

# Nigerian Politicians, Linguistic Rascality and the Security Implications

Iyabode Omolara Akewo Daniel, PhD

Associate Professor of English

[akewoauthe@gmail.com](mailto:akewoauthe@gmail.com), [idaniel@noun.edu.ng](mailto:idaniel@noun.edu.ng)

08052786823, 08035984870

English Unit,

School of Arts and Social Sciences,

National Open University of Nigeria,

Victoria Island, Lagos.

# Nigerian Politicians, Linguistic Rascality and the Security Implications

## Abstract

Nigeria has had her own share of political rivalry among her politicians. However, the recent worrisome trend is the situation in which political leaders have taken to thuggery in their language choices. The consequence of this since 2009 is yet to abate; rather, it has grown worse: the Boko Haram menace is one such consequence. This study thus seeks to find out the role played by language in the whole political process, especially, as it concerns attendant violence that has consistently been visited on Nigeria in recent times. This study analyses media reports of the political speeches of some politicians and the way these have impacted on the resultant political violence that followed such speeches. It uses the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in combination with the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) to do a grammatical analysis of the said reported speeches to determine how the linguistic choices actually reflect the messages and how these are consequential to the attendant violent reactions from sections of the populace. Our findings show that linguistic choices are important elements in causing explosive reactions from long standing and simmering undercurrent of ethno-religious sentiments. However, using language for conciliatory purposes by politicians is very effective in avoiding electoral violence and maintaining security in Nigeria. It is thus concluded that the Nigerian political class has to take appropriate actions important to stop the 'trigger-happy' and blood-letting Nigerian politicians from causing avoidable losses of life and property in order to avoid the continued compromise of the Nigerian national security that continuously result from rascally linguistic usages by Nigerian politicians.

**Key words:** Electoral violence, Nigerian politicians, Linguistic rascality, National security, Critical Discourse Analysis

## Introduction

Electoral violence is not a new phenomenon within the Nigerian political landscape. Since the colonial period, pockets of political violence had been recorded. History has it that violent political reactions trailed the 1954 and 1959 elections (Orji & Uzodi, 2012). Professor Ibeanu, the Chief Technical Adviser to INEC Chairman, agreed that electoral violence in Nigeria dated as far back as these periods and its cause could not be linked to only one issue (Ibeanu, 2012). This position is also canvassed by the International Peace Institute (2012) in that they see many factors as being responsible for the spate of electoral violence in West Africa. Standing out among the issues are inflammatory rhetoric used by politicians and the way the press help to propagate these negative linguistic usages. However, as noted on the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre website on Post Election Violence project page, the 2011 elections were generally adjudged the best of all elections organised by INEC since 1999 to then (cf. Ogunne, 2011:5) . The question one then needs to ask is: what went wrong?

It is certain that something had gone wrong in the processing of the political situation that Nigeria found herself. This becomes obvious as many that usually complained about their votes not counting watched with keen interest the votes as they were counted on the television, or those with enough courage to stick it out at the different collation centres. The consensus was that people's votes seemed to have counted for the first time in the Fourth Republic. It reminded one of the failed June 12 'experiment'.

Oni (2015) asserts that no usage of language by politicians is neutral. It is of interest to note that linguistic choices by politicians, no matter how innocuous the context may appear, tend to be politically coloured. This is why the language of political discourse that tends to try to force people to reason in a particular way is seen as propaganda (cf. van Dijk, 2003). The interesting thing is that even those making use of such language may consider what they are doing as being within reason. This is why those that caused the mayhem in Rwanda thought they were defending their national interest while stirring up so much hatred against their so called 'enemies' [or 'rats' as they described these so called enemies] (CWN International, 2012), who are in actual fact their fellow Rwandan citizens. Before they realised what they had done, it was already too late. Many lives had been lost (United Human Rights Council, 2015).

Van Dijk had severally discussed the power of political language and the way it results in particular social cognition. You can find his discussions of how language, the media and politics interact to create a particular way of thinking within the society. In many of his writings (cf. Van Dijk 1993, 1995, 1995a), he describes this as social cognition. Daniel (2008) avers that the social cognition can be so insidious that it could make people act in particular ways as designed by the power holders in the society while the populace assume they are the ones thinking in such particular manner. She argues that this is what happened with the Nigerian women who had been made to believe they have become empowered while in actual fact their cognition is more of a 'concessionist' belief system. The findings of Daniel (forthcoming) that women have rather reduced as elected candidates in the Nigerian parliament sixteen years into the Fourth Republic rather than consolidate on their previous electoral gains seems to support this. Concessional power in terms of conciliatory

appointive positions in the name of affirmative action has remained the base of women's political power in Nigeria. In short, sixteen years into Nigeria's current political dispensation, women are still clapping for men as the women's wings of political parties.

However, this is by the way. The concern here is the way political influencers use language to dominate the thinking of the people and make them do what they want them (the populace) to do. It had been said above that this is called social cognition. The populace is made to think in a particular way while making them feel that they own the thoughts. It has been observed that politicians in Nigeria make use of language to entangle the people in their political shenanigans. While their personal interest remains the focus of their political ambition, they give the people the impression that they are serving their interests; be this sectional or tribal.

This study thus seeks to find out how language has been dragged into this political thugery exhibited by Nigerian politicians. The study seeks answers to the question of the role of linguistic rascality among Nigerian politicians and how these threaten and/or compromise national security.

The next two sections look at the objectives of the study and the research questions guiding the research. These are followed by the literature review, the data collection process, the analysis and discussion of the findings.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study is guided by the following objectives as outlined below. These include:

1. To find out the sort of language usage by politicians that usually triggers off electoral violence in Nigeria
2. To ascertain the extent to which language can impact electoral violence and the security situation in Nigeria
3. To investigate the type and structure of the language used by politicians and how the same triggers electoral violence
4. To determine the way language usages can be used to avoid future electoral violence.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions to guide the study are:

1. What sort of language usage by politicians tend to result in electoral violence?
2. What impact can the type of language used by politicians have on the security situation in Nigeria?
3. What is the type and structure of the language usage by politicians that result in electoral violence?
4. How can language usage be used to help avoid electoral violence in Nigeria?

### **Politics of Bitterness**

To say that negative politics is a new thing in Nigeria is to be self-deceiving. Nigeria has been known to exhibit one level of violence or the other within its political history. As perceptibly noted by Orji and Uzodi (2012), the violence in Nigerian politics had usually been

greatly increased when a civilian government conducts elections. It had usually been that the result is a military take over. However, since the advent of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, by whatever combination of forces (see Orji & Uzodi, 2012 for some possible explanations given for this), the military had been kept at bay and the people of Nigeria had plodded on. However, it appears that the apparent movement forward is not in reality. Or it may be that the way people of the modern age understand politics is to use language to destroy their opponent. Much of this was found in the linguistic choices of the politicians. The campaign of calumny variously engaged in by the political class before the 2015 general elections is in a class of its own. The sad thing is that no political party among the fore-runners was better than the other: All engaged in the dirty game of the political rascality. Character assassination was the order of the day. The party in control of government was not better than the opposition in this. The opposition that also promised change was fully engaged in this underhand game. The campaigns were not thus based on issues but on how much mud you can sling on your opponent in the political arena.

It needs to be mentioned here that ethnic politics took root in Nigeria through the design of the colonial administration in conjunction with the Native Authority and this was perfected in the 1954 general elections (Bamgbose, 2012). After this period, ethnic politics grew to become violent with time. Electoral violence culminated in this period in a wild form in the 'wet ẹ' operations of the Western Region in the early 1960s. The repeat of this is found in the 1983 general elections as demonstrated in the defunct Ondo State elections. The zenith of the violence is in 2011 when Youth Corps members serving in the northern states in Nigeria were hunted down and killed. The 2011 electoral violence seemed to have been triggered by unguarded comments by some politicians. The place of language in electoral violence is thus obviously a concern, based on the perpetual tension over who controls federal power by Nigerian politicians (cf. Campbell, 2010 & IPI, 2012).

### **Electoral Violence and the Nigerian Electorate**

Electoral violence is seen as any kind of act that results in bodily, psychological and social harm to the electorate. It is the kind of violence that is connected with the use of force before, during, and after elections. As such, any kind of unpleasant expression, whether physical, psychological, or even verbal that is used during an electioneering process is regarded as electoral violence (cf. Bamgbose, 2012; The Nordic Africa Institute, 2012). It is thus necessary to see any kind of behaviour that is regarded as harmful to the receiver in connection with elections as electoral violence. When the usage of linguistic terms contain elements that would be regarded as threatening or psychologically discomfiting to the receiver, one could easily classify these sort of expressions as violent. Campbell (2010) describes them as inflammatory rhetoric.

The Nigerian electorate is the collective of voters in the Nigerian society. Any kind of act that is used to threaten, force or compel them to vote in any sort of way (for or against the agent of such act) is regarded as electoral violence. Electoral violence also has to do with verbal threat of negative consequences to the electorate or the public. It is thus easy to classify any use of word negatively on the public as electoral violence. In this paper, any use of words in a way that sounds threatening to the general well being is regarded as electoral violence, especially, where there is a suggestion of negative consequences on the electorate or the public at large.

## **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as Instruments of Linguistic Analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a critical tool of linguistic analysis. It originated from the works of scholars like Fairclough, van Dijk, and Wodak. Our focus in this paper is essentially the work of van Dijk as related to political interests. Fairclough (2012) asserts that CDA is about investigation into the operations of political power and how it helps in the organisation of society. CDA seeks to investigate discursive practices and the structure of power in the society as expressed through language. Van Dijk theory of CDA (cf. 1993, 1995, 1995a) queries the media representation and its presentation of the cognitive posturing of a people. This is regarded as social psychology. CDA thus essentially queries the deployment of power within the social milieu. Specifically, van Dijk describes CDA as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 2003: 352). It is thus clear that, to van Dijk, the functioning of discourse within the political space is about negotiation for power. Of interest is also Jank's (1997) definition of CDA. One pertinent question that she actually asks that is relevant to this inquiry is: whose interest does the discourse serve? Secondly, whose interests are negated? Another important issue are the consequences that follow a particular manner in which language is employed. These are interesting questions that are relevant to the way language is used by Nigerian politicians and the consequences of these for Nigeria's national security.

Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) investigates linguistic structures within social contexts (Halliday, 1985). It analyses lexical and sentential structures within social operations. It determines the psychological and social semantics underlying linguistic choices. The ideational function of language helps to determine the psychological foundations of linguistic choices while the social functions of language is essentially determined by the interactional functioning of language. It is important to note that CDA actually has its foundations in Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin & Rose, 2003)

The CDA aspect of the investigation thus interrogates the power operations duly seen or imagined by the user of the language in making such linguistic choices. It is obvious that a power position residing within the ideational positioning of the linguistic elements have been taken by the interlocutor. It is this positioning that seems to guide the choices of the political linguistic users in the social context of Nigerian electioneering.

The security threat posed by the choices of the interlocutor is the consequence of the choices made in such instances. This becomes the real interest in the investigation here as shown by the negative result of such choices in 1959, 1963, 1983 and 2011. Such consequences as culminating in the terrible tension built up to the 2015 general elections could be dire for a nation with very complex and conflicting interests like Nigeria (cf. Campbell, 2010).

### **The Nigerian Politician and the Media**

Anyone that chooses to contest in an election through political parties is regarded as a politician. Nigerian politicians are registered members of Nigerian political parties. It is important to state that independent candidacy is yet to be regarded as an option by the Nigerian constitution. It is thus necessary to say that all politicians in Nigeria, as defined above, are card carrying members of political parties. For there to be a recognised party, it must

be registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (otherwise called INEC). This is the national electoral umpire in Nigeria. A party can only have legal standing if it has been duly registered by this body. Nigerian politicians therefore contest elections on the platform of Nigerian political parties.

The Nigerian media is the Fourth Estate of the realm. The Nigerian media are the outlet of language usages by Nigerian politicians. The Nigerian media is the platform for Nigerian politicians self-expression. It needs to be mentioned here that one of the important ways that the Nigerian politicians are linked with the Nigerian media is that when one wants to go into politics, part of your investment is to start a media outfit. If you are already in control of the government, the state media houses become your major outlet. Nonetheless, if you are not in charge of any of the media houses, you may likely have your sympathisers among them. Otherwise, you pay for the media services rendered to you.

It must however be said in relation to this study that the pertinent observation of the International Peace Institute (IPI) on media and post-election violence is perceptive. It was observed that “in countries where elections have triggered violence, the role of the media in inciting violence at times has become a cause for concern” (IPI, 2012: 4). The crucial role of the media in preventing or triggering electoral violence can therefore not be underestimated. After all, they play a key role in generating and disseminating information about the candidates as well as overseeing the electoral process (IPI, 2012).

As the spread of the Rwandan violence was greatly facilitated by the radio broadcasts of the Hutu controlled government (CWN International, 2012; [History.com](#), 2009; United Human Rights Council, 2015), the resultant electoral violence visiting a community can be helped by the part played by the media in relating the electioneering process. One watched with trepidation the blow by blow relation of the election crisis in Rivers State of Nigeria as the TVC television channel in Nigeria was broadcasting live the election confusion taking place in Port Harcourt. As much as one would not want to see the truth of the happenings and live coverage being swept under the carpet, one thinks that in a tension soaked election process, such biased reporting as well as seeming loss of control that was going to attend the issues in Rivers with accusations and counter-accusations was the least needed thing at that moment in the election process.

The AIT and NTA broadcast of series of character assassination and demonisation of the other political party seemed like the media allowing itself to be dragged into the mud of politics. As it is also being played out by the sainting of the new President on the same NTA that demonised him as the opposition candidate makes one wonder at the unsavoury roles of the media in the whole electioneering process. It is thus apparent that there is a great need for the training of the media houses on how to conduct themselves during elections. A mature democracy may be able to handle such media idiosyncrasies but a fragile one like in Nigeria and many African states require a very mature and responsible media to help in developing the society rather than destroying it.

This, however, does not mean one is unmindful of the role played by the ownership structure in such cases (cf. Daniel, 2015). Nonetheless, the fact remains that a biased media is a dangerous threat to national security at any time. It makes it clear that the proper training to be given to media practitioners as advocated by the International Peace Institute should include media owners. Wrong usage of media power will always put everyone within the country affected at risk, whether politically advanced or advancing.

Van Dijk (2003) asserts that not much linguistic investigation of political discourse has been done by specialists in political science even though a few linguists in the non-English tradition seemed to have attempted an investigation of political discourse. The need to look at the role that political discourse and language usage perform in triggering and mitigating electoral violence cannot be underplayed. This study thus investigates the linguistic usages of politicians in the Nigerian media. It looks at the implications of these linguistic choices for the national security of Nigeria in relation to electoral violence.

## Data Collection

The data used in this investigation are a collection of textual productions of some select Nigerian political actors as reported in the Nigerian news media. These selections are purposive. The major guiding principle in selecting the speech events has to do with the social standing of the speakers and the impactful force and possible consequences of such speeches on the Nigerian national security. The sources of these reports are both electronic and paper. There was no specific discrimination made in terms of the media type used. Convenience of access marked the main focus of the media source. The data collected were then analysed, using the SFG base and the CDA analytical tools. CDA and SFG were applied to unearth some semantic content and the implicative structures of the linguistic usages of these textual productions. The linguistic elements of focus in the analysis are highlighted in red fonts to easily identify them as red flags in the usages as well as focus of discussion

The main texts analysed are the highlights of:

Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's pre-2007 elections campaign speech.

General Muhammadu Buhari post-2011 general elections speech

Chief John Odiegie-Oyegun pre-Osun State 2014 governorship election speech

President Goodluck Jonathan 2011/2015 campaign promise

## Sample Speeches by the Political Gladiators

Chief Olusegun Obasanjo:

... this election is a **do or die** affair for **me** and the **PDP**. This election is a matter of **life and death** for the PDP and Nigeria. (*Daily Trust*, 12 February, 2007 in a political campaign rally at Abeokuta, Ogun State)

General Muhammadu Buhari:

God willing, by 2015, something will happen. They either conduct a free and fair election or they go in a very disgraceful way. If what happened in 2011 (alleged rigging) should again happen in 2015, by the grace of God, **the dog and the baboon would all be soaked in blood**. (*The punch*, 9 April, 2014 in a meeting with party members in Kaduna, Kaduna State.)

Chief John Odiegie=Oyegun:

Jega is sitting on an iceberg and he does not know what is under him. The **consequences** of rigging this election will be **undesirable**. (*The Punch*, 8 August, 2014 at a press conference in Osogbo, Osun State)

President Goodluck Jonathan

My **ambition** is **not** worth the **blood** of any Nigerian. (Repeated in adverts severally on Nigerian Television Authority).

### **Analysis and Discussion**

The choice of such words such as 'do or die', 'life and death' portray desperation and zero sum politics. It shows an arrogance that portrays power drunkenness. In the psychology of the speaker; the winning of the elections is the only option there is. There is no such thing as losing the election. It is a sign of desperation as well as a psychology of one that thinks of having control of state apparatus with which to take control and ensure that the outcome that is definite is that of winning the elections. It is thus not surprising that the elections were blatantly rigged. It was daylight robbery; and the election observers did not mince words in saying this.

Like Ogunne (2011) and Bamgbose (2012) insightfully noted, this sort of expression is clearly meant to incite the President's supporters and members of his party (the PDP) to violence. Interestingly, though, no violence followed — only murmurings at the flagrant way the rigging was done. The possible explanations for this, according to Ogunne (2011), could be that the North that rose against the elections of 2011 that was clearly acknowledged internationally as free and fair had control of power as one of their own was the beneficiary of such desperation on the part of the outgoing President Obasanjo. This again brings to the fore the unfortunate role of ethno-religious undercurrents in Nigeria's electoral process. This is confirmed by Bamgbose (2012) when he asserts that "after the election that brought Goodluck Jonathan in, some disgruntled elements rose up in the North chanting '*Ba muso*' meaning they do not like the president because he is not from the north" (pg. 217). This sort of ethnic politics is what has been the major bane of Nigerian politics and at the root of the persistence of electoral violence trailing Nigerian elections and the constant threat to national security. This is why one continues to believe that Nigerian politicians need to be more restrained in the kind of things they say as well as put national interest ahead of their personal ambitions even though it is obvious that Nigerian politics is a money spinner (Bamgbose, 2012).

The choice of an expression like 'the dog and the baboon would all be soaked in blood' portrays a bloodthirsty activity being anticipated. The government actually accused General Buhari of being bloodthirsty! (*The Punch*, 2014). Speech act consideration of the phrase will rate it as a threat in illocutionary content and suggestive of violent occurrence of bodily harm in perlocutionary effect. It also suggests psychological violence or oppression, with the consequence of vote avoidance by legitimate electorates. The expression dogs and baboon actually suggests everyone and everything in sight and these will get soaked in blood, indicating a lot of bloodshed. Imagining this sort of thing is quite scary. Not only that, it reminds one of the Rwanda experience. This was like a follow up to the 2011 post-presidential elections violence. From a man of General Buhari's status, this is not only unbecoming but quite disappointing.

The questions then are: Could these linguistic choices possibly account for the high level of tension that came with the 2015 general elections? The fear could be felt in the air. The atmosphere was fully charged with a lot of tension. This is further discussed below.

The choice of the words 'consequences' and 'undesirable' as semantic fields within the context of an election action gives the impression of punishment. Even though it is not

clearly stated who is to be punished, the pragmatic implicature is that the governmental and social systems will be negatively affected. The end result of this will likely be harm to the electorates that make up the general Nigerian populace.

The negative element 'not' in relation to 'ambition' and 'blood of Nigerian' suggests that as collocates, the ambition of the interlocutor and the blood of Nigerians are not expected to go together. This is then followed by President Jonathan stepping down when his party lost the elections. This could be seen as a major event that doused the tension that all the previous threatening statements had raised before the general elections. It thus shows that as much as the negative speeches of Nigerian politicians could be a source of great threat to national security, their speech, followed by real actions could actually be a source of security sustenance in the Nigerian social milieu. It then suggests that both sides of the peace could be achieved through linguistic choices.

From the analysis above, it could be regarded that the Nigerian politicians seem to make threatening statements without weighing the possible imports. As shown by the resulting violence that greeted General Buhari's defunct party's 2011 threat of making the nation ungovernable after loosing the general elections, the impact of such statement can be very grave. When statesmen threaten to bathe their country in blood, one should not be surprised about the tension that preceded the declaration of the result of the 2015 elections. Peace pacts were signed as a way of avoiding a repeat of 2011 post-presidential elections violence. Nonetheless, everyone's nerve was on edge. It is therefore not surprising the resultant intensity in the activities of the albatross called Boko Haram followed the 2011 post-election violence.

The threat of bloodshed as contained in the General Buhari's speech quoted above to ALL Nigerians does not become of statesman and a former Head of State (cf. Dr. Abatis's presentation of the Nigerian government's reaction to the threat of bloodshed). This particular statement is very important to this discussion here because this statement was made in the wake of the 2011 post election violence in which many innocent young Nigerians lost their lives. One would have expected this to give a little more restraint to the leading political actors.

As much as one would like to present these sort of discussion here in a nice way as General Buhari is now Nigeria's current president, the resultant tensions that followed such threats before the 2015 elections could not be swept under the carpet. The tension was so palpable that it could be felt in the air. The saving grace appeared to be the responsiveness of the immediate past president to the terrible tension that gripped Nigerians in the few days during the presidential elections by stepping down and actualising his promise that no Nigerian blood is worth his ambition. It does show that politicians need to be careful about the things they say before elections in order to avoid such terrible security breach that their statements could become. Ogunne's (2011) and Bamgbose (2012) explanation for the trigger of the 2011 post-presidential elections was the long simmering ethno-religious tensions that had been among Nigerians for years. The politicians are aware of the underlying tensions, and they still go ahead to make inciting statements. This is also without remorse. It is then obvious that these statements are actually expressions of frustration of not having access to power.

It becomes very worrisome when one considers the violent consequences of such careless statements that preceded the 2011 elections by party members that eventually resulted in the north and south dichotomy in the pattern of the resulting violence that greeted the

loss of the presidential elections by General Buhari in 2011. As a fall out of the unfortunate incident, till now, many southern youths do not like being posted to the North for their Youth Corp service year, thereby defeating the main point for which it was set up in the first place. This reminds one of the sectional politics of the 50s and early 60s. Nigeria needs to outgrow sectional politics. One could say that the way that the Southwest and the Northern part of Nigeria came together, even though considered ideological strange bed-fellows, they were able to actualise their desire to make the General Buhari of 2015 become President Buhari. As much as the dirty campaigns were still engaged in this time around, it appeared that the attempts by the elders in the Nigerian nation to make the politicians a lot more careful with their statements paid off, even though the tension of the result of the 2011 elections never seemed to leave the air.

President Obasanjo's arrogant speech at the 2007 PDP campaign rally is seen as not befitting a president. It is thus not surprising that it led to General Buhari's degeneration into violent utterances post-2011 elections when he again lost his presidential bid. And mind the word 'again' as it now seemed like there was a conspiracy to keep him out of Aso Rock, which could get anybody into the frustration that Nigerian politics can sometimes become. Ogunne (2011) also asserted that this could have been partly the reason why the elections generally adjudged by the international committee as free and fair was viewed as illegitimately denying a section of the country, especially the North, access to power and the state resources.

Chief Odigie-Oyegun's use of such negative lexical choices such as 'consequence' in relation to 'undesirable' could only be accounted for within the social cognition of victim mentality. It was like crying wolf where there was none because the end result of the elections in Osun State actually went in favour of his party rather than of the government that would supposedly be 'rigging' the elections. For statesmen, this negative and antagonistic linguistic choices is quite worrisome. One found series of such unfounded allegations before the 2015 presidential elections. Could this be the way oppositions are expected to behave? It would seem that giving sound alternative way to run the government would appear more reasonable things to be talking about as an effective opposition party rather than creating panic situations.

The Boko Haram insurgency can thus be related to this persistent negativity as seen in the aftermath of the 2011 elections where such unsavoury statements abound from one of the party leaders of Chief Odigie-Oyegun. Is it therefore surprising that the military has become part of the election process in the recent times? Even this has been discredited as indicating an attempt to rig elections in favour of the PDP in Ekiti State. The reality of other factors that could have led to the Ekiti people making their own choice was not taken cognisance of. Nonetheless, it will seem that compromising national security should not be the focus of Nigerian politicians. As observed by Frimpong (2012), the end result of electoral violence is the weakening of the national security apparatus. This should be avoided by patriotic citizens, especially, by political actors that seek to lead the people of their countries.

The good news however is that the whole tension surrounding the 2015 general election was doused by the statesmanly following up of the promises made by the immediate past president. He had said over and over again that his ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian. This was seen in the statesmanly way he handled his defeat at the polls. Even when Minister Orubebe tried to create a scene at the election collation centre purportedly

in support of the president, it turned out he was not serving the president's interest. It is thus clear that such self- and Nigerians-respecting attitude and action are what is needed to maintain Nigeria's national security. It must nonetheless be mentioned that the tension in Rivers State that was supposedly created by the First Lady's undue interference in Rivers State politics and her unguarded statements during the whole period are not befitting of the status of the wife of the president. In the same vein, the Rivers State governor's un-called for personal attacks on the president are also questionable and unbecoming of his status. In all, the only silver lining in the 2015 elections was the presidential following up actions on the linguistic choices of avoiding shedding the blood of Nigerians through a must win elections.

The media needs to importantly play its part by taking neutral stand in the presentation of the politicians speeches. A biased presentation could lead to a lot of havoc being caused in the nation. Rwanda is a recent history that Nigeria should not repeat. The predictions against Nigeria's security survival would have been such a terrible one if not for the statesmanly handling of the elections result. Eventually, speaking peace where one could have spoken negativity by political actors can only advance the security of Nigeria. Drums of war in terms of linguistic manipulation of the electorate though inciting them to violence can be avoided when those in the eye of the storm take appropriate actions. These was taken through cautious and direct appeal to their supporters to be calm before, during and after the elections in 2015. All these went a long way in helping to calm tensions eventually.

The current president's insistence not to get involved in choosing of the eighth assembly parliamentary leaders has also helped in dousing of tension in the new administration. If this is maintained, it appears that it should help in sustaining stability in Nigeria as well override the previous negativity in his speeches. However, as noted by Campbell (2010), Ogunne (2011) and IPI (2012), internal democracy remains a challenge to political parties in Nigeria. This is another source of self-annihilation by political parties. This has destroyed a once-seemingly invincible party in Nigeria; it could be the undoing of the new seemingly indestructible party as seen by the kind of politics going on around it now. One could say, after all, this is politics. But is it the same for Nigeria's security or the breeding of another set of bloodthirsty men in power?

## **Conclusion**

This study has looked at the linguistic choices of some political gladiators on the Nigerian political scene. It is obvious that the linguistic choices of the Nigerian politicians is generally negative in content as seen in their pre-and post elections speeches analysed above. It is seen that mutual distrust is a very common root of such statements. it is also observed that these linguistic choices most often than not are a threat to the collective sensibility and well being of the Nigerian electorates. It is as well found that the linguistic choices of the Nigerian politicians tend to disregard the safety and well being of the Nigerian populace as well as the social and governmental systems.

Another important conclusion drawn from this analysis is the fact that the national security becomes threatened as a consequence of such careless statements by Nigerian politicians as shown by the scaled up terror acts of Boko Haram since after the 2011 elections.; it had been suggested that the ethno-religious shade of the post-election violence in 2011 accounts for this. The sectional pattern of the resultant violence that trailed the 2011 general elections shows that the possible threat to national stability that can result from rascal-

ly linguistic choices by Nigerian politicians is real. It is concluded that such unbecoming linguistic choices by those that parade themselves as leaders in the Nigerian society actually brand them as rascals. To avoid a repeat of the sad event of the 2011 elections violent aftermath is for Nigerian politicians to disrobe their rascality and enrobe themselves with statesmanship.

The President Jonathan's statesmanship at the end of the 2015 elections and the cascading effect it had on the reactions to all the other elections gives hope to the country as it appears the most sensible way for politicians to make use of linguistic choices to the advantage of the Nigerian nation. He promised that his ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian as shown in the linguistic analysis, and he kept to that promise. This appears the only way forward in having elections that also ensures the maintenance of Nigeria's national security post 2015 elections. The calming effect this had on the high wire tension that held Nigeria in its grip during the 2015 elections was electrifying. The way it seemed to cascade down the line and voided all the negative predictions of the western powers shows that Nigerian politicians can also be the required solution to Nigeria's security situation if they choose to be. It is thus clear that do or die or bloody politics has no place in Nigerian politics if national security will be maintained for the well being of all Nigerians.

## References

- Bamgbose, J. Adele. (2012). Electoral violence and Nigeria's 2011 general elections. *International review of social sciences and humanities*. 4.1: 205-219
- Campbell, John. (2010). *Contingency planning memorandum No. 9: Electoral violence in Nigeria*. New York: The Council on Foreign Relations®, Inc.
- CWN International. (2012). Rwanda Genocide Documentary. Accessed on June 29, 2015 from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3DrvrrSgHI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3DrvrrSgHI).
- Daniel, I. O. (2008). *The Linguistic and Pictorial Representation of Nigerian Women's Assertiveness in Selected Nigerian Newspapers*. PhD Thesis, Department of English. Ibadan: University of Ibadan.
- Daniel, I. O. A. (2015). Women and Identity Construction in Nigerian Newspapers: Women Foci as Site for Contest. In N. Nwabueze, F. Bammeke, C. C. P Nnorom (Eds.), *Behavioural Sciences and the Human Condition: An Impact Appraisal – A Festschrift for Prof. F. A. D. Oyekanmi at 65*, (345-359).
- Daniel, I. O. A. (forthcoming). Gender equality: A truth semantic analysis of Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*. Manuscript prepared for publication.
- Fairclough, Norman. (2012). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. Accessed on August 18, 2014 from [www.academia.edu/3791325/Critical\\_discourse\\_analysis\\_2012](http://www.academia.edu/3791325/Critical_discourse_analysis_2012)
- Frimpong, Paul. (2012). Electoral violence in Africa...Causes, implications and solutions. *Modern Ghana News*. Friday, December 14, 2012. Accessed on August 18, 2014 from <http://www.modernghana.com/news/435729/1/electoral-violence-in-africacauses-implications-an.html>
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.

History.com Staff. (2009). The Rwandan genocide. Accessed June 29, 2015 from <http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide> Ibeanu, Okechukwu. (2012). Forward. *The 2011 post-election violence in Nigeria*. Abuja: Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre

International Peace Institute (2012). Elections and stability in West Africa: The way forward. Being the report of the seminar hosted by International Peace Institute in conjunction with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division on September 26, 2011.

Janks, Hilary. (1997). Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 18 (3), 329–340. Accessed on August 18, 2014 from [www.uv.es/gimenez/Recursos/criticaldiscourse.pdf](http://www.uv.es/gimenez/Recursos/criticaldiscourse.pdf)

Martin, J. R. & Rose, D. (2003). *Working with Discourse*. London: Continuum.

Ogunne, Kingley Oladayo. (2011). Political parties activities and post-election violence in northern Nigeria: Case study of 2011 presidential election

Oni, Funke Josephine. (2015). The Rhetoric of Collocations in Nigerian Political Discourse. Being a paper presented at the School of Arts and Social Sciences Seminar on Thursday, 11 June.

Orji, Nkwachukwu & Uzodi, Nkiru. (2012). *The 2011 post-election violence in Nigeria*. Abuja: Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre

The Nordic Africa Institute. (2012) Policy notes 2012/3: Electoral violence in Africa. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute.

United Human Rights Council. (2015). Genocide in Rwanda. Accessed June 30, 2015 from Armenian Youth Forum-Western United States website <http://ayfwest.org>

Van Dijk, Teun A. (1993). "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis." *Discourse in Society*. 249-283. Accessed July 14, 2006. <http://www.discourse-in-society.org/OldArticles/Principlesofdiscourseanalysis.pdf>

Van Dijk, Teun A. (1995). "Discourse Analysis as Ideology Analysis." *Language and Pace*. 17-33. <http://www.discourse.org/OldArticles/Discourseanalysisasideologyanalysis.pdf> Accessed February 18, 2008.

Van Dijk, Teun A. (1995a). "The Mass Media: Discourses of Domination or Diversity." *Discourse in Society*. <http://www.discourse.org/OldArticles/Themediatoday.pdf>. Accessed February 18, 2008.

Van Dijk, Teun A. (2003). Critical discourse analysis. *The handbook of discourse analysis*, 18, 352-371.