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## **Tracking ideology in political news**

**Abstract.** This paper develops and applies a method for tracking the ideological value in news reporting. One lead and four related reports of the Nigerian newspaper, *The Punch*, on the sensitive Nigerian Supreme Court decision delivered on the qualification of Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar for the 2007 general election were purposively sampled and analyzed using insights from media discourse, critical discourse analysis and pragmatics. Two institutions, namely political and judicial, are found to be tracked in the reports through esphora and homophora. The power relations between these institutions and Atiku Abubakar are tracked largely through bridging and anaphora, showing different ideological exploitations and conflicts between the groups. The preponderance of references to issues favours Abubakar; a dominance of authorial voices and strategic tracking of public participants' voices unveil the principal's (*The Punch's*) bias for Atiku Abubakar and support for democratic governance in Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

Studies on political discourse have concentrated on the speeches of politicians (e.g. Fairclough 2005; van Dijk 2005; Mazidad 2007); media political interviews (e.g. Mullany 2002; Zbernovich 2007; Odebunmi 2008); political debates (e.g. Christie 2002; Fento-Smith 2008), etc. Very few of these studies have been devoted to media reporting of political news (e.g. Nunn 2007). These few studies have looked at news reporting, largely from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, but have not given attention to how the interaction between tracking and ideology

influences the reporting mode and the meaning of the reports published. By the same token, works on tracking have not been focused exclusively on ideological representations in news reporting. Alo (2007), for example, concentrates on how people are tracked (identified) in the news. Other studies on tracking are either not related to political discourse or have limited themselves to cohesive devices in media texts, which are just aspects of tracking.

This paper sets out to apply a method of examining media political news reporting against the background of tracking and ideology vis-à-vis the news being reported, an area that is yet to be significantly explored in the literature on political discourse, media studies and discourse analysis. Only one political news report in *The Punch* has been centrally selected, while four others were selected as complements. The major report, which concentrates on the Nigerian Supreme Court judgment on the appeal brought by the former vice-president of Nigeria, Atiku Abubakar, carries news that was determinant of the sustenance of the Nigerian democracy. Consequent upon the crisis-sensitive nature of the case (as Abubakar, his party, Action Congress and a large majority of Nigerians believed that then Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo (1999- 2007) had influenced the Independent National Electoral Commission to edge Abubakar out of the 2007 presidential election, a situation made more tense by the judgment of the Appeal Court, which Abubakar challenged at the Supreme Court, upholding the decision of INEC to disqualify Abubakar from participating in the election), the Court had had to use extreme caution both in the legal procedure followed, inclusive time, (as the election was then a few days away), and the judgment delivered. The same level of caution had been observed in the reporting of the case by *The Punch* a leading news paper in Nigeria, known for forthrightness and balance in judgment. It therefore becomes interesting to see how the reporting has been done in terms of what are or are not tracked, and what ideological pictures have been created. The major point of

reference is the lead story of *The Punch* of April 17, 2007, “Supreme Court Clears Atiku for Polls” authored by Tobi Soniyi, and Olusola Fabiyi. The following related stories were used as complements to the main story: “We’ll Obey Supreme Court, says Iwu” (Mosikilu Mojeed, Comp.1), “Bayo Ojo hails judgement” (Tobi Soniyi and Olusola Fabiyi, Comp. 2), “NBA, Gani, others react” (Musikilu Mojeed, Semiu Okanlawon, Tony Amokuodo, Kayoed Ketefe and Kemi Obasola, Comp. 3), and “It’s Victory for Democracy” (Musikilu Mojeed, Comp. 4).

The texts were analysed, using insights from the literature on tracking, linguistic studies of media discourse, and critical discourse analysis. Aspects of pragmatics, especially the co-text, have also been found useful in the analysis. The co-text refers to the lexical and structural environment in which a word is used (Mey 2000; Odebunmi 2006) A study of how tracking picks out ideology in political news reporting is capable of demonstrating power structures and the socio-political beliefs in Nigerian society.

### **Tracking and News Reporting in Nigeria**

Tracking refers to the linguistic and discoursal means by which connections are maintained between different parts of texts to enhance the sense-making process of the texts. Tracked in texts are people and things, and tracking is done through the use of linguistic elements. Four major types of resources for tracking people and things have been identified in the literature; namely, presenting, presuming, possessive, and comparative (cf Martin and Rose 2003).

Presenting resources introduce people and things, while presuming ones track them. Their respective examples are ‘a’, ‘an’, ‘one’, ‘someone’, ‘somebody’, ‘anyone’, etc; and ‘the’, ‘that’, ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘you’, ‘she’, ‘it’, ‘we’, ‘us’, person names, etc. In large measure, the distinction between them relates to that between new and given information (cf Brown and Yule 1983). The comparative and possessive resources (whose respective examples include possessive

pronouns/nouns such as ‘his’, ‘my’, ‘John’s’ etc; and adjectives/nouns such as ‘same’, ‘similar’, ‘other’, ‘another’, ‘related’, ‘different’, etc) can be used in both presenting and presuming capacities.

Tracking resources are activated through reference devices such as anaphora (that which points backward, e.g., Tolu sings. *She* also dances); bridging (that which goes indirectly backward, e.g., They just brought the fridge, but *the door* fell down); cataphora (that which looks forward, e.g., There is *one saviour*: Jesus Christ); esphora (that which points forward within the same frame, e.g. *The song of freedom*); homophora (that which points outside the text on the premise of shared knowledge, e.g., *The* redemptive council.); and exophora (that which points to situations outside the text, e.g., God sees what *we* don’t see) (cf Martin and Rose 2003).

### **Ideology, Tracking and News Reporting**

Ideology has been described as implicit assumptions held, largely in interaction with power relations (Fairclough 2001; Wodak 1996). In this implicitness lies the capacity of ideology to give sustenance to power inequalities and thus serve “political” purposes (cf Fairclough 2001). Ideologies are seen by Wodak (1996:18) as “particular ways of representing and constructing society, which reproduce unequal relations of power, relations of domination and exploitation”. Since Ideology involves the politicization associated with language use, and language is the site of ideological representations, language can be investigated to expose implicit stances, attitudes and political leanings of people. This point becomes clearer when we consider levels of language that are ideologically valuable. These include meanings, both lexical and discoursal.

At the lexical level, ideology resides in the choices made, which are largely “political” (cf Fairclough 1998, 2001; Wodak 1996; Verdonk 2002). At the discoursal level, Fairclough (1998) identifies coherence as an important tool of ideology:

Coherence is a key factor in the ideological constitution and reconstitution of subjects in discourse: a text 'postulates' a subject 'capable' of automatically linking together its potentially highly diverse and not explicitly linked elements to make sense of it (Fairclough 1998:74).

This view announces the relevance of tracking to an ideological enterprise as it is a discourse tool that is capable of showing implicit relations in texts. Of particular importance here are trackers such as bridging, esphora, homophora and anaphora, used in presenting, presuming, possessing or comparative capacities, which are largely engaged in news discourse with high ideological implications. In large measure, they can be accounted for as stylistic elements in the media text, style itself being ideologically important (Fairclough 1998:75). Style thus may reveal the political tilt of the reporter and/or that of the media organisation.

The importance of political tilt in the corporate stance in media organisations usually arises in issues relating to ownership/authorship of news reports. The fact is that news reports have in them a conglomeration of voices, which makes it difficult to strictly associate their authorship with a single reporter. Hence, in Malawi, for example, many news reports are published with no by-lines, thus charging the media organisation wholly with the responsibility for their contents (Chimombo and Roseberry, 1998). Thus, inhering in the reports are the ideological positions of the organisation, which are housed in many aspects of the meaning of the texts, part of which is tracking.

Goffman's (1981) concepts animator, author, and principal are useful in determining the ideological representations in news reports. The animator (the transmitter and technician) is the person whose sounds are heard or whose marks are made on paper; the author (the journalist) is the person who compiles the sounds or words into reports; and the principal (the proprietor, management or editorial executives) is the person whose position is reported in the news.

Handling the ideological value of tracking in news reports successfully requires a determination of the location of the voices in reports, especially those of the authors and principals, and the degree to which the voices of the real public participants or actors about whom the reports are composed are represented. This will enable us see clearly the ideological representations that the texts bear.

### **Method of Analysis**

A combination of Martin and Rose's (2003) concept of tracking and aspects of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis is used in the analysis. These are supplemented with the pragmatic and media discourse concepts of co-text and author/principal. Fairclough's ideas of power relations are applied to identify the power contests and contexts reported in the news, and his concept of coherence, together with its stylistic value, is appealed to with reference to presenting and presuming tracks. The relationships between these elements and the power agencies and relations they point to are largely explained through the co-text.

Two major roles of tracking in relation to the ideologies in the texts are identified: institutional representation and power relations. The former is largely marked by esphora and homophora, while the latter are largely indexed by bridging and anaphora. The two tracking roles are taken in turn:

### **Institutional Representation**

Two major kinds of institutions are identified in the text, namely political institution and judicial institutions. The political institution is represented by the Independent National Electoral Commission, which represents the Nigerian government in the case at hand. INEC is presented in the following light: (a) an electoral body (b) a political authority (c) a non-legally-empowered entity. INEC, represented as an electoral body, is solely marked by the homophora *the*

Independent National Electoral Commission (line 2), which tracks the body as (i) an entity already known to the reader, i.e., an average, literate Nigerian and (ii) a body outside the text that is socially and politically recognised in the Nigerian experience.

At a few points in the text, INEC is presumed as a political authority. This is achieved, largely with a combination of homophora and esphora. The example below demonstrates this:

Ex.1:

He further said the power	(96)
conferred on INEC to organise	(97)
undertake and supervise all	(98)
<i>elections to the offices of the</i>	(99)
<i>President and Vice-president</i>	(100)

The esphoric “*elections to the offices...*” provides a movement forward between “elections” and *the offices* (a homophora). The pointing, with the subsequent discursal interaction, ultimately establishes a rapport between “elections” and “the offices”, itself, i.e., the rapport, defined by the co-textual “organise, undertake and supervise” and “the president and vice-president”. This contextual support for the homophoric and esphoric elements assists in picking out INEC as the body vested with power to ensure elections to political offices.

This political authority has its bounds, defined again by the union of esphora and homophora (lines 104-105):

Ex.2

And other elective posts, under	(101)
paragraph 15 of the third	(102)
schedule to the constitution, did	(103)
not vest the power of disqualification of any candidate in INEC	(105)

“*The power*” not “power” goes into the social awareness of Nigerians. The phrase “*The power*” now points forward to “disqualification”, bestridden by the preposition “of”, showing that “the power” to disqualify exists. This is co-textually constrained by “did not vest” and “in INEC”.

This immediately throws light on the limits of the power of INEC, indicating that it lacks the standing to exercise legal power.

The judicial institution in the text is identified with reference to (a) institutions of law and their functions, (b) legal decisions and actions, (c) legal offices, and (d) issues in contention/ common point of reference. Each of these, which is either marked by esphora or homophora, is discussed in turn. Three law institutions are mentioned in the text, namely, the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and Federal High Court. Only the first two will be given attention for reasons of space.

The esphoric, “the Court of Appeal”, does not just name the law institution; it also mentions its function, which is to take appeal cases. i.e. it is a court where appeals are considered. Also represented through tracking are legal decisions and actions. Two instances will suffice here

Ex.3:	
Earlier attempts by counsel	(27)
for INEC, Mr. Joe-Kyari	(28)
Gadzama (SAN), to seek for an	(29)
adjournment was rejected as	(30)
Justice Kastina-Aliu confirmed	(31)
<i>the readiness of the court</i> to proceed	(32)
with the matter in view of	(33)
time factor	(34)

In this example, the esphora in “the readiness of the court”, picks out the decision taken by the court, which is co-textually expatiated in the clause that follows, “to proceed with the matter in view of time factor”. The fact is that the point esphorically picked out is crucial to the issue of democracy in Nigeria and the image of the law institution, which seems to have been damaged by the kind of questionable judgment earlier delivered by the Court of Appeal.



Another example follows:

Ex. 4:

*The notice of the appeal* stated, (118)

the learned justices of the court of Appeal erred.... (119)

“The notice” points forward to “the appeal” to indicate a legal document, implying a legal action, as the notice is necessarily served to relevant parties in dispute.

In addition to legal actions/steps, legal offices are also tracked. In this connection, we have the following:

Ex. 5:

Earlier attempts by *counsel* (77)

Ex.6:

*Five justices of the court, with the* (77)

*President of the Court of* (78)

*Appeal....* (79)

Ex. 7:

*The learned justices of the Court* (118)

*of Appeal* armed in law.... (119)

In Ex.5, using homophora, the office or position of the barrister pursuing the case is represented.

In Ex. 6, “five justices of the Court of Appeal” represents the highest office in the court (Esphora and Homophora). “The President of the court”, in the same example, identifies the office of the top most justice. Its separation from the office of the justices in general makes an ideological point which will be given attention in the second part of our analysis. In Ex. 7, “The learned justices of the court” also tracks the highest office the Court of Appeal (Esphora).

The last representation under the judicial institution is reference to a common legal matter, variously tracked as follows:

Ex.8:  
 Gadzama had wanted an (35)  
 adjournment to enable him to (36)  
 provide a better presentation of (37)  
*the subject matter* before the (38)  
 court ... (40)

Ex. 9:  
 In arguing *the appeal*, coun- (41)  
 sel for Abubakar, Mr. Rickey ... (42)  
 Tarfa, (SAN), however, prayed (43)  
 the court to set aside *the judg-* (44)  
*ment of the Court of Appeal* on (45)  
 the ground that *it* was in error (46)

In Ex.8, the issue in contention, i.e., the disqualification of Vice-president Atiku Abubakar from participating in the 2007 general election in Nigeria, is tracked as “the subject matter” (homophora); the same is tracked in Ex. 9 as “the appeal” (homophora) and “the judgment of the Court of Appeal” (esphora).

### **Tracking and Power Relations**

Power relations in the text are largely indexed by bridging and anaphora, but a few overlaps of homophora and esphora are noticed. Six manifestations of these relations are observed, namely:

- i. The powerful versus the less powerful (INEC versus candidates)
- ii. The less powerful + ideological/social structure versus the powerful (candidates versus INEC)
- iii. The less powerful versus legal might (candidates versus Appeal court)
- iv. The less powerful + ideological/social structure versus the powerful legal might
- v. High legal might versus low legal might (voice of democracy versus voice of suppression)

## vi. Judicial might versus political might.

First, INEC, the powerful force, lords it over political candidates, among whom is Vice-president Atiku Abubakar, who it disqualified from participating in the 2007 presidential election. This power relation is presented thus by the authors:

Ex. 10:  
 The supreme court on Mond (1)  
 ay held that Independ (2)  
 ent National Electoral Commis- (3)  
 sion had no power to disqualify (4)  
 Vice-President Atiku Abubakar ... (5)  
 or any other candidate for the (6)  
 2007 general election (7)

The bridging and anaphora in Ex. 11 and 12 presume the disqualification by INEC presented in lines 1 – 7 above:

Ex. 11:  
 ...INEC had the (74)  
 power to screen and disqualify (75)  
 candidates for the election (76)

Ex. 12:  
 That INEC had such power (81)

“INEC” (line 74) in Ex. 11 bridges the full form “The Independent National Electoral Commission (lines 2-3), co-texted by “power to screen and disqualify candidates for the election”, where “candidates” and “election” are also bridges to both “Vice-President Atiku Abubakar” and “the 2007 general election” respectively. This tracking, taken with the co-texts, interprets as the powerful INEC exercising power over the less power candidate, thus imposing restrictions on him. In Ex. 12, “such powers” (line 81) is a bridge to “power to disqualify” (line 4). The same interpretation as in Ex. 11 can be offered for this.

Another power relation is that which holds between (the interaction of) the less powerful (within the ideological/social structure of society) and the more powerful (INEC). The candidate at issue demonstrates a clear awareness of the social structure, which permits the less powerful some right to redress their situation. This awareness and the subsequent challenge that the candidate throws at the powerful INEC are variously tracked with reference to disqualification and INEC's power for such reported in lines 1-7 by the authors. Ex.13 shows some of the tracks:

Ex.13:	
In the appeal, <i>Abubakar</i> ar-	(85)
gued that the decision of the	(86)
Court of Appeal that the provi	(87)
sions empowering INEC to dis-	(88)
qualify candidates were not in-	(89)
cluded in the constitution for the	(90)
fun of it	(91)

In this report by *The Punch*, the item, 'Abubakar' (line 85: a bridge) tracks "Vice-president Atiku Abubakar" (homophora); the co-text 'argued that ...fun of it' interprets Abubakar challenging the disqualification, itself tracked (in this example) as "the decision" (going back to presenting and presuming elements such as "had no power to disqualify" (line 4) and "the judgment" (line 8).

Ex. 14: also provides good instances:

Ex. 14:	
Following the invitation by	(213)
INEC to all presidential candid	(214)
dates to appear before it for	(215)
screening, <i>Abubakar and his</i>	(216)
<i>Party filed</i> a suit at the <i>Federal</i>	(217)
<i>High Court in Abuja</i> , challeng-	(218)
ing <i>the commission's power</i> to	(219)
carry out the screening.	(220)

<i>The court</i> partly ruled in his	(221)
favour and held that though	(222)
INEC could screen candidates,	(223)
it lacked the power to disqualify	(224)
candidates.	(225)
INEC was dissatisfied with	(226)
both findings. <i>Abubakar</i> was	(227)
also irked by <i>the ruling, that INEC</i>	(228)
<i>could screen candidates</i> . He	(229)
filed a <i>cross-appeal</i> on <i>that is-</i>	(230)
<i>sue</i> while <i>INEC</i> appealed	(231)
against <i>the whole judgment</i> .	(232)

There is an interesting power relation here. INEC, the powerful government body moves to exercise power by asking that all presidential candidates be screened. This screening serves as the meeting point of all the tracks noticed in Ex. 14. Abubakar (a bridge and a presuming track) is coordinated with “his party” (a presenting track) to establish the strength and gravity of the legal step taken. The co-text, “challenging,” strong ideological point, when considered along with the bridge (and co-textual) “the commission’s power” implies a contest.

The case filed, i.e. the contest staged at the presenting, “the Federal High Court, Abuja” ends in partial favour of both Abubakar and INEC, leading to another contest at the Court of Appeal. Abubakar’s dissatisfaction and the ideological awareness he explores are tracked in “(irked by) the ruling that INEC could screen candidates” (lines 228-229), and the legal step he takes further to that is captured in the presenting, “a cross-appeal” (line 230), itself anaphorically referenced as “that issue going back to the ruling that INEC could screen candidates” (lines 230-231).

The co-texts “challenging” and “the commission’s power” work to attract INEC’s reaction, especially with the ruling reducing its power. This reaction is tracked in the bridges

“INEC” (the participant or aggrieved party), “appealed”, (tracking “cross-appeal” (line 230) and showing a counter action in a power contest) and “the whole judgment” (tracking the presuming “the court ruled” (line 221) and “the ruling that INEC could screen ... (lines 228-229).

Another power relation holds between the less powerful and the legal might, represented respectively by Atiku Abubakar and the Court of Appeal. The court places power with INEC, orchestrating the superiority of the agent of government. This scenario is tracked across the text.

Ex. 15 and 16 show some of the tracks:

Ex. 15:

...The Court of Appeal	(14)
of Appeal, Abuja...had	(15)
claimed that INEC had powers	(16)
to disqualify candidates	(17)

Ex. 16:

The Court of Appeal had on	(73)
April 3 ruled that INEC had the	(74)
power to screen and disqualify	(75)
candidates for the election	(76)

In these two instances, the legal might, tracked as the presuming “the court of Appeal” provides a judgment that is partially at variance with the Federal High Court’s and that completely disfavours Abubakar. The power now assigned to INEC is tracked through the anaphors, “INEC had powers to disqualify candidates” and “had the power to screen and disqualify candidates”, which go back to the presenting “to disqualify Vice-President Atiku Abubakar or any other candidate for the 2007 general election” (lines4-7).

The turn of events in the immediate foregoing brings another dimension into focus, which now shifts the battle from between Abubakar and INEC, two legal forces, as the judgment of the Appeal Court is challenged at the Supreme Court, the new site for the contest. The ideological

awareness exploited by Abubakar to further challenge the legal might of the Court of Appeal is tracked in the following extract.

Ex. 17:	
Abubakar was dissatisfied	(82)
and appealed to the Supreme	(83)
Court.	(84)
In the appeal, Abubakar ar-	(85)
gued that the decision of the	(86)
Court of Appeal that provi-	(87)
sions empowering INEC to dis-	(88)
qualify candidates were not in-	(89)
cluded in the constitution for the	(90)
fun of it was wrong	(91)

“Dissatisfied” (tracking, “the Court of Appeal had ruled. INEC had the power ... the election” lines 73-76) shows Abubakar’s reaction to the judgement. “Appealed” (co-texting “dissatisfied”) points to the legal step Abubakar takes to stage a contest with the Court of Appeal, appealing to a higher judicial authority, located as “The Supreme Court”. The action of appeal is tracked with the presuming “in the appeal”, and Abubakar’s “dissatisfaction” is described with tracks such as: “the decision of the Court of Appeal” (a bridge, tracking the judgement of the court variously labeled as “the judgement” (line 14), “the court of appeal ... in error to hold ...” (lines 22 – 24), “five justices of the court ... agreed that INEC had such powers” (lines 77-81), etc. Another of such tracks is presented in lines 87 – 90, where the judgement is doubted on the ground that it is not established in the constitution, using the homophoras: “*the provision* (empowering INEC) ...; (included in) *the constitution*.”

An important power relation is reported between the high legal might and the low legal might, a contest coming at the instance of Abubakar. The superiority of the Supreme Court shown through its judgement greatly embarrasses the Court of Appeal. This, announced by the

actual public participant (strategically brought in to authoritatively confirm the report and position of the principal on the issue) is reported through presenting and presuming tracks as follows:

Ex.18:  
 Justice Aloysins Katsina – Alu, (18)  
 who delivered the lead judge- (19)  
 ment said, “I have no doubt in (20)  
 coming to the conclusion that the (21)  
 Court of Appeal was in error in (22)  
 holding that INEC has the power (23)  
 to disqualify any candidate.” (24)

‘I’ anaphorically tracks “Justice Aloysins Katsina – Aliu, who represents the legal office and authority that faults the judgement of the Appeal Court. “The conclusion” is a presuming track for the judgement of the court (going back to “held in” line 2), contrasting other presuming tracks such as: “the Court of Appeal” and holding that INEC ...the power to disqualify, all of which refer back to lines 1 -7 earlier cited. The actual track that picks out the incompetence of the Court of Appeal is captured in the phrase “in error” (uttered by the actual public participant) which is a presenting track for subsequent presuming tracks, such as “in error” (an anaphor used by Mr. Rickey, counsel for Abubakar – line 46), “its decision” (a bridge used by the animator/authors- lines 48-49), etc. In fact, it picks out all tracks referring to the judgement of the Court of Appeal as the “error” lies in it.

A strong ideological point with respect to the embarrassment of the Appeal Court comes from the authors when they note:

Ex. 19:  
 Five justices of the court with (77)  
 The President of the Court of (78)  
 Appeal, Justices Umar Abdullahi (79)



presiding ...

(80)

The phrase “five justices” has anaphoric anchorage in “the Court of Appeal” (lines 14 – 15), “the appeal court” (lines 47 -48), etc. Given that the delivery of the judgment of the Court of Appeal is neither given by the real public participant (itself ideological in that the logic followed and the arguments advanced by the court are not provided or reported by the authors), presenting “*the President* (of the court)” is not necessary. This information, notwithstanding its redundancy, is foregrounded, and therefore leaks the ideology that the authors and principal seek to put on display the incompetence of the court irrespective of the status and professional placement of the members, and move to propose that the president be removed, considering the stigma that his incompetence has attracted to both the Appeal Court and the entire Nigerian judicial system.

Ultimately, the judicial supremacy of the Supreme Court and by extension, Atiku, as against the disgrace of the Appeal Court and by extension, INEC, enthrones truth as against falsehood and corruption, (many Nigerians held the view that truth was being desperately distorted to sweep Abubakar out of the presidential election). As stated earlier, the judgment is important in the political and especially electoral history/experience of Nigerians, and its mishandling could cause political crisis in Nigeria. This is confirmed in the voices of some public participants in Complementary Story 3:

Ex. 20 (Comp. 3):

“We are happy that the Supreme Court has once again lived up to expectations and saved the country’s democracy from collapse”

Ex. 21 (Comp. 3):

“the judgement has saved a lot of things. INEC could have plunged the country into chaos if the Supreme Court did not rule in that way”

Each of these inputs from public participants has been strategically brought up to work with the position of the principal or author on the matter, a conclusion supported by the fact that none that significantly differs is reported in any of the stories sampled.

One of the important segments of tracks capturing the significance of the judgment is found between lines 8 – 11 of the text:

Ex. 21:  
 The judgment came barely (8)  
 five days to the presidential election. (9)

The text “The judgement” here bridges lines 1 – 7 of the text where the ruling of the Supreme Court has been reported by the authors. The co-text “came barely five days ...” is important in terms of the temporal significance of the event. “The presidential election” then presumes “the 2007 general election”. The authors’ tracking of the issue and the target of the candidates (i.e. to be “clear[ed] for the polls”, foregrounded by being devoted a single sentence paragraph, emphasises the success of democratic process over the coercion preferred by Obasanjo-led government.

Part of the contest between the force of democracy and that of coercion is reported by the authors thus:

Ex. 22:  
 Earlier, attempts by counsel (27)  
 for INEC, Mr. Joe-Kyari (28)  
 Gadzama (SAN) to seek for an (29)  
 adjournment was rejected as (30)  
 Justice Katsina-Aliu confirmed (31)  
 the readiness of the court to pro- (32)  
 ceed with the matter in view of time factor (34)

Important here is the presenting “counsel for INEC ... Gadzama”, an esphoric identification of a major participant. Although “INEC” has been mentioned earlier in the story, the phrase, “counsel

for INEC”, introduces a new discourse element, which is exophorically tracked by “Gadzama”. Also important are the presenting “an adjournment; and the presuming “Justice Katsina-Aliu. “An adjournment” bridges references to the case before the court, and “Justice Katsina-Aliu” anaphorically tracks all references to the supreme court, together with the power that has been associated with it. This power concept becomes clearer in the bridge, “rejected”, which tracks the reaction of Aliu to the proposal. This reaction and expression of power are further track in “the readiness of the court” (which shows the determination or decision of the court) and “in view of time factor” (which indicates the time restrictions for the judgment). Also, “time factor” tracks “barely five days to the presidential election”, which further emphasises the magnitude of the issue and the dire consequences that may attend delay.

The incumbent political force in this contest suffers defeat; one, by the refusal of the Supreme Court to grant an adjournment; two by the eventual loss of the case (as already discussed). This success on the part of the appellant now transcends the immediacy of the court environment or the issue in dispute. It becomes a manifestation of victory for democracy in Nigeria. This victory is stamped with the government conceding defeat as reported by the author in Complementary Story 1:

Ex. 23 (Comp. 1):

The chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Prof. Maurice Iwu, on Monday said that Vice-President Atiku Abubakar’s name would appear on the ballot paper for Saturday’s presidential election. He said the inclusion of the name of Abubakar in the ballot paper was in line with the Supreme Court’s judgment.

Here, the presenting (in this complementary story), “The chairman, Prof. Maurice Iwu” tracks the appropriate government agent to act on the judgment, entailing defeat for the Obasanjo-led government and INEC, the electoral body directly responsible for the electoral process. “The Vice-President ...” and “Saturday’s presidential election” anaphorically track the main

participant, Abubakar and the object of his contest identified in the main news report. The co-text “his name would appear” anaphorically tracks (and reiterates) the interpretation of the judgment mentioned in the main story. This is further tracked in the author’s explanation to the interpretation: “in line with the Supreme Court’s judgment”.

Finally, the democratic implications of the victory are variously tracked in all complementary stories. For example, in Complementary Story 2, the reaction of the then Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Chief Bayo Ojo is reported thus:

Ex. 24 (Comp. 2):

Ojo ... said democracy was about upholding the tenets of the rule of law as enshrined in the 1999 constitution.

In this extract, “democracy” tracks “the [victorious] judgment” in the main story, and “the 1999 constitution” tracks the point of reference of all the courts: Federal High Court, Appeal Court and Supreme Court. A similar reaction is tracked in Complementary Story 4, entitled “Its victory for democracy”, which is an utterance credited to Atiku Abubakar where “It’s” and “victory” anaphorically tracks “the judgment” in the main story.

### **Conclusion**

Tracking in the central and complementary texts identifies social institutions and power relations in the Nigerian political experience. Through esphora homophora, a political institution (INEC) and three judicial institutions: the Supreme Court, the Appeals Court, and the Federal High Court have been identified. Bridging and anaphora track the power relations between the political institution, the candidate(s) and the judicial institution.

Tracking in the texts is, to a very large extent, not used neutrally. With a preponderance of reference to issues that point to the favour of Abubakar, whom many Nigerians believe to be a victim of coercion, a dominance of authorial voice and a strategic representation of the voices of

public participants, all of which track the favourable judgement in the central text, it seems clear that *The Punch* is biased toward Atiku Abubakar advocates and support for democratic governance, disavouring the Obasanjo government, which was believed by many Nigerians and members of other political parties to have engaged in illegal and electorally dubious means to subvert democracy in Nigeria.

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