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# CONTEXTUALIZING “CHANGE”: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE “CHANGE” SLOGAN IN NIGERIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE (2014 TO PRESENT)

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**CONTEXTUALIZING “CHANGE”: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF  
THE “CHANGE” SLOGAN IN NIGERIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE**

**(2014 TO PRESENT)**

By

Olayemi B. Awotayo

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

In Rhetoric, Theory and Culture

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2018

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This thesis has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of  
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To my sister Oluwatosin Amire-Awotayo who passed on shortly before I embarked on this journey.

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## ABSTRACT

What does “change” mean in the strands of discourse circulating in Nigerian political discourse? In this study, I deploy the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis, particularly the Discourse Historical Approach (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016), to examine how the “change” slogan is deployed in selected presidential and religious addresses. While Muhammadu Buhari presents himself an agent of "change" in his 2014 Declaration Speech, employing linguistic forms of positive nomination and predication to describe himself and his party as “transparent” and “credible,” he criticizes his opponent with negative formations of the same strategies: “unthinking government” and “oppressive.” However, faced with the complexity of governing a modern democracy, in a “Change Begins With Me” speech, Buhari exhorts Nigerians to themselves model change before they ask the government to deliver on the promise of “change.” Though “change” is often deployed in political discourse, both the ambiguity of the slogan and the contentious nature of political discourse also emerge in related media discourse, where a prominent Nigerian clergyman, Reverend Ejike Mbaka, invokes religious metaphors as discursive re-appropriation of the president’s campaign slogan, warning that Buhari risks being blown away by the “wind of change.” Thus, I analyze the intertextual re-contextualization of the “change” slogan in Nigerian political discourse in order to reveal how political tensions emerge through discursive formation.

Keywords: Slogans, Political Discourse, Critical Discourse Studies, Nomination, Nominalization, Predication



**CHAPTER ONE:**  
**THE STUDY OF POLITICAL SLOGANS IN A MULTIDISCIPLINARY**  
**CONTEXT**

**1.1. Introduction**

Slogans are an essential part of corporate advertising and political campaigning. As attention-getting phrases, they are often invoked by corporate organizations or other social groups to champion a cause. Deployed in political communication, “they simplify the task of communicators and audiences in a situation where there are many ideas competing for a place in the political agenda and a great deal of noise from competing messages” (Sharkansky, 2002 p. 75). In modern democracies, most political figures use slogans as alluring aphorisms to articulate ideological standpoints, to persuade their audience, to entrench ideology in public consciousness, and to drive political action. Consequently, an impressive body of discourse analysis has engaged with the impact of slogans in political genres (e.g., Hodges, 2014; Hackett, 2016; Kamalu, 2016; Veg, 2016). Discursive practices anchored in politics generally aim for specific goals, which could be positive or negative. Sometimes, an audience may also find a political message—or certain aspects of it—ambiguous, thereby laying the groundwork for how analysts have given attention to political discourse.

Political aspirants often deploy language strategically to proclaim mandates and win electoral support. While in office, they equally depend on linguistic ingenuity to conceptualize pertinent economic issues and gain voters’ trust. Thus, the study of political language is premised on the notion that language plays a crucial role in all social

processes, particularly politics. Although the relations between language and social processes lies ubiquitously in the domains of the social sciences and humanities, the interrelations between politics, communication, and language, have been central in Critical Discourse Studies (CDS)—which encompasses a wide range of analytical and theoretical discourse approaches . This connection is demonstrated by Norman Fairclough, in his foundational text, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (2013), where he asserts that CDA is a “transdisciplinary approach” to the analysis of various forms of social relations; where discourse itself signifies “the relations of communication between people who talk, write and communicate with each other” (p. 3) and abstract discursive practices that bring language, power, and ideology together in very complex ways. Wodak and Meyer (2014) consider CDA as “a problem-oriented” systematic analysis of how power, ideology, and resistance are woven into semiotic and linguistic texts (p. 31). Particularly, CDA-inclined political analysts focus on how social actors use language to negotiate power among a multitude of political players and interests (Kress et al., 1982; Chilton, 2006; Machin & Mayr ,2012; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016; van Dijk, 2016).

While democratic politics presents a façade of structurally horizontal relations of power, there is normally an elite class at the forefront of the social enterprise. Nevertheless, political analysts do not limit their critique to genres of prominent actors in the public domain. In “What is Political Discourse” (1997), van Dijk makes the case for a macro, extensive, and contextual analysis of political discourse by describing the various interpretive ramifications of political communication:

From the interactional point of view of discourse analysis, we therefore should also include the various recipients in political communicative events, such as the public, the people, citizens, the ‘masses,’ and other groups or categories. That is, once we locate politics and its discourses in the public sphere, many more participants in political communication appear on the stage. (p. 13)

He adds that political discourse is a “prominent way of doing politics,” a process that reflects activities “such as passing laws, decision-making, meeting, campaigning”; such discourse appears in genres such as “propaganda, political advertising, political speeches, media interviews, political talk shows on TV, party programs, [and] ballots” (p. 18).

Political interactions usually involve metaphorical attributions, where key actors use language symbolically to take positions, vilify their opponents, and idealize their own viewpoints. Thus, linguistic strategies of nomination, predication and nominalization have been key aspects of critical analysis by which CDA scholars reveal how speakers conceptualize discourse participants and public policies processes, which sometimes include positive self-evaluation and negative evaluation of others and the ideological significance of their descriptors (Fowler, et al. 1979; Fowler, 1991; Reuseigl 2007; Reuseigl and Wodak, 2016; van Dijk, 2016). Such analysts take stock of the discursive representation of actors, actions, and processes (the “what(s),” “who(s),” and “how(s)”) in political genres, and establish the implications that emerge from such representations, without losing sight of the social affordances that underscore such processes.

## 1.2. Background of the Study

The attention to the ways political actors formulate messages to proclaim their interests or legitimize their position has been central to political discourse analyses. Analysts, especially those oriented to CDA approaches, examine how political messages may be encoded using linguistic strategies of nomination, predication and nominalizations, in some cases to delete or deflect agency, and to make discrete, concrete goals relating to specific social events and practices (Machin and Mayr, 2012). When actors discursively construct messages these ways, they seek to orient an audience to their viewpoints.

Kamalu and Aganga (2011) succinctly capture this, arguing that “the language of politics is essentially aimed at persuading the audience or addressee to accept the perspective of the speaker” (p. 33). Therefore, language remains a crucial resource in the hands of those whose goal is to sway an audience<sup>1</sup> to accept their position, or gain political influence while critical discourse analyses is particularly motivated by how language use serves ideological goals.

Beginning in 2014, Nigerian presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari proclaimed his “change” mandate, addressing the need for transformation in major sectors and most importantly, transparency in public financing. A few months after he came to power, in

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<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that the recognition of how speakers tailor their messages to the appropriate context and audience, finds a larger scope in Aristotle’s early description of the rhetorical setting, with the division of rhetoric into epideictic, deliberative, and forensic—corresponding, respectively, to “praise and blame” in ceremonial contexts; active decision-making in political contexts; and “deciding questions of justice” in juridical contexts (Herrick 2017, p. 79 - 81). These forms of rhetorical acts emerge in political texts and talk.

his 55<sup>th</sup> Independence Day address, President Buhari responds to Nigerians' call for quick intervention in the oil industry, electricity supply, and security by criticizing his predecessor, Goodluck Jonathan and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), now the opposition party, claiming that the previous administration was responsible for Nigeria's low economic achievement. President Buhari makes an argument for slow progress and, in closing his speech, tells Nigerian that "change" must begin with them. One year into his tenure, President Buhari also inaugurates a national orientation program, where he maintains that his call for "change" is not "theoretic," arguing that change necessarily begins "at home," "in school," "on the road," and so on. Meanwhile, political opponents and non-partisan Nigerians, such as Reverend Ejike Mbaka, react to this "change" agenda, likewise using linguistic strategies of nomination and predication to argue that if President Buhari fails to revamp Nigeria's economy, he risks being blown away by a metaphorical "wind of change." Thus, this analysis invokes principles of Critical Discourse Analysis, particularly the Discourse Historical Approach to examine how the "change" slogan is employed in Nigerian political discourse, in order to analyze how discursive formulation reveals political tension.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

I formulate three questions that guide the approach for this discussion:

- (1) How is "change" used by Muhammadu Buhari in his presidential campaign?
- (2) How might CDA identify and illuminate the agentive shift in the use of change?
- (3) What does "change" mean in the different strands of discourse circulating in Nigeria's political landscape from 2014 to the present?

In the body of this analysis, I focus on the following addresses:

(1) Four speeches of President Muhammadu Buhari:

- (a) Buhari's (October 15, 2014) Declaration Speech—where he identifies a myriad of challenges faced by Nigeria and promises that his All Progressives Congress (APC) party would bring changes to reverse the steady decline in the economy, fight Boko Haram, and address corruption. He criticizes the then ruling (PDP) government for ineptitude in the fight against corruption.
  - (b) Acceptance Speech (Channels TV, April 1, 2015) where President Buhari praises his audience for having voted for “change” and says, “change has come,” identifying himself and his party with the “change” slogan.
  - (c) 55<sup>th</sup> Independence Day address (October 1, 2015), where the president employs strategies of argumentation to address the myriad of challenges faced by the Nigerian people.
  - (d) The launching of the “Change Begins With Me” (September 8, 2016) campaign, where President Buhari admonishes his audience to themselves embrace change before they see the change promised by the government.
- (2) New Year Day (Jan 1, 2018) where Reverend Ejike Mbaka, a Nigerian clergy man, criticizes the Buhari-led administration.

#### **1.4. Political Context of Muhammadu Buhari's Presidency**

A former military head of state (1983-1985) during Nigeria's dictatorship regimes, Muhammadu Buhari returned to power under civilian rule after he defeated his predecessor, Goodluck Jonathan, in the March 28, 2015 presidential election. Buhari swore an oath that officially inaugurated his presidency on May 29, 2015. He rose to power on the mantra of change in an election in which his newly formed party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), defeated an entrenched People's Democratic Party (PDP), which had been the ruling party since 1999, when Nigeria returned to democratic government. Two independent political parties—the northern-based Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and the predominantly southwest-based Action Congress of Nigeria (CAN)—formed a strong coalition (the APC), which displaced the PDP in 2015, and attracted influential members of the latter before and after the 2015 general elections. On October 1, 2015, on the celebration of Nigeria's 55th Independence Day, President Buhari gave a speech that addressed economic challenges. Though the occasion was barely three months after the president assumed office, Nigerians were already demanding that the new APC government deliver on the promises that motivated their votes at the polls. In the address, President Buhari responds to issues such as the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, vagaries of global oil prices, unstable electricity, and scarcity of petroleum products. Dissatisfaction with the progress of government led to vehement critique of Buhari's change initiative from commentators who saw the move as a matter of political expediency, suggesting it should have been launched immediately after the APC government rose to power in 2015. More recently (January 1, 2018), Reverend Mbaka has pointed to low economic performance in his critique of the

“change” ideology, calling on the Nigerian president to make serious intervention in prominent sectors of the economy if he wishes to maintain the trust of the Nigerian people. In Chapter Two, I elaborate on the principles CDA. In Chapter Three, I present my data and analysis of five speech events: four speeches by Muhammadu Buhari and one of Ejike Mbaka, while the Chapter Four summarizes the analysis and presents a conclusion.



## **CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY**

This chapter introduces the principles of CDA, examines the main tenets of the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) according to Reisigl and Wodak (2016), and explains the principles of the DHA germane to my discussion in Chapter Three.

### **2.1. The Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis developed in the 1980s from a group of critical social science and humanities researchers who share a common orientation to the ways language shapes social realities. The central aim of the pioneering scholars of CDA was to develop a set of theoretical perspectives and approaches geared towards explicating the discursive dimensions of language, power, and ideology in relation to humans' socio-political milieu. Later CDA developments of the 2000s emphasized cross-disciplinary perspectives in analyzing texts and talk, and created the impetus for several theoretical approaches and methodologies, now collectively described as Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) (van Dijk, 2013; Wodak and Meyer, 2016).

CDA remains indebted to scholarship in rhetoric, systemic functional linguistics, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and visual studies, and was strongly influenced by the critical theories of the Frankfurt school (van Dijk, 2016). Traditional social science and humanities disciplines—such as anthropology, cognitive science, philosophy, and critical linguistics—have also shaped the trajectory of the field (Wodak and Meyer, 2016). The principles that guide work in discourse analysis and its subfields are equally

recognized in CDS<sup>2</sup>. According to Wodak and Meyer, these include emphasis on naturally occurring language<sup>3</sup>, the study of social interaction rather than limited units of sentence structures, the addition of semiotic aspects of language to the object of study, the knowledge of the context of language-use, attention to discourse as a large body of texts to draw coherent linguistic patterns, and so on (p. 2) (For more insights on the historical development of the field, Wodak and Meyer 2016, pp. 4-13; Fairclough 2013; Wodak, 2007)

Fairclough's conceptualization of CDA as a method (e.g., in Wodak and Meyer, 2001) comes from an earlier emphasis on a close analysis of language use in texts<sup>4</sup> rather than social formation. However, he considers CDA both a method and a theory or theoretical perspective as he suggests in the following:

I should declare at once that I have certain reservations about the term 'method'.

It can too easily be mistaken as a set of 'transferrable skill' if one understands

'method' to be a technique, a tool in a box of tools, which can be resorted to when needed and then returned to the box. CDA is in my view as much theory as

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<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this analysis, I maintain the term "CDA" as it directly conveys my textual focus, though van Dijk (2013) and Wodak and Meyer (2016) have noted that CDS accounts for a variety of theories and approaches that emerged through the evolution of the CDA field.

<sup>3</sup> It must be noted that the attention to "naturally-occurring language" most closely aligns with the perspectives of scholars who focus on the analysis of unplanned conversations (Conversation Analysis), and may be contested as not representative of CDA scholars who examine written texts (See Schegloff, 1968)

<sup>4</sup> This may be contrasted with CDA scholarship that emphasizes detailed social analysis, rather than textual-based analysis (for an overview of this distinction, see Krzyzanowski and Forchtner, 2016, p. 254).

method – or rather, a theoretical perspective on language and more generally semiosis (including ‘visual language’, ‘body language’ and so on) as one element or moment of the material social process which gives rise ways of analyzing language or semiosis within broader analysis of the social process. (p. 121)

CDA aims to convey a set of cross-disciplinary interactions (see also van Dijk, 2008, 2015); hence, Wodak and Meyer (2016) argue against saying, “I am going to apply CDA” (p.3), mainly because there is no single “method” of doing CDA. Fairclough (2013) asserts that CDA is both “interdisciplinary” and “transdisciplinary” because it simultaneously shapes and is shaped by preexisting disciplines (viz. anthropology, political science, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, critical linguistics, and so on), establishing a self-reflective dialogue among them. As Wodak and Chilton (2005) note, the transdisciplinary approaches in CDA equally rest on the view that work in CDA cannot be solely about language. Hence, they call for increased multidisciplinary interactions to constantly enrich the field.

Defining CDA has often entailed clarifying its phrasal constituents (viz. “critique” “discourse,” “ideology<sup>5</sup>” and “power”). Discourse is generally linked with the material process of meaning making. Most importantly, however, it is considered meaningful in relation to other entities it describes. Among CDA scholars it denotes “a set of relations between people who talk, write, and in other ways communicate with each other” (Fairclough, 2013 p.3). Wodak and Meyer (2016) conceptualize discourse as the

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<sup>5</sup> Fairclough (2013) explains why the term “ideology” remains germane to CDA scholarship, notwithstanding the decline in the use of the term in social research due to the diminishing of social classes (p.26).

relationship between nuanced and “stable use of language and social institutions that frame it” (p. 6). For instance, other subject matter or genres (e.g. media discourse), communicative events (e.g. political discourse), and other social processes have been described in terms of a kind of discourse.

In terms of “critique,” CDA gains its critical impetus from critical theories of the Frankfurt school. “Critique” signifies a rigorous analysis of how speakers or writers negotiate meaning. In the CDA tradition, “critique” includes a multilayered approach to clarifying underlying representation of power relations, inequality between privileged and unprivileged members of the society, struggle for legitimacy and acceptability by powerful people as represented in discursive practices. However, the CDA scholars have recently identified the misconception that “critique” may not essentially depict negative referentials (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2016) since the aim of CDA is to equally identify the best form of social practice.

Wodak (2002), citing Thompson, asserts “ideology refers to social forms and processes within which, and by means of which, symbolic forms circulate in the social world.” In CDA, she adds, it is considered “an important means of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations” (p.9). Much of CDA scholarship has focused on fully developed ideologies such as racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-immigration policies. Ideologies may also portray economic processes. For instance, Fairclough (2013) conceptualizes how the ideological framework within the capitalist and neoliberal aspirations of many economies of the 2000’s maps out the trajectories for CDA under the subtitle, “Manifesto for CDA in a Time of Crisis”. He suggests, “in this time of crisis the priority for critical research

including CDA should shift from critique of structures to critique of strategies—of attempts, in the context of the failure of existing structures to transform them in particular direction” (p.14). Such strategies include how political ideologies are discursively presented. For instance, both in international and national politics, we often find political agendas construed with an ambiguous term like “change.” Such an ambiguity may highlight how audiences are manipulated, especially when the agency for “change” is not clearly defined or deliberately omitted in political discourse. Thus, CDA presents analysts with a multidisciplinary framework for understanding the workings of language, power and ideology in texts and talk.

Van Dijk, another pioneer of the CDA movement, asserts in his 1993 publication “Principles of Discourse Analysis” that CDA “requires true multidisciplinary, and an account of intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture” (p. 253). For van Dijk, members of the discourse society possess the meaning potential of certain discursive practices. Thus, the critical analyst must be cognizant of the shared cultural experience (and mental knowledge) of social realities to provide an explicit analysis of how language mediates social process. He elaborates on his context-oriented analysis, arguing that “critical discourse analysis can only make a significant and specific contribution to critical social or political analyses if it is able to provide an account of the role of language, language use, discourse or communicative events in the (re)production of dominance and inequality” (p. 279).

The political context of CDA is robust in Paul Chilton's title, *Analyzing Political Discourse* (2006), where he asserts that existing CDA theories did not fully conceptualize how humans' mental models and conceptual knowledge of space or 'spatial cognition' construct ideologies in our minds, and shape how we interpret political messages. He argues that political discourse relies on "conceptual frames" or "presumptive frames" (p. 203) deduced through cognitive processing, by which more abstract usages in the domains of social context may then be illuminated. His approach contrasts with previous functionalist approaches that emphasized social-cultural experience over cognitive processes. According to Chilton, there is need to reexamine language as "mental phenomenon," rather than the too often emphasized, "social phenomenon." He explains further:

Starting from single issues such as racism, or from political categories such as ideology, scholars in this tradition have tended to use linguistics as a tool kit and have not tried to tell us more about the human language instinct. Worthily, they have sought to fight social injustice of various kinds. I do not know if discourse analysts can have any serious impact on the genocides, oppressions and exploitations we are still witnessing (Chilton, 2006: x)

Chilton explains that political actions and actors may be conceptualized within what he calls "multidimensional deixis," in which deictic expressions that designate "space," "time," and "modality" (p. 58) project strategies of perspectivization in political discourse. He posits that participants in public discourse accept certain ideologies through a natural instinct about whose views (within the network of ideological perspectives)

align with theirs. He sums this up in the last section of the text: “The wider the [political] arena, the greater the need to identify one’s position” (p. 204).

Other prominent CDA theorists have incorporated multimodal approaches into the movement, examining the discursive construction of power and resistance in semiotic texts. For instance, Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (1996, 2006) seminal work, *Reading Images* and O’Toole’s (1994) *The Language of Displayed Art* greatly influenced multimodal CDA<sup>6</sup>. According Lin (2013), the numerous CDA approaches share a common concern with how “different forms of social inequality and domination and subordination that are being produced and reproduced through language and discourse, and its [CDA’s] commitment to working towards effecting change and improvement of such situations” (p. 2).

## **2.2. From Textual to Contextual Analysis: Principles of the Discourse Historical Approach**

The Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) is a multidimensional approach to the critical analysis of discourse. It explicates the discursive construction of meaning and ideologies across genres, within certain historical or contextual parameters. A prominent exponent of the theory, Martin Reisigl (2017) identifies four developmental phases (1987, 1993, 1997, and 2007 to present) of the discourse historical approach (henceforth, DHA) in

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<sup>6</sup> Recently, Machin (2016) argues for a socially driven multimodal CDA, suggesting that the model based on purely linguistic, text-based visual analysis may not coherently accomplish the aim of Critical Discourse Studies in explicating discourse as social practice.

Europe, in which critical analyses have focused on discursive construction of racism, anti-semitism, anti-immigration ideologies, economic inequalities, and various forms of social problems.

Following Reisigl and Wodak's (2016) DHA, my analysis aims at discovering how the linguistic categories may be adopted for analyzing the discursive representation of social actors, actions, and process described in the Nigerian political discourse under the rubric of "Change." Although the DHA formulates research goals around a particular topic, for instance, climate change, my concern in this study is the way the change slogan is used in the Nigerian political landscape. Yet, this work does not lose sight of the DHA proponents' central concern for how a context and historically nuanced analysis may integrate "discourse," "text," and "context" in a coherent multidimensional fashion:

- (1) Text-dependent critique fleshes out inconsistencies, (self) contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas in text-internal or discourse-internal structures.
- (2) A context-oriented (*Socio-diagnostic*) analysis reveals the 'persuasive' or 'manipulative' tendencies of discourses; and
- (3) A prognostic intervention creates opportunities for improved communicative practices surrounding specific topics (e.g. in my analysis, "Change" and how it is used, and the political ideological goals it serves in, for instance "Change Begins With Me").

Rather than adopted as a fixed and limited set of methodologies, the DHA generally enjoys an eclectic adoption of principles from an array of disciplines. Hence, the goal of



this analysis is in line with the orientation of the DHA, and the data selected (across the usages of the “change” slogan in Nigeria political discourse) illustrates the discursive (viz-a-viz linguistic) formulations of “change” and its referentials in selected data. However, it must be noted that such a critical perspective to language use with an ambiguous “change” slogan is often deployed in political discourse to foreground power, resistance, or ideologies that may appear neutral in the public sphere. Thus, this analysis is in tandem with the goals of the DHA protagonists whom, according to Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000), are “intent on tracing the (intertextual) history of phrases and argument” (p. 450). In spite of this, my orientation to the “historical” emphasis of the DHA<sup>7</sup> diverges somewhat from mainstream DHA. For instance, one might be inclined to ask what kind of history undergird the analysis of “change” slogan, or even argue that “change” is often deployed in political discourse and may not be peculiar to a particular political context. Given the necessary limited scope of this thesis, I conceptualize history in terms of the progression of the usage of “change” in Nigerian political discourse, and formulate ways of understanding the linguistic dimensions of its usages in the contemporary Nigerian context. I recognize how the theorists formulate questions that stimulate critical thinking through the DHA lenses.

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<sup>7</sup> Following van Dijk’s socio-cognitive and Chilton’s cognitive methods, DHA largely sees discourse as social interaction for which *history* provides appropriate parameters for interpretation and critique. Reisigl and Wodak’s theorization embraces flexibility with methodological appropriation, and Reisigl (2015) notes *history* can be variously conceptualized, while Reisigl and Wodak (2016) assert it could simply be regarded as context.

The following linguistically focused questions (in accordance in DHA) are also relevant for my analysis:

- (i) How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically?
- (ii) What characteristics are attributed to social actors?
- (iii) From what perspectives are these nominations, attributions, and arguments expressed?

Given the above DHA-oriented questions, in the next section, I explain some of the discursive strategies described in the DHA that guide my linguistic analytical focus: nomination, predication and nominalization.

### **2.3. Linguistic Nomination, Nominalization and Predication as Discursive**

#### **Construction of Political Tensions**

Germane to my CDA of the “change” slogan are linguistic forms of positive and negative representations of actors and processes, and the ideological assumptions they portend. Nomination<sup>8</sup> refers to the ways in which individuals are named. The study of nominal forms has received substantial attention in CDA, especially by those inclined to the discriminatory uses of lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic structures of language use in the discourses of racism, anti-Semitism, immigration, etc. (van Leeuwen 1996, Reisigl 2005). Across political discourse, linguistic behavior is realized in similar ways, where political actors use linguistic forms of positive self-attribution to conceptualize

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<sup>8</sup> My usage of nomination refers to linguistic forms of attribution; hence should not be misinterpreted as nomination of persons, for instance, in a political or electoral process.

their position, while presenting their opponents in negative light. For instance, in his 2014 declaration of presidency, the APC aspirant<sup>9</sup> calls his opponent's term in office “**an oppressive PDP government**” and “**unthinking government;**” whereas, himself and his party as “**transparent**” and “**credible.**”

Critical analysts also examine linguistic forms of nominalization, which often refers to the transformation of a verbal form transformed into nominal form, which acts to delete agency, background actors, or institutionalize processes. Compared to nominations that may identify agency, nominalizations “are syntactic means of non-nomination” (Reisigl, 2005, p. 378). For instance, Fairclough (1992) notes, “nominalization turns processes and activities into states and objects, and concretes into abstracts” (p. 181). A good illustration of nominalization is in President Buhari's Declaration speech, where the verb form “improve,” which may foreground the agency of a certain person, is turned into a noun form, “improvement,” which deletes or relegates to the background, agentive responsibility. Other critical scholars<sup>10</sup> (Martin, 2008; Billig, 2006) recognize certain contradictions around how analysts have conceptualized nominalization; nevertheless, a contextually sound inquiry offers relevant insights about how linguistic nominalization processes may encode ideological meaning. Predication refers to “the discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions” (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016, p. 33). Discourse analysts examine predication as discursive

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<sup>10</sup> Both Martin (2008) and Billig (2006) are skeptical of the ways analysts have approached “nominalization,” suggesting that, critical analysts often fall prey of the same problematic they analyze. For instance, they argue analysts themselves use nominalizations while establishing the ideological undercurrents of discourses they analysis in nominalization forms.

constructions of evaluative and sometimes, stereotypical attribution of actors, action and processes. For instance, in the text I examine, the APC presidential aspiration presents a litany of arguments for “change” in the Nigerian political process, by suggesting the “**PDP has presided over our country’s decline**” and that Nigeria has been “**polarized by an unthinking government**” (Excerpt C: Declaration Speech). With such negative characterizations, the speaker positions himself as a more credible candidate than the present holder of the presidential seat. In Chapter Three, I will provide a detailed illustration of positive and *negative* forms of nomination and predication, and the ambiguity induced through nominalization of processes attributed to the “change” slogan as used in selected speeches, discuss the ideological consequences they trigger.

In the following examples, to highlight the contrast between positive and negative forms of nomination and predication, I will underline words, phrases and sentences that describe processes and persons in a positive way, while I will italicize the negative descriptions of processes and persons within the excerpts. In my discussion of these items, I will boldface certain uses of both positive and negative tokens, to enable easier reference to them in the analysis following each excerpt.

### **2.3. Significance of the study**

Political discourse analysts, especially those who deploy CDA, have often examined how the discursive strategies of texts and talk serve ideological purposes. Some of these analyses have examined the rhetoric of partisan political officers to, among many other aims, explain how political actor and process are discursively manipulated (viz. van Dijk,

2005; Chilton, 2006; Kamalu & Aganga 2011; Wodak and Meyer, 2016). Though the word “change” has been variously deployed in many political campaigns, the aim of this study is to illustrate how such a slogan is powerful mostly by “the uses that powerful people put to it” (Wodak, 2011, p. 35). Tracing the history of the uses of “change” in Nigerian political discourse, I reveal the discursive construction of ambiguity in political language, and its manipulative potential. The linguistic devices make evident how “change” is coherently contextualized within its description of the two political agents, the rising APC, and the (former) PDP government, and by the processes relevant to Nigeria’s political and economic affairs. In making an argument for change, the Nigerian president both assigns blame and deflects blame, while an outspoken Nigerian clergyman, Reverend Ejike Mbaka, recontextualizes the “change” slogan, vilifying the Nigerian president that he might be obliterated by the “wind of change.” Therefore, the “change” slogan (both its implicit and explicit references) illustrates how political actors can valorize their agency and deflect criticism, in order to consolidate electoral support.

## **CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS OF THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF CHANGE IN SELECTED SPEECHES**

In this chapter, I analyze speeches of President Buhari and Reverend Mbaka, to examine how “change” is discursively constructed in Nigerian political discourse from 2014 to present.

### **3.1 Analysis of Muhammadu Buhari’s Addresses**

In this subsection, I focus on four speeches of President Buhari: I first examine the strategies of nomination and predication in the Declaration Speech of October 15, 2014, prior to the 2015 general elections, where Buhari—presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC)—presents himself as crusader of “change.” Next, I examine discursive strategies deployed in President Buhari’s Victory Speech of April 1, 2015 to explicate the shifting discursive strategies from blame in the declaration speech to praise in the victory speech, with Buhari having won the election. Next, I examine strategies deployed in Buhari’s 55<sup>th</sup> Independence Day speech of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, where he makes an argument for slow (positive) change in volatile sectors during the period. Following this, I examine Buhari’s use of linguistic predication and nomination in his “Change Begins With Me” speech of September 8, 2016, where he urges Nigerians to share the burden of “change.” Tracing this discursive construction of “change” through the linguistic presentation of participants and processes in the Nigerian political terrain helps me account for the ways this ambiguous nature of a “change” slogan emerges in political discourse.

### 3.2. Presidential Declaration Speech: Strategies of Legitimization and

#### Deligitimization

This subsection examines the linguistic means (viz. nomination and predication) by which Buhari makes his argument for change, particularly how he conceptualizes the state of Nigeria's economic affairs. Also, I highlight how—in order to make argument<sup>11</sup> for “change”—he characterizes his party in positive light versus attributing negative referentials to his opposition. I examine how actors, and processes associated with both parties are linguistically presented. A declaration speech is notably an avenue to highlight the intervention an aspirant seeks to make if voted into office. Therefore, in a bid to establish their influence, political actors deride their opponents using negative linguistic nomination and predication for their activities, while presenting themselves as the promising alternative. Although Buhari does not explicitly invoke “change” until the close of the speech, his call for “change” forms the basis for his overall discursive strategies. I underline the linguistic forms of positive nomination and predication and italicize the *negative forms of linguistic nomination and predication* in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 1(a)

First I would like, Mr Chairman, if I may, pay tribute to Nigerians as a whole who are *enduring all sorts of hardships and deprivations* on a daily basis. **Many millions** are *grappling with extreme poverty* and *barely eking out a living*. **Nearly**

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<sup>11</sup> Within the Buhari's argumentative stance, we see how he conjures his rhetorical exigence (Bitzer, 1968), creating a demand for “change” by mostly presenting Nigeria's economic situation in negative light.

*all are in fear of their lives or safety for themselves and their families due to [i]nsurgency by the godless movement called Boko Haram; [b]y marauding murderers in towns and villages; [b]y armed robbers on the highways; [b]y kidnappers who have put whole communities to fright and sometimes to flight.*

In the above excerpt, though Buhari positively pays “**tribute**” to his audience, he implicitly criticizes the incumbent government, and the PDP, through his negative descriptions of the currently living condition of the Nigerian people. Linguistic nomination, including the attribution of people, events, and processes are one of the ways speakers may justify their position in political discourse (Wodak and Meyer, 2016; Machin and Mayr, 2012). Buhari makes the case for a change of power by intensifying<sup>12</sup> the challenges of the voting mass, using aggregative nouns such as “**Nigerians as a whole**,” “**many millions**,” and “**nearly all**”, whom are, in the president’s view, experiencing “**all sorts of hardship and deprivation**,” and “**extreme poverty**.” In highlighting the numerous problems that need serious intervention, he sets up the presupposition that he is capable of turning Nigeria into a safe and economically vibrant nation. Buhari’s argumentative stance develops fully in the next section, where he criticizes the (now) opposition government, legitimizing himself and his party and delegitimizing his opponent. To illustrate the difference between positive and negative

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<sup>12</sup> It must be acknowledged that intensification is treated in other texts as a separate discursive strategy deployed by speakers (Machine and Mayr 2012; Reseigl and Wodak 2016); however, I conceptualize it as part of the ways persons and processes are named.



attribution, again, I underline the former, and italicized the latter as seen in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 1(b)

We have tried to ensure all processes in our party formation to be transparent and credible. These structures will lead to free and fair polls. There is no point in holding elections if they are not free and fair. *Interference in the form of rigging* which PDP Government has practised since 2003 is *the worst form of injustice – denying people their right to express their opinions*. Whether they like it or not, injustice cannot endure (Para. 6 & 7)

In excerpt 1(b), Buhari condemns the opposition party with various forms of predicative nouns, attributing their actions to constant “**interference** in the form of **rigging**” and describing their action as “the worst form of **injustice**.” However, he legitimizes his party’s activities, suggesting that “all processes in the [his] **our** party formation” are “**transparent**” and “**credible**”. Buhari, presents himself and his party as praiseworthy and valorizes his party’s emergence through a coalition of four formerly independent political parties—the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). Trying to establish the need for change, Buhari proclaims that if he is given the presidential mandate, he and his party will solve all the problems he has identified and propel the needed “change” in Nigeria. This is seen in the following excerpt where he accepts agentive responsibility for change:

Excerpt 1(c)

**We in APC** are resolve to bring **change** to Nigeria. **We plan to do things differently.** We plan to put priority on Protection of lives and property. Pursuing economic policies for shared prosperity and immediate attention on youth employment.

He continues that he has identified a paucity in the incumbent government include “quality education” and “agricultural productivity.” He presents the incumbent government of the PDP as disreputable and attributes electoral malpractices to the governing party. More examples of negative predication emerge in the next excerpt, where Buhari’s vilifies the PDP more strongly with predicative linguistic forms, while commending the activities his own party:

Excerpt 1(d)

Since 1999 PDP *has presided over our country’s decline.* Nigeria in my experience *has never been so divided, so polarized by an unthinking government hell bent on ruling and stealing* forever whatever befalls the country. Mr Chairman, **we in APC are resolved to stop them** in their tracks and **rescue Nigeria from the stranglehold of PDP.**

According Reseigl and Wodak (2016) predication may be signaled by “evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits [which may include] adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases...and explicit predicate and predicative nouns and adjectives” (p. 33). In the above excerpt, Buhari deploys (negative) predicative adjective to state that the PDP is responsible for Nigeria’s economic decline, and that the PDP officials are an “**unthinking government,**” looting Nigeria’s resources. The president promises to change all of these: invoking positive predicative adjectival form “resolved,” to present

an intention to defeat his opposition in the statement “we in APC **are resolved to stop them** in their tracks and **rescue Nigeria from the stranglehold** of PDP” (p. 2). It is also important to note he deploys the metaphorical form of predicative noun, “stranglehold,” to portray Nigerians as extremely vulnerable under the leadership of his opposition, the PDP.

In the next excerpt, Buhari continues to denounce the opposition to legitimize himself as credible candidate with nominal and predicative forms:

Excerpt 1(e)

The last 16 years of PDP Government *has witnessed **decline in all critical sectors of life in Nigeria***. There is now *general insecurity in the land*. Quite apart from Boko Haram, [t]here is *prevalence of Armed Robbery, Kidnappings and Killings, Cattle rustling, Market and farmland arson...*

The economy continues to deteriorate while *the [PDP] Government continues to announce fantastic growth figures...Simply because you sell oil and steal part of the money does not entitle you to cook figures and announce phantom economic growth...*

With a variety of predicative forms, such as “the last 16 years **has witnessed decline in critical sectors**,” [t]here is **now general insecurity in the land**,” blaming all the predicaments current life in Nigeria on the activities of the opposition party. Prior to the election, the voting public generally believed that Buhari could indeed excel in the fight against corruption if elected to office. This was based on widespread belief that Buhari’s former military government (1983-1985) arguably succeeded in the anti-graft crusades of

the time, known as War Against Indiscipline (WAI). However, Buhari fails to emphasize that his prospective civilian government will be a democratically elected administration, where viable systems of oversight must be deployed beginning from his party, to ensure that his anti-corruption crusade effectively confronts graft across the political divide. He believes too readily that the new APC was properly sanitized of corrupt elements. Recall that in excerpt 1(b), he contends that his party's formation is "transparent," and that that would enable the APC conduct free and fair elections. Often times, when partisan political officers speak in the context of a declaration of interest, they advocate their party's ideology, and condemn fellow contenders, and the opposition party in order to garner electoral followership. The foregoing discussion illustrates the basis for Buhari's implicit argument for change in excerpt 1(b) as well as his explicit invocation of the word in excerpt 1(c) , in which he presents himself with positive forms of predication and nomination, and processes associated with his party; whereas, he designated negative characteristics to the incumbent (PDP) government. To begin to map out the rhetorical shift in the use of "change," the following section will illustrates how the President Buhari emblemizes himself as "change," saying that Nigerians have voted for him, and therefore, "change has come."

### **3.3. Presidential Acceptance Speech: Accepting Agency for Change**

In his acceptance speech, Buhari downplays his criticism of the previous party, and focuses instead on praising<sup>13</sup> the stakeholders and the Nigerian people at large who

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<sup>13</sup> Bizzel and Herzberg (2001) and Herrick (2017), clarifying Aristotle's concept of epideictic, deliberative, and forensic rhetoric, explain that the orator is presented with a variety of rhetorical situations, where the speaker must identify the most persuasive

contributed to his success at the polls. Here are some of the excerpts that depict Buhari’s identification with “change”:

Excerpt 2(a)

I am immensely grateful to God for this day and for this hour. I feel truly honoured and humbled that the Nigerian people have **so clearly** chosen me to lead them. Today, history has been made, and **change** has finally come. Your votes have **changed** our national destiny for the good of all Nigerians. INEC has announced that I, Muhammadu Buhari, shall be your next president. My team and I shall faithfully serve you. There shall no longer be **a ruling party** again: APC will be your governing party.

In the above excerpt, President Buhari deploys linguistic forms of positive predication to celebrate the electoral victory and commends the Nigerian people for bestowing him huge mandate. He draws his audience close to himself, stating: “I feel honoured and humbled that the Nigerian people have so clearly chosen me to lead them.” The use of the intensifier (adverbial phrase) “**so clearly**” is evident in this sentence: an argument that the election results should be taken as irrefutable evidence of the electorates’ huge mandate. Unlike previous times (2003, 2007, 2011) where he has opposed the presidential election results, he makes a positive appeal to INEC—noted as a form of functionalization in

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means of establishing their authority, negotiating power, and legitimizing their ideological views, according to the issue they addresses. In the contexts, epideitic rhetoric, the speaker invokes praise and blame based specific purpose that he or she seeks to achieve. This acceptance speech is largely based on praise; however, it also induces implicit criticism against the outgoing government.

Machin and Mayr (2012)—as the credible institution to officially declare the legitimate winner. The nominalization of “change” is also significant in this excerpt. Buhari anthropomorphizes “change,” omitting agency unlike in the previous excerpt, where he claims “**we** will bring change.” However, contextualized by processes described in this s

excerpt, we can see that change simultaneously implies that the entrenched PDP government is defeated, the APC has emerged, and that other positive significations of “change” may emerge now that Buhari has been elected president.

This process creates the premise for his self-glorification, deploying examples of positive self-presentation and exhorting his audience in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 2(b)

We shall **faithfully** serve you. We shall never rule over the people as if they were subservient to government. **Our long night** has passed and **the daylight of new democratic governance** has broken across the land. This therefore is not a victory for one man or even one party.

As evident in the above excerpt, Buhari presents his government as emblem of faithful service, symbol of light as opposed to darkness, arguing that his government will not be oppressive as perhaps some Nigerians has feared. This excerpt is inundated with reassurances of “change,” in the form metaphorical allusion to transitioning from old to “new,” “long night” to “daylight,” and comparisons of APC’s promised “**faithful serv[ice]**” to PDP’s “**oppressive rule.**” Recall that in excerpt 1(a), he told the Nigerian people that they must be delivered from the stranglehold of the PDP. In this excerpt, he charges his audience that will not be “subservient” to the government. As Buhari begins to map out his discursive strategies for the exigency of “change,” the following discussions will highlight how he gradually shifts emphasis from a various forms of “change,” to accomplish ideological goals.

### 3.4. 55<sup>th</sup> Independence Address: Strategies of Assigning versus Deflecting Blame

This section examines how Buhari deploys linguistic forms of predication, nomination, normalization in the 55<sup>th</sup> Independence Day speech to assign versus deflect blame. This also explicates the shifting structures of argumentation about why “change” is not happening as quickly as predicted during the first few months of his term of his office. As evident in the following excerpt, Buhari introduces the speech with celebratory remarks about Nigeria’s victorious transitioning from British colonial government to a sovereign state.

Excerpt 3(a)

October 1<sup>st</sup> is a day for joy and celebration for us Nigerians... [T]his day, 55 years ago; we liberated ourselves from the shackles of colonialism and began our long march to nationhood and to greatness. No temporary problems or passing challenges should stop us from honoring this day. Let us remind ourselves of the gifts God has given us.

Buhari celebrates Nigeria’s independence and exhorts Nigerians to unite for change, in spite of “**temporary problems,**” and “**passing challenges**”. According to him, these numerous challenges should not dissuade the citizens from appreciating Nigeria’s rich (postcolonial) political history and its post-independence accomplishments. CDA scholars often acknowledge the ideological effects the use of pronouns realizes in political discourse (Chilton 2006; van Dijk, 2016; Reseigl 2007; Reseigl and Wodak 2016). For instance, some speakers deploy inclusive and exclusive pronouns to associate and dissociate from other members, or to create positive self-image versus negative “other”-image. In this case, Buhari employs the inclusive personal plural pronoun to



associate with Nigerians and create a self-positive image for the Nigerian people about the country and its laudable political history. The use of the pronoun “we,” “us,” and “ourselves,” coupled with the positive forms of metaphorical predication such as “we liberated ourselves from the **shackles of colonialism** and began **our long march into nationhood and to greatness**” unite him with the people in celebrating Nigeria’s rich political history (Para. 1). However, it is also rhetorically significant that Buhari assigns economic recession to predicative adjectival forms such as “passing” and “temporary” in order to downplay criticism against the new government for its slow progress in relieving Nigerians of economic hardship. In the address, Buhari further argues that Nigeria lacks “unity of purpose” and that this why the country has not fully maximized potential in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 3(b)

**We** have all the attributes of a great nation. **We** are not there yet because the one commodity **we** have been unable to exploit to the fullest is unity of purpose. This would have enabled **us** to achieve not only more orderly political evolution and integration but also continuity and economic progress. Countries far less endowed have made greater economic progress by greater coherence and unity of purpose.

Nonetheless, President Buhari praises the Nigerian people, and his opposition for not interfering with 2015 electoral process, which could have led to chaos, and perhaps geopolitical disintegration.

In the following excerpt, Buhari praises opposition for allowing “change” to take effect by not contesting the result of the 2015 election:

Excerpt 3(c)

We have witnessed this year a sea of **change** in our democratic development. The fact that an opposition party replaced an entrenched government in a free and fair election is indicative of the deeper roots of our democratic system. Whatever one's views are, Nigerians must thank former President Jonathan for not digging-in in the face of defeat and thereby saving the country untold consequences.

It is also noteworthy that the only time Buhari positively describe his opponent was when he speaks about the transition of power (Para. 4-6). Unlike his declaration speech where he vilifies the opposition party, in both the acceptance speech and the independence speech, he comments positively, only on how the opposition party (governing party) facilitated a smooth transition in 2015. However, his shifting argumentative stance is remarkable in this speech, where he later deploys nomination to background agents of “change” and nominalization to deflect agentive responsibility on prominent economic activities that were the basis for the “change” campaign.

Note in the following examples how Buhari omits desired mention of his own agency in changes to important public sector issues:

Excerpt 3(d)

On power, **government officials** have held a series of long sessions over several weeks about the best way to improve the nation's power supply in the safest and most cost effective way. In the meantime, **improvement in the power supply is moderately encouraging**. By the same token, **supply of petrol and kerosene to the**

public has improved throughout the country. All the early signs are that within months the whole country would begin to feel a change for the better.

In the above excerpt, there is no sufficient attempt to present the specific ways Buhari or his representatives have improved power supply and petroleum supply in very concrete terms. Buhari glosses over activities and processes relating critical sectors using nominalizations with the headword “improvement” and “supply” in the examples highlighted. Similarly, “[a]ll the early signs” is also a form of abstraction (Machin and Mayr 2012, p.115). This abstraction does not clearly address the expectations of the electorate that he would take charge in making these changes.

Note in the following excerpt that Buhari takes the credit for few achievements, personalizing them with emphatic speech acts in the following:

Excerpt 3 (e)

I toured the neighboring countries, marshal a coalition of armed forces of the five nations to confront and defeat Boko Haram. I met also the G7 leaders and other friendly presidents in an effort to build an international coalition against Boko Haram to the insurgents, and severely weakened their logistical and infrastructural capabilities... I have instructed security and local authorities to tighten vigilance in vulnerable places... I have ordered for a complete audit of our other revenue generating agencies mainly CBN, FIRS, Customs, NCC, for better service delivery to the nation (Para. 9-12).

The President highlights and claims agentive responsibility for his beginning effort to fight terrorism and improve security in the above excerpts. Until fresh attacks emerged

from the camp of the Boko Haram insurgents, these were the few areas in which the people of Nigeria were beginning to feel real change. The Independence Day speech, though meant to celebrate Nigeria's independence, nonetheless reinforces political antagonism when the president negatively describes the actions of the (now) opposition party, arguing that in the years prior to 2015, Nigeria's resources were "mismanaged, squandered and wasted" and that the APC, instead, will emblemize "probity and prudence in public financing" (Para. 13). It is noteworthy, in the conclusion of this speech, how the president summarizes his "change" campaign in the next excerpt:

Excerpt 3 (f)

I would like to end my address this morning on our agenda for **CHANGE**.

Change does not just happen. You and I and all of us must appreciate that we all have our part to play if we want to bring CHANGE about. We must change our lawless habits, our attitude to public office and public trust. We must change our unruly behavior in schools, hospitals, market places, motor parks, on the roads, in homes and offices. To bring about change, we must change ourselves by being law-abiding citizens.

The speaker exhorts Nigerians to embrace attitudinal change in various aspects of life, marked by linguistic nominations such as "schools, hospitals, market places, motor parks, on the roads, in homes and offices." In the first three instances of the use of "change" in the above example, "change" appears as nominalization, devoid of concrete agency, and thereby lacking concise denotation. Following that, "change" is predicated on attitudinal "change" in the rest of the excerpt with the plural pronoun "we" as subject, not Buhari as "I." Though the "change" campaign has been an underlying discourse in the presidential

addresses up to this point, Buhari's emphasis on the notion that "change does not just happen," in the first line of the above excerpt (and conclusion of his speech), for the most part, reinforces the ambiguity of the "change" slogan, serving serious ideological purpose for the speaker based on how it has been used.

### **3.5. Inauguration Speech of the "Change Begins With Me" National Orientation**

#### **Campaign: The Discursive Representation of Attitudinal Change**

In this speech, I examine the discursive strategies deployed by Buhari to establish further, the credibility of his "change" campaign. Buhari rose to power on the idea of change, which— as we have seen in speeches beginning with his declaration speech—portended economic and political changes. However, a few months into his tenure, Buhari's administration begins to shift this from electoral change to emphasize "attitudinal change." Though this can be said to have always been part of the president's anti-graft efforts, the continuous recontextualization of various kinds of "change" reveals its ambiguous usage as a political catchword. As I will show below, Buhari has been criticized for deploying the "attitudinal change" rhetoric as a matter of political expediency, thereby reinforcing the volatile nature of political discourse. Here is how Buhari makes an ethical appeal to various kind of "attitudinal change" in the national orientation campaign called "Change Begins With Me," using linguistic nomination strategies:

Excerpt 4(a)

Nigeria today is passing through a challenging moment where *hardly anything works in a normal manner*. Many have attributed this phenomenon to the *total*

*breakdown of our core values* over the years... [H]onesty, hard work, Godliness have given way to *all kinds of manifestations of lawlessness and degeneration* in our national life. This is why we have among our cardinal objectives ‘change’, which implies the need for a change of attitude and mindset in our everyday life.

In the above excerpt, Buhari makes an appeal to attitudinal change, persuading the Nigerian people to embrace his administration’s national orientation campaign.

According to the speaker, low levels of political achievement are attributed to “the total breakdown of our core values over the years,” and “all kinds of lawlessness and degeneration in life.” Although the orientation campaign may indeed be considered as part of the larger effort to consolidate anti-graft awareness, the appeal to good moral standards a few months into the president’s tenure illuminates how the ambiguity of “change” maps onto into Buhari’s larger ideological propositions. The need for the Nigerian people to maintain a principled lifestyle across board cannot be over-emphasized; however, there seems to be no concrete parameters to adjudicate such attitudinal change concerning change “at home, change in the work place, change at traffic junction, change at traffic lights, etc.”

In the concluding part of the speech, Buhari maintain his argument for change in the following excerpt:

Excerpt (4b)

I am therefore appealing to all Nigerians to be part of this campaign. **Our citizens** must realize that the **change** they want to see begins with **them**, and that **personal and social reforms are not theoretic exercise. If you have not seen the change in**

you, you cannot see it in others or even the larger society...[B]efore you ask 'where is the change they promised us', you must first ask how far have I changed my ways 'what have I done to be part of the change for the greater good of society'.

In this excerpt, Buhari makes a strong case for why the citizens must share the blame for slow progress. His proposition that the Nigerian people need to first see change in themselves, can be seen as a strategy to lessen the attack that may be launched against his government if it fails to deliver on its promises. Notice that Buhari argues that before “you ask ‘where is the change they promised us,’ ” that the Nigerian people must ask themselves how they have contributed to “the greater good of the society.” With such an argument, Buhari suggests a causal relationship between the Nigerian people’s contribution to national development and what they get. In other words, if you do not give, you may not receive. This anti-graft campaign is part of a larger discourse invoked by the president to support his acceptability among the voting public. Though the caption reads “Change Begins with Me,” it is equally interesting to note how Buhari shifts perspectives from “I,” to “our,” to “you” in the first three lines of excerpt 4(b) to include himself and all Nigerians, in some instances, and to focus on the Nigerian audience as culpable if there is no success on this issue.

### **3.6. Reverend Ejike Mbaka’s National Address: Discursive Reappropriation of “Change” Slogan**

This section focuses on how a Nigerian clergyman called Buhari and processes associated with the “change” slogan religious-political discourse. Reverend Ejike Mbaka is a

Nigerian clergyman based in Enugu, southeast Nigeria, who considers himself the mouthpiece of the masses. Arguably a nonpartisan religious leader, Reverend Mbaka generally speaks against any government he finds oppressive. As with a number of other spiritual leaders, his pronouncements have been delivered as a kind of prophesy inspired by God for the Nigerian people. The speech under study is reported as a New Year message to the Nigerian president, reported with full transcript at *Daily Post* (a prominent Nigerian newspaper) by Uzodinma Emmanuel, January 1, 2018. In this speech, Reverend Mbaka re-appropriates Buhari's "change" rhetoric, using metaphorical allusion and linguistic forms of predication and nomination in his conceptualization of activities and processes related to Buhari's leadership. The section is guided by the question: what linguistic and discursive strategies are deployed to portray the activities of President Buhari in religious political discourse?

Excerpt 5(a):

The Lord says, Nigerians, he says, *captive Nigerians*, you will be speedily rescued;...*the hardship* is not from God, they are manmade; *the wicked cabals* and *satanic agents* in this country *have wickedly kidnapped the goodwill and good intentions of Mr. President*, Muhammadu Buhari; *his good intentions have been kidnapped*; President Buhari must wake up and sit up immediately...heaven demands Buhari, our President to **change** all *those who are holding and caging him in captivity*; if he will not **change** them, he will be **changed**;

In this speech, Reverend Mbaka attributes slow progress to "manmade" problems.

Economic repression is predicated on the activities of "the wicked cabal" and "satanic agents" to whom, according to Mbaka, Buhari is vulnerable. To make a stronger case for



his argument, Mbaka anthropomorphizes “heaven,” suggesting that Buhari has to intervene proactively in politics as practiced at the present day. The appeal to divine intervention is common in Nigeria’s political discourse. It is part of the cultural embellishments in traditional African communication, where a very complicated situation is sometimes construed as needing divine intervention. We can already see the appeal to supernatural forces in Mbaka’s use of predication and metaphor in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 5 (b)

**Change** or you will be **changed**; *God* said that Buhari *is in trouble*; Buhari *is hypnotized*; Buhari *is in a horrible bondage*; Buhari’s *mantra has been cannibalized*. Unless President Buhari quickly and strategically positions the right people and **changes** the former ones he inaugurated by him, *the wind of change* that he himself inaugurated *will blow him away shamefully*. The wind will be too strong that *Mr. President and the cabal will be blown out of office shamefully*. The wind will be irresistible for *it will come like a hurricane*. Buhari can handle this problem but number one, his office, if he is not careful, another will take.

In the above excerpt, Reverend Mbaka criticizes President Buhari’s government, presenting him as a vulnerable individual, claiming that he is under the influence of both human and supernatural forces. For instance, we see the predicative forms such as Buhari “is in trouble,” “is hypnotized,” “is in a horrible bondage,” “has been cannibalized.” However, a contradiction emerges in this argument: Buhari is presented as being “caged,” but is also expected to “quickly and strategically position the right people” in government. In political discourse, a rhetorical appeal to natural forces, or to God has been variously theorized (Chilton, 2006). For instance, Chilton explored how President

Bush and Osama bin Laden legitimize attacks on each other (the 9/11 attack and the reprisal) using an ethical appeal to God, both suggesting that God who has helped them fight their enemies. The same logic operates here, where Reverend Mbaka legitimizes his position on the state of affairs based on a revelation received from God. Hence, the various appeals to how natural forces, such as the “wind of change” may “blow” the Nigerian president away if he fails to transform Nigeria to positive ends. Reverend Mbaka’s appeal to future causes of action by natural forces lack verifiable proofs. However, it is important to note how “change” is used in this speech as a critique of the government. This reinforces how volatile and slippery the “change” slogan deployed by the APC government has been. To understand whether there is “change,” or who is responsible for “change” in any context, there is need to examine the policies upon which the “change” mandate is anchored. This insight will facilitate a stronger understanding of how the Nigerian society participates in the change discourse, informed by their conceptualization of the activities of the government to which they have given the huge mandate.

In this chapter, I have examined how change is recontextualized across the five speeches. In the declaration speech, Buhari makes implicit reference to change, denouncing his opponent and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and attributing economic decline to them. He then argues that the APC are “resolved” to bring change claiming responsibility for “change” around key economic sectors. In the acceptance speech, he proclaims, “change has come,” emphasizing his commitment to bring positive change to Nigeria. Yet just a few months into his administration, his 55<sup>th</sup> Independence Day address, he

reappropriates the “change” slogan, conceals agency by using the phrase “change does not just happen,” later invoking the inclusive plural pronoun “we” to exhort Nigerians to share agentive responsibility for “change,” and that they must first change all “lawless habits.” In his “Change Begins with Me” speech, Buhari makes an appeal for “a change of attitude and mindset in everyday life,” switching constantly from “change begins with **me**” to “change begins with **them.**” The shifting patterns of “change” in his speech suggest that the “change” slogan is an ideological construct, which enables Buhari both deflect and assign agentive responsibility through linguistic forms of nominalization, nomination, and predication. In Chapter Four, I conclude with an overview of critical discourse analysis of the “change slogan” in the Nigerian political discourse, and suggest a few insights for future research on the importance of intertextual examination of the “change” catchphrases, and how this might foster a nuanced analysis of the role social actors, and processes in public discourse.

**CHAPTER FOUR:**  
**POLITICAL TENSION THROUGH DISCURSIVE PRACTICES IN THE**  
**NIGERIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE**

**4.1. Summary**

In this thesis, I have investigated the use the “change” slogan in Nigerian political discourse. Political actors use slogans to highlight ideological agenda; hence small changes in the use of the word “change” may create political tension. In Chapter One, I laid the groundwork for my analysis with an overview of the significance of slogans in political discourse. I introduced some principles of political discourse analysis, explicating how critical analysts engage the language of politics. Following this, I contextualize my analysis within the political developments surrounding Buhari’s presidency, vis-à-vis his use of “change” to conceptualize actors and processes associated with his “change” campaign. I presented five speeches that recontextualize “change” in the Nigerian political discourse, beginning with the electioneering campaign speech of October 15, 2014, which implicitly creates the demand for ‘change’ with intensified forms of linguistic nomination and predication. In the literature review in Chapter Two, I elaborated on the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (often referred to as Critical Discourse Studies, considering its multidisciplinary scope), examining perspectives that have been offered by scholars such as van Dijk (1993, 1997, 2013, 2015); Chilton (2006); Wodak and Chilton (2005); Fairclough (2013); Wodak and Meyer (2016) etc. I described my theoretical focus, the Discourse-Historical Approach following Reisigl and Wodak (2016). The toolkits in their work most relevant for my analysis were discursive strategies such as nomination and predication; I also invoked nominalization from Machin and

Mayr (2012) to agentive dropping or suppression to yield ideological goals. These linguistic devices enabled me explain how political actors and processes have been discursively constructed in various instances—as a negative critique of opponents (the then incumbent government), and a positive presentation of the Buhari-led incoming government, as well as a strategy to sometimes delete, deflect, shift, and reassign agency.

Then, in my analysis, in Chapter Three, I deployed these toolkits, and examined the shifting perspectives of the use of “change” in the addresses of the Nigerian president, Buhari. I began with the 2014 presidential declaration, where Buhari creates exigency for “change”—first, implicitly and later explicitly— to proclaim, “**we** are resolved to bring “**change**”. Buhari attributes negative agentive responsibility to the previous party in power, the PDP, arguing that they are responsible for a catalogue of economic problems faced by the Nigerian people. For instance, he contends that the PDP “has **presided** over the Nigeria’s decline.” He condemns and delegitimizes his opponent, but presents himself and his party as crusaders for “change,” highlighting their “resolve” to bring “change” to Nigeria. I further illustrated the progression in the use of “change” by examining how he deploys the “change” slogan in his April 1 Acceptance Speech, where he commends the Nigerian people’s effort in “**so clearly**” choosing him as president. He draws attention to himself and his party as “change,” saying that Nigerians have voted for “change,” and “change has come.” However, confronted by the difficulty of governing a modern democracy, in his October 1, 2015 55<sup>th</sup> Independence Day Address, he conceals his lack of agency in handling many concise economic affairs. He describes processes relating to these economic affairs using strategies of nominalization such as “supply” of petroleum

and “improvement” in the power sector, the areas where Nigerians demanded concrete and evident accomplishments from him and his government. He closes this address by deflecting blame, predicating economic woes on the activities of “the past” (the PDP). Buhari continues to appropriate the “change” slogan in further speeches: he contends that Nigerians must themselves accept agentive responsibility for change. He reinforces the ideological significance of the ambiguity of “change,” when he continues to appropriate the slogan to mean change of “attitude” and “mindset” in his September 8, 2016 “Change Begins With Me” National Orientation Campaign address.

The change slogan is very common in political discourse; yet, change does not exist in itself. It is always tied to key economic issues, which, in the Nigerian case, encompasses insecurity, insurgency, and petroleum scarcity. In his election rhetoric, Buhari presents himself as a credible agent of change—capable of clamping down on insurgency, revitalizing the economy, and resuscitating domestic oil production. He deploys various nominal and predicative forms to portray the opposition in negative terms, in statements such as “PDP has presided over Nigeria’s decline,” and “Nigeria has never been so polarized” until the PDP rose to power, to deride the opposition and justify the need for change. He argues that his party, the APC “resolve[d] to stop them,” to “rescue Nigeria from the stronghold of the PDP,” and “bring **change** to Nigeria.” The “change” slogan is also reappropriated in religious rhetoric, where an outspoken clergyman attributes supernatural forces to the causes of change. According to Reverend Mbaka, “Buhari is hypnotized,” yet paradoxically, he is to propel “change” in order to escape the “wind of

change.” All the speeches examined reveals a variety of ways “change” can be used, reinforcing the ideological consequences that ambiguity portends in political discourse.

#### **4.2. Suggestions for further study**

This research focused on the intertextual history of the use of “change” in selected speeches by the Nigerian leading party from 2014 to present following the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reeseigl and Wodak, 2016) within in the broader Critical Discourse Studies (van Dijk, 2013; Wodak, 2016). Several political discourse analysts have focused on speeches of the Nigerian leaders (Adetunji 2006, Kamalu and Aganga 2011, Kamalu 2016; Sharndama 2015, Terna-Abah, 2017)/. Although Kamalau (2016) examines the semiotic and multimodal significance of party emblems in Nigeria, there was a paucity of studies that undertook to explicate the ideological and power undercurrent of political slogans, as I have attempted to analyze with an emphasis on how ambiguity of the word “change” may facilitate legitimization of the self and delegitimizing political opponents. Following this, the fact that linguistic nomination and nominalization unveil ideological struggles in discursive construction remains the crux of this discussion. Nonetheless, there are still ample research avenues for how both rhetorical and CDA principles may further illustrate culturally nuanced political tensions that arise from the discursive appropriation of “change” in the Nigerian political discourse.

In addition, although this analysis is based on the micro (textual) and macro (social) forms of discourse associated with the “change” rhetoric in the Nigerian political discourse, rhetorically grounded visual analysis could further illuminate how the larger

society has appropriated the change discourse in advertising and online forums. CDA scholars, especially those inclined to the principles of the DHA also incorporate ethnography into the research design, which though outside the scope of this project, might worth further research to account for how the larger population responds to the demand for “change.”

### **4.3. Conclusion**

In this project, I have examined the significance of CDA for the analysis of how ideological clashes are presented through the use of the “change” slogan. Slogans serve ideological goals just as they do full ideologies like “fascism,” and “neoliberalism.” In Nigerian politics, the analysis of “change” must focus on the contextual significance of the word, and the economic activities or processes it is linked to, in order to dissect how conflict emanates from linguistic representation. Analyses, such as that provided in this thesis, may enable one to expose the discursive realization of power struggles in the political domain. Also, the ambiguity of the word “change” demands a deeper analysis of how political actors can valorize their agency and assign or deflect blame. As this analysis reveals, political slogans are not confined to the domain of politics; the theory/method of Discourse Historical Approach and Critical Discourse Analysis may highlight how political agents seek ideological consensus and power through linguistic manipulation, and how this may be resisted through discursive reappropriation. Thus, this analysis of the “change” slogan foregrounds how political tensions are discursively constructed, and thus lays the groundwork for how CDA may be employed to build active citizenship. Finally, considering the attention that I have given the



recontextualization of change with political developments in Nigeria, it is hoped that this analysis of “change” in the Nigerian political discourse will be an important addition to how the DHA may conceptualize “context” or “history” in political discourse.

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