

Research article

Evolving Political Culture in West Africa: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Presidential Elections in Nigeria, Liberia and Ghana

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Abstract

This study examines the electoral gains achieved in West Africa by focusing on the presidential elections in Nigeria (2015), Liberia (2023), and Ghana (2024), respectively. Generally, elections in developing democracies are viewed as a 'war' with an ideological posturing of 'win' or 'mar' the process. However, the 2015, 2023, and 2024 presidential elections held in the three West African countries represent a paradigm shift from the usual rancorous aftermath of elections to a more peaceful atmosphere. The losers in these elections, who were sitting presidents in the three countries in focus, not only accepted their defeats but also congratulated their opponents—a feat that had never been achieved on the entire African continent. Data for the analysis were elicited from online reactions to the declaration of the elections in focus. For a more precise understanding, the data from the Nigerian elections are labelled as NGR, while those from Liberia are labelled as LBR, and the Ghana elections data are labelled as GHA, as captured in the analysis. The analysis reveals cases of political reawakening, consciousness, and maturity in a hitherto politically tense continent that is just emerging from ethnic and militia wars, military regimes, and truncated democratic experiences. This study aims to expand the literature on political maturity, which can help deliver political dividends rather than backbiting, warfare, disintegration, and acrimony.

Keywords: CDA, Evolving Political Culture, West Africa, Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Presidential Elections

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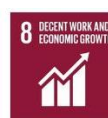
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1. Introduction

This paper was motivated by three newspaper headlines portraying the acceptance of defeat in presidential elections conducted in three West African countries, namely: Nigeria, Liberia, and Ghana. Before this time, elections on the African continent have been characterised by violence, allegations of rigging, and wanton killings. When these three sitting presidents conceded defeats, it came as a rude shock to even their opponents as well as their supporters. It was viewed more as a miracle. The three headlines are:

- a. *CNN March 31, 2015: Nigeria votes: Goodluck Jonathan concedes defeat, calls for no more violence. By Susannah Cullinane, Christian Purefoy, and Stephanie Busari, CNN.*
- b. *Reuters November 18, 2023: Liberia President George Weah concedes election defeat to Joseph Boakai. By Carielle Doe and Alphonso Toweh.*
- c. *Ghana 2024: Ruling party's candidate concedes defeat, congratulates opposition's Mahama. By Bakare Majeed. December 8, 2024, Premium Times.*

Johnathan conceded defeat in the Nigerian presidential election, which was held on the 28th and 29th of March, 2015. The opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari won the presidential election by more than 2.5 million votes. Incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan conceded defeat even before the results from all 36 states had been announced. The election marked the first time an incumbent president had lost re-election in Nigeria. President George Weah conceded defeat to Joseph Boakai in the presidential runoff election held on November 14 in Liberia. As it was reported in the media, President Weah said in his concession speech:

"Tonight, the CDC has lost the election, but Liberia has won. This is a time for graciousness in defeat, a time to place our country above party, and patriotism above personal interest. Let us heal the divisions caused by the campaign and come together as one nation and one united people." The same scenario played out in Ghana where Ghana's ruling party conceded defeat. The sitting president while accepting the results of the elections said "Let me say that the data from our internal collation of the election results indicate that former President John Dramani Mahama has won the presidential election decisively,". "The NDC has also won the parliamentary election. Even though we await the final collation of several seats, I believe ultimately these will not change the outcome." "I am making this concession speech before the official announcement by the Electoral Commission to avoid further tension and preserve the peace of our country,". "It is important that the world investor community continues to believe in the peaceful and democratic character of Ghana,". "The people have voted for change at this time, and we respect that decision with all humility." (Carielle Doe and Alphonso Toweh 2023).

In all three acceptances of defeats, there were no court cases, no violence of any kind, and no political differences of any kind. The nations were generally peaceful and continued with their normal business. But has there been electoral violence before then? The African sociopolitical landscape had been thrown into political turmoil after several elections on the continent as shall be observed in the literature below. In such situations, politicians view the electoral process as a

"do or die" affair, thus raising the question of the essence of leadership if the electorate is made to die whenever politicians fail to achieve their political aims in any electoral contest.

2. Literature Review: Electoral Violence in Africa

The review of relevant literature in this study focuses mainly on electoral violence in Africa, a menace that has been experienced on several occasions on the continent. Various scholars have lent their voices to this menace and have tried to call for a change in the continent to ensure a peaceful democratic experience. The violence that emanates from politics is so predominant that it has become a part of the political reality of the people, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in multiparty electoral situations. This prompts Fjelde (2024) to observe that: *"electoral violence is more likely in countries that employ majoritarian voting rules and elect fewer legislators from each district. Majoritarian institutions are likely to provoke violence where large ethnopolitical groups are excluded from power and significant economic inequalities exist"*.

According to Edafenene (2021), *"electoral violence is a major phenomenon in Africa that seems to defy all possible solutions or remedies"*, thus implying that political players employ all manner of tactics to ensure their victory at the polls, including violence. In such situations, they are likely to employ the services of miscreants popularly known in the Nigerian local parlance as *"agbero"* to unleash terror on the helpless electorate (see Ebim 2021). This situation has constantly undermined the sanctity of the electoral process on the African continent. Where politicians see elections as a do-or-die process, the violence will continue to persist. The profiteers of the flawed process see nothing wrong with their conduct, whereas the losers who approach the courts are denied justice, thus turning the entire process into a cyclical sojourn. There is hardly any country in Africa that has not tested the bitter pills of electoral violence.

The notoriety of the perpetrators of electoral violence is so pronounced that Shola Omotola (2010) avers that "The electoral process in many of Africa's 'new' democracies has been characterised by violence". However, recent manifestations of electoral violence have assumed an unprecedented magnitude and changing form and character, with negative implications for democratic stability and consolidation. Rising electoral violence in Africa is closely linked to the neo-patrimonial character of the African state, the nature of power contestation, the weak institutionalisation of democratic institutions, including political parties and electoral management bodies, and the complex political economy of electoral violence.

Sadiki Koko (2022) observes that "From Algeria to South Africa, passing through Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Zimbabwe, election-related violence has imposed itself as a full component of Africa's political landscape". One can say that although the patterns, causes and consequences of election-related violence do not necessarily follow the same trends in different African countries (due to, among other factors, inter-country historical, socio-economic, and political differences), there are commonalities in the types, causes, and consequences of such violence on the continent.

After three decades of multiparty elections in Africa, numerous studies have emerged on electoral participation on the continent. A more recent study talks about "184 multicandidate presidential elections and 207 multiparty legislative elections held in some forty-six [African]

countries between 1990 and 2015" (Bleck & van de Walle, 2019, p. 30). "But how electoral participation is dealt with in the scholarly work varies from study to study; too often, scholars refer to electoral participation as the act of voting. However, casting a vote on election day is only one aspect of it" (Bennett & Bennett, 1986).

From the above review, one can conclude that violence has been significant in African elections; for instance, of the several hundred competitive legislative and presidential elections that have been held in Africa since 1990 (Bleck & van de Walle, 2019) about 25 percent have been violent (Fisher, 2002; Straus & Taylor, 2012). In Nigeria violence has been part of elections in Nigeria (Bratton, 2013; Sisk, 2012), Côte d'Ivoire (Boone & Kriger, 2012), Sudan (Sisk, 2012), Kenya (Burchard, 2015; Mueller, 2012), Ethiopia (Smith, 2012), Zimbabwe (Boone & Kriger, 2012; Bratton, 2015), Uganda (Blattman, 2009), Togo and Zanzibar (Boeke, 2012); and more recently in Zambia in 2016 (Bleck & van de Walle, 2019:1; Cheeseman & Klaas, 2018:122).

3. Theoretical Framework

In this study, we adopt the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a framework that facilitates interdisciplinary research of this nature. Being interdisciplinary implies that it facilitates the aggregation of other theoretical forms in developing a comprehensive analytical framework. In this study, we adopted the Discourse-Historical Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, a method of analysing how discourse has evolved over time in political and historical contexts. The approach was developed by Ruth Wodak to analyse how anti-Semitic stereotypes were constructed in Austrian political discourse by focusing on the historical dimensions of discourse formation.

The essence of the historical approach to discourse analysis is to solve societal problems by focusing on the critical understanding of the linguistic nuances of a text or an utterance. The analysis is based on context by taking into consideration the complexity of a discourse situation from a historical perspective (Wodak, 2016, p. 3). According to Wodak, (2015, p. 89) "discourse is socially constructed and socially constitutive, implying that it both constructs social practices and is, in return, built by social practices" the aim is to ensure that discourse from a historical point of view is "a group of interconnected linguistic practices linked to a broader topic and related to 'validity claims or normative stances that involve multiple social actors'"

4. Analysis and Interpretation

In this research, we have elicited data from the three countries in focus. These data were the reactions of people after the presidential elections. Five data points were selected from each of the three countries, totalling fifteen. First, sixty-one clauses were deduced from the data. The data from the Nigerian elections amounted to twenty-five clauses, those from Liberia were sixteen clauses, while those from Ghana were twenty clauses. Altogether, there are 1,274 words from the data. Out of which four hundred words emanated from the Nigerian elections, three hundred and ninety-two each were obtained from both the Liberian and Ghanaian elections. The clause structure of the Nigerian presidential election accounts for 41.2%, Liberia 26.2% and Ghana 33.3%. In terms of word count, Nigeria's data stands at 38.4%, while Liberia and Ghana count for 30.7%.

The analysis of text in this paper is strongly linked with the analysis of language used by people who reacted to the election results. The analysis involves the socio-political perspective of the speakers. It involves the relationship of the sentences or clauses with each other by focusing on metaphor, power, ideology, critique, and analysis of genre. Metaphor is a stylistic device that is used to associate abstract ideas with concrete images, and due to its prominence in public texts and discourses of all kinds, metaphor has been recognised as one of the most important rhetorical devices. Metaphorical speech has been at the centre of rhetorical training and was regarded as a socially powerful but also dangerous 'trope' or figure of speech that required special attention and critique (Johnson, 1981; Stutterheim, 1941, pp. 60-162). In this sense, metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 156). It is evident that such a perspective on metaphor as a conceptually significant, even central, cognitive mechanism matches the research interests of CDA to a large extent.

4.1 The Data as Discursive Practice

Discursivity in CDA refers to how language and discourse are used to construct, maintain, and legitimise social inequalities. It is based on the notion that language use is purposeful, whether the choices are conscious or unconscious. Discursive practices are seen as linguistically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power, and they play a crucial role in securing power and hegemony. It has to do with the exercise of power and hegemony, which involves the possibilities of direct revolutionary struggle for control of the means of production. Discursive practice describes how language is used to construct identities, perform actions, and shape social realities. It can also refer to the use of language in specific social contexts. In social contexts, Discursive practice describes how language is used to achieve specific effects, such as building relationships, asserting power, or creating meaning. It also involves language used within specific communities, institutions, or social groups. It applies to the processes and conventions that govern how communication takes place. In a nutshell, discursivity in CDA refers to how language and discourse are used to construct, maintain, and legitimise social inequalities. It is based on the notion that language use is purposeful, whether the choices are conscious or unconscious. Discursive practices are seen as ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power, and they play a crucial role in securing power and hegemony.

4.1.1 Power and Hegemony

Instances of power and hegemonic resonance in the data are: *"There is no better way to describe this election but to say thank you to every Nigerian and most of all the number one citizen of the country - President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan for accepting the defeat in good faith and even calling General Muhammadu Buhari to congratulate him"* NGR. In the data above, the text demonstrates a vacuum in leadership. There had been a series of crises in the country orchestrated by the hegemonic bloc due to the power shift from the north to the south and from Islamic leadership to a Christian leader. Therefore, there is the expectation of peaceful coexistence since power has shifted. This is substantiated in the text below: *"The country has been in chaos. "Change will come with this government", NGR. The chaotic situation as exemplified in the text is a demonstration of the struggle to hold on to power, where people lived in fear: "We have been dying in silence and no one was saying anything". Again, there is the prediction of "a change" with the coming of the newly elected government. This is punctuated by the saying that "Nigerians are*

happier" NGR, demonstrating a lack of joy and happiness with the swearing-in of the outgoing administration.

There is also a clear demonstration of power and hegemony in the text of the sitting Liberian president. He openly admitted the rejection of his candidature and demanded peace for the betterment of the larger Liberian society: "The Liberian people have spoken and we have heard their voice," LBR. "I urge you to follow my example and accept the result of the elections," ... "Our time will come again" LBR. This did not come as a surprise, as the text below shows: "Recognizing the disastrous consequences of wantonly corrupt and unaccountable executive power, Liberians emerging from the war were determined to establish" a system of checks and balances". LBR. The text shows the exercise of power in ensuring "a system of checks and balances". The just-voted-out government therefore did not adhere to the tenets of power, and as a result, it was voted out. This is a clear show of power and hegemonic tendencies.

The situation is the same in Ghana. The speaker shows clearly the lack of patience for a leadership that "mismanages" its common patrimony: "The good people of Ghana have shown the exit way to the NPP for mismanaging the economy," GHA. For this speaker, the outgoing leadership lacks direction, a sense of cohesion and vision: "They have voted for a visionary leader, they have voted for a man that will change the fortunes of this country, they have voted for a man that will reset this country," GHA. The electoral process, therefore, is a depiction of a lack of trust in the country's leadership: "It is a manifestation of the fact that there was a lot of mistrust that people had, the hopelessness with which people viewed the political and economic system that has existed so far," GHA. To clearly show the love for the newly elected president, the speaker reflects on the past years of the elected candidate: "Mahama's presidency from 2012 to 2017 left a mixed legacy" GHA. This segment of the analysis demonstrated how power and hegemony play significant roles in ensuring the smooth running of government and where it is mismanaged, the people have the right to intervene.

4.1.2 Ideology

According to van Dijk (2012), ideology is understood as a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that shape how individuals perceive and interact with the world. It is embedded in and propagated through language and discourse, influencing social practices and power relations. Ideological depictions in the data are as shown below: "I wasn't surprised at the result because the turnout was so great", "With this result, freedom will come back to Nigeria", "We the people are the ones who voted in this president", "We voted him in to do something. I am excited for the future of Nigeria". NGR. The ideology portrayed here is that of positive self-representation. The speaker is rather portraying the outgoing government in a negative light, while portraying himself and his co-travellers as "good". But the text below seems a response to the one above. For instance, the speaker views the winner of the election as a fomenter of trouble. One who destabilises the country when he losses election and cautions him to focus on good leadership: "Rather than weep and call out to his supporters to make the government ungovernable, thus inciting religious tension and initiating sectarian conflict such as that by Boko Haram, he accepted defeat so that Nigeria's fragile democracy can mature" NGR. There is, however, a mixed feeling in other speakers as they air out their views as reflected in the texts below: "God has answered our prayers" NGR. "Nigeria is in for the worst" NGR. "The vote was on religious lines" NGR. "In the north of Nigeria,

biometric readers were not used" NGR. "The election was rigged" NGR. These texts are reflections of the reality of the Nigerian political experiences. No doubt, Nigeria is a heavily polarized society as shown in the text above.

For instance, the first speaker is of the ideological belief that the election of the president is an answered prayer, marking a divine intervention whereas the other speakers the worst has befallen the country; the voting pattern was along religious lines and that the newly introduced biometric machines were not put to use in the northern part of the country which is mostly Islamic, poorly educated and tends to show tendencies of violence. The speaker concluded by alleging that the election was rigged in favour of the winner. This ideological posturing is amplified in the texts below: "The man has nothing to offer Nigeria" NGR. "Everyone will see this soon afterward" NGR. Here, the speakers opined that the newly elected leader has nothing to offer the country and that his government will be a failure. This prediction came to pass as the Nigerian economy was plunged into its worst crisis in decades.

The ideology of self-glorification dominates the data generated from the outcome of the Liberian election. The defeated president, rather, gave credit to himself and continued to praise himself while responding to the results of the election: "The Liberian people have spoken and we have heard their voice," LBR. "I urge you to follow my example and accept the result of the elections," LBR. "Our time will come again in 2029 when Boakai's six-year term in office ends" LBR. From the ideology of self-adulation, he promises a comeback at the expiration of the six-year tenure of the candidate who defeated him at the polls. He is, therefore, of the view that he had done well and that his people will still give him a chance when he comes to contest in the future. The next speaker, through the process of exaggeration, likens the victory in Liberia to the entire West African sub-region: "Liberians have once again demonstrated that democracy is alive in the ECOWAS region and that change is possible through peaceful means," LBR. Through this proclamation, he elevated the defeated president to the position of a hero who has "defied the stereotype that peaceful transitions of power are untenable in West Africa," LBR. He concluded by saying that the demonstration of sportsmanship in the conduct of the election is a collective resolve of the Liberian people to "reaffirm their commitment to democracy" LBR.

The data elicited from the Ghanaian electoral process were dominated by negative ideological projections, depicting the outgoing administration in a negative light while portraying the newly elected administration in a positive light. The very first speaker viewed the defeated administration as having performed well in the areas of infrastructure and that it ran an all-inclusive government, but failed in the area of energy: "While Mahama was credited for infrastructure projects and inclusivity, he struggled with Ghana's energy crisis" GHA. He also bemoaned the low expectations of the newly elected government and stated that the people have high expectations of his promises. GHA. There appears to be impatience and a lack of cooperation on the part of the electorate, as the speaker expressed his eagerness to vote out the sitting government. According to him, "I want to vote to kick out the current government because they have not been kind to young people," GHA. From the above text, there was a lack of belief in the sitting administration. The future of the country, therefore, lay in the hands of the newly elected administration as the speaker opines: "We look forward to working closely with President-elect Mahama to carry our historic relationship into the future" GHA. This ideological posturing shows the level of deceit that leaders exert on the electorate and how the electorate, in turn, can pay back

when they can do so. The only time for the electorate is during electioneering activities, and that is the position of the speaker.

4.1.3 Intertextuality and Recontextualization

Intertextuality is a linguistic concept developed by Julia Kristeva. It involves the shaping of a text's meaning by another text, either through deliberate compositional strategies or by interconnections between similar or related works perceived by an audience or reader of the text. These references are sometimes made deliberately and depend on a reader's prior knowledge and understanding of the referent, but the effect of intertextuality is not always intentional and is sometimes inadvertent. Often associated with strategies employed by writers working in imaginative registers (fiction, poetry, and drama and even non-written texts like performance art and digital media), intertextuality may now be understood as intrinsic to any text. 'Recontextualization', on the other hand, refers to the process of transforming discourses or ideologies when they are incorporated into educational contexts, allowing for the play of ideology within a space where social discourse becomes legitimate educational knowledge. It is the process of taking something from one text and using it in another, giving it a new meaning in a new context. Recontextualisation can be explicit, like when one text directly quotes another, or implicit, like when the same meaning is expressed in different texts. Recontextualisation is a key part of intertextuality.

For example, a journalist can use direct speech in a news report to embed the voices of others, which is an example of intertextual recontextualisation. The following are intertextual elements in the data. "The result might not be fair to all, but to me this is the fairest of all elections of our time where everyone is allowed to participate", NGR. This data is intertextual in the sense that there is a hidden comparison of the results of the current election. Again, comparing the country to other nations and within the sub-region of the continent, the speaker says, "The country has been in chaos" NGR. Due to the chaotic situation as shown above and based on what is obtainable in other countries, the speaker avers that "We have been dying in silence and no one was saying anything" NGR. As a follow-up to the unrest in the country, which has culminated in a lack of peace, the speaker sees a sigh of relief: "Nigerians are happier." This happiness is viewed as a product of responsible leadership, which has been lacking over the years: "For the first time we have seen a leader who listens to and respects the choice of the people". Recontextualizing the situation to when Muhammadu Buhari had lost the election and wept openly on national television, the speaker says: "Rather than weep and call out to his supporters to make the government ungovernable, thus inciting religious tension and initiating sectarian conflict such as that by Boko Haram, he accepted defeat so that Nigeria's fragile democracy can mature".

In the Liberian election, events are recontextualised to give a clear picture of the past and project what the future holds for the country. Moreover, for this speaker, "Recognizing the disastrous consequences of wantonly corrupt and unaccountable executive power, Liberians emerging from the war were determined to establish a system of checks and balances", LBR. Painting a picture of what led to the clean electoral process, the speaker reflects on the past and concludes that the victory came as a collective effort: "This included an independent legislature and judiciary, as well as an autonomous National Elections Commission (NEC), Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, Central Bank, Public Procurement and Concessions Commission, and a

small but professional military, among other bodies" LBR. For this speaker, the past plays a role in shaping the future. For him: "Many of these institutions were launched and facilitated, if not consolidated, under the presidency of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf" LBR. This is decipherable in the speech of the next speaker, who is of the view that the foundation for that peace belongs to the past administration: "The peaceful transfer of power was a testament to the progress Liberia had made in building and upholding norms of limiting executive power", LBR.

The Ghanaian experience of a peaceful transfer of power by a sitting leader comes with a price. In the text below, we see the rationale for this being captured in the past events that gave rise to the moment: "The good people of Ghana have shown the exit way to the NPP for mismanaging the economy," GHA. For this speaker, the inability of the sitting government to fix the economy and resolve the issues at hand led to their loss in the polls. He opines that: "Someone who has cost me before, I will find it very difficult to give him another chance," GHA. These issues are enumerated in various sectors of the economy, including "...power fluctuation, power instability..." GHA. This inability of the leader to fix the critical infrastructure left the electorate with no option but to effect a change in government: "Unfortunately, the ordinary citizen did not see that as a kind gesture, so they had to punish him at the polls." GHA. More so, the sitting government as compared to those in the past has failed to "... service our debts." which contributed to the decision of the electorate to vote out the government.

4.1.4 Language Elements in the Data: Reactions to the Nigerian Elections

The data is couched in diverse linguistic resources which can be termed metaphorical. For instance, the expression *...the result might not be fair to all, but to me this is the fairest of all elections of our time where everyone is allowed to participate* smacks of inclusivity and electoral togetherness. It is a pointer to an electoral process where everyone was allowed to participate without any form of sentiment. This is enunciated in the following expression: *The results collated from each polling station and presented at the INEC [election commission] office is to me 100% authentic.* According to this clause, the result reflects the voice of the people and their agreement to sustain and maintain democracy in the country. The speaker went further to state that *"... there is no better way to describe this election but to say thank you to every Nigerian and most of all the number one citizen of the country - President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan for accepting the defeat in good faith and even calling General Muhammadu Buhari to congratulate him.* According to the speaker, the former Nigerian president did not only *Carielle Doe and Alphonso Toweh. Carielle Doe and Alphonso Toweh.*

It is rather a metaphorical demonstration of a "monumental win". According to the speaker, *"The win was nothing short of monumental"*. This reaction shows the extent of relief and joy in the hearts of the people; *"This is an overwhelming victory, and we are excited.* It also shows that the sitting government has not performed to the expectations of the people as one of the speakers observes *"The good people of Ghana have shown the exit way to the NPP for mismanaging the economy,"* This has been the bane of African politics, the plundering of the meagre resources, excessive corruption and the mismanagement of the people's commonwealth. The major problem of Africa has always been that of leadership, and for this speaker, *"They have voted for a visionary leader, they have voted for a man that will change the fortunes of this country, they have voted for a man that will reset this country,"*. This implies that the country was in a state

of comatose and that, just like a virus-infested system, the country needed to be formatted to regain its machinery of governance. This speaker is bitter about the misdirection of government policies and the people's readiness to vote for positive change. He is of the view that the action of the people at the poll is a "*manifestation of the fact that there was a lot of mistrust that people had, the hopelessness with which people viewed the political and economic system that has existed so far*". He went back to history and likened the presidency of the opposition leaders to a positive legacy he had left before his defeat. This again conjectures the reconfiguration of the historical view to determine the position of the plan. Discourse-Historical Linguistics harnesses the texts of the past and tries to project them into the future. According to the speaker "*Mahama's presidency from 2012 to 2017 left a mixed legacy*". "*While Mahama was credited for infrastructure projects and inclusivity, he struggled with Ghana's energy crisis*" "*We had issues of power fluctuation, power instability but he was able to solve it before he left*". With this kind of positive disposition of an electorate, there is the need for patience to allow the leader to prove his prowess. Just like the Liberian election, the Ghana victory resonates in the USA and their response is quite encouraging for an emerging democracy "*The United States is proud of our enduring partnership and friendship with the people and government of Ghana*". "I want to vote to kick out the current government because they have not been kind to young people".

4.2 Conclusion

The data have been examined from the perspective of Ruth Wodak's approach to discourse analysis, which is primarily historical in nature. Utilizing recontextualization, we described and interpreted the data to provide an account of past events as if they were happening in the present. The presidential elections, which took place in three West African countries: Nigeria, Liberia, and Ghana, constituted the source of data. After a thorough analysis, we concluded that power and hegemony play a crucial role in electoral practices, where contestants aspire to acquire, retain, and exercise power. The electorate, too, is not left out in the scheme of things as they are constantly involved in the decision-making process of political electioneering. Politics, as we observe, helps shape the people's destiny, and where power is misdirected, the people have the mandate to react positively and put their leaders in perspective. From the analysis, we can say that there seems to be a positive culture towards electioneering and for the sustenance of democratic practices in West Africa, as epitomized in the examples of Nigeria, Liberia, and Ghana.

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APPENDIX A

BBC News. (2015, April 1). Nigeria elections: Reacting to Buhari's win. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32144867>

RAW DATA

REACTIONS TO BUHARI'S VICTORY: NIGERIA

1. **Joseph Arueya, Lagos:** The result might not be fair to all, but to me, this is the fairest of all elections of our time where everyone is allowed to participate. The results collated from each polling station and presented at the INEC [election commission] office is to me 100% authentic. Provided, of course, that each party agent representing their parties was on the ground, witnessed the counting of the results, and signed off the schedule paper. There is no better way to describe this election than to say thank you to every Nigerian and most of all the number one citizen of the country - President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan for accepting the defeat in good faith and even calling General Muhammadu Buhari to congratulate him. I wasn't surprised at the result because the turnout was so great. With this result, freedom will come back to Nigeria. We the people are the ones who voted for this president. We voted him in to do something. I am excited for the future of Nigeria. The country has been in chaos. We have been dying in silence and no one was saying anything. The change will come with this government. There will be more employment opportunities and better education and the youth will come back to Nigeria.
2. **Andrew Onu, Kaduna, Nigeria:** Nigerians are happier. For the first time we have seen a leader who listens to and respects the choice of the people. Indeed, the sitting president's exemplary act of peace is the icing on the cake for Nigeria's democracy. Rather than weep and call out to his supporters to make the government ungovernable, thus inciting religious tension and initiating sectarian conflict such as that by Boko Haram, he accepted defeat so that Nigeria's fragile democracy could mature. A true example of statesmanship. I salute the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
3. **Andy Bello, Benin City, Nigeria emails:** The election reflects the choice of the majority despite massive rigging and irregularities on the part of the ruling party in the south-south. So, Buhari needs to now focus on uniting the nation and recruiting technocrats who can help rebuild the crippling economy and strive hard to redeem that part of his image that his antecedent as a military dictator dented.
4. **Maryam Yakub Yareema, Kano, Nigeria emails:** God has answered our prayers. The election was conducted in Nigeria safely and ordinarily and the outcome was very amazing. Almost all Nigerians were glad, happy, and full of joy and contentment. Change has come to us but we Nigerians must change our habits before Baba Buhari brings change to our nation.
5. **Ez Dikio,** Nigeria is in for the worst. The vote was on religious lines. In the north of Nigeria, biometric readers were not used. The election was rigged. The PDP cabal that destroyed the PDP moved to APC. The man has nothing to offer Nigeria. Everyone will see this soon afterward.

APPENDIX B

REACTIONS TO LIBERIA ELECTIONS

Tord, S. (2024, December 10). Analysts urge Ghana's new president to manage expectations amid economic challenges. VOA News. Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/a/analysts-urge-ghana-s-new-president-to-manage-expectations-amid-economic-challenges/7895941.html>

1. Recognizing the disastrous consequences of wantonly corrupt and unaccountable executive power, Liberians emerging from the war were determined to establish a system of checks and balances. This included an independent legislature and judiciary, as well as an autonomous National Elections Commission (NEC), the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, the Central Bank, the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission, and a small but professional military, among other bodies. Many of these institutions were launched and facilitated, if not consolidated, under the presidency of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. ***"[2018's] peaceful transfer of power was a testament to the progress Liberia had made in building and upholding norms of limiting executive power."*** **THE OBSERVER.**
2. "Liberians have once again demonstrated that democracy is alive in the ECOWAS region and that change is possible through peaceful means," Weah has defied the stereotype that peaceful transitions of power are untenable in West Africa," Jonathan
3. United States Mission to the United Nations, Office of Press and Public Diplomacy For Immediate Release November 15, 2023 **Statement by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield on Liberia's Runoff Election.** Once again, the Liberian people reaffirmed their commitment to democracy in yesterday's runoff election. We commend their dedication to exercising their right to vote broadly and peacefully. The United States will continue to promote accountability and will call out anyone who undermines the electoral process through fraud, violence, or intimidation. At each step of this election, Liberians from all walks of life have expressed their desire for Liberia – one of the oldest continuous republics in the world – to become a beacon of peaceful citizen-centered democratic governance in the region. The United States remains committed to helping the people of Liberia achieve this goal.
4. Liberia's last election was celebrated by the United Nations Secretary-General for being peaceful. It is also currently considered partly free according to Freedom House with a 60 percent score based on political rights and civil liberties.
5. The 2023 electoral campaign has similarly been largely peaceful as the political parties signed the Farmington River Declaration 2023 committing to a nonviolent electoral process. According to a recent Afrobarometer survey, Liberians also overwhelmingly support elections as the best way to choose their political leaders even though do not fully trust the National Elections Commission.

APPENDIX C

Tord, S. (2024, December 10). Analysts urge Ghana's new president to manage expectations amid economic challenges. VOA News. Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/a/analysts-urge-ghana-s-new-president-to-manage-expectations-amid-economic-challenges/7895941.html>

REACTIONS TO GHANA ELECTIONS

1. The win was nothing short of monumental. "This is an overwhelming victory, and we are excited. The good people of Ghana have shown the exit way to the NPP for mismanaging the economy," he said, referring to the New Patriotic Party of defeated President Nana Akufo-Addo. Jeremiah Maclean, a staunch NDC supporter,
2. "Someone who has cost me before, I will find it very difficult to give him another chance," he added. "They have voted for a visionary leader, they have voted for a man that will change the fortunes of this country, they have voted for a man that will reset this country," he said. Bonsu, Mahama's track record leaves little hope for the future.

3. Dr. Kwame Asah-Asante, a political analyst at the University of Ghana. "It is a manifestation of the fact that there was a lot of mistrust that people had, the hopelessness with which people viewed the political and economic system that has existed so far," he said. Mahama's presidency from 2012 to 2017 left a mixed legacy. According to analyst Jonathan Asante Okyere, while Mahama was credited for infrastructure projects and inclusivity, he struggled with Ghana's energy crisis. "We had issues of power fluctuation, power instability but he was able to solve it before he left. Unfortunately, the ordinary citizen did not see that as a kind gesture, so they had to punish him at the polls," he said. "The people have a high expectation of his promises," he said. "That for me will be the challenge that he is likely to face. If you look at the mess that we find ourselves in, especially as we are not able to service our debts, it feels like there are even deeper cracks than what meets the eye."
4. US DEPARTMENT OF STATE: The United States commends the Electoral Commission, its hundreds of thousands of poll workers, civil society, and the country's security forces, who helped ensure a peaceful and transparent process. We also applaud Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia for his gracious acceptance of the results. We are aware of reports of isolated incidents of violence and at least four confirmed deaths. The United States extends our condolences to the families of those killed and urges a full investigation and accountability. The United States is proud of our enduring partnership and friendship with the people and government of Ghana. We look forward to working closely with President-elect Mahama to carry our historic relationship into the future.
5. "I want to vote to kick out the current government because they have not been kind to young people," said Antwi, a trader in the capital of Accra, accusing the outgoing government of President Nana Addo Akufo-Addo of breaking its electoral promises since it was first elected eight years ago. Joseph Antwi Accra

CLAUSE STRUCTURE OF THE DATA

REACTIONS TO BUHARI'S VICTORY

- i. The result might not be fair to all, but to me this is the fairest of all elections of our time where everyone is allowed to participate.
- ii. The results collated from each polling station and presented at the INEC [election commission] office is to me 100% authentic.
- iii. Provided, of course, that each party agent representing their parties was on the ground, witnessed the counting of the results, and signed off the schedule paper.
- iv. There is no better way to describe this election but to say thank you to every Nigerian and most of all the number one citizen of the country - President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan for accepting the defeat in good faith and even calling General Muhammadu Buhari to congratulate him.
- v. I wasn't surprised at the result because the turnout was so great. With this result, freedom will come back to Nigeria. We the people are the ones who voted for this president.
- vi. We voted him in to do something. I am excited for the future of Nigeria.
- vii. The country has been in chaos. We have been dying in silence and no one was saying anything.
- viii. Change will come with this government.
- ix. There will be more employment opportunities and better education and the youth will come back to Nigeria.

- x. Nigerians are happier.
- xi. For the first time we have seen a leader who listens to and respects the choice of the people.
- xii. Indeed, the sitting president's exemplary act of peace is the icing on the cake for Nigeria's democracy.
- xiii. Rather than weep and call out to his supporters to make the government ungovernable, thus inciting religious tension and initiating sectarian conflict such as that by Boko Haram, he accepted defeat so that Nigeria's fragile democracy could mature.
- xiv. A true example of statesmanship. I salute the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- xv. The election reflects the choice of the majority despite massive rigging and irregularities on the part of the ruling party in the south-south.
- xvi. So, Buhari needs to now focus on uniting the nation and recruiting technocrats who can help rebuild the crippling economy and strive hard to redeem that part of his image that his antecedent as a military dictator dented.
- xvii. God has answered our prayers.
- xviii. The election was conducted in Nigeria safely and ordinarily and the outcome was very amazing.
- xix. Almost all Nigerians were glad, happy, and full of joy and contentment.
- xx. Change has come to us but we Nigerians must change our habits before Baba Buhari brings change to our nation.
- xxi. Nigeria is in for the worst.
- xxii. The vote was on religious lines.
- xxiii. In the north of Nigeria, biometric readers were not used. The election was rigged.
- xxiv. The PDP cabal who destroyed the PDP moved to APC.
- xxv. The man has nothing to offer Nigeria. Everyone will see this soon afterward.

REACTIONS TO LIBERIA ELECTIONS

- i. "The Liberian people have spoken and we have heard their voice," Weah said in an address to the nation.
- ii. "I urge you to follow my example and accept the result of the elections," he said, adding that "our time will come again" in 2029 when Boakai's six-year term in office ends.
- iii. Recognizing the disastrous consequences of wantonly corrupt and unaccountable executive power, Liberians emerging from the war were determined to establish a system of checks and balances.
- iv. This included an independent legislature and judiciary, as well as an autonomous National Elections Commission (NEC), the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, the Central Bank, the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission, and a small but professional military, among other bodies.
- v. Many of these institutions were launched and facilitated, if not consolidated, under the presidency of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

- vi. The peaceful transfer of power was a testament to the progress Liberia had made in building and upholding norms of limiting executive power
- vii. "Liberians have once again demonstrated that democracy is alive in the ECOWAS region and that change is possible through peaceful means,".
- viii. Weah has defied the stereotype that peaceful transitions of power are untenable in West Africa,"
- ix. Once again, the Liberian people reaffirmed their commitment to democracy in yesterday's runoff election.
- x. We commend their dedication to exercising their right to vote broadly and peacefully. The United States will continue to promote accountability and will call out anyone who undermines the electoral process through fraud, violence, or intimidation.
- xi. At each step of this election, Liberians from all walks of life have expressed their desire for Liberia – one of the oldest continuous republics in the world – to become a beacon of peaceful citizen-cantered democratic governance in the region.
- xii. The United States remains committed to helping the people of Liberia achieve this goal.
- xiii. Liberia's last election was peaceful.
- xiv. It is also currently considered partly free according to Freedom House with a 60 percent score based on political rights and civil liberties.
- xv. The 2023 electoral campaign has similarly been largely peaceful as the political parties signed the Farmington River Declaration 2023 committing to a nonviolent electoral process.
- xvi. According to a recent Afrobarometer survey, Liberians also overwhelmingly support elections as the best way to choose their political leaders even though do not fully trust the National Elections Commission.

REACTIONS TO GHANA ELECTIONS

- i. The win was nothing short of monumental.
- ii. "This is an overwhelming victory, and we are excited.
- iii. The good people of Ghana have shown the exit way to the NPP for mismanaging the economy,"
- iv. "Someone who has cost me before, I will find it very difficult to give him another chance," he added.
- v. "They have voted for a visionary leader, they have voted for a man that will change the fortunes of this country, they have voted for a man that will reset this country,"
- vi. "It is a manifestation of the fact that there was a lot of mistrust that people had, the hopelessness with which people viewed the political and economic system that has existed so far,"
- vii. Mahama's presidency from 2012 to 2017 left a mixed legacy.
- viii. While Mahama was credited for infrastructure projects and inclusivity, he struggled with Ghana's energy crisis.

- ix. "We had issues of power fluctuation, and power instability but he was able to solve it before he left.
- x. Unfortunately, the ordinary citizen did not see that as a kind gesture, so they had to punish him at the polls." he said.
- xi. "The people have a high expectation of his promises,".
- xii. "That for me will be the challenge that he is likely to face.
- xiii. If you look at the mess that we find ourselves in, especially as we are not able to service our debts, it feels like there are even deeper cracks than what meets the eye
- xiv. The United States commends the Electoral Commission, its hundreds of thousands of poll workers, civil society, and the country's security forces, who helped ensure a peaceful and transparent process.
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- xvi. We are aware of reports of isolated incidents of violence and at least four confirmed deaths.
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