



JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

ISSN : 3122-0479

DOI – <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22757235>

**Volume 2 No 2 August (2026): Journal of English
Studies**

**“ORIRE, NOT CHIBOK” A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SILENCE IN LASI
OLAGUNJU’S NEWSPAPER COLUMN ON ORIRE KIDNAPPING**

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Abstract

One of the trending issues that continue to engage public discourse in the media is the prevailing insecurity across Nigeria. The perspectives of regular newspapers columnists on the issue have not enjoyed as much scholarly attention compared with other sociopolitical issues. This study therefore conducts a critical discourse analysis of a column titled “Why Orire was not Chibok” published by the Nigeria Tribune newspaper on July 13, 2026. The study adopts a qualitative research design and anchors its analysis on Teun van Dijk’s model of CDA, particularly his ideological square theory. The findings of the study reveal that through the deployment discursive devices such as personal pronouns “I”, “We”, argumentation, disclaimer, evidential strategies, lexicalization, number game, modality, contrast, proverbs, rhetorical questions and agency representation in the column, the writer justifies “Us vs Them” ideological polarity in the way Southwestern Nigerians view security of lives compared with their Northerners. The study concludes that there are social situations in which maintaining silence is far more socially detrimental.

Keywords: Newspapers columnist, Orire, Chibok, Critical Discourse Analysis, Discursive devices

Introduction

The role of the press in keeping people informed about day to day social realities cannot be overstated. The press is popularly regarded as the Fourth Realm Estate because it is the fourth pillar of democracy as it complements the three traditional arms of government – the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary. This designation implies that democracy as a global practice for inclusive governance cannot maximally thrive and deliver on its spelt-out mandates to the populace if the press fails to play its roles. Print-based media represents the conscience of the society through publications of editorials, feature writing, cartoon strips and regular columns. Ibrahim and Yakubu (2026) posit that the press as a watchdog of the society has the ability and capability to determine and scrutinize what to report, when and how to report it, as well as where it will be published. The sphere of print media coverage is more encompassing in terms of information conveyed and timing of the news items churned out for public consumptions. In this regard, Alozie (2009) submits that Newspapers information typically touches on a broad spectrum of societal issues such as news, politics, science and technology, education, advertisement, commerce, religion, entertainment among others. He argues further that relatively, newspapers contain the most current information about the day to day happenings in the society than can be made available in radio, television or any other media. Thus, the fundamental intent of newspapers as McQuail(2010) maintains, is to inform, educate, promote accountability and transparency; in the interest of national development, act as early warning system, preserve culture and national identity as well as shape public opinion.

The news items published in a newspaper could serve as a mirror or a reflection of the social reality as this ultimately helps the reading audience to discern the course, shape or effect of an event, action or situation (Akanbi, 2020). The fundamental duty of journalists in informing and shaping readers or listeners' opinions largely depends on the use of language. As Umar and Sherndama (2013) observe, the languages used by journalists enable them to create and maintain relationship with the target audience or readers. Deployment of language by journalists, as a medium of expression, has far more implications on the receiving audience as well as a reflection of the inner workings of the journalists themselves. In the dissemination of information to the public, different contexts dictate apt linguistic resources typically deployed by media practitioners. However, there is a dialectical relationship between social realities and linguistic representation by journalists. The aptness of linguistic resources so deployed by a journalist therefore has a delicate balance between what suits his or her opinion on an issue and what practically keeps the society cohesive and united when opinion expressed is consumed by the reading audience. According to Agu (2015), the choice of words by journalists is often sensitive or weighty as it can build the nation or even contribute in destroying what has been built over the years. The delicate balance in the use of language by journalists to ventilate perspectives on matters of common concern in a country is more intricate, particularly in a multi –ethnic society like Nigeria. The multiplicity of Nigeria cultural composition sometimes plays significant role in the linguistic framing of social realities. This assertion resonates with Labov (1991) cited in Julius (2024) who perceives the language of journalism as a mirror of the wider society and culture. Labov adds that this kind of language affects attitudes and opinions in society through the way it presents people and issues. It is in this context that this study is intended to conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis of Lasisi Olagunju's column on the kidnapped children of Orire, Oyo State as published in the Tribune Newspapers on July 13th, 2026.. The choice of Olagunju's column in this study is justified as several studies have been conducted on how other renowned columnists in the print media

such as Ray Ekpo, Dan Agbese, Gbenga Adebambo deploy linguistic resources in their columns to express their opinions on sensitive national issues while little or none of such scholarly attention has been accorded Lasisi Olagunju's columns in spite of highly informative content of his regular articles on national issues.

One of the current national realities which have continued to attract public discourse is the pervading security threat. It is one of the issues over which Lasisi Olagunju has expressed his perspectives. His column on Orire children Kidnapping as published in the *Tribune Newspaper* on July, 2026 is one of such perspectives. The kidnapping took place on May 15, 2026 at Community Grammar School, Baptist Nursery and Primary school, and L.A. Primary School. Following attack on the schools, the attackers immediately killed one of the teachers in the school and thereafter abducted 46 others which include 39 pupils and students and 7 teachers. The victims spent 56 days in captivity in the dense forests of the old Oyo National Park before their eventual rescue.

This study therefore specifically seeks to: (1) investigate discursive devices used in Olagunju's column to express his perspectives on the Oyo children kidnapping (2) examine how linguistic choices in the column encode his ideological tilt on the subject (3) explore the moral obligations evoked through the linguistic choices in the column. The study is significant as it helps to prevent over generalization of the popular claim that silence is golden.

A Brief Profile of Lasisi Olagunji

Lasisi Olagunju, a multiple award-winning newspaper columnist, was Nigeria Media Merit Award (NMMA) Newspaper Columnist of The Year 2016 and also winner of Nigerias Diamond Award for Media Excellence (DAME) for Informed Commentary writing in 2019. He attended Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife where he bagged a First-Class Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in English Studies. He was at the University of Ibadan for his Master's and PhD. degrees in Communication Arts and Political Communication respectively. He also holds a degree in Law. He joined the Nigerian Tribune as Senior Features Writer and Senior reporter, rising through the rank and file to become the newspapers News Editor in June 1999 and Deputy Editor in 2001. He was appointed as the Chief Press Secretary to the Osun State Governor from June 2003 to 2008, and Special Adviser on Media to the same governor from 2008 to November, 2010. He returned to journalism in September 2011 and became General Editor/Editorial Board member of the Nigerian Tribune till October 2012 when he was appointed as Editor, Saturday Tribune, a position he holds till date.

Olagunju; is a poet, author and researcher. He has published a number of books including biographies. His collection of poems, *Forest Flowers*, was published in 2008. He writes the *Monday Lines* column for the Nigerian Tribune and has to his credit, over five hundred (500) informed articles written consistently every week for the past ten years.

Conceptual Review

Silence

Silence in its ordinary sense refers to absence of sound or the act of refraining from speaking. In a more profound and broader sense, silence can be conceptualized as the intentional or unintentional absence of verbal expression within a communicative event, by means of which individuals convey meanings, emotions, attitudes, identities, relationships, or ideological positions depending on the social, cultural, and interactional context. In this regard, Lopez et al (2024) submit that silence is vital in human communication, extending beyond mere absence of sound to express respect, attentiveness, and comprehension. They add that it is viewed as a form of active listening that promotes deeper engagement, and strengthens relationships between people. Müller, Tavares, and Simão, (2024) argue that rather than representing a lack of communication, silence functions as a form of communication in itself because it can express agreement, disagreement, resistance, reflection, respect, uncertainty, power, protest, fear, or emotional intensity. It follows therefore that its interpretation depends on participants' shared knowledge, cultural norms, institutional settings, and the discourse surrounding the silence.

It is obvious from the foregoing that depending on the contexts, being silent can have both positive or negative implications. There are situations when silence is adjudged detrimental. Thomasian (2018) is critical about such scenarios. In reference to President John Kennedy's statement -- *The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who, in times of great moral crisis, maintain their neutrality* and that of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. *In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends*, Thomasian (ibid) maintains that:

There are also times when silence is not golden and is tarnished with the stains of self-preservation, ego, self-interest, fear, and a lack of courage. Silence is also not golden when people are not talking due to shame and fear from being abused, violated and shut down from those who hold real or perceived power over others

Ball (2025) echoes the views of Thomasian as she faults the myth of perceiving the silent ones as the wise ones, those who speak out are fools, and that those who stay quiet are kings. She maintains that real courage lies in showing up, speak until you are heard, because your voice, not your silence is where your power truly lies. These views lend credence to the fact that contexts play major role in determining when being silent is most desirable and when using one's voice is the most appropriate step to take.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysts (Fairclough, 1992, van Dijk, 1998, Wodak, 2009, Fowler, 1991, van Leeuwen, 2008, Chilton, 2004, etc.) investigate the meanings of a text beyond its neutral linguistic system. Their argument is that language used in a text encodes more in meaning than what grammatically appears on the surface. In his view on CDA as a concept, Baker (2019) submits that as a field of study, it can be described as "an academic movement, a way

of doing discourse analysis from a critical perspective and that it is characterized by common interests in demystifying ideologies and power through the systematic and thorough investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken and visual). Baker further notes that CDA typically analyses news texts, political speeches, advertisements, school books, etc.” He also argues that CDA identifies strategies which appear normal or neutral on the surface, but which might actually be ideological and seek the representation of events or persons for particular ends. More specifically, Machin (2012) observes that CDA is used to identify and study specific areas of injustice, danger, suffering and prejudice. He notes further that, while it is unclear just how effective intervention in discourses alone can help to mitigate such problems, CDA can help to shine a light on these issues and point societies in the direction of change.

In relation to this study, CDA is a relevant analytical tool as it helps to reveal beyond the surface import of the columnist’s treatment of **silence** as meaning making phenomenon. CDA provides a basis for regarding silence as not neutral because it examines not only what discourse explicitly says, but also what it presupposes, foregrounds, backgrounds, excludes, and leaves unsaid. Thus, silence can participate in the construction of meaning even when there are no spoken or written words.

Review of Related Studies

A plethora of scholarly studies have investigated the use of language in political discourses from the three arms of government in democracy. Less of such attention has been given to the Fourth Estate in democracy particularly the press as one of the information outlets of the mass media through which opinions on lingering security threats in the country are ventilated. Bilewunmo et.al (2024) for instance did a comparative analysis of the stylistic features in the columns of Ray Ekpou and Gbenga Adebambo in *The Guardian Newspaper*. The data used for the study were 26 selected articles from each of the columnists between January and August, 2019. The objectives of the study were to identify and analyse the styles deployed by the columnists as well as the themes that informed their writing styles. Analysis of the data used in the study was predicated on Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistic Theory and Lawal’s Stylistic Theory. The results revealed that the columnists used many styles to convey their messages to the readers. The findings further show that themes have influence on the style of writing. Both writers employed simple sentences to achieve logical and step-by-step presentation of ideas and complex sentences were common syntactic features in the columns.

The study above equally focused on columnists’ use of language in their columns on National issues just as the present study. The study investigated data gathered in 2019 but the present study analyses the data collected in 2026, reflecting different socio-political realities in Nigeria. Besides, the present study is predicated on Teun van Dijk’s model of Critical Discourse Analysis unlike the study above which adopted Halliday’s SFL and Stylistic Theory of Adebayo Lawal.

Umaru, et al. (2013) also conducted on “*A Stylistic Analysis of the Syntactic Features and Cohesive Devices in Nigerian Newspapers*”. The corpus for the study consisted of five texts selected from different Nigerian Newspapers. The result of the study revealed that dependent clauses are prevalent which serve as extension of the ideas in the independent clauses. The writers used simple sentences to achieve logical and step by step presentation of ideas. Complex sentences were as well noted as common syntactic features in the columnists’ use of

language. Through the use of complex sentences, columnists supply additional information to what obtains in the main clause either by serving subordinate clause before the main clause or after it. Similarly, compound sentences were employed by the columnists as a means of conveying more than a single idea in a stretch of language. The analysis of the cohesive device indicated that substitution and reference cohesions were the predominant cohesive devices used. Both the cataphoric and anaphoric references were predominant. The columnists, based on the outcome of the study, used intermixed styles to convey their message to the audience.

The study above is similar to this study as they both they examine linguistic resources deployed by the writers. The two studies differ in area of some objectives. Whereas the study above concentrated only on syntactic features and cohesive devices, the present study extends its focus to thematic preoccupation as well as encoded ideological tilt in the deployment of linguistic resources used in the data analysed.

Silence is not necessarily neutral, particularly when individuals possess relevant knowledge or legitimate concerns about pressing social and political issues. Recent scholarship indicates that silence may allow problems to remain unaddressed, suppress dissenting perspectives, and undermine effective institutional or democratic deliberation. In this connection, Kim and Wang (2024) demonstrate that silence can have consequences for institutional effectiveness, knowledge sharing and innovation, while Ozer et al. (2024) show that withholding concerns can negatively affect performance and creativity. Similarly, Oz et al. (2024) demonstrate that fear of social isolation can encourage self-censorship and constrain the expression of controversial opinions. Thus, where speaking is necessary to expose wrongdoing, challenge injustice, or stimulate corrective action, silence may function not simply as the absence of speech but as a condition that enables existing problems or power relations to persist.

These studies view the negative effects of silence from generic point of view and differ from the present study which focuses on how column in a national daily can be used as a medium of expressing perspective on silence and ventilating opinion of issue of national concern.

Theoretical Framework

This study is predicated on Teun van Dijk's ideological square(1998, 2006). The ideological square theory explains how discourse constructs polarized representation between social groups through four ideological operations which stipulate that: (1) Emphasize Our good things (positive self-representation). (2) Emphasize Their bad things (negative other representation) (3) De- emphasize Our bad things. (4) De-emphasize Their good things. In his model of Critical Discourse Analysis, van Dijk explicates discursive devices which are used to encode ideological tilt in a discourse. These include: lexicalization (word choice), actor description, agency assignment, evidentiality, number game, presupposition, implication, polarization, comparison, hyperbole, metaphor, disclaimer, consensus, victimization, rhetorical questions, etc. This theory is considered appropriate for the present study as the data analysed in the study embody van Dijk's theoretical paradigms.

Methodology

The study adopts qualitative research design and its data analysis is predicated on Teun van Dijk's model of CDA, more specifically his ideological square strands. This allows for unraveling of meaning beyond the mere linguistic structures of the data. The data analysed were sourced from Lasis Olagunju's Tribune Column Titled "Orire, Not Chibok" published on the July 13th,

2026. Six (6) excerpts from the column were analysed and the analysis was based on how the discursive devices of silence deployed in each of the excerpts encodes ideological tilt of the writer.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The excerpts below explicate how Olagunju uses his column to portray reactions of the South West Nigeria and their Northern counterparts on kidnapping scenarios in the country.

Excerpt 1

The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) and the Northern Elders Forum (NEF) were in the media yesterday (Sunday) urging President Bola Tinubu to replicate in the North the feat that rescued the Oriire pupils and teachers in Oyo State. I am with them. Their request is not a northern demand; it is a national obligation. No Nigerian child anywhere should be in captivity.

The opening sentence of excerpt 1 contains the macrostructure (sub-theme) of the excerpt which is a request made by the opinion leaders from the country's Northern extraction -- The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) and the Northern Elders Forum (NEF) -- that the president should apply the same strategy used in the rescue of the Oriire pupils and teachers in Oyo State to have kidnapped people in the North freed from captivity. Through the use of the personal pronoun "I" in the second sentence "*I am with them*", the writer portrays a picture of inclusiveness and solidarity in respect of the demand made by Northern leaders. The third sentence "*Their request is not a northern demand; it is a national obligation*" is a case of the use of **argumentation strategy** to buttress his support for by the elders' request. The fourth sentence --- *No Nigerian child anywhere should be in captivity* ---- is a linguistic exemplification of **national solidarity** against nefarious activity of the kidnappers.

With this, the writer (Olagunju) in the excerpt ideologically legitimizes the request of the Northern elders, situating the request within general context of an ideal society where those at the helms of affairs in a country owe it a duty to ensure that every citizen, regardless of their ethnic group is secured and free from captivity. By this, the writer ideologically aligns with the elders and constructs them as *in-group members*. However, the excerpt that follows indicates a caveat which may make the request made relatively difficult to achieve.

Excerpt 2

But I also have a message for ACF and NEF: life returns to you what you put into it. If you do not sweat like the labourers at Oyingbo, you cannot gleam like Adegboro at Oja-Oba. The Oyo children and their teachers would probably have vanished like bad fart into odious oblivion, had their governor, their state government, their media and the whole of Yoruba people not fought openly and relentlessly for them. Abuja alone neither can nor will save anyone.

The use of conjunction "**But**" in the first sentence of the second excerpt "*But I also have a message for ACF and NEF: life returns to you what you put into it*" negates the writer's sense

of solidarity with the Northern elders' request as earlier expressed in the first excerpt. The sentence encodes dialectical relationship between people's actions and inactions and their social realities. Life as a phenomenon is personified in the sentence and assigned the human quality of being able to throw back to man what man hurls at it. It is given an active role. In the context of the excerpt, the use of the pronoun "*you*" as the recipient of the reciprocal action of life is a direct reference to the Northern elders (ACF and NEF) and the Northern people the two bodies represent.

The lexico-semantic import of the first sentence serves as a prelude to moral obligation to which attention of the elders is being directed in the excerpt. Through the use of simile (like) embedded in the second sentence, "*If you do not sweat like the labourers at Oyingbo, you cannot gleam like Adegboro at Oja-Oba*", the writer uses a Yoruba proverbial analogy in the sentence as both **inter-textual reference and argumentation strategies** to support his central message in the excerpt which further reinforces the reciprocal effect of human actions or inactions and their consequences.

In the third sentence of the excerpt, the writer, through argumentation and evidentiality strategies, uses adverbial clause of condition in the complex sentence, "*had their governor, their state government, their media and the whole of Yoruba people not fought openly and relentlessly for them*", to indicate collective efforts which precipitate the release of the Orire kidnapped victims. The main clause of the complex structure, "*The Oyo children and their teachers would probably have vanished like bad fart into odious oblivion*", expresses the negative consequence of failure to have exerted the energy that led to the release of kidnapped victims. Implication of failure to act the way the Yoruba did is lexicalized in the clause with the use of verb the "*vanished*" signifying movement of the victims out of view, while such disappearance, through the use of a **simile** in "*like bad fart into odious oblivion*" is compared with the analogy of an anal blast which is a by-product bowel waste. "*Odious oblivion*" in the clause carries a negative lexicalization of the public aversion, and the dislike the disappearance of the victims into the permanent den of kidnappers could have caused were they not rescued. In particular the nominal element "*oblivion*" in the context of its use is a historical allusion to the almost forgotten remnant of the Chibok girls abducted from Borno State in 2014 still in the kidnappers' captivity. The central message projected here is that keeping silent in the face of attacks that led to the kidnap can only be counterproductive.

In the context of the excerpt therefore, the indirect applause given to actors (governor, their state government, their media and the whole of Yoruba people) who, through **their ceaseless voice** facilitated the rescue of the victims, is an ideological way of categorizing them as in-group members. This amounts to positive representation of their rescue efforts. Conversely, the other side of the ideological polarity is negative, given the indirect manner the ACF and NEF groups are represented in the excerpt. As the timely rescue of the Orire kidnapped victims and the precipitated efforts referenced in excerpt are addressed to ACF and NEF, the writer ideologically evokes on the part of the Northern bodies moral obligation of soul-searching which should raise moral question on why the like of institutional and individual collaborative efforts and moves that led to the celebrated rescue in Orire in the Nation's South-West are usually absent in the North when similar challenging scenarios occur in the region the elders represent. The challenge posed here is, ideologically a case of "US VS THEM".

Excerpt 3

Nigeria is a cold, lonely and often wicked place. Alátiṣe must help Alátiṣe. When your people are kidnapped, and you choose to play the politics of silence, you gag the press, punish critics, criminalise the cries of victims and dismiss public outrage, you weaken the very pressure that compels governments to act. The North does all those. Had the Yoruba of the South-West behaved that way, the Oriire children and teachers would long have been swept away by the flood of life. Silence in the face of evil is not dignity; it is complicit surrender.

Excerpt 3 above contains four sentences, each of which contributes to the writer's perception of how silence in the face of injustice denies people their right to live a life devoid of human inflicted fear, agony and constant lamentation. In the first sentence of the excerpt "*Nigeria is a cold, lonely and often wicked place*" "Nigeria" as geographical entity is constructed in a negative light. The negative representation is lexicalized through deliberate choice of adjectives: **cold, lonely and wicked**, all of which carry negative sense. The second sentence "*Alátiṣe must help Alátiṣe*" is a Yoruba metaphor which translates to solving one's problem oneself without relying on outsourced help. The use of the modal operator "*must*" which signifies obligation carries a moral burden of being particularly intentional in fixing one's problem.

The writer in the second sentence is more assertive and poignant at establishing why maintaining silence is not always the right way to go. The sentence is loaded with indexes of scenarios when being silent is no longer golden but also a recipe for disaster. In the expression "*When your people are kidnapped, and you choose to play the politics of silence*" the writer views emphasis on politics relative to openly condemning the act of kidnapping for which the North as represented by the ACF and NEF should be blamed. The silence lamented in the sentence is lexicalized through "**you gag the press;**" "**punish critics;**" "**criminalise the cries of victims;**" and "**dismiss public outrage**" all of which are suggestive of deliberate muffling of voices which can draw attention to kidnapping episodes.

More pointedly, the writer accuses the North as a practical embodiment of all the indices of silence in relation to pervading kidnapping case in the region. This sentiment is succinctly captured in the third sentence of the excerpt "*The North does all those.*" "*all those*" is an anaphoric reference to all the indices, which provide enabling conditions for abduction and kidnapping to remain insurmountable challenge.

The last sentence in the excerpt speaks to the central theme of Olagunju's column which is speaking aloud when contexts make it imperative to do so. The sentence is rooted in the use of **argumentation strategy** as the writer clearly juxtaposes South-West responses to kidnapped case of Orire victims and similar responses from the Northern region on cases of kidnapping and abductions. So, when the writer says --- "*Had the Yoruba of the South-West behaved that way, the Oriire children and teachers would long have been swept away by the flood of life*". ---- he sharply draws a clear line of demarcation between responses from the two regions on similar security challenge. The conditional clause "*Had the Yoruba of the South-West behaved that way...*" is symbolic as it draws the line of difference in what South-West did not do which translates into having the kidnapped victims of Orire rescued and what their Northern counterpart did which makes kidnapping and abduction of innocent

people in their region a lived reality. The main clause of the last sentence “*Oriire children and teachers would long have been swept away by the flood of life.*” presents the second leg of the writer’s argumentation strategy which conveys what could have been the fate of the Orire kidnapped victims. Being swept away by the flood of life is a **metaphor** which carries in it a historical allusion to some of the unfortunate Chibok abducted girls whose possibility of being alive cannot be ascertained even by the government. The concluding sentence of the excerpt – “*Silence in the face of evil is not dignity; it is complicit surrender.*” --- is further used to double down on the writer’s argument that rather than being golden, silence can **sometimes** spell doom for those who adopt it as a virtue.

Again, excerpt 3 carries ideological representation. Through different linguistic and rhetorical devices in the excerpt, the writer uses the Orire episode to paint a picture of cultural difference between the North and the South –West in relation to their respective perception and attitude to social vices. The polarity drawn ideologically frames the South –Western people as intolerant of known social aberration which kidnapping and abduction of fellow human represent, while their Northern counterparts are constructed as being too silent in the face of such aberration. The relative framing of the two federating regions by the writer further strengthens the “Us vs Them” dichotomy.

Excerpt 4

<i>I read a statement on Saturday by the Kwara State chapter of the PDP lamenting Woro been in terrorists’ and counting. Yet, there especially, in Ilorin. I Kwara, for their critics and their has become part of the tragedy.</i>	<i>that 176 persons—children, women, the young and the old—from community in Kaiama Local Government Area of the state had captivity since February 3, 2026. That was 160 days ago, is hardly a public outcry anywhere, including, and understand it is a crime in the North, including media to publicly condemn terror. Silence</i>
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The use of inter-textual, number game and argumentation strategies by the writer to explicate that silence is not always golden is evident in excerpt 4 above. Inter-textuality strategy is deployed in the first sentence in which the writer hinges his argument on a public statement credited to one of the foremost opposition political parties in Nigeria , Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) which was said to have lamented that “*...176 persons—children, women, the young and the old—from Woro community in Kaiama Local Government Area of the state had been in terrorists’captivity since February 3, 2026.*” The writer resorts to **number game strategy** to buttress the argument of the opposition in the second sentence which reads “*That was 160 days ago, and counting.*” The number game strategy (160 days) helps to evoke in the readers emotion of pity and grave concern about unimaginable harrowing experience of the victims. The degree of concern evoked is lexicalized through the progressive verb “**counting**” which suggests endless wait for freedom of the victims.

The writer expresses his disapproval to relative silence that greets the cited abduction in the sentence --- “*Yet, there is hardly a public outcry anywhere, including, and especially, in Ilorin.*”

In the fourth sentence --- “*I understand it is a crime in the North, including Kwara, for their critics and their media to publicly condemn terror.*”--- the writer presents the readers with regional argument usually put forward to **justify** noticeable **collective silence** in the

country North whenever kidnapping and abduction of innocent people take place. The use of **"I understand"** in the excerpt is a lexicalized way of giving a tone of **factuality** to the writer's argument as the word **"understand"** in the context of its use suggests that the writer's claim is based on reliable information. The last sentence in the excerpt --- "*Silence has become part of the tragedy.*"--- lexicalizes through the word **"tragedy"**, the far reaching consequence of remaining silent in the face of man inhumanity to man as symbolized by kidnappers and abductors.

Beyond the surface interpretation of the writer's view in excerpt 4, there is an underlying ideological undertone in the writer's framing of the subject of kidnapping. The use of personal pronoun "I" in the expression --- *I understand it is a crime in the North,... to publicly condemn terror*--- the writer obviously positions himself as a symbol of Yoruba ethos and pathos part of which is respect for sanctity of human life. By the same token, attributing condemnation of terror as an act regarded as crime in the North, helps the writer to ideologically construct the South-West of the county as better compared to their Northern counterpart in terms of value attached to sanctity of human life and people's freedom from human induced captivity. Again, this is a case of "Us vs Them" polarity.

Excerpt 5

If you ask why all 44 abductees in Oyo are now free while many in Borno remain in captivity, you must ask more than that one question. Ask: Why do we know the exact number of those abducted in Oriire while the number of those held in Borno is still spoken of in estimates? Why did the Oriire abduction provoke outrage across southern Nigeria, while similar tragedies in Borno so often fail to generate the same intensity of public emotion across the North?

In excerpt 5 above, the writer relies largely on the use of probing questions and comparison as discursive strategies to drive home his argument. The questioning technique blended with comparison probes to establish "*why all 44 abductees in Oyo are now free while many in Borno remain in captivity....*" are yet to gain freedom. The writer argues that more questions need to be thrown to unravel how the feat of Oriire rescue was possible while same success appears illusive in the North. The Northern elders were asked to probe : *Why do we know the exact number of those abducted in Oriire while the number of those held in Borno is still spoken of in estimates?* The use of the personal pronoun **"we"** in the excerpt suggests that the entire Nigerian public regardless of regional classification is aware of the number of victims in the Oriire abduction but such definite figure, according to the writer, cannot be pinned down in similar incident in Borno State. This further strengthens the argument that, compared to their Northern counterpart, the South West have a culture of accounting for everyone of their own in all situations including kidnapping and abduction.

The last sentence in the excerpt raises another question "*Why did the Oriire abduction provoke outrage across southern Nigeria, while similar tragedies in Borno so often fail to generate the same intensity of public emotion across the North?*" This again ideologically draws a line of cultural difference between the two regions, particularly in relation of effective and intentional use of language, press, awareness creation and protests to bring pressure to bear on the authority to fight crime. Ideologically, the questions are meant to prick the moral conscience of the North as represented by ACF and NEF on their usual silence on the activities of kidnappers

and abductors in their region and to awaken in them, moral obligation of speaking out in condemnation of the activities of these enemies of state.

Excerpt 6

A friend from the North told me: "We don't yell in the North; whatever happens is an act of God." But God does not condone evil. Terrorism cannot be His act. Mass abduction and mass murder are the work of men, and men must resist them. "So, please, speak out."

Excerpt 6 encodes the central message of the entire column. The discursive devices used in the excerpt include : Intertextuality, Disclaimer and Argumentation. The first sentence --- *A friend from the North told me: "We don't yell in the North; whatever happens is an act of God."* --- exemplifies the use of intertextuality to buttress the writer's position. As a direct quote from a friend to the writer from northern extraction, the statement not only vindicates the writer impression about the North in relation to the region's disposition to the rampant cases of kidnapping and abduction, it also gives insight into the general psychological mindset of the region's people on every occurrence, including kidnapping and abduction of people. The statement : *"We don't yell in the North; whatever happens is an act of God"* signifies fatalistic mindset to life realities and largely explains why the menace of kidnapping and other related social vices become so endemic in the region.

The writer uses **disclaimer strategy** in *"But God does not condone evil. Terrorism cannot be His act."* This is meant to situate man inhumanity within the context human themselves and the need not to outsource the blame for evil committed by people themselves. The writer uses **argumentation strategy** in --- *"Mass abduction and mass murder are the work of men, and men must resist them"*--- to place the blame of abduction and terrorism where it really belongs. The use of the modality element **"must"** in *".... mass murder are the work of men, and men must resist them"* --- reflects how obligatory it is for the North to look inward and confront the insecurity in their region with single-minded determination, devoid of fatalism and outsourcing of root cause of insecurity plague ravaging the region.

The writer in the last sentence uses **imperative mood couched in politeness** --- *"So, please, speak out."* The sentence speaks volumes and reveals the writer's ideological tilt in the column. By implication, the sentence attributes the lingering and seeming endless spate of kidnapping, abduction and related terrorism acts more prevalent in the North to a culture of silence from those who are supposed to speak out and condemn the acts as popularly exemplified in the country South –West and for which the timely rescue of the Orire abducted victims can be largely attributed. The imperative mood therefore negates the popular dictum that **silence is golden.**

Findings and Conclusion

The objective of this study is to examine how through their columns in the National dailies, columnists express their perspectives on national issues, and how such expressions reveal their ideological tilt. In the analysis of Olagunju's Nigeria Tribune column on the kidnapping of Orire children and some teachers, their eventual rescue and the demand by Northern Nigeria elders that similar timely rescue should be replicated in the North, the findings of the study prove wrong the popular dictum that silence is golden. The study has been able to establish

that in some social contexts not speaking out could have far more devastating consequences on the psychological well-being of a people. This reality is proven in Olanguju's column on the collective voices of the South –West Nigeria people which prompted Nigeria government to deploy all necessary security apparatus to ensure timely and safe rescue of the Orire kidnapped victims compared with less of such voices from the North which Olagunju blames for continuous captivity of kidnapped victims in the den of the kidnappers in the region. Olagunju's opinion in the column resonates with Teun van Dijk's position that public discourse on social realities typically constructs polarized representation between social groups, indicating an embedded "Us vs Them" ideology in the discourse.

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