

MULTIMODAL STANCE-TAKING IN SELECTED NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT POSTERS ON FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL POSTED ON X

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Abstract

The 2023 fuel subsidy removal campaign by the Nigerian government on X (formerly Twitter) was not only a national campaign against corruption and problems bedeviling the oil sector, but also a campaign to control the narrative and ideologically position the state as a rational and transparent actor in the complex economic realities. This paper applies multimodal discourse analysis and the stance triangle to examine the discourse features of this campaign and the role of stance in the evaluation of state actors in the campaign discourse. The data for this study consists of ten (10) purposively sampled posts (tweets) retrieved from verified Nigerian government accounts on X. The findings reveal that the government's communication strategy hinges on rational, technocratic, and institutionally legitimised stance moves aimed at managing public sentiment and realigning perceptions of the policy shift. Also, the findings reveal a deliberate attempt to control the narrative around the subsidy removal through a combination of visual reassurance, logical explanation, and economic realism. The study concludes that multimodal texts function as strategic tools for stance construction in contemporary political discourse as they can be used to challenge and renegotiate official narratives.

Keywords: Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Stance, Fuel Subsidy Removal, X, social media, Nigeria.

Introduction

Crude oil and its products play a key role in the Nigerian economy. Anyone familiar with the country's politics understands that

oil is a major stake in the country's power balance. The fight for dominance in Nigeria, no matter how conically different it appears, is a clear effort to control oil riches and its accompanied developmental opportunities (Obasi, Ezenkwa, Onwa & Nwogbaga 2017). Nigerian politics and oil are inextricably linked, as National and individual goals, hopes, and aspirations revolve around it.

The politics of fuel subsidy in Nigeria has long been a lightning rod for economic, social, and ideological contestations. Subsidies, introduced to cushion the high cost of petroleum products, have over the years become a symbol of state largesse, inefficiency, and elite capture. Amid rising debt burdens and fiscal constraints, the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in May 2023, announced a decisive policy shift—the removal of the longstanding fuel subsidy. This announcement, made on the day of the President's inauguration, sparked immediate public reactions ranging from protests and union threats to social media campaigns and debates. In this evolving context, digital communication platforms—especially X (formerly Twitter)—became vital arenas where the Nigerian government sought to frame, justify, and manage the public narrative around this contentious policy.

Government agencies, presidential spokespersons, and official channels leveraged X not just to inform the public, but to persuade, reframe, and reinforce the ideological underpinnings of subsidy removal. These posts combined textual rhetoric, visual cues, hashtags, emojis, and hyperlinks in a communicative strategy that reflects what Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) describe as “the orchestration of semiotic modes to produce meaning.” The shift from traditional political communication to multimodal digital messaging reveals a significant transformation in the way legitimacy is constructed and contested in public discourse.

As a digital platform, X affords real-time interaction, instant feedback loops, and wide dissemination, making them potent tools in

state-citizen engagement. As Zappavigna (2012) notes, platforms such as Twitter (now X) are “sites of ambient affiliation,” where language use is shaped by the need to connect, influence, and participate in collective meaning-making. The use of hashtags such as #SubsidyRemoval and #RenewedHope, official infographics showing subsidy redirection benefits, and images of the President in working meetings—all function as multimodal strategies for legitimising governmental action and managing public dissent.

Furthermore, the government's digital messaging must be situated within the broader context of public distrust and historical grievances regarding transparency and governance in Nigeria. Fairclough (1995) asserts that discourse is “a form of social practice” that reflects and reinforces power relations. The government’s posts on X serve as a critical site for exercising discursive power, framing the subsidy removal as a patriotic and economically sound decision, often invoking national unity and responsibility.

Given this background, this study explores how the Nigerian government strategically deployed multimodal discourse strategies on X to communicate its stance on the 2023 fuel subsidy removal. It investigates how linguistic, visual, and symbolic resources were combined to construct a narrative of necessity, patriotism, and reform.

Stance in Discourse

In any communication situation, interlocutors in a bid to share information also convey their attitudes, emotions, feelings, moods or dispositions. This non-referential disposition together with referential information enables the hearer/reader to properly interpret the message (Ihara 2006) cited in Chilwa & Ifukor (2015, p.5). This disposition is referred to as stance. At its most basic understanding, stance taking can be seen as a relational work and an interactional evaluation process (Du Bois, 2007). As discussed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), stance taking refers to the “display of evaluative, affective, and

epistemic orientations in discourse” (p. 595), or rather a strategy through which individuals position themselves within interaction.

The stances that individuals take are intrinsically intersubjective and are signalled by the interplay of linguistic and non-linguistic features which enable them to dialogically assign values to objects, categories, and identities, express their attitudes and judgments, and position themselves about others (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Johnstone, 2007; Kiesling et al., 2018). Specifically, when speakers (or writers) interact, they can take different types of stances which have been understood by some as either epistemic or attitudinal (e.g., Hyland, 2005), and are respectively enacted to claim knowledge or authority, and to express alignment or disalignment with their interlocutor(s) concerning the objects of their evaluations. Therefore, stance refers to how speakers and writers evaluate a proposition, position themselves, and align with or against others within a communicative act. Du Bois (2007) introduces the “stance triangle” to conceptualise stance as involving three interlinked acts: evaluation, positioning, and alignment. This model has gained traction in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, offering a dynamic view of how interpersonal and ideological meanings are performed in communication.

Stance is not merely about expressing opinion; it also involves interactional positioning and identity construction (Englebretson, 2007). In digital contexts, stance serves to build affiliations or oppositions among dispersed interlocutors, often through affect-laden language and alignment markers such as hashtags or quoting (Lee, 2015). However, much of the research on stance remains rooted in textual analysis, with limited attention to the role of non-verbal or visual cues in expressing evaluative meaning, particularly in socio-politically charged environments.

Political Discourse, social media and Digital Activism in Nigeria

The intersection of discourse and ideology is central to understanding how governments justify controversial policies. Fairclough (1995) conceptualises discourse as a form of “social practice” that reflects and reinforces societal power structures. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), scholars examine how institutional language legitimises authority and marginalises dissenting voices. Wodak (2001) extends this by exploring how political actors use strategic discourse to manage crises and consolidate legitimacy.

In digital environments, where information flows rapidly and audiences are fragmented, the strategic use of discourse becomes even more critical. Van Dijk (1998) notes that elites control not only access to discourse but also the structure and framing of discourse itself. In Nigeria, where public trust in government is often fragile, discursive strategies on platforms like X are vital for narrative control, especially around controversial decisions like subsidy removal.

Social media platforms have transformed political discourse in Nigeria by providing participatory spaces for citizen engagement, commentary, and protest (Uwalaka & Watkins, 2018). X has emerged as a key platform for such engagement due to its openness, speed, and affordances for multimodal communication. From elections to economic policy changes, Nigerian users have employed social media to critique leadership, share lived experiences, and mobilise digital protests (Opeibi, 2021).

Cultural and communicative creativity characterises Nigerian social media discourse. Users blend satire, humour, and local languages with visual formats like memes and GIFs to produce resonant critiques of government policy and social issues (Egbunike, 2020). The #EndSARS protests exemplified how multimodal practices—ranging from protest art and video livestreams to emoji-laden hashtags—functioned as tools of resistance and mobilisation (Olumide & Afolabi, 2021).

While these developments affirm the importance of social media in Nigerian political life, few studies have examined the multimodal strategies users employ to construct a stance on policy issues. Most existing research focuses either on content trends or purely textual content, overlooking the visual and affective dimensions that are crucial to stance-taking. This study fills that gap by offering a systematic multimodal analysis of stance in online discourse surrounding the fuel subsidy removal policy.

Extant Literature

Several studies have investigated and explored stance and the removal of fuel subsidy in Nigerian political communication. These studies have come from varying perspectives such as discourse studies, political discourse, sociolinguistics, pragmatics and multimodality. For example, Ering and Akpan (2012) analysed the politics of fuel subsidy and mass protest, concentrating on the socio-economic implications of the removal on the Nigerian people while Onyishi, Eme, and Emeh (2012) discussed the implications of the fuel subsidy policy on the Nigerian economy at the domestic and international levels. From a linguistic perspective, Agbedo (2012) examined language use in the placards of the 2012 fuel subsidy removal protests published in Nigerian e-newspapers. The study started by categorising the messages on the sampled placards into five themes, namely fuel subsidy removal, corruption, crash in public expectation, quality and cost of governance and people power as precursor of revolution and then analysed the data using insights from Halliday's theoretical concept of 'Register' classified as field, tenor, and mode. The findings of the study revealed that the emerging pattern of civil protest in Nigeria interrogates a wide range of socioeconomic and political challenges plaguing the Nigerian nation. Although pictures play an essential role in the success of the protest, no attention was given to them (Igwebuike, Abioye & Chimuanya 2017, p.204).

Also, Onanuga and Ademilokun (2014) studied a multimodal analysis of selected graphic protestations on fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria. The target of the study was to reveal that pictures are meant to convey surreal, realistic, and humorous meanings. According to them, the protest pictures are targeted at ridiculing the government on the one hand, while still conveying the seriousness of the situation on the other hand. Based on the objectives of the study, the findings reveal that three major meaning-making strategies were used for expressing the protest situation, namely, surrealism, realism, and humour. In addition, humour is deployed as a strategy of dousing emotions and mildly conveying the people's distaste for the actions of the former administration. The study concluded that in conflict-affected societies, humour has a significant potential to contribute to the escalation or reduction of conflicts.

Furthermore, Abioye (2014) examined discourse mapping of online news on fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria. Anchored on insights provided by critical discourse analysis, the study analysed selected foreign and local online news reports on the subsidy removal. It asserted that the relevance of language as social discourse encompasses understanding, explaining, and analysing new phenomena in our sociopolitical system, which are relevant to Nigeria's social transformation. It concluded that language can be used to achieve a range of objectives; for instance, it can be used identify the different roles of participants in a specific context, it can be used to tease out hegemonic underpinning within interactions and the interpersonal relationships that are established in such interactions, and how the texts are organized into meaningful discourse.

Chiluwa (2015) carried out a critical discourse study of the Facebook posts on the 'Occupy Nigeria' fuel subsidy removal protests. The study examined discourse strategies (such as code-switching, Pidgin, etc.) deployed by the online protesters to articulate their arguments, demands and goals. The findings revealed that the strategies

express diverse groups' identity, solidarity as well as loyalty to the political in-group and ethnic interest rather than national interest. It concludes that 'despite the seeming effectiveness of the online protests via Facebook, the Nigerian protesters did not ultimately achieve their aim partly because the protests did not attract sufficient participation' (Chiluwa, 2015, p. 47).

Adebomi (2024) undertook a multimodal study of related internet memes on fuel subsidy removal policy by President Bola Tinubu. The paper argues that internet memes relating to the subsidy removal by Nigerians are intended to criticise and digitally resist the perceived anti-people policy by the government. Using Kress & van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis and van Dijk's critical discourse analysis theory, the study purposively sampled and analysed fifty (50) memes shared within the Nigerian WhatsApp space. The findings of the study reveal that the discourse, design, production and distribution of semiotic resources enhance the unbundling of the thematic issues in the memes. Also, the study shows that the memes are employed to negatively represent Tinubu's government as well as expose the perceived anti-people ideology underlying fuel subsidy removal. Though related to the present study because of the multimodal theory employed as well as the issue of fuel subsidy removal policy, the present study differs in its focus on multimodal stance analysis in the tweets posted on X. Additionally, while this study focused on X, Adebomi concentrated on WhatsApp.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This paper integrates theoretical insights from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Social Semiotic Theory of Multimodality with Du Bois's (2007) stance triangle model for analysing the discursive construction of stance employed by the Nigerian government in its public communication on the 2023 fuel subsidy removal, particularly those disseminated through X (formerly Twitter). The fusion of these

complementary approaches facilitates a holistic analysis of how language and visual elements interact to construct, circulate, and legitimise ideological positions in public discourse.

The social semiotic model developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) extends Halliday's functional linguistics to multimodal communication by emphasising that all semiotic modes – language, image, colour, typography, layout, and sound – function as meaning-making resources that reflect and are shaped by social and cultural practices. According to this theory, communication is not merely a matter of transmitting information but a strategic and socially situated act of meaning-making.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that visual communication, like language, performs three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction refers to how meaning is represented; the interpersonal metafunction deals with how the text/image engages the viewer; and the textual metafunction concerns how the elements are organised into a coherent message. For example, the visual prominence of economic benefits such as “employment” and “increase GDP” in the subsidy removal posters suggests a deliberate compositional arrangement aimed at persuading viewers by foregrounding positive outcomes. This framework is particularly useful in analysing the multimodal nature of digital political communication, where meanings are constructed not only through language but also through visual cues such as colour schemes (e.g., green for growth, red for urgency), image placement, and layout structures that reinforce ideological readings.

Complementing the visual grammar analysis, Du Bois's stance triangle offers a framework for understanding how individuals position themselves and others about propositional content in discourse. According to Du Bois, stance is a tripartite process involving evaluation, positioning, and alignment. In evaluation, the speaker (or multimodal communicator) expresses an attitude or judgment toward a focal object

(the stance object). In this study, the subsidy removal policy and its economic implications serve as the stance subject matter, evaluated primarily in positive terms (e.g., "increase GDP," "create employment"). Positioning interrogates how the speaker situates themselves within the discourse, signalling their perspective or alignment relative to others. NNPC Ltd. positions itself as a neutral market player responding to government policy, emphasising that it no longer controls pricing or supply monopolistically, thereby presenting itself as an actor within a deregulated market. At the level of alignment, the speaker (or producer of the message) invites the audience to align with their stance, shaping the audience's perspective on the stance object. In the analysed materials, alignment is achieved through appeals to shared national goals (e.g., economic growth, job creation, and improved fuel availability) and the visual emphasis on modern infrastructure, national symbols, and progress-oriented imagery.

Du Bois's model thus provides a means to trace how stance-taking is not merely an individual act but a relational process that unfolds through interaction, whether verbal, visual, or multimodal. The stance triangle is particularly useful in identifying the intended audience positioning: how viewers are invited to evaluate the fuel subsidy removal policy as beneficial, position themselves as supportive citizens, and align with the state's vision of economic reform.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilising Kress & van Leeuwen's Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) with Du Bois's (2007) stance triangle as its primary analytical approach. The data for this study consists of official posts (tweets) made by verified Nigerian government accounts on X between May 29, 2023 (the date of the subsidy removal announcement) and September 30, 2023. This timeframe covers the initial announcement and immediate post-policy engagement period, capturing the peak of public discourse and

governmental response. The data were drawn from the following verified government-affiliated accounts: @NNPCLimited (Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited) and @NMDPRA (Nigeria Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority - NMDPRA).

A purposive sampling strategy was used to collect ten (10) posters tweeted using the official verified handles mentioned above. This method was employed to select tweets that explicitly expressed a stance toward the subsidy removal policy. These posters were downloaded using an Android phone for analysis.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

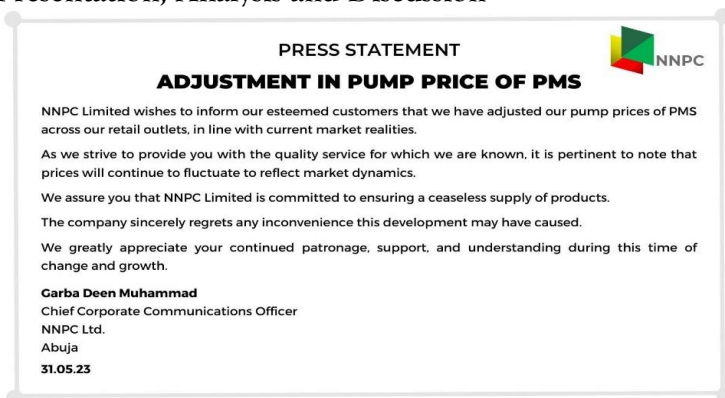


Fig. 1: “PRESS STATEMENT – ADJUSTMENT IN PUMP PRICE OF PMS”

From the poster, the evaluation here balances a factual explanation of price changes with a mild affective tone, acknowledging potential public inconvenience. The use of the word “regrets” adds emotional weight to the statement and attempts to build empathy with the audience. Also, NNPC Ltd. positions itself as a responsible, service-oriented company navigating a new market-driven environment. By framing price adjustments as necessary responses to “current market

realities,” the organisation distances itself from blame and instead portrays itself as adaptable and professional.

The company aligns itself with a discourse of economic transition and modernisation, using terms like “change and growth.” This supports the government’s broader narrative of reform and privatisation. It disaligns with expectations of price stability, explaining that “prices will continue to fluctuate.”

Looking at the semiotic modes employed in the poster, the textual part portrays formal, corporate language with a consistent tone. The visual aspect shows the minimalist design and inclusion of the NNPC logo, which underscores authority and seriousness. In terms of the paralinguistic aspect of communication, the capitalisation of “ADJUSTMENT” draws focus to the key message. Interactionally, no engagement features (e.g., hashtags or tags) are used, and the poster uses customer-centred language (“we assure you,” “we sincerely regret”) to establish relational proximity.



Fig. 2: Why the Petrol Price Increase before June

This poster justifies the early increase in petrol prices, using both linguistic and visual resources to communicate urgency and avert blame. The central evaluative move is framed economically: delaying the subsidy removal would cause “serious nationwide fuel scarcity and hardship” due to over N2.8 trillion in debt owed to NNPC. Here, economic necessity becomes the organising principle of stance.

Visually, the poster uses a green fuel nozzle and yellow-orange colour gradient to connote fuel, caution, and urgency. The positioning strategy distances the speaker (NNPC) from blame by emphasising external constraints, such as accumulated debt, rather than governmental failure. In the poster, alignment is sought with economically rational citizens, and disalignment is created with dissenters who view the hike as premature or unjustified. The visual mode complements this by softening resistance with calm, institutionally branded visuals (NNPC’s logo and corporate palette), which emphasise professionalism and authority.



Fig. 3: “Why Sell Old Stock at the New Price?”

This poster addresses widespread public discontent over petrol stations selling pre-subsidy fuel at post-subsidy prices. The evaluation centres on the claim that such pricing is necessary to prevent restocking issues and

scarcity. Here, market logic – rather than moral justification – frames the policy. The stance constructed is practical and transactional.

Positioning frames fuel station operators as constrained actors within a larger economic system, countering the perception of profiteering. Visually, the image of organised, functioning petrol stations evokes calm and normalcy, countering panic buying or unrest. The poster realigns public sentiment by shifting the narrative from exploitation to survival of the supply chain.

Textually, the question-answer format (“Why sell old stock at the new price?”) and the answer’s definitive tone (“...scarcity will manifest”) imply transparency and inevitability. This combines with institutional colours to reinforce trust.

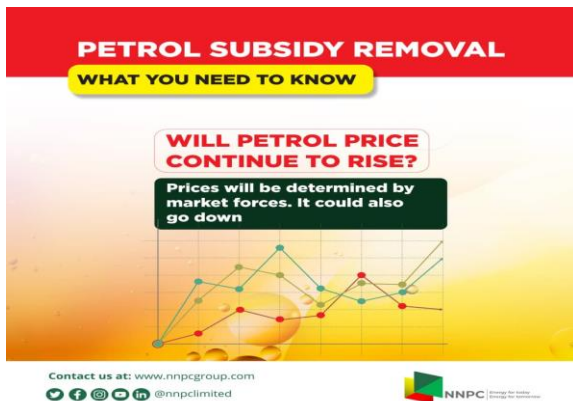


Fig. 4: Petrol Price Trajectory

This poster adopts a neutral to slightly optimistic stance. The message “prices will be determined by market forces” is repeated, hinting at volatility but also the possibility of price drops. Here government is positioned as a detached observer of market activity rather than an active agent of pricing. This rhetorical move shifts responsibility to abstract economic mechanisms. In all, the alignment remains

consistent with liberalisation discourse, normalising market volatility as expected and manageable.

Looking at the textual mode, the reiterative phrasing used in the poster underscores the inevitability of market logic. Although the absence of concrete data distances the audience from potential accountability. The use of the multi-coloured line graph suggests rational fluctuation of prices owing to market forces, while the use of warm colour gradients in the background softens the impact of the message. Looking at the graph, its lack of a vertical axis or numerical data makes the chart ambiguous and interpretative.

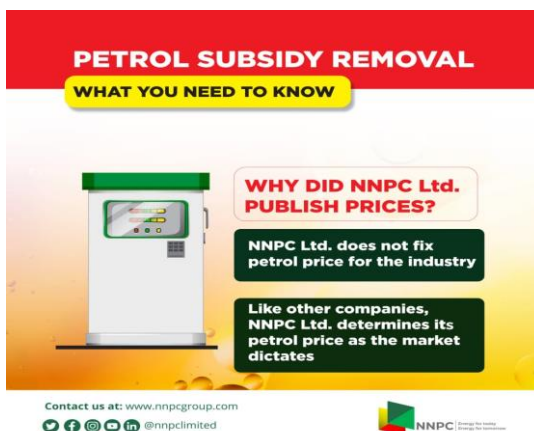


Fig. 5: “Why Did NNPC Ltd. Publish Prices?”

Again, this poster justifies the reason NNPC publishes the prices of petrol. This poster employs the image of a modern digital fuel pump, connoting technological progress and institutional modernisation. The green and white colour scheme reinforces national identity and financial prudence, while the use of bold, sans-serif fonts ensures clarity and legibility. The text performs a disclaiming, asserting that “NNPC Ltd. does not fix petrol price for the industry.” Instead, it frames price determination because of market forces, thus shifting agency from the

state to the anonymous “market.” This serves to absolve NNPC – and by extension, the federal government – of blame in rising fuel prices.

The poster aligns with a neoliberal ideological stance that emphasises market determinism and individual corporate agency. The NNPC is positioned as a market actor rather than a regulator, effectively blurring the line between public accountability and corporate autonomy.



Fig. 6: “How Will Consumers Be Protected?”

In this poster, the NNPC responds to citizens’ concerns about oversight and fairness. The stance here is evaluative and forward-looking: the poster states that consumer protection will be enforced through “Industry Regulators & Consumer Protection Council.” The evaluation emphasises institutional safeguards and implies a functioning accountability system.

Consumers are positioned as vulnerable but safeguarded by regulatory authorities, thereby maintaining the image of a paternalistic, yet responsive, state. Visually, the large green shield with a check mark is an archetypal sign of security, reinforcing a stance of assurance and credibility. The visual metaphor aligns with audiences seeking protection, calming post-policy anxiety, and reinforcing faith in governance structures.



Fig. 7: “Will NNPC Ltd. Remain the Only Supplier of Petrol?”

The poster clarifies that other independent marketers would have a stake in the petrol supply. The evaluative move is framed as shared responsibility; this is encoded in the message “NNPC Ltd. will no longer be the sole supplier of petrol.” These show that other marketers other than NNPC Ltd., would be engaged in the supply of petrol. Shared responsibility becomes the organising principle of stance.

Also, the poster utilises high-contrast typographic styles and visual elements such as a large oil tanker labelled “BLACK GOLD” to symbolise resources, wealth, and logistical capability. The red, yellow, and green colour palette evokes urgency, transparency, and authority, respectively. The structured layout separates question and response, aiding clarity, and comprehension.

The discourse in this poster employs authorisation, with the clause “By Law, no player can control more than 30% of the market” serving to legitimise the government's deregulation stance. The language used is deliberately depersonalised, with phrases such as “will no longer be the sole supplier” replacing more politically charged terms like “loss of government control.” The poster frames deregulation as a necessary step toward a fair, competitive market structure. The shift from state monopoly to regulated market is naturalised, portraying

NNPC as one among other competitors rather than a dominant state actor. This deflects responsibility from the government and implicitly aligns with neoliberal economic ideologies.



Fig. 8: “The Future of Petrol Supply to Domestic Market”

In this poster, NNPC makes future declarations about the domestic market and sustainability. The stance here is evaluative and foretells futuristic dealings: it states that Dangote, NNPC and other domestic refineries will ensure petrol is available, create employment and increase GDP. This evaluation de-emphasises the monopoly of NNPC and implies a functioning policy system. Here, the NNPC Ltd positions itself as a neutral player, just like any other marketer.

The use of a stylised oil rig and refinery complex visually evokes industrial modernisation. A bullet-point list of economic benefits – such as job creation, GDP growth, and improved foreign exchange reserves – constructs a persuasive narrative of national economic revival. The poster employs instrumental rationalisation, linking subsidy removal to desirable national outcomes. The listing of names like “Dangote” and references to “domestic refineries” invoke nationalistic pride, while the consistent use of future tense verbs (“will ensure,” “will improve”) conveys optimism and inevitability.

This text constructs deregulation as a patriotic duty and an economic imperative. By foregrounding national gains and sidestepping immediate public hardships, it aligns with hegemonic state narratives that privilege long-term macroeconomic indicators over short-term public welfare.

PETROL SUBSIDY REMOVAL
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHY THE PETROL PRICE INCREASE BEFORE JUNE?
Delaying subsidy removal till the end of June 2023 could have caused serious nationwide fuel scarcity and hardship as NNPC Ltd. was owed over N2.8 Trillion and can no longer sustain sufficient supply to the market.

WHY SELL OLD STOCK AT THE NEW PRICE?
Fuel stations cannot restock if they sell at old price and nationwide scarcity will manifest if they do.

WILL NNPC Ltd. REMAIN THE ONLY SUPPLIER OF PETROL?
NNPC Ltd. will no longer be the sole supplier of petrol.
By Law, no player can control more than 30% of the market.

WHY DID NNPC Ltd. PUBLISH PRICES?
NNPC Ltd. does not fix petrol price for the industry.
Like other companies, NNPC Ltd. determines its petrol price as the market dictates.

HOW WILL CONSUMERS BE PROTECTED?
Industry Regulators & Consumer Protection Council will provide control.

WILL PETROL PRICE CONTINUE TO RISE?
Prices will be determined by market forces. It could also go down.

THE FUTURE OF PETROL SUPPLY TO DOMESTIC MARKET
Dangote, NNPC & other domestic refineries will:
Ensure Petrol availability
Improve Nigeria's FX reserve
Create Employment
Increase GDP

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NNPC NIGERIAN NATIONAL PETROLEUM CORPORATION

Fig. 9: NNPC Ltd. - What You Need to Know

The poster frames subsidy removal as economically necessary, citing the NNPC's financial constraints. For instance, phrases like “NNPC was owed over N2.8 Trillion” evoke urgency and fiscal unsustainability. In terms of positioning, the NNPC Ltd. is portrayed both as a burdened actor and a reform-oriented player. By highlighting deregulation and market liberalisation, it frames itself as aligning with global economic

norms. This makes the poster align with neoliberal economic discourse by emphasising market forces and deregulation. It subtly absolves the state of direct control over petrol pricing.

The textual mode employed uses FAQ format to simulate dialogic interaction, and with statements such as “NNPC does not fix petrol prices”, it deflects accountability on the part of the state. In terms of the visual modes, the use of icons of oil tankers, refineries, and bar charts depicts complexity and different operational scales. More importantly is the use of segment-specific colours (red, green, yellow) to show direct thematic attention. Also, the use of the Shield icon under “consumer protection” symbolises reassurance as the typography and layout create visual balance and clarity.



Fig. 10: NMDPRA FAQ on Fuel Subsidy Removal

The poster attempts to address some of the questions that might be in the minds of the people. The language evaluates the fuel subsidy removal positively, portraying it as a rational and initiative-taking solution to national fuel scarcity. Terms such as “guarantee,” “stabilize,”

and “adequate availability” reflect epistemic certainty and invoke a sense of confidence in policy efficacy.

The NMDPRA positions itself as a responsive and strategic institution safeguarding national fuel distribution. Through the operationalisation of the National Strategic Stock Reserve, the agency presents itself as a proactive and crisis-aware body doing all it can to mitigate the issue.

This makes the message align with pro-government and neoliberal discourses emphasising market readiness, efficiency, and long-term planning. The absence of oppositional views or reference to public dissent underscores the unidirectional communicative mode. The textual elements deployed in the posters are declarative language that establishes an authoritative tone. Moreover, the bold and capitalised phrases (e.g., "FAQ ON FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL") foreground importance. The use of technical terminology frames the issue as an expert-led concern.

Visually, the poster shows a clean, organised petrol station, which suggests supply stability. While the colour palette (orange and green) is associated with urgency and national identity. Also, different official emblems and logos added to the poster enhance institutional legitimacy. In addition, a look at the structured bullet points is indicative of a befitting rational planning in place, while the capitalisation emphasises key terms.

Discussion of Findings

This study set out to examine how stance is multimodally constructed in response to the 2023 Nigerian fuel subsidy removal, with particular focus on government-issued campaign posters and their interaction with public discourse on X. The findings show that the government’s communication strategy hinges on rational, technocratic, and institutionally legitimised stance moves aimed at managing public sentiment and realigning perceptions of the policy shift. Also, the

findings reveal a deliberate attempt to control the narrative around the subsidy removal through a combination of visual reassurance, logical explanation, and economic realism. Drawing on Du Bois' (2007) stance triangle, the posters employ evaluations that foreground national economic urgency, position NNPC and regulatory bodies as responsible actors acting under constraint, and seek alignment with rational, law-abiding citizens.

The communicative strategy deployed is multimodally reinforced through colour schemes (green, red and yellow) denoting trust, urgency, and national identity; iconography (fuel pump, shield, petrol stations) that evoke stability and order; typography and layout that resemble authoritative, institutional discourse. Such strategic multimodal orchestration aligns with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory that meaning in contemporary texts is realised across multiple semiotic modes that work together to shape interpretation. The posters thus function not only as informational tools but as semiotic interventions aimed at guiding affective and ideological alignment.

In all, the selected government posters deploy a blend of visual grammar and strategic discourse to normalise the removal of fuel subsidies and align public opinion with market-driven reforms. These multimodal strategies do not merely inform the public but ideologically position the state as a rational, transparent actor navigating complex economic realities. This strategic communication functions as a form of soft power, subtly guiding public interpretation through carefully orchestrated semiotic and linguistic resources.

Conclusion

Social media campaigns like X spread fast and reach many people around the country and the world at the same time. This study argues that the systematic blend of varying modes in the posters by the government is not merely to inform the public but ideologically position the state as a rational, transparent actor navigating complex

economic realities. This strategic communication functions as a form of soft power, subtly guiding public interpretation through carefully orchestrated semiotic and linguistic resources. This contributes to our understanding of how multimodal texts function as strategic tools for stance construction in contemporary political discourse. It highlights both the possibilities and limitations of institutional visual communication in managing public sentiment, especially in environments where citizens actively repurpose social media platforms to challenge and renegotiate official narratives.

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