

Interdiscursivity in Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Birthday Tributes on X

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the interdiscursive strategies employed in Bola Ahmed Tinubu's birthday tributes on X, focusing on how they blend diverse discourses to construct political legitimacy and manage public perception in Nigeria's digital political landscape. Utilising Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research analysed ten purposively sampled tributes from Tinubu's verified X account, @officialABAT tweeted within the first half of Tinubu's presidency. The tributes were categorised into four thematic groups according to their dominant discourses, with each text examined at the textual, discursive, and social practice levels. Theme 1 consists of four texts, while Themes 2, 3, and 4 comprise two texts each. The analysis identified seven dominant interwoven discourses —nationalist, heroic, political leadership, relational, human rights, literary, and meritocratic — that strategically extol the virtues of the subjects of the analysed tributes while simultaneously reinforcing Tinubu's authority and credibility. The study contributes to scholarship on political communication by identifying tributes as a distinct genre through which leaders reproduce dominant ideologies, naturalise authority, and shape collective memory.

KEYWORDS

Authority, Discourse, Interdiscursivity, Ideology, Tribute

1. Introduction

In contemporary political communication, social media platforms have become pivotal arenas for the dissemination of ideologies and the performance of political identities. Among these platforms, X (formerly Twitter) has emerged as a strategic space where political actors blend various discourses to construct persuasive narratives. The concept of interdiscursivity, which refers to the intermingling of distinct discourses within a single communicative event, offers a valuable lens for analysing how political figures negotiate power, legitimacy, and public appeal (Fairclough, 1992; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Nigeria's president, exemplifies this practice in his birthday tributes on X, where economic, nationalistic, religious, and developmental discourses often coalesce.

However, despite the increasing scholarly attention to political discourse on social media, there remains a gap in the literature regarding how Nigerian political elites, particularly the presidency, strategically utilise interdiscursivity to shape public perception and legitimise authority in digital spaces. While several studies have explored the rhetorical devices and ideological structures in political communication (Adetunji, 2006; Opeibi, 2019; Onyegbu, 2024; Abolarin-Egbebiola & Dada, 2025, etc.), few have specifically examined the nuanced layering of discourses within birthday tributes issued on



platforms like X by Tinubu's presidency in Nigeria. This gap is particularly significant because presidential discourse on social media is not merely informative; it is performative and ideologically loaded. It is often designed to align national narratives with political agendas. Therefore, Bola Ahmed Tinubu's use of interdiscursivity on X calls for critical study. This is because it reflects broader trends in political legitimisation and governance rhetoric in postcolonial African democracies. Addressing this research gap contributes to a deeper understanding of how language constructs power in digitally mediated presidential communication.

In light of the foregoing, this study aims to interrogate the interdiscursive strategies embedded in Bola Ahmed Tinubu's press releases on X, with a view to uncovering the ideological constructs they propagate. Specifically, the first objective is to identify and categorise the different discourses interwoven within selected press releases. The second objective is to critically examine how these interdiscursive elements function to legitimise political authority, manage public perception, and reinforce dominant ideological positions. Through these objectives, the study contributes to the broader field of Critical Discourse Analysis by highlighting the role of interdiscursivity in shaping presidential communication in Nigeria's digital political landscape.

Furthermore, the justification for this study lies in the increasing centrality of social media as a platform for official political communication and the relative paucity of discourse-analytical research that interrogates the strategic layering of discourses within such spaces in the Nigerian context. As presidents and other high-ranking officials now bypass traditional media to engage the public directly, platforms like X have evolved into arenas where language is carefully curated to project authority, manage crisis narratives, and construct political legitimacy (KhosraviNik, 2017; Ekström & Johansson, 2019). Nevertheless, scholarly attention to how interdiscursivity functions within presidential communication in Nigeria remains limited. Thus, this study is timely and necessary, as it bridges a critical gap at the intersection of political discourse, digital communication, and ideological analysis. By focusing on Bola Ahmed Tinubu's press releases, the research not only contributes to the theoretical advancement of Critical Discourse Analysis but also enhances our understanding of how Nigerian political elites navigate identity, power, and persuasion through interdiscursive practices. Moreover, it provides empirical insight into how discourse is mobilized to appeal to diverse publics in a linguistically and ideologically heterogeneous society — thereby enriching academic literature and informing media literacy, political communication strategies, and civic engagement in contemporary Nigeria.

This study contributes to scholarship on political discourse by foregrounding presidential tributes as a distinct and underexplored genre within Critical Discourse Studies. While research on Nigerian political communication has largely focused on campaign rhetoric, policy speeches, and protest discourse, this work demonstrates that ceremonial and commemorative texts also function as powerful tools of ideological construction and political legitimisation. It reveals how interdiscursive hybridity operates in birthday tributes, showing how multiple discourses are strategically woven together to reinforce President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's credibility. The findings shed light on Nigerian political culture by showing how tributes are crafted to appeal to diverse constituencies, thereby projecting inclusivity. They reiterate how ceremonial discourse reproduces nationalist, democratic, and cultural hegemonies. In doing so, the study deepens debates on the nexus of discourse, ideology, and power in governance. It also demonstrates that tributes are not merely commemorative but strategic

political acts. Methodologically, it expands the reach of Critical Discourse Analysis by applying it to non-confrontational and celebratory genres, thereby enriching the study of political texts.

2. Literature Review

The concept of interdiscursivity originates from Bakhtin's (1981) theorisation of dialogism and heteroglossia, which posit that texts are inherently dialogic, constantly engaging with multiple voices and discourses. Bakhtin's later work (1986) underscores heteroglossia as the co-existence of social languages within utterances, producing a "hybridisation" of discourses. Kristeva (1980) extended this perspective through her notions of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, emphasising the ways texts simultaneously draw upon and transform existing discourses. Building on these foundations, Fairclough (1992) situated interdiscursivity within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), where it refers to the mixing of genres, registers, and discourses within a text to reflect social practices and power relations. Importantly, Fairclough distinguishes interdiscursivity from intertextuality: while intertextuality involves surface-level textual borrowing, interdiscursivity points to deeper discursive conventions and ideological structures.

More recent scholarship has highlighted interdiscursivity as a central feature of political communication, demonstrating how leaders strategically blend discourses to construct legitimacy and appeal to heterogeneous audiences. Cap (2017), for instance, examined European political speeches and showed how politicians interwove security, economic, and cultural discourses to frame immigration policies. His CDA analysis identified interdiscursive strategies such as metaphor and deixis, which aligned nationalistic rhetoric with transnational policy frameworks. In a related study, Oddo (2018) explored U.S. political debates, showing how interdiscursivity enabled the fusion of deliberative and populist discourses, thereby appealing simultaneously to elite stakeholders and grassroots voters. Together, these studies establish the value of interdiscursivity as a tool for analysing political rhetoric across diverse contexts, consistently highlighting how discourses are combined to manage legitimacy, identity, and ideological conflict. However, while such research has examined interdiscursivity in various political settings, little attention has been paid to the intertextual strategies through which political leaders explicitly draw on and reframe prior texts. In particular, no study has investigated how Bola Ahmed Tinubu employs intertextuality in his birthday tributes to some distinguished Nigerians on X to construct authority and engage Nigeria's diverse digital audience. This study therefore addresses this gap by focusing on the intertextual dimensions of Tinubu's political communication.

3. Theoretical Framework

Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model, which integrates textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, provides the analytical lens for this study. At the textual level, the tributes are examined for explicit and implicit intertextual references, such as borrowings from constitutional discourse, appeals to cultural and religious registers, or echoes of global political rhetoric. This helps in identifying and categorising the different discourses interwoven within the texts.

At the level of discursive practice, the focus is on how these tributes are produced, distributed, and consumed within Nigeria's political communication landscape. This involves interrogating how interdiscursive elements are strategically selected and combined to construct messages that appeal to different audiences. In particular, attention is given to how intertextual borrowings from popular

slogans, legal formulations, or international diplomatic language are mobilised to manage public perception and build legitimacy for presidential decisions.

Finally, at the level of social practice, the analysis moves beyond the texts to consider how these intertextual strategies reinforce or contest broader ideological positions. Here, the emphasis is on how Tinubu's birthday tributes draw upon wider societal discourses, such as neoliberal economic policies, democratic governance ideals, or national unity narratives, among others to sustain dominant power structures. This dimension is crucial in showing how intertextuality functions as a tool of ideological reproduction, enabling the presidency to both legitimise political authority and also naturalise specific worldviews as common sense within Nigeria's socio-political context.

4. Methodology

This qualitative study uses CDA to analyse ten purposively sampled birthday tributes from Tinubu's verified X account (@officialABAT), tweeted within his first two years as president (2023–2025). The timeframe captures efforts to consolidate authority. Tributes were selected for interdiscursive elements, ensuring they reflect the presidency's official voice.

5. Data Analysis

The tributes are categorised into four thematic groups according to their dominant discourses, with each text examined at the textual, discursive, and social practice levels. Theme 1 consists of four texts, while Themes 2, 3, and 4 comprise two texts each, as presented below:

Theme 1: Political Leadership and Nationalism

Text 1: Vice – President Kashim Ibrahim

Dear Kashim,

As you mark your 57th year, I take a moment to reflect on the journey we have undertaken together in the service of our great. Your story, from the classrooms of the University of Maiduguri to the highest echelons of leadership, unwavering commitment, and unparalleled wisdom.

Your courage, especially during those trying years in Borno State, has left an indelible mark. It's not just your tenacity in the face of adversity that stands out, but the intellectual prowess and innovative spirit you bring to every challenge.

I'm not just proud to have you as our Vice President; I am honoured to count you as a friend. May the years ahead continue to be filled with the same grace, wisdom, and strength you have shown over the decades.

Happy 57th, Kashim. Here's too many more years of shared success and collaboration.

Source: @officialABAT (tweeted on September 2, 2023)

The text has eulogistic expressions such as “unwavering commitment” and “intellectual prowess” to construct an elevated representation of Shettima. Metaphorical formulations such as “indelible mark” portray Shettima's legacy as enduring. At the level of discursive practice, the text is directed at multiple audiences, including Nigerians at large, political supporters, and Shettima himself. It interweaves nationalist discourse, as reflected in the use of expressions, such as “our great Nigeria”, heroic discourse, with words such as “courage”, political leadership discourse, with the use of the phrase “highest echelons” among others, and relational discourse, with Tinubu referring to the subject as “friend” to cultivate national pride and legitimise his administration. Within its socio-political context, particularly in the aftermath of the 2023 elections, the text consolidates political legitimacy by foregrounding unity between the southern Tinubu (as President) and the northern Shettima (as Vice –

President), thereby mitigating regional tensions and reinforcing nationalist as well as meritocratic ideologies.

Text 2: Kadir Obafemi Hamzat

As Dr. Kadir Obafemi Hamzat celebrates his 60th birthday, it is an occasion that brings both deep pride and heartfelt reflection. I have heard the distinct privilege of knowing Dr. Hamzat for many years, not just as a colleague in the public service but as a trusted friend whose contributions to the development of Lagos State and Nigeria are nothing short of extraordinary. In 2005, recognising his exceptional talent and unwavering commitment to excellence, I brought Femi back home to serve in my cabinet during my tenure as the Governor of Lagos State. From that moment, it was clear that he possessed a rare combination of technical acumen, visionary leadership, and an unyielding dedication to the progress of our people. His role in shaping the future of Lagos State has been pivotal. With a deep understanding of governance and an innovative approach to problem-solving, Femi has been instrumental in driving the socio-economic transformation of the state.

His contributions have not only strengthened the infrastructure and governance of Lagos State but have also set new standards for public service across the nation.

Beyond his professional achievements, Femi is a man of profound integrity and compassion. His commitment to the welfare of the people, his humility in leadership, and his ability to inspire others are qualities that have made him a cherished figure both in government and among the people he serves,

As we celebrate this significant milestone in Femi's life, I extend my deepest congratulations and warmest wishes. His 60th is not just a celebration of personal journey but a testament to the enduring impact he has made on Lagos State and Nigeria as a whole.

On behalf of a grateful nation, I wish Dr. Hamzat continued strength, good health and fulfilment in the years to come.

May his legacy of service and leadership continue to inspire generations.

Source: @officialABAT (tweeted on September 18, 2024)

In this text, Tinubu uses complimentary terms such as “exceptional talent” and “visionary leadership” to construct a highly valorised image of Hamzat. He also uses the pronoun “I” to position himself as a political gatekeeper and arbiter of legitimacy, and the inclusive “we” to foster collective identification. At the level of discursive practice, the message addresses Lagosians, Nigerians more broadly, and political supporters, thereby reinforcing Tinubu's political legacy. It blends nationalist discourse as reflected in the use of “grateful nation”, heroic discourse, as in “profound integrity”, political leadership discourse, as shown in the use of “new standards”, relational discourse, with the use of “trusted friend”, and meritocratic discourse to legitimise the subject and bolster the credibility of his administration. Situated within its broader socio-political context, the tribute legitimises Tinubu's governance legacy in Lagos, thereby consolidating his continuous influence there.

Text 3: Former President Muhammadu Buhari

On behalf of the government and people of Nigeria, I extend my warmest congratulations and best wishes to you on your 82nd birthday.

As you celebrate this remarkable milestone in Daura, we reflect on your years of dedicated service and leadership, which have significantly shaped the course of our nation.

Your steadfast commitment to Nigeria's advancement and unity inspires many, and your enduring legacy continues to guide our nation's journey towards prosperity and stability.

Your doggedness and resilience in contesting presidential elections in 2003, 2007, and 2011 before winning in 2015 and 2019 also inspires us never to give up.

I will continue to build on the infrastructure legacy you bequeathed to our nation as the leader of our country's first All Progressives Congress (APC) administration.

On this special day, may you be surrounded by the love of your family and friends and continue to enjoy good health, happiness and fulfilment in all your endeavours, now and in the future. Happy birthday and thank you for your service to Nigeria.

Source: @officialABAT (tweeted on December 17, 2024)

The tribute contains formal expressions such as “dedicated service” and “enduring legacy” to compliment Buhari. Metaphorical formulations such as “shaped the course” depict Buhari as a pathfinder whose contributions are framed as historically consequential. At the level of discursive practice, the message is directed towards Nigerians at large, members and supporters of the APC, as well as Buhari himself, thereby reinforcing party cohesion and projecting continuity. The discourse interweaves nationalist elements, as reflected in the use of “advancement and unity”, heroic characterisations, with the use of “doggedness”, political community discourses, and resilience narratives to legitimise Buhari’s role within the party and the nation. Within the broader socio-political context, the text functions as a social practice that consolidates APC unity and enhances Tinubu’s legitimacy by aligning his administration with Buhari’s legacy, and simultaneously appealing to northern political bases.

Text 4: Former President Oluseun Aremu Obasanjo

Today, as former President Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo turns 88, I pray a special tribute to an extraordinary leader and statesman who has made enormous contributions to Nigeria’s development and whose life for the past six decades is woven deeply into the fabric of Nigeria’s history.

Providence has consistently thrust General Obasanjo to the forefront at critical junctures in Nigeria’s history.

He served the country meritoriously in the Nigerian Army. As a colonel, fate beckoned on him while commanding the Third Marine Division to receive the instrument of surrender from Colonel Philip Effiong, the Biafran Army Commander, signalling the end of Nigeria’s 30 months civil war.

General Obasanjo also made history as the military leader who took over the reins of power, following General Murtala Muhammed’s death in 1976. He completed the administration’s transition programme, and successfully handed power to a civilian regime in 1979.

Twenty years later, in 1999, he emerged as civilian president, freed from prison a year earlier, to herald the rebirth of another democratic dispensation, which recently clocked 25 years, and still counting.

During the two eras, General Obasanjo implemented critical policies and reforms, and made important decisions that profoundly impacted the lives of many Nigerians. As the Head – of – State, he consistently demonstrated a selfless commitment to national unity, peace, and progress.

Out of office, only a few will deny that the former president continues to wield considerable influence among the political elite at home, and well-grounded abroad, where he is an ambassador of global peace and troubleshooter. His tireless effort in conflict resolution, advocacy for good governance, and dedication to Pan – Africanism through institutions like African Union and the United Nations are testaments to his statesmanship.

Sometimes controversial, former President Obasanjo’s regularly interventions in national affairs have helped shaped public policies, and acted as a check on leadership.

I thank General Obasanjo for his onerous contributions to Nigeria. I commend him for his statesmanship and leadership.

At 88, the former President is still gaining strength. I pray that God Almighty will grant him the grace to live for more years so that the nation and Africa can continue to tap from his wealth of experience.

Source: @officialABAT (tweeted on March 5, 2025)

Reverential words and phrases such as “extraordinary leader” and “statesman” are used to construct an elevated portrayal of Obasanjo, while references to “providence” and “fate” imbue the representation with historical weight and inevitability. The deployment of personal pronouns, particularly “I” and “we,” functions to balance Tinubu’s individual perspective with a collective national voice, thereby reinforcing both personal credibility and shared identity. At the level of discursive practice, the message is oriented towards multiple audiences, including Nigerians, political elites, and international observers, with an emphasis on historical continuity and legitimacy. The discourse intertwines historical narratives, patriotic appeals, military ethos, and statesmanlike characterisations to situate Obasanjo within a broader trajectory of national leadership. Within its socio-political context, the text operates as a social practice that aligns Tinubu with democratic continuity, strategically countering narratives of political rivalry while simultaneously reinforcing nationalist sentiment and elitist leadership ideologies, and obscuring regional fault lines in the Nigerian polity.

Theme 2: Cultural and Literary Legacy

Text 5: Wole Soyinka

I am pleased to join admirers around the world in celebrating the 90th birthday of Nigeria’s iconic son and the world – renowned Professor Akinwande Oluwole Babatunde, famously known as Wole Soyinka.

Tomorrow, July 13th, will be the climax of the series of local and international activities held in his honour. To underscore the literary giant’s global relevance, a symposium and a poetry reading were held in Rabat, Morocco on 9 July. The event was organised by the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Pan African Writers Association (PAWA).

Professor Wole Soyinka, the first African to win the Nobel Literature Prize in 1986, deserves all the accolades as he marks the milestone of 90 years on earth. Having beaten prostate cancer, this milestone is a living testament to his ruggedness as a person and the significance of his person.

It is fitting we celebrate this national treasure while he is still with us.

I am, accordingly, delighted to have the honour to announce the decision of the Federal Government to rename the National Theatre in Iganmu, Surulere, as The Wole Soyinka Centre for Culture and the Creative Arts.

We do not only celebrate Soyinka’s remarkable literary achievements but also his unwavering dedication to the values of human dignity and justice.

When he turned 80, I struggle to find words to encapsulate his achievements because they were simply too vast. Since then, he has added to his corpus with his series of interventions, published in many volumes.

Professor Soyinka is a colossus, a true Renaissance Man, blessed with innumerable talents. He is a playwright, actor, poet, human right activist and political activist, composer, and singer.

He is a giant bestriding not just literary world but our nation, Africa, and the world.

He remains the shining light of our nation, the gadfly that pokes our national soul, decrying tyranny and oppression, urging us to become better as a nation.

He is one Nigerian whose influence transcends the Nigerian space and who inspires people around the world. Since his youth, he has been a vocal critic of oppression and injustice whenever it exists, from apartheid in South Africa to racism in the United States. Soyinka always speaks truth to power.

Beginning from his 20s, he took personal risks for the sake of our nation. His courage was evident when he attempted to broker peace as at the start of the civil war in 1967. Detained for two years for his bravery, he narrated his experience in his prison memoir, “The Man Died”

Despite deportation and solitary confinement, his resolve to speak truth to power and fight for the marginalised was further strengthened. His early writing, such as “The Lion and the Jewel”,

“Death and the King Horseman”, not only testifies to his mastery of language and innovative storytelling but also his unflinching commitment to enthroning a fair and just society.

Our paths crossed during our just struggle for the enthronement of democracy in Nigeria following the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election. When faced with a trial in absentia and death sentence by the military regime at home, he galvanises opposition in exile through NALICON and NADECO. His global stature made him the face of our struggle to validate June 12 and restore democracy in Nigeria.

Today, I join the world to celebrate his profound influence on generations of writers, scholars, and activists who have inspired by his work. I celebrate him for giving us the spark to fight and confront military dictators in our country.

I celebrate him for his enduring spirit and for teaching us that literature and drama can be used as a powerful tool to challenge the status quo.

I wish Professor Soyinka an incredibly happy 90th birthday.

May he continue in good health to find creative fulfilment in the next decade leading up to his centennial.

May he continue to inspire us all to build a nation where people are free from oppression and our teeming youths can live up to their dreams without being a wasted generation.

Source: @officialABAT (tweeted on July 12, 2024)

The tribute lauds Wole Soyinka as a “literary giant” and “national treasure”, among others. The pronouns “I” and “we” used strategically align Tinubu with Soyinka’s cultural and intellectual legacy. Metaphorical designations including “gadfly” and “colossus” further position Soyinka as a transformative figure whose impact transcends literature and extends into broader sociopolitical spheres. At the level of discursive practice, the message is directed towards multiple audiences—Nigerians, global literary communities, and domestic political supporters—thereby reinforcing Tinubu’s image as a patron of culture and custodian of national heritage. The discourse blends nationalist appeals, heroic narratives, human rights commitments, political authority, and literary prestige to strengthen both individual and institutional legitimacy. Within its wider socio-political context, the act of renaming the National Theatre operates as a social practice that consolidates Tinubu’s authority by linking his administration with cultural ideals.

Text 6: Mr. Frank Abiodun Aig-imoukhuede

Today, I celebrate the remarkable life of Mr. Frank Abiodun Aig – Imoukhuede, OON, a national treasure and cultural icon, as he marks his 90th birthday.

Celebrating 90 years today, Mr. Aig – Imoukhuede’s remarkable journey highlights the impactful combination of dedication, creativity, and service to his country. As the first Nigerian university graduate to join the Daily Express, he broke new ground in journalism. His subsequent roles, including Nigeria’s first Cultural Officer and Director of the National Council for Arts and Culture, have significantly enriched our cultural and literary landscape, inspiring future generations to contribute to our heritage.

Through iconic achievements, such as organising FESTAC 1977, and penning literary classics like *Pidgin Stew* and *Sufferhead*, he has preserved the essence of the Nigerian and African experience for generations to come. Mr. Imoukhuede’s work bridges cultural gaps, elevate our heritage, and inspire us to embrace our collective identity with pride.

As we honour his immense contributions, I urge younger generations to draw inspiration from his legacy of excellence, innovation, and patriotism.

Happy 90th Birthday, Mr. Frank Abiodun Aig – Imoukhuede! May your days ahead be filled with health, joy, and fulfilment! Your impacts continue to resonate for decades to come.

Source: @officialABAT (tweeted on January 8, 2025)

Tinubu uses celebratory expressions such as “national treasure” and “cultural icon” to construct an elevated representation of Aig-Imoukhuede. He uses “I” and “we” to cultivate collective identification

and foster national pride in the tribute. Metaphorical formulations such as “...broke new ground” frame Aig-Imoukhuede’s contributions as innovative and transformative, situating him within a discourse of cultural progress. At the level of discursive practice, the message is directed towards cultural communities, Nigerians more broadly, and particularly the youth, thereby positioning heritage as both a source of pride and a foundation for future continuity. The discourse incorporates cultural narratives, professional achievement, patriotic appeals, political authority, and generational discourses to strengthen legitimacy and broaden its resonance across diverse audiences. Within its socio-political context, the text functions as a social practice that aligns Tinubu with Nigeria’s cultural golden age, thereby enhancing his political legitimacy while reinforcing patriotism and cultural continuity. In doing so, it appeals particularly to nostalgic audiences who valorise heritage as a marker of collective identity and national cohesion.

Theme 3: Traditional and Religious Authority

Text 7: Oba Gbadebo

Your Royal Majesty,

Please accept my warm felicitations on the auspicious occasion of your 80th birthday, which takes place on September 14, 2023.

I share in the joy of so many Nigerians in celebrating another milestone with you and your family, the Council of Chiefs, sons and daughters of Egba-land, as well as friends and associates from the public and private sectors.

Your Royal Majesty’s track record of service to our nation has been inspiring, exemplary, and commendable, most notably beginning with your distinguished and meritorious career in the military, which saw you winning many medals.

Since ascending the throne of Your Majesty’s forefathers in 2005, your wisdom and charismatic leadership have brought peace and progress to your domain, and the impact has been felt at both state and national levels.

At 80, Your Royal Majesty, we will continue to cherish and rely on your experience, foresight, and guidance to take Nigeria to greater heights, all while acknowledging your sacrifices and selfless service.

I pray the Almighty God will grant Your Majesty many more years of joy, health and strength to continue serving the country we love.

Source: @officialABAT (tweeted on September 13, 2023)

Bola Ahmed Tinubu use formal and deferential language such as “wisdom” and “charismatic leadership” to exalt Oba Gbadebo. The use of the honorific “Your Royal Majesty” alongside the inclusive pronoun “we” strategically balances reverence for traditional authority with appeals to collective unity. The ceremonial structuring of the tribute mirrors conventional genres of royal address, thereby embedding the it within established cultural and rhetorical traditions. At the level of discursive practice, the message is oriented towards multiple audiences, including Egba-land, and Nigerians more broadly, in order to reinforce cultural ties and situate himself within a continuum of traditional and national leadership. The tribute entwines royalist, patriotic, military, and political registers to strengthen its appeal and to underscore the symbiosis between cultural heritage and contemporary governance. Within its broader socio-political context, the text functions as a social practice that enhances Tinubu’s legitimacy through the honouring of traditional rulers, while simultaneously reinforcing hierarchical and patriotic ideologies that promote unity and stabilise political authority.

Text 8: Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye

Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye exemplifies deep faith, wisdom, and humility, demonstrating a remarkable dedication to the gospel and selfless service. His impactful work continues to inspire millions in Nigeria and beyond. His leadership reflects a purposeful life, rooted in conviction and a steadfast commitment to uplifting others, serving as a powerful model for humanitarian service and spiritual guidance.

As he marks 83rd birthday, I pray for his continued strength, good health, and divine grace to keep guiding and inspiring generations to come.

Happy Birthday, Daddy G.O.

Source: @officialABAT (tweeted on March 2, 2025)

Tinubu uses faith-based phrases, such as “deep faith” and “divine grace” to celebrate Adeboye on his 83rd birthday. The appellation “Daddy G.O.” introduces an element of familiarity that personalises his authority and fosters intimacy with audiences. The pronoun “I,” juxtaposed with references to his capacity to “inspire millions,” is used to balance personal affirmation with the projection of a wider communal and national influence. At the level of discursive practice, the message addresses multiple audiences—members of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Christians across denominational lines, and Nigerians more broadly—thereby leveraging religious capital to enhance legitimacy. The discourse blends religious, humanitarian, and patriotic registers to situate Adeboye as both a spiritual leader and a moral exemplar within the national space. Within its broader socio-political context, the tribute aligns Tinubu with Christian values and moral leadership, thereby strategically countering narratives of bias in Nigeria’s religiously diverse landscape, while simultaneously reinforcing religious and patriotic ideologies that contribute to the legitimisation of political authority.

Theme 4: Personal and Familial Bonds

Text 9: Oluremi Tinubu

My dearest Oluremi,

On this beautiful day, as we celebrate your 64th birthday, my heart is full of gratitude and love for the incredible woman you are. Since we began this journey together, you have been my rock, confidante [sic], greatest supporter, and the love of my life. Every step of the way, you have shown unwavering strength, grace, and love to me, our family, and our beloved nation, Nigeria. You are the heart of our home, the light guiding me through the most challenging days, and the embodiment of kindness and wisdom. Your compassion, generosity, and dedication inspire millions of Nigerians and me, especially our young women who look up to you as their First Lady.

On your special day, I want to take a moment to tell you how truly blessed I feel to walk beside you. Your love sustains me, wisdom guides me, and strength lifts me. I could not ask for a better partner to share triumphs and trials of life.

As you turn 64, I wish you nothing but boundless joy, peace and happiness. May this year unfold with blessings, laughter and cherished moments you so richly deserve. I look forward to all the moments we will create together in the years to come.

With all my love and appreciation, now and always.

Your Bola.

Source: @officialABAT (tweeted on September 21, 2024)

Tinubu uses emotive terms such as “rock” and “confidante” to construct an intimate yet valorised representation of his wife, Oluremi. The metaphor “...light guiding me” elevates her role to one of moral and inspirational significance. The interplay of the pronouns “I” and “we” in the tribute serves to balance the personal and the collective, projecting both marital intimacy and national pride.

At the level of discursive practice, the message is directed at multiple audiences, including Nigerians at large, women, and political supporters, thereby humanising Tinubu and broadening the affective appeal of his political persona. The tribute incorporates romantic, familial, and patriotic registers, situating Oluremi not only as a partner in private life but also as a symbolic figure within the national imaginary. Within its socio-political context, the text operates as a social practice that counters perceptions of aloofness by reinforcing Tinubu's moral credibility, while simultaneously promoting patriarchal and nationalist ideologies that emphasise family values as foundational to governance and collective identity.

Text 10: Olamilekan Bello

Dear Mr. Olalekan Bello,

On the joyous occasion of your 70th birthday, I write to celebrate an extraordinary gentleman whose life has been a beacon of excellence, integrity, and service.

Your journey over decades is a source of pride not only to your family and close circle but also to our nation. You have demonstrated, time again, that character, dedication, and commitment to uplifting others are the hallmarks of true leadership.

On a personal note, as an in-law and a friend, I have witnessed first-hand, the grace and wisdom with which you navigate life. Your devotion to family, your humility in success, and your steadfastness in adversity are qualities that inspire admiration and respect.

As you mark this milestone, I join your family, friends and well-wishers in praying for continued good health, happiness and peace. May the years ahead even bring greater fulfilment, as you continue to positively impact lives.

Once again, happy 70th Birthday! May you bask in the joy and love of this special day with warm regards.

Source: @officialABAT (tweeted on November 28, 2024)

The text contains panegyric terms such as “beacon of excellence” and “integrity” to celebrate Bello. The metaphor “beacon” symbolises moral guidance and exemplary leadership. The strategic use of the pronouns “I” and “our” in the tribute simultaneously creates a sense of intimacy and collective unity, thereby positioning Tinubu both as a personal associate of the subject and as a national leader. At the level of discursive practice, the message is directed towards Bello's immediate circle, Nigerians at large, and political supporters, thereby reinforcing loyalty and consolidating networks of support. The tribute entwines relational, character-based, leadership-oriented, and celebrity registers to enhance Bello's public image. Within its socio-political context, the tribute underscores Tinubu's relational style of leadership, appealing to forms of patronage-based politics, while also promoting ideals of moral leadership and nationalism, albeit in a more implicit and less emphatic manner.

6. Discussion

The analysis of the ten tributes reveals the intertwining of seven primary discourses that collectively construct Tinubu's political and cultural legitimacy. A nationalist discourse frames subjects such as Shettima, Soyinka, Buhari, and Obasanjo as contributors to Nigeria's unity and progress, thereby fostering collective pride and reinforcing a sense of shared national identity (Texts 1, 5, 3, 4). This is complemented by a heroic discourse that elevates individuals as exceptional figures, attributing to them qualities such as courage (for Shettima), resilience (for Buhari), and statesmanship (for Obasanjo), which embed them within narratives of national heroism (Texts 1, 6, 3, 4). Political leadership discourse further underscores governance roles associated with Hamzat, Buhari, and Obasanjo, aligning Tinubu with images of effective leadership and institutional continuity (Texts 2, 3, 4).

In parallel, a relational discourse highlights Tinubu's personal bonds with Shettima, Hamzat, Oluremi, and Bello, serving to humanise his political persona and present his leadership as relationally grounded in Texts 1, 2, 9, and 10. A human rights discourse links Soyinka and Obasanjo with ideals of justice and democracy, thereby enhancing Tinubu's credibility within democratic frames in Texts 2 and 9. Similarly, a literary discourse celebrates the cultural contributions of Soyinka and Aig-Imoukhuede, positioning Tinubu as a patron of national culture and heritage in Texts 5 and 6. A meritocratic discourse, evident in references to Shettima, Hamzat, and Aig-Imoukhuede, foregrounds talent, dedication, and achievement, projecting aspirational values that align with narratives of progress and excellence in Texts 1, 2, and 6.

These dominant strands are reinforced by additional discourses: the royal (Oba Gbadebo) which invokes traditional authority in Text 7, the romantic/familial (Oluremi) which foregrounds intimacy and moral grounding in Text 9, the religious (Adeboye) which invokes Christian values as a source of legitimacy in Text 8, and the resilience discourse (Buhari) which highlights endurance in governance in Text 3. Collectively, these interdiscursive elements construct a multi-dimensional narrative of Tinubu's leadership, embedding him within frameworks of nationalism, morality, cultural patronage, and traditional legitimacy.

The tributes strategically align Tinubu with iconic figures such as Soyinka, Obasanjo, Buhari, and Adeboye, thereby leveraging their symbolic capital to legitimise his authority and embed his image within established reservoirs of national prestige. Institutional acts, such as the renaming of the National Theatre, alongside invocations of shared historical struggles, including the June 12 democratic movement in Text 5 and Lagos governance in Text 2, further consolidate his credibility by situating him within narratives of continuity and transformation.

At the level of public perception management, relational discourses in Texts 1, 2, 9, and 10, and moral discourses in Texts 10 and 8 function to humanise Tinubu, thereby countering perceptions of aloofness and projecting intimacy and integrity. Moreover, the strategic targeting of diverse constituencies constructs an image of inclusivity designed to broaden Tinubu's political reach. Ideologically, the tributes reinforce multiple strands: nationalist discourse cultivates unity (Texts 1, 5, 3, 4); meritocratic framing foregrounds competence and achievement (Texts 1, 2); relational discourse resonates with the logic of patronage politics (Text 10); cultural and religious hegemony elevates Yoruba and Christian values as central to legitimacy (Texts 5, 7, 6, 8); while democratic ideals are reinforced through associations with historical struggles for justice and governance continuity (Texts 5, 4).

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the tributes reveals that they function as far more than ceremonial gestures of honour; rather, they operate as sophisticated sites of discourse that actively construct and reinforce Tinubu's political and cultural legitimacy. Through the interplay of nationalist, heroic, leadership, relational, human rights, literary, and meritocratic discourses, supported by auxiliary strands of religion, royalty, familial intimacy, and resilience, the texts weave a multi-layered narrative of authority and belonging. By aligning Tinubu with iconic figures such as Soyinka, Obasanjo, Buhari, and Adeboye, the tributes strategically leverage symbolic capital, embedding him within reservoirs of national prestige and continuity. Equally, references to shared historical struggles, institutional interventions like the

renaming of the National Theatre, and narratives of democratic resilience and governance continuity further consolidate his credibility, situating him at the nexus of transformation and tradition.

At the level of perception management, the tributes carefully balance the projection of Tinubu as a statesman with the humanisation of his persona through relational and moral discourses that foreground intimacy, integrity, and shared values. This dual strategy not only counters perceptions of aloofness but also extends his appeal across diverse constituencies by incorporating cultural, religious, and moral frames that resonate with different segments of Nigerian society. Ideologically, the texts affirm unity, competence, and achievement while simultaneously reinforcing cultural and religious hegemony, thereby broadening the scope of political legitimation beyond policy and governance into symbolic and affective realms. Taken together, these findings underscore the potency of commemorative discourse in African political contexts, highlighting how ceremonial texts can act as powerful ideological instruments that shape leadership narratives and contribute to the reproduction of political authority.

Future research could extend this study by, thematically, comparing Tinubu's interdiscursive strategies with those of other Nigerian or African political leaders on X to establish whether his style is unique or part of broader regional patterns in political communication. Analysing tributes by past presidents or regional leaders would offer a comparative perspective on how interdiscursivity is mobilised to legitimise authority. Since this study focused on birthday tributes as a distinct genre, further work could examine other genres on X, such as condolence messages, policy announcements, or campaign posts, to determine whether nationalist, heroic, and relational discourses remain consistent or shift according to communicative purpose.

Methodologically, future research could incorporate quantitative approaches like corpus linguistics or sentiment analysis to map interdiscursive patterns across larger datasets. Examining word frequencies, collocations, and audience engagement metrics such as likes, retweets, and comments would help quantify the salience of particular discourses. This would also complement the present qualitative insights by linking discourse strategies with measurable audience reception. Another promising direction is to analyse replies, retweets, or comments on Tinubu's tributes to explore how different audience groups, including supporters, critics, and regional communities, interpret and negotiate these strategies. Such reception-oriented analysis would enrich Fairclough's CDA framework by more explicitly bridging discursive practice with social practice.

Contextually, this study covers the first two years of Tinubu's presidency (2023–2025), a longitudinal analysis spanning his full term could reveal how interdiscursivity responds to shifting political, economic, or social contexts. For instance, nationalist discourses may intensify during national crises, while relational discourses might recede under mounting political pressures, offering insights into the evolving dynamics of digital political communication. Furthermore, while this study centres on X, Nigerian political elites also engage through platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Future research could compare interdiscursivity across these platforms to assess whether Tinubu adapts his discursive strategies to platform-specific audiences or maintains consistency, thereby highlighting the influence of platform affordances on political communication.

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