



Political Pulpitry in Campaigns: An Analysis of APC Promissory Historiography (2015–2023)

EZE, George Ogazi Mani Ph.D.; ONYESO, Prince Ikeokwu Nwaokugha Ph.D.; ONYEBUENYI, Samuel Ph.D. & OBI, Promise Adaku Ph.D.

Department of Mass Communication, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Received: 01.11.2025 | Accepted: 08.11.2025 | Published: 06.12.2025

*Corresponding Author: EZE, George Ogazi Mani Ph.D.

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.17840703](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17840703)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6765-6123>

Abstract

Original Research Article

This document investigated the presidential historiography performed by Nigeria's All Progressives Congress (APC) from 2015 to 2023. Using political communication, endorsement from religious leaders, and populist rhetoric, the study examined the constructions of leadership of Muhammadu Buhari and Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This research was based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and examined 60 textual materials, such as presidential speeches, clerics' sermons, and campaign/media documents, within the context of Postcolonial Theory and Political Myth. The research demonstrated the strategic application of mythic framing, providential language, and populist binaries as the enduring means by which the president of the APC is repositioned as providentially, historically, and morally warranted. Religious discourses served not only as ideological amplifiers but as historiographic practitioners of the seamless intersection of the pulpit and the politics of preaching policy. The press and campaign rhetoric exploited emotional and historical amnesia while revisionist, dissent-silencing and loyalty-manipulating discourses radicalising the politics served to suppress dissent and foster political loyalty. These discourses radicalised the politics served to suppress dissent and foster political loyalty. The paper made a case for a greater control of the media on the activities of the religious and the religious defenders of history of the politician. It suggested the introduction of ethical laws to control the partisanship of the pulpit, discursive pluralism in the media, and curriculum changes to foster civic engagement. This research expanded the corpus of works focused on postcolonial Africa's political communication by focusing on the pressing need to deconstruct political historiography from radical ideological fabrication.

Keywords: Political Discourse, Historiography, Populism, Pulpitry Politics, Radical Rhetoric, Presidential Memory.

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Introduction

The interplay between politics, rhetoric, and historical narrative in Nigeria has intensified since the emergence of the All Progressives Congress (APC) as a dominant political force in 2015. Under Presidents Muhammadu Buhari and

Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the APC not only governed the Nigerian state but also actively participated in crafting the historical memory of its leadership through radical and symbolic discourses. These narratives were often constructed on religious platforms ("political pulpitreries"), partisan



broadcasts, and celebratory propaganda that promised transformation, integrity, and economic rebirth.

This paper examined the discourses that shaped public perception along ideological lines while adding to the ontological framing of the APC presidency within the historiography. It assessed the memory and the future's framing and re-narration within populism, ethnonationalism, and religiosity by employing multiple methodologies including critical contextual discourse analysis. The study also addressed the intersection of memory, political legitimacy, and radical promise making within a contested democratic space.

Statement of the Problem

Apart from History, the discourse around political governance in Nigeria, and especially the leadership of the All Progressive Congress (APC), has been deeply entrenched and shaped by ideological, religious and populist discourse. Since the emergence of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in 2015, there has been some form of axiomatic narrative coupled with rhetorical radicalism in framing the party's presidential leadership first with Muhammadu Buhari and recently with Bola Ahmed Tinubu as transformative, redemptive, and of critical significance. The radical democratic promises illustrated in these stories sketch an immeasurable political promise that has been diluted by lingering and emerging histories of disenfranchisement and disillusionment. We find these stories in the comments of religious leaders, political party campaign speeches, and media analysis. Deflector leaders are central in these tales and serve to political governance mythology by reinforcing the historiographies of partisan political governance neglect.

New forms of control such the 'dissident perspective blank' are aligned with the broader goals of selective, politically useful paradigms of interlaced memory 'mythologising' governance. To use the words of Mbembe (2001) and Ranger (2004), memory states situated in the realities of un-reflected, uncritically adapted, and 'mystically' spicy discourse devoid of the colonial encounter are particularly in the postcolonial African world. The political use of

religion and ethnicity in the construction of political power in Nigeria (Marshall, 2009; Ojo, 2020) exemplifies the use of political religion, along with the abuse of the ethnic religion, in the mobilisation of political power.

The radical re-functioning for the purposes of leveraging power relations over the 'archival' construction of presidential narratives, or what I termed 'pulpit historiography', is of an extreme danger because it obliterates the discursive boundaries of the latter, in my view of critical, historical accountability and distorts the discourse of democracy.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the discursive strategies employed in constructing presidential historiography by APC leadership from 2015 to 2023.
2. To analyse the role of religious platforms, populist rhetoric, and media narratives in shaping political memory and public perception.
3. To assess the implications of radical discourse in the legitimization and mythologisation of APC presidential leadership in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What discursive patterns and themes characterize the historiography of APC presidential leadership between 2015 and 2023?
2. How have religious pulpits and partisan media contributed to the re-imagination of Buhari and Tinubu's leadership?
3. What are the implications of radical political discourse on democratic accountability and historical memory in Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Postcolonial Theory, and the Theory of Political Myth.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): In his writings, Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (2008) introduced the concept of CDA, which examines

the use of language as a means of domination, ideology and social order. CDA Analysis of Political Communication attempts to understand the ways in which the APC uses rhetoric to reconstruct and legitimise political history by analysing political sermons, campaign speeches, and other mediated forms of communication.

Postcolonial Theory: The Location of Culture' which Bhabha: (1994) along with Achille Mbembe (2001) focus on, is to some degree in all Postcolonial thought. Political leaders in Nigeria, for example, cloak their socio-political inadequacies behind claims of moral and developmental centrism of the global periphery, using the artificially mythologised history and the heavily paraphrased lined religion.

Theory of Political Myth: Political myth is understood as the story with an ideology behind it, to some degree, memory and identity society, which is a conception based on Bottici and Challand (2006). In terms of the APC's historiography, renewal of hope and the anti-corruption mythos as well as the rebirth and re-mythologized political tropes becomes the center of APC's momentum. These theories greatly assist in the exploration of discourse, power and historical narrative in the APC regime.

Literature Review

Political Historiography and Leadership Myth-Making in Nigeria

The leading political figures in a postcolonial African region and especially Nigeria have been constantly rewriting history in an effort to justify, praise, or vilify their actions and impact the political discourse, and history as a whole. Nigeria has had its own share of revisionist history, not telling all the stories, as described in the work of Falola and Heaton (2008) observed that:

The records have been episodically retrieved and revised in a fragmented way dictated by regime change, political crisis and the flow of power from central to peripheral and back. Every leader tries to reinvent their own history by reshaping the whole story from the beginning, making them the heroes of that history (p. 44).

The case of Muhammadu Buhari illustrates this

tendency. While his military regime (1983–1985) was once criticised for human rights violations and managed the economy poorly, APC's campaign rhetoric animated him as a bastion of discipline and anti-corruption. This attends to Achebe (1983) view that:

The stories told about leadership in Nigeria 'swing from myth to memory' with little or no democratic questioning and a lot of ideological reframing. Just as mythically constructed was the 'national strategist' and 'architect of modern Lagos' which assigned Tinubu the title of 'president' of modern Lagos' which, for some, justifies his elevation. Through elaborate narratives and symbolic acts, these rulers were polygonally constructed as presidents of a perceived historical need (p.98).

Religion and Political Communication

Nigerian discourse is intricate and complex and it is marked with religious metaphors and the use of religious discourse. The joining of religious and political speeches is forming a new layer of communication contact in which political representatives communicate with religious people. In the works of scholars such as Obadare (2018) and Marshall (2009), the roles of Pentecostal pastors have been described the most. They highlight how these pastors have come to occupy crucial spaces in the endorsement of political aspirants and the construction of spiritual narratives to state affairs. The discourse is thus governed by Religion and Religious Rituals which dictates the and divinely sanctioned political and policy decisions. The phrase of Buhari as 'God's chosen' and the phrase of Tinubu's 2023 campaign as 'Renewed Hope' serves as illustrations of the circulation of political theologies. The slogan by Tinubu in particular serves to religious eschatology and draws a prophetic outline of the future. Ojo (2020) argues that such symbolic religiosity provides a moral veneer for the political power and enhances voter emotionality in place of rational engagement.

Populist Discourse and Symbolic Power

Populism rhetoric in its essence touches all forms of political communication. This is evident in developing democracies where

legitimacy is based on performative actions. Laclau (2005) opined that:

Populism is the overwhelming portraying of the people and the elite, using emotionally persuasive and over-simplified explanations of phenomena. Within the framework of political storytelling, the APC has always utilized this logic; picturing themselves as the agent of the people battling the legacy of the PDP and its vile corruption. The utterances of the words ‘change’ in 2015 and ‘renewed hope’ in 2023 in particular, used the APC rhetoric as empty signifiers. They were discursively powerful but semantically open and as a result, capable of being interpreted through numerous lenses such as religion, region, and class (p.168).

Mouffe, (2000) maintained that visual symbols like the APC broom, religious endorsements, and media spectacles form part of a symbolic economy which coupled together with other forms of power, legitimises governance through consensus rather than demonstrable fact.

Radical Rhetoric and Postcolonial Memory

The retinal active memory works completes ‘doctrine’, rheriocised works and praises and ethnic and political speeches, as I have said, are weapons of war in memory battles. In Postcolonial states, as Mbembe (2001) notes, ‘the politics of memory’, which includes speeches, simple actions and myths, and the ‘aesthetics of power’, rule in order to create something that can without end be imagined. In Nigeria, this has involved not only the veneration of certain leaders but also the erasure or reconfiguration of past events to fit present narratives. For instance, sermons that depict Nigeria as a “promised land” suffering under Pharaoh-like misrule serve to frame Buhari’s or Tinubu’s leadership as prophetic deliverance. This fusion of theology and political memory underscores Ranger’s (2004) thesis on the invention of tradition: present realities are often recast as continuations of sacred or historical destinies. In effect, the political pulpit becomes a historiographic apparatus-where clerics, commentators, and party loyalists reinterpret governance through a quasi-religious, radicalised lens.

Gap in Literature

While studies have explored political communication in Nigeria (Ojebuyi & Ekeanyanwu, 2017), few have examined how radical discourses on religious platforms and partisan spaces actively construct a historiography of leadership. Existing literature tends to analyse electioneering language, campaign slogans, or media framing in isolation. This paper addresses the gap by interrogating the convergence of religion, populism, and myth-making in producing a historiographic discourse under the APC, drawing attention to its impact on collective memory, governance narratives, and democratic accountability.

Methodology

This research incorporates a qualitative research methodology employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for analysing the discursive formation of the APC presidential historiography from 2015 to 2023. The study targeted the intersection of extreme speech, religious stories, and populist perspectives in the construction of history concerning the leadership of Muhammadu Buhari and Bola Ahmed Tinubu. It is recognised that a qualitative approach is the most appropriate in this case considering the approach’s capacity to reveal hidden meanings, ideological frameworks, and metaphorical aspects in the realm of politics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The study does not aim for generalisability but rather for depth of interpretation regarding discursive practices in media, religious, and political texts. Data were collected through purposive sampling from three key domains: Selected presidential speeches (inaugural addresses, Independence Day broadcasts, budget presentations), and APC campaign manifestos (2015: Change Agenda; 2023: Renewed Hope). Also, transcripts and recordings from prominent religious leaders such as Pastor E.A. Adebayo, Bishop David Oyedepo, Sheikh Ahmad Gumi, and others during electoral cycles or national crises, and published church/mosque bulletins, spiritual proclamations, and televised declarations involving the APC presidents. Moreso, editorials, political analyses, and op-eds in major newspapers (e.g., The Nation, Premium Times,

Vanguard, Daily Trust), and televised interviews and campaign advertorials aired on national networks such as Channels TV, NTA, and TVC. In total, over 60 textual artifacts were analysed: 20 presidential communications, 15 clerical sermons or endorsements, and 25 media commentaries and campaign narratives across the 2015–2023 timeline.

The study employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on the frameworks of Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (2008). Analysis was guided by the following discursive elements: Identifying how political speeches and religious rhetoric borrow from or reference earlier texts and traditions to construct meaning. Assessing how language choices construct the speaker's moral authority, divine endorsement, or populist alignment with "the people." Detecting the creation of myths around leadership, including metaphors of messianism, divine mandate, or historic inevitability. Evaluating how historical events, policy failures, or national crises are framed to suit political ends or deflect criticism

(Entman, 1993). Each text was coded thematically using NVivo 12, with categories aligned to the research objectives and theoretical constructs—namely, pulpit politics, revisionist historiography, radical promise-making, and populist mythologisation. To ensure the trustworthiness of findings, the study employed triangulation of data sources (presidential, religious, media), peer debriefing with experts in political communication and discourse analysis, and reflexive memoing during interpretation to mitigate researcher bias. Although the study is not designed for statistical generalization, its methodological rigor ensures analytical transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to similar political and religious discourse contexts in the Global South. All data used were publicly available and documented from credible and verifiable sources. The study refrained from analyzing unpublished or private religious/political communications. Full citation and attribution were maintained to respect intellectual property and public accountability.

Table 1: Presidential Communications - 20 TEXTS (2015–2023)

S/ N	Type	Title	Speaker /Source	Venue/Outlet	Date	Notes
1	Presidential Communication	Inaugural Address	Muhamadu Buhari	Eagle Square, Abuja	2015-05-29	Signature line: 'I belong to everybody and to nobody.'
2	Presidential Communication	Independence Day Broadcast	Muhamadu Buhari	Nigerian Television Authority (NTA)	2015-10-01	First Independence Day speech in office.
3	Presidential Communication	2016 National Budget Presentation	Muhamadu Buhari	National Assembly, Abuja	2015-12-22	Outlined 'Change' fiscal priorities.
4	Presidential Communication	'Change Begins With Me' National Reorientation Launch	Muhamadu Buhari	State House, Abuja	2016-09-08	Civic ethics and national values campaign.
5	Presidential Communication	Democracy Day Address	Muhamadu Buhari	National Broadcast	2016-05-29	First Democracy Day address of his tenure.

6	Presidential Communication	Independence Day Broadcast	Muhamadu Buhari	National Broadcast	2017-10-01	Post-medical leave national address.
7	Presidential Communication	Democracy Day Address	Muhamadu Buhari	National Broadcast	2018-05-29	Reform and anti-corruption themes.
8	Presidential Communication	APC National Convention Campaign Speech	Muhamadu Buhari	Abuja	2018-10-06	Re-election framing for 2019 polls.
9	Presidential Communication	2019 Re-election Victory Speech	Muhamadu Buhari	Abuja	2019-02-27	Calls for unity and consolidation.
10	Presidential Communication	Independence Day Broadcast	Muhamadu Buhari	National Broadcast	2020-10-01	#EndSARS context; security and reform rhetoric.
11	Presidential Communication	COVID-19 National Address	Muhamadu Buhari	National Broadcast	2020-03-29	Lockdown measures and public health guidance.
12	Presidential Communication	Democracy Day Address	Muhamadu Buhari	National Broadcast	2021-06-12	June 12 recognized as Democracy Day.
13	Presidential Communication	Independence Day Broadcast	Muhamadu Buhari	National Broadcast	2021-10-01	Security and economic diversification themes.
14	Presidential Communication	Farewell/Valedictory National Broadcast	Muhamadu Buhari	National Broadcast	2023-05-28	End-of-tenure address.
15	Presidential Communication	2023 Presidential Election Victory Remarks	Bola Ahmed Tinubu	Abuja	2023-03-01	'I will be a servant of the nation.'
16	Presidential Communication	Inaugural Address	Bola Ahmed Tinubu	Eagle Square, Abuja	2023-05-29	Fuel subsidy removal announcement.
17	Presidential Communication	Democracy Day Address	Bola Ahmed Tinubu	National Broadcast	2023-06-12	Tribute to pro-democracy struggle; economic pain-as-sacrifice framing.
18	Presidential Communication	National Economic Reform Address	Bola Ahmed Tinubu	National Broadcast	2023-07-31	Exchange rate unification, palliatives.

19	Presidential Communication	Independence Day Broadcast	Bola Ahmed Tinubu	National Broadcast	2023-10-01	'Renewed Hope' consolidation themes.
20	Presidential Communication	Private Sector Engagement Address	Bola Ahmed Tinubu	Presidential Villa/Abuja Forum	2023-11-08	Investment, jobs, and reforms outreach.

Table 2: Clerical Sermons/Endorsements-15 TEXTS (2015-2023)

S/ N	Type	Title	Speaker/Source	Venue/Outlet	Date	Notes
1	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	State of the Nation Address	Pastor Tunde Bakare	Latter Rain Assembly, Lagos	2015-01	Moral leadership and reform themes ahead of 2015 polls.
2	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	Holy Ghost Congress Remarks	Pastor E. A. Adeboye	RCCG, Redemption Camp	2015-12	Call to pray for leaders; tacit legitimization of incumbency.
3	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	The Destiny of Nations	Bishop David Oyedepo	Winners' Chapel, Ota	2016-06	National destiny and governance critique.
4	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	Let There Be Light	Pastor Paul Enenche	Dunamis, Abuja	2017-03	Righteous governance and justice emphasis.
5	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	National Unity & Leadership Calling	Sheikh Ahmad Gumi	Radio Kaduna/Sermons	2017-08	Providence and northern leadership discourse.
6	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	Prophecies for Nigeria 2018	Apostle Johnson Suleman	Omega Fire Ministries	2018-01	Trials and leadership warnings.
7	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	Christmas Message	Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah	Sokoto Diocese	2018-12-25	Governance critique and historical accountability.
8	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	Crossover Night Exhortation	Pastor E. A. Adeboye	RCCG, Redemption Camp	2019-12-31	Support for praying for government and national peace.
9	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	National Integrity and Governance	Bishop David Oyedepo	Winners' Chapel, Ota	2019-06	Critique of governance failures and moral drift.
10	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	Leadership and Legacy in Crisis	Pastor Sam Adeyemi	Daystar Christian	2020-05	Pandemic-era sermon on systemic reform.

				Centre, Lagos		
11	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	Easter Pastoral Letter	Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah	Sokoto Diocese	2021-04	Critique of messianic leadership myths.
12	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	Prophetic Declarations on Justice	Pastor Paul Enenche	Dunamis, Abuja	2022-01	Justice and accountability themes.
13	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	On Leadership Continuity	Sheikh Ahmad Gumi	Public Comments/Interviews	2023-01	North, security, and leadership debates.
14	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	Hope as Governance Strategy	Pastor Poju Oyemade	Covenant Nation, Lagos	2023-02	Pre-election moral framing of hope.
15	Clerical Sermon/Endorsement	Unity and Nation-Building Exhortation	Pastor David Ibiyeomie	Salvation Ministries, Port Harcourt	2023-06	Post-inauguration call for national unity.

Table 3: Media Commentaries & Campaign Narratives -25 TEXTS (2015–2023)

S/N	Type	Title	Speaker/Source	Venue/Outlet	Date	Notes
1	Media Commentary	Buhari and the Burden of History	The Nation (Editorial)	Print/Online	2015-06	Early appraisal of APC governance.
2	Media Commentary	The Myth of Anti-Corruption	Premium Times (Analysis)	Online	2016-07	Critical analysis of anti-graft narrative.
3	Media Commentary	Change or Chains? APC's Betrayal	Vanguard (Op-ed)	Print/Online	2016-10	Public disappointment framing.
4	Media Commentary	A Second Term and Second Chances	ThisDay (Editorial)	Print/Online	2019-03	Post-2019 election editorial.
5	Media Commentary	North, Buhari, and the Legacy Question	Daily Trust (Editorial)	Print/Online	2019-05	Regional legacy discourse.
6	Media Commentary	The Lost Hope and the Cost of Silence	Punch Newspapers (Editorial)	Print/Online	2020-10	#EndSARS and leadership critique.
7	Media Commentary	Between Prophecy and Presidency	The Guardian Nigeria (Editorial)	Print/Online	2021-01	Religion-state entanglement.

8	Media Commentary	Tinubu's Time: The Kingmaker Becomes King	TheCable (Analysis)	Online	2023-03	Transition narrative.
9	Media Commentary	A New Messiah or Old Merchant?	Vanguard (Op-ed)	Print/Online	2023-05	Campaign myth critique.
10	Media Commentary	Hope Again: Tinubu's Historic Burden	Daily Independent (Editorial)	Print/Online	2023-06	Expectations management.
11	Campaign Narrative	NTA Jingle: 'Sai Buhari – The Man of Integrity'	APC Campaign/NTA	Television	2015-01	Integrity myth-building.
12	Media Commentary	Eight Years of Buhari: The Legacy Debate	Channels TV (Special)	Television	2023-05	End-of-tenure assessment.
13	Media Commentary	The Buhari Phenomenon: Facts or Fiction?	AIT (Documentary)	Television	2019-04	Campaign-era documentary.
14	Media Commentary	Renewed Hope in Focus: First 100 Days	TVC News (Feature)	Television	2023-09	Performance snapshot.
15	Media Commentary	Church, State, and the Politics of Pulpit	Arise TV (Panel)	Television	2023-08	Debate on clerical endorsements.
16	Campaign Material	APC Manifesto: Change Agenda	APC	Print/Online	2015-02	2015 presidential manifesto.
17	Campaign Material	APC Re-election Pamphlet: Next Level Nigeria	APC	Print/Online	2018-11	2019 re-election platform.
18	Campaign Material	Tinubu/Shettima Manifesto: Renewed Hope 2023	APC	Print/Online	2022-10	2023 campaign platform.
19	Campaign Video	The Builder of Modern Nigeria	APC Campaign (Tinubu)	YouTube/TV	2023-01	Leadership myth video.
20	Campaign Jingle	Jagaban: A Man for All Seasons	APC Campaign	Radio	2023-02	Personality branding.
21	Campaign Advert	This is the Time for Change	APC	The Nation (Advert)	2015-01	Pre-election advertorial.
22	Campaign Appearance	Tinubu Appearance at RCCG Congress (Live)	APC Campaign	Facebook Live/Stream	2023-12	Religious-platform visibility.
23	Social Media Thread	10 Reasons Buhari is the Best President Ever	APC Youth Forum (Twitter/X)	Social Media	2020-07	Populist myth-making thread.

24	Messaging Broadcast	Vote the Prophet, Not the Politician	Grassroots Networks (WhatsApp)	Social Media	2019-02	Religious framing of vote choice.
25	Campaign Video	Tinubu's Legacy in Lagos: The Facts	APC Campaign	YouTube	2023-02	Performance branding video.

This rich and diverse corpus provides the empirical basis for tracing discursive trends across political, religious, and media channels that contribute to the construction of APC presidential historiography.

Analysis and Findings

Drawing on 60 carefully selected textual artifacts across presidential communications, clerical sermons, and media commentaries, the study uncovers five interrelated themes that define the radical discursive construction of APC presidential historiography between 2015 and 2023. These findings are situated within the theoretical frameworks of Critical Discourse Analysis, Postcolonial Theory, and Political Myth.

A dominant discursive pattern across both presidential speeches and religious sermons is the presentation of Buhari and Tinubu as providential figures chosen by divine or historical destiny. Buhari was frequently portrayed as “the man of integrity” and “a necessary reformer,” while Tinubu was labeled as “the builder of modern Nigeria” and “the strategic messiah.” For instance, Buhari’s 2015 inaugural address used language such as “I belong to everybody and to nobody”—positioning himself as morally transcendent (Text 1). Similarly, sermons from Pastor Adeboye (Text 2, 8) and Imam Gumi (Text 5) invoked providence and destiny in validating APC’s rule. These narratives align with Bottici and Challand’s (2006) concept of political myth as “a narrative with a claim to historical truth that is ideologically mobilized to create collective identity and legitimacy.” The invocation of divine purpose fosters an aura of inevitability and moral authority, shielding leaders from criticism and recasting political decisions as sacred mandates.

Religious sermons from major clerics such as Pastor Enenche (Text 4, 12), Bishop Kukah (Text 7, 11), and Sheikh Gumi (Text 5, 13) demonstrate how religious institutions became ideological co-constructors of presidential historiography. While some critiques emerged, particularly from Kukah, others sanctified power through eschatological framings such as “God’s appointed time,” “restoration,” and “covenant leadership.” This reflects Obadare’s (2018) notion of the “Pentecostal republic,” where the state becomes the stage for religious drama and moral symbolism. Sermons often blurred the boundaries between prophecy and propaganda, encouraging congregants to perceive political leadership as a divine reward or test. These spiritual framings contribute to what Mbembe (2001) calls the aestheticisation of power, where governance becomes infused with ritual, spectacle, and divine symbolism, rather than subjected to rational or democratic scrutiny.

Across campaign documents, manifestos, and televised interviews (Texts 16–25), both APC presidents engaged in revisionist historiography. Buhari’s military past was rebranded as a training ground for discipline and national renewal, while Tinubu’s political rise was framed as a narrative of strategic resilience and visionary governance. Key campaign materials such as Next Level Nigeria (Text 17) and Renewed Hope (Text 18) strategically downplayed economic stagnation and insecurity under APC rule, instead offering future-oriented narratives built on symbolic recovery. According to Entman (1993), framing involves selecting certain aspects of reality and making them more salient in a communicative text. These materials exemplify positive reframing, where failure is positioned as “growing pains,” and criticism is recast as “resistance to change.”

The language of radical populism is evident

across many APC narratives, especially in speeches and media advertisements (Texts 1, 8, 10, 20, 21). The PDP is consistently cast as the corrupt elite responsible for Nigeria's decline, while APC is positioned as "the people's party," a redeemer from national shame. This binary simplification aligns with Laclau (2005) theory of populist reason, where political identity is constructed through antagonistic opposition between "the people" and "the enemy." By simplifying complex policy issues into moral oppositions (e.g., change vs. corruption, hope vs. despair), APC communicators reduced the cognitive burden of democratic choice and built an emotionally resonant mythology. This tactic was particularly visible in religious spaces (Texts 2, 14), where "spiritual warfare" metaphors substituted policy analysis, transforming political engagement into a moral crusade.

Presidential communications (Texts 6, 9, 13) and religious endorsements (Texts 3, 10, 15) often invoked national suffering, sacrifice, and redemption using emotionally evocative language. These included appeals to pain (e.g., fuel subsidy removal as "birth pangs of greatness"), hope ("renewal is coming"), and divine intervention ("God will restore Nigeria"). Media platforms amplified these messages through campaign jingles and symbolic visuals such as the APC broom, white garments, or religious salutes (Texts 11, 14, 19, 20). The use of emotional spectacle corresponds with Mbembe (2001) idea of commandment, where political power is dramatised, ritualised, and spectacularised to assert control and generate loyalty. The deployment of visual and emotional rhetoric in both media and religious venues further cemented leadership mythologies, making critique appear as heresy or betrayal.

Summary of Findings

Theme	Discursive Function	Illustrative Texts
Providential Leadership	Legitimation through myth	Texts 1, 2, 5, 11, 13
Pulpitary Politics	Religious sanction & moral framing	Texts 2, 4, 8, 14
Historical Rewriting	Reframing failures as heroism	Texts 16–18, 22
Populist Binaries	Simplified political opposition	Texts 9, 17, 21
Emotional Ritualization	Spectacular governance rhetoric	Texts 10, 19, 20

The presidential history of the APC between the years 2015 and 2023 spans beyond the actions of the leader and instead involve a narrative framework of radical discourse, religious legitimation, and populist communication. By way of mythologized storytelling, emotionally resonant symbolic rituals, and impassioned rhetoric, the APC constructed and embroidered its history with the narrative of a savior of Nigeria with the self-critique branded as profound betrayal and the governance metrics, dissatisfactory under mesmeric promises, as prophetic a repackaging of governance outcomes. The shrinking of memory democracies to this strategy indicates the cover of mist romantic religiosity wherein the political dogma is processed.

Discussion

The overlap between political discourse and its mediated alongside religious forms of diffusion synchronously and asynchronously referring to the focus of the present study helps to advance the historiography of the APC presidency that is characterised by myth, emotionally charged, and post-amnesic. Employing post-colonial scrutiny of critical discourse analysis, the findings assert that the discourse generated by the APC regime through Buhari and Tinubu was a regime of legitimation that was messianic, populist, and sacrosanct.

The radical re-imagining of Buhari and Tinubu as providential leaders augments the other instances of political discourse in Africa which

ascribe the titles of “father,” “messiah,” or “savior” to the leaders (Mbembe, 2001; Apter, 1993). That type of construction is not limited to figurative expression. It indeed is a form of political historiography which aims to embed in the minds of the populace a certain narrative as being necessary and inevitable. In that context, the presidency of the APC is beyond governance. It is a period in the history of the nation which has had to be “intervened” upon in a manner which can only be termed as divinely orchestrated. Such discourse is mythopoeic in character and lacks any consideration of the reality of the leadership performance.

The crossing of religion, politics, and history in Nigeria confirms the power of the political pulpit. It is the other way around: for the purpose of storytelling, history is politics and politics is religion. Obadare (2018) notes that Nigerian Pentecostalism has in particular come to represent the symbolic value of Pentecostalism. This study confirms that political actors seek to acquire this capital and use it to construct their legitimation. The supportive religious rhetoric for the APC presidents functioned as moral legitimation, and as historical justification, portraying them as agents of a sacred narrative. This convergence weakens secular democratic critique and discourages the development of rational civic memory.

The populist framing of APC history especially the vilification of opposition parties and romanticisation of APC's internal struggles reflects what Laclau (2005) calls the hegemonic logic of populism, where political legitimacy is constructed through moral binaries. The discursive exclusion of dissenting narratives and failure to account for policy failures signal the emergence of monological historiography—a single voice echoing across media, pulpits, and state rhetoric. This monologism is dangerous for democratic culture. It replaces multi-perspectival analysis with emotionally charged slogans, as seen in phrases like “Renewed Hope” and “Next Level”, which promise transformation without factual scrutiny. These promises, when unfulfilled, risk creating a cycle of disillusionment and political apathy among citizens (Mouffe, 2000).

Conclusion

This study concludes that the historiography of APC presidential leadership between 2015 and 2023 was not organically generated by citizens or scholars, but manufactured through a complex web of radical discourse involving political rhetoric, religious endorsement, and populist myth-making. These narratives elevated Buhari and Tinubu beyond their empirical records and inserted them into a spiritualised and heroic historical timeline that suppresses critique and alternative memory.

While political myth and symbolic language are inevitable in any democratic culture, their dominance in Nigeria's political-religious complex reveals a dangerous shift from deliberative democracy to spectacular legitimacy. The sanctification of leaders through pulpit praise and emotional media scripting contributes to a fragile civic memory and a distorted public understanding of national history.

Nigeria's upcoming elections and transitions in leadership will hinge on critical historiography more than ever before. As with plural destinies and backward-looking frameworks, historiography involves more than just facts. Reconciling the history from propaganda, and disentangling religion from state fantasies is a matter of great importance for the fulfilment of democratic accountability in Nigeria and the postcolonial period. 'Right Memory' is a country's self-worth and a mark of continuity, a currency with intrinsic value.

For scholarship, there is a growing urgency for the richly documented phenomena of media and religion's investment in shaping political memory on the African continent.

For practitioners also, deliberate investments on trauma-sensitive, skills, and history-informed reporting will go a long way in countering distortion of history.

For the state, the core of the matter is reining in the ecclesiastical bid for the pulpit. Even communication on public policy has to be circumscribed in order to preserve democratic secularism.

For the public, civic education campaigns should

emphasize the importance of advocating the history of critical thinking engagement to young voters.

Recommendations

Drawing from the analysis of radical discourses in APC presidential historiography (2015–2023), the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Sponsorship on platforms should not disseminate singular heroic or messianic narratives that politically venerate leaders without reliable evidence. Rather, singularities should be contextualised discursively and pluralised, particularly concerning the data, testimony of citizens, and the history-preserving presidential performance.
2. Institutions, NGOs, and educational reformers should promote historical illiteracy through instructional design, public history, fact-checking forums, and public relations campaigns. Citizens must be trained to critically assess political speeches and religious messages for historical accuracy and ideological framing.
3. Electoral bodies and civil society watchdogs should develop ethical guidelines that discourage overt religious endorsements of candidates. While freedom of expression is vital, excessive clerical participation in campaign myth-making can erode democratic neutrality and fuel ethno-religious tension.
4. Governance metrics such as economic indicators, health indices, and education reforms should be consistently disseminated to the public. Policy performance reviews, not rhetorical or symbolic credentials, should drive public discourse about leadership legacy.

Politicians, speechwriters, and communication strategists must be sensitised to the ethical limits of emotional manipulation, religious exploitation, and historical distortion in campaign messaging. Trainings in responsible political storytelling should be institutionalised by party structures.

REFERENCES

- Achebe, C. (1983). *The trouble with Nigeria*. Heinemann.
- Adebanwi, W. (2016). *Nation as grand narrative: The Nigerian press and the politics of meaning*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.
- Adetunji, A. (2019). Political discourse strategies in Nigeria's democratic experience. *Discourse & Society*, 30(6), 555–572. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926519856934>
- Agbiboa, D. E. (2021). *They eat our sweat: Transport labour, corruption and society in urban Nigeria*. Ohio University Press.
- Akinwale, A. A. (2019). Pentecostalism, politics and the public sphere in Nigeria. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 37(1), 74–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2019.1567415>
- Akinwale, A. A. (2020). Media framing of Nigerian elections: Continuity and change in 2015 and 2019. *African Journalism Studies*, 41(1), 54–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2020.1727086>
- Akinwotu, S. A. (2019). Mediatization of religion and politics in Nigeria: Pentecostal pastors as political actors. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 11(3), 345–362.
- Alozieuwa, S. H. (2016). Buhari's inaugural address and the rhetoric of change in Nigeria. *Journal of African Political Studies*, 12(2), 45–63.
- Althusser, L. (2001). *Lenin and philosophy and other essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed.). Verso.
- Apter, A. (1993). *Beyond words: Discourse and critical agency in Africa*. University of Chicago Press.
- Bachmann, I., & Baram-Tsabari, A. (2016). Narratives in political communication. *Communication Theory*, 26(4), 454–474. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12094>
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*:

Four essays (M. Holquist, Ed.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Balarabe, M. (2020, February 10). Buhari's "Next Level" and Nigeria's unending challenges. *Daily Trust*. <https://dailytrust.com>

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.

Bloor, M., & Wood, F. (2011). *Keywords in qualitative methods: A vocabulary of research concepts*. SAGE.

Bloor, T., & Bloor, M. (2013). *The practice of critical discourse analysis: An introduction*. London: Routledge.

Bottici, C., & Challand, B. (2006). Rethinking political myth: The clash of civilizations as a self-fulfilling prophecy. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(3), 315–336.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Campbell, J. (2020). Nigeria and the nation-state: Rethinking diplomacy with the postcolonial world. Rowman & Littlefield.

Chiluwa, I. (2019). Religion and the public sphere: Discourses of Pentecostal pastors in Nigeria. *Discourse & Communication*, 13(2), 212–233.

Chiluwa, I. (2021). Religious leaders, political communication and Nigeria's public sphere. *African Communication Research*, 14(1), 45–68.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). Sage.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.

Fayemi, K. (2015, May 30). APC: From merger

to victory. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng>

Hackett, R. A., & Zhao, Y. (1998). *Sustaining democracy? Journalism and the politics of objectivity*. Toronto: Garamond Press.

Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. SAGE.

Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Irele, A. (2018). Political homiletics and pulpit power in Nigeria. *African Studies Review*, 61(3), 35–52. <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.67>

Jibrin, I. (2022, April 15). Pentecostal pastors and Nigerian politics: Anointing or opportunism? *Premium Times*. <https://premiumtimesng.com>

Kperogi, F. A. (2020). Nigeria's 2019 presidential election and the mediated construction of political legitimacy. *African Studies Quarterly*, 19(3–4), 77–99.

Kukah, M. H. (2019, March 27). *Easter sermon: Nigeria at crossroads*. Catholic Diocese of Sokoto.

Laclau, E. (2005). *On populist reason*. Verso.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (2001). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics* (2nd ed.). London: Verso.

Lawuyi, O. (2016). Political sermons and prophetic interventions in Nigerian democracy. *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14(2), 112–126.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Marshall, R. (2009). *Political spiritualities: The Pentecostal revolution in Nigeria*. University of Chicago Press.

Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the postcolony*. University of California Press.

Meyer, B. (2015). *Sensational movies: Video, vision, and Christianity in Ghana*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mouffe, C. (2000). *The democratic paradox*. Verso.

Obadare, E. (2018). *Pentecostal republic:*

Religion and the struggle for state power in Nigeria. Zed Books.

Ojebode, A., & Akingbulu, A. (2019). Media, religion and democratic culture in Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 11(3), 327–344. https://doi.org/10.1386/jams.11.3.327_1

Ojebuyi, B. R., & Ekeanyanwu, N. T. (2017). Agenda-setting function of newspapers on political communication in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Communication & Society*, 30(3), 1–15.

Ojo, E. O. (2021). Political campaigns and the politics of promises in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *African Journal of Political Science*, 15(1), 55–72.

Ojo, M. A. (2020). Religion and politics in Nigeria: The dynamics of ethno-religious nationalism. *Religions*, 11(6), 305. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11060305>

Onapajo, H. (2016). Religion and elections in Nigeria: The 2015 presidential election as a test case. *Journal of African Elections*, 15(2), 44–66.

Oseni, T. (2023, February 20). Media narratives on Tinubu's campaign and APC's legacy. *Vanguard*. <https://vanguardngr.com>

Oyekan, A. (2019, January 12). Adeboye's 2019 prophecy and Buhari's "Next Level." *Punch*. <https://punchng.com>

Ranger, T. (2004). The invention of tradition revisited: *The case of colonial Africa*. In E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (Eds.), *The invention of tradition* (pp. 211–262). Cambridge University

Press.

Searle, J. R. (1979). Expression and meaning: Studies in the theory of speech acts. Cambridge University Press.

Strömbäck, J. (2008). Four phases of mediatization: An analysis of the mediatization of politics. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13(3), 228–246.

Taiwo, R. (2017). Political discourse analysis in Nigeria. *Discourse & Society*, 28(4), 379–397.

ThisDay Editorial Board. (2015, May 31). Buhari and the burden of expectations. *ThisDay*. <https://thisdaylive.com>

Tinubu, B. A. (2022, June 8). Acceptance speech after APC presidential primaries. APC Secretariat.

van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. London: Sage.

van Dijk, T. A. (2006). Discourse and manipulation. *Discourse & Society*, 17(3), 359–383. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926506060250>

van Dijk, T. A. (2008). Discourse and power. Palgrave Macmillan.

Vanguard Editorial Board. (2023, February 25). Tinubu and the contested "renewed hope." *Vanguard*. <https://vanguardngr.com>

Weber, M. (1947). The theory of social and economic organization (A. M. Henderson & T. Parsons, Trans.). New York: Oxford University Press.