

Ideological Dualism in Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's New Year Day Speeches

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Abstract

Language plays a central role in political discourse, as it provides a means through which political leaders express ideas, justify actions, and project ideological positions. This paper examines ideological dualism in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2024 and 2025 New Year Day speeches, which were delivered during a period of significant economic reforms and public hardship. Anchored on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and guided by van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, the study adopts a qualitative approach to the analysis of the President's deployment of linguistic choices for shaping ideological meanings. The analysis focuses on key discursive features such as pronouns, evaluative adjectives, modality, metaphor, and intertextual references to uncover how binary oppositions such as unity versus dissent, endurance versus irresponsibility, and present hardship versus future prosperity are constructed and sustained. The findings revealed that Tinubu's discourse consistently promoted positive self-representation and subtle marginalization of critics and alternative viewpoints. Across the two speeches, ideological dualism shifts from justificatory framing in 2024 to legitimising and celebratory framing in 2025, transforming public suffering into evidence of national progress. The study demonstrated that presidential New Year Day speeches function not merely as ceremonial addresses but as strategic ideological tools for managing public cognition, sustaining political legitimacy, and reinforcing power relations during periods of socio-economic transformation.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Political Discourse, Ideological Dualism, Presidential Speeches

Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in politics. It is through language that political leaders express ideas, justify actions, (de)legitimize self and opponents, and project ideological positions. Political discourse is therefore never neutral. It reflects power relations, shapes public perception, and influences how citizens interpret social reality (Fairclough, 2015; van Dijk, 2014). Every political speech carries embedded assumptions that reveal the beliefs and interests of the speaker. In political communication, words are carefully selected. They are used to persuade, to unify, and sometimes to obscure responsibility. Political actors frame issues in ways that support their policies and sustain legitimacy (Chilton, 2004). Through repetition, evaluation, and moral appeal, leaders construct narratives that encourage consent while discouraging resistance. This makes political language a central object of critical inquiry.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a useful framework for examining how language operates in this way. CDA views discourse as a social practice through which ideology and power are produced and reproduced (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). From this perspective, political speeches are not merely communicative events but ideological tools that shape cognition and social relations. In Nigeria, political discourse plays a significant role in constructing national identity and legitimising leadership. Presidential speeches, in particular,

function as authoritative texts that define national problems, assign responsibility, and project hope (Opeibi, 2009, 2015). Such speeches are often delivered during moments of political transition or economic difficulty, when public trust and patience are under strain. As a result, they are highly strategic and ideologically loaded.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2024 and 2025 New Year Day speeches were delivered within this context. The 2024 address followed major economic reforms, including the removal of fuel subsidies and currency adjustments, which resulted in widespread hardship and public dissatisfaction (Abayomi, 2023). The 2025 speech, delivered one year later, sought to reassure citizens and consolidate legitimacy by highlighting signs of recovery and progress (Ajisafe, 2025). Together, these speeches provide a valuable opportunity to examine how language is used to manage crisis, justify policy, and sustain authority. This study, therefore, examines ideological dualism in Tinubu's New Year speeches. Ideological dualism is understood here as the discursive construction of binary oppositions such as unity versus dissent, endurance versus irresponsibility, and present hardship versus future prosperity. These oppositions function ideologically by organising moral judgment and political loyalty (van Dijk, 1998, 2006). Through such binaries, political actors promote positive self-representation while marginalising dissenting viewpoints.

The study adopts van Dijk's (2015) socio-cognitive model of CDA, which integrates textual analysis, cognitive interpretation, and social explanation. This model is particularly appropriate because it explains how discourse shapes shared mental models and social beliefs that sustain dominance. By applying this framework, the study uncovers how Tinubu's speeches legitimise governance decisions, construct national unity, and manage dissent during a period of socio-economic transformation. This paper contributes to scholarship on political discourse in Nigeria and beyond. It extends existing CDA research by focusing on New Year Day speeches as ideological texts and by demonstrating how ideological dualism evolves across time. More broadly, it reinforces the importance of critically examining political language as a key site where power, ideology, and governance interconnect (Fairclough, 2015; van Dijk, 2021).

Nigeria's contemporary socio-political environment provides an important background for understanding the ideology underlying President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2024 and 2025 New Year Day speeches. Since the return to democratic governance in 1999, Nigeria has experienced periodic electoral contestations, ethno-religious tensions, economic volatility, and public distrust in political institutions. Intense political competition, legal challenges, and widespread public debate concerning electoral credibility and governance direction accompanied the 2023 presidential election that brought Tinubu to office. Consequently, his early presidency unfolded within a politically polarised atmosphere marked by heightened scrutiny and divided public opinion. In such contexts, presidential discourse becomes a strategic instrument for consolidating authority, managing dissent, and constructing national cohesion. As van Dijk (1998, 2015) argues, political elites often rely on discourse to shape shared mental models in situations of contested legitimacy.

Economically, the period between 2023 and 2025 was characterised by major structural reforms, including the removal of fuel subsidies, exchange rate adjustments, inflationary pressures, and fluctuating currency value. These reforms generated significant socio-economic hardship, affecting living costs, employment conditions, and purchasing power across different segments of the population (Abayomi, 2023). Public reactions ranged from cautious optimism to organised

protest and online dissent. Within this climate, political communication was not merely informational but performative and ideological. Presidential speeches functioned as platforms for reframing hardship as a necessary sacrifice, redefining patience as patriotism, and presenting reform as a moral responsibility. The Nigerian socio-political context therefore, intensifies the relevance of ideological dualism, as unity versus dissent, endurance versus irresponsibility, and progress versus regression become discursively mobilised categories through which leadership legitimacy is negotiated and stabilised.

Language is central to the production and circulation of ideology. It is through language that social realities are described, evaluated, and legitimised. In political contexts, discourse functions not only to inform but also to persuade, justify, and control (Chilton, 2004). Political actors rely on language to frame issues in ways that align with their interests and maintain authority. Ideology, in this sense, refers to shared systems of beliefs that organise social understanding and guide political behaviour (van Dijk, 1998). These belief systems are rarely expressed explicitly. Instead, they are embedded in everyday discourse through lexical choices, grammatical patterns, and rhetorical structures. As Fairclough (2013) argues, ideology becomes most effective when it appears natural and unquestioned. Political discourse therefore plays a key role in shaping how citizens interpret events, policies, and power relations. Political speeches are especially important in this process. They are carefully constructed texts that present selective versions of reality. Through repetition, evaluation, and framing, speeches promote certain interpretations while silencing others. This paper therefore considers political speeches as fertile domains for critical discourse analysis.

Literature Review

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is concerned with the relationship between language, power, and society. It examines how discourse contributes to the reproduction of dominance and inequality (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). CDA does not view language as neutral. Instead, it perceives discourse as a form of social practice that both reflects and shapes social structures. Among CDA approaches, van Dijk's socio-cognitive model is particularly influential in political discourse studies. The model connects three levels of analysis: textual structures, cognitive processes, and social contexts (van Dijk, 2015). It explains how discourse influences shared mental models, which in turn guide social attitudes and behaviour. This makes the approach especially useful for analysing elite political communication. A central concept in van Dijk's framework is the ideological square. The ideological square describes how discourse typically emphasises the positive qualities of the in-group ("Us") and the negative qualities of the out-group ("Them"), while downplaying in-group flaws and out-group strengths (van Dijk, 1998, 2006). This pattern is common in political speeches, where leaders seek to present themselves and their supporters favourably while marginalising critics. The socio-cognitive model has been widely applied to studies of presidential speeches, parliamentary debates, and media discourse (van Dijk, 2014; Hart, 2010). These studies show that ideology operates not only at the level of words but also through the cognitive framing of events and identities. It builds on that tradition by examining ideological dualism in Nigerian presidential discourse.

Ideological dualism refers to the discursive construction of binary oppositions that influences the structuring of political meaning and guide moral judgment within public discourse.

Such oppositions often include unity versus division, loyalty versus betrayal, responsibility versus irresponsibility, and sacrifice versus entitlement. These binaries simplify complex social realities and make political choices appear morally clear (Chilton, 2004). Scholars have noted that binary framing is a powerful ideological tool because it limits alternative interpretations (van Dijk, 2006; Fairclough, 2015). When political discourse frames issues in dualistic terms, citizens are encouraged to align with one side while rejecting the other. This process strengthens in-group cohesion and weakens dissent. In times of crisis, ideological dualism becomes more pronounced. Leaders often frame hardship as a necessary sacrifice and dissent as harmful or unpatriotic. Such framing helps to stabilise authority and maintain compliance (van Dijk, 1997). This study adopts ideological dualism as an analytical lens to examine how Tinubu's speeches construct moral and political oppositions during economic reform.

Studies on Nigerian political discourse have shown that presidential speeches frequently rely on inclusive pronouns, religious references, metaphors, and moral appeals to construct legitimacy and national unity (Opeibi, 2015). These linguistic strategies are used to manage ethnic diversity, political tension, and public dissatisfaction. Research on Nigerian inaugural and campaign speeches reveals a strong emphasis on hope, renewal, and collective responsibility (Balarabe, 2018; Owolabi & Kilani, 2024). Kwasau and Abdulrasheed (2025), a socio-pragmatic study of Nigerian presidential aspirants' campaign speeches showed that hedging, speech acts, and implicature were deployed by politicians to manage uncertainty and build credibility. Similarly, Udoh and Ejiaso (2023), a critical study of Nigeria's 2023 campaign discourse revealed that presidential candidates employed inclusive pronouns, lexical repetition, and strategic modality to foster voters' trust in the Nigerian state. In addition, Onuoha (2023), a critical discourse study of President Buhari's June 12 Democracy Day speech revealed how his linguistic choices reinforced solidarity while subtly delineating power relations between the government and the citizenry. The focus of these studies show that sufficient attention has not been paid to New Year Day speeches, despite their importance as ritualised national texts. New Year speeches combine reflection on past challenges with promises of future progress. They are delivered at symbolic moments that encourage moral evaluation and national introspection. As such, they are ideal sites for examining how ideology is discursively managed over time. This study addresses this gap by analysing Tinubu's 2024 and 2025 New Year speeches through the lens of ideological dualism. It builds on existing research by offering insights into how political language is used to manage hardship, legitimise authority, and construct national unity.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine ideological dualism in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2024 and 2025 New Year Day speeches. CDA is appropriate for this study because it allows for a systematic investigation of how language is used to construct meaning, legitimise power, and reproduce ideology within social contexts (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). Rather than focusing on frequency or quantification, the study is concerned with explanation and interpretation of ideological meanings embedded in political discourse.

The analysis is anchored in van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of CDA, which integrates textual analysis, cognitive interpretation, and social explanation (van Dijk, 2015). This model is

particularly suitable for political discourse because it explains how discourse structures influence shared mental models and social beliefs that sustain dominance and legitimacy. It also foregrounds the ideological square, which accounts for positive self-presentation of the in-group and negative representation of out-groups (van Dijk, 1998, 2006). These concepts are central to the analysis of ideological dualism in this study.

The data consist of two official New Year Day speeches delivered by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on 1 January 2024 and 1 January 2025. These speeches were obtained from official government sources and verified through reputable national media platforms. The speeches were deliberately selected because New Year addresses are ritualised national texts that combine reflection on past events with projections for the future. They are delivered outside electoral campaigns, making them suitable for examining governance-related ideological work rather than campaign rhetoric. In addition, the two speeches coincide with contrasting phases of Nigeria's economic reform process: crisis management in 2024 and legitimacy consolidation in 2025.

The analysis followed a systematic procedure. First, both speeches were subjected to close reading to identify recurring themes, patterns, and salient linguistic features. Relevant excerpts were then extracted, numbered, and organised thematically. The analysis focused on specific discursive features, including inclusive and exclusive pronouns, evaluative adjectives, modal verbs, metaphorical expressions, intertextual references, and forms of address. These features were examined at the textual level to identify how ideological meanings are linguistically realised.

At the cognitive level, the study analysed how these textual choices activate shared mental models related to unity, endurance, faith, sacrifice, and progress. Attention was given to how hardship is framed as moral duty, how patience is encouraged as virtue, and how progress is cognitively represented as inevitable reward. At the social level, the analysis situated the speeches within Nigeria's socio-economic and political context between 2024 and 2025, examining how discourse functions to manage dissent, sustain legitimacy, and reinforce power relations.

Ideological dualism was operationalised as the discursive construction of binary oppositions such as unity versus dissent, endurance versus irresponsibility, and present hardship versus future prosperity. These binaries were analysed as ideological mechanisms that organise moral judgement and political loyalty rather than as neutral rhetorical devices (van Dijk, 2006; Fairclough, 2015). A comparative reading of the two speeches enabled the identification of ideological continuity and shift across time.

The study relies exclusively on publicly available political texts and therefore raises no ethical concerns. Interpretations are grounded in explicit linguistic evidence to ensure analytical transparency and minimise researcher bias. Overall, this methodological approach provides a coherent and theoretically grounded framework for examining how ideological dualism is constructed and sustained in presidential New Year speeches during periods of socio-economic transformation.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study based on a critical discourse analysis of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2024 and 2025 New Year Day speeches. The analysis is organised around key discursive patterns through which ideological dualism is constructed and sustained. Drawing on van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, the discussion integrates textual analysis,

cognitive interpretation, and social explanation to show how language functions ideologically in the two speeches.

Discursive Construction of National Unity

A dominant theme in both speeches is the construction of national unity through inclusive discourse. In Extract 1 (line 1), Tinubu opens with the greeting: “Dear Compatriots, it gives me immense joy to welcome each and every one of you – young and old – to this brand-new year 2024.” (2024 Speech). He reinforces this collective framing later when he states in Extract 2 (line 41): “Our destinies are connected as members of this household of Nigeria.” Similarly, in 2025, he begins his speech in Extract 3 (line 1) with: “Fellow Nigerians, as we enter 2025, I wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year.” To further establish this theme, he later adds in Extract 4 (line 40): “Together, let us stay the course of nation-building.” Textually, the construction of national unity is realised through the extensive use of inclusive pronouns ‘we’, ‘our’, ‘us’ and adjectival forms of address such as “Fellow Nigerians” and “Dear Compatriots.” These expressions are not merely polite openings; they function ideologically to project symbolic equality between the president and citizens. In addition, it is important to note, that the use of the noun ‘compatriots’ in the 2024 speech and the adjective ‘fellow’ in 2025 have contextual implications. In 2024, Tinubu’s emergence as President was still being challenged by some of his opponents. Thus, the word ‘compatriots’ was strategically deployed to invoke a sense of shared destiny and collective action. This intention is further demonstrated in the use of adjectives ‘peaceful’, ‘orderly’ and ‘successful’ (Extract 5, line 3) to sustain the view that Tinubu’s leadership was legitimate. Furthermore, the phrase ‘clear mandate’ in Extract 6 (line 4) strategically constructed his emergence as President in the 2023 election as indisputable, thus reinforcing the argument of legitimacy. Conversely, the use of the adjective ‘fellow’ (a more direct linguistic means of establishing common identity based on citizenship) in the 2025 New Year speech demonstrates his stability in power. In all, by repeatedly positioning himself within the collective ‘we’, Tinubu discursively narrows the distance between leadership and followership, presenting governance as a shared national undertaking rather than a hierarchical imposition. This observation aligns with van Dijk’s (2015) argument that pronouns play a crucial role in shaping group identity and ideological alignment.

The family metaphor “household of Nigeria” (Extract 7, line 4) used in the 2024 speech further naturalises unity by drawing on kinship semantics, which suggest a government-citizen relationship built on loyalty, obligation, and mutual dependence. The conceptualization of citizens as a family is reinforced by the use of mental process verbs (Halliday and Mathessien, 2013) in Extracts 8 and 9 (lines 12 and 13) of the 2024 speech: ‘**I hear** the groans of Nigerians’; ‘**I know** for a fact’ which position the President as a concerned leader. Cognitively, these inclusive choices activate shared mental models of belonging and collective responsibility. Citizens are encouraged to perceive themselves as partners in national progress rather than passive recipients of policy. More importantly, the President represents self as welfarist, using the adjectives ‘rough’ and ‘tough’ in Extract 10 (line 14) to project the image of a caring leader. Socially, the construction of unity serves to stabilise authority by transforming political obedience into patriotic cooperation. Unity is framed as a moral good. Conversely, deviation from it is implicitly problematized and deviants are projected as ‘distractions’ (Extract 11, line 23) to national unity. Across the two years, this

discourse of unity remains stable, but its function evolves. In 2024, unity is invoked as a coping mechanism in the face of hardship: ‘Our current circumstances should make us resolve to work better for the good of our beloved nation.’ (Extract 12, line 17). By 2025, it is presented as an achieved condition that must be protected: ‘Your trust humbles me, and I promise to continue serving you diligently and wholeheartedly.’ (Extract 13, line 18). These discursive moves reflect how politicians deliberately shift ideology based on contextual influence.

Polarisation of Self and Others

Some of the samples also demonstrate how politicians use language to categorise Self /in-group and others using the typical ‘we’ versus ‘they’ political discourse. In the speeches, this was done to reinforce the image of a united country on the one hand, and on the other hand, to marginalise dissenting voices. In Extract 14 (line 10) of the 2024 speech, affluent citizens were tacitly criminalized by the President who described their economic power as ‘chokehold.’ In this way, Self and the ordinary citizens were presented as victims of the previous administration’s faulty economic system. Tinubu’s determination to provide better lives for citizens is metaphorically constructed in form of a commissive: ‘I will fight every obstacle’ (Extract 15, line 42). This threat is however mitigated in Extract 16 (line 37) with religious discourse: ‘because God didn’t create us with equal talents and strengths’ to responsabilise divinity for the disproportionate distribution of wealth in Nigeria. In Extract 11 (line 23) of the 2025 New Year speech, dissents are categorised as: ‘a tiny segment of our population that still sees things through the prisms of politics, ethnicity, region, and religion.’ Textually, the phrase ‘tiny segment’ is deliberately used as a minimising quantifier to reduce the numerical significance/power of critics. This lexical choice helps to delegitimise the opposition by presenting them as marginal rather than representative. The metaphor ‘sees things through the prisms’ suggests distortion and bias, implying that critics of his government lack objectivity and clarity. By contrast, the president positions himself and the implied majority as rational and forward-looking through the use of the imperative ‘let us not get distracted.’ This blending of inclusion and control exemplifies what van Dijk (2015) describes as positive self-presentation, where the in-group is framed as unified, reasonable, and disciplined, and the out-group, by implication, is characterised as divisive, emotionally driven, and politically motivated.

Cognitively, this framing guides public interpretation by narrowing the range of acceptable viewpoints. Citizens are encouraged to associate national unity with focus and obedience, while dissent is cognitively mapped as a distraction and regressive in nature. The metaphor of distraction activates a mental model in which critics are not merely oppositional but obstructive to progress. This framing discourages identification with dissenting voices and reinforces ideological patience and conformity. The statement (Extract 17, line 21), “We must remain focused and united” (2025 Speech), intensifies this ideological positioning. The modal verb “must” signals obligation and moral necessity, presenting unity not as a choice but as a civic duty. The pairing of the notion of ‘focused’ and ‘united’ links attentiveness with loyalty, suggesting that to question leadership is to undermine national cohesion. Linguistically, this construction collapses political disagreement into moral failure.

At the social level, these excerpts function as discursive gatekeeping. In a politically polarised environment, defining critics as a “tiny segment” serves to protect the dominant narrative and

preserve leadership legitimacy. As van Dijk (1998, 2006) argues, elites often employ such binary representations to sustain power by emphasising the virtues of “Us” while discrediting “Them.” Unity, in this discourse, becomes synonymous with compliance, while dissent is rendered socially suspect. Overall, Tinubu’s language in these excerpts completes an ideological dualism: loyal citizens are positioned as rational, united, and forward-looking, whereas critics are framed as divisive and backward-looking. Through this discursive strategy, national unity is constructed not merely as solidarity but as an ideological tool for managing opposition and stabilising political authority.

Strategic Framing of Hardship

Economic hardship is central to the two speeches and is framed through moralised language. In Extract 18 (line 9) of the 2024 speech, Tinubu avoids blame for the hardship of the citizens by metaphorizing subsidy as: ‘an unsustainable financial burden’ and the fiscal policy that he inherited as ‘catastrophe.’ The affected citizens are described in Extract 18 (line 12) as those who “work hard every day.” thus framing them as diligent and deserving rather than irresponsible or dependent. This lexical construction reinforces positive in-group representation, aligning the suffering citizens with virtue and moral worth. Cognitively, this discourse activates shared mental models of struggle and labour familiar to the Nigerian socio-economic experience. The imagery of “groans” in Extract 8 (line 12) invites listeners to see the President as a leader who emotionally identifies with the hardship of the citizens, while at the same time his claim of awareness fosters a sense of recognition and validation. This acknowledgement reduces the likelihood of anger being directed at leadership, as citizens are guided to interpret their suffering as seen and understood, even if unresolved. The discourse thus channels emotional response toward patience rather than resistance.

The adjectives ‘tough’ and ‘rough’ in Extract 10 (line 14) are resemanticised and rather than describing economic difficulty, they are transferred to citizens themselves, redefining hardship as a test of resilience. This move subtly depoliticises suffering by relocating responsibility from policy conditions to moral endurance. The saying: ‘tough times never last’ is intertextually deployed to activate familiar cultural schemas of perseverance and survival. Citizens are encouraged to internalise hardship as temporary and to view endurance as a defining national trait. This framing delays demands for immediate relief by embedding hope in the future and valorising patience in the present. Socially and ideologically, the excerpts work together to legitimise leadership during crisis. By first acknowledging pain and then reframing it as character-building, Tinubu’s discourse in the 2024 New Year speech performs what van Dijk (1997, 2006) describes as affective alignment, where leaders symbolically share in suffering to sustain public consent.

In the 2025 New Year speech, the President’s discourse shifts decisively toward progress and reassurance. He asserts in Extract 19 (line 6) that ‘economic indicators point to a positive and encouraging outlook for our nation.’ Textually, the clause is framed as a declarative statement rather than a prediction or appeal. The lexical items ‘economic indicators’ and ‘outlook’ invoke technical and institutional registers, which give the claim an appearance of objectivity and expertise. The evaluative adjectives ‘positive’ and ‘encouraging’ function to morally appraise the state of the economy, guiding listeners toward optimism. This linguistic construction reduces

uncertainty and projects confidence, marking a departure from the obligation-laden modality of the 2024 speech.

Tinubu reinforces this reassurance by listing measurable outcomes: 'Fuel prices have gradually decreased, foreign reserves have risen, and the naira has strengthened.' The use of the present perfect tense: 'have decreased', 'have risen', 'has strengthened', 'has generated' (lines 7 and 8) is significant. It presents improvement as already achieved rather than anticipated. Each clause: 'Foreign reserves **have risen**', 'the Naira **has strengthened**', 'the stock market's record growth **has generated** trillions of naira' foregrounds upward or stabilising movement through material process verbs" 'risen' and 'strengthened', which symbolically encode recovery and control. By citing specific economic markers, the President constructs a discourse of evidence, transforming abstract reform claims into apparently verifiable facts.

At the cognitive level, these statements activate mental models of reward and validation. Citizens are encouraged to reinterpret earlier hardship as purposeful and productive. The technical vocabulary appeals to rational cognition, while the positive evaluation satisfies emotional expectations of relief. In this way, the discourse reassures listeners that patience has been justified and that compliance with earlier sacrifices is now yielding results. This move demonstrates what van Dijk (2015) describes as ideological reinforcement, where repeated discourse reshapes public belief systems in favour of the governing elite. The assertion (Extract 20, line 22): 'We are on the right path to building a great Nigeria that will work for everyone' metaphorizes government's efforts at nation building as an inclusive journey. Textually, the phrase 'right path' frames national development as linear and purposeful, suggesting direction and inevitability. The adjective great carries evaluative weight, while the pronoun 'we' and the clause 'that will work for everyone' project inclusiveness and moral fairness. The future-oriented modal "will" expresses certainty rather than obligation, signalling confidence in outcomes rather than demanding further sacrifice. Socially and ideologically, these fragments consolidate political legitimacy. The government is portrayed as competent, corrective, and responsive. Within van Dijk's ideological square, critics of reform are discredited in the 2024 speech as '*our compatriots* who are even asking if this is how our administration wants to renew their hope' while in the 2025 speech, the administration and compliant citizens are positively represented as disciplined and rewarded. Ideological dualism is thus completed: hardship, once framed as necessary endurance, is reconstituted as evidence of progress. Through this discursive shift, Tinubu's language transforms economic recovery into a moral vindication of leadership, stabilising authority and limiting space for renewed dissent.

Framing of In-Group's Resilience

Discursive framing of the in-group's resilience was employed by the President in the two speeches to intensify ideological persuasion and present Self as a capable leader. In 2024, Tinubu states in Extract 21 (line 15): "We are made for this moment, never to flinch, never to falter." The pronoun 'we' is deployed here to refer to Self and party members in a self glorifying manner. The word flinch suggests fear or weakness, and rejecting it portrays Nigerians as strong and courageous. In this way, suffering is framed as a test of character rather than a result of government policy. At the cognitive level, this language encourages citizens to see themselves as resilient and specially prepared for difficulty. It appeals to familiar cultural values of strength, endurance, and faith. As a result, people are guided to accept hardship as meaningful and necessary, instead of questioning

leadership decisions. In addition, the adverb ‘silently’ is deployed in the claim: ‘we have worked to free captives from abductors’ (Extract 22, line 19) to debunk the notion that Nigeria faced a worsening insecurity situation from 2023 to 2024. The promise of sustained positive performance is presented in the 2024 speech in the present continuous tense: ‘we are working hard’ (Extract 22, line 20), ‘we are moving a step further in our quest’ (Extract 23, line 23), and the metaphor of sport ‘we will race against time’ (Extract 24, line 26).

Conversely, in the 2025 New Year speech, the metaphor of journey is employed to project a shift from enduring hardship to expecting reward (Extract 25, line 41): ‘The New Year will bring us closer to the bright future we all desire and the Nigeria of our dreams.’ In this way, current challenges are presented as temporary in order to sustain the feeling of hope and optimism among citizens. He reinforces this assurance with the commissive (Extract 26, line 39): ‘Your sacrifices have not been in vain. I assure you they will not be in vain even in the months ahead.’ The deliberate use of the word ‘sacrifices’ suggests that citizens’ pain served a higher selfless purpose which is the advancement of the country which was worthwhile. Overall, the use of framing of hardship and government’s efforts help Tinubu to control how hardship is perceived. In 2024, endurance is presented as a duty while in 2025 it is praised as proof of progress.

Legitimation of Power

In the 2024 speech, the assertion: ‘You voted me as President’ (Extract 26, line 6) was used by Tinubu to project his legitimacy as President against the background of the controversies that surrounded his emergence as winner of the 2023 election. He also deployed intertextuality to strategically legitimise his policies and leadership. Names such as the ‘Port Harcourt Refinery’, the ‘Dangote Refinery’, the ‘National Wheat Development Programme’, and international engagements like COP28 to showcase his factual initiatives and political influence. Proper nouns carry evidential weight; they suggest that government actions are already underway and measurable. Thus, their use linguistically and cognitively reduced vagueness of claims and strengthens persuasion. Many Nigerians are familiar with these projects and institutions, even if only through media reports. Mentioning them allows citizens to mentally connect presidential claims with real-world events, making the discourse easier to accept. Intertextual references therefore function as cognitive shortcuts that reduce doubt and scepticism, encouraging citizens to trust the government’s narrative of progress.

In the 2025 speech (Extract 27, line 15), intertextuality is expanded through the listing of institutions such as the ‘National Credit Guarantee Company’, the ‘Bank of Industry’, and the ‘Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority’. These references present governance as systematic and technocratic. By highlighting partnerships and timelines, Tinubu constructs an image of organised leadership and careful planning, reinforcing the idea that reforms are not arbitrary but professionally managed. At the social level, intertextuality operates as a tool of legitimation. By drawing authority from international partners, national institutions, and well-known projects, the president borrows symbolic power to strengthen domestic legitimacy. This aligns with van Dijk’s (2006, 2014) view that elites use discourse to reproduce power by embedding their actions within respected social and institutional frameworks. At the same time, intertextuality narrows space for alternative explanations by presenting policy outcomes as the result of complex processes beyond everyday political debate. Overall, intertextuality allows Tinubu to present himself as a competent

and influential leader working within a broad network of credible actors. Through this strategy, political authority is reinforced, dissent is indirectly weakened, and governance is framed as both inevitable and legitimate.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how ideological dualism is constructed in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2024 and 2025 New Year Day speeches. Using Critical Discourse Analysis and guided by van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, the paper analysed how language functions to frame hardship, promote unity, and sustain political legitimacy during a period of economic reform in Nigeria. The analysis shows that the speeches are not merely ceremonial addresses but strategic ideological texts. The findings reveal that Tinubu's discourse consistently relies on binary oppositions such as unity versus dissent, endurance versus irresponsibility, and present hardship versus future prosperity. These oppositions organise moral judgement and political loyalty. Through inclusive pronouns, evaluative adjectives, modality, metaphor, and intertextual references, the president presents himself and compliant citizens positively while marginalising critics and alternative interpretations. This pattern reflects the operation of van Dijk's ideological square, where positive self-representation and negative other-representation are systematically maintained (van Dijk, 1998, 2006, 2015). Across the two speeches, ideological dualism remains stable but adaptive. In 2024, the discourse is largely justificatory.

Hardship is framed as a necessary sacrifice that demands patience, faith, and collective endurance. By 2025, the same hardship is reinterpreted as evidence of progress and recovery. Endurance is no longer demanded; it is rewarded and celebrated. This shift shows how political discourse can transform public suffering into national pride, thereby reinforcing legitimacy over time. At the cognitive level, the speeches activate shared cultural and moral frames that link patriotism with obedience, faith, and perseverance. Citizens are encouraged to interpret governance decisions through moral rather than structural lenses. At the social level, the discourse manages dissent by redefining unity as compliance and criticism as marginal or divisive. In doing so, it limits the space for contestation while sustaining hegemonic stability (Fairclough, 2015).

The study has important implications for the analysis of political discourse in Nigeria and similar contexts. It demonstrates that New Year Day speeches function as powerful ideological instruments that shape public cognition and social relations beyond their ceremonial role. It also highlights the usefulness of ideological dualism as an analytical lens for understanding how political leaders manage crisis, legitimacy, and public consent through language. More broadly, the findings reaffirm the relevance of Critical Discourse Analysis in exposing the subtle ways power operates through every day political communication. By paying attention to how language frames reality, citizens and scholars alike can better understand how ideology is produced, circulated, and normalised in democratic societies.

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Appendix

Excerpts from President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s New Year Speeches (2024 and 2025)

Discourse Feature	Excerpt ID	Lines	Interpretation / Ideological Function
Inclusive address (Construction of national unity)	Excerpt 1	“Dear Compatriots, it gives me immense joy to welcome each and every one of you – young and old – to this brand-new year 2024.”	Constructs a shared national identity and symbolically aligns the President with citizens, presenting governance as a collective enterprise rather than a hierarchical imposition.
Family metaphor (Naturalisation of unity)	Excerpt 2	“Our destinies are connected as members of this household of Nigeria.”	Naturalises unity through kinship semantics, framing loyalty and cooperation as moral obligations while implicitly problematising dissent.
Inclusive greeting (Stability of power)	Excerpt 3	“Fellow Nigerians, as we enter 2025, I wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year.”	Signals consolidated authority and leadership stability, reflecting reduced need for defensive legitimisation compared to 2024.
Collective mobilisation (Shared responsibility)	Excerpt 4	“Together, let us stay the course of nation-building.”	Frames nation-building as a collective duty, reinforcing ideological alignment between leadership and citizens.
Evaluative adjectives (Democratic legitimisation)	Excerpt 5	“A peaceful, orderly and successful transfer of power...”	Positively frames the electoral process to legitimise the administration and marginalise competing narratives questioning its emergence.
Mandate construction	Excerpt 6	“You entrusted your faith in me with a clear mandate...”	Presents leadership as indisputable and popularly endorsed, reinforcing political legitimacy against post-electoral contestation.
Family metaphor	Excerpt 7	“Our destinies are connected as members of this household of Nigeria.”	The kinship metaphor normalises sacrifice as a familial duty. It naturalises

			unity by drawing on kinship semantics
Empathy alignment	Excerpt 8	“I hear the groans of Nigerians who work hard every day to provide for themselves and their families.”	Aligns the President with suffering citizens, constructing a caring leadership image while shifting focus from policy causation to shared experience.
Affective acknowledgement of anxiety	Excerpt 9	“I know for a fact that some of our compatriots are even asking if this is how our administration wants to renew their hope”.	Acknowledges public concern to manage frustration and sustain emotional alignment with the governing in-group.
Welfarist self-presentation	Excerpt 10	“The time may be rough and tough; however, our spirit must remain unbowed.”	Frames economic hardship as a moral test of resilience, valorising endurance and discouraging resistance.
Marginalisation of dissent	Excerpt 11	“A tiny segment of our population that still sees things through the prisms of politics, ethnicity, region, and religion.”	Constructs critics as numerically insignificant and cognitively biased, reinforcing ideological polarisation between loyal citizens and dissenters.
Modal obligation (Unity as civic duty)	Excerpt 12	“Our current circumstances should make us resolve to work better for the good of our beloved nation.”	Unity is invoked as a coping mechanism in the face of hardship
Gratitude expression and commitment to service	Excerpt 13	‘Your trust humbles me, and I promise to continue serving you diligently and wholeheartedly.	Reinforces positive self-presentation by consolidating legitimacy through humility and renewed commitment to the citizens.
Othering and delegitimation of elite beneficiaries	Excerpt 14	“Another was the removal of the chokehold of few people on our foreign exchange system..”	Constructs a negative out-group of wealthy elites while presenting the government and ordinary citizens as victims
Commissive stance and assertive self-presentation	Excerpt 15	“I will fight every obstacle”	Projects the President as a determined and protective leader.

Religious mitigation of assertive commitment	Excerpt 16	‘because God didn’t create us with equal talents and strengths’	Softens the force of the prior threat by attributing inequality to divine will,
Modal obligation (Unity as civic duty)	Excerpt 17	“We must remain focused and united.”	Presents unity as moral necessity, collapsing political disagreement into irresponsibility and lack of patriotism.
Moralised framing of hardship and positive in-group representation	Excerpt 18	“An unsustainable financial burden...”	Shifts blame away from leadership by portraying hardship as inherited and unavoidable, while constructing suffering citizens as virtuous
Technocratic reassurance	Excerpt 19	“Economic indicators point to a positive and encouraging outlook for our nation.”	Uses expert and institutional discourse to reassure citizens and legitimise governance performance.
Journey metaphor (Progress narrative)	Excerpt 20	“We are on the right path to building a great Nigeria that will work for everyone.”	Frames national development as linear and purposeful, delegitimising alternative policy interpretations.
In-group resilience framing through inclusive pronoun use	Excerpt 21	“We are made for this moment, never to flinch, never to falter.”	Constructs the in-group as strong and courageous, reframing suffering as a test of character rather than a consequence of government policy
Strategic minimisation through adverbial framing	Excerpt 22	“Silently, we have worked to free captives from abductors”	Downplays publicised security challenges while projecting effective but understated government action
Progressive action framing through tense and metaphor	Excerpt 23 and 24	“‘we are moving a step further in our quest’ ;‘we will race against time’.”	Projects continuous effort and urgency, presenting governance as proactive and goal-driven while sustaining public confidence in ongoing reform
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Future-oriented hope framing (Optimistic projection)	Excerpt 25	‘The New Year will bring us closer to the bright future we all desire and the Nigeria of our dreams’.	Recasts present challenges as temporary by projecting a hopeful future, sustaining optimism and reinforcing public patience and ideological commitment.
Moral valorisation of sacrifice	Excerpt 26	‘Your sacrifices have not been in vain... I assure you they will not be in vain even in the months ahead	Reframes citizens’ suffering as meaningful and selfless contribution to national progress, thereby justifying hardship and reinforcing loyalty to leadership.
Intertextual legitimation through institutional referencing	Excerpt 27	‘National Credit Guarantee Company’, the ‘Bank of Industry’, and the ‘Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority’	Presents governance as organised, systematic, and technocratic, reinforcing leadership competence and legitimising authority through association with credible institutions and partnerships.