

# Focalization Processes In the People's Democratic Party's 'We Are In A One Chance Bus' Using George Lakoff's Framing Theory

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## Abstract

This research paper explores the focalization processes in the People's Democratic Party's (PDP) use of the phrase "We are in a one-chance bus" within Nigerian political discourse. Analyzed through the lens of George Lakoff's Framing Theory, the term "one-chance bus" metaphorically represents a perilous situation from which there is no escape, commonly used in Nigerian colloquialism to describe fraudulent or unsafe public transportation. By employing this metaphor, the PDP frames the current government, All Progressives Congress (APC) as corrupt and inefficient, effectively casting the Nigerian populace as victims trapped in an undesirable socio-political condition. Lakoff's Framing Theory, which emphasizes how language and metaphors shape political realities, is used to understand how the PDP leverages cultural symbols to activate cognitive frames of danger, helplessness, and moral failure. This paper argues that the "one-chance bus" metaphor aligns with Lakoff's "victim-aggressor" frame, where the government is positioned as the aggressor and the people as its victims. Furthermore, the PDP's repeated use of this metaphor helps focalize public attention on governance failures, reinforcing negative perceptions of the ruling party. The emotional and moral resonance of the frame also evokes outrage, fear, and a desire for political change, aligning with Lakoff's notion that successful framing taps into deeper moral and emotional dimensions. This study contributes to an understanding of how political parties use metaphors to shape public perception and mobilize support, emphasizing the relevance of Lakoff's Framing Theory in analyzing political communication in Nigeria. The research highlights how metaphoric framing, when embedded in shared cultural experiences, can influence political discourse and voter behavior.

**Keywords:** *Focalization, One-Chance Bus, People's Democratic Party (PDP), Framing Theory, Political Communication, Nigeria.*

## INTRODUCTION

In political discourse, focalization—the process of determining the narrative perspective through which information is conveyed—plays a significant role in shaping public perception. In the context of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) of Nigeria, the phrase "We are in a one chance bus" has emerged as a symbolic political discourse. This metaphor reflects a situation where people are trapped in a precarious or hopeless circumstance, invoking feelings of disillusionment and helplessness. The focalization in this discourse is crucial for understanding how political actors use language to control the narrative, influence public sentiment, and assert dominance over ideological opponents. This paper aims to critically analyze the focalization used in this political discourse, examining its structure, purpose, and impact on the Nigerian political landscape. Focalization processes remain central to narratology and narrative theory,

shaping how stories are experienced and interpreted. Whether in literature, film, or digital media, the manipulation of focalization determines the flow of information and the relationship between the audience, the narrator, and the characters. Gérard Genette however, introduced the term in his *Narrative Discourse* (1980), expanding on earlier concepts of point of view and perspective. He categorized focalization into three primary types: zero, internal, and external. Each type governs the degree of knowledge the narrator and the characters possess relative to the audience. Focalization processes, therefore, play a vital role in shaping narrative structures and the interpretation of events within literary texts and linguistic discourse.

### **Background of the PDP and Nigerian Political Climate**

The Nigerian political climate has been shaped by a myriad of factors ranging from colonial legacies, ethnic diversity, economic interests, and military interventions to democratic consolidation. One of the key players in these political dynamics is the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Established in 1998, the PDP has been at the forefront of Nigerian politics, especially during the formative years of the country's Fourth Republic and the country's transition from military rule to democracy following the death of General Sani Abacha. The party was established by a group of politicians, some of whom were former military officials, and others were members of the political class who had been marginalized during military rule (Omotola, 2010). These individuals sought to form a political platform that would unify the diverse ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria and restore democratic governance. The PDP's founding philosophy was to establish a party that represented the diversity of Nigeria and promoted national unity. The PDP developed several mechanisms to manage diversity and meet the interests of its members, including the rotation of positions (including president, leadership positions in the National Assembly, and party leadership positions) among the country's six geopolitical zones (Kendhammer 2010). One of the most significant political events that solidified the party's dominance was its success in the 1999 elections. The PDP won the presidency with the election of Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military head of state, as the president. This victory marked the return of civilian rule after years of military control (Diamond, 2002). Since its formation, the PDP has been one of the major political parties in Nigeria, enjoying significant power and influence over the country's governance. The party held the presidency from 1999 to 2015, making it the dominant force in Nigerian politics for 16 years. During this period, the party managed to navigate Nigeria's complex political landscape, balancing power among the country's numerous ethnic, religious, and regional groups (Adejumobi, 2004).

As a result, the PDP circumvented some challenges faced by political parties in the Second Republic, which were characterized as regional and ethnic in outlook (Diamond 1988; Diamond and Suberu 2002). The PDP initially embraced a zoning policy, which rotated political power between Nigeria's North and South, as a means to maintain balance and fairness in the country's ethnically diverse society. This policy played a significant role in the party's early successes, as it allowed for broad-based support across the country. However, internal conflicts, especially regarding the zoning arrangement, led to divisions within the party. The party played a dominant role in Nigerian politics for many years, holding power at the federal level for over a decade until its defeat in the 2015 general elections by the All Progressives Congress (APC). Since then, Nigeria's political landscape has been marked by intense competition between the PDP and APC, with both parties vying for influence in shaping the country's governance and policy direction.

## Challenges and Decline of the PDP

The health and resilience of a country's democracy are often gauged by the strength of its democratic institutions, including its political parties (IDEA 2017). Political parties are essential institutions of democracy. According to Crotty (1993), "democratic government is unlikely and may not be possible in the absence of competitive political parties" (p.665). So, parties are fundamental political institution in the actualisation of democratic ethos and principles. The interest(s) and purpose shown by them revolve around the objective of using the party to acquire power, share in the exercise of power or take control of government (Yaqub, 1992). By competing in elections, parties offer citizens a choice in governance, and while in opposition they can hold governments accountable. Hamalai et al. 2017, however, argue that the absence of a clearly defined ideology in the PDP is reflected in the Party's internal conflicts, including the choice of party head (it had 12 party chairmen in 16 years). Poverty of ideology coupled with its attendant crisis and contradictions have been of dramatic effect not only on these parties, but also on the entire project of national rebirth and integration, sustainable democracy and development (Olanrewaju, 2015). A weak statute and party structure, lack of cohesion, and a disconnect with members at the grassroots level, Dan-Azumi argued, further played a significant role in the party's decline in 2015, particularly given its failure to support popular candidates in the party primaries. The party's dominance began to decline after the 2011 elections, as internal strife, accusations of corruption, and leadership crises plagued its operations. One of the key moments that signaled the beginning of the party's fall from grace was the 2015 general elections. In that election, the PDP lost its grip on power as its candidate, incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, was defeated by Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC). Given the advantages of incumbency, the win by Buhari reflects the dissatisfaction with the PDP-led government's handling of issues such as corruption, insecurity, and economic decline. The Boko Haram insurgency and widespread corruption scandals under the Jonathan administration severely weakened the party's standing among the electorate. Many members of the PDP also defected to the newly formed APC, further weakening the party.

However, Nigeria's political environment is characterized by intense competition between political parties, which often revolves around personal, ethnic, and regional interests rather than ideological differences. The electoral process has also been marred by violence, intimidation, and accusations of manipulation. The PDP, like other political parties in Nigeria, has had to navigate these challenges while striving to maintain relevance in an ever-evolving political landscape (Ihonvbere, 2000). The PDP having played a significant role in shaping Nigeria's political landscape since the country's return to democracy in 1999 equally enjoyed dominance for over a decade and a half until their internal conflicts, leadership crises, and governance challenges snowballed to its decline, particularly with its loss in the 2015 general elections. The Nigerian political climate, undoubtedly remains fluid, with political parties like the PDP continuously adapting to the country's evolving democratic context.

The phrase "one chance bus" has significant cultural connotations in Nigerian urban settings, often referring to vehicles used by kidnappers and robbers to lure unsuspecting passengers. By comparing the nation under APC to a "one chance bus," the PDP effectively frames the government as leading citizens into danger, implying that staying under the current leadership would continue to pose serious risks. "We are in a One Chance Bus" serves as a colloquial Nigerian expression referring to being trapped in a difficult or deceptive situation, often with no clear way out. In political discourse, it has become symbolic of dissatisfaction

with governance, particularly in relation to economic challenges, corruption, electoral crisis and perceived failures of leadership.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to analyze the focalization processes in the PDP's political discourse using George Lakoff's Framing Theory.

#### **The specific objectives are to:**

1. Identify the focalization strategies employed in the PDP's discourse
2. Examine how these strategies align with Lakoff's Framing Theory by illuminating the interplay between language, cognition, and ideology in Nigerian political rhetoric.
3. Assess the impact of these focalization and framing techniques on public perception and voter behavior.

**Significance:** This research significantly inputs that understanding focalization in political discourse can provide insights into the strategies used by political parties to communicate their messages effectively.

### **Previous Studies on Focalization**

Previous researches have examined focalization and framing in political discourse, but there is a gap in the literature regarding their application to the PDP's discourse. This study aims to fill that gap.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The effectiveness of political rhetoric often lies in its ability to evoke shared cognitive and emotional frameworks among the audience. The People's Democratic Party's (PDP) metaphorical statement, "We are in a one chance bus," represents a significant rhetorical strategy aimed at framing Nigeria's socio-political situation under its opposition. Such a metaphor resonates deeply with the public, leveraging cultural and linguistic constructs familiar to the Nigerian populace. However, the cognitive mechanisms and linguistic strategies that enable this metaphor to resonate effectively remain underexplored.

Framing, as theorized by George Lakoff, plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception and influencing political discourse. The PDP's metaphor not only critiques governance but also strategically aligns the public's sentiments with its political agenda. Despite the metaphor's widespread use, there is limited scholarly attention to how such framing shapes political discourse in Nigeria and reflects broader sociocultural and ideological underpinnings.

This research addresses this gap by analyzing the focalization process of the PDP's statement within the context of Lakoff's Framing Theory. It investigates how the metaphor frames the current socio-political climate, the cultural resonance of "one chance bus" as a metaphor, and its implications for political communication. By doing so, the study aims to illuminate the interplay between language, cognition, and ideology in Nigerian political rhetoric.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative research design, specifically employing discourse analysis. The focalization process within the political discourse of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) is explored through the lens of George Lakoff's framing theory. The study seeks

to understand how linguistic framing is used to shape perceptions and attitudes towards governance and political narratives in Nigeria.

### **Analytical/ Theoretical Framework**

In 2004, linguist and cognitive scientist George Lakoff popularized the idea of using metaphors and “frames” to promote a progressive political agenda. His theories, based on the early work of sociologist Erving Goffman, explained how choice of language in general, and metaphors in particular, allowed for the structuring of issues to reflect progressive values. When in *Frame Analysis* Goffman (1974) defined a frame as a ‘schemata of interpretation’ (p. 21), he was heavily drawing from Bateson’s (1972) anthropological work on human cognitive behaviour: a frame is what allows us to understand what is out there, memorise this understanding and reuse it in the future. However, George Lakoff’s framing theory provides the theoretical lens for this study. The theory posits that language not only reflects but also shapes thought and action. Frames are mental structures that influence how individuals interpret and react to information. As noted by Deborah Tannen, the origin of frames or scripts is cultural, and arises out of the participants’ experiences of previous similarly-situated interactions (Tannen, 1993). The “One Chance Bus” metaphor is analyzed as a conceptual frame that highlights particular aspects of Nigerian political reality while obscuring others. Framing is a crucial concept for people engaged in social change to understand. To Lakoff, it is the art of communicating, such that one’s language activates particular unspoken ideas and associations. He maintains that being intentional about framing as part of progressive campaigns means activating relevant values and encouraging more people to think in terms of our worldview. Lakoff’s Framing Theory posits that the way information is presented (framed) influences how it is perceived (Lakoff, 2004). By selecting particular words and metaphors—there is a profound impact on how people interpret and respond to them. The theory helps us in this present study to examine focalization and framing in the PDP’s discourse.

### **Understanding Focalization in Political Discourse**

Earlier, some researchers, notably van Dijk (1987, 1993), Fowler (1991), have paid particular attention to the role of language in the construction of social consensus regarding the in-group ‘us’ as against the out-group ‘them’. Later, van Dijk (2004) re-formulated his approach, which consists of two main discursive strategies of ‘positive self-representation’ (semantic macrostrategy of in-group favouritism) and ‘negative other-representation,’ (semantic macro-strategy of derogation of out-group). The analysis of what van Dijk (2007:78) refers to as ‘ideological square,’ is an aspect of what he sees as the need “to relate properties of discourse with these underlying, socially shared, representations, which group members use as a resource to talk about (members) of other groups” (van Dijk, 2006). Focalization as a narrative technique determines the viewpoint from which a story or event is perceived. According to Genette (1980), there are three types of focalizations: internal, external, and zero (non-focalized) focalization.

1. **Internal Focalization:** The narrative is limited to what a particular character knows, sees, or experiences.
2. **External Focalization:** The narrator provides only what can be observed externally, without insight into the internal thoughts or emotions of characters.
3. **Zero Focalization:** The narrator knows everything about the story, characters, and events, resembling an omniscient viewpoint.

In political discourse, the choice of focalization reflects the speaker's intent and audience manipulation (Bal, 1997). When a politician uses an internal focalization, they often aim to appeal to shared experiences with their audience, making their narrative more relatable and credible. In the phrase "We are in a one chance bus," the internal focalization is evident as the speaker assumes the collective voice of the people, portraying a sense of shared struggle and frustration. This internal perspective strengthens the connection between the political actor and the audience, creating an "us versus them" mentality, where the 'them' refers to the current ruling government (APC) or political elite.

### **The Metaphor of "One Chance Bus"**

Metaphors go beyond literal language; it conveys complex ideas and create vivid imageries. They are cognitive aspect of language. And in Lakoff and Johnson's view, "it is a systematic cognitive device used in the understanding of certain abstract concepts through the application of concrete ones" (2003, p15).

The term "one chance" originates from Nigerian urban slang, referring to a situation where unsuspecting passengers are lured into a bus by criminals, only to be robbed and abandoned in a dangerous location. Politically, the PDP's use of this metaphor suggests that the nation has been misled by corrupt leadership, trapped in a system where promises of progress turn into deceit. The focalization here employs fear, betrayal, and helplessness to evoke an emotional response from the audience. The metaphorical bus represents the Nigerian state under what the PDP views as the failed leadership of its political opponents. According to Lazar (2009), metaphors in political discourse often serve as cognitive shortcuts, enabling the public to understand complex situations in simpler terms. The "one chance bus" metaphor, focalized through the voice of the people, positions the PDP as an ally of the disillusioned masses, while the ruling government is cast as the antagonist.

### **Focalization and Ideological Framing**

The PDP's discourse can be viewed through the lens of ideological framing, where the focalization helps shape a particular worldview. Frames are cognitive structures that guide the interpretation of events. By focusing the narrative on the "one chance bus" metaphor, the PDP frames the current political situation as dangerous and unsustainable. These narrative positions the PDP as a potential savior capable of rescuing the people from this metaphorical trap. According to Van Dijk (2006), political discourse often employs focalization to strengthen ideological divisions. In this case, the focalization through internal perspectives emphasizes the PDP's role as the voice of the people, while delegitimizing the ruling government's authority. This framing not only seeks to establish a binary opposition but also attempts to galvanize support for the PDP by portraying the party as a beacon of hope.

### **The Role of Collective Focalization in Mobilization**

The use of collective focalization in "We are in a one chance bus" serves as a tool for political mobilization. Collective focalization refers to the process through which a political group speaks on behalf of the people, constructing a narrative that reflects the collective experience of suffering or oppression (Fairclough, 2000). By adopting this narrative strategy, the PDP effectively positions itself as a leader of the masses, offering a shared voice to those who feel marginalised. Mobilization is critical in political campaigns, and the PDP's strategic use of collective focalization in this discourse seeks to create a sense of urgency among the electorate. The narrative suggests that failure to act will result in further entrapment in the "one

chance bus," encouraging voters to align with the PDP in order to escape the current political impasse.

### Critical Analysis

**Paragraphs 1a, 1b, 2, 10, 12a and 12b** below (from the full speech) are specific *excerpts* which shall be analyzed to show the linguistic strategies and features employed in the statement to create this focalized narrative.

#### Paragraphs 1a and 1b:

‘Where Is President Buhari’s Fight Against Corruption?’

"Gentlemen of the press, we have called you up today to, through you, raise serious posers for which we demand immediate response from President Muhammadu Buhari and his All Progressives Congress (APC), whose administration has scammed Nigerians and the international community in the last three years."

- **Rhetorical Question as a Tool of Critique**

The use of the rhetorical question “Where is President Buhari’s fight against corruption?” is central to the focalization process and demands for accountability. Pretorius, in Tjatji (2001: 78), defines a rhetorical question as a question where the answer is obvious or self-evident. It does not require an answer. Similarly, to Wood (1981: 230), a rhetorical question is a question asked for stylistic effect. This means there are no required efforts needed for the question to be answered. Guth, in Serudu (1987: 276), supports this by saying: “A rhetorical question has a built-in answer. It seems to leave the decision to the reader, but it is worded in such a way that only one answer is possible”. These definitions reveal the nature of a rhetorical question. The answer is normally known by the writer and reader. The purpose is not for the question to be answered but for stylistic effect. The writer aims to achieve something by using a rhetorical question, especially emphasising an idea or fact. Readers are essentially not expected to make some effort to find the answer.

The question above from the PDP Statement is an indicator that the anti-corruption fight, which was a cornerstone of Buhari's campaign promises, is either absent or ineffective. By asking "where," the speaker implies that this fight is no longer visible, creating a sense of public disappointment.

- **Critique Without Direct Accusation**

The rhetorical question subtly critiques the government without outrightly stating that it has failed. This indirect approach engages the audience by prompting them to reflect on the administration's actions or inactions (van Dijk, 2006).

- **Direct Address and Engagement:**

**Paragraph 1b** starts with direct address and engagement "Gentlemen of the press," which establishes the audience and purpose. By addressing the press, the speaker assigns them an intermediary role, emphasizing their function in disseminating the message to a broader audience. This rhetorical strategy situates the media as facilitators of accountability. However, public service roles of the media have been articulated in the concepts of media’s social responsibility and accountability since the 1940s (e.g. Hutchins Commission, 1947; Hodges, 1986; Christians, 1988; McQuail, 1997; 2003; Bertrand, 2000; Plaisance, 2000, etc.).

McQuail's definition of media accountability encapsulates the core aspects its relation to media responsibility vividly:

Accountable communication exists where authors (originators, sources, or gatekeepers) take responsibility for the quality and consequences of the publication, orient themselves to audiences and others affected, and respond to their expectations and those of the wider society (McQuail, 2003, p. 19).

Furthermore, the collective responsibility captured in the phrase "through you" in the first excerpt (Paragraph 1b) implies a collaborative effort to hold the government accountable, creating a sense of shared purpose between the speaker and the press. The focalization here highlights the importance of transparency and positions the speaker as a representative voice for the public.

- **Presupposition and "Assumption" of Corruption**

The statement uses presupposition to foreground corruption as an undeniable reality of Buhari's administration. Examples of Presupposition: "Raise serious posers" presupposes the existence of unanswered questions regarding Buhari's governance.

"Scammed Nigerians and the international community" presupposes dishonesty and betrayal, framing the administration as deceptive on both domestic and global scales. These linguistic choices ensure that the audience accepts corruption as a given, directing attention toward the need for accountability rather than the validity of the accusations (van Dijk, 2006).

- **Evaluative Language and Emotional Framing:**

PDP's strong evaluative language is also used to evoke emotional responses and frame the Buhari administration in a negative light: "Scammed Nigerians and the international community." The word "scammed" carries connotations of fraud and deceit, suggesting deliberate malfeasance. By including "the international community," the critique extends beyond domestic governance, implying that Buhari's administration has damaged Nigeria's global reputation.

- **Temporal Emphasis:**

The phrase "in the last three years" creates a sense of continuity and systemic failure, reinforcing the idea that corruption is not an isolated incident but an enduring pattern. This evaluative framing appeals to both local and international audiences, leveraging shared frustrations to delegitimize the administration.

- **Power Dynamics and Positionality:**

The speaker constructs a positional dynamic that contrasts their role as a truth-teller with the alleged corruption of Buhari's government. They equally demand accountability: The phrase "we demand immediate response" conveys urgency and authority, positioning the speaker as a voice of accountability. This demand also challenges Buhari's perceived inaction, focusing attention on his failure to address critical issues, thereby framing the APC as deceptive. By accusing the APC of scamming Nigerians, the statement focalizes on the moral failings of the ruling party, creating a dichotomy between its governance and the expectations of integrity and transparency.



- **Temporal and Contextual Focalization:**

The statement strategically focuses on the three-year period of Buhari's administration, contextualizing the critique within a broader narrative of unmet expectations. Implicit contrast with past government is made, although the statement does not explicitly reference previous administrations. The critique of Buhari's governance invites a comparison with the PDP era, suggesting that conditions have worsened under the APC. By highlighting the ongoing failures, the statement projects future consequences and implicitly warns of continued deterioration if corrective measures are not taken; this, however, fosters a sense of urgency.

**Paragraph 2:**

"President Buhari and his APC deceived Nigerians to secure power on the promise of transparency, accountability and zero tolerance for corruption. Little did Nigerians then realize that they had boarded a "one chance bus" driven by vicious and vengeful liars, scammers and a falsehearted and heavily corrupt leaders, parading as saints and messiahs."

Focalization Processes here, highlight specific information to influence interpretation and perception. For example, the equation of focalization with perception have been made by some notable critics. Bal is not the only one to equate focalization with perception. This premise is also shared by Herman & Vervaeck (2004), and Prince, who explicitly states that, "discussion links focalization only to the perception of the narrated by (or through, or 'with') an entity in that narrated" (2001: 47).

- **External Focalization: The Critic's Perspective:**

The critique assumes an external focalization position, presenting Buhari and the APC from the perspective of disillusioned observers who highlight the gap between pre-election promises and governance realities. This viewpoint positions the speaker as an external evaluator who is detached from the APC's internal processes, enabling a direct critique of their actions.

The speaker who is also an agent of focalization is a representative of an opposition PDP and a critical voice, who uses this position to reflect public dissatisfaction. By adopting an omniscient tone, the speaker projects themselves as a credible source of insight into Buhari's administration.

The target of criticism are the focalized subjects: President Buhari, the APC, and their leadership. They are depicted as deceitful, vengeful, and corrupt individuals who manipulated public trust to gain power.

- **Focalized Themes**

The statement emphasizes two major themes:

- 1. Deception and Broken Promises:**

The phrase "deceived Nigerians to secure power" foregrounds the accusation that Buhari's administration failed to deliver on promises of transparency and accountability. This theme is reinforced through the rhetorical contrast between pre-election promises and post-election governance (Chilton, 2004).

## 2. Corruption and Betrayal:

The description of the administration as a “one chance bus” metaphorically depicts Nigerians as victims of a fraudulent scheme. The loaded terms “liars,” “scammers,” and “falsehearted leaders” focalize the administration’s alleged moral and ethical failures.

### Linguistic Strategies in Focalization

The speaker employs several rhetorical devices to direct audience focus:

#### 1. Metaphor:

The term “one chance bus” is a Nigerian colloquialism that describes a scam or fraudulent act where victims are misled or trapped. This metaphor paints a vivid picture of exploitation and loss of trust (Ojukwu & Okechukwu, 2016). Describing Buhari and APC as “falsehearted leaders parading as saints and messiahs” accentuates the dichotomy between their public image and factual reality.

#### 2. Hyperbole:

Terms like “vicious,” “vengeful,” and “heavily corrupt” exaggerate the scale of alleged wrongdoing, evoking strong emotional responses and fostering public indignation (Lakoff, 2004).

#### 3. Polarization:

The statement creates a stark divide between the APC’s promises and their purported actions, reinforcing an “us vs. them” narrative. The use of “saints and messiahs” sarcastically critiques the administration’s moral posturing.

#### 4. Temporal Focalization:

The phrase “Little did Nigerians then realize” contrasts past hope with present disillusionment, emphasizing the evolving perception of Buhari’s administration.

Internal Focalization: The Audience’s Perspective

The statement implicitly focalizes the ordinary Nigerian citizen’s experience, portraying them as unsuspecting victims of APC’s alleged deceit. By centering the narrative on the collective disillusionment of Nigerians, the speaker appeals to shared frustrations and fosters solidarity among critics of the administration (van Dijk, 2006).

#### • Contextual and Historical Dimensions:

1. Cultural Context: From the foregoing, the metaphor of the “one chance bus” resonates deeply within Nigerian socio-political discourse, where fraudulent schemes are a recurring concern. This cultural framing enhances the relatability of the critique.
2. Historical Focalization: Buhari’s rise to power in 2015 was heavily premised on promises of eradicating corruption and restoring trust in governance. Through external and internal focalization, the statement constructs a narrative of betrayal and failed leadership, leveraging metaphor, hyperbole, and cultural symbolism to influence public perception. By centering on themes of deception and corruption, the speaker highlights the disparity between Buhari’s promises and governance realities, fostering a critical lens for evaluating his administration.

**Paragraph 10:**

"Can the Buhari Presidency and APC claim to be unaware of the damning report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a public document which detailed how officials were using bulk of the resources meant for the IDPs on contracts that were found to have immensely benefitted officials of the APC Government including the sacked Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir Lawal?"

Through interrogative framing, presupposition, and strategic reference to authority, the PDP constructs a narrative that contrasts the promises of anti-corruption with the perceived failures of the APC Government. The notion of presupposition originated in semantics (Mey, 2001) where it has been defined as "a logical concept bound up with truth conditional semantics" (Khaleel, 2010, p.523). Truth conditional semantics on the other hand studies "the propositional meaning of sentences and the logical conditions for establishing their truth or falsity" (Finch, 2000, p. 184). Thus, semantic presupposition is defined as "a relation between two sentences.... One sentence presupposes another just in case the truth of the second sentence is a necessary condition for the truth or falsity of the first" (Greenfield & Smith, 1976, as cited in Khaleel, 2010, p. 524). The statement presupposes that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report is credible and that the APC government, including Babachir Lawal, benefited from contracts tied to IDP resources.

**Example of Presupposition:**

The phrase "a public document which detailed how officials were using bulk of the resources meant for the IDPs..." assumes the veracity of the report's claims without debate, steering the audience to accept this as fact.

**• Focus on Vulnerability:**

By emphasizing resources "meant for the IDPs," the PDP highlights the moral and humanitarian implications of the alleged corruption, making the critique more emotionally resonant.

**• Strategic Reference to Authority**

The invocation of the UNDP adds credibility and weight to the critique. By using an International Body and referring to the UNDP, a reputable global organization, the PDP reinforces the seriousness of the allegations and elevates the discourse beyond partisan politics. The contrast between the international standard implied by the UNDP and the alleged failures of the APC underscores the PDP's framing of Buhari's administration as ineffective and morally compromised/bankrupt.

**• Temporal Focalization and Naming Specific Actors**

The statement's reference to Babachir Lawal, the then sacked Secretary to the Government of the Federation, focalizes responsibility on a specific individual within the APC leadership.

**• Temporal Marker:**

By mentioning Lawal as "sacked," the statement draws attention to past actions taken by Buhari's administration, critiquing these efforts as inadequate and incomplete. Naming Lawal focuses on leadership failure and tying him to the alleged misuse of IDP funds extends the

critique to Buhari's leadership, pointing to the fact that corruption within the APC is systemic rather than isolated.

- **Contrast Between Promises and Reality**

The implicit contrast between Buhari's anti-corruption promises and the alleged corruption exposed by the UNDP report is central to the focalization process. Corruption according to Khan (1996) is an act which deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of some private motives such as wealth, power or status. Nye (1967) in another instance described corruption as the process of obtaining material enrichment or opportunities for oneself and or for others, through the use of public office (or influence) in ways other than those publicly acknowledged through the rules and procedures of that office. The anti-corruption rhetoric of Buhari's administration was built on promises of transparency and accountability. But the reality of corruption from the PDP statement emphasizes that the APC undermines these promises, fostering public disillusionment and positioning the PDP as a credible alternative.

**Paragraph 12a and 12b:**

"The PDP challenges the Presidency to explain why his 'famed' anti-corruption dragnet has not been cast on the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) despite widely reports of alleged stealing of over N25 billion meant for the health need of the people from the account of the Scheme in the Treasury Single Account (TSA) by APC agents."

"Can President Buhari, the African Union anti-corruption champion, explain why his Presidency recalled and reinstated the indicted Executive Secretary of the Scheme, Prof. Usman Yakubu, while he was still being quizzed by the EFCC for alleged corruption?"

In the indictment above, interrogative framing is aptly applied and the use of rhetorical questions in this critique serves as a focalization strategy that places the Buhari administration under scrutiny.

- **Demand for Explanation:**

The opening question, "why has his 'famed' anti-corruption dragnet not been cast on the NHIS?" challenges the credibility of Buhari's anti-corruption agenda by questioning the omission of the NHIS scandal. This question presupposes that corruption within the NHIS is both significant and undeniable. The phrase "famed anti-corruption dragnet" introduces a layer of sarcasm, implying that the administration's anti-corruption efforts are performative rather than substantive. By directly addressing President Buhari as the African Union anti-corruption champion, the statement juxtaposes his international recognition with his government's domestic failures, amplifying the contrast between expectation and reality.

**The critique presupposes several key points:**

- **The Theft of N25 Billion:**

The statement assumes the validity of reports that N25 billion intended for public health was misappropriated under Buhari's administration. This frames the alleged corruption as a fact rather than a claim, directing the audience's attention to the lack of accountability.

- **Complicity in Reinstating Prof. Usman Yakubu:**

The second question presupposes that the Buhari administration acted improperly by reinstating an indicted official. The phrase “while he was still being quizzed by the EFCC” underscores the perception of ongoing corruption and administrative bias.

These presuppositions subtly shift the burden of proof onto the Presidency, compelling it to defend its actions or omissions.

- **Temporal and Institutional Focalization**

The statement focuses on two key institutions—the NHIS and the Treasury Single Account (TSA)—to highlight systemic corruption under the Buhari administration. By spotlighting the NHIS, a symbol of public trust and an agency tasked with providing healthcare, the critique emphasizes the moral implications of corruption, framing it as a betrayal of public welfare. The mention of the TSA, a system introduced to promote transparency, serves to highlight the contradiction between its intended purpose and the wanton diversion of funds.

This institutional focus draws attention to governance failures, reinforcing the narrative of unfulfilled promises.

- **Evaluative Language and Sarcasm**

Attardo (2000), defines sarcasm as, "an overtly aggressive type of irony with clearer markers/ cues and a clear target" (p.795). It is a linguistic marker subtly applied where rhetorical devices like hyperbole and figuration convey true sentiments and intentions that are opposite to the literal meanings of the words used. Here, one might say something that sounds positive on the surface, but in reality, what is being expressed is a negative sentiment. The word sarcasm comes from the ancient Greek word *sarkázein*, meaning “to tear flesh”. It is sometimes used in a humorous or ambivalent manner to deliver sneering and mocking remarks and is largely context dependent.

The PDP statement above employs evaluative language to frame Buhari’s anti-corruption campaign as hypocritical. The phrase, "Famed anti-corruption dragnet" is sarcastic, suggesting that Buhari’s anti-corruption efforts are more rhetorical than practical. While this title, “African Union anti-corruption champion” is factual, its inclusion in the context of alleged domestic corruption creates a stark contrast, undermining Buhari’s credibility. This evaluative framing directs the audience’s focus to the discrepancy between Buhari’s international image and his domestic governance.

### **Manipulating Focalization in Narrative Flow**

The choice of focalization dictates how much information is revealed to the audience and when. For instance, shifting between internal and external focalization creates suspense or enhances intimacy. Internal focalization can immerse the audience in a character’s subjective experience, fostering empathy and understanding. In contrast, external focalization may maintain ambiguity, compelling readers to infer motivations and emotions. Focalization’s role extends beyond narrative techniques to include ideological and thematic dimensions. Mieke Bal (1997) highlights how focalization can frame power dynamics, bias, and reliability within a narrative. For instance, focalization influenced by societal structures can underscore marginalized voices or challenge dominant narratives. Furthermore, in linguistic research, focalization is heavily influenced by context, so linguistic analysis often involves examining

how speakers adapt their focalization strategies based on the given discourse or situational context.

### Findings

From the analysis of the focalization processes employed by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in their phrase "We are in a one-chance bus" using George Lakoff's Framing Theory, the following findings were identified: firstly, strategic framing for emotional impact where the party leverages Lakoff's concept of framing by using the metaphor "one-chance bus" evokes feelings of betrayal, danger, and helplessness. This metaphor aligns with the cultural and colloquial understanding in Nigeria, where a "one-chance bus" refers to fraudulent or dangerous transportation schemes. This framing strategically directs attention to the failures of the All Progressives Congress (APC)-led government by creating an emotionally charged narrative that resonates deeply with the audience's lived experiences.

The research again, identified polarization of governance narratives. The phrase creates a binary frame: PDP as Saviours versus APC as villains. The PDP effectively positions itself as the alternative to what it portrays as systemic failure under the APC, amplifying public disillusionment. By drawing on this polarized narrative, the PDP successfully reframes public discourse to shift focus from their past governance issues to the perceived inadequacies of the APC.

Thirdly PDP's moral critique through metaphor positions the APC-led government as deceptive drivers of a "bus" that promised prosperity but delivered chaos. By extension, the metaphor critiques Buhari's leadership as unreliable and morally compromised. This aligns with Lakoff's idea that metaphors frame political discourse by shaping perceptions of moral authority and governance.

Futhermore, with the exploitation of public disillusionment, the PDP capitalizes on widespread frustration with governance under the APC to strengthen their narrative. The metaphor simplifies complex political issues into relatable imagery, ensuring accessibility to a wide audience. And using Lakoff's Framing Theory emphasizes the role of cultural context in shaping interpretations. The PDP's use of the "one-chance bus" metaphor exploits the Nigerian cultural understanding of fraud, effectively grounding its critique in shared societal experiences.

### Recommendations

This research recommends that there is the need for an enhanced use of positive framing by PDP. While the PDP's critique of the APC is effective, they should balance this with frames that emphasize their plans and strategies for governance. Positive framing, highlighting solutions, can broaden their appeal and reduce reliance on negativity. Secondly, the APC should adopt counter-framing strategies to dismantle the metaphorical implications of the "one-chance bus." This should involve reframing their leadership as one of recovery and stability, presenting evidence of progress to challenge the PDP's narrative.

Both parties should complement metaphorical framing with factual evidence to build credibility. Public trust in governance discourse is strengthened when metaphors are backed by actionable plans and tangible results. There is also the need for broader application of framing theory in political discourse. Future research should explore how other cultural and metaphorical frames influence public perceptions of governance. Expanding Lakoff's Framing

Theory into Nigerian political discourse could reveal deeper insights into voter behavior and political communication strategies.

## CONCLUSION

The study of the focalization processes in the People's Democratic Party's (PDP) use of the phrase “We are in a one-chance bus” through the lens of George Lakoff’s Framing Theory reveals how political discourse relies on culturally resonant metaphors and framing strategies to influence public perception. The PDP effectively employs the metaphor of a “one-chance bus”—deeply embedded in Nigerian cultural and linguistic context—to evoke feelings of betrayal, disillusionment, and danger. By framing the All Progressives Congress (APC)-led government as deceptive and incompetent, the PDP amplifies public frustration and strategically shifts the narrative to position itself as the more reliable alternative.

This analysis highlights the power of framing in shaping political discourse, demonstrating how metaphors can simplify complex realities and create emotional connections with the audience. However, it also underscores the potential risks of relying heavily on negative framing, which may polarize political communication and foster divisiveness.

Future research and political discourse should seek a balance between critique and constructive framing, emphasizing solutions alongside criticisms. Such an approach will not only strengthen democratic dialogue but also ensure that political narratives contribute positively to governance and societal development. Ultimately, the study affirms the critical role of cultural context and linguistic strategies in the framing of political issues, providing valuable insights into the intersection of language, politics, and public perception.

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## Appendix

The News Headlines from Sahara Reporters, New York, August 6, 2018

Reads:

'We're In a One-Chance Bus' — PDP Lists 14 'Acts of Humongous Corruption' Under Buhari

### The Full Statement

Press Conference By The People's Democratic Party (PDP), today Monday, August 6, 2018, at the PDP National Secretariat, Abuja.

Paragraph 1a: 'Where Is President Buhari's Fight Against Corruption?'

1b: Gentlemen of the press, we have called you up today to, through you raise serious posers for which we demand immediate response from President Muhammadu Buhari and his All Progressives Congress (APC), whose administration has scammed Nigerians and the international community in the last three years.

Paragraph 2: President Buhari and his APC deceived Nigerians to secure power on the promise of transparency, accountability and zero tolerance for corruption. Little did Nigerians then realize that they had boarded a "one chance bus" driven by vicious and vengeful liars, scammers and a falsehearted and heavily corrupt leaders, parading as saints and messiahs.

Paragraph 3: The Buhari Presidency and the APC-led Federal Government have been doing all to divert public attention from their ocean of corruption and primitive stealing including launching a brutal attack on the opposition, hounding innocent Nigerians for no just cause and seizing the airwaves to brand everybody else as corrupt, while underneath they shamelessly pillage our nation's resources, stealing money in trillion, under President Buhari's official cover.

Paragraph 4: Today, the Buhari Presidency has been busted. Today, the very leader, who hitherto paraded as pro-poor and saintly has now been exposed to be at the head of the most corrupt administration that our nation ever had since independence.

Paragraph 5: If President Buhari and his Presidency are not corrupt; if the APC is not a party of corruption, the PDP challenges them to address Nigerians on their complicity in the exposed acts of humongous corruption thriving in the high places under their watch.

Paragraph 6: The PDP challenges President Buhari to explain why his anti-corruption fight has not been extended to investigate the corruption from the leaked memo detailing alleged underhand oil contracts to the tune of N9 trillion (\$25 billion dollars) at the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, which are under the direct supervision of President Buhari as Minister of Petroleum Resources. Why has investigation into this scam been suppressed?

Paragraph 7: The PDP challenges President Buhari to explain to Nigerians whose interest he is protecting by refusing to allow an independent inquest into the alleged corruption in the handling of the N1.4 trillion oil subsidy regime allegedly involving officials at the Presidency, particularly those benefiting from alleged N58 hidden tax per liter which Nigerians have continued to bear since the fuel price increased from PDP subsidized cost of N87 to presumably unsubsidized cost of N145.

Paragraph 8: The PDP challenges President Buhari and the APC to explain whose interests they are protecting by suppressing investigation into the alleged use of 18 unregistered companies to lift and divert N1.1 trillion worth of crude oil in 2017. Who are the owners of these companies? Are the companies linked to President Buhari or any of his relatives or even APC leaders?

Paragraph 9: Furthermore, the PDP challenges the Buhari Presidency and the APC to explain to the world why his anti-corruption fight has not been extended to the internationally reported diversion and alleged stealing of N18 billion out of the N48 billion approved by the National Assembly for the rehabilitation of millions of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and rebuilding of six northeast states ravaged by insurgency in the 2017 budget.

Paragraph 10: Can the Buhari Presidency and APC claim to be unaware of the damning report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a public document which detailed how officials were using bulk of the resources meant for the IDPs on contracts that were found to have immensely benefitted officials of the APC Government including the sacked Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir Lawal?

Paragraph 11: Can the Presidency and the APC claim to be unaware of the motion by Senator Baba Kaka Garba from Borno Central, who exposed how persons, known to have connections with the APC, fraudulently cornered N1.2 billion from the Federal Government under the guise of supplying items to IDPs?

Paragraph 12a: The PDP challenges the Presidency to explain why his 'famed' anti-corruption dragnet has not been cast on the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) despite widely reports of alleged stealing of over N25 billion meant for the health need of the people from the account of the Scheme in the Treasury Single Account (TSA) by APC agents.

12b: Can President Buhari, the African Union anti-corruption champion, explain why his Presidency recalled and reinstated the indicted Executive Secretary of the Scheme, Prof. Usman Yakubu, while he was still being quizzed by the EFCC for alleged corruption?

Paragraph 13: The PDP and Nigerians would also want President Buhari to explain why his anti-corruption crusade has not been directed to the discovery of unremitted revenue from sale of crude by the NNPC under his watch as well as the undisclosed of revenue accruable to states for which there have been deadlock at the Federal Accounts Allocation Committee (FAAC). Why are these areas immune from the anti-corruption fight or are the interests at the highest places involved in the messy deals.

Paragraph 14a: Moreover, it is a settled saying that birds of the same feathers flock together. The fact that President Buhari comfortably surrounds himself with persons indicted for corruption, sundry frauds, common scams as well as forgeries is very revealing on the phoniness of his administration's fight against corruption.

14b: President Buhari has no other explanation for engaging and rewarding corrupt individuals as ministers, including a certain individual whose state's judicial panel of inquiry had in 2015 issued a government white paper indicting him of looting over N90 billion through alleged illegal sale of the assets belonging to the state. After all, the said white paper further alleged that N40 billion out of the looted N90 billion was diverted for APC's 2015 Presidential campaigns.

Paragraph 15: It is no longer news that one Obono-Obla, President Buhari's Special Assistant on Prosecution and Chairman, Special Investigation Panel for the Recovery of Public Property in Buhari's anti-corruption team has been indicted for forging his WAEC certificate, yet his boss, Mr. Integrity has refused to investigate him.

Paragraph 16: The same goes for Buhari's Minister of Finance, Kemi Adeosun, who has been accused of dodging her compulsory national service and allegedly forged the NYSC Exemption Certificate. Despite her inability to deny the allegation, she is still the minister of finance under Mr. Clean.

Paragraph 17: Currently, the Buhari Presidency in its corrupt proclivity is seeking to force the reopening of the Senate contrary to Section 12 of the Senate Standing Rules for which the Presidency and the APC are offering lawmakers from both chambers an inducement of the sum of \$1 million each with the aim of impeaching Senate President Bukola Saraki and Deputy Senate President Ike Ekweremadu.

Paragraph 18: The PDP has been informed that one of the heads of the security agencies is the arrow head of the Buhari Presidency's agents charged to coordinate this heinous design, which has the unlimited capacity to throw our nation into anarchy and ultimately destroy our hard-earned democracy.

Paragraph 19a: The question today is, where is President Buhari's fight against corruption?

19b: The APC and Buhari Presidency has turned Nigeria into their cash cow while manipulating our laws and rules to favour their selfish designs.

20a: However, the PDP restates a commitment to the Nigerian people to expose the Buhari administration and fight for the unity, stability, indivisibly and prosperity of our dear nation.

Paragraph 20b: Nigeria belongs to all of us and nobody, no matter how highly placed has the right to continue to subvert our laws, beguile, intimidate or even attempt to subjugate our citizens at any time.