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Tracking Ideology in Nigerian Newspaper Representation of the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra Protests

Ayo Osisanwo

ayosisdelexus@yahoo.com

University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Osas Iyoha

Edo State University Uzairue, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines the ideological inclinations of the discourse surrounding the 2015 and 2016 Biafra protests as represented in selected Nigerian newspapers. Data for the study were news reports purposively selected from four widely circulated Nigerian national dailies: *The Punch*, *The Nation*, *The Sun* and *Vanguard* newspapers, which reported the protests. The period covered was between 2015 and 2016, a period when the protests were prominently reported in the country. Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and M.A.K Halliday's Transitivity model of Systemic Functional Linguistics served as the theoretical framework of the study. The data were subjected to critical discourse analysis. Findings reveal six underlying ideologies in the representation of the protests; namely separatist, pacifist, liberationist, dissidentist, schist and repressionist.

Keywords: Discourse, representation, Pro-Biafra protests, Nigerian newspapers, ideology, Indigenous People of Biafra, Nigerian political discourse.

Introduction

One event that has constantly generated heated arguments within and beyond Nigeria is the Nigerian civil war of 1967, also known as *Biafra War*. The war, which ended in 1970 sparked off serious allegations of genocide against the Igbos, who grappled with the pains of death and the carnage of defeat (Audu, Osuala and Ibrahim, 2013). The arrest of Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the *Indigenous People of Biafra* (IPOB) on 17 October 2015, and his continued detention after he was granted bail generated mass protests across the South-East and South-South geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The rising

wave of protests, sometimes accompanied by violence, which have enjoyed wide coverage in the media around the world, had evolved from simply the struggle for the release of Kanu to agitations for the secession of Biafra. Biafra was conceived in the period after the second military coup in Nigeria, where mostly easterners were killed. The incessant protests became a sensitive national issue, generating fundamental ideological questions of nationhood and federalism, and raising serious questions about identity, marginalisation, oppression, and discrimination.

The newspapers selected for this study and the news media in general have represented and constructed the Biafra freedom agitation in different ways. This difference in the construction of events, as Fowler (1991) observes, is what makes news reportage hardly objective; the news media would often subtly constitute viewpoints and opinions about what is being reported. This, in turn, may affect and influence people's opinion, attitude and value judgement about the issues being reported (Richardson, 2007). The influence of the news media on the formation of belief and opinion of people is enormous. History is replete with the incredible influence of the news media on opinion formation on certain events (van Dijk, 2000). During the Nigerian Civil War, for instance, the news media played an important role in the representation of the war and in the opinion people, especially the international community, had about the war (Arua, 2014; Audu, Osuala and Ibrahim, 2013). Hence, the role of the news media cannot be underestimated in the scheme of event representation.

Ideological representation of persons and events in the news has come to be associated with different things to different people in diverse disciplines. The diversity of the use of the term 'ideology' is occasioned by its long use in a wide range of scholarly disciplines, and in everyday life. Koerner (2002) posits that the diversity in the use of the term has made it to also acquire a rather negative connotation. Eagleton (1991) asserts that 'ideology' is a matter of 'discourse' rather than 'language'. It has to do with 'the actual uses of language between particular human subjects for the production of specific effects' (p. 9). The discursive context in which a statement

occurs is what determines its being classified as ideological. Thus, the linguistic features of a work of art contribute less to its ideology than its discursive context. The same stretch of language that may be ideological in one context may not be ideological in the other context. Ideology, invariably, 'is a function of the relation of an utterance to its social context' (Eagleton, 1991: 7). Therefore, to say that a statement is ideological is then to mean that it is backed by an ulterior motive and the legitimation of certain interests in a power struggle.

Ideology could also be perceived as signifying ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the motives and interests of the elite specifically through distortion or dissimulation. Ideology constitutes the bedrock of critical discourse analysis as it deals largely with situations of power and dominance (van Dijk, 1998b). van Dijk avers that ideology can be seen as 'political or social systems of ideas, values or prescriptions of groups or other collectivities, and has the function of organising or legitimising the actions of the group'. It is the way in which meanings within texts serve to establish and maintain domination (Knowles and Malnkjaer, 1996). van Dijk (1998a) further posits that to discover embedded ideology within media texts, its social function must be identified. This social function serves to co-ordinate the social practices of group members in order to effectively realise group social goals and protect its interest. van Dijk goes on to point out that apart from identifying social function, cognitive structures could also be identified. These cognitive structures are expressed in 'self' and 'others', 'us and them', and so on. van Dijk equally notes that the choice of certain lexical items with ideological connotations, such as the use of evaluative premodifiers, modals, clause structure, implicature and presupposition are often reflective in media reports. The current study contributes to literature in the study of ideology in the news as it sets out to examine ideological inclinations of news reports on the 2015-2016 pro-Biafran protests.

Review of Literature

Existing linguistic studies of the media have focused on how selected persons or groups are represented in the media based on their

religious inclinations, tribal proclivity or ideological stance (see Majid, 2008; Mahdi, 2009; Talaat, 2011; Osisanwo, 2016a; Oyeleye and Osisanwo 2013a, 2013b, Igwebuike, 2013; Amir, Kazem and Hussien, 2013; Osisanwo and Oluwayemi 2018). Some others have examined how crime, especially heinous crimes, such as insurgency and terrorism are represented in the media (Chiluwa, 2011a, 2011b; Iyoha, 2015; Osisanwo, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b, 2019). Also, a number of studies have been conducted on the discourse of protest paying adequate attention to the pragmatic and stylistic functions of language in issues such as UK students' protest, protest on the removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria and the Arab Spring protest (Egbunike, 2015; Hall, 2011; Newlands, 2009; Cottle, 2008; Lee and Craig 1992; Fang, 1994). The current study differs from previous studies in that it examines how ideology is expressed in the representation of the 2015 and 2016 Biafra protests.

Also, there have been studies on the pro-Biafra protests, which have examined pro-Biafra discourse in digital communities such as *Nairaland* and *Facebook* with little attention paid to discourse and ideological representation. Chiluwa (2018) investigates discourse acts in online discourse forged by IPOB in furtherance of the actualisation of the independence of the Eastern region. The study examines how outrage is produced by the group. The study discovers that the main players in the discourse have conflicting opinions, which leaves so much to be desired about the actualisation of the secession dream. Osisanwo and Iyoha (2020) examine the discourse strategies and the ideological inclinations of news reports on the pro-Biafra protest, using van Leeuwen's representation of social actors and Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL). The study identifies three representational strategies which include 'protesters as freedom fighters', 'protesters as economic saboteurs' and 'protesters as law-abiding citizens.' Though focused on the same subject of IPOB in relation to media discourses, the current study differs from existing studies in that it adopts a different approach to examine the representation of the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protests with a view to identifying and exploring the ideologies constructed in the representation of the protest in news reports.

Methodology

Data for this study were news reports purposively drawn from four widely circulated Nigerian national dailies namely: *The Punch*, *The Nation*, *The Sun* and *Vanguard* newspapers that covered the protests. The period covered was between 2015 and 2016, when the protests were prominently reported in the country. Sixty news reports were selected from the newspapers: (*The Punch* (9), *The Nation* (13), *The Sun* (20) and *Vanguard* (18)), covering the period when the protests were prominently reported in the print media. The Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Grammar provided the theoretical insights upon which the data were qualitatively analysed. The Critical Discourse Analysis model of Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009; Wodak, 2001, 2009) is anchored on the Vienna School of Discourse Analysis. DHA has its roots in Bernstein's sociolinguistic approach (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 1996) as well as the philosophical and sociological tradition of Critical theory (Wodak and Reisigl, 2009). DHA dwells largely on the historical background of discourse events. The approach 'integrates and triangulates knowledge about historical sources and the background of the social and political fields within which discursive events are embedded' (Wodak, 2009: 38.) The following layers of context are taken into consideration in the systemic quantitative analysis of DHA - the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between utterances, text, genres and discourses; the extra-linguistic social/sociological variables; the history and archaeology of texts and organizations; and the institutional frames of the specific context of a situation (Wodak, 2009: 38).

This, according to Wodak, would help one to understand how discourses, genres and texts change due to socio-political contexts. Wodak (2009:8) further opines that CDA investigates 'authentic everyday communication in institutional, media, political or other locations rather than on sample sentences or sample texts constructed in linguists' minds.' CDA is used to account for the ideological inclinations of social actors as represented in the linguistic content of the newspapers. DHA is used to track the discourse issues and

ideologies in the reports while the linguistic tools used to triangulate the ideologies are enhanced by Halliday's SFL, especially the textual part of Halliday's SFL.

Analysis and Discussion

The ideologies projected in the representation of the 2015 and 2016 pro-Biafra protest are presented in this section. These include the separatist, pacifist, liberationist, dissidentist, schist and repressionist ideologies.

Separatist ideology

The separatist ideology is often used to capture the movement and agitation for independence and the actualisation for self-governance by a group or race within a particular country. This group or race is embittered by the socio-political situations of the nation. Therefore, it sees the need to secede from the larger group as a solution to its oppression. In the reports, the protesters who are mainly the Igbo, are embittered by the supposed actions and inactions of the Federal Government of Nigeria. They see secession as a solution to their perceived socio-political and religious oppression. The ideology, basically reflected in the voice of the Biafra protesters, underpins the rationale for the agitations of the Biafra protesters for a sovereign state. In the reports, the separatist ideology bifurcates into radical and subtle separatist. The radical separatists are those that demonstrate constant and seemingly unfaltering commitment to the realisation of the state of Biafra. The radical separatist ideology can be historically traced to Odumegwu Ojukwu who declared Biafra as a nation in 1967. The declaration culminated in a thirty-month civil war in Nigeria. The civil war was described as one of the deadliest wars in the world in which about three million Igbos died. The excerpts below exemplify the radical separatist ideology:

Excerpt 1:

He (the Zonal Spokesman, Mr Okpa Ignatius) said they have **vowed that no amount of intimidation or arrest will** deter them from achieving their objectives, which

is the realisation of the state of Biafra.
(*Punch*, November 2, 2015).

The nominalised element, “no amount of intimidation and arrest” which hints at the subjugation power of the Nigerian government indicates the unrelenting posture of the Biafra protesters. The reporter also manages the voice of Ignatius as though Ignatius might have truly chosen, for instance, the verb “vowed”. The reporter surreptitiously reflects his alignment with Ignatius’ strong position. Here, the radical separatist ideology is projected in the words of Ignatius who expresses the determination of the group to achieve and actualise the Sovereign State of Biafra by all means. It is hinted that intimidation, threat, and arrests of members and any other means that government employ would not affect the resolve of the group. Put in context, this statement is sequel to the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu.

The subtle separatist is a type of separatist ideological movement that intends to achieve independence in a mild non-confrontational manner. The Igbo are presented as law abiding citizens who will achieve self-governance in a non-violent manner. Instances of subtle separatist ideology are exemplified below:

Excerpt 2:

You don't shoot at people who have no fire arms
but **only**

have **placards** on them

Vanguard Wed, Oct 7, 2015 pg 3

Excerpt 2 presents IPOB members as a non-violent group. The group went with placards to register their grievances. This is a peaceful protest, and carrying placards is a non-violent way of protesting. Carrying placards shows that IPOB members are non-violent and peace-loving. The lexical choices “only” and “placards” show the ideological posture of the subtle separatists. The lexical choice “only” is tactically used to express a subtle comparison between the actions of the protesters and the federal agents who supposedly attacked them. The peaceful protest is a pointer to the subtle separatist ideology. Other instances of the ideology are exemplified in excerpts 4-6.

Excerpt 3:

The protesters, who were **non-violent** **alleged** that the Federal Government was determined to **relegate** Igbos to **the background**, vowing that **no amount of intimidation and harassment could dampen their spirits**

The Sun Wed, Oct 21, 2015

The lexical modifier “non-violent” also explicates the subtle separatist ideology. The tactical deployment of the term “non-violent” shows that IPOB members are not favourably disposed to engaging in any form of combat with federal agents. Their intention is to have a peaceful political change which is the actualisation of the Biafran nation. The subtle separatist ideology calls for peaceful negotiation so that violence and shedding of blood will be avoided. The quest for political change arises from the actions and inactions of the federal government of Nigeria. The action of the federal government is explicated in the lexical choice “relegated”. Easterners were allegedly being politically and socially discriminated against. All these necessitated the quest for the secession of easterners from Nigeria. Ironically, the pressure from the Federal Government has only just ignited the feelings of nationalism, loyalty and patriotism all the more in the protesters as seen in the excerpt, instead of dampening their spirit.

Excerpt 4:

We are **armless**, we have not harmed anybody and we owe nobody any apology for what we are doing. As Biafrans, we stand for **peace** and **justice** will reign.

Vanguard, Wed, Oct 21, 2015 pg 14

The lexical choices – “armless”, “peace” and “justice” explicate the subtle separatist ideology. The word “armless”, for instance, shows that IPOB protesters are without any destructive weapons. This ideology which is based on the subtle separatist movement is averse to shedding of blood and confrontation of military personnel. Excerpt 6 exemplifies the attack and counter-attacks of the military men and

the non-violent nature of the protesters.

Excerpt 5:

We want our **freedom**, that is why we are here. We are not comfortable with the Nigerian government, the intimidation, killing and all that; that is why we want our **freedom**. We feel very bad about his detention and it is affecting each and every one of us. We are not comfortable; we want to go," he said.

Daily Sun Wed, Oct 21, 2015

In excerpt 5, subtle separatist ideology is explicated in the lexical choice "freedom". "Freedom" is repeated twice to show the importance of not only the word but the need to point attention to the importance of seceding from Nigeria. Freedom, here, means the condition, right and state to be governed by oneself rather than imposition. By implication, the agitators are supposedly not free as they see themselves as being under the hegemony of the Nigerian state, and now, the intimidation and killing have ignited their need to be free.

Pacifist ideology

Pacifist ideology is defined as the belief that war, or anything that can spur it such as protest, agitations, and demonstration is bad and should not be ventured into. It again captures the idea that engaging in war or any act capable of causing war is not worth pursuing. This, invariably, suggests that actions such as chanting of war songs in protests or social unrests, violent demonstrations, and other acts capable of causing social disillusionments are not to be undertaken. The excerpts below exemplify the pacifist ideology in the discourse of the Biafran protest:

Excerpt 6:

The governors from the Eastern States **must come together, reason together and dialogue** on the demand for a

Biafran state. It is painful that majority of the protesters were not born before the war. Those who suffered as a result of the civil war and alive today will likely think twice before venturing into another war....

Excerpt 6 advocates a democratic method of resolving national crises and differences. This is the basic tenet of the pacifist ideology. The pacifist ideology is concerned with non-violent ways of resolving political or cultural differences. In excerpt 8, the tactical use of the collocate “come together and reason together” suggests that the governors from the region must think and make judgements based on the practical facts before them on why they think the government of the day has failed them. The collocates “come together” suggest that governors in the region irrespective of their parties' affiliation must see themselves as one and champion the cause of the Biafran nation instead of plunging the country into social unrests and an eventual war. The nation, Nigeria, has been battling a lot of issues such as terrorism, insurgency, tribal conflicts, kidnapping and other crimes. It is therefore necessary to avoid issues that would aggravate the current situation.

The tactical use of the lexical choice “dialogue” shows that there should be formal talks among governors from the regions. The talk should centre on the demand for self-governance by the easterners. After the dialogue by the governors from the regions, easterners within the region and diaspora must meet to “reason together” on the need for self-governance. “Dialogue” and “reason together” involve two steps, namely, consultation and consolidation. These steps are accommodated by governments all over the world and are preferred to confrontation or war. The grammatical modal “must” in excerpt 7 suggests that it is necessary for the agitators to conduct themselves within the ambit of the constitution. This implies obligation and necessity. The deployment of “must” in the discourse suggests that the agitators must be civil in their protest. Excerpt 8 expatiates why the protesters must conduct themselves in a civil manner.

Excerpt 7:

The Igbo youths have the rights to express themselves and to demand for their needs. But it **must** be done in a **civil manner**. The **burning of Nigerian flags and the tearing of Nigerian passport** are **violations of the law of the land**. No government will fold its arms when a group of people felt aggrieved and take laws into their hands. From state to state, the agitators **can** march **peacefully** to the State Assembly with **their demands for separate states**. They **could** hold meetings with their state representatives at the National Assembly with a **written letter demanding for the state of Biafra**. **It is those that are alive that can benefit from the demand for a new Biafra**. **To confront the state with the security agents in a violent manner could be termed felony**.

Excerpt 7 explicates pacifist ideology. The ideology tactically calls for peaceful resolution of differences between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the pro-Biafra protesters. The writer frowns at the burning of the Nigerian flag and tearing of Nigerian passports. This is a clear violation of the constitution of Nigeria. This act is capable of generating social unrest among the opposing groups. What is perceived here is that it is better to be democratic than to be violent. This is the opinion and tenet of the pacifist ideology. Excerpt 9 further substantiates the peaceful ways of resolving differences among the opposing groups.

Excerpt 8:

We **must** call all the parties involved in the campaign for Biafran state to come to the negotiating table as a matter of necessity before things get out of hands

The Nation, Sunday, November 15, 2015

Excerpts 7 and 8 aptly reflect pacifist ideology. The writers see the pursuance of peace by everyone in the country as a necessity. This is first reflected in the first line where the writers choose the modal auxiliary, the deontic “must” to emphasise the need for the Eastern states to rise up to the responsibility of ensuring the sustenance of peace by “coming together”, “reasoning together” and “dialoguing”. In lines 6 and 7, the writer again uses the deontic “must” to invite the “Biafra” agitators to tow the path of peace in bearing their grievances. The three instances where the deontic “must” is used, not breaching the peace of the nation is projected as a civic obligation that those clamouring for the sovereign state of Biafra must uphold.

The writer in excerpt 8 evokes the image of horror the Igbo suffered during the civil war where starvation and hunger led to the death of over one million Igbo persons (Falola and Heaton, 2009). The writer presents the agitators as inexperienced and naive, having no first-hand experience of the civil war and consequently, the setbacks it brought to the Igbo people. The writer avers that **“Those who suffered as a result of the civil war and alive today will likely think twice before venturing into another war.”** He instead advocates for peaceful talks which he presupposes would have stopped or not made for the 1967 Civil war in the first place if the *Aburi Accord* had been honoured by both the Nigerian government and the then Eastern Region. He therefore vehemently rejects the idea of a war as an option in the fight for self-governance.

It can be said that pacifist ideology preaches peace. The ideology is focused on the pursuance of social and political tranquillity in Nigeria. Thus, chanting of war songs, confrontation with the military men and women are tantamount to incivility which will ruin the quest for self-government and invariably another civil war which Nigerians are not prepared for.

Liberationist ideology

The liberationist ideology is first hinged on the notion that a particular group within society is not favourably treated. The ideology as represented in the reports is captured in the idea of wanting the perceived disadvantages experienced by the agitators

and the Igbo generally to be removed. The agitators want to cease to be part of the Nigerian nation as they claim to want to be liberated. Freedom is paramount to them, as well as the freedom of their supposed leader, Nnamdi Kanu, who has been arrested and detained. Excerpts 10 and 11 exemplify the liberationist ideology in the discourse of the pro-Biafra protest:

Excerpt 9:

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Orlu zone yesterday held a peaceful protest and called on the Federal Government **to immediately release** the detained Nnamdi Kanu, Director of Radio Biafra, who was arrested last week by security agencies. The Zonal Spokesman, Mr Okpa Ignatius called on the security agencies **to release** the Director of Radio Biafra, Mazi Nnamdi Okpa from detention **without delay**

The Sun October 24, 2015 page 7

Excerpt 10:

Biafra started because of **injustices and marginalisation** of Ndigbo in Nigeria. These injustices triggered the Civil War of 1967-1970. Those of us who went to that war were very much convinced that we were fighting to **liberate** our people and we were prepared to give it our all. It did not matter whether we died in the process.

The Vanguard Nov 15, 2015. Pg 20

The liberationist ideology is hinged on freedom – physical, emotional, psychological, political and so on. Freedom as the major tenet of the liberationist ideology is lexicalised as “release” and “liberate” in excerpts 9 and 10 respectively. In excerpt 9, Mr Okpa calls for the release of Kanu from “detention without delay” so as not

to infuriate IPOB members. It can be observed from excerpt 10 that injustices and marginalisation are the major causes of the IPOB protest.

By saying “[t]hose of us who went to that war were very much convinced that we were fighting to liberate our people.”, the speaker is asking for the Ndigbo to be “liberated” from the “Nigerian” government from whose hands the Ndigbo have suffered “injustices” and “marginalisation”. The speaker uses “we” and “them” to show that the Igbos are the victimised who need to be liberated and the “Nigerian” government is the actor or agent of victimisation from whom the Igbos are seeking liberation.

Excerpt 11:

Look at the way President Muhammadu Buhari has made **his appointments**, it is purely skewed against Ndigbo and even at this age, I still feel I should fight again if that can remedy the situation. I want to see Biafra in Igboland before I die. They should give us Biafra and that will settle

The Sun, November 15, 2015

In excerpt 11, the reporter manages the voice of the protesters by emphasising that the skewed political appointments were part of the issues that led to the Biafra protest. The Buhari-led government did not appoint easterners in the key political portfolio. Easterners were supposedly regarded as second-class citizens. Excerpt 11 ends with a call to the Nigerian government to give “us” (the Ndigbo) a sovereign state.

Excerpt 12:

He (the Director of Information, MASSOB, Mr Uchenna Madu) said, “we will continue to protest until his (Kanu's) release. The protests continue. The condition is that he must be released. A court has granted him bail and we have fulfilled the bail condition but the DSS is frustrating all the moves we made.

In line 2 of excerpt 12, the inclusive “we” in “we will continue to protest until his release” used by the Director of Information, MASSOB, reflects the oneness in the demand of MASSOB members, which is to seek the release of their leader. They demonstrate solidarity with Nnamdi Kanu who is actually an IPOB leader, even though MASSOB and IPOB differ on a number of issues, they still demonstrate solidarity in propagating the release of Nnamdi Kanu and, by extension, the secession of Biafra. The expression, “the condition is that he must be released” shows that IPOB members are determined to fight for the freedom of their leader. The continuous detention of Nnamdi Kanu suggests that it is the eastern region that is detained because Kanu has become metonymic for the region. Hence, the freedom of Nnamdi Kanu and that of the Igbo by extension is situated within the liberationist ideology.

Dissentist ideology

Dissentist ideology is used to capture or show strong difference of opinion on a particular subject, especially about an official suggestion or plan or a popular belief. In this case, dissentist ideology refers to the show of disagreement with the idea of creating a sovereign state of Biafra. It is also used to capture the notion that the idea being projected by a group of people is of no value. Therefore, it should be discarded.

Excerpt 13:

Biafra... was the idea of the late Ikemba Nnewi Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, who felt that he had no choice than to pull his people out of Nigeria in 1967 because of **perceived injustice, marginalisation and unfair treatment.**

The Nation, Thursday, Nov. 19, 2015 Pg 17

Excerpt 13 reflects the dissentist ideology. The writer shows a strong disapproval for the agitation of a Biafra state. The pragmatic implication for the use of “perceived” injustice is that it is not only associated with the Igbo but all other ethnic groups in Nigeria. The

agitators have as one of the bases for their agitation “injustice and unfair treatment” by the “Nigerian” government as shown in:

Excerpt 14:

...But, unfortunately, some **funny characters who knew nothing about the origin of Biafra are today making noise all over the place, claiming that they want to resuscitate Biafra. Only those living in a fool's paradise believe that they can resuscitate Biafra. To resuscitate Biafra for what? To fight another civil war? With who? It cannot be with Nigeria because the country has gone past that stage of fighting itself.**

The Nation, Thursday, Nov. 19, 2015 Pg 17

From excerpt 14, it can be observed that a different view concerning the quest for the sovereign state of Biafra is expressed. The speaker here does not believe in the resuscitation of the Biafra state because he sees Biafra as an attempt to fight another civil war. The questions in the excerpt are meant to question the rationality of the IPOB members and protesters. “To resuscitate Biafra for what? To fight another civil war? With who?” are questions that call for deep reflection. The questions depict dissentist ideology as the writer does not align with the ideology behind resuscitating Biafra. The writer finally warns Biafra agitators to retrace their steps so as not to incur the wrath of the present government; the protesters should learn lessons from other groups that threaten the peace and stability of Nigeria. Dissentist ideology is further exemplified in excerpts 16-19.

Excerpt 15:

Like others (MASSOB and BZM), its (IPOB's) agenda is not clear beyond seeking a sovereign state of Biafra. What I do not understand is why they are so crazy about having **their so-called Biafra Republic.**

What can be observed in excerpt 15 is that the writer is perplexed on

the reason for the quest for Biafra Republic by the easterners. In fact, the writer tactically uses the modal adjective “crazy” to show his degree of disapproval. The use of “crazy” shows that the protest and the quest for Biafra Republic is annoying and insensible. The writer, while demonstrating dissident ideology, warns that the protesters would be treated like terrorists – Boko Haram insurgents and Niger Delta Militants.

Excerpt 16:

In the last few weeks, IPOB sympathisers have been marching through some Southeast and Southsouth states, **whipping up sentiments** for a Biafra state. Their action was sparked by the detention of Nnamdi Kanu, Director of the London-based illegal Biafra Radio.

From excerpt 16, it can be observed that the writer shows dissident ideology with the tactical deployment of the collocate “whipping up sentiments for a Biafra state”. By sentiment, the writer means feelings, supports, and affiliations that are considered irrational and silly. To the writer, irrationality is demonstrated by the way protesters marched throughout the South-East and South-South geopolitical zones, as well as other regions in Nigeria, soliciting sympathy from the people. Although the protest was ignited by the arrest and detention of Nnamdi Kanu, the writer still could not fathom the rationale behind the quest for Biafra Republic.

Excerpt 17:

The Biafra project is not popular among easterners, save for some **misguided elements**, who are ready to swear by Kanu, as some did by the late Ojukwu some 48 years ago.

Furthermore, excerpt 17 demonstrates dissident ideology. The writer asserts that the quest for Biafra is unpopular among Easterners. The lexical items “not popular” suggest that the quest does not receive the people's supports. The protesters, to the writer, are perhaps doing this

because of their selfish interests. The reporter calls Nnamdi Kanu and his supporters “misguided elements” to express his dissentist views. What this suggests is that despite the havoc that wrecked the eastern region in 1967, the easterners have not learnt from past mistakes.

Excerpt 18:

Kanu's cry for a Biafra state is taking **ethnic jingoism** too far. There is nothing like Bini nation, Yoruba nation, Hausa nation, Igbo nation, Okun nation, Ijaw nation, Itsekiri nation, Nupe or kanuri nations. There is only one nation state to which we all belong and that is **Nigeria**. Why then do some people want to tear the societal fabric? Biafra is an idea which time has gone; that is if it was ever an idea in the first place. The earlier Kanu and his **co-travellers** know this the better.

The Nation, Thursday, November 19, 2015

In Excerpt 18, the writer reflects dissentist ideology, showing an avowed disapproval of the agitation for a Biafra state. The reporter calls the agitation for Biafra republic, ethnic jingoism because there is only one nation-state. This nation-state is called Nigeria. Loyalty and patriotism to a Nigeria nation should supersede any other loyalties. The excerpt shows that the writer openly disapproves the agitation for Biafra Republic. To the writer, Biafra has come and gone and it is unreasonable for any individual under any guise to resuscitate the issue. The writer opines that Nigerians all belong to one indivisible nation.

The use of rhetorical questions in excerpt 18 is deployed to query why some people want to cause trouble in a volatile nation. “Why then do some people want to tear the societal fabric?” shows that the writer disapproves the agitation of the IPOB members and protesters. The question queries the protest and why some “misguided people” are bent on fomenting trouble in a volatile Nigerian state. The writer regards the act as being responsible for causing political and social unrests in Nigeria.

Schist ideology

Schist is used to capture the ideology of upholding a different view to others in a group where members are considered to have ideas and views in unison. This could present different views as alternatives to a national issue. The ideology suggests that there are two groups who hold tenaciously to their ideologies. Each of these groups considers its ideology as superior. In the data, it is observed that a group sees others as deviants because of their own views. In the Biafra protest, the South-south sees the protest as an infringement on their rights and an invasion of their land. The south-south region of Nigeria comprises Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers. These states see the protest on their land as an infringement. The following excerpts exemplify the schist ideology:

Excerpt 19:

The South-South nationalities said, “We **will not allow any inch of the land** of the **ethnic nationalities** mentioned above and other lands of the South South to be part of the **ill-thought-out enterprise**.”... “We call for a halt to demonstrations for Biafra on our land henceforth as it touches on the collective sensibilities of our people and could provoke ethnic crisis. We are not only surprised but shocked that Igbos who returned to Nigeria after **the fall of Biafra** in January 15, 1970 with tales of woes and horrors can talk about Biafra,” they asserted.

What can be observed from the excerpt is that the South-South states disassociate themselves from “the so-called ill-thought Biafra Republic”. In 1967, both the south-east and south-south regions were regarded as the eastern part of the nation. However, perspectives have changed since then. From the excerpt, it can be noted that the Biafra protest is called an “ill-thought out enterprise”. This reflects the schist ideology. The reason is that the Biafra protest has perhaps come to be conceived as an ethnic agenda. The agenda which started in 1967 and

ended in January 15th, 1970 should not be resuscitated. The south-south states see it as an infringement on their land. The south-south states are quick to warn the protesters to desist from their land as such protests could lead to ethnic-jingoistic wars.

Schist ideology as shown in the excerpt above is projected with the use of the verbal group “will not allow”. The South-South states express their detachment from the agitations of some eastern agitators who clamour for the sovereign state. The detachment is further shown in the description of the Biafra protesters' objective by the South-South nationalities. By describing the Biafra protesters' objective as “ill-thought-out enterprise”, the South-South nationalities clearly show their disaffiliation and disposition towards the Biafran agenda.

The 'us' and 'them' ideological dichotomy is quite obvious in the use of deitic expressions such as 'we', 'our', 'us' and 'them' as used in the extract. By implication, the south-south is trying to be distant from the agitation which they were unable to do in the 1967 Biafra War. They make it clear that they are not part of Biafra. It has been argued (see Raji and Abejide, 2013) that part of what led to the war was the discovery of enormous oil deposit in the South-south, which resulted in several areas of the South-south region being battlegrounds for the war between the Nigerian Army and the Biafran Army during the Civil war. It is therefore not surprising that they try to isolate themselves from the Eastern region despite their proximity to the East so that they would perhaps not be pawns in another war in Nigeria.

Repressionist ideology

This ideology is concerned with the way people and individuals are controlled through force. It is also an attempt to act within a particular principle or law which could be to defend or protect a nation, group or individual. Excerpts 21-24 exemplify repressionist ideology.

Excerpt 20:

Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of Police Usman Gwary, in charge of Zone 9, has declared **categorically** that the

police are **ready to battle** the Movement for Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB)
The Nation, Wed. Nov. 18, 2015 Pg 42

Excerpt 20 shows that the Nigerian police have the directive to control people's activities and behaviours. The police declare that they are battle ready for the protesters who are allegedly going about the protest peacefully. For instance, in excerpt 22, the use of the collocation "ready to battle" shows that the police are ready to go violent on the protesters. Apart from this clampdown on the protesters, IPOB and MASSOB members are allegedly chased around like criminals as shown in excerpt 21.

Excerpt 21:

Members of Movement for the actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra, (MASSOB) in Onitsha, Anambra State have said that **the clampdown** on its members by President Muhamadu Buhari would not silence the movement until the Biafra State is actualised.

The Sun Wed. Sep. 16, 2015, Pg 10

From excerpt 21, the deployment of the lexical item "clampdown" shows that the Nigerian government is repressivist in its attitude to handling the protest. The "clampdown" involves the use of force to disperse protesters through several means including the use of force-teargas canisters and other military weapons. This is expatiated in excerpt 22 below.

Excerpt 22:

MASSOB Deputy Director of Information, Mazi Chris Mocha, stated this yesterday in Onitsha while speaking

with journalists. His words, “Buhari cannot stop us from the actualisation of a sovereign state of Biafra even if he sends **the entire security operatives** in the country to the South-East and South-South geo-political zones.”

The Sun Wed. Sep. 16, 2015 Pg 10

The hyperbolic expression “the entire security operatives” suggests the magnitude of attention government pays to the protesters. This also suggests the repressionist ideology in the action of the federal government. It must be noted that repressionist ideology aims to control the activities of people forcefully. Excerpt 23 decries this action of the government.

Excerpt 23:

“Tell me a country where non-violent freedom agitators are **chased around the way MASSOB is. It is not done anywhere. But that cannot deter us.**”

The Sun, Wed. Sep. 16, 2015 Pg 10

Excerpt 23 suggests that protesters are “chased around” like criminals. They are repressively attacked by government security operatives. The security operatives are the Nigerian police, Civil Defence Corps, and Nigerian army. These federal security operatives are agents of government repressive ideology.

Conclusion

The study has examined ideological inclinations underpinning the discourse of the Biafra protest. The paper has shown that the discourse of the Biafra protest is enmeshed with ideologies that justify the actions of the protesters and condemn government's activities. Six underlying ideologies: separatist ideology, pacifist ideology, liberationist ideology, dissidentist ideology, schist ideology and repressionist ideology were projected in the representation of the protests. The use of the positive 'self' and negative 'other' construct,

naming and reference characterise the ideologies. While the separatist (which bifurcates into subtle and radical) and the liberationist advocate for a radical approach to self-governance, the pacifists proffer the milder approach of negotiation and dialogue, the dissident jettisons the idea of self-governance and the schist has an indifferent stance.

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