

Critical Discourse Analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's Speech On 12th June, 2021, Democracy Day

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Abstract

This research work focuses on the use of Critical Discourse Analysis on President Muhammadu Buhari's speech on 12th June, 2021, Democracy Day. Its primary concern is on the use personal pronouns and illocutionary speech acts. The researcher employed the use of qualitative cum analytical, descriptive and thematic approaches in describing this work. This work derives its data from secondary sources. The aim of this paper is to illustrate how the use of critical discourse analysis unveils and showcases the deeper meanings of Mr. President's speech beyond its shallow information. Critical discourse analysis is an "eye-opener" to the people in order to have a better enhanced comprehension of what political speeches and texts are all about. The result of this study reveals how political heads, representatives and candidates use language and power to indoctrinate and persuade the people into submitting to their biddings.

Keywords: Applied linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Politics, Speech acts, Illocutionary act.

1. Introduction

Democracy day in Nigeria marks the very day Military government handed over political power to the elected civilian government in 1999 and till now, civilian government is known to be longest continuous rule since Nigeria's independence from colonization in 1960. It is a tradition that is celebrated annually since the year 2000 A.D. The initial official Democracy Day in Nigeria is 29th May, marking the first day the civilian government took charge in the person of Olusegun Obasanjo as the president. The new Democracy Day was led by President Muhammadu

Buhari on 12th June on his second tenure up till date in his inaugural address for the commemoration of M.K.O Abiola and other civilians who lost their lives in serving the country. Critical discourse analysis is a methodology that enables a vigorous assessment of what is meant when language is used to describe and explain.

The aim of critical discourse analysis according to Fairclough (1995:132) is 'to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events and texts as well as cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power'. The use of personal pronouns has been very handy and helpful to politicians over the years and still are in our present days. Personal pronouns as well as the use of various types of speech acts by political bodies, candidates and political aspirants have been used to indoctrinate and manipulate the minds of the people in order to find favor among the people who has the power to fulfill their political anticipated ambitions. This research is focused on critically analyzing and explaining the use of personal pronouns and illocutionary speech acts as classified by Searle (1979) on President Muhammadu Buhari's speech on 12th June, Democracy Day.

Politicians know the power of language and tactfully choose their words for public speeches in order to achieve their motives which is to control the minds of the people and win favor from the public against their opponents or predecessors and also for their self-beneficial reasons. Mr. President's speech on 12th June, 2021, Democracy Day has some underlying meanings beyond its mundane form, that is, his use of personal pronouns and illocutionary speech acts. Hence, these expressions with implied meanings which are the use of personal pronouns and Searle's 1979 classification of illocutionary speech acts are what this work intends to unveil in order to simplify what the people find difficult to comprehend and also to point out his strategic choice of words used to indoctrinate the people.

This paper aims to carry out a Critical discourse analysis on the President's speech on 12th June, 2021, Democracy Day. In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives are considered:

- 1) To identify the use of illocutionary speech acts that are preponderant in this speech.
- 2) To identify the use of personal pronouns as tools of conviction and influence.
- 3) To discover the strategy of the speech.

2. Literature Review

This section is split into three categories; first is the conceptual review which comprises; Applied Linguistics, Pragmatics; under which we have speech acts and classification of speech acts by Austin, Pronouns, Discourse, Discourse Analysis (DA), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The second category is the empirical studies that contains Some CDA work done by different researchers. The section is concluded with a summary of the review.

2.1 Applied Linguistics

According to Wilkins (1999:7), Applied Linguistics is concerned with increasing understanding of the role of language in human affairs and thereby providing the knowledge necessary for those who are responsible for taking language-related decisions whether the need for these arises in the classroom, the workplace, the lawcourt, or the laboratory.

Applied linguistics is a field of study that looks at how linguistics helps in understanding real-life problems in areas such as Psychology, Sociology and Education. There appears to be consensus that the goal is to apply the findings and the techniques from research in linguistics and related disciplines in order to solve practical problems. The different subdomains of applied linguistics that are relevant and have developed since 20th century includes; Sociolinguistics (Conversational Analysis and Ethnography), Speech act theory and Pragmatics, Artificial Intelligence.

2.2. Pragmatics

Crystal (1987:62-5) opines that Pragmatics deals with the factors that manages the language for what we want to choose within the pool of language that could satisfy whenever it is used within a social interaction and its effects on others. Pragmatics is so broad that it includes all studies of language users, from neurolinguistics to sociolinguistics. Therefore, Pragmatics is the cover term for the study of language use, and in particular the study of linguistic communication, in relation to language structure and context of utterance. Much of the work done in Pragmatics were carried out by some philosophers such as; Wittgenstein (1953), Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Grice (1975) etc. They agree that Pragmatics must identify central uses of language, it must specify the conditions for linguistic expressions (words, phrases, sentences, discourses) to be used in those ways, and it must seek to uncover general principles of language use. Pragmatics is known in a layman's term as the "contextual meaning of a word". That is to say that a word can mean different things depending on the context of use. For instance; a building can be said to be a classroom during the weekdays and also a church on Sundays.

2.3. Speech Acts

Speech act theory is a subfield of pragmatics that studies how words are used not only to present information but also to carry out actions. Speech acts are acts performed in uttering expressions. Speech acts is different from utterance acts whose interest is on uttering of sounds, syllables, words, phrases, and sentences from a language.

The main interest of an utterance acts derives from the fact that in performing an utterance act, we usually perform either a locutionary act (the act of making a meaningful statement, saying something that the hearer understands), illocutionary act (an act performed in uttering something. It is also the act of saying something with purpose) or perlocutionary act (an act performed by uttering something-an act that produces an effect on the hearer, that is causing someone to act). The illocutionary acts of the speech acts interest theorists the most. The speech

act theory was introduced by an Oxford philosopher J.L Austin in 'How to Do Things with Words' in 1962 and it was further developed by American philosopher J.R Searle (1969,1979) whose ideas on communication and meaning have stimulated research in philosophy. Austin (1962:104) lists three types of acts that are performed whenever one uses language: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts which are characterized thus:

A locutionary act is an act of saying something. An illocutionary act is an act of performing something, in contrast to an act of saying something. A perlocutionary act brings about an implication to the audience. They have an effect such as feelings, actions or thoughts in the hearer thereby changing the hearer's mind. Unlike illocutionary acts, perlocutionary acts can project a sense of fear into the audience. For instance, "I will not be your friend". The impending loss of friendship is just an illocutionary act while the effect of frightening the friend into compliance is a perlocutionary act.

2.5. Austin's Classification of Illocutionary Speech Acts

Austin classifies illocutionary acts using a list of performative verbs like; verdictives, excersitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives.

a. Verdictives: This includes formal or informal acts of giving verdict, estimate, or appraisal (as acquitting, reckoning, assessing, diagnosing). This may concern facts or values.

b. Commissives: This act includes the speaker to commit to do something (as promising, undertaking, opposing, betting and even consenting). E.g., (7) "I oppose your argument".

c. Excersitives: It is the illocutionary act that includes the acts of exerting rights, powers or better still, influences such as voting, appointing, warning, ordering. These presuppose that the speaker has certain kind of authority or influence.

d. Behabitives: This act has to do with attitude and social behaviour as congratulating, apologizing, commending, thanking. E.g. (8) "Congratulations on your new promotion". These include reactions to

other peoples' behaviour or fortune, and are particularly vulnerable to insecurity.

e. Expositives: This includes the act that classify reasons, communications or arguments such as; affirming, denying, describing, stating, answering and asking. E.g. (9) "There will be a sit-at-home on October 20 in memorial of our lost loved ones during END SARS protest".

2.6. Discourse

The term 'discourse' has generated a lot of debate and argument among scholars. It is defined as "the language above the sentence or utterances that constitute a text" (Cameroon, 2001). Discourse is a form of code or language use in communication in both spoken and written languages and can be used in everyday conversations both formal conversations like having chit-chats with family and friends and informal conversations like speaking in a public establishment, government offices, schools and so forth. It is simply the language in use (Cook 1989). Fairclough's (1992:3) description of discourse as the situational context of language use involving the interaction between reader/writer and text. He also states that discourse is the particular view of language in use. Wodak and Meyer (2001) also define discourse as a way of signifying a particular activity portraying social practice from a particular lateral perspective.

Onadeko (2000:83) gives a genuine insight to discourse by stating that "it is the scientific study of naturally occurring conversation (or what is meant to be rendered in written mode) which exists between at least two participants in a social context". Some scholars like E.A. Adedun and Yaw Sekyi-Baidoo (2014) through Wale Osisanwo's book "Introduction to Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics" were able to put up some features that characterize discourse such as:

a. Conversation: Conversation is an interaction between two or more people. At least two people must be in conversation where one talks after another especially in response to the first speaker. In some cases, one may use paralinguistic cues as response like gesture, nodding or facial expression.

- b. Discourse participants: These are the people involved in a conversation. They are also known as interlocutors; each of them is addressed differently as speaker and addressee.
- c. Turn-taking: It is a point where one stops talking and another speaker begins to speak. In conversation each participant waits for his turn to avoid overlapping.
- d. Overlapping: It is also called interruption. It occurs when another speaker does not allow the first speaker to finish his talk, so that two or more participants are talking at the same time as experienced in some occasions like football talks.
- e. Talk initiation: It is the process of starting conversation. One of the participants starts off the conversation while the other/s listen.
- f. Opening and closing of discourse: The preliminary exchange that must take place before conversation begins is discourse opening. It may be in form of greeting or summoning. It creates a platform to initiate a conversation. Closing of discourse is the concluding remark made by one of the participants to show that conversation has come to end. The cues such as “bye”, “good bye” or “final” could be used.

2.6. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is the study of texts both written and spoken, long or short and is also interested in the relationship between texts and contexts in which they arise and operate. It is the analysis of language in use, following Cook (1989) definition of discourse. Holmes (2013) explains discourse analysis as a tool for sociolinguists to identify the norms of talk among different social and cultural groups in different conversational and institution contexts and to describe the discursive resources people use in constructing different social identities in interaction.

The basic purpose of discourse analysis is to provide a better understanding and appreciation of texts and how they become meaningful and accessible to their users.

2.7. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis is defined as being fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language (Wodak 2001). According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997:55), Critical discourse analysis sees discourse language use in writing as a form of social practice Wodak (1996:17-20) explains critical discourse analysis as an interdisciplinary that is concerned with social problems. It is not concerned with language or language use, but with linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures.

Critical discourse analysis is the analysis of the internal relations of discourse and such analysis cuts across related disciplines like: Linguistics, Politics, Media studies, Literature, Genre studies, Information technology, Sociology etc. Therefore, CDA is an interdisciplinary form of analysis which Fairclough calls transdisciplinary. Critical analysis aims to produce interpretations and explanations of areas of social life which both identify the causes of social wrongs and produce knowledge which could contribute on righting them. These interpretations and explanations not only involve people who live and act in a certain way or circumstances but also politicians and managers who seek to govern or regulate the ways in which they do so. Critical discourse analysis typically analyzes news texts, political speeches, advertisements, schoolbooks to mention but few, exposing strategies that appear normal on the surface but which may in fact have ideological needs to shape the representation of events and person for a particular end. The term 'critical' naturally means *denaturalizing* the language to reveal the kinds of ideas, absences and taken-for-granted assumptions in texts. Critical discourse analysis is often found in the smallest linguistic details where ideologies of power and politics can be found.

The goal of Critical discourse analysis according to Taiwo (2007:219) is to find the relationship between discourse (text and talk) and society.

The aims of Critical Discourse Analysis as summarized by Van Dijk (2001b:353) are as follows:

- a. Critical discourse analysis does not only describe discourse structure; it rather attempts to explain discourse in terms of social power.
- b. Critical discourse analysis focuses on social problems and political issues.
- c. It also focuses on the way discourse exercises its power in relation to the society.
- d. Lastly, an empirically adequate critical analysis of social problems is usually multidisciplinary.

3. Data Presentation and Analysis

This section of this study is bisected into two subsections. Firstly, the Critical discourse analysis of Mr. President's speech comprising the forty-one personal pronouns extracts analysis and the twenty-two illocutionary speech acts extracts analysis based on Searle's classification. Secondly, the tabular representation of the concordance of the personal pronouns and speech acts deployed in the speech. It is noteworthy that in the analysis that will be shown shortly, some of the personal pronouns and speech acts co-exist in the same extract so they will be illustrated at the same course of analysis. President Muhammadu Buhari's speech on June 12, 2021, Democracy Day which is under analysis is published by The Guardian News on June 12, 2021. The method adopted for the analysis of this data is by continuous but careful study of the speech in a textual material. It comprises one thousand, nine hundred and fifty-five (1,955) words, seventy-eight (78) sentences and sixty (60) paragraphs.

Data analysis excerpted from the speech are both qualitative and quantitative respectively. Qualitative analysis in the sense that it deploys critical discourse analysis to interpret the personal pronouns in order to highlight the meanings behind their choice. Quantitative analysis in the sense that the data will be represented in a tabular form to determine the frequency of occurrence of personal pronouns and speech acts.

3.1. Data Analysis

President Muhammadu Buhari's Use of Personal Pronouns and Speech Acts Analysis

3.1.2 Use of Personal Pronouns/ Expressives

Excerpt from paragraph (1)

10) I join **you** all today to commemorate and celebrate our Democracy Day. It is a celebration of freedom and a victory for one people, one country and one Nigeria.

Analysis

Personal Pronouns; "I"- first person singular pronoun refers to Mr. President himself

"You"- second person plural pronoun refer to the mass/ citizens

Expressives: Mr. President tries to let the people know that he is taking part in mourning of the deceased as well as in celebration of our democracy day which marks our freedom and victory.

Excerpt from paragraph (5)

11) Unfortunately, some of these challenges came in the shape of violent outrages leading to loss of lives of many of our dear compatriots and the destruction of some of our infrastructure, including those devoted to improving our democratic processes.

Analysis

Expressives: The President is referring to the security threats in the nation in 2019 by Boko Haram's suicide bombings, abductions and attacks on the civilians and inter-communal violence that heightened during the 2019 presidential election where he was re-elected as the president of Nigeria.

Excerpt from paragraph (6)

12) Once again, I want to render my sincere and heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of our gallant servicemen and women who lost their lives in line of duty and as a sacrifice to keep Nigeria safe.

Analysis

Personal Pronouns: first person singular pronoun “I” refers to Mr. President

Expressives; The use of the first-person singular pronoun “I” by Mr. President depicts his sorrowful emotions towards the families and friends that lost their loved ones like the soldiers that lost their lives in fighting Boko Haram and other servicemen and women (police officers) who also lost their lives in the hands of armed robbers and deadly thugs.

Excerpt from paragraphs (7 & 8)

13) I extend the same condolence to the families and friends of our countrymen, women and children who were unfortunate victims of such senseless arsons, kidnappings and murders.

I also share the pains of families and direct victims of ransom-seeking, kidnapped victims who went through unimaginable trauma in the course of their forced imprisonment.

Analysis

Personal Pronouns: first person singular pronoun “I” refers to Mr. President

Expressives; In his use of the personal pronoun “I”, He wants the people to know that he feels and also share in their heartbreaks especially those who were victims of the various obnoxious acts mentioned above. His use of the pronoun ‘I’ in this sentence is subjective.

Excerpt from paragraph (12)

14) Unfortunately, like in most conflict situations, some Nigerian criminals are taking undue advantage of a difficult situation and profiteering therefrom with the misguided belief that adherence to the democratic norms handicaps this administration from frontally and decisively tackling them.

Analysis:

Expressives: The President expresses his disappointment in some unruly civilians who cease opportunities in the midst of conflicts to commit despicable atrocities to the detriment of the country.

Excerpt from paragraph (58)

15) My strong belief in Nigerian spirit gives me comfort that we are facing these challenges with renewed commitment to keep our country one.

Analysis:

Expressives: In this paragraph, he wants the people to know that he appreciates the so called “Nigerian spirit” which I will call the resilience spirit that keeps them pushing no matter the obstacles.

Excerpt from paragraph (59)

16) I thank **you** for your patience and attention and more importantly your resolve to join hands in making Nigeria the country of our dream.

Analysis:

Personal Pronouns: “I”- First person singular pronoun refers to Mr. President

“You”- Second person plural pronoun refers to the citizens

Expressives: He expresses his gratitude to the people for being patient and attentive to his long speech and also rhetorically believing and trying to appease the people by saying that effort is being made by the people due to their joint labour in making the country a dream come true.

3.1.3 Use of Personal Pronouns/ Representatives

Excerpts from paragraphs (13 & 14)

17) **We** are already addressing these obstacles and we will soon bring some of these culprits to justice.

We are, at the same time addressing the twin underlying drivers of insecurity namely poverty and youth unemployment.

Analysis:

Personal Pronouns: “We”- second person plural pronoun refers to Mr. President and his administrators.

Representatives: The President attempts to make the people (especially the youth) believe that he and his government is working towards eradicating the challenges as mentioned above in no distant time.

Excerpts from paragraphs (36 & 38)

18) Dear Nigerians, **I** will be the first to admit that in spite of our efforts and achievements which are there for all to see, there is still much more to be done and **we** are doing our best in the face of scarce resources and galloping population growth rate that consistently outstrips our capacity to provide jobs for our populace. Our over-all economic target of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in 10 years is our goal notwithstanding COVID-19.

I am very convinced that this 100million target can be met and this informed the development of a National Poverty Reduction with Growth Strategy. The specific details of this accelerated strategy will be unveiled shortly.

Analysis:

Personal Pronouns: “**I**”- first person singular pronoun refers to Mr. President.

“**We**”- second person plural pronoun refers to Mr. President and the government administrators

Representatives: With the use of personal pronoun “**I**”, He is letting the public know that he believes that he has made some outstanding achievements during his tenure as the president of the republic.

The President makes the citizens to know that there is a poor economic growth in the country that stunts the development of job opportunities but on the other hand, with the use of the personal pronoun “**we**”, he tries to sway the people into believing in him and his administration’s intentions to annihilate poverty by bringing up poverty eradication strategy.

3.1.4 Use of Personal Pronouns/ Commissives

19) Except from paragraph (2)

As with all democracies **we** will always be going through improvement processes in our desire to reach the goal of a mature democracy, a strong, evolved and integrated nation-state to be reckoned with globally.

Analysis:

Personal Pronouns; “We”- second person plural pronoun refers to both Mr. President and the citizens.

Commissives: Mr. President is assuring the people including himself based on the use of the personal pronoun “we” of a better democratic government in the future.

Excerpt from paragraph (11)

20) **We** will by the Grace of God put an end to these challenges too.

Analysis:

Personal Pronouns: “We”- second person plural pronoun refers to both the president and the citizens.

Commissives: The use of the personal pronoun “we” entails that he is involved with the people in the appalling experiences and challenges they are facing in the cases of; arson, kidnapping, homicides, destruction of properties to list but a few. Mr. President is promising the people that all these challenges will be tackled by the “Grace of God” which explains that he is also a believer of a greater being as Nigeria is known to be a religious country.

Excerpts from paragraphs (56 & 57)

21) In adhering to the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy notably section 14(2b) **I** shall do all within my power to ensure that the security and welfare of the people remain the primary purpose of government.

I have, throughout my tenure, provided the security agencies with all they require relative to available resources and will be providing more as the dynamics unfold to put an end to our security problems.

Analysis:

Personal Pronouns: “I”-first person singular pronoun refers to Mr. President

Commissives: He promises the people safety by implementing and equipping the security agencies with the necessary equipment that will adhere safeguarding the lives and properties of the citizens.

3.1.5 Use of Personal Pronouns/ Directives

Excerpt from paragraph (9)

22) Let me assure my fellow citizens that every incident, however minor gives me great worry and concern and **I** immediately order security agencies to swiftly but safely rescue victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

Analysis:

Personal Pronoun: “**I**”-first person singular pronoun refers to Mr. President

Directives: Mr. President is assuring the people that he takes action when it comes to safeguarding them. As the president and the commander-in-chief of armed forces, he orders security agencies to the safety of the people and they comply diligently by carrying out the expected actions.

3.1.6 Use of Personal Pronouns / Declaratives

Excerpts from paragraphs (51 & 52)

23) This body which as **I** said is the arm of government responsible for constitutional changes has concluded the preliminary stages of amending and improving our constitution in a way that the majority of Nigerians will be happy with.

Government is however, willing to play a critical role in the constitutional amendment process without usurping the powers of the National Assembly in this regard.

Analysis:

Personal Pronouns: “**I**”- first person singular pronoun refers to Mr. President

Declaratives: As the president, he has the right to appoint the members of the National Assembly and they are mandated to amend and improve our national constitution. He also wants the people to know that Nigeria operates in flexible rule of law and the constitution can be amended, if necessary, in ways that will please and benefit the people.

Note that in the second paragraph in (23), the use of ‘Government’ shows the objectivity of the president. Whenever, it was time to proffer solution,

the president was careful to be objective (that is, not directly involving himself alone).

3.2 Personal Pronouns Concordance

The tabulation of the personal pronouns deployed in the speech is as follows;

I	You	We	Our	Me	Us	They	My
22	7	25	33	2	6	2	13

3.3 Illocutionary Speech Acts Concordance

The tabulation of the illocutionary speech acts deployed in the speech is as follows;

Expressives	Representatives	Commissives	Directives	Declaratives
8	4	4	1	2

4. Findings and Conclusion

In this paper, we examined language and power and their tactful use by using the Critical Discourse Analysis approach. The result of this study is based on the speech of President Muhammadu Buhari on June 12th, 2021 Democracy Day. The areas this research is focused on are; the use of personal pronouns and Searle's classification of illocutionary speech acts. This study reveals the evidence of the use of personal pronouns and illocutionary speech acts by Mr. President and the study unveils the actual meanings of some sentences as analyzed in the previous chapter.

It is observed from the analysis that the president is most times subjective in his use of pronouns when referring to show of care, pity and achievements. He tends to use the personal pronoun 'I', thereby personalizing them. However, in instances where he should render solutions or the plans, he has about settling one issue or the other, he results to being objective (not involving himself personally or alone), through the use of the pronoun 'We' or the noun 'Government'. This is seen as a

deliberate attempt by the president to exempt himself, in case the problem is not eventually solved.

The result of this study reveals how political heads, representatives and candidates use language and power to indoctrinate and persuade the people into submitting to their biddings. In a country like Nigeria, the lower-class citizens are easily intimidated and controlled. The Democracy Day speech given by Mr. President is used to make the poor masses believe that the government has their interests at heart and that the government shares in their bitterness about the current situations of the country and they are swiftly working towards annihilating them. The analysis done on this speech reveals that that Mr. President is trying to show the people his government achievements over the years since his appointment into seat and promising the people that he is obliged to do more before his tenure elapses.

We note that the objectives which are to list and analyze the use of personal pronouns and illocutionary acts as political tools have been achieved. The finding of this study is considered relevant and useful in educating and enhancing further research in this field and other related disciplines. It also serves as a guide and reference for study in Critical Discourse Analysis. Based on the analysis gathered from this speech, the researcher recommends that this work should be used in educational curriculum in order to bring about comprehensive understanding of Critical Discourse Analysis.

APPENDIX

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY, MUHAMMADU BUHARI,
PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMED
FORCES FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA ON THE OCCASION
OF COMMEMORATION AND CELEBRATION OF DEMOCRACY
DAY ON 12TH JUNE, 2021**

Fellow Nigerians,

I join you all today to commemorate and celebrate our Democracy Day. It is a celebration of freedom and a victory for one people, one country and one Nigeria.

As with all democracies we will always be going through improvement processes in our desire to reach the goal of a mature democracy, a strong, evolved and integrated nation-state to be reckoned with globally.

In the last two years we have witnessed and overcome a good number of testy challenges that would have destroyed other nations especially relating to our collective security.

The indefatigable CAN DO spirit of the Nigerian has sustained us and would keep pushing us to put these challenges behind us.

Unfortunately, some of these challenges came in the shape of violent outrages leading to the loss of lives of many of our dear compatriots and the destruction of some of our infrastructure, including those devoted to improving our democratic processes.

Once again, I want to render my sincere and heartfelt condolences to the families and the friends of our gallant servicemen and women who lost their lives in the line of duty and as a sacrifice to keep Nigeria safe.

I extend the same condolence to the families and friends of our countrymen, women and children who were unfortunate victims of such senseless arsons, kidnappings and murders.

I also share in the pains of families and direct victims of ransom-seeking, kidnapped victims who went through unimaginable trauma in the course of their forced imprisonment.

Let me assure my fellow citizens that every incident, however minor gives me great worry and concern and I immediately order security agencies to swiftly but safely rescue victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

Fellow Nigerians,

When you elected me as your President in 2015, you did so knowing that I will put an end to the growing insecurity, especially the insurgency in the North East, but the unintended consequences of our scattering them in the North East pushed them further in-country which is what we are now facing and dealing with.

We will, by the Grace of God put an end to all these challenges too.

Unfortunately, like in most conflict situations, some Nigerian criminals are taking undue advantage of a difficult situation and profiteering therefrom with the misguided belief that adherence to the democratic norms handicaps this Administration from frontally and decisively tackling them.

We are already addressing these obstacles and we will soon bring some of these culprits to justice.

We are, at the same time addressing the twin underlying drives of insecurity namely poverty and youth unemployment.

Interventions led by the government and the Central Bank of Nigeria driving economic growth over past 6 years are targeted mostly to the agricultural services, infrastructure, power and health care sectors of the economy.

In the Agricultural sector, for instance, the Anchor Borrowers Programme resulted in sharp decline in the nation's major food import bill from \$2.23 billion in 2014 to US\$0.59 billion by the end of 2018.

Rice import bill alone dropped from \$ 1 billion to \$18.5 million annually.

This initiative supported local production of rice, maize, cotton and cassava. The government financed 2.5 million small-holder farmers cultivating about 3.2 million hectares of farmland all over the country and created 10 million direct and indirect jobs.

Several other initiatives, namely AgriBusiness/Small and Medium Enterprise Investment Scheme, the Non-oil Export stimulation Facility, the Targeted Credit Facilities operated across the 774 Local Governments.

In the manufacturing sector the CBN-BOI N200 billion facility financed the establishment and operations of 60 new industrial hubs across the country, creating an estimated 890,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The CBN's N50 billion Textile Sector intervention Facility increased capacity utilization of ginneries from 30% to nearly 90%.

The Economic Sustainability Plan – our rebound plan for the COVID-19 pandemic developed in 2020 is currently being executed. The plan is primarily focused on the oil-sector, which has recorded phenomenal growth contributing over 90% to the GDP growth in Q1 2021.

Though marginal we have recorded GDP growth over two quarters; Q2 2020 and Q1 2021. This is evidence of successful execution of the ESP by the Federal Government.

My vision of pulling 100 million poor Nigerians out of poverty in 10 years has been put into action and can be seen in the National Social Investment Programme, a first in Africa and one of the largest in the world where over 32.6m beneficiaries are taking part. We now have a National Social register of poor and vulnerable households, identified across 708 local government areas, 8,723 wards and 86,610 communities in the 36 States and the FCT.

Our conditional cash transfer program has benefited over 1.6 million poor and vulnerable households comprising more than 8 million individuals. This provides a monthly stipend of N10,000 per household.

I have also recently approved the National Poverty Reduction with Growth Strategy Plan that augments existing plans to further reduce poverty in Nigeria. As at the end of 2020, the Development Bank of Nigeria has disbursed 324 billion Naira in loans to more than 136,000 MSMEs, through 40 participating Financial Institutions. I am to note that 57% of these beneficiaries are women while 27% are the youth.

We are able to do all these and still accelerate our infrastructure development through sensible and transparent borrowing, improved capital inflow, improving and increasing revenue through capturing more tax bases and prudent management of investment proceeds in the Sovereign Wealth Fund.

Fellow Nigerians, our infrastructure revolution continues with key projects attaining critical milestone under the Presidential Infrastructure Development Fund; The Second Niger Bridge, The Lagos-Ibadan Expressway and the Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria-Kano Expressway.

I have also approved the establishment of Infracore Plc, a world-class infrastructure development vehicle wholly focused on Nigeria with a capital structure of N15 trillion.

The railway system is not left out as the Itakpe-Warri standard gauge rail was completed and commissioned 33 years after construction began. The Lagos-Ibadan double track railway line which I have just commissioned has commenced operations.

We are focused on ensuring that our infrastructure drive is key to economic growth and one that can be felt by every Nigerian. Building critical infrastructure in our ports is also opening up opportunities for the Nigerian economy.

My approval for 4 new seaports using a Public-Private-Partnership approach is hinged on growing the Nigerian economy. These four sea ports; Lekki Deep Sea Port, Bonny Deep Sea Port, Ibom Deep Sea Port will create massive job opportunities and foreign investment inflows.

We have worked at deepening our Eastern ports leading to success like having three container ships berth at Calabar port, a first in 11 years. Similarly, on October 30 2019, an LPG tanker operated by NLNG berthed in Port Harcourt, the first time in LPG ship is berthing at any of the Eastern Ports.

As we invest in these new assets, we have also made strides in ensuring that they are secured and protected. In this regard I am also pleased to note the launch of the NIMASA Deep Blue project- which is an Integrated National Security and Waterways Protection Infrastructure that I recently commissioned. This initiative

is designed to add to the layer of security we have to safeguard our maritime sector.

Dear Nigerians, I will be the first to admit that in spite of our efforts and achievements which are there for all to see, there is still much more to be done and we are doing our best in the face of scarce resources and galloping population growth rate that consistently outstrips our capacity to provide jobs for our populace. Our over-all economic target of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in 10 years is our goal notwithstanding COVID-19.

In the last two years we lifted 10.5 million people out of poverty- farmers, small-scale traders, artisans, market women and the like.

I am very convinced that this 100 million target can be met and this informed the development of a National Poverty Reduction with Growth Strategy. The specific details of this accelerated strategy will be unveiled shortly.

In the last one year, Nigeria and the whole world faced COVID-19 for which no one was fully prepared.

Our response to the pandemic involved making hard choices in balancing livelihoods and public health concerns. You are all living witnesses to how successful this has been due to a number of pro-active measures put in place. Our response to COVID-19 is globally acclaimed.

We were able to ensure that the various lockdown measures did not impact too negatively on the ability of ordinary Nigerians to continue sustaining their livelihoods.

During the pandemic, we disbursed N5,000 to 1 million Nigerians using a Rapid Response Register and advanced N20,000 to 750,000 beneficiaries of the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme and provided 1.37 million Nigerians with palliatives from CACOVID.

At the same time the Federal Government released 109,000 metric tonnes of food reserve stocks and 70,000 metric tonnes of grains to the poor and vulnerable in all 36 states of the federation.

In addition, Government reduced interest rates from 9% to 5% for struggling businesses and extended credit facilities to 548,345 beneficiaries.

Fellow Nigerians, when this administration decided to change our Democracy Day from 29th May to June 12th in my first tenure, it was not only to honour the sacrifices of the men and women of our country who fought for the return of democracy but also to demonstrate our commitment to satisfy the aspirations of the people and creating an environment for democracy to be an accepted way of life.

As your President I remain committed to providing an enabling environment for a free, fair and credible electoral system under my tenure.

However, you need to play your part by getting involved at any level you can supporting a democratic system that works for all and not for a section or a select few and demand accountability from your elected leaders.

My commitment to bequeathing a sustainable democratic culture remains resolute, my pursuit of a fair society remains unshaken and my desire to see that Nigeria remains a country for each and every one of us has never been stronger.

In responding to the challenges that this period imposes on us, government also recognizes the need to acknowledge notions of marginalization and agitations for constitutional amendments among various segments of our population.

While this government is not averse to constitutional reform as part of our nation building process, everyone must understand that the primary responsibility for constitutional amendments lies with the National Assembly.

This body which as I said, is the arm of government responsible for constitutional changes has concluded the preliminary stages of amending and improving our constitution in a way that the majority of Nigerians will be happy with.

Government is however willing to play a critical role in the constitutional amendment process without usurping the powers of the National Assembly in this regard.

As a nation we have come very far from where we started and we are getting incrementally closer to where we ought to be.

Overcoming the present challenges is but one of a necessary process that we have to undergo as a nation so that we can come out stronger. The day I joined the Nigerian Army I was prepared to lay down my life for Nigeria.

As your President I remain ever committed to upholding and defending Nigeria's Corporate existence.

In adhering to the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy notably section 14(2) (b) I shall do all within my power to ensure that the Security and welfare of the people remain the primary purpose of government.

I have, throughout my tenure, provided the security agencies with all they require relative to available resources and will be providing more as the dynamics unfold to put an end to our security problems.

My strong belief in the Nigerian spirit gives me comfort that we are facing these challenges with renewed commitment to keep our country one.

I thank you for your patience and attention and more importantly your resolve to join hands in making Nigeria the country of our dream.

Happy Democracy Day! God Bless us All, God Bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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