was becoming corrosive, and of course, with this kind of spitting of bilious views into the political wind, there was bound to be lots of nerves in the air.”Pg 1*

This statement creates the impression that many Nigerians are concerned; the tension is high and that if nothing is done to reverse the Muslim-Muslim ticket for national integration, Nigeria heads to disintegration and chaos. The use of the phrase *‘of course’* strengthens Dogara’s warning to the APC and well-meaning Nigerians to intervene and save the nation. This tact assures the APC and other political stakeholders that things can get bitter and thus, seeks favourable public judgement should things turn worst for Nigeria.

**Mythopoesis:** This posits that legitimation can be conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate ones.

### **United Kingdom getting stronger through embracing social inclusion**

If this speech is to be divided into three parts, the second part dwells so much on emphasising the need for social inclusion in Nigeria as it is in the United Kingdom (UK). This idea is portrayed in the page 4 of Dogara’s speech as we can see in this excerpt.

*“If the UK offers any example, in 2005, the Tories had only two non-White MP’s. Just within decade, this has change dramatically... As we speak, the UK may well be on the verge of becoming the second major Western democracy to have a non-White leader in Sunak [who] ...shares the same faith with just 1.03 million Britons representing just 1.6% of the UK’s total population” Pg 4*

An explicit way a politician can mask their quest for power is through direct comparison of things or places. This tact enables audience to reason even superficially, how the compared items differ. The above extract compares Nigeria with UK and the deductive reasoning postulates that Nigeria, despite being an emerging democracy, blessed with people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and surmounted with lots of economic, educational and security challenges, opts for sectional divide and exclusion at the time when the country urgently needs unity and political inclusion for economic

prosperity. Doraga, advocates for social inclusion and religious balance at the centre for fairness, justice and equity as it is in the UK.

### **Power Slipping from the Republican Party in the United States of America due to Social Exclusion**

*“Compare this to the US under Trump where the Republican Party was and is still in danger of becoming the party of White grievances and White reaction against an increasingly diverse America. Is it in vain that the Democrats had to settle for a woman and a black VP in Kamala Harris? Women issues are treated as minority issues and what percentage of US population is black? Just 13% in case you don't know.” Pg 5*

In this excerpt, the speaker warns APC that it risks becoming a party of Muslim reaction against the increasingly diverse and more accommodating Nigerian people. The analogy goes on to mock APC that Democrats in United States of America with almost 90% white people settled for Kamala Harris, a black woman as Vice President to ensure politics of inclusion. This tact impliedly appeals to the conscience of good people in the APC and other Nigerians to see reason in this protest and remedy the anomaly for the party to retain power and the country to maintain its fragile peace. Dogara pursues his deeply hidden agenda of wanting political power behind seeking balance and fair representation for all religions at the centre.

*“In these two, we have two models to borrow from; either to play politics of exclusion which the Muslim-Muslim ticket represents or to make politics all-inclusive in order to heal our national fault lines and unite our desperate peoples for nation building. The latter must be the choice of every patriotic and sensible Nigeria.” Pg 5*

The enactment of this tact makes the protest more explicit and suggests that Nigeria must go for a choice out of two. This is to either heal its wounds and remain united as one indivisible nation to be achieved only through all-inclusive politics or opts for the politics of division and exclusion which Muslim-Muslim ticket embodies as Dogara alleges, to destroy the remnants of our already faulty lines. The implication of this argument seems clear that the APC can only come out clean by surrendering the VP slot to northern Christians and perhaps to the speaker. Anything short of this could push the already on the brim country into civil instability. Thus, this argument threatens both the APC and the candidates that there may be backlash for this unfair treatment.

#### **1.4.2 Shettima's Rhetorical Tactics**

Shettima's speech is made up of 17 paragraphs carefully designed to counter the criticism and reproach directed at his choice as the running mate to the APC's Presidential Candidate in 2023 elections, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Shettima counters Dogaras' allegations as propaganda rooted in mediocrity and stereotype from losers. Meanwhile, Shettima deployed different tactics to legitimise his choice, describing it as the product of free and fair process and pragmatic and foresighted effort of stakeholders to retain power beyond 2023.

**Authorisation:** This strategy implies making reference in the discourse to the authority of custom, tradition and law of persons in whom institutional authority is vested.

#### **Historical allusion**

Shettima perhaps enacted this tact from the idea that their ticket is not in contradiction with the constitutional provision and that life has a cyclical nature and history teaches well to convince the reproachers to defy stereotypes as was done thirty years ago and accept Muslim-Muslim ticket for national development.

*“We are again on the cusp of history, and left with no option, other than collaborating assiduously again, to pursue the collective interest of APC's stakeholders, across ethnic, religious, and regional stations,” Pg 1-2*

*“Today, I must also testify to the cyclical nature of history. But like those before us, we must resist temptation to throw feast, over an invitation to serve the people. We must always take the past as our finest teacher, one never to be taken for granted. This would guide our string tomorrow.” Pg 3*

Politicians are known to exploit any available factor in power pursuit and popularity increase. Shettima enacted this tact to justify that his nomination is within the premise of history. Cleverly, the speaker in excerpt L presents Muslim-Muslim ticket as the only available option forced by circumstances. As such, APC members should sacrifice their regional and religious interests to pursue collective goal of APC stakeholders not his agenda as he was only called to offer his best for Nigeria. Shettima reminded the populace that about thirty years back, Nigerians defied similar prejudices and stereotypes and voted for similar ticket wholeheartedly. Thus, Nigerians should read yesterday very well to prepare for their tomorrow.

To further buttress that he has not pushed for the VP slot, Shettima assured the public in excerpt O that like MKO Abiola and Babagana Kingibe, Tinubu and him will defy stereotypes of some Nigerians to emerge as another best moment in Nigeria's democratic experiment. Thus, Shettima berated what he called 'conflict entrepreneurs' that 'hawk hate in gaudy suit and babanriga' to desist from dishing the reincarnation of thirty-year Nigerians' hope of getting competent hands devoid of any stereotype. The implication of Shettima's argument is that should Nigeria edge into anarchy, those criticising Muslim-Muslim ticket should be held responsible because the seed of having this moment has been planted in Nigerians thirty years ago through MKO Abiola and Babagana Kingibe ticket.

#### **Nomination Process Free and Fair not Imposition**

One other tact the speaker employed to get accepted is his insistence that the selection process leading to his candidature was free and fair not imposition and that Nigerians have accepted the ticket. However, northern Christians rejected this and claimed Muslim-Muslim is carefully designed and imposed to dominate them.

*"This ticket isn't an imposition; it's an outcome of democracy at its practical best and based on the aggregation of the ideas and insights, of our great party's stakeholders" Pg 3*

Shettima claimed stakeholders in APC followed democratic processes in their emergence and considered practically, the challenges ahead of winning 2023 presidential election. According to him, the overwhelming endorsement by mostly, Christian presidential aspirants and the subsequent election by mostly Christian delegates signifies that the 'desperados' wanting to divide people for personal ambition cannot win. To further leverage on this, Shettima assured the public that their ticket is a national project, out to continue the transformative process embarked upon and seek to unite people not to divide them. Although it can be described as a day-dream or a mirage to most Nigerians, national unity has become a very catchy-word to politicians for attracting public support and sympathy towards their course.

**Moral Evaluation:** This tactics posits legitimization by reference to discourse value, that is how language legitimises ways of thinking.

#### **Majority of Christians have accepted the ticket**

Another tact enacted by Shettima to pursue his agenda claims that majority of Christians do not have problem with the ticket and have been sending in good will messages and determined to work for its success.

*"If this were an unpopular option, as the cast of partisan provocateurs has attempted to paint, there wouldn't have been the tones of goodwill messages, especially from distinguished Christians, from all over the country." Pg 3*

Shettima cautioned some Christians here not to listen those branding the ticket discriminatory and thus, overheating the polity unnecessarily for their personal gains. Shettima insisted that reproachers would not succeed in painting them black as majority of Christians have already accepted the ticket and ready to work for its success. This, as Shettima claimed is evidenced by the outpour of congratulatory messages Christian brothers and sisters are sending in. To pursue his political agenda, Shettima successfully created the impression that their ticket is a Nigeria project and has nothing to do social, regional or religious exclusion and would work to realise the Nigeria of Nigerians dream.

#### **Instilling hope to Nigerians**

Another tact Shettima enacted tries to convince public is instilling them hope that with Muslim-Muslim ticket, Nigeria and Nigerians are in competent hands and that there is no cause for alarm.

*“I’m grateful for this opportunity to be part of this history, to deliver Nigeria to a future defined by fast-evolving technologies, that will propel us towards guaranteed national security, economic boom, youth engagement, mass employment, high-quality education, and, of course uncompromising national cohesion.” Pg 5*

Shittima expresses his excitement for being part of the historical ticket that would hopefully turnaround events and reverse the decaying Nigeria if elected. The attempt here is to instill hope that their presidency would ensure Nigeria harnessing present technological advancement for a guaranteed national security and qualitative education that would lead to job creation and economic prosperity which are key to national unity.

**Rationalisation:** This refers to legitimation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalised social actions.

### **Nomination is based on trust, competence and confidence**

In another tact, Shettima struggles to justify his nomination and describes it as a placement of trust in him, his competence for the job and his potentials to deliver the task.

*“I ‘m standing here today because of the benign testaments of those who believe in me... I ‘m most honoured by the consensus of the distinguished stakeholders of our party, to trust me, with representing the nation’s interests...” Pg 2*

Shettima’s assertion tried to establish a reason that his nomination is based on the public trust in him from different testaments that he would not take public expectations for granted and would work to represent national not sectional interests. The fact that Shettima was a governor at a critical time in Borno state, a serving senator and an eloquent speaker means he can simply influence people’s perception into believing his way of grabbing power through much emphasis on trust and competence. Based on this, if some people describe his nomination as irrational, so be it because he is trusted by his precedence and stakeholders for his competence to represent national interests.

**Mythopoesis:** This posits that legitimation can be conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate ones.

### **Chosen due to party’s foresight and pragmatism to retain power**

Another strategy the speaker employed to convince public and divert people’s attention from describing the ticket as a sectional agenda is to claim that the ticket is a national project, and an effort to win election and retain power not to subjugate anyone. Shettima insists APC has no any agenda other than winning election beyond 2023 and will work to pursue national unity and development.

*“The success of the All Progressive Congress (APC) in the past two presidential elections were not magic shows. They were the results of our foresighted, and pragmatic decisions, to sacrifice our personal interests and sectional sentiments...” Pg 1*

*“My emergence as the running mate of the inimitable JagabanBorgu is based on the party’s forthright assessment of the threats ahead...” Pg 2*

In this excerpt, Shettima insisted that as situation warrants, for APC to retain power beyond 2023, its structure for presidential election should reflect Muslim-Muslim ticket. Thus, he advised what he calls ‘frightened camps’ to sacrifice their personal interest for better Nigeria. Shettima’s admission that the fear of dislodging APC at the centre triggered his emergence could be another tact to frighten and arouse the sympathy of northern Christians in APC to accept the ticket or else, APC would be defeated. The implication here to Shettima is the fact that Muslim-Muslim ticket has become indispensable for APC at this moment. Lastly, Shettima praised the rational APC Christian brothers and sisters that are driven by passion to retain power and deliver unifying projects and knocked very hard the ‘irrational’ ones criticising the ticket for their refusal to see reason in the combination as nothing but permutations to win election. This way, Shettima exerted his influence to pursue power by implying that their ticket is indispensable to APC’s victory in 2023.



### 1.5 Discussion

Although demystifying political discourse to reveal motivations for several lexical choices in power struggle and sustenance seems not a new trend, examining opposing pre-election speeches in one political party may be assumed to be a new dimension in political discourse analysis. Unlike during campaigns and in the inaugural speeches where emphasis was more on persuading voters for votes and policy outlines respectively, the tide here changes to persuading public with propaganda and rhetorical tacts to go for or against the nomination of Kashim Shettima as the APC's Vice Presidential Candidate for 2023 election. On this background, this research analysed speeches delivered by Yakubu Dogara, a Christian and former Speaker, House of Representatives and Kashim Shettima, a Muslim and former Governor, attacking and counter attacking Muslim-Muslim ticket respectively. From the discussion of the extracts, it explicitly appeared that politicians enact rhetorical tacts to pursue power and construe their ideologies under the guise of religion, region, or claiming competency, trustworthiness, and/or even through historical allusion. As expected, the excerpts from the speeches reflect these notions to legitimise and delegitimise Shettima's nomination as the VP Candidate.

Typically, Dogara – whose speech reflects Christians' voice and bents hard to reproach APC's decision to present Muslim-Muslim ticket and knowing fully well that power ploy may work against him, deployed persuasive and 'aggressive' strategies such as blame attribution; claim of segregation and subjugation; berating fellow Christians on the dangers of the ticket; acknowledging Muslims' contribution in his political success; insisting protest not personal or anti-islam and signaling defection to pursue power and relevance beyond 2023. Explicitly, Dogara's discourse expressed grief and disappointment and thus, tacts used reflect grievances and frustrations about Muslim-Muslim ticket. As such, the rhetoric may be said to have been enacted purposely to arouse sympathy and delegitimise APC's ticket with the goal of obtaining favourable public judgement. Although Dogara and by extension northern Christians' argument may turn out to be reflecting the true reality and moral burden that should be expressed to demand inclusivity in Nigerian politics, it may also, as in many instances be a strategy to seek power and have continued relevance at the centre. This can be substantiated by Dogara and other Christian leaders' support for Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu against many Christian aspirants in the party primary election. As it is, the enactment of these strategies place Christians in Nigeria as subjugated, excluded and relegated to the background in one hand and paint the APC and by extension, its stakeholders, as cheaters, desperados and a party wanting power through division to promote satanic agenda on the other hand.

On his part, Shettima did all he could to defend his nomination as foresighted and pragmatic decision the party ever made to pick a trustworthy and competent man for the job. In this course, Shettima enacted other tacts as 'ticket APC's effort to retain power', 'history allusion of the ticket', 'commending majority of Christians for accepting the ticket' and 'instilling hope for greater Nigeria possible only with the ticket' to be part of the defense for his nomination. However, where it appears obviously difficult to defend his nomination, Shettima branded the protesters as 'partisan provocateurs', 'conflict entrepreneurs' and desperate politicians that cannot prioritise reason over sentiment. This strategy depicts Shettima as innocent that is only called to serve his country and offer his best and paints protesters as desperate politicians seeking power through mediocrity, prejudice and division.

On this background, it should be noted that it is not the Vice-Presidential nomination that actually triggered Dogara and Shettima's outburst and war of words. Rather, it is the outcome, which determines who is nominated and who is not, that actually prompted what remarks each made. This is evidenced in the assumption that Dogara defected from PDP to be paired with Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu in the presidential ticket and Shettima has long been nursing the agenda to fulfill his political ambition. Moreover, it is obvious that politicians are known for defection to protect their interest, as such, they can criticise an election vehemently today because it is against their interests and defend it religiously tomorrow for suiting their interests. Thus, theirs is always a permanent interest not a permanent enemy as the saying goes.

### 1.6 Conclusion

Therefore, it is important to clearly state that this war of words has become an integral part of politics that adds glamour to campaigns and targets masses, whose judgments and perceptions politicians

religiously pursue for manipulation and continued domination. This way, the masses may be left in the dark as to which side to support because each of the speakers has portrayed themselves as the victim and painted the other as villain. With these accusations and counter accusation, politicians lose nothing or very little but push the masses to the brim of physical confrontation that may lead to the loss lives and properties. Thus, if not checkmate by informed audience, masses would submit to these accusations for continued domination by the elites. This is where CDA is involved to draw public attention for masses to come back to their senses through proper scrutiny of rhetorical tactics deployed and make wise decisions. This way, many lives and property would be saved and good governance would be ensured.

## References

- Abuya, E. J. (2012). A Pragma-stylistic Analysis President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Inaugural Speech. *English Language Teaching*, Vol. 5(11), 8-15.
- Adegbija, E. (1988). 'My friend, where is Anini?': Decoding the Meaning of Utterances. *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol. 12(2), 177-86.
- Adegbija, E. (1995). 'I Major General X': Discourse Tactics in Military Coup Speeches in Nigeria. *Text*, Vol. 15(2), 253-70.
- Aremu, M. A. (2011). A Social Pragmatic Analysis of Obituary Announcements in English in Nigeria. *Journal of the Nigeria English Studies Association*, Vol. 14(2), 142-55.
- Bello, B. M. & Mele, M. L. (2014). Rhetorical Tactics in Defending and Criticising Nigerian Elections. *Ganga: Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, Vol. 5(2), 1-19.
- Daniel, I. O. (2011). Ideology, Power and Pictures of Women. *Journal of the Nigeria English Studies Association*, Vol. 14(2), 120-41.
- Dellinger, B. (1995). Critical Discourse Analysis. Accessed May 10, 2018. <http://www.users.utu.fi/bredlli/cda.html>
- Fairclough, N. (1998). Political Discourse in the Media: An Analytical Framework. In A. Bell & P. Garret (eds). *Approaches to Media Discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fairclough, N. (2000). *New Labour, New Language?* London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). The Dialectics of Discourse. Accessed May 10, 2018. <http://www.geogr.ku.dk/courses/phd/globloc.papers/phdfairclough2.pdf>
- Fairclough, N. & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical Discourse Analysis. In T. van Dijk (ed.), *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. London: Sage, 258-84.
- Hudson, K. (1978). *The Language of Modern Politics*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Idris, A. (2017). Analysis of Process Types in the Inaugural Speeches of Presidents Muhammadu Buhari and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. *Ganga Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, Vol. 5(5), 29-45.
- Igwebuike, E. E. & Chimuanya, L. (2021). Legitimizing Falsehood in Social Media: A Discourse Analysis of Political Fake News. *Discourse and Communication*, vol. 15(1), 42-58.
- Jones, P. (2001). Sociocultural Theory: Chapter Two. Accessed May 10, 2018. <http://athene.mit.csu.edu.au/srelf/SOTE/EML504/JONESSLT.html>
- Kitch, C. (1998). The American Woman Series: Gender and Glass. In *The Ladies Home Journal*, 1897. *Journalism and Mass Communication*, vol. 72 (2), 243-62.
- Koussouhon, L. A. & Dossoumou, A. M. (2015). Political and Ideological Commitments: A Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis President Buhari's Inaugural Speech. *International Journal of Linguistics and Communication*, vol. 3(2), 24-34.
- Kress, G. (1990). Critical Discourse Analysis. In R. Kaplan, (ed). *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 11.
- Lagu, S. A. (2021). Persuasive Strategies of 2015 Inaugural Speech of Governor Nysom Wike of Rivers State, Nigeria. *Scholars International Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, vol. 4(8), 242-248.
- Malah, Z. & Idris, A. (2016). Sociolinguistic Exploration of Nigeria's Political WhatsApp Communities: A Case Study of President Muhammadu Buhari Supporters' Group. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, vol. 4 (4), 560-572.
- McGregor, Sue L. T. (2004). Critical Discourse Analysis- A Primer. *Critical Science and Critical Discourse Analysis*, vol. 15(1), 102-22.

- Van Dijk, T. (1993). Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. *Discourse and Society*, vol. 4(2), 249-83.
- Sharndama, E. C. (2015). Political Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's Inaugural Speech. *European Journal of English Language and Linguistics*, 3(3): 12-24.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2007). Legitimation in Discourse and Communication. *Discourse and Communication*. Vol. 1(1), 91-112.
- Wardhaugh, R. (2006). *Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Wodak, R. (2001). What CDA is about- A Summary of its History, Important Concepts and its Development. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (eds). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 1-13. London: SAGE.