Special Issue on:
Conflict and National Integration: Critical Reflections in Language and literature
Guest Editors: Kingsley O. Ugwuanyi & Onyemuche A. Ejesu

Contents

A Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Mustapha Bulama's Cartoons on Armed Banditry

Aliyu Y. Abdulkadir[1], Mohammed A. Baraya[2] & Aminu Saleh[3]
[1]Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State | aliyuabdul@fukashere.edu.ng
[2]Gombe State Polytechnic, Bajoga | baraya6043@gmail.com
[3]Gombe State Polytechnic, Bajoga | aminusaleh478@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper critically analyses selected cartoons from a Nigerian newspaper, the *Daily Trust*, covering four purposively selected cartoons between September 2020 and June 2021 on the subject of armed banditry in northern Nigeria. Specifically, the study explicates these visual images to understand how they are intentionally represented as linguistic tools to communicate and disseminate points of view, values and judgments in the *Daily Trust*, one of the national print and online newspapers in Nigeria. The study draws upon Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA), and particularly employs Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of Visual Grammar in examining these cartoons. The study finds that through the deployment of multimodal texts, artists and news media entities are able to inscribe their perspectives regarding societal problems such as insurgency, insecurity, bad governance and so on. By utilizing these approaches, they also depict their stances on these specific news matters, thereby clarifying their motives and as a consequence, contributing to the national discourse on these issues as well as fortifying their relationships with their target audiences. Bulama's cartoons specifically present the regional crisis of armed banditry in a historical fashion and with a democratic flair, challenging government to do more through a power-centric focus that also presents some level of hope that the crisis could be eventually surmounted. The study concludes with recommendations that include a call to the cartoonist to include victim-centric representations in his work, and to other artists to engage in projects that collect these cartoons from across editions of *Daily Trust* and other newspapers to give nuanced insights into the subject of insecurity in Nigeria.

Keywords: Newspaper cartoons, visual grammar, multimodality, Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis, insecurity, armed banditry

1. Introduction

Cartoons are coded means of visual communication that, among other things, aim at providing socio-cultural meanings construed within wider critical contexts. Cartoons are common sense naturalistic coded visual images (Kress et al., 1997; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). They fall within the general move from verbal to visual communication and they are analysed in terms of their discursive implications.

Cartoons are oftentimes intended to project inferences which portray socio-cultural beliefs, problems and practices among members of a given society. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), such visual representations are easily decoded by the addressees "regardless of how much education or scientific-technological training they have received" (pp. 165-6). This implies that the potential audiences for cartoons stretch far and wide.

When cartoons are used as communicative signs along with other semiotic systems such as texts, a situation of multimodality is achieved. This can be in a news medium such as a newspaper or in other media such as school textbooks. According to Kress (2009), a mode is "a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning" (p. 79). Multimodality evokes power relations between the participants. In fact, both producers and readers must cooperate to compose and, in turn, comprehend 'complex sign-texts' to accurately infer the socio-cultural implications within a given 'communicational environment' (Kress et al., 1997).

Newspaper cartoons are generally not bound by professional codes of conduct as much as mainstream journalism. Riffe et al. (1988) state that cartoonists, "with their commitment to critical commentary, may hold views at odds with the professional journalist's 'ethics of objectivity'" (pp. 91-2). Yet, the ideology expressed in a given cartoon is tenably representative of the newspaper's point of view since "most cartoonists have little in-print opportunity to violate a paper's standards, simply because publication decision making rests with the editor" (Riffe et al., 1988, p. 97). In other words, the ultimate decision on whether a cartoon appears in a newspaper edition or not lies not with the cartoonist but with the editor.

This study attempts to provide insights into the manner in which newspaper cartoons project the points of view of newspapers on Nigeria's security challenges. The study aims to a) explore *Daily Trust*'s use of modes other than verbal text to relay news events, b) uncover the messages within *Daily Trust*'s Bulama's cartoons on the subject of insecurity (specifically armed banditry in Northern Nigeria), and c) identify the implications of these representations for praxis and audience sustainability. The study focuses on the various visual modes and linguistic features within these cartoons that betray discourse strategies, paying special attention to the way in which they are used to depict the Nigerian socio-political environment.

Nigeria is faced with an unprecedented wave of different but overlapping security crises, from kidnapping for ransom to inter-ethnic clashes and extremist insurgencies. Almost every corner of the country has been hit by violence and crime (Tanko, 2021).

Audu Bulama Bukarti, a senior analyst on Sahel security at the Tony Blair Institute, says that the scale of the insecurity threatens the very fabric of Nigerian society: "With every attack, human lives are lost or permanently damaged and faith in democracy and the

country is diminishing" (Tanko, 2021, n.p.), while Onime (2018) describes the situation thus: "Lives are lost on daily basis, population depleted, businesses in comatose, investments are nose-diving, multinationals closing shops and vacating the country, unemployment soaring and the populace in fears" (p. 377).

Government after government since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999 has failed to tackle the ever-worsening security situation in the country. When Muhammadu Buhari was elected President in 2015, he promised to protect citizens from terrorists and criminals. But with a few months left in his final term in office, the country is arguably more unstable now than it had been in decades. Some have linked the recent surge of insecurity to the staggering poverty across the country. Youth unemployment currently stands at 32.5%, a situation described by Anyanwu and Duru (2020) as "a demographic and ticking time bomb still waiting to explode" (p. 69).

2. Mustapha Bulama's newspaper cartoons

Mustapha Bulama is a Nigerian artist based in Kaduna State. He specializes in political cartoons and children's book illustrations. He is also a graphic designer and visual facilitator. He joined the *Daily Trust Newspaper* as a comic strip artist in 2000, venturing into political cartoons in 2008. His cartoons and Illustrations are currently published in the Saturday and Sunday editions of *Daily Trust Newspaper*, while his comic strips are published in the weekday editions of the same paper. He draws his inspiration from the works of many artists, his favourites being Albert Uderzo, Zapiro, Gado, Jason Seiler and Xose Tomas. As an illustrator, he has illustrated over twenty children's books for different publishers since 2008, amongst which are the Moonbeam award-winning *Zahra and Coco Alphabets, Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, The Empty Calabash* published by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) and *Buhari of the People*, a children's biography of President Muhammadu Buhari. Bulama has won numerous awards in the field of editorial cartooning, story writing and illustration amongst which are the Diamond Award for Media Excellence (Best Editorial Cartoonists) 2017, and (Illustrator) Gold Prize Winner of Moonbeam Children's Book Award, United States, 2012.

Bulama's cartoons present a unique project that contrasts sharply with what would otherwise be expected of a typical Nigerian cartoonist. Coming from the North of Nigeria and working as a cartoonist in what is arguably the leading national newspaper from the region, it is interesting that he uses his platform to consistently hold the government of the day to account. Mustapha remains deeply critical of President Muhammad Buhari's governance approach, especially on the issue of regional and national insecurity, which attracts widespread readership and followership of his social media handles (Facebook and Twitter). This in part influenced my choice to study his works in order to understand his perspectives on the subject of armed banditry in Northern Nigeria.

While there is no known research on Bulama's cartoons on armed banditry or insecurity in general, which makes this study justified given the wide appeal his cartoons enjoy, there are related studies to foreground the present study. For example, Sani et al. (2012a) found that Nigerian political cartoons in *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* set social agenda by mainly encapsulating current and sensitive issues that people are much concerned about, while Sani et al. (2012b) concluded that newspaper cartoons are supported with texts comprising loan word, coinage, word class, denotation and connotation, hence a multimodal scenario. Luca (2000) focused on how newspaper audiences are able to interpret pictures and other images, and found that cartoons are pertinent to transmitting ideas because they are not literacy-based and can be consumed quickly. Riffe et al. (1988) on their part argued that editors were more critical than cartoonists when it comes to condemning possible conflicts of interest and are also more likely to advocate cartoonist "non-involvement" to avoid such conflict, stressing that whatever gets past the editor becomes not merely the expressed ideology of the cartoonist but also of the paper. Not surprisingly, Lamb (1996) found that cartoonists and editors were in agreement on the functions of cartoons in print media. El Refaie (2003) found that many of the dissimilarities between verbal metaphor and its visual counterpart result from differences regarding what the two modes are able to express easily and efficiently. The present study differs from the above studies as it focuses on the multimodal elements in Bulama's cartoons to understand how they are intentionally represented as linguistic tools to communicate and disseminate points of view, values and judgments in the *Daily Trust Newspaper* regarding the armed banditry crisis that has bedevilled Nigeria.

3. Visual Grammar

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) state that "visual communication is always coded" (p. 32). In this vein, the concepts of multimodality and visual communication are grounded on frameworks proposed by Halliday (1978) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) where visual communication and verbal discourse together form a comprehensive meaning-making unit.

Based on Halliday's Functional Grammar (FG), Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) have examined the meanings of images in visual communication in terms of their functions. So, it can be realized that in FG, the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meta-functions respectively correspond to representational, interactive and compositional functions in visual grammar (VG). In terms of Visual Grammar, the representational structure depicts events, participants and settings; interactive relations evaluate power relations between the recipients, while compositional structure relates meaning to the positioning and organization of the semiotic elements in the image. In this sense, Visual Grammar is similar to Halliday's meta-functions and his representational approach to the real world. Kress et

al. (1997) argue that there are three elements (or functions) that should undergird any discursive practice regardless of its mode:

1. To represent and communicate relevant aspects of the social relations of those who are engaged in communication.

2. To represent and communicate those events, state of affairs, and perceptions that the communicator wishes to communicate.

3. To enable the production of messages which have coherence, internally as a text, and externally with relevant aspects of the semiotic environment (the so-called 'context').

Visual Grammar interprets and is interpreted through culturally bound and historically specific social interactions. According to van Leeuwen, social semiotic elements are resources imposed on our societies where meaning is decoded "by that complex condensation of cultural and social histories and of awareness of present contingencies" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 12). Bulama's cartoons provide culturally-motivated visual ideas that either stand alone in commentary-making or support the discoursal messages contained in textual communication that *Daily Trust* news articles and editorials convey. Visual Grammar is, therefore, a useful approach to making sense of these cartoons.

4. Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CDMA)

The analytical tool utilised in this study is Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis, a merger of critical discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis. This approach enables the researcher to examine the cartoons both as communication with deep meanings that only close interrogation and appraisal can unravel, and as a mode of communication that conveys information in a way different from natural language even though just as effectively.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not a homogenous model, nor a school or a paradigm, but at most a shared perspective on doing linguistics, semiotic or discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1993). The objective of CDA is to explore language use as social practice. CDA believes that language users do not function in isolation but in a set of cultural, social and psychological frameworks. CDA studies the connections between textual structures; while taking this social context into account, CDA explores the links between textual structures and their function in interaction within society. Such an analysis is a complex, multi-level one, given the obvious lack of direct, one-to-one correspondence between text structures and social functions, especially when it comes to creating and maintaining differences in power relations. The relatedness of the complex mechanism of discursive practices and their social function is frequently and willingly left opaque, especially when the need occurs to create and maintain differences in power relations.

The main objective of CDA is to create a framework for disambiguating this said opacity. Fairclough (1992) views CDA as a branch of discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practice, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes. According to Fairclough (1992), CDA aims to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power, exploring how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. It should be noted that the relationship is bi-directional. Language use is not only affected by its existence within a certain frame of cultural or social practice but also influences and shapes the social and cultural context it finds itself in. It can therefore be concluded that discursive practices are constitutive of social structures, the same way the social structures determine discursive practices.

Mostly, CDA investigates power relations in language use, usually as it is manipulated to favour those in authority. Hence the central focus of CDA is language, power, ideology and history. The word 'critical' differentiates CDA from other forms of discourse analysis. "'Critical' implies showing connections and causes which are hidden; it also implies intervention, for example providing resources for those who may be disadvantaged through change" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 9). Therefore, it is important to uncover the hidden meanings of semiotic systems in order to aid more understanding, since these meanings are not explicit.

Essentially, the term *multimodality* is used both to describe a phenomenon of human communication and to identify a diversified and growing approach to linguistics and communication research. As a phenomenon of communication, multimodality defines the combination of different semiotic resources, or modes, in texts and communicative events, such as still and moving images, speech, writing, layout, gesture, and/or proxemics. As a phenomenon of communication, multimodality is increasingly being used by researchers in disciplines concerned with texts and meaning, such as linguistics and communication studies, all of which however tend to devote their analytical focus to text-based language use.

Recent directions in the field of multimodality reflect an appealing range and diversity of approaches. These include the use of the methodology in: exploring gender stereotypes in children's books (Guijarro & Ventola, 2021); investigations into meaning-making in digital contexts (Moschini & Sindoni, 2021); studies on language learning (Diamantopoulou & Ørevik, 2021; Lim & Tan-Chia, 2022); examination of textbook and discourses (Canale, 2021); meaning making in Covid-19 pandemic epoch (Tan & Marissa, 2022). These are just a few examples that point to how scholars in diverse fields embrace the capacity of multimodality as a methodology to enable them to discover aspects of their data that would

probably not be sufficiently revealed if other methods are used. The method also leads to clarity in discovering how meanings in communication are reinforced by multiple modes, in terms of both reinforcement and complementarity.

Within the field of "multimodal studies" (O'Halloran & Smith, 2011), the phenomenon of multimodality is approached through different theoretical perspectives (Jewitt, 2009; O'Halloran & Smith, 2011), all, however, hinging on four key assumptions (Jewitt, 2014): that (a) all communication is multimodal, (b) analyses focused solely or primarily on language cannot adequately account for meaning, (c) each mode has specific affordances arising from its materiality and from its social histories which shape its resources to fulfil given communicative needs, and (d) modes concur together, each with a specialized role, to meaning-making; hence relations among modes are key to understanding every instance of communication.

All considered, multimodality as a field of research conceives of representation and communication as relying on a multiplicity of modes, all of which have been socially developed as resources to make meaning. Modes such as gesture, sound, image, colour, or layout, for example, are conceived as sets of organized resources that societies have developed – each to a greater or lesser level of articulation in different social groups – to make meaning and to express and shape values, ideologies, and power relations. When in combination with speech and/or writing, they are not a mere accompaniment of, or support to verbal language, as labels such as *para-/extra-linguistic* or *non-verbal* might suggest; rather, each concurs with a specific functional load to the meaning made by the overall text – and as such they deserve attention.

5. Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach. Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA) (van Dijk, 1993) guided the analysis in the present study. Specifically, the analysis sought out the representations of ideology in the cartoons. Issues of balance and continuity were also assessed, since "viewers use a narrative constituent grammar to guide sequential image comprehension" (Neil et al., 2014, p. 65). Each cartoon is presented in its original colour, since colours also possess indicative and significant meanings. "In the visual semiosis, the potential of ideological encoding can be strengthened through the arrangement of colours and visual elements" (Wang, 2014, p. 279). The overall ways the modes create awareness are subsequently explored and the implications are teased out.

Data were purposively selected. The *Daily Trust* was specifically selected given its roots and wide readership in Northern Nigeria, the very region with the worst cases of insecurity in the country. Likewise, the cartoons were purposively selected based on the subject of insecurity in Northern Nigeria. The analytical approach consisted of critically examining the primary sources (four cartoons) alongside related texts. In the analysis, where text material is extracted from the cartoon, it is mostly presented in upper case for

emphasis. Other foregrounding techniques used to highlight content are italics and bold type. All these communicative strategies are critically examined in order to have a more nuanced understanding of the cartoons.

6. Results and discussion

In the analysis and discussion that follows, each cartoon image is presented followed by a critical multimodal discourse analysis of its representation and content. The images are presented and discussed in the order of their production in terms of the dates of their appearance in the *Daily Trust.*

IMAGE 1: 19 June 2021

As regards the information value of this cartoon, it shows two bandits with AK47 rifles dragging some students apparently into a forest. The bandits are bigger in the cartoon to show their superiority in terms of their capacity to use force over the helpless, downcast victims, who are all presented with an infantile outlook. The victims are shown to be a mixed set of both boys and girls and the two girls each depict the two major religions of the country Nigeria: Christianity and Islam. The last student looks back in dire longing for help: this immediately challenges those in authority to question their resolve. While the green grasses indicate that the students are being led into the bush, they also project a natural blend for the children's uniforms that at once suggests regeneration and at the same time implies camouflage, which depicts that they are at once safe from harm, or will elude discovery by search parties. The bandits have shoes, while the children followed them bare-footed, which implies the safety of the captors and the vulnerability of the captives. Hence, it depicts that the bandits do not care about the plight of these children. The bandits' lack of mercy can also be seen in the title of the cartoon as they kill a *policeman* in order to kidnap the students – over *eighty* of them.

The dialogue text above each of the bandits shows their conversation: "I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND THE PRESIDENT'S **LANGUAGE**." This statement is a sarcastic response to the President's speech targeting those he calls the enemies of peace in the country. However, the fact that the word *language* appears in bold and capitalised helps to highlight the major point in the speech of the first bandit and the word in its original context in the president's speech implies *a show of force* against the enemies. The President uses nearly the same statement on June 1st 2021 in a video which was later twitted and shared widely, where he said: "We'll treat them in the language they understand" referring to the government's use of force to suppress Biafran agitators. So, the statement intimates that the bandits have not seen any action from the security agencies, or they are daringly mocking the President, his utterance and his security heads. The response by the other bandit is: "MAY BE HE MEANT **FULFULDE**." The word FULFULDE capitalised and in bold type suggests that the bandits are probably Fulanis – or this could be a reference to the President's own cultural-cum-linguistic heritage, which puts him on common grounds with the bandits themselves. In any case, it is pertinent that language has a central place in the discourse on insecurity as represented in the cartoon.

The colour of the students' uniform, green and white, also symbolizes Nigeria as a whole, as the Nigerian flag is green, white and green; it also suggests that insecurity is a national problem. The irony in this situation invites critical contemplation. The colours are originally meant to represent positive national characteristics. Now they are seen to represent helplessness and loss. The bandits are presented wearing clothes made of various colours (green, blue, orange and red), which implies that they are possibly not Nigerians, or do not promote Nigeria's interests. The nationality of the nomadic Fulani has been the subject of widespread debate, especially as regards the subject of banditry, since they live a life of constant mobility which has little space in contemporary post-colonial land tenure arrangements across the continent. On the 21st of February 2021 the Federal Government of Nigeria sought the Amendment of the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of humans and cattle within the sub-region as they think some of the bandits and criminal herdsmen terrorising the country are non-Nigerians (Vanguard, 2021). The blue sky indicates that the evil acts of the bandits are perpetrated with an air of impunity in broad daylight.

The name of the publishing company *Daily Trust* and their logo plus the name of the artist are seen on the right-hand corner of the picture. The *Daily Trust* logo has colours such as blue, yellow and red. There is a symbol of copyright ©before the artist's name to show ownership of the cartoon picture. This identifies the origin of the cartoon, giving credence to the analysis that the image is a representation not only of the cartoonist's judgments, but also of the viewpoint of the media outlet as an institution, which reflects Riffe et al.'s (1988) view that cartoons represent the overall philosophy of the newspaper.

IMAGE 2: Scores killed as troops, vigilantes ambush Kebbi students' kidnappers (19 June 2021)

The information value of this picture is the opposite of the previous one in the sense that the bandits are now running, being under heavy fire. The students are also not on the scene, presumably rescued or abandoned. While in Image 1 the heading points that the bandits succeeded in their plan, in this second image titled SCORES KILLED AS TROOPS, VIGILANTES AMBUSH KEBBI STUDENTS' KIDNAPPERS, the bandits have been over-powered probably by the formal and informal security agents. The first bandit replied to his own earlier comment by saying I THINK THIS IS THE **LANGUAGE** THE PRESIDENT IS TALKING ABOUT! Clearly, now they understand that the word LANGUAGE the president is talking about is a show of force or to deal with those who want to create problems for the state and the citizens. The statement by the other bandit affirms the real interpretation by the first bandit by saying "I THINK THESE ARE JUST THE **ALPHABETS**," implying that, out of what the President has promised for enemies of the country, this is just the beginning, perhaps because more attacks on them are still to come as highlighted by the word **ALPHABET** in bold and capitalised.

The cartoon of the two bandits is the most salient element of the composition due to its size and the message it conveys: it shows the action of the bandits and their reaction to the thing chasing them. One of the bandits is looking back to confirm the distance between them and the people chasing them. They are fired at; this is signified by the symbol of flying bullets, which might be why the other bandit is covering his ears with his hands because of the sound of the gunshots and also as a way of dodging the bullets. The bandits have met a force stronger than theirs to the extent that one has lost one of his blue shoes. There is also dust in the background to show the speed of the bandits and also the nature of the road which is not tarred. From the postures of the bandits, one could tell they are running very fast.

The green environment in the background shows vegetation. The plants seem to sway more in the direction of the fleeing bandits, implying that there is no longer a hiding place for the bandits. Likewise, green represents hope and regeneration.

Just like in the first image, the name and logo of the publishing company as well as the name of the artist and date of publication are written on the right-hand bottom corner of the picture with the logo having colours such as blue, yellow and red. There is also the symbol of copyright before the name of the artist.

IMAGE 3: 19 September 2020

Image 3 above presents two furious-looking bandits discussing the ironical decision taken by the government to send only 900 troops to deal with them, but as many as 30,000 troops were sent to oversee the conduct of gubernatorial elections in Edo State (the cartoon was published the same day governorship election was held in Edo State in Southern Nigeria). The first utterance by the bandit in a yellow shirt shows the weakness of the government in that the government pay more attention to elections than security challenges. The bragging of the bandit in a red shirt who is probably the leader shows how much the bandits believe in the superiority of their weapons. The foregrounding of the word RESPECT through capitalisation gives further credence to this. The inscription on the tree (**BANDITS DEN)** mocks the security agencies as well as the government. The bandits have the guts to even label where they live as their own territory. Unfortunately, it is common knowledge that the bandits have taken over parts of the country as their territory, yet no meaningful action has been taken against them. This is also a comment on the loss of authority by the Nigerian security forces to the bandits. The gesture of folded fist and frowned face shows anger from the bandits and a mockery of the failure of the government with regard to the security of lives and property of its citizens. The guns the bandits are brandishing symbolize war and the strength they have, which shows how well-equipped they are because the weapons are similar to, if not more sophisticated than, those given to the security agents. The radio being held by the bandit symbolizes that the bandits have Intel on every security arrangement of the Federal Government of Nigeria because of the

connections they have with their sponsors. The green grasses and the brown tree represent the bush or hideout of the bandits, which has become their home and that of their hostages.

Similar to Images 2 and 3 above, the name and logo of the publishing company as well as the name of the artist and date of publication are written on the right-hand bottom corner of the picture with the logo having colours such as blue, yellow and red; these colours are almost depicted on the clothes of the bandits. The blue shoe, the yellow shirt of one bandit and the red shirt of the boss may be interpreted to symbolise danger or how dangerous the bandits can be. There is also the symbol of copyright before the name of the artist.

Buhari appoints new COAS -News

IMAGE 4: Buhari appoints new COAS (29 May 2021)

Finally, Image 4 presents a master (the Nigerian President from the visual) issuing out orders to his subordinate (one of the service chiefs). The image depicts a burning house as a result of many issues on the ground. The text above the picture reads BUHARI APPOINTS NEW COAS-NEWS. COAS stands for Chief of Army Staff. The picture depicts the President and the new Chief of Army Staff, and the burning house clearly depicting the enormous challenges ahead of the COAS. In a sense, the President's unperturbed mien is surprising – he sits unperturbed picking his teeth amidst the security challenges in the comfort of the Aso Rock Villa, possibly hoping that the newly appointed COAS will douse the inferno. It could also probably be interpreted to mean that the problem of insecurity is the military's to deal with rather than his.

The place they are, the Aso Rock Villa (which is the seat of power of the president of Nigeria) is burning, signifying the precariousness of the country and this means the new Chief of Army Staff has a lot to do to fix the burning country and this is supported by the text above the President reading: "WELCOME GENERAL, YOU'VE GOT WORK TO DO." Here, Mustapha

presents the President as befitting of the description of the African proverbial madman who goes to sleep while his roof is on fire.

The COAS is in a standing position looking up with his mouth wide open, which reflects that what he sees is more than what he had expected. In the centre of the room is a table with a red-coloured fire extinguisher on it, which symbolizes the weapons and personnel the new Chief of Army Staff has to fight the enemies of the country. The legs of the table which are three might be symbolic of the major ethnic groups of the country. The picture frame on the wall of the room shows the various problems pulling the country down; the country in the frame is represented by the car. The artist's name and date of publication are written in the right-hand bottom corner together with the name and logo of the publishing company. The COAS's military attire is a well-constructed one; the Army General's uniform is standard according to the code of conduct of the Nigerian Army. Buhari, himself a retired Army General and now the elected Nigerian President, dresses in a complete set of Kaftan which is in sync with his cap unlike the dress of the bandits in Images 1 and 2.

Overall, Bulama's cartoons represent the various actors in the Northern Nigerian insecurity landscape: the ethnic categories, the perpetrators, victims and government/security participants, adults and children, etc. Likewise, the images are rich in relevant colours, motifs, props, etc that evoke a strong sense of reality, presenting a well-articulated documentation of the travails of Nigeria as a country and Nigerians as a people currently ravaged by insecurity. The cartoons are thematised to present news, hence propping the textual news content of the newspaper editions in which they appear. In this respect, they are arguably summaries of the main news events of the moment, hence their being akin to editorials. In addition, Bulama's cartoons are inevitably multi-modal: text augments, images, colours, symbolisms, etc. Within the frames of the cartoon, there are textual (verbal) presentations usually given as dialogue or caption. This supports the meaning-making process and deepens the communication between the cartoonist and the newspaper on the one hand, and between the cartoonist and the audience on the other hand. The cartoonist presents humour as well as ridicule against some of the actors through the use of sarcasm and irony. In the end, there are multi-layered meanings in Bulama's political cartoons, with historicity used to connect the current depiction to the past. Overall, these cartoons can be described as a 'democracy' of representation, where multiple perspectives are presented. One major absence in these cartoons, in this regard, appears to be the point of view of the victims themselves.

7. Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, the findings of the present study indicate that Bulama's cartoons on the subject of insecurity project a spirit of optimism/hope about northern Nigerian and the wider Nigerian security landscape. The cartoons present a *democracy* of perspectives in the sense that balance is achieved by considering a wide range of angles to

the matter, except the voices of the victims. In his cartooning, Bulama Mustapha challenges security stakeholders, especially the President of the Federal Republic who is the Commander-in-Chief/Chief Security Officer of the country, to do more. The cartoonist utilizes realism in representation, even though overly power-focused as opposed to being victim-focused. Through this approach, Mustapha suggests that the solution to the malaise lies in who wields control of governance and leadership of the security agencies on the one hand, and on the other hand the tussle for control between the government security agencies and the various groups causing insecurity – especially the so-called armed bandits. Bulama's cartoons are complementary to verbal-textual news. They carry within them summaries of the main news events, targeting audiences with little time or too little literacy to read word-based news stories. Hence, these cartoons provide proof that multimodality gives alternative news in a concise and thought-spurring manner. There is continuity in the representation of insecurity events in Bulama's cartoons. Each new cartoon continues with the narrative on insecurity from where a previous cartoon stopped, hence presenting a sort of Achebe-like narrative approach where history is the overarching goal of the narrative. This continuity creates a visual grammar and helps in presenting the transformation of the situation, and basically ushers in hope because we appreciate that there is some level of positive improvement. Whether this is real or a mere wish is beside the point.

Those who are in the best position to address this question are of course the victims of the reckless attacks by these bandits. Thus, the non-depiction of victims' voices limits the realism in Bulama's cartoons. The point of view of victims appears to be excluded in terms of self-expression in Bulama's cartoons, and this constitutes a major limitation both in his promotion of democracy as an artist, as well as the completeness of the insecurity story depicted in his cartoons. With praxis, this can be addressed since it is impossible to fully appreciate the situation of things only from the point of view of the powerful and the perpetrators. Finally, stakeholders in the evolving security issue, especially the government, should pay attention not only to verbal news but also to cartoons. The analysis has demonstrated that there are crucial messages in these cartoons that can propel the direction of policy and action in tackling the security challenges bedevilling the country.

References

Anyanwu, S. O., & Innocent U. D. (2020). Youth unemployment in Nigeria: Implications for development. In B. E. Aigbokhan, & H. E. Oaikhenan (eds), *Nigeria's socio-economic challenges and development options* (pp. 66-100). Benin City: Mindex.

Bulama, M. (2020). The Bandits Den. Available at: https://mobile.facebook.com/newbulamacartoons/posts/my-cartoon-today/337483601026415/?_rdr (Accessed on 10 November 2021).

Bulama, M. (2021a). Buhari appoints new COAS. Available at: https://mobile.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=324487675792792&set=a.226809218893972&refid=13&paipv=0&eav=AfZYYuQi415AZ4TFfRNbZYlKkAj3vQkGaFpMwV4MFR_CnlBZMP96UQShdyfgmIg2-yc&_rdr (Accessed on 10 November 2021).

Bulama, M. (2021b). Policeman killed, 80 students abducted in Kebbi-News (**19 June 2021)**. Available at: https://mobile.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=337173214524238&id=100046946863735&set=a.226809218893972&eav=AfbYtaM0dgJ9VSW2scijVfLVL6WixW126AuXvUVimkXAEVicG9KvohNRjo7bzPqjyYU&paipv=0&source=48 (Accessed on 10 November 2021).

Bulama, M. (2021c). Scores killed as troops, vigilantes ambush Kebbi students' kidnappers. Available at: https://mobile.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=338617724379787&id=100046946863735&set=a.226809218893972&eav=AfZjpp1VCJN5Gv6bk-GHYr6cLrcM10XsrMgcr670H2rKXJYjw_lf3_G8r13lSlW1VmE&paipv=0&source=57 (Accessed on 10 November 2021).

Canale, G. (2021). *A multimodal and ethnographic approach to textbook discourse.* London: Routledge.

Diamantopoulou, S., & Ørevik, S. (2021). *Multimodality in English language learning*. London: Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Critical Discourse Awareness*. London: Longman.

Lim, V. F., & Tan-Chia, L. (2022). *Designing learning for multimodal literacy teaching viewing and representing*. London: Routledge.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Arnold.

Jewitt, C. (ed.). (2009). *The Routledge handbook of multimodal analysis*. London: Routledge.

Jewitt, C. (2014). Multimodal approaches. In S. Norris, & C. D. Maier (eds), *Interactions, images and texts: A reader in* multimodality (pp. 127-136).

Kress, G. (2009). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication.* London: Routledge.

Kress, G., Leite-García, R., & van Leeuwen, T. (1997). Discourse semiotics. In T. A. van Dijk (ed.), *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction* (pp. 257-291). Sage.

Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. London: Arnold.

Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge.

Lamb, C. (1996). Perceptions of cartoonists and editors about cartoons. *News Research Journal,* 17(3-4), 105-119.

Luca, I. (2000) Multimodal Discourse Analysis in media. *Romanian Journal of English Studies*, (17), 74-80.

Moschini, I., & Sindoni, M. G. (2021). *Mediation and multimodal meaning making in digital environments.* London: Routledge.

Moya-Guijarro, A. J., & Ventola, E. (2022). *A multimodal approach to challenging gender stereotypes in children's picture books.* London: Routledge.

Neil, C., Ray, J., Phillip, J. H., & Gina R. K. (2014). The grammar of visual narrative: Neural evidence for constituent structure in sequential image comprehension. *Neuropsychologia,* 64, 63-70.

O'Halloran, K., & Smith, B. (2011). Multimodal studies [Introduction]. In K. L. O'Halloran & B. A. Smith (eds), *Multimodal studies: Exploring issues and domains* (pp. 1-13). London: Routledge.

Onime, B. E. (2018). Insecurity and economic growth in Nigeria: A diagnostic review. *European Scientific Journal*, 14(4), 377-391.

Riffe, D., Donald S., & Roger L. V. (1988). Ethics in editorial cartooning: cartoonist and editor views. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 9(3), 91-103.

Sani I., Mardziah, H. A., Afida, M. A., & Faith S. A. (2012a). Linguistic analysis on the construction of satire in Nigerian political cartoons: The example of newspaper cartoons. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies,* 4(3), 52-59.

Sani, I., Mardziah, H. A., Faiz, S. A., & Afida M. A. (2012b). Political cartoons as a vehicle of setting social agenda: The newspaper example. *Asian Social Science,* 8(6), 156-164.

Tan, S., & Marissa, K. L. E. (2022). *Discourses, modes, media and meaning in an era of pandemic: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis approach.* London: Routledge.

Tanko, A. (2021). Nigeria's security crises — five different threats. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-57860993 (Accessed on 13 January 2023).

van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse and Society*, 4(2), 249–283

Wang, J. (2014). Criticizing Images: Critical Discourse Analysis of Visual Semiosis in Picture News, *Journal of Critical Arts*, 28 (2), 264–286.