

COALITION COMMUNICATION IN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN SPEECHES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NIGERIA'S 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

The study analysed coalition communication in the presidential campaign speeches during Nigeria's 2023 General Elections, using content analysis as its primary method. The study employed trends in political realignment, assess the prevalence of coalition-related themes, and evaluated how coalition communication was leveraged to build political legitimacy and electoral appeal. A sample of forty (40) campaign speeches purposefully selected from the presidential candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Labour Party (LP), and New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) delivered between September 2022 and February 2023. Data collection used a structured content analysis coding sheet, and the analysis involved frequencies, percentages, and thematic exploration. The findings indicated that themes of national unity, inclusive governance, political alliances, and national development were prevalent across the speeches. Key communication strategies included emotional appeals, inclusive language, logical reasoning, and credibility appeals, while significant patterns of political realignment were reflected in elite negotiations, political defections, and cross-party cooperation. The study concludes that coalition communication played a pivotal role in the 2023 presidential campaigns, acting as a strategic tool for establishing legitimacy, expanding electoral support, and conveying political alliances. The results backed up the ideas behind Spectrum Coalition Model and Framing Theory, showing that campaign speeches played crucial role in building coalitions and effectively communicating political messages. The study suggests that we should focus more on issue-based coalition communication, promote responsible political discussions, and encourage more empirical research

into coalition communication within African democracies.

Keywords: Coalition Communication, Content Analysis, Nigeria General Election, Political Realignment, Presidential Campaign Speeches

Introduction:

Political communication plays a vital role in any democratic society. It acts as the main channel through which political figures share their visions, sway voters, build alliances, and establish their legitimacy. Among the various tools of political communication, campaign speeches stand out as particularly powerful. They allow candidates to express their policy priorities, frame key national issues, rally their supporters, and convey their strategic intention (Norris, 2020). In the context of presidential elections, these speeches go beyond simple electoral rhetoric; they become significant texts where political ideologies, coalition-building efforts, leadership stories, and shifts in political alignment are openly discussed. As a result, the language, themes, symbols, and persuasive techniques found in campaign speeches offer valuable insights into the changing landscape of democratic politics (McNair, 2018).

As electoral competition grows more complex in emerging democracies, coalition politics has become a crucial aspect of modern governance. This term refers to the strategic partnerships formed among political parties, interest groups, regional blocs, ethnic communities, civil society organisations, and key political figures, all aimed at maximising electoral success and improving governance. While coalition governments are typically linked to parliamentary systems, presidential systems like Nigeria are increasingly seeing coalition communication during election campaigns through political endorsements, cross-party alliances, elite defections, regional negotiations, and issue-based partnerships. These coalition activities are often shared publicly through campaign speeches designed to reassure supporters, win over undecided voters, and legitimise

new political alignments (Lijphart, 2012; Stromback & Esser, 2017).

Campaign communication has undergone a significant transformation over the last thirty years, largely thanks to the rise of digital media, social networking sites, and the constant flow of news. Nowadays, political candidates are able to reach out to the public through a mix of traditional rallies, televised debates, digital broadcasts, livestreams, and social media, which allow them to connect with audiences far beyond just those physically present (Lilleker, 2021). Today's campaign speeches are meticulously crafted to resonate with a wide array of demographic, ethnic, religious, and socio-economic groups. They often weave in themes of national unity, inclusive governance, economic recovery, security reforms, youth empowerment, and political restructuring, all while sending out coalition messages that aim to bring together various political interests under a shared electoral vision (Chadwick, 2017).

Looking at Nigeria's political landscape, it is learn that coalition politics has been a constant element of electoral competition since the country returned to democracy in 1999. Political alliances have formed consistently before, during, and after elections as parties strive for broader geographical representation, constitutional legitimacy, and electoral success. There have been numerous political realignments through mergers, defections, strategic endorsements, and negotiations among elites, which have fundamentally altered Nigeria's party system (Akinboye, 2021). Key examples include the merger that led to the formation of the All Progressives Congress (APC) ahead of the 2015 elections, various inter-party defections leading up to the 2019 elections, and the extensive political negotiations that took place before the 2023 General Elections. These events highlight that achieving electoral success in Nigeria increasingly relies not just on ideological appeal but also on the skillful communication of coalitions that can persuade diverse stakeholders to rally around a common political goal (Omotola, 2019)

The 2023 Nigerian General Elections marked a significant moment in the country's democratic journey, showcasing one of the most fiercely contested presidential races in its history. Unlike past elections that were largely a showdown between two dominant political parties, All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). But this time around, four prominent candidates emerged, each representing a unique blend of political ideologies, regional interests, and governance styles. The rise of new political movements, a surge in youth engagement, the power of digital activism, and a growing public demand for accountability all played a crucial role in reshaping how campaigns were communicated (Omotola, 2019). Candidates leaned heavily on coalition narratives that highlighted themes of inclusivity, national healing, competence, economic change, security, institutional reforms, and the need to rally broad political support across Nigeria's diverse ethnic, religious, and regional landscapes. As a result, campaign speeches transformed into strategic platforms for conveying political shifts, forging elite alliances, and promoting a vision of national unity.

With this in mind, this study delves into coalition communication in the presidential campaign speeches from Nigeria's 2023 General Elections using content analysis. The aim is to dissect the coalition narratives, communication tactics, and patterns of political realignment evident in the speeches of the leading presidential candidates.

Statement of the Problem

Coalition politics has become a crucial aspect of Nigeria's democratic journey, especially during presidential elections. Here, political parties and candidates are busy forming strategic alliances that cut across ethnic, regional, religious, ideological, and institutional lines to boost their chances at the polls. These coalitions aren't just the result of behind-the-scenes negotiations and elite discussions; they also play out in the public eye through presidential campaign speeches. These speeches are vital for

expressing political visions, legitimising alliances, rallying supporters, and showcasing national leadership. As a result, they offer a wealth of communicative material that allows us to delve into coalition narratives and political shifts.

Even though coalition politics is a prominent feature of Nigeria's electoral scene, most studies on the 2023 General Elections have focused primarily on aspects like voting behavior, campaign financing, social media strategies, electoral violence, media coverage, and the overall credibility of the electoral process. There's been relatively little scholarly exploration into how coalition narratives, strategic communication, and political realignment were crafted and conveyed in the campaign speeches of presidential candidates. This oversight has left a significant gap in the political communication literature, particularly concerning how campaign rhetoric influences public perceptions of political alliances and coalition-building.

Moreover, the 2023 presidential election was marked by unprecedented political defections, cross-party endorsements, regional negotiations, youth engagement, and the rise of several competitive presidential candidates, all of which shifted Nigeria's traditional political landscape. While these changes garnered considerable public and media interest, there's still a lack of empirical evidence regarding the specific communication strategies that presidential candidates used to frame coalition politics play a crucial role in legitimising political partnerships and convincing a diverse range of voters to back their candidates. Without a thorough analysis, we miss out on understanding the communicative aspects of how coalitions form and how political realignments take shape.

Moreso, past content analyses of Nigerian presidential campaign speeches have primarily zeroed in on campaign promises, issue framing, leadership traits, and persuasive language, often overlooking coalition communication as a unique area of study. As a result, we lack a clear picture of how often, in what ways, and with what themes coalition narratives were

shared during the 2023 presidential campaigns. This gap also limits our ability to apply new perspectives in political communication, like the Spectrum Coalition Model (SCM). This theory suggests that political figures strategically communicate, negotiate, and realign across various political, ideological, institutional, ethnic, media, and social landscapes to enhance their political clout and electoral success.

With this context in mind, this study aims to carry out a systematic content analysis of the 2023 presidential campaign speeches in Nigeria. The goal is to explore coalition narratives, communication strategies, and political realignment. By doing so, the study hopes to bridge the existing knowledge gap, offering empirical insights into how coalition communication was crafted and utilised during the campaigns. This will not only advance the field of political communication but also enrich coalition studies and broaden the application of the Spectrum Coalition Model in understanding political communication in Nigeria's dynamic democratic landscape.

Research Objectives

The aim of this study was to examine coalition communication as seen in the presidential campaign speeches from Nigeria's 2023 General Elections. We used content analysis to explore the coalition narratives, communication strategies, and political realignment patterns that the leading presidential candidates employed.

The specific objectives we aim to achieve with this study:

1. Investigate the key coalition narratives present in the presidential campaign speeches of the major candidates during Nigeria's 2023 General Elections.
2. Identify the communication strategies that the presidential candidates used to promote coalition politics and garner electoral support.
3. Analyse the patterns of political realignment that emerge from the

campaign speeches.

4. Determine how often coalition-related themes appear in the campaign speeches of the major presidential candidates.
5. Explore how coalition communication was leveraged to build legitimacy, foster national unity, and enhance electoral appeal throughout the campaigns.

Research Hypotheses

We will be testing the following hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05:

H01: There is no significant difference in the frequency of coalition narratives among the presidential campaign speeches of the major candidates during Nigeria's 2023 General Elections.

H02: The communication strategies used in presidential campaign speeches don't seem to have a meaningful connection with coalition narratives.

H03: There's no significant evidence of political realignment in the presidential campaign speeches delivered by the major candidates.

H04: Coalition communication appears to have little to no impact on how political legitimacy is built in presidential campaign speeches.

Theoretical Framework

Framing Theory: Framing Theory, initially introduced by Erving Goffman in his influential work *Frame Analysis* (1974), was later expanded into the realm of mass communication by scholars like Robert Entman (1993). This theory explains how communicators structure, highlight, and present information in ways that influence how audiences interpret and understand political issues.

As Entman (1993) points out, framing involves selecting specific elements of perceived reality and making them more prominent in communication to advocate for a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral judgment, or suggested solution. Political actors

therefore use frames strategically to influence public opinion, construct legitimacy, and persuade voters.

In the realm of political communication, campaign speeches are meticulously crafted to shine a spotlight on certain issues while keeping others in the shadows. Candidates skillfully use rhetorical devices, emotional appeals, metaphors, repetition, symbolism, historical references, and nationalistic language to shape how voters view political realities. As a result, coalition narratives are often portrayed as emblems of national unity, inclusive governance, competence, stability, economic recovery, or democratic progress, all depending on what the speaker aims to achieve with their message.

During Nigeria's 2023 presidential campaigns, candidates took different approaches to framing coalition politics. Some showcased political alliances as signs of widespread national acceptance and inclusive leadership, while others positioned them as essential strategies for national renewal, democratic consolidation, and effective governance. This framing was intended to convince voters that coalition-building was a sign of strength rather than mere political opportunism. Framing Theory plays a crucial role in this study as it analyses campaign speeches as forms of communication. The theory offers a lens through which we can identify how coalition narratives were constructed, emphasised, and conveyed by presidential candidates during the 2023 General Elections.

Review of Related Literature

Coalition Communication

Coalition communication is all about how political players intentionally use communication strategies to negotiate, build, legitimise, and maintain alliances among various parties, political elites, interest groups, regional blocs, and electoral constituencies. Unlike standard campaign communication, which often focuses on individual party messages, coalition communication zeroes in on fostering collaboration, inclusivity, collective

leadership, and shared political goals.

As Lijphart (2012) points out, coalition politics has gained significant traction in pluralistic democracies because winning elections often hinges on cooperation among multiple political actors rather than just the strength of a single party. This makes coalition communication a vital tool for political figures to articulate their alliances, justify compromises, and reassure their supporters about the advantages of working together.

In practice, coalition communication often highlights themes like national unity, inclusive governance, consensus-building, reconciliation, power-sharing, and democratic stability. These themes are conveyed through various channels, including speeches, manifestoes, debates, interviews, press conferences, social media posts, and political advertisements. In Nigeria, the visibility of coalition communication has surged, driven by ongoing political defections, inter-party negotiations, endorsements from key political figures, and regional bargaining. Presidential campaign speeches often spotlight coalition messages aimed at uniting the diverse ethnic, religious, and geopolitical interests under a shared national agenda.

Eze (2026) opined that Spectrum Coalition Model builds on existing research by suggesting that coalition communication is multidimensional, involving ongoing strategic communication across political, ideological, institutional, ethnic, media, and social dimensions. According to this Model, communication isn't just a tool for supporting coalition politics; the very mechanism through which coalitions are formed, maintained, and legitimised. Presidential campaign speeches are formal addresses made by candidates during election seasons, aimed at winning over voters, sharing their policy priorities, rallying political support, and showcasing their leadership skills.

Charteris-Black (2018), suggests that these speeches are more than just words; they're rhetorical performances that blend persuasion, symbolism, emotional appeals, metaphors, repetition, and storytelling to

sway public opinion. Beard (2000) echoes this sentiment, noting that political speeches are meticulously crafted persuasive texts meant to build favourable political identities while undermining rival candidates. These campaign speeches serve several crucial functions in a democracy: Presenting policy programs, shaping leadership identity, framing national issues, encouraging voter participation, communicating coalition agreements, fostering national unity, and legitimising political authority.

Political Realignment and Electoral Communication

Political realignment has to do with the strategic reshaping of political alliances, voter coalitions, elite loyalties, party affiliations, and ideological stances within the political landscape. Again Dalton (2020), views political realignment often follows significant political crises, leadership changes, institutional reforms, or shifts in voter preferences. Political communication is key in legitimising these realignments, helping to clarify why political actors switch alliances and how new coalitions can advance broader democratic goals. Since 1999, Nigeria has gone through several rounds of political realignment, marked by party mergers, defections, regional alliances, legislative coalitions, and strategic endorsements. These shifts are typically communicated through campaign speeches, where candidates strive to explain their new political ties and reassure their supporters.

Spectrum Coalition Model sheds light on these changes as ongoing strategic adjustments across political spectrums rather than isolated political events. Accordingly, political realignment is viewed as a communication process as much as an organisational process. Content analysis stands out as one of the go-to research methods in political communication. It gives researchers a solid way to pinpoint communication patterns in a systematic, objective, and either quantitative or qualitative manner. For the empirical, the study reviewed four related scholarly works to give credence to research, they are:

Okoro and Ibrahim (2023) took a closer look at the campaign rhetoric and voter mobilisation during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election. Their study delved into how presidential candidates used persuasive communication strategies to sway voter behavior throughout the election period. They opted for a qualitative content analysis research design, carefully selecting twenty-four official campaign speeches from the four leading presidential candidates, delivered between September 2022 and February 2023. The data was analysed using thematic content analysis.

The results showed that the candidates consistently leaned on rhetorical appeals focused on themes like national unity, economic recovery, security enhancement, youth empowerment, and leadership competence. Techniques such as emotional appeals, repetition, patriotic symbolism, and inclusive language stood out as the most effective persuasive methods. The study concluded that these campaign speeches played a significant role in shaping public perceptions of leadership credibility and boosting electoral mobilisation. However, the researchers mainly concentrated on persuasive rhetoric and voter mobilisation, without diving into coalition communication or political realignment. As a result, this current study aims to build on that foundation by exploring coalition narratives and communication strategies within the same electoral framework.

Adeyemi and Ojo (2022) explored the concept of political framing in presidential campaign speeches in Nigeria. Their goal was to understand how presidential candidates framed national issues and leadership during their election campaigns. They grounded their research in Framing Theory and used a qualitative content analysis approach. The study sample consisted of thirty campaign speeches from the 2019 Nigerian presidential election. The findings revealed that candidates primarily framed issues like corruption, insecurity, unemployment, national development, and democratic accountability as key topics in their campaigns issues. The study further revealed that framing devices such as metaphors, repetition,

problem-solution structures, and patriotic narratives enhanced message effectiveness. While the research highlighted the significance of framing in campaign discourse, it did not go deeply into coalition narratives, alliance communication, or political realignment. This current study aims to fill that void by looking closely at coalition communication in the speeches from the 2023 presidential campaign.

Lilleker and Jackson (2021) carried out a comparative study on strategic political communication and electoral campaigns in modern democracies. They investigated how political leaders convey strategic alliances, policy priorities, and their leadership images during national elections in various democratic nations. Their research utilised a mixed-methods approach, blending quantitative content analysis with qualitative discourse analysis of campaign speeches, televised debates, party manifestoes, and digital campaign materials.

The findings revealed that successful political campaigns are increasingly leaning on messages about coalition-building, inclusive political narratives, image management, and strategic communication, rather than just ideological appeals. Communication focused on coalitions improved perceptions of leadership legitimacy and electoral credibility, especially in politically diverse societies. The authors concluded that campaign communication has evolved into a multidimensional landscape due to the interplay of traditional media, digital platforms, and strategic political alliances. However, their study took a broad comparative approach and didn't specifically analyse Nigeria's 2023 presidential election. This study aims to address that contextual gap by concentrating solely on coalition communication in Nigeria.

Akinboye (2024) explored political realignment and elite coalition formation during Nigeria's 2023 General Elections. The research aimed to uncover how political defections, elite negotiations, regional alliances, and strategic endorsements shaped electoral competition leading up to the

presidential election. Using a qualitative case study approach, we gathered data from a variety of sources, including newspaper articles, official party documents, campaign speeches, and in-depth interviews with political analysts.

The results highlighted that political realignment emerged as a key feature of the 2023 election, with many political figures crossing party lines and forming strategic alliances to boost their chances at the polls. Additionally, the study found that campaign communication was crucial in legitimising these political shifts, framing them as efforts toward national unity, inclusive governance, and strengthening democracy. However, the focus was primarily on the behavior of political elites and coalition-building, rather than a thorough content analysis of presidential campaign speeches. To address this gap, the current study employs content analysis to explore the narratives around coalitions, communication strategies, and the political realignments present in presidential campaign speeches.

The empirical studies reviewed indicate that a significant amount of scholarly work has focused on campaign rhetoric, political framing, voter mobilisation, strategic communication, and political realignment. Together, they underscore the importance of campaign speeches in shaping public opinion, establishing leadership legitimacy, and influencing how people vote.

Yet, three notable gaps persist. First, there is lack of studies that consider coalition communication as the main focus within presidential campaign speeches. Second, there's limited empirical research that has systematically analysed how coalition narratives and political realignment were conveyed during Nigeria's 2023 General Elections through content analysis. Lastly, none of the studies reviewed have utilised Spectrum Coalition Model (Eze, 2026) as a framework to explain coalition communication and strategic political realignment.

This study aims to fill in the conceptual, contextual, and theoretical

gaps by conducting a thorough content analysis of presidential campaign speeches from Nigeria's 2023 General Elections. It majors in on coalition narratives, communication strategies, and political realignment, making a valuable contribution to the field of political communication scholarship.

Methodology

The study used content analysis research design because the study focuses on analysing coalition narratives, communication strategies, and political realignment as reflected in the presidential campaign speeches from Nigeria's 2023 General Elections. By using content analysis, we can explore both the manifest content (the explicit messages) and the latent content (the underlying meanings) present in these political speeches. It also offers a scientific approach to pinpoint recurring themes, rhetorical strategies, coalition references, and communication patterns, all while keeping the original texts intact.

The population of the study included all the officially published presidential campaign speeches delivered by the four main candidates during Nigeria's 2023 General Elections, which took place from September 2022 to February 2023. The four candidates were: Bola Ahmed Tinubu (All Progressives Congress - APC), Atiku Abubakar (Peoples Democratic Party - PDP), Peter Obi (Labour Party - LP), and Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso (New Nigeria Peoples Party - NNPP)

The accessible population consists of campaign speeches sourced from official party websites, verified campaign organisations, national television broadcasts, official YouTube channels, authenticated transcripts, and reputable national newspapers. The forty (40) presidential campaign speeches, Ten (10) each were selected using topical purposive sample technique. The research relied solely on these secondary data. These sources were chosen for their authenticity and reliability in providing verifiable campaign communication materials. The unit of analysis focused on individual presidential campaign speeches. In each speech, the researcher

looked into: Coalition narratives, Communication strategies, Messages about political realignment, Rhetorical devices, Issue framing, and Political endorsements. Others include references to alliances, inclusive political language, and appeals for national unity. Each instance of these elements served as a coding unit for analysis.

The data collection was a Content Analysis Coding Sheet, which the researcher designed. This coding sheet included variables related to: Identification, Candidate, Political Party, Date of Speech, Venue, and Source. Other issues considered were: Coalition Narratives, National Unity, Inclusive Governance, Political Alliance, Partnership, Consensus, Coalition Building, and Regional Cooperation among others.

The coding categories were crafted from the study's objectives, Spectrum Coalition Model, and Framing Theory. We established face and content validity through expert reviews. The coding sheet was scrutinised by specialists. Reliability was assessed through inter-coder reliability. Two independent coders analysed a subset of the speeches using the coding manual. Their results were compared using Holsti's Inter-Coder Reliability Formula:

$$[CR = (2M)(N_1 + N_2)]$$

Where: CR = Coefficient of Reliability, M = Number of coding decisions agreed upon

N_1 = Total coding decisions by Coder One, N_2 = Total coding decisions by Coder Two

A reliability coefficient of 0.80 or higher was deemed acceptable for this study.

Data were analysed using a mix of quantitative and qualitative content analysis using frequencies, percentages, tables. It also focused on thematic interpretation of strategic communication patterns and coalition narratives. The analysis was guided by the principles of Spectrum Coalition Model (SCM) and Framing Theory, which allowed us to uncover both the

Data Presentation

Table 1: Distribution of Sampled Campaign Speeches

Candidate	Party	Speeches
Bola Ahmed Tinubu	APC	10
Atiku Abubakar	PDP	10
Peter Obi	LP	10
Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso	NNPP	10
Total		40

Table 1 indicates distribution of sampled campaign speeches was evenly

Table 2: Coalition Narratives Frequency

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
National unity	34	85%
Inclusive governance	30	75%
Alliance/coalition	28	70%
Political realignment	22	55%
Youth inclusion	18	45%

Table 2 above, shows that National Unity stood out but (85%), as the most frequently mentioned coalition narrative, while Youth inclusion stands at the lowest with (45%).

Table 3: Frequency of Coalition Narratives by Presidential Candidate

Coalition Narrative	APC f (%)	PDP f (%)	LP f (%)	NNPP f (%)	Total	%
National Unity	18 (23.1)	20 (25.6)	22 (28.2)	18 (23.1)	78	26.3
Inclusive Governance	16 (23.2)	19 (27.5)	18 (26.1)	16 (23.2)	69	23.2
Political Alliance	17 (25.8)	16 (24.2)	15 (22.7)	18 (27.3)	66	22.2
National Development	14 (22.2)	15 (23.8)	18 (28.6)	16 (25.4)	63	21.2
Democratic Stability	6 (28.6)	5 (23.8)	4 (19.0)	6 (28.6)	21	7.1
Total	71	75	77	74	297	100

As illustrated in Table above, National Unity stood out as the most frequently mentioned coalition narrative, appearing 78 times (26.3%) among the total coded references. This was closely followed by Inclusive Governance (69 occurrences; 23.2%), Political Alliance (66 occurrences; 22.2%), and National Development (63 occurrences; 21.2%). In contrast, Democratic Stability (21 occurrences; 7.1%) was mentioned the least.

Table 4: Communication Strategies Employed by the Presidential Candidates

Communication Strategy	APC	PDP	LP	NNPP	Total	%
Emotional Appeal	21	20	24	18	83	22.0
Logical Appeal	17	19	20	18	74	19.6
Credibility Appeal	18	17	16	17	68	18.0
Repetition	15	16	18	15	64	17.0
Inclusive Language	20	18	21	19	78	20.7
Story telling	4	3	3	1	11	2.9
Total	95	93	102	88	378	100

Table 4. indicates that Emotional Appeal (22.0%) was the most utilised strategy, closely followed by Inclusive Language (20.7%), Logical Appeal (19.6%), Credibility Appeal (18.0%), and Repetition (17.0%). The heavy reliance on emotional appeals shows that candidates aimed to forge strong emotional bonds with voters by tapping into themes like national identity, hope, patriotism, security, and economic dreams.

Table 5: Political Realignment Messages across Campaign Speeches

Political Realignment Theme	APC	PDP	LP	NNPP	Total	%
Political Defections	12	14	10	13	49	23.8
Elite Negotiation	15	13	12	15	55	26.7
Cross-party Cooperation	11	12	13	10	46	22.3
Regional Partnership	10	11	12	13	46	22.3
Strategic Endorsements	4	3	2	1	10	4.9
Total	52	53	49	52	206	100

The data in Table 5 highlights that Elite Negotiation (26.7%) was the most prominent category of political realignment messages. This was closely followed by Political Defections (23.8%), Cross-party Cooperation (22.3%), and Regional Partnership (22.3%), while Strategic Endorsements (4.9%) were the least common.

Table 6: References to National Unity and Inclusion

Theme	APC	PDP	LP	NNPP	Total	%
Unity	18	20	22	18	78	34.5
Inclusion	16	19	18	16	69	30.5
Diversity	9	8	10	9	36	15.9
Peace	8	9	8	10	35	15.5
Reconciliation	3	2	2	1	8	3.6
Total	54	58	60	54	226	100

The data in Tables 6 reveals that coalition communication mainly aimed to promote national unity, inclusive governance, and political alliances. National unity made up 34.5% of all references related to unity, while inclusive governance accounted for 30.5%. These insights suggest that candidates consistently positioned themselves as national leaders capable of transcending ethnic, religious, or regional divides.

Table 7: Candidate Comparison of Coalition Communication Intensity

Candidate	Coalition References	Percentage
APC	71	23.9
PDP	75	25.3
LP	77	25.9
NNPP	74	24.9
Total	297	100

A candidate-by-candidate breakdown (Table 7) shows that coalition communication was fairly evenly distributed across the four political parties. The Labour Party led the way with the highest number of coalition references, totaling 77 occurrences (25.9%), followed by the Peoples

Democratic Party with **75 occurrences (25.3%)**, the New Nigeria Peoples Party with **74 occurrences (24.9%)**, and the All Progressives Congress with **71 occurrences (23.9%)**. While there were certainly differences among the candidates, the gaps between them were quite narrow. This suggests that coalition communication emerged as a shared electoral strategy, regardless of party lines.

Discussion

Our analysis revealed that the key coalition narratives highlighted by the presidential candidates revolved around themes of national unity, inclusive governance, political alliances, and national development. Notably, national unity stood out as the most frequently mentioned theme, suggesting that the candidates were keen to position themselves as leaders who could govern beyond the divides of ethnicity, religion, region, and party affiliation.

This observation supports McNair's (2018) assertion that campaign speeches serve as strategic communication platforms where political figures build legitimacy, rally electoral support, and share their visions for the nation. Likewise, Norris (2020) argues that modern political communication increasingly focuses on fostering inclusive democratic dialogue that resonates with a wide range of audiences.

The strong presence of coalition narratives also mirrors Nigeria's diverse political landscape, where winning elections heavily relies on candidates' abilities to garner support from various geopolitical zones and cultural groups. Thus, coalition communication emerged as a vital strategy for promoting national unity while broadening electoral appeal.

Our findings indicated that the candidates predominantly used emotional appeals, inclusive language, logical reasoning, credibility appeals, and repetition as their main communication strategies throughout the campaigns. Emotional appeals...

This finding supports McNair's (2018) argument that campaign speeches serve as strategic communication tools for political figures to build legitimacy, rally electoral support, and express national visions. In a similar vein, Norris (2020) points out that modern political communication increasingly focuses on fostering inclusive democratic dialogue that resonates with a variety of audiences. The emphasis on coalition narratives also highlights Nigeria's diverse political landscape, where winning elections heavily relies on candidates' ability to garner support from different geopolitical zones and cultural groups. As a result, coalition communication emerged as a key strategy for promoting national unity while broadening electoral appeal.

The study uncovered that emotional appeals, inclusive language, logical reasoning, credibility appeals, and repetition were the key communication strategies used throughout the campaigns. Emotional appeals took the top spot, showing that candidates often tapped into themes like patriotism, hope, security, economic recovery, and national identity to forge psychological connections with voters.

The consistent use of inclusive language, especially phrases like "we," "our nation," and "together," highlights a conscious effort to build a sense of collective political identity. These linguistic choices helped reinforce coalition narratives by portraying candidates as representatives of all Nigerians, rather than just specific political or regional interests.

One of the key takeaways from the study is that campaign speeches were rich with references to political realignment, highlighting elite negotiations, political defections, regional partnerships, and cross-party cooperation. These messages show that coalition-building went beyond just organisational setups; it also involved intentional public communication aimed at legitimising new political ties.

The results back up Dalton's (2020) argument that political realignment often comes with strategic messaging meant to reassure voters

and explain shifting political alliances. In Nigeria, where political defections and coalition talks are a regular part of the electoral landscape, campaign speeches became vital platforms for clarifying and legitimising these changes.

Interestingly, the relatively low frequency of explicit endorsement messages indicates that candidates leaned towards broader themes of cooperation and inclusivity rather than making direct references to individual endorsements.

When comparing the four presidential candidates, the analysis revealed only slight differences in how intensely they communicated about coalitions. While the Labour Party had the highest number of coalition references, the APC, PDP, and NNPP also dedicated significant attention to coalition narratives.

This suggests that coalition communication wasn't just the domain of one political party; instead, it was a common practice shared across Nigeria's major presidential campaigns. The findings highlight that coalition-building has become a crucial aspect of electoral communication in modern Nigerian politics, regardless of ideological differences.

The findings strongly align with the principles of Spectrum Coalition Model which posits that political actors engage in strategic communication, negotiation, alignment, and realignment across various political and ideological, institutional, ethnic, regional, media, and social spectrums in order to maximise political influence and electoral success. The prevalence of coalition narratives, inclusive communication, elite negotiation, and political realignment in the campaign speeches supports the idea that communication is the key way coalitions are created, sustained, and legitimised.

This study shows that coalition politics is inherently about communication. Presidential campaign speeches weren't just about laying out policy ideas; they also served as strategic tools for building political

legitimacy, forging alliances, and rallying widespread electoral support.

The results also back up the principles of Framing Theory. Candidates consistently framed coalition politics through themes of national unity, inclusive governance, democratic renewal, economic transformation, peace, and shared responsibility.

These frames presented coalition politics as a positive and essential approach to national development, rather than mere political opportunism. Thus, the study confirms that framing is a potent communication strategy that political figures use to shape public perceptions of alliances and political realignment.

Conclusion

The study concludes that coalition communication was a defining characteristic of the presidential campaigns. Also, that it focused mainly on national unity, inclusive governance, political alliances, and national development, with emotional appeals, inclusive language, and logical reasoning standing out as the primary communication strategies.

Additionally, it throws up that political realignment was conveyed through mentions of elite negotiations, regional partnerships, and cross-party cooperation, highlighting the strategic nature of coalition-building within Nigeria's democratic environment. Comparative analysis revealed that all four major presidential candidates employed coalition communication extensively, although with varying levels of intensity.

The study supported the ideas put forth by Spectrum Coalition Model, showing that political communication is the key way coalitions are formed, legitimised, and maintained. Also highlight the importance of Framing Theory in illustrating how coalition narratives are structured and shared to shape voter perceptions.

Recommendations

Drawing from the study's findings, here are some recommendations:

1. Political parties and presidential campaigns should keep promoting

coalition communication that focuses on national unity, inclusive governance, and peaceful democratic engagement, steering clear of divisive ethnic, regional, or religious language.

2. Campaign strategies and political communication advisors ought to craft evidence-based communication strategies that blend persuasive messaging with solid policy content, thereby enhancing public trust and democratic accountability
3. Researchers and scholars in political communication should pursue further empirical studies on coalition communication across various electoral settings, employing mixed methods, discourse analysis, computational text analysis, and comparative approaches to enrich the expanding knowledge base in the field.
4. Communication studies should integrate emerging theories like Spectrum Coalition Model into political communication curricula to better prepare future scholars and practitioners.
5. Political parties and election management stakeholders, should foster issue-based campaign communication through regulations and voter education initiatives that combat hate speech, misinformation, and inflammatory political rhetoric.

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