

Pragmatics of Violence: Violentization of our World through Words

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Abstract

This article explores the different canons of strategic violence construction in contemporary discourses in Nigeria and Europe. While plethora of existing studies on the language of violence pick interest in engaging the discourses of violence from sociology, media studies, (critical) discourse analysis, and sociolinguistics, they have significantly undermined the typologies and pragmatic strategies of constructing violence in contemporary discursive events in Nigerian and European sociopolitical space. The current effort is therefore directed towards addressing this lacuna by examining how violence is constructed and co-constructed in the communicative events of the two climes with a view to identifying the typologies of violence (co)constructed and the pragmatic strategies deployed in (co)constructing violence in Nigeria and Europe. Aspects of pragmatics theories and concepts including speech acts theory (Searles, 1979), cooperative principle Grice (1975), pragmatic acts (Mey, 2001), and discursive pragmatics Zienkowski (2011) were deployed to tease out the pragmatics of violentising discourses across various communicative contexts. Data purposively selected include a press release by Former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo delivered on the 27th February, 2023; a speech by President von der Leyen, delivered at the European Parliament Plenary on Russian aggression against Ukraine, on 1st March, 2022; and the communicative exchanges at INEC Office Collation Centre between INEC Chairman and Senator Dino Melaye, a political party agent, on the 27th February, 2023. Findings showed that three principal typologies of violence: physical, psychological/emotive, and socio-ideological violence were identified. These were variously grounded within the contexts of law and war in both Nigeria and Europe. Five pragmatic strategies were found prominent in the study, namely deresponsibilisation, blame game, defaming of character and identity, evocation of antecedent, graphicisation of physical (violent) acts. These mechanisms of violentisation of communication were ventilated through the acts of warning, threatening, asserting, indicting and alleging. Violentised discourses from the contexts of conflict, law and war, thus typify the dynamics of the communicative worlds of the two climes, and eminently forge out how language is capable of creating strategic violence in itself, for its users, and is capable of making or marring peaceful cohesion in our war-torn world.

Keywords: Pragmatic violence, Nigerian elections, Russia-Ukraine debates, Speech acts

1. Introduction

In spite of the experiences of disorientation and vulnerability that accompany violent acts, attempting to understand violence and how it relates to language may provide us with some important resources for comprehending the complex entanglements in the variables of language, violence and signification. Our language use, according to Silva (2017), is thus vulnerable to violence, conflict and excessive emotion, and inquiring into this vulnerability, and therefore may assist us to shed light on problems arising from such.

As language users, scholars and researchers from different scholarship backgrounds in the humanities and possibly allied specializations, we not only explore the destructive potential of violence for shattering experience and language, but also interrogate its productive potential for making language more accessible in its own use and circulation. To the extent that comprehending a text as a discursive event requires having a model of interactional text, it follows that no pragmatic function can exist without an overlapping metapragmatic function. Every engagement in violent-laden expression is therefore assumed to be for a pragmatic purpose. Based on the quantity and quality of violence that go on in different spheres of human life, it is pertinent to focus on the roles of language in violence discourse, in all its ramifications. Hence, this paper is an interdisciplinary attempt at entangling scholarship on physical, verbal and symbolic violence in the margins of the world, with some canons in pragmatics, semiotics, discourse analysis, literary studies, among others.

2. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this article is to explore how violence is constructed and co-constructed in our world through expressions, texts, video contents and some extra-linguistic resources.

In specific terms, the objectives are to:

- i. highlight and discuss the typologies of violence constructed in the political texts and short video contents selected for the article; and
- ii. examine the pragmatic strategies deployed in constructing the violence typologies in the political texts and short video contents selected.

3.1. Perspectives on the Language of Violence

Studies on the language of violence are not entirely new. What is however found lacking is the triangulation of data of different climes to tease out wider purview of the unified essence and construction of the language of violence in cross-cultural contexts as we have in Africa and Europe. This article takes this stride because of the global weight of the Conference from which it emerged. It is a product of a Plenary presentation at the 6th Pragmatics Association of Nigeria (PrAN) International Conference held at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria in March 2023. Language is generally associated with the abstract realm of thought, representation and expression, a realm that contrasts sharply with the material realm in which we tend to place violence. Language is often seen as antithetical to violence: violence is the outburst that comes when the rational order of language fails. Violence is as much part of our human condition as peaceful cooperative action is. Yet, regardless of it being basic in human condition, violence is a disconcerting concept.

Violence itself is a language we all learn to interpret. There is the symbolic language of ethnic and class violence, particularly in the struggle for power and domination. In ‘investigating violence in language’, Silva 2017: 7 identifies three perspectives from which we can interrogate the relationship between violence and meaning:

First, as the disconcerting episodes, **violence affects meaning** by either making people temporarily silent and flustered or by disrupting an entire framework of signification... Second, ... more than disrupting meaning, violence itself may be inflicted by utterances. In this perspective, **meaning itself can be violent**. In differently exploiting language resources to create inequality, racist invectives, misogynistic language, homophobic slurs and hate speech often affect the subject in bodily ways. Third, both **violence as disruption of meaning** (perspective 1) and **violence in meaning** (perspective 2) produce effects. Talk of crime... discussion of irritability and communicability, the circulation of stories about crime or the circulation of hate in stories make violence proliferate.

In Silva’s (2017) work, the whole interest is to address the problem of violence in language, particularly how words inflict wound; the relation between physical and linguistic violence; and how racial invectives, misogynous language, homophobic slurs, hate speech, among others affect the body, and make us vulnerable to conditions of injurability that language brings about. Verbal violence is not just “mere words”, but as much violence as physical violence. Racial insults have an immediate injurious impact on victims. There are two different dimensions that cause racist, homophobic

and other injurious speech to act as a blow on the victim's body: temporally, racial invectives condense a long historicity of unequal forms of address and distribution of wellbeing; somatically, they strike the body, harming a corporeal and psychic structure of affects that had been formed and sustained in linguistic practices.

Violent and forceful language can be harmful, but language that verges on provocation or incitement is clearly intended to prompt the other side into an ill-considered response, which itself may consist of either equally forceful or violent language, if not actual force and violence. Violent communication is communication that limits liberty, denies recognition of needs, diminishes the worth of a person, and/or blocks compassion. Violent communication is often the result of using manipulative or coercive language that induces fear, guilt, shame, praise, blame, duty, obligation, punishment, etc. Violent communication happens in speaking, listening, and thinking through self-talk or imagined conversations.

There is a phenomenon of language violence in dialogue with others, in dialogue with oneself, as well as hidden violence in language. This phenomenon has cognitive dimensions through which violence structures are built into general concepts, which are feared to be physically realized in reality (Al-Tamimi, 2022.). The extent of the damage that violent language can inflict on the soul and body is unimaginable. Encountering violent words can cause one psychological distress and extreme discomfort. Many individuals who result to suicide are products of both inter and intra violent communication.

Violence of language is the violence that a language, by its nature, imposes on its speakers through the authority that exists in the language itself and another symbolic authority that the language acquires from the social status of the speaker. This refers to language that is situated within relationships; i.e. one of the ways we understand what people mean when they speak or write is by referring to who they are, and how well we know them, and whether or not they have some kind of power or not. Language with its authority may force us to do with our words or our thinking what we do not like to do; when it restricts us to limited choices of words. Verbal violence can mean expressions such as threatening, instigating, sedition, innuendo, stinging joke, and everything that leads directly to inflicting harm (physical, psychological and emotional). Linguistic violence is inflicted by words, and it also occurs within words.

Violence thrives in language, and is finally realized outside it in physical reality. There are two types of linguistic violence in general discourse. The first type is in the context of war and the words of violence that users mention and intend their literal connotation, which are phrases derived from the domain of combat, such as bombing, killing, mutilation, etc. Such linguistic violence is justified in the context of war. The second type is patterns of linguistic violence that is exchanged by interlocutors in times of

peace and in the context of talk about religion, culture, family life or politics, and in which the same expressions from the same domain (fighting) are used.

In Nigeria, the effects of political activities that display hate speech, verbal abuse and violent communication have become apparent in a gradual democratic set-up over the years. More than ever before, the actions of politicians have negatively aggravated the situation, and kept citizens more divided. Odongo (2010) noted that hate speech refers to inciting and hate words against people who share certain group characteristics based on their own. This includes speech that advocates or encourages violent acts against a specific group, and creates an atmosphere of hatred or prejudice which in turn may promote hate crimes.

Verbal violence is on the rise in Nigeria, and finds expressions in two major factors that nurture and sustain its continuous existence, namely politics and ethno-religious conflicts. Orounye (2012) has observed that ethno-religious conflicts have become so pervasive that most of them are politically motivated. The outcome of most of these expressions of violence is wide-scale violence that often results in destruction of lives and property, intimidation and displacements of residents etc. Outbreaks of these conflicts often open the window for dissemination of injurious, hateful, dangerous and vituperative speeches that have the capacity of accelerating conflicts.

3.2. Review of Relevant Pragmatics Concepts

To chart the course of an effective meaning generation in relation to communication and violence, four relevant concepts are concisely interrogated in the sectional review. These are: context, implicature, speech acts and discourse. The selection of these four concepts is predicated on the goal of the paper which is to deploy pragmatic resources to unraveling the language mechanism for constructing violence.

3.3. Context, Implicature, Speech Acts, and Discourse/Discursive Pragmatics and Pragmatic Strategies

A very significant concept in pragmatics is *Context*. Here, context of an utterance refers to the relevant aspects of the physical or social setting of an utterance or discourse. If one can agree with Odebunmi (2006) that context is the spine of meaning, but that its scope is beyond human experience, that position may be further interrogated a little. Any form of human experience itself can be seen or described as context. There is no doubt that meaning cannot be identified without consideration of the context of utterance/text production.

Implicature refers to what is meant, suggested or inferred, as against what is literally stated. It has to be worked out, depending on the awareness of the speaker and the hearer of the presuppositions of the context of interaction. *Implicature* is the mid-way between what is said and what is implied, but not stated overtly. This is a sophisticated inferential procedure that is possible only through an understanding of the presuppositions of a situation of social interaction. Most often, this can be a source of violence in discourse. Grice (1975) identifies two types of implicature: conventional and conversational. The conventional implicature is workable through the normal or conventional meanings of the words used, whereas conversational implicatures are derived from a general principle of conversation. In other words; conversational implicature derives from the general conditions, which determine the conduct of conversations.

The main feature of pragmatics is the identification of speech acts, such acts may be direct or indirect speech acts. In an indirect speech act, the speaker utters a sentence, and means more than what he literally says. It could refer to utterances in which we say one thing and mean another, or say one thing and mean what we have said, and also mean another illocution with a different propositional content; hence, it is possible to perform indirect speech acts in violence communication, hate speech or abusive language. In indirect speech acts, the speaker intends to produce a certain illocutionary effect in the hearer, and he intends to produce this effect by getting the hearer to recognize his intention by virtue of the hearer's knowledge of the rules that govern the utterances of the sentence. Because of the hints, insinuations, irony, metaphor, etc. the speaker's utterance and meaning fall apart in indirect speech act. Indirect speech acts may not be thoroughly understood without due regard to the total pragmatic contexts in which they are conceived and used. This is largely because they are speech acts that perform other functions apart from the ones they are made to perform on the surface construction. Though paralinguistic features like postures, facial expressions, hesitations, pauses and tone of voice, may be appropriately utilized to modify and boost the illocutionary force of indirect speech acts, in violence-related discourses, the lexical choices often help to identify the practs being intended or performed.

Discourse is actually seen as a particular way of representing certain aspects of reality. Some specific conditions must thus be satisfied if discourse will effectively present the social construction of reality. These conditions include: the structural characteristics of particular societies, features of their institutions, aspects of their history, as well as issues relating to the beliefs, attitudes and values of the people. When we speak of **discourse**, we are always speaking of language that is in some way situated. And that is the meeting point between pragmatics and discourse. Language is always situated in at least four ways: First, **within the material world**, and where we encounter it (invariably, the context) will contribute to the way we interpret it; Second, **within relationships**; one of the main ways we understand what people mean when they speak

or write is by referring to who they are, how well we know them, and whether or not they have some kind of power over us; Third, **in history**, that is, in relation to what happened before, and what we expect to happen afterwards. Finally, **language is situated in relation to other language(s)** – utterances and texts always respond to or refer to other utterances and texts; that is, everything that we say or write is situated in a kind of network of discourse. These situations help in no small way in analyzing discourse of any type, violence discourse inclusive. Based on that, Scollon and Levine (2004) argue that “language in use,” whether in the form of spoken language or text, is always and inevitably constructed across multiple modes of interaction, involving speech and gesture. This is why video contents and written texts will suffice here, in the examination of language of violence.

3.4. Theoretical Orientation: The Triangulation

The paper collates resources of the theoretical bases of the speech acts theory, cooperative principle, pragmatic acts, and discursive pragmatics. Out of these resources. The pragmatic strategies were identified and interpreted. As scholars and researchers in the field of pragmatics, one may be tempted to assume that it may not be necessary to define this broad term, again, but defining the concept will help to freshen our individual and collective memories about this polymorphous field. Many authors (Bianchi 2004, Recanati 2004, Basso et al 2009, Ariel 2010, Sperber and Wilson 2012) have defined pragmatics as a field that is similar to the neighbouring discipline of semantics, in terms of interpretation of meaning. However, differently from semantics, pragmatics is interested in the meaning that does not coincide with the truth-conditional meaning of an utterance. Pragmatics studies how people use words to accomplish actions in their conversations such as requesting, directing, ordering, threatening, warning, abusing and apologizing, which are all present in discourse of violence.

3.4.1. Speech Act Theory

One of the theories of pragmatics that helps to define expressions is **Speech Act Theory**, which traces speech acts, and pays attention to the classification and characterization of speech acts. In other words, speech acting has to do with the action performed in saying what is said, and they are verbal actions happening in the world. According to Mey (2001:95), speech acting involves doing something with words, which in effect may bring about a change in a given state of affairs. The main thrust of speech act theory is that utterances do not only express a state of being but also perform an action. Obviously, we do not merely say something with our words, we do something with them. Also of note is that an utterance or a statement by a speaker is both an expression of meaning and attitude. And this is crucial in the interrogation of language of violence.

3.4.2. Cooperative Principle

One major theory of pragmatics is the **Cooperative Principle**, as advanced by Herbert Paul Grice (1975), and it derives from the cognitive-philosophical pragmatics perspective. The Cooperative Principle (CP) is a general principle that participants bring into play in a cooperative interaction, and its four categories as well as their submaxims are well discussed in several literatures. It is important to recognize these sub-principles (maxims) of *Quantity*, *Quality*, *Relation* and *Manner*, which illustrate CP, as unstated assumptions we have in conversations. One of the assumptions is that people are normally going to provide an appropriate amount of information: that speakers are telling the truth; that they are being relevant, in their contributions; and that they are trying to be as clear as they can. There is also the theory of **Implicature**, also espoused by Grice, which stemmed off from the CP. This also addresses the "Hornian Intervention in Cooperative Principle".

3.4.3. Relevance Theory

We also have the **Relevance Theory** proposed by Sperber & Wilson (1986), which is grounded on the idea that our cognitive systems have evolved in the direction of increasing efficiency, and are set up so that they tend automatically to maximize relevance. Our inferential systems tend to draw the greatest possible cognitive effects from the combination of the new information and context. In this approach, the search for relevance is a basic feature of human cognition, which is exploited, in ostensive-inferential communication. Speakers and hearers have powerful mind-reading abilities. In producing a certain utterance, the speaker tends to take for granted what background assumptions the hearer is likely to use, as well as what inferences he is likely to draw, among others.

3.4.4. Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory (2001)

Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory (2001), is considered a systematic improvement of speech act theory. Unlike speech act theory, pragmatic acts theory takes care of not just utterances but action and the situation that influences these utterances, and this is why the theory can accommodate any genre of discourse or utterance, violence communication discourse inclusive. In this theory, there are two parts to pragmeme - the **activity part** and the **textual part**. The activity part deals with the interactants, while the textual part refers to the context of language use. The interactants, who often operate within the confines of the activity part, communicate with the deployment of different speech acts such as indirect speech acts, conversational (dialogue) acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts, and physical acts. Similarly, in the textual part, the interactants operate within the ambit of (con)textual phenomena such as inference, relevance, voice, shared situation knowledge, metaphor and metapragmatic joker. The interaction between these two parts, activity and textual, makes up the pragmeme with its various practs or allopracts.

The goal of pragmatics is to explain how a listener can succeed in retrieving some interpretation intended by the speaker from an uttered sequence of words. This is done through the identification of particular speech act(s) that an utterance performs. Speech act implies doing things with words. Implied in the concept of speech acts is the assumption that the minimal unit of human communication is not a sentence or other expression, but rather the performance of certain kinds of acts such as *making statements, asking questions, giving orders, describing, explaining, apologizing, thanking, congratulating, etc.*

3.4.5. Discursive Pragmatics

Zienkowski (2011, p.1) describes discursive pragmatics as “a platform for the pragmatic study of discourse.” It is an interdisciplinary field of discourse analysis and linguistic pragmatics which has no agreement on the meaning of the two terms; as they are no straight forward items. The significance of discursive pragmatics, as an interdisciplinary and inter-theoretical cross-fertilization, relies on its communicative potential. Studies on discursive pragmatics range from topic, themes, theories and perspectives connected with rhetoric, cognitive linguistics, semantics, sociolinguistics, communication studies, philosophy, literature and many other interdisciplinary fields. All the above mentioned disciplines when critically assessed are products of an increasing pre-occupation with pragmatic concerns in connection to both functional and communicative language use.

3.4.6. Pragmatic Strategies

Pragmatics has contributed immensely to the concept of communicative competence, by concentrating on the adequacy of language in its social context as well as on the function of language use in actual interaction among interlocutors. Thus, 'pragmatic communicative competence' is concerned with the use of sufficient interaction styles to communicate a speaker's intended meaning, in a real interaction among interlocutors. Pragmatic strategies are thus the different tactics employed by language users to drive home the intended meaning (message) of the addresser (sender) to the addressee (receiver). This may be direct or indirect. Some pragmatic strategies particularly will include the use of interrogation, deresponsibilisation, labelling, name calling, presupposition, implicature, accusing and blaming, negative evaluation, judging and criticizing, dehumanization and demonization, among several others. Nevertheless, communication, being a two-way process through which an exchange of meaningful messages, takes place between and among interlocutors, involves thoughts, ideas, concepts, feelings, etc., towards a mutually accepted goal to create shared understanding. All these are necessary for effective interrogation of injurious or hate speech, and verbal violence.

4.0. Methodology

This study adopted the purposive sampling technique to select its data which comprise:

i) a 22-sentence press release by Former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo which he delivered on the 27th February, 2023. The Press Release comprises 22 sentences, and given the contexts of the release, the mutually shared background information and beliefs by all Nigerians and members of the international community, the various forms of knowledge and shared common ground, 8 of the sentences were selected. The sentences were selected from a copy of the Release obtained from *the Primeneews online*. The selected Sentences 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 were subjected to analysis. The selection is based on the presence of lexical items that have potentials for expression, ignition, incitement, inducement and promotion of violence, either overtly or covertly. Though van Dijk (2003) posits that Pragmatics should study such acts within the broader domain of discourse, and not be restricted to isolated sentences, these sentences have been contextualized, given the various backgrounds that have produced them;

ii) Excerpts from the Speech by President von der Leyen, delivered at the European Parliament Plenary on Russian aggression against Ukraine, on 1st March 2022 constitute the second part of data. 10 of the sentences are analyzed. The sentences selected for analyses are Ss 2, 3, 6, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20.; and

iii) finally, the communicative exchanges at INEC Office Abuja Collation Centre between INEC Chairman and Senator Dino Melaye, a party agent, on the 27th February, 2023, labelled **dialogue**.

Purposive data selection from the 3 sources was hinged on: (1) the need to have a representative coverage of language use in Nigeria (national), and that of Europe (International); (2) the presence of notable indices of lexicalized violence in both climes' recorded and transcribed texts.

Using the top-down analytical approach, the paper first identified the types of violence and their underlying context in the political text and video content, before discussing the pragmatic strategies deployed in enacting these typologies of identified violence types and contexts.

5.0. Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Typologies and Contexts of Violence in the Selected Political Texts and Video Contents

a. Physical violence

Verbally and non-verbally constructed, physical violence concerns expressions and demonstrations that orient towards physical agitation and war-induced migrations. This violence type is found to be prominent in the context of politics, war/agitation. The dialogue between the INEC Chairman and Senator Dino Melaye divulges the various manifestations of this violence type.

Party Agent: Mr. Chairman

INEC Officer for Osun State: My score is here.

Party Agent: Mr. Chairman...

Vice Chancellor: My name is Prof. Folashade Ogunsola the Vice-Chancellor of Lagos State.

Party Agent: Mr. Chairman...

INEC chairman: You are now more than **disruptive**.

Party Agent: I am not disruptive. I am **defending** my vote and **allowed by law to do that**.

INEC Chairman: Oh Kwara, No, Osun, introduce yourself and read the scores...

The context of the **Dialogue** above reveals an altercation between the INEC Chairman and a party agent. While the party agent seeks the attention of the Chairman by repeatedly calling on the Chairman, the latter was ignoring the calls, alleging the complainant as a disruptor. This is typical of construction of violence because the deliberate attempt not to hear the party agent is a strategic means of deemphasizing the importance of the call, and consequently inviting a rancor. The simple clause "You are now more than disruptive" presupposes that he is aware of the calls, and found them at that point unbearable. On this, the party agent also resorts to the evocation of his legal right to complain about what he felt is an anomaly that needed to be addressed. Disruption is also symbolically stamped by the speaker's stand to protest and consequently interrupt the vote counting process.

Taking an excerpt from von der Leyen's Speech in **S.2**, 'They sought refuge **inside our borders**, because **their country was not safe** any longer', the S.2 is a depiction of

physical disruption (violence) punctuated by the indices of migration which are allegedly orchestrated by war in the case of the Ukraine versus Russia. Being made refugees of war, the speaker painted a situation of anarchy in Ukraine and its attendant lack of peace that resulted in their migration to other country's borders, seeking safety.

b. Psychological/Emotive violence

Still within the context of war and destruction, there is a mental subscription to psychological or emotive violence. This type of violence is defined by the state of mind and condition of the acts described through the propositional content of the speaker(s). Emotive verbs and other lexical indices concretize this violence type as exemplified in Ss. 3 & 4.

S.3 Thousands of people fleeing from bombs, camped in underground stations – holding hands, crying silently, trying to cheer each other up. (From von der Leyen's Speech)

S.4 'Your Excellency... tension is building up ...' (From Obasanjo's Letter)

Both S.3 and S.4 evoke a kind of psychological tension ignited by the different contexts of conflict. S.3 demonstrates this typology of violence by the fleeing, camping and crying of thousands of people as a result of the bombings described by the speaker. The portrayal of these people trying to cheer up one another is a testament to their state of emotional downcast.

c. Social-ideological violence (politics/war/law context)

Discourse has a way of revealing the ideology and identity of individuals. In other words, the US-THEM polarity is mostly fanned by constructing themselves in the best light while defaming others in the most cruel form. Socio-ideological violence is concerned as a type of violence associated with personalities' identity and ideological dispositions and how these have been perceived as inimical to the health and wellbeing of others. S.5 and S.6 demonstrate this violence types.

S.5 At this stage, we do not need wittingly or unwittingly to set this country on fire with the greed, irresponsibility and unpatriotic act of those who allegedly gave money to INEC officials for perversion and those who collected the blood money. (From Obasanjo's Letter)

S.6 Honourable Members,

This is a moment of truth for Europe. Let me quote the editorial of one Ukrainian newspaper, the Kyiv Independent, published just hours before the invasion began: 'This is not just about Ukraine. **It is a clash of two worlds, two polar sets of values.**' They

are so right. This is a clash between **the rule of law and the rule of the gun**; between **democracies and autocracies**; between **a rules-based order and a world of naked aggression**. (From von der Leyen's Speech)

Both illustrations (Ss. 5 & 6) reveal social violence in varied contexts and form. The first example is established in the contexts of election and its characterizing corruption which is a form of violence as captured by the lexical categories "set this country on fire" and "blood money". These are cautioning acts that warn against politicians who undertake illicit steps towards rigging elections for themselves and the potentially implicit violence that it can trigger.

The second example also solidifies this violence in the speaker's language use as he contextualizes within their legislative affordance the underlying import of the ongoing violent conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The speaker lexicalizes that it is an ideological clash between different types of leadership wherein one is democratic while the other is autocratic; where one operates within the ambits of the rule of law while other clings to the rule of the gun. The pragmatic import of this socio-ideological violence can be sieved from the disruption of the social order that suffers in the hand of blood-thirsty leaders whose identities portray violence by their conduct.

We need now to explicate some of the views discussed, so far, by investigating the pragmatic strategies employed in the expressions of violence in some aspects of data.

5.2. Pragmatic Strategies in the Construction of Violence in the Selected Political Texts and Video Contents

Six (6) pragmatic strategies were deployed to enforce violence in the studied texts and video contents. These strategies eminently engendered and amplified the three contextual typologies of violence as discussed in the previous section. The six pragmatic strategies deployed are: deresponsibilisation, assertive (acts of) accusation, threatening acts/blame game, defaming (identity/character), and graphicisation of (physical) violence acts. These are discussed in turn in the following sections

a. Deresponsibilisation

Deresponsibilisation is the act of evading responsibility. It is a tact individuals engage to shift blame or distance themselves from issues of political undertone. The adoption of this pragmatic strategy is intended to forge out self-exoneration and other-indictment. It connects to prediction of potential violence through indirect act of warning. S.7. projects this strategy:

S. 7. When the die is cast, it will be your problem and that of the nation. (From Obasanjo's Letter)

S.7 is not a case of pragmatic failure or incompetence, rather it is a case of deresponsibilisation. In his use of hedging, Obasanjo is asking PMB to share the responsibility for what he (Obasanjo) is saying. He is trying/has tried to 'deresponsibilise' himself, by heightening the impact of his expression. And it is in that pragmatic strategy that the violence in his communication resonates (Odebunmi, 2019, 14). According to Mey, (2021, 10), 'hedging', just like other forms of mitigation, is a form of deresponsibilisation; a way to decrease responsibility by downgrading the importance of what is being said, by referring to an authority, or even by 'masking' one's utterances such that they appear to originate from another source, belong to another speaker, or are at home in another context where they cannot be distinguished among the cacophony of voices that interfere in the interaction (Mey, 2021: 10-11). Threatening is a familiar form of verbal abuse, and can be very explicit such as expressed in the utterance above. Obasanjo, through this utterance, is creating a sense of fear, disaster and catastrophe which can result as a result of inaction of PMB to act. This is another pragmatic strategy of deresponsibilisation.

b. Assertive (acts of) accusation (pragmatically lexicalizes indictment) &(In)Assertive/hedged act (of accusation)

These are claim-making strategies with harsh and mild illocutionary force. Pragmatic assertion is a strategic deployment of language to introduce a new message with minimal reliance on presupposition. In this article, it is broadly projected through confrontational act – bald-on record type of engagement. It gets at direct acts with minimal face saving acts. Language use in this form is conflict-induced, and therefore construct violence in a wide sense.

S. 8. It is no secret that INEC officials, at the operational level, have been allegedly compromised to make what should have worked not to work and the results doctored.

S. 9. The Chairman of INEC may claim ignorance but he cannot fold his hands and do nothing when he knows that election process has been corrupted and most of the results that are brought outside BVAS and server are not true reflection of the will of Nigerians who have made their individual choice.

S. 10. At this stage, we do not need wittingly or unwittingly to set this country on fire with the greed, irresponsibility and unpatriotic act of those who allegedly gave money to INEC officials for perversion and those who collected the blood money.
(Ss 8-10 are from Obasanjo's Letter)

Obasanjo has obviously, in S.8, taken a position, here, as he states his belief in unequivocal terms, particularly with the use of the words – ‘...*INEC officials... have been allegedly compromised and ...results doctored.*’ His use of the hedge ‘allegedly’ is characteristic of Obasanjo, whenever he wants to play safe with words (see Ayodabo, 2003). This pragmatic strategy is to force the INEC into doing what he (Obasanjo) wants them to do (that is, cancel/review the presidential election results-release process). The use of these words can provoke the INEC, as an institution, incite the opposition against the supposedly winning candidate/party, nudge the government at the center and the general public to possible unimaginable actions and inactions. These words, as used, here constitute hate speech; they are intolerant words of insult to condemn INEC and the entire results release process.

In **S.9**, the writer uses outright assertion in provoking the Chairman of INEC by declaring that ‘...*he cannot fold his hands and do nothing when he knows that election process has been corrupted...*’. This prodding of INEC Chairman’s conscience constitutes verbal abuse of the INEC Chairman’s integrity as an expected unbiased referee. Obasanjo goes on further to assume the role of the all-knowing, when he contends that ‘... *most of the results that are brought outside BVAS and server are not true reflection of the will of Nigerians who have made their individual choice.*’. This all-knowing strategy can be premised on his status as a statesman, which many people will believe has provided a sort of advantage for him to know more than most Nigerians and foreigners about the results being declared. Thus, his utterance has symbolically violentized the world of Nigerians and members of the foreign community, who consider Nigeria as the heart of Africa. If any violence erupts in Nigeria, as a result of this Press Release, it is capable of snowballing into many countries in Africa.

In **S.10**, expressions that display violent words include: fire, greed, irresponsibility, unpatriotic act, perversion, blood money’. All these give moralistic judgements on INEC. Referring INEC and staff as irresponsible and unpatriotic diminishes the worth of that institution and they key leaders. These are strong abusive and violent words that can cause psychological distress and extreme discomfort to the target victims.

S.11 is a dialogue the Nigeria’s Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakub and Senator Dino Melaye, the agent of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). This is a post presidential election encounter, and the verbal altercation occurred at the National Collation Centre of the INEC Office in Abuja.

S.11 Dialogue:

INEC Chairman: You are now being disruptive.

Party Agent: I am not disruptive. We are saying what you uploaded is not the right thing. You can bundle me out but the right thing must be done. I am a party agent.

INEC Chairman: You are now being disruptive.

Party Agent: That is not what the constitution says.

INEC. Chairman: You are now being disruptive.

Party Agent: I am not being disruptive. I am asking if what you uploaded is.. (inaudible).

INEC Chairman: Okay, next score, please! After the presentation, we will then come back to the issue you raised.

Party Agent: Let him say that what is uploaded is what he's going to present.

INEC chairman: Okay, score Kwara, Oh sorry, Monshood Mondan, please make your presentation. Kwara has done its own. Okay, please Osun state go ahead with your presentation.

INEC Officer for Osun state: Okay, my is Dr. Mutiu Olaleke Agnoke. I am the resident of electoral commission INEC Osun state.

The above encounter is an expression of anger by the agent of one of the political parties which contested for the Office of the President of Nigeria on 25th February, 2023. The exchange of words was between the INEC Chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakub and Senator Dino Melaye, the agent of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Obviously, the Party Agent is the aggressor, given the fact that his political party seems not to be recording the expected level of success, as the results were being announced and collated, State by State.

The INEC Chairman's repetition of the expression: '*You are being disruptive*' does not go well with the Party Agent, and he keeps on, with a high pitch of tone, protesting that he wasn't being disruptive. There is no doubt that the party agent is aggressive, and he utters: '*I am not being disruptive '... You can bundle me out! But the right thing must be done.*' The noise being generated by the Party Agent has heightened the tension within the hall, and in the end, the Party Agent stormed out of the Collation Centre in annoyance. His outburst thus constitutes verbal violence. The INEC's responses to the Party Agent's utterances constitute a 'face off' or 'avoidance'. The response also breaks

Grice's CP sub-maxims of 'Quantity', 'Quality' and 'Relevance'. This strategy appears deliberate, on the part of the INEC Chairman. All he was concerned with, at that moment, was the presidential election results' collation and declaration of the winner. The Party Agent's words, in the pitch of expression, goes beyond mere complain; they constitute indirect verbal abuse, because as opined by Silva (2017:13), 'the idealized model of a shared metalinguistic world grounded on cooperation doesn't seem to hold in this case'.

b. Threatening acts/blame game

Threatening and blaming are two pronounced forms in which language violentises the world of speakers. Threats are constructed when potential dangers are spelt out with possible consequences, as denoted in S.12 and S.13 in the macro contexts of politics teased out predominantly by an indicting act.

S. 12. Let me appeal to the Chairman of INEC, **if his hands are clean, to save Nigeria from the looming danger and disaster which is just waiting to happen....'** (From Obasanjo's Letter)

S. 13. 'Your Excellency ... tension is building up ...' (From Obasanjo's Letter)

The above text in S.12 may look like an appeal ordinarily, it is an indirect accusation and indictment. The writer is raising an alarm, here, and possibly encouraging and indirectly urging those who may feel cheated or aggrieved by the results declared by INEC, so far, to be ready to react violently, perhaps 'through violent words, as he believes and opines that '*... danger and disaster ... is just waiting to happen...*'. The strategy used here is that of 'demand' and 'blocking compassion', and an outright implied **threat** or **blame**. S.13 is another case of implicit threat to force the INEC Chairman to review the election result process. Thus, this 'alarm call' is aimed at intimidating the INEC Chairman, by calling on President Muhammadu Buhari to act and intervene. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo and President Muhammadu Buhari are both ex-military men, hence the grave import of the expression '*...tension is building up...*' is understood by both the writer and the addressee. And that common ground is what the writer has exploited.

c. Defaming (Identity/Character)

Defaming is a recurrent pragmatic strategy in which someone's reputation is deliberately damaged by another. This is done through speech acts of indicting and alleging. In the context of politics, it is used to discredit leadership, and create distrust for them among their citizens.

S. 14. The Chairman of INEC may sneak out of the country or go back to his ivory tower. (From Obasanjo's Letter)

The reality being created/painted/envisaged, here, is, to some extent, contingent on Obasanjo's imagination, and perhaps expectation/viewpoint. The intention behind this prediction is hateful, and the effect of the utterance is hurtful to the person-victim that is mentioned. In essence, what is describable as hate speech, verbal abuse, violent language or violent communication is the whole act of being insulting, defaming, blasphemous, unpleasant actions, provoking, inciting or spreading false news. See also Mangantibe (2016). Generally, the main pragmatic strategy employed by Obasanjo in his Press Release is to speak violently to INEC, so that the institution might do what he (Obasanjo) wants, by inducing fear, guilt, blame, duty obligation on them.

Perhaps it is pertinent to note that politically motivated hate speech is generally an antecedent of election-related provocation and violence in Nigeria, as seen in the Press Release analyzed above. The fundamental question, therefore, is: why would Obasanjo, a social actor, considered a statesman by virtue of his profile and antecedent, and someone expected to be immersed in a peaceful sociability resort to such disproportionate use of words? The entire text features an interesting engagement of lexical choices in signaling the practs of warning and threatening. He has also relied on deresponsibilisation, largely as a way to hedge most of his utterances.

d. Evocation of antecedence

Speakers' violentisation of their world is sometimes strategically constructed by resorting to history to validate the projection of violence. This is demonstrated in the following S.15 and 16.

S. 15. War has returned to Europe. (From von der Leyen's Speech)

S. 16. Almost thirty years after the Balkan Wars, and over half a century after Soviet troops marched into Prague and Budapest, civil defence sirens again went off in the heart of a European capital. (From von der Leyen's Speech)

S.15 is a declarative, in which the President of the European Commission, Ursula Getrud von der Leyen, the German politician who has been serving as the President of the European Commission since 2019 presupposes that war was once in Europe. His strategy of recalling the agony and pains of the war then, is a signal warning to the entire European Union that a possible recall of history is here! Thus, this is a reiteration of the fact that what arises in a language may be processed within the language before it appears in reality. The implicature here is conversational. This strategy of appealing to history reenacts the violence that pervaded Europe in the past; thus the expression

of 'War has returned to Europe' is to show that the symbolic power of language comes from its ability to create violence through verbal expressions.

S.16 above is another recourse to history, where von der Leyen uses words of reality to inflict linguistic violence on his audience. The use of lexical items '*... thirty years after the Balkan Wars, ... over half a century after Soviet troops marched into Prague and Budapest, civil defence sirens again went off ...*' graphically and symbolically recalls the sordid war histories. The use of '*...again...*' has conventional implication in pragmatic terms, and von der Leyen perhaps uses this to jolt her listeners into consciousness about the looming dangers ahead. She has used these words to create a psyche of violence.

e. Graphicization of (physical) violence acts

This is the graphic representation of violence. It is intended to create mental images that arouse compassion from audiences. This pragmatic strategy is common to propositions indexing war, as can be seen in the following:

S. 17. Thousands of people **fleeing from bombs**, camped in underground stations – holding hands, **crying silently**, trying to **cheer each other up**.

S. 18. Cars lined up **towards Ukrainian Western borders**, and when many of them **ran out of fuel**, people picked up their children and their backpacks and marched for **tens of kilometres towards our Union**.

S.19. They sought refuge **inside our borders**, because **their country was not safe** any longer.

S.20. Because inside Ukraine, **a gruesome death count has begun**. **Men, women, children** are dying, once again, because a foreign leader, President Putin, decided that their country, Ukraine, has no right to exist. (Ss 17-20 are from von der Leden's Speech)

Graphic representation is also achieved above through number, a strategy that uses counting number of victims or casualties of war. We have a pillage of violent words, here, such as '*... people fleeing*', '*bomb*', '*... underground stations...*', '*... holding hands*', '*crying...*' all summing up as coercive language that induces sense of destruction, fear, aggression and desolation, thus blocking compassion. In other words, the world is assaulted and fouled by this communicability of violent discourse. Von der Leyen paints a picture of helplessness and desolation here, and the foulness of her words resonates pity in '*... when many of them ran out of fuel, people picked up their children*

and backpacks and marched for tens of kilometres towards our Union'. Obviously, the speaker is asserting the power and influence of the Union to be the available helper in time of crisis. This is a strategy of denial of responsibility through blaming of the actions (of the war) on precipitators of the war(s). This is a strategy of moralistic judgements and evaluation of others; thus she puts Ukrainians down, and exposes their helplessness and inadequacies. The linguistic items '*...sought refuge*', and '*...not safe...*' foreground the inescapable violence which the verbal expressions pragmatically project. She casts a moral judgement on President Putin as the source of the agony that is pervading Ukraine. This pragmatic strategy is also that of denial of responsibility (deresponsibilisation) as well as explicit threat of blame. Thus, we can see how violent, vulgar and inciting her words and expressions are.

6. Conclusion

Arising from the analysis, it becomes obvious that language and violence can manifest in different forms, and they can be of different types and in different contexts. Violence discourse can be either explicit or implicit, and can be expressed in direct or indirect speech acts. Such can be in form of **speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display which disparages or intimidates a protected individual or group**. In other words, a speech that offends, threatens, or insults groups, based on race, colour, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or other traits is characterizable as violent language, verbal abuse, language violence or hate speech. Although Pragmatics has traditionally favoured attention to harmonious or cooperative interactions, recruiting the canons of linguistic thinking to account for conflictive communication requires a great deal of rethinking, as Culpepper (2011) has opined. Because our language use is vulnerable to violence, conflict and excessive emotion, further inquiry into this vulnerability may shed light on how we can engage with violence through words. As language users and analysts, we have a responsibility of interrogating situations, utterances and texts that are capable of generating, promoting or igniting violence whether in the home front, at places of work, in politics, the economy, etc. in religious homes or even on the field of play, etc. In other words, as pragmaticists, we should show concern and interest in examining pragmatic strategies that are employed by speakers, in their utterances, and writers in texts. It should also be a source of interest to us to examine strategies, available, to mitigate the illocutionary effects of the violentized utterances and expressions. It is then that our relevance as language researchers and scholars will become utilitarian.

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Appendices

- i. Text of President von der Leyen's Speech to the European Parliament Plenary on Russian aggression against Ukraine, on 1st March, 2022.
- ii. Text of Olusegun Obasanjo's Letter to Nigerians, as published by the Primeneews online on 28th February, 2023

European Commission –

Speech by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary on the Russian aggression against Ukraine

Brussels, 1 March 2022

Madam President of the European Parliament,

Mr. President of the Council,

High Representative,

Mr. President of the Ukraine, dear Volodymyr,

Mr. Speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament,

My Honourable Members,

War has returned to Europe. Almost thirty years after the Balkan Wars, and over half a century after Soviet troops marched into Prague and Budapest, civil defence sirens

again went off in the heart of a European capital. Thousands of people fleeing from bombs, camped in underground stations – holding hands, crying silently, trying to cheer each other up. Cars lined up towards Ukrainian Western borders, and when many of them ran out of fuel, people picked up their children and their backpacks and marched for tens of kilometres towards our Union. They sought refuge inside our borders, because their country was not safe any longer. **Because inside Ukraine, a gruesome death count has begun. Men, women, children are dying, once again, because a foreign leader, President Putin, decided that their country, Ukraine, has no right to exist.** And we will never ever let that happen and never ever accept that.

Honourable Members,

This is a moment of truth for Europe. Let me quote the editorial of one Ukrainian newspaper, the Kyiv Independent, published just hours before the invasion began: **'This is not just about Ukraine. It is a clash of two worlds, two polar sets of values.' They are so right. This is a clash between the rule of law and the rule of the gun; between democracies and autocracies; between a rules-based order and a world of naked aggression. How we respond today to what Russia is doing will determine the future of the international system. The destiny of Ukraine is at stake, but our own fate also lies in the balance. We must show the power that lies in our democracies; we must show the power of people that choose their independent paths, freely and democratically. This is our show of force.**

Today, a Union of almost half a billion people has mobilised for Ukraine. The people of Europe are demonstrating in front of Russian embassies all across our Union. Many of them have opened their homes to Ukrainians – fleeing from Putin's bombs. And let me thank especially Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary for welcoming these women, men and children. Europe will be there for them, not only in the first days, but also in the weeks and months to come. That must be our promise altogether. And this is why we are proposing to activate the temporary protection mechanism to provide them with a secure status and access to schools, medical care and work. They deserve it. We need to do that now. We know this is only the beginning. More Ukrainians will need our protection and solidarity. We are and we will be there for them.

Our Union is showing a unity of purpose that makes me proud. At the speed of light, the European Union has adopted three waves of heavy sanctions against Russia's financial system, its high-tech industries and its corrupt elite. This is the largest sanctions package in our Union's history. We do not take these measures lightly, but we feel we had to act. These sanctions will take a heavy toll on the Russian economy and on the Kremlin. We are disconnecting key Russian banks from the SWIFT network. We also banned the transactions of Russia's central bank, the single most important financial institution in Russia. This paralyses billions in foreign reserves, turning off the tap on Russia's and Putin's war. We have to end this financing of his war.

Second, we target important sectors of the Russian economy. We are making it impossible for Russia to upgrade its oil refineries; to repair and modernise its air fleet; and to access many important technologies it needs to build a prosperous future. We have closed our skies to Russian aircraft, including the private jets of oligarchs. And make no mistake: We will freeze their other assets as well – be it yachts or fancy cars or luxury properties. We will freeze that altogether.

Thirdly, in another unprecedented step, we are suspending the licences of the Kremlin's propaganda machine. The state-owned Russia Today and Sputnik, and all of their subsidiaries, will no longer be able to spread their lies to justify Putin's war and to divide our Union. These are unprecedented actions by the European Union and our partners in response to an unprecedented aggression by Russia.

Each one of these steps has been closely coordinated with our partners and allies, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Norway, but also, for example, Japan, South Korea and Australia. All of these days, you see that more than 30 countries – representing well over half of the world's economy – have also announced sanctions and export controls on Russia. If Putin was seeking to divide the European Union, to weaken NATO, and to break the international community, he has achieved exactly the opposite. We are more united than ever and we will stand up in this war, that is for sure that we will overcome and we will prevail. We are united and we stay united.

Honourable Members,

I am well aware that these sanctions will come at a cost for our economy, too. I know this, and I want to speak honestly to the people of Europe. We have endured two years of pandemic. And we all wished that we could focus on our economic and social recovery. But I believe that the people of Europe understand very well that we must stand up against this cruel aggression. Yes, protecting our liberty comes at a price. But this is a defining moment. And this is the cost we are willing to pay. Because freedom is priceless, Honourable Members. This is our principle: Freedom is priceless.

Our investments today will make us more independent tomorrow. I am thinking, first and foremost, about our energy security. We simply cannot rely so much on a supplier that explicitly threatens us. This is why we reached out to other global suppliers. And they responded. Norway is stepping up. In January, we had a record supply of LNG gas. We are building new LNG terminals and working on interconnectors. But in the long run, it is our switch to renewables and hydrogen that will make us truly independent. We have to accelerate the green transition. Because every kilowatt-hour of electricity Europe generates from solar, wind, hydropower or biomass reduces our dependency on Russian gas and other energy sources. This is a strategic investment. And my Honourable Members, this is a strategic investment, because on top, less dependency on Russian gas and other fossil fuel sources also means less money for the Kremlin's war chest. This is also a truth. We are resolute, Europe can rise up to the challenge. The same is true on defence. European security and defence has evolved more in the last six days than in the last two decades. Most Member States have promised deliveries of military equipment to Ukraine. Germany announced that it will meet the 2% goal of NATO as soon as possible. And our Union, for the first time ever,

is using the European budget to purchase and deliver military equipment to a country that is under attack. EUR 500 million from the European Peace Facility, to support Ukraine's defence. As a first batch, we will now also match this by at least EUR 500 million from the EU budget to deal with the humanitarian consequences of this tragic war, both in the country and for the refugees.

Honourable Members,

This is a watershed moment for our Union. We cannot take our security and the protection of people for granted. We have to stand up for it. We have to invest in it. We have to carry our fair share of the responsibility.

This crisis is changing Europe. But Russia has also reached a crossroads. The actions of the Kremlin are severely damaging the long-term interests of Russia and its people. More and more Russians understand this as well. They are marching for peace and freedom. And how does the Kremlin respond to this? By arresting thousands of them. But ultimately, the longing for peace and freedom cannot be silenced. There is another Russia besides Putin's tanks. And we extend our hand of friendship to this other Russia. Be assured, they have our support.

Honourable Members,

In these days, independent Ukraine is facing its darkest hour. At the same time, the Ukrainian people are holding up the torch of freedom for all of us. They are showing immense courage. They are defending their lives. But they are also fighting for universal values and they are willing to die for them. President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people are a true inspiration. When we last spoke, he told me again about his people's dream to join our Union. Today, the European Union and Ukraine are already closer than ever before. There is still a long path ahead. We have to end this war. And we should talk about the next steps. But I am sure: Nobody in this hemicycle can doubt that a people that stands up so bravely for our European values belongs in our European family.

And therefore, Honourable Members, I say: Long live Europe. And long live a free and independent Ukraine.

My z vamy. Slava Ukraini.

SPEECH/22/1483 Related media

Extraordinary Plenary session on the Russian aggression against Ukraine

Participation of Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, to the European Parliament Plenary debate, on the Russian aggression against Ukraine

Olusegun Obasanjo

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PRESS RELEASE

2023 NIGERIA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION **- AN APPEAL FOR CAUTION AND RECTIFICATION**

Nigerian Brothers and Sisters, greetings to you all.

I am constrained to speak at this point.

I crave the indulgence of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency General Muhammadu Buhari, to make this statement because I have had opportunity to keep him aware of what I know is happening and the danger looming ahead. On many occasions in the past, I have not hesitated to point out lacuna in the action of the President and his government. But as far as the election issues are concerned, the President has proved beyond reasonable doubt that he will want to leave a legacy of free, fair, transparent and credible elections.

Until last Saturday night, February 25, 2023, the good and noble plan and preparation for the elections seemed to be going well. For the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), a lot of money was spent to introduce Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), and the Server for immediate transmission of results from polling units. It is no secret that INEC officials, at operational level, have been allegedly compromised to make what should have worked not to work and to revert to manual transmission of results which is manipulated and the results doctored. The Chairman of INEC may claim ignorance but he cannot fold his hands and do nothing when he knows that election process has been corrupted and most of the results that are brought outside BVAS and Server are not true reflection of the will of Nigerians who have made their individual choice. At this stage, we do not need wittingly or unwittingly to set this country on fire with the greed, irresponsibility and unpatriotic act of those who allegedly gave money to INEC officials for perversion and those who collected the blood money. Let me appeal to the Chairman of INEC, if his hands are clean, to save Nigeria from the looming danger and disaster which is just

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waiting to happen. If the Chairman can postpone elections four days to the election, he can do everything to rectify the errors of the last two days – no BVAS, no result to be acceptable; and no upload through Server, no result to be acceptable.

Where BVAS and Servers have been manipulated or rendered inactive, such results must be declared void and inadmissible for election declaration. Chairman INEC, I have thought that you would use this opportunity to mend your reputation and character for posterity.

Your Excellency, President Buhari Muhammadu, tension is building up and please let all elections that do not pass the credibility and transparency test be cancelled and be brought back with areas where elections were disrupted for next Saturday, March 4, 2023, and BVAS and Server officials be changed. To know which stations or polling units were manipulated, let a Committee of INEC staff and representatives of the four major political parties with the Chairman of Nigerian Bar Association look into what must be done to have hitch-free elections next Saturday. Mr. President, may your plan and hope for leaving a legacy of free, fair, transparent and credible election be realised. Mr. President, please don't let anybody say to you that it does not matter or it is the problem of INEC. On no account should you be seen as part of the collusion or compromise. When the die is cast, it will be your problem and that of the nation. The Chairman of INEC may sneak out of the country or go back to his ivory tower. Your Excellency, thank you for hearing me out.

Compatriot Nigerians, please exercise patience until the wrong is righted. I strongly believe that nobody will toy with the future and fortune of Nigeria at this juncture.

Long live Nigeria in peace, security, stability and in the hope for greater future.


OLUSEGUN OBASANJO
February 27, 2023