

Our government has made significant strides’: Legitimation Strategies and Appraisal Choices in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s Speech on #Endbadgovernance Protest

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Abstract

Past studies on #Endbadgovernance protest in Nigeria have focused on the growing level of youth consciousness of their involvement in governance, perceived effect of the protest on academic staff and media representation of the protest to the neglect of how President Bola Ahmed Tinubu positively self-represent his administration in his speech on #Endbadgovernance protest. Thus, this paper examines legitimation strategies and appraisal choices in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s speech on #Endbadgovernance protest with a view to identifying the strategies and the appraisal resources in the speech. The paper adopted van Leeuwen’s (2008) legitimation theory and Martin & White’s (2005) appraisal theory which respectively account for evaluation and the linguistic resources. The data for the paper was retrieved online and excerpts were purposively sampled. Findings reveal three legitimation strategies in the speech namely, authorisation, moral evaluation and rationalisation. Personal and impersonal subcategories of authorisation together with the appraisal resources of engagement and attitude are deployed to legitimate the president’s authority and that of the constitution in restoring peace and invoking the constitutional right to mete out punishment to violators. Under moral evaluation, abstraction as well as the appraisal system of attitude, is used to project protest as a constitutional right and positively appraise the Tinubu-led government. However, analogy and evaluation, which are subcategories of moral evaluation and the appraisal choice of attitude are deployed to discredit the destructiveness of the protest. For rationalisation, explanation and goal are mainly used to positively appraise, through the system of attitude, the removal of subsidy and the Tinubu-led administration.

Keywords: #Endbadgovernance protest; authorisation; moral evaluation; rationalisation; Tinubu-led administration

Introduction

Speech making is an integral part of political discourse as it involves the use of language by politicians to express and communicate political views and ideologies. Speech is a public form of expression designed to inform, persuade, entertain or inspire a particular audience. In politics, speeches are made during national celebrations, campaigns, inaugurations, etc. At other times, they are made to address political exigencies. This type is classified as special broadcast (Oni, 2012, 59). For instance, in 2024, due to the general feeling of malaise resulting from the removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria, the youth population embarked on a protest with the hashtag #Endbadgovernance to show their dissatisfaction with the Tinubu-led-administration that came into power on May 29, 2023.

Studies on speeches, specifically on presidential speeches in Nigeria, have examined inaugural speeches (Odebunmi and Oni 2012, Aremu 2017, Oguegbu and Chukwu 2020, Nwbunwene et al. 2024), Independence Day speeches (Ojo and Omotunde 2017, Oni 2017) Democracy Day speeches (Blessing 2023, presidential campaign speeches (Adeagbo 2021, Udoh and Ejiaso 2023, Akporokah and Ifechelobi 2023), etc. These studies are quite relevant even though they have not addressed the aspect of legitimation in the speech of President Bola Tinubu in response to the #Endbadgovernance protest.

Several works have been carried out on protest. Alekseev et al. (2021) focus on African American protest movements in the U.S., analysing hashtags for their denotative and connotative meanings (p.1211). Their study examines both surface meanings and deeper implications of protest-related language and reveals how hashtags serve as digital expressions of socio-political phenomena and how they map protest trajectories and regional hotspots over time. Jones and Chau (2022) explore metalinguistic tactics in the Hong Kong protests of 2014 and 2019 and show how protesters skilfully use language to align with dominant ideologies and enhance solidarity among activists. Similarly, Moskovljevic (2023) examines the political graffiti that emerged during the 2019–2020 Hong Kong protests. By applying linguistic landscape theory and mediated discourse analysis, the study uncovers how English and global languages are strategically employed to craft counter-narratives against China's influence (Moskovljevic, 2023, p.40). Ahaotu and Oshamo (2023) focus on a multimodal discourse analysis of social media posts related to the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar framework, they examine how text, colour, images, and layout are deployed to amplify messages of racial identity, oppression, justice, and activism (Ahaotu and Oshamo, 2023, p.25).

In relation to the #Endbadgovernance protest, Ziprebo and Obi (2024, p.239), through a qualitative study using secondary data, reveal that the movement was driven by economic hardship, systemic corruption, subsidy removal, unemployment, poor management of the nation's resources and lack of infrastructure. Udousoro, Daniel, and Iton (2024) examine the protest from the angle of August Comte's stages of evolution and the application of the proposition to the growing consciousness and involvement of Nigerian youth on issues that have deprived them from being heard and recognised in the management and governance of Nigeria (p.8449). Chigozie (2024) investigates the perceived effect of #Endbadgovernance protest on poverty alleviation by academic staff of public universities in the southeastern state of Enugu and concludes that the protest 'was simply a public outcry of discontent with government's ineffective solutions to obvious hardship and pains in Nigeria...' (p.50). Idi and Solomon (2024, p.1), using the protest paradigm theory, focus on how the mass media negatively represent the protests and protesters by delegitimizing and diminishing their platform to voice demands. The reviewed literature reveals how language, media and social contexts intersect in protest discourse.

This paper intends to fill this gap. As such, our paper examines legitimation and appraisal choices in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's speech on #Endbadgovernance protest, which took place between August 1 and 10, 2024, with the view to identifying the legitimation strategies and appraisal choices deployed by the president to positively self-represent his administration and, indirectly, delegitimize the protest. To achieve this, the paper combines van Leeuwen's (2008) theory of legitimation and Martin & White (2005) appraisal theory.

Theoretical Framework

This paper draws from van Leeuwen's theory of legitimation and Martin & White theory of appraisal. van Leeuwen's theory of legitimation is semantically oriented and draws from Michel Foucault's idea of discourse as semantic construction, and Michael Halliday's concept of register as a semantic variety of language (van Leeuwen, 2008, p.vii). It adopts the approach of Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation (van Leeuwen, 2008, p.vii) that when people engage in conversation in their quotidian activities, they consciously or unconsciously transfer social practices, for instance research, medical test, voting, protest, diplomacy among others, into social discourses. This practice is central to van Leeuwen's theory of legitimation and it is termed recontextualisation - the conversion of social activities from their original setting into conversations or narratives about these activities (van Leeuwen, 2008, p.105). van Leeuwen (2008, p.105) argues that the reconfiguration of social practices into discourse calls for validation or justification as the initial

realm of such practice has been changed. This validation which gives credence to the recontextualised practices is construed by van Leeuwen as legitimisation. van Dijk (2000) explains legitimisation as a social and political act achieved through the use of language (written or oral), and in most cases it occurs as a “discursive response to a challenge of one’s legitimacy” (p. 255). In van Dijk’s opinion, legitimisation usually occurs as a reaction to the challenge of one’s power. That is to say, if there is no challenge to one’s power, there will be no need for legitimisation. Similarly, Cap (2010, p.8), sees legitimisation as the fundamental goal of a politician seeking validation and support of actions he intends to carry out in the benefit of the audience. While the former sees legitimisation as a reaction to one’s legitimacy, the latter conceives it as a way of canvassing the listeners to accept and support one’s action most especially in politics.

van Leeuwen (2008) posits four major forms of legitimisation namely, authorisation, moral evaluation, rationalisation and mythopoesis (p. 105-106). Authorisation, as a method of legitimisation, legitimates social practices by appealing to persons, authority, figure, expert or institution. When a social practice is recontextualised, it might be justified by making reference to those in power or authority who support or endorse it. van Leeuwen (2008) puts forward six types of authority legitimisation namely: personal authority, expert authority, role model authority, impersonal authority, traditional authority and conformity authority (p. 106-109). These categories are further grouped into custom, authority and recommendation based on their sources. Conformity and traditional authority are grouped under custom because both forms derived their legitimisation by appealing to the ways things are/were done. Simply put, the answer to the spoken or unspoken ‘why’ in the case of traditional and conformity authority is ‘because that is the norm’. Authority as a second source, which encompasses personal and impersonal authority, refers to the justification of social practices by making references to people or codes. In this instance, the spoken or unspoken ‘why’ is answered with ‘because I said so or because the law says so’, where ‘I’ stands for the personal legitimisation, and the ‘law’ stands for impersonal legitimisation. Lastly, recommendation explains the legitimisation achieved through the postulations of experts and role models. In this case, the answer to the ‘why’ is because it is recommended by a particular expert or a role model.

Moral evaluation, as a form of legitimisation, justifies a claim by appealing to social values that people already perceive as good, right or proper. This type of legitimisation varies from one society to another, and can better be understood by possessing a deep social and cultural knowledge

of the society. This is simply because what is good in a particular society might be a taboo in another culture. Basically, adjectives such as good, bad, healthy, normal, evil, among others are used to morally evaluate a social practice in discourse. It includes three subcategories as postulated by van Leeuwen (2008): evaluation, abstraction and analogy. Evaluation is a type of moral evaluation that uses descriptive adjectives to justify actions or ideas by making them seem morally right. Abstraction is a way of moralising practices by using abstract terms to connect social practices to moral values. In this type of moral evaluation, there is a shift in language used to emphasise the moral purpose of actions instead of the describing the actions plainly. Analogies, another choice of moral evaluation are comparisons used to justify a practice by linking it up with a practice or idea which already connotes a positive or negative value.

Rationalisation is another form of legitimation identified by van Leeuwen. He insists that not all purposes can serve as legitimation; however, "...in order to serve as legitimations, purpose constructions must contain an element of moralization" (2008, p. 113). That is, rationalisation cannot function as a legitimation strategy without appealing to moralisation. Rationalisation is further divided into instrumental and theoretical rationality. The former justifies actions by their goal, means and effects while the latter legitimises actions or practices by making reference to some kind of truth about the status quo which is usually achieved through definition, explanation or prediction.

Mythopoesis, the last strategy for legitimating actions as put forward by van Leeuwen, refers to the validation of practices or actions through the use of narratives. This strategy uses moral tale to legitimate actions or practices while cautionary tales are used to delegitimize actions or practices.

Martin & White's (2005) appraisal theory is a framework developed from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and it is used in linguistics to examine how speakers or writers evaluate and express attitudes, emotions and judgements. It focuses on the way evaluative language works and how people respond to situations and others within communication. The approach is a multidimensional system that classifies the language of evaluation into three subsystems: attitude, engagement, and graduation (Martin & White, 2005, p.2). Attitude is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things. Attitude is classified into three types of feeling: affect, judgement, and appreciation. Affect covers emotions, the various resources for expressing positive and negative

feelings (Martin & White, 2005, p. 47; Martin & Rose, 2007, p.2). Affect resources are divided into four categories: dis/inclination which expresses people's desires and fears, un/happiness which expresses feelings of happiness and sadness and liking and disliking, in/security which expresses people's feelings of peace or restlessness toward their environments or other people, and dis/satisfaction which expresses people's feelings of attainment and frustration toward themselves or their performances in activities in which they are engaged (Martin & White, 2005). Appreciation involves evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena, according to the ways in which they are valued or not in a given field. Appreciation covers aesthetics, the resources for expressing people's evaluations and reactions to things, their composition (balance and complexity), and their value (Martin & White, 2005, p. 49). Judgement deals with attitudes towards behaviour, which we admire or criticise, praise or condemn. Judgement covers ethics, the various resources for judging people's character and behavior which are divided into judgements of normality, capacity, and tenacity (social esteem) and judgements of veracity and propriety (social sanction) (Martin & White, 2005). Attitude is also classified in terms of polarity as its realisations can carry either negative or positive values. Engagement deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. Broadly speaking engagement is concerned with the ways in which resources such as projection, modality, polarity, concession and various comment adverbials position the speaker/writer with respect to the value position being advanced and with respect to potential responses to that value position – by quoting or reporting, acknowledging a possibility, denying, countering, affirming and so on. Graduation attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred (Martin & White, p.48). Graduation is concerned with gradability. For attitude, since the resources are inherently gradable, graduation has to do with adjusting the degree of an evaluation – how strong or weak the feeling is. This kind of graduation is called 'force'; realisations include intensification, comparative and superlative morphology, repetition, and various graphological and phonological features (alongside the use of intensified lexis – loathe for really dislike, and so on). It could be 'raised' or 'lowered'. In the context of non-gradable resources, graduation has the effect of adjusting the strength of boundaries between categories, constructing core and peripheral types of things; this system is called 'focus'. It could be 'sharpened' or 'softened'. Political speeches are rich in evaluative language. Legitimation theory and appraisal resources will help uncover how the president constructs meaning, positions his administration and the protesters in relation to the #Endbadgovernance protest.

Methodology

The data for this paper is a transcript of the speech made by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on August 4, 2024 on #Endbadgovernance protest. It was retrieved online from (<https://www.channelstv.com/2024/08/04/full-text-president-tinubus-speech-on-endbadgovernance-protests/>). Excerpts were purposely sampled from the speech and analysed qualitatively using van Leeuwen's (2008) theory of legitimation and Martin & White's (2005) appraisal theory to account for evaluation and the linguistic resources.

Analysis and discussion

The analysis reveals that President Tinubu deploys the strategies of authorisation, moral evaluation and rationalisation together with appraisal elements to positively self-represent his administration and condemn the actions of the #Endbadgovernance protesters. The percentages of the legitimation strategies in the speech are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Legitimation strategies in President Tinubu's Speech on #Endbadgovernance protest

Authorisation		Moral Evaluation			Rationalisation			
Persona 1	Impersona 1	Evaluatio n	Abstractio n	Analog y	Instrumental			Theoretical
14	7	10	9	1	Mean s	Effec t	Goa l	Explanatio n
21		20			1	18	18	2
26.25%		25%			39			
					48.75%			

As Table 1 shows, there are 21 authorisation strategy (26.25%) (comprising 14 personal and 7 impersonal); 20 moral evaluation strategy (25%) (subdivided into 10 evaluation, 9 abstraction and 1 analogy) and 39 rationalisation strategy (48.75%) (comprising instrumental: 1 means, 18 effect and 18 goal; and 2 explanation).

Authorisation

The first strategy identified in the speech is authorisation. Authorisation is the justification of social practices that make reference to persons, authority, figure, expert or institution to whom power or authority is vested. In the speech, two major types of authorisation namely, personal and

impersonal are foregrounded for legitimating the President's recontextualised social practices when he states,

Excerpt 1: As President of this country, I must ensure public order.

Structurally, excerpt 1 contains two clauses: a subordinate clause (As President of this country) and a main clause (I must ensure public order). The subordinate clause is used by the president to justify the recontextualised social practice in the main clause. The speaker, by identifying himself as the president of the country, legitimates his action of ensuring public order through personal authority. He does this by invoking his official title without providing further justification. In this instance, the answer to the unspoken or unasked question is 'because I am the president', and this gives no room for further question or explanation. This personal authority gives the president the power to restore public order. This suggests that if he were not in that position, he would not have had that privilege. Besides, 'I must ensure public order' could be subsumed under the appraisal resource of dialogic contraction under the engagement system. By implication, the president 'leaves no space in the dialogic colloquy for the possibility of alternative' (Hart, 2016 p. 54). Consequently, 'I must ensure public order' is a contractive assertion which closes all dialogic spaces by positioning public order as non-negotiable. It signals authoritarian narrowing and unconditional obligation. 'I must ensure public order' is also a declaration of unilateral authority to restore order.

Similarly, authorisation as legitimation strategy is seen in the next excerpt.

Excerpt 2: In line with my constitutional oath to protect the lives and property of every citizen, our government will not stand idly by and allow a few with a clear political agenda to tear this nation apart.

This excerpt also follows the sentence pattern of excerpt 1 where the subordinate clause is topicalised to legitimate the action in the main clause. In the case of excerpt 2, the authorisation is impersonal because the speaker invokes the authority of the constitution rather than the presidency. Here, the speaker's claim of not standing idly by and allowing 'a few with a clear political agenda to tear this nation apart' is justified in his constitutional oath and this positively evaluates the authority provided by the constitution. The action of a few whose interest is to tear the nation apart is an example of negative judgement (moral condemnation) under the appraisal system of attitude. Hence, the legitimation strategy and the appraisal choice identified in excerpt 2 serve as the basis to justify the action of the Tinubu-led government - not to 'stand idly by and allow a few ...to tear this nation apart'.

In the same vein, the strategy of authorisation is also illustrated in excerpt 3 where the president states,

Excerpt 3: ... I hereby enjoin protesters and the organisers to suspend any further protest and create room for dialogue....

The president uses the first person personal pronoun 'I' to signify his power to put an end to the protest. In the face of such a societal unrest, it takes a strong or rather recognised authority to call it off. The president, therefore, legitimates his call for the suspension of the protest by invoking his authority and role as a decision maker of the country. Even though the tone of the statement is polite, it is more of a directive that must be followed without further hesitation. The action in this excerpt is legitimated through personal authorisation. In relation to the appraisal system, '...I hereby enjoin protesters and the organisers to suspend any further protest and create room for dialogue....' is contrastive and belongs to the system of engagement as it does not give room for any alternative opinion. It is a direct, authoritative statement with no recognition of other voices or perspectives. This reinforces the president's stance and that of his administration's control over issues that bother on national unity.

Furthermore, the president invokes his authority in the excerpt below when he threatened that the law will catch up with the violators of the peaceful protest as indicated in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 4: ... be warned: The law will catch up with you.

As shown above, the President issues out a stern warning to those who have turned the protest to something else. The expression, 'be warned', is deployed to caution the excesses of the violators of the peaceful protest about the consequences of their action. This is achieved through the use of impersonal authority through the president's reference to the law. The lexical elements, 'the law will catch up with you', is an example of force under the category of graduation within the appraisal theory and it strengthens or intensifies the ability or power of the law to mete out punishment to offenders. The excerpt below also resonates the use of impersonal authority in the president's speech.

Excerpt 5: Our law enforcement agencies should continue to ensure the full protection of lives and properties of innocent citizens....

The law enforcement agencies are governmental bodies responsible for restoring order and enforcing law in a country and are given the authority to carry out their duties by the constitution. The President, therefore, calls out these bodies to continue to ensure the full protection of lives

and property because the constitution has granted them the power to do so. This responsibility, vested in the law enforcement agencies, is further strengthened through the president's deployment of the modal 'should' which can be categorised under the appraisal system of engagement. 'Should' gives room for dialogic expansion and suggests a recommendation rather than a categorical assertion. It opens space for other perspectives, indicating modalisation (suggestion rather than certainty). This appraisal choice evaluates the law enforcement agencies positively in terms of tenacity (persistence in duty) and capacity (competence) to protect lives and property.

Moral Evaluation

The second strategy identified in President Tinubu's speech is moral evaluation. In moral evaluation, social practices are justified or condemned by making reference to moral value, norms or shared cultural beliefs about what is right or wrong. There are instances of this strategy in President Tinubu's speech as discussed below.

Excerpt 6: Notably among the protesters were young Nigerians who desired a better and more progressive country where their dreams, hopes, and personal aspirations would be fulfilled.

The president recognises protest as a legitimate action under democracy and justifies the action of the protesters by appealing to moral legitimation through the subcategory of abstraction. In abstraction, under moral evaluation, actions are legitimated through reference to generalised moral principles rather than explicitly judging action as good or bad. In excerpt 6, the president does not explicitly judge the protesters' action as being good or bad but evokes concepts that carry moral weight in society such as 'better and more progressive country', 'dreams', 'hopes' and 'personal aspirations'. Consequently, excerpt 6 falls under the system of attitude. The lexical items 'young Nigerians' reveals the president's positive judgement about the particular set of people who constituted a majority in the protest. The reference to 'a better and more progressive country' is a positive appreciation of Nigeria. Also, 'dreams', 'hopes' and 'personal aspirations' are instances of positive affect. Through moral evaluation and attitude, the president positions himself as one who identifies with the protesters.

Another example of moral evaluation as legitimation strategy is found in President Tinubu's speech as stated in excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7: I am especially pained by the loss of lives in Borno, Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna and other states, the destruction of public facilities in some states, and the wanton looting of supermarkets and shops, contrary to the promise of protest organisers that the protest would be peaceful across the country.

Two forms of moral legitimization, evaluation and analogy, have been employed to justify the recontextualised practice. In the first part, the President opens this excerpt with an emotional loaded phrase “I am especially pained” which signifies disappointment in the protesters. He had earlier justified the action of protest as being democratic. However, the outcome of the protest: loss of lives, destruction of public facilities and wanton looting is against the norm of a peaceful protest. He, therefore, delegitimizes the undemocratic action of the protesters through evaluation which is under moral legitimization where actions are (de)legitimized by explicitly judging them. Hence, words with negative expressive values are deployed to delegitimize the action of the protesters through the president’s use of analogy - (introduced by ‘contrary’) - a form of moral evaluation, which justifies action by juxtaposing it with other action. The president’s displeasure about the action of the protesters are brought to fore through negative judgement which he expressed through a form of amplification achieved through the lexical elements ‘I am especially pained’ suggesting a high intensity of emotion signalling that the president is not just upset but profoundly so. This is meant to elicit stronger sympathy from Nigerians.

Furthermore, moral evaluation as legitimization strategy is seen where the president states that:

Excerpt 8: My vision for our country is one of a just and prosperous nation where each person may enjoy the peace, freedom, and meaningful livelihood that only democratic good governance can provide – one that is open, transparent and accountable to the Nigerian people.

The president justifies his vision for the country through abstraction, a subcategory of moral evaluation, which involves the use of moral values that are universal. These values, as reflected in excerpt 8, are ‘just’, ‘prosperous’, ‘peace’, ‘freedom’, ‘meaningful’, ‘open’, ‘transparent’ and ‘accountable’. These abstract values suggest that the vision of the president is to make the nation enjoy every privilege all democratic nations enjoy. And of course, the values mentioned are characteristic of ‘democratic good governance’, which his government represents. The president’s use of the modifier ‘good’ portrays his administration positively. ‘Good’ can be sub-categorised as affect which belongs to the system of attitude within the appraisal theory and it allows the president to positively express his emotion, disposition and judgement about his administration. Indirectly, ‘good’ negates the modifier ‘bad’ in the hashtag #Endbadgovernance.

Besides, the president deploys evaluation, a sub-category of moral evaluation, to condemn the outcome of the protest as shown in the next excerpt.

Excerpt 9: Unfortunately, one of the digital centres was vandalised during the protests in Kano. What a shame!

Excerpt 9 is introduced by ‘unfortunately’ which suggests regret. It also ends with an expression that connotes disapproval, assigning a negative moral value to the protest. ‘Vandalised’ is not only descriptive but also carries an implicit moral assessment, condemning the act as destructive and unjustifiable. The term functions as a strategic evaluative tool in the president’s speech to morally discredit the protesters’ actions, elicit emotional responses and shape public perception of the events.

Lastly, excerpt 10 is an example of abstraction as a sub-category of moral evaluation.

Excerpt 10: But we must not let violence and destruction tear our nation apart.

Through the use of the inclusive pronominal ‘we’, the president calls for a joint action (by his government and probably other Nigerians) to stand up and say no to violence and destruction. The intention is to delegitimize the protesters’ action and legitimate any action that would be taken by his government to stall the protest. Although the excerpt does not evaluate the protest directly, it links the practice to a broader, shared moral concern. In relation to the appraisal resources in the excerpt, ‘we must not’ is a strong obligation, contracting dialogic space by insisting on a singular moral stance. By contracting dialogic space, the president presents the issue as non-negotiable: either you oppose violence and align with “national unity” or you are complicit in destruction. This polarises the discourse, making dissent appear unreasonable or unpatriotic. Contraction further reinforces the president’s role as a moral arbiter, positioning his stance as the only acceptable one. ‘Violence and destruction’ carries a strong negative judgement, framing these actions as morally condemnable under propriety within the appraisal resource of judgement. The phrase ‘tear our nation apart’ intensifies this judgement by invoking a threat to national unity - a socially sanctioned transgression. The president’s statement employs moral condemnation (judgement) to delegitimize violent protest while positioning himself as a guardian of national unity. The contracting engagement limits dissent, framing opposition to violence as non-negotiable. This aligns with political discourse strategies where leaders use appraisal to condemn certain behaviours, align the audience with a shared value and disalign with disruptive actors (Chilton, 2004; Martin & White, 2005).

Rationalisation

The third legitimisation strategy identified in President Tinubu's speech on #Endbadgovernance protest is rationalisation. This strategy is foregrounded in the speech and it is the legitimisation of recontextualised practices by referring to their purposes, goals, means, or expected outcome. Two instances of the sub-category of rationalisation (instrumental and theoretical) have been identified in the speech as indicated below.

Excerpt 11: The destruction of properties sets us back as a nation, as scarce resources will be again used to restore them.

In excerpt 11, the president delegitimises the action of destruction of property caused by the violators of the principles of protest by using effect orientation which is a sub-category of instrumental rationalisation. Effect orientation (de)legitimises a practice by its intended or unintended ramification. In other words, it focuses on the result of the practice. In the excerpt, the recontextualised practice is 'destruction of property' which negatively evaluates the character and behaviour of the protesters through the resource of judgement. The effect of this practice is that 'it sets us back as a nation' which is also a negative evaluation of the impact of the destruction and 'scarce resources will be again used to restore them'. The lexical item 'scarce resources' is an example of the system of graduation within appraisal theory. The president's deployment of the expression enables him to up-scale the substantial amount of resources that would be needed to fix those things that were destroyed by the protesters. This could also be a form of appeal to the emotion of Nigerians. In all, the president is able to achieve two purposes through the excerpt. One, he delegitimises the action of the youth and, two, he appeals to the emotion of the populace to accept his renewed hope thereby legitimating his government. This is a form of positive self-representation and it is achieved through the delegitimation of the actions of the protesters.

Another instance of rationalisation is seen where the president states,

Excerpt 12: For decades, our economy has remained anaemic and taken a dip because of many misalignments that have stunted our growth. Just over a year ago, our dear country, Nigeria, reached a point where we couldn't afford to continue the use of temporary solutions to solve long-term problems for the sake of now and our unborn generations.

In the excerpt above, explanation, a subcategory of theoretical rationalisation, is deployed to connect the audience with the speaker. In order to legitimate his administration's action which has to do with the removal of fuel subsidy, the president gives cogent reasons why the effect of his administration's action might not be felt immediately. The expression 'for decade' (which is graduation under appraisal system) suggests that the problem has long been in existence – an

inherited one. The president, therefore, explains his administration's action of removal of fuel subsidy as being necessary in order to bring a permanent solution rather than taking temporary, cosmetic or diversionary measures. For instance, the expression 'for decades' and 'just over a year ago' are divergent time markers that emphasise the duration of economic challenges and the swiftness of his administration's decision at rectifying a long standing problem within the shortest time frame. Likewise, 'anaemic and taken a dip because of many misalignments that have stunted our growth' is a negative assessment of Nigeria's economic performance for decades. Thus, by acknowledging past shortcomings and advocating for systemic change, the president positions himself as a leader committed to transformative progress.

The president, also, legitimates the decision to remove fuel subsidy through rationalisation as illustrated in excerpt 13.

Excerpt 13: I therefore took the painful yet necessary decision to remove fuel subsidies and abolish multiple foreign exchange systems which had constituted a noose around the economic jugular of our Nation and impeded our economic development and progress.

Goal, which is a subcategory of instrumental rationalisation, is adopted by President Tinubu to legitimate his action. It enables the president to justify the removal of fuel subsidy. That is, the WHY of the action. In the excerpt, the action of the speaker is legitimated by his reference to the goal. The expression 'painful yet necessary...' shows that the action of the removal of fuel subsidies is positively evaluated by the president through the appraisal category of affect which is within the system of attitude within the appraisal theory.

Furthermore, rationalisation as a legitimisation strategy is evident in the next excerpt.

Excerpt 14: My dear brothers and sisters, we have come this far. Coming from a place where our country spent 97% of all our revenue on debt service; we have been able to reduce that to 68% in the last 13 months. We have also cleared legitimate outstanding foreign exchange obligations of about \$5billion without any adverse impact on our programmes.

The excerpt above is an example of effect, a form of instrumental rationalisation which allows the president to legitimate his administration's action. The first sentence is used to establish a link between the speaker and the audience so as to get their attention. On the other hand, the president uses the first part of the second sentence to delegitimize past governments for being responsible for the country's huge debt. He further uses the second part of the sentence to present the outcome of his administration's effort at tackling the challenge. Within the appraisal theory, 'my dear brothers and sisters' belongs to affect under the system of attitude and it allows the president to create a bond, affection and solidarity between himself and Nigerians. The expression 'we have

come this far', positively evaluates the resilience and effort of the president and the audience in the face of past challenges thereby praising the collective perseverance of the people/government. 'Coming from a place where our country spent 97% of all our revenue on debt service' negatively portrays past administration (negative judgement). On the other hand, 'we have been able to reduce that to 68% in the last 13 month' is a positive judgement of the capacity and competence of the president's administration. 'We have also cleared legitimate outstanding foreign exchange obligations of about \$5billion without any adverse impact on our programmes' is also a positive judgement about the efficacy (capacity) and reliability (tenacity) of his government. By foregrounding his achievements while back grounding ongoing challenges, the president selectively appraises reality to buttress his administration's legitimacy.

Finally, rationalisation as legitimisation strategy is seen in excerpt 15 when the president states,

Excerpt 15: My administration is working very hard to improve and expand our national infrastructure and create more opportunities for our young people.

Goal, subsumed under instrumental rationalisation, is used as legitimisation strategy here. 'My administration is working very hard' is a positive judgement of the capacity and tenacity of the president 'to improve and expand opportunities for our young people'. Also, 'My administration is working very hard' evaluates the commitment and diligence of the president's administration. It portrays the government as one that is working tirelessly for the development of the country with regard to improving infrastructure and creating more opportunities for young Nigerians.

Conclusion

Three legitimisation strategies have been identified in the speech namely, authorisation, moral evaluation and rationalisation. Under authorisation, two subcategories, personal and impersonal, are deployed. Through personal authorisation, the president legitimates his action of restoring public order by invoking his official title. For impersonal authorisation, the president invokes the authority vested in the constitution to mete out punishment to violators of peaceful protest. In relation to the appraisal categories, the system of engagement and attitude are deployed to portray an unconditional obligation on the part of the president and that of the constitution at ensuring public order by embracing dialogue.

Moral Evaluation is another legitimisation strategy identified in the speech. Through abstraction, a subcategory of moral evaluation, reference is being made to generalised moral principle by seeing the protest as a constitutional right rather than judging the protesters' action as

good or bad. The appraisal resources of attitude is used to positively evaluate the youth populace that form the larger part of the protest. Similarly, abstraction and attitude are used to portray the vision of the Tinubu-led government positively. On the other hand, analogy which is a subcategory of moral evaluation, and the appraisal choice of attitude are deployed to show resentment for the wanton destruction of lives and property. Also, evaluation, a subcategory of moral evaluation, is deployed in the speech to discredit the destructiveness of the protest by negatively adjudging it.

The last legitimization strategy identified is rationalisation. Effect orientation, a subcategory of instrumental rationalisation is deployed to delegitimize the destruction of property through the appraisal resources of attitude, specifically the sub system of judgement, which negatively evaluates the behaviour and character of the violators of peaceful protest. Contrarily, explanation, a subcategory of theoretical rationalisation positively evaluates President Tinubu-led administration's action of fuel subsidy removal. The president, through graduation under attitude, presents the capacity of his government at resolving a long standing problem. Besides, goal, a subcategory of instrumental rationalisation together with affect under the appraisal category of attitude enables the president to positively appraise his government's decision to remove fuel subsidy.

There is a preponderance of rationalisation in the speech. This strategy reflects President Tinubu's intent to justify his action and that of his government as being purposeful and outcome-driven. Goal and effect orientation are deployed as the dominant types of instrumental rationalisation to reassure the audience that the Tinubu-led policies are both intentional and beneficial, aligning with citizens' material needs like jobs, housing, and food security.

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