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# Leadership as an Art and a Responsibility: A Case Study of the Linguistic Choices of Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan

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Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/67014>

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## Abstract

President Jonathan of Nigeria continuously proclaimed that no blood of a Nigerian is worth his ambition before the 2015 elections. However, when he lost the presidential elections in 2015, it would be natural to expect him to become anti-government and seek ill of the Nigerian people who rejected him. This study thus sought to determine the usage of language by President Jonathan in order to determine if he uses language responsibly and for the peace and unity of Nigeria. The data were sourced from his Facebook page. These were saved and analysed using the Chomsky theta theory and Halliday theme-rheme system. The findings from the discussion show that Dr. Jonathan consistently exhibit responsible leadership in his linguistic usage. He continued to encourage and call on Nigerians to unite and support the government of the day. It was thus concluded that he has in him the spirit of leadership, which manifests in his positive use of language to encourage Nigeria's unity.

**Keywords:** responsible leadership, linguistic choices, President Jonathan, Facebook, theta theory, theme-rheme, Nigeria

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## 1. Introduction and background

Many who call themselves leaders within the African milieu have usually been dressed with the false sense of what it means to be a leader. To many, being a leader has to do with the ability to win political positions and be at head of a group or organisation. It has usually been viewed that leadership is about 'calling the shots', while the others are there to obey their orders.

However, it is also a known fact that being a leader entails a lot of responsibility. It actually is a great responsibility [1, 2]. Part of responsible leadership is thus the linguistic choices that

people make as leaders. This is why the Rwandan leaders were held accountable for the genocide of more than two decades ago [3]. The pivot of that unfortunate incident, we now know, is essentially due to the choice of language [4]. In the same vein, the unfortunate killings of young Nigerians on national service as an aftermath of the 2011 elections could be traced to the kind of things being said by some northern leaders before the general elections at the time [2].

In a group, the linguistic choices of its leaders could either make or break the group; it could either hold the group together or scatter it. Linguistic choices are also important in pushing a group to outdo itself or even make it perform below its own attainment mark. Part of what makes for leadership is therefore the language the leader speaks.

This could show the leader as being responsible or not. On the global scene, this is probably why Donald Trump had thrown a chill down the spine of many 'sane' people in the world. The possibility of his becoming the President of America makes many fear, not because he is not qualified to contest but because his rhetoric so far in his quest for the presidential nomination of the Republican Party makes many feel he could become the next big problem of the world if he finds himself in the White House as the American President. The question you then ask yourself is: why is this so? Why are people concerned about the kinds of things that Donald Trump is saying? It should be obvious that the way he had been manipulating language and thus appearing as the enemy of the free world led to many people saying very uncomplimentary things about him, from his political opponents to the political 'allies' of America across the Atlantic. This goes to show that leadership responsibility could be couched in linguistic terms [1].

President Jonathan, the erstwhile President of Nigeria, was credited with the statement paraphrased as that no Nigerian citizen's blood is worth his ambition to remain President in Nigeria [5]. Despite his many assurances to this effect before the elections, there was still a lot of tension in Nigeria during the 2015 general elections. The reason for this is another basis for another study [2, 6]. Nonetheless, this promise was carried to the letter when he lost the elections. He voluntarily handed over the leadership of Nigeria to the opposition that won the elections, even calling General Buhari to congratulate him on winning the elections, even before the final results were declared. This unusual act of chivalry and acting responsibly (in a continent bedevilled by sit-tight 'rulers') as a leader, following his seemingly 'responsible' use of language to save Nigeria from the expected holocaust that many had predicted the 2015 elections, would have so far impressed many outside Nigeria's shores that he had continued to garner awards from across the continents of the world.

## 2. What is leadership?

Leadership has been variously defined. We will look at some of the definitions here. However, much more of importance is the fact that our approach will be that of seeing leadership as an art as well as a responsibility. The issue is that a responsible leader will be artistic in the manner in which their responsibility is delivered. This will make for consistency in the manner of doing the leadership.

Kruse [7] tries to define leadership by identifying what it is not. One essential factor he notes is that leadership is not about age, social position or assigned roles. He opines that leadership is a process of *social influence*, which aims at maximising the efforts of others towards the *achievement of a goal*. To Smith [8], leadership has to do with the ability to adapt the setting or situation in such a manner that everyone feels empowered to contribute creatively to solving the problems. It is thus about being able to coordinate resources or people to the end of achieving a goal. In essence, leadership should lead to success in every sphere of one's life.

### 2.1. Leadership as responsibility

In this study, a syntactic analysis of the linguistic choices of President Jonathan as a leader is the focus. The question then is what makes a leader responsible. Nelson Mandela was quoted as defining a leader as one who leads from behind, where the victory is shared by all but that takes responsibility for any negative occurrence in the group they lead by being at its forefront at such times [9].

In essence, part of being a skilful leader involves being able to take actions that show sense of responsibility knowing that they are social influencers [10]. Looking at the features that make for a skilful leader as outlined by Gameslearn.com [11] and Taylor [12], a responsible leader is one who lives by example and one who has good attitude. They are able to hold their negative energy in check and look at the bigger picture rather than being narrow minded in their responses to situation.

One may thus dare to add and say that a responsible leader is one who motivates people to do that which is to the benefit of all and sundry rather than their narrow selfish interests. This will require a great deal of readiness to sacrifice the self on the altar of the general good. Like Taylor [12] asserts, leadership involves giving and serving. The leader's linguistic choices should reflect such sacrifices, in our view. Kruse [7] quotes John Maxwell as summarising the concept of leadership as: 'influence – nothing more or less'. It is thus obvious that responsible leadership is being careful about how this influence is wielded to the end of common good. The kind of language the leaders chooses to express themselves should thus serve greatly to determine their level of social responsibility.

Nonetheless, it needs be pointed out that the modern leader has been defined as being a lot more fluid than the 'great man' view of a leader. Clare [10] states, 'we have to nurture a new leadership that doesn't depend on the illusion of extraordinary individuals. Indeed, the leadership of the future will not be provided simply by individuals but by groups, communities and networks'. Nonetheless, even in these groups, leaders emerge as someone tends to give direction and have influence that gives direction to the group or community. These are those that can make all the difference through their behavioural pattern – whether the collective will work or not.

A very interesting twist to the definition of leadership is [13] definition of leadership as 'the capacity to influence others through inspiration motivated by a passion, generated by a vision, produced by a conviction, ignited by a purpose' (p. 54). His argument is that influence is not enough to describe leadership. The kind of leadership provided must be positive and for common good for it to be called true leadership. In this wise, inspiration

is an important component of the true spirit of leadership. It has to be rooted in a passion that is motivated by a vision. It is obvious that such a leadership will be expressed in the linguistic choices of that a leader. This is because the negative and manipulative kind of influence is manifested in propaganda; so, also will positive leadership be manifest in the encouraging and inspiring linguistic choices of the leader that could be described as responsible.

This study thus focuses on how language makes a difference in exposing the skilfulness or otherwise of the person of Dr. Jonathan as a leader in Nigeria. As much as it needs to be acknowledged that his leadership was based on position, the possible influence of that position in the graveness of the consequence that could follow his linguistic choices cannot be over-emphasised. However, the interest here is to determine whether his linguistic choices fits into the perceived posture of a leader who looks at the bigger picture that his assurance of not wanting to lead Nigeria into commotion and confusion due to his personal ambition to continue to hold political office is a consistent posture or a mere fluke.

### **3. Problem statement**

This paper thus hopes to uncover if indeed his language usage is an art and act of responsibility or just a chance occurrence that earned him his current global recognition.

### **4. Objectives**

1. This paper seeks to find out if his seeming responsible use of language was a fluke or a pattern of the linguistic behaviour of President Jonathan.
2. It also wishes to ascertain if he is in the habit of being cautious in his usages as a leader now that he is no longer in power and his party in opposition.

### **5. Research questions**

1. Is there a pattern of usage in the linguistic choices of President Jonathan or is the perceived responsible linguistic choices a fluke?
2. Are President Jonathan linguistic choices consistently cautious even now that he is no longer in power?

### **6. Methodology**

This paper is a syntactic analysis of President Jonathan's speeches, especially those on his Facebook posts. This is especially relevant in the face of the seeming 'persecution' of his government by the new government [14]. It appeared as if that he could not be provoked

to make public statements that would be considered unstatesmanlike. Could it then be that responsible leadership is a pattern exhibited through his usage of language?

Empirical data to confirm or refute this hypothesis are the focus of this paper. About 40 Facebook posts of Dr. Jonathan were harvested from his Facebook page. These include some of his formal speeches and engagements, which were posted on his Facebook page. These were saved on the author's Facebook page and later accessed for analytical purposes. Nonetheless, only a few of the Facebook posts were eventually used as data and analysed in this paper. These were coded for easy reference as FB day, the month and year, for example, FB 6 June 16 meaning Facebook 6 June, 2016. This style is used to show the extracted data and their date of posting on Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's Facebook page.

A syntactic analysis of his selected speeches in his Facebook posts was then done to compare the formal and informal usages of the English language by President Jonathan to ascertain the level of his responsible use of language at the formal and informal levels. It is expected that, with the informal medium such as the social media, he could let down his guard and respond to the government of the day. However, his linguistic choices as a measure of such tendencies are expected to reveal if he is a leader indeed or just a fluke of chance in terms of his handling of his famous mantra that no Nigerian blood is worth his ambition. As such, the Chomskian theta theory as well as the Hallidayan textual meta-function is applied to unearth both the psychological and expressive bases in the usages of President Jonathan. The next section looks at the framework of analysis for the study.

## 7. Theoretical framework

Syntactic analysis is done in this study. The combined theories of Chomsky and Halliday were applied to the data. The theta theory of Chomsky as explicated in the government and binding theory (GB syntax) is combined with the theme-rheme system as described in the Hallidayan systemic functional grammar (SFG) to do a psychological prodding and determine the sociological manifestation of such base psychological manifestations in the linguistic choices of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria. These theories are discussed below.

### 7.1. The theta theory

The theta theory is basically about how verbs assign thematic roles to their arguments. These arguments are usually NPs, which occupy theta positions. In this position, an argument can perform a referential task like that of name, pronoun or anaphor in the sentence [15: 35]. Any element outside this theta position is said to be in a non-argument position and consequently cannot be assigned a theta role. The verb thus determines the role played by a particular NP in an argument position, such as complement or subject positions adjoining it, within the sentence structure, for example, *Sade slapped the boy*. The verb, *slapped*, assigns the role of **agent** to *Sade* and that of **patient** to *the boy*.

A theta role is consequently the set of thematic relations assigned by an element to a theta position. Thematic relations, on the other hand, are the semantic relations that hold between



a particular verb and a particular noun phrase [16: 55]. However, only a single theta role can be performed by an argument at a given time. The governing verb usually assigns thematic roles to its adjacent NP argument(s). There are many other thematic roles apart from the two already mentioned. These are described below. The essential fact that needs to be noted is that these roles are usually semantic in nature. However, some scholars see the idea of thematic roles being semantically disagreeable. This point is discussed further subsequently.

Chomsky [15: 17] observes that 'at the most general level of description, the goal of a grammar is to express the association between representations of meaning'. Ravin [17: 1] alleges that this is a very drastic turnaround by Chomsky from his previous stance that meaning is something not too useful to grammatical theorising. Ravin [17] thus notes that the GB syntax is built on the pivot of meaning and that the theta theory is the locus of its explication. This he finds untenable as he believes that grammatical forms should not be tied to semantic explications.

It is held here that the two are highly connected. Grammatical structures are essentially a means of expressing propositions, which obviously are semantic contents or intentions of the speaker. The syntagmatic orderings of these structures are important means of conveying the propositional contents. Though one finds their insistence on 'quantitative account of the patterns of verbal elements' as a prerequisite suspect, Miller and Selfridge [18] opine that the syntactical structuring of words can be so important that 'an accidental inversion of words...can produce grotesque alterations of a sentence' which can lead to a sensible message turning into 'gibberish' (p. 198). Kempson [19: 140] declares that the meaning of a sentence is not only expressed by meanings of the words contained in it but also by the 'syntactic arrangement in that sentence'.

There is a world of difference between *I told him to come* and *he was told to come*. While the first sentence is probably a statement of fact, the second sentence may be a mere conjecture or even a vague wish. Moreover, the agent of the verb *told* is present in the first sentence, while there is uncertainty about the agent of the same action in the second sentence. This undermines the possible volitional effectiveness of the second sentence. The differential meaning is brought about by the structural disparity between the two sentences. Lyons [20], however, calls for caution in this regard as he thinks matching sentences and meanings one on one could result in distorted analysis. He nevertheless acknowledges that the grammatical and semantic structures of a language are 'highly...congruent with one another' (p. 135).

In this study, different explications of the theta theory within the GB syntax tradition are brought together, as they suit the data. Chomsky [15] identifies only three thematic roles. These are agent, patient/goal and instrument. Cowper [16] and Lamidi [21], however, add source, location, experiencer, recipient, benefactive, theme and percept. Napoli [22] identifies beneficiary (benefactive of Cowper [16]), maleficiary and motive as well as some others already mentioned. Ndimele [23] adds path in addition to some others already outlined.

Cowper [16] is of the opinion that not all scholars are agreed on the issue of the theme role. Carnie [24] observes that the disagreement is more wide ranging than just the concern with the theme role. Napoli [22: 383] points out that for English 'the debate over how many and which theta roles we have is ongoing'. These roles are believed to be connected to the grammatical functions (GFs) of the arguments [15, 16, 22]. This view of the close-knit link between

syntax and semantics has been seriously questioned by Ravin [17] as noted above. He argues that thematic roles are not valid semantic entities, adding that the claim that the meaning of predicates can be used to predict syntactic structures is a fallacious one.

One, however, differs because the verb as the nucleus of a clause to a large extent determines its meaning structure, that is, its propositional content. When structures lack meaning, they are most probably going to prove nonsensical (especially when not properly contextualised, compare [25] and [26]). As a result, the words that reveal the action and processes or states within the clause should reveal the one affected by the action as well as the doer of the action or one in the state, as the case may be. Thus, thematic roles are regarded in this study as being important to syntax in that they give life to the grammatical positions within the clause. This is because they are actually semantic role carriers, depending on the function they perform in that particular syntactic position as assigned by the verb. Like Lamidi [21: 57] fittingly points out: 'since the verb is central, it means that the adjoining arguments are dependent on it for their interpretation'. Thus, the VP theta marks the NPs in the subject/object positions in the structure. The theta roles assigned to particular GF positions thus convey the thematic relations existing between the verb and the argument(s) in the clause.

To this extent, of course, GB syntax is an improvement in the previous theories of TGG, which makes it very relevant to the present analysis. It is expected to disclose the effecting argument (agent of the action) and the affected one (the argument at the receiving end of the action) within the event represented by the sentence. As rightly noted by Chomsky [15], we can account for these thematic relations within the clausal structure without needing to create a new abstract level of 'θ-system' (p. 103) within the grammar.

Napoli [22: 382] opines that 'almost every statement one can make about syntax is open to attack'. This is no reason not to make them. The current quest is to find out how the erstwhile Nigerian President perceives his power base in relation to others in the society. It appears that the theta theory in the mentalistic generative grammar is adequate for this pursuit as it can reveal his perception of role and influence as expressed in the syntactic structures in relation to his leadership responsibility as the president of and a statesman in Nigeria. It is expected that the posture he manifests should show whether his psychological location is of the unconcerned or that of a responsible leader who sees implications to the linguistic choices he makes. This is important to this study.

Therefore, presented here are the previously identified thematic roles and their meanings. In the course of the analysis, the particular ones that occur in the data are the ones discussed in relation to their functions in the structures.

*Agent*: one that initiates an action or carries out the action.

*Patient*: the one affected by the action

*Theme*: the focus of the action or about what/whom the action is

*Goal*: the one that receives the action or towards which a movement is made

*Instrument*: the entity used to perform an action



*Source:* the point of origin of an entity

*Location:* the position of an entity (abstract or concrete)

*Beneficiary/Benefactive:* one for whose benefit or well-being the action occurs

*Maleficiary:* one to whose detriment the action occurs

*Motive:* the propelling force behind the action

*Experiencer:* the one who feels or perceives an event

*Recipient:* this is a kind of goal of the action like 'give', 'donate', etc.

*Percept:* an entity which is experienced

*Path:* the route through which an entity moves

## 7.2. The theme and rheme system

The Halliday [27] describes the theme system as the major textual system at the clause rank which gives the clause its character as a message. Halliday and Matthiessen [28] suggest that in all languages 'the clause has the character of a message' (p. 88). Osisanwo [29: 81] emphasises that the theme system 'accounts for the positioning of elements of clause structure within the clause. Specifically...the available choices in the initial position of the clause'. Brown and Miller [30] affirm that "'theme", "rheme" and "end focus" refer to structural positions within the sentence' (p. 357). These positions are functional positions. James [31] opines, following Halliday [32], that the theme system is realised in the textual metafunction which brings together all the other metafunctions. Thematic status is assigned to an element in the English language by putting it first, while the remaining part of the message, called rheme, completes the procedure of forming a text [28]. Consequently, the theme is the point of departure for a message in the structure; it is the focus of the clause.

According to Bloor and Bloor [33], the theme system has to do with the textual function of the text. They declare: 'A simple explanation of Theme in English is to think of it as *the idea represented by the constituent at the starting point of the clause*', while rheme is '*the rest of the message*' contained in the latter part of the clause [(p. 72) original emphasis]. In this vein, the theme has to do with the element at the initial position in the clause and the rheme, the tail end of the clause. Usually, the theme is a subject element in a declarative clause. Therefore, it is referred to as an unmarked theme. But when other elements like a predicate, a complement or an adjunct fill this position, the initial position becomes marked. The information is being specially focused. Interestingly, a subject may be focused. In this case, the intonation structure is very vital in determining a subject position with a marked theme [27, 33].

Halliday [27] avows that when the message structure is organised with the subject position filled by an NP-subject element in the initial position in the clause, it is called an unmarked theme. Conversely, when the receiver of the action fills this position, the theme is said to be marked, that is, occupying a position that makes it prominent and focused in the information structure. This position getting occupied by adverbial or prepositional elements also turns it

into a marked thematic position. Halliday [27: 39] observes that 'the Theme is not necessarily a NOMINAL GROUP...It may also be an ADVERBIAL GROUP or PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE' (original capitalisation). The theme-rheme structure summary is presented in **Figure 1**.

Theme	Rheme
The boy	gave me the book.
The old man who died last week	was my grandfather.
Yesterday,	we started the job.
Whenever they arrived from work,	they eat their food.
From the beginning,	I knew he would win.

**Figure 1.** Theme-rheme structure of English. Adapted from [34].

Halliday sums up the relevance of the theme system to the textual function as follows:

The Theme is one element in a particular structural configuration which, taken as a whole, organizes the clause as a message; this is the configuration Theme + Rheme... Within that configuration, the Theme is the starting-point for the message; it is what the clause is going to be about. So part of the meaning of any clause lies in which element is chosen as its Theme...First position in the clause is not what defines the Theme; it is the means whereby the function of Theme is realized, in the grammar of English [27: 39].

The implication is that it is not just the positioning of the element that determines whether it is a theme or not, but the function it is performing in that initial position. Consequently, the need for ascertaining the function of an element in the initial position is important in determining its thematic status rather than the element simply occupying the initial position. Halliday [27] also points out that some other languages like Japanese use other means to determine the thematic structure of clauses. Halliday and Matthiessen [28: 88] assert that the thematic structure in Japanese is marked with the use of a special postposition, *wa*, indicating that whatever immediately precedes it is thematic.

Levinson [35], conversely, sees the theme-rheme structure as a confused enterprise as it is limited to declarative structures and unable to account for the complex ones. We, however, believe this is not necessarily true as the possibility of the occurrence of an adverbial theme, especially the subordinate clause, shows that the theme-rheme structures are possible in complex

sentences. Additionally, the theme-rheme structure is usually about the information structure in a particular clause and, as such, may be able to account for the information structures possible within a complex sentence, with many clauses or even show the interconnectivity of the information being expressed in the whole sentence or text. Halliday [27] and Halliday and Matthiessen [28] give such examples with subordinating clause themes or clause complex theme structures.

## 8. Data analysis and discussion

The data were sourced from the Facebook account of President Jonathan. He started his Facebook romance with young Nigerians in early 2010 with the intention of connecting with them and finding a way of getting direct access to the happenings in the Nigerian society from the members of the public. Eventually, it became a means of influencing the young to vote for him in 2011, it would seem. He seemed to have struck a chord with the young, while his wife seemed to convince the womenfolk to vote for her husband. The result of that election is now history.

An attempt to repeat this feat in 2015 failed woefully. Nonetheless, it appears that the failure is actually a success in disguise [36]. President Jonathan avers in the post: 'Some may think it is ironic that perhaps my greatest achievement was not winning the 2015 Presidential Election...I proved to the ordinary man or woman in the country that I was his or her equal'. This is the pique that motivated this study.

The fact is that even though Dr. Jonathan lost the presidential elections, his readiness to hand over government to his successor without any protest or compulsion surprised many and seemed to affirm his mantra that his ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian. This is considered at variance with the usual reaction of some African leaders as shown by the wars on the continent that had been rooted in the sit-tight leadership that had been the bane of the continent. Even his successor threw the nation into mourning after losing the 2011 elections when his utterances and those of his supporters from his defunct party, CPC, seemed to have triggered off the postelections violence in Nigeria after the presidential elections of 2011. It would then be obvious that it is probably not the lack of faith in Jonathan's assurances of no Nigerian blood not being worth his ambition that was the reason for the palpable tension that surrounded the 2015 elections, but the antecedent of hate speeches that beclouded the campaigns leading up to it [2, 6].

### 8.1. Theta theory application

The choice of data used is purposively selected as structures that have direct bearing on the issues of public interest and consequence in their implications. Many posts were available on the page, but those chosen are comments with national import or appeal. In addition, sample data were used representatively as the number of posts is so extensive that all related to the criteria of choice could not reasonably be analysed. This is the approach in the analyses under the two theories applied (Texts 1–3).

*Text 1: FB 9 February 15*

My friends (goal)/ on Facebook (location)/, I (source)/ want to remind/ us all (goal)/ that we (experiencer)/ have no other country other than Nigeria (theme)/ and as we (source)/ approach/ the election (goal)/, it (theme) is wise/ that we (agent) speak/ good and peaceable words (theme)/ over Nigeria (beneficiary)/ because we (agent)/ will have to eat our words (patient)/, so let us (agent) make/ them (patient)/ sweet rather than bitter.

We (experiencer)/ must see/ the coming polls (percept)/ as a contest (theme)/ amongst brothers and sisters from the womb of one Nigeria.

We (agent)/ must avoid/ threats and desperation (theme)/ as we (source)/ make/ our case (theme)/ to the electorate (goal).

Head or tale (source)/, Nigeria (beneficiary)/ wins.

Therefore, I (agent)/ urge all Nigerians (patient)/ to join me (goal)/ in saying/ it (theme)/ is well with Nigeria (beneficiary) and by the special grace of God (instrument), it (theme)/ shall continue to be well with our great country Nigeria (beneficiary).

*Text 2: FB 6 June 16*

I (source)/ said before the last election (theme)/[ that my political ambition (motive)/ was not worth the blood (theme)/ of one Nigerian (beneficiary)/] (theme).

I (experiencer)/ was true to my word (theme)/ when on March 16th, 2015, just after the election (source)/, when the results (theme)/ were still being collated by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (agent)/, I (source)/ called my opponent, General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) (goal)/ to concede, in order to avoid any conflict (theme)/ and ensure a peaceful transition of power (motive)/.

This (theme)/ was without precedent [sic] in my country and I (experiencer)/ am proud that it (agent)/ achieved my goal (patient)/ of [no conflict (goal)/ arising from the result of the election (source)] (motive).

Some (experiencer)/ may think it (theme)/ is ironic that perhaps my proudest achievement (percept)/ was not winning the 2015 Presidential Election (theme). By being the first elected Nigerian leader (agent)/ to willingly hand over power (patient)/ via the ballot box (path)/, to the opposition party (beneficiary)/, without contesting the election outcome (theme)/, I (source)/ proved to the ordinary man or woman (goal)/ in the country (location)/ that I (experiencer)/ was his or her equal (goal).

That his or her vote (theme)/ was equal to mine (theme)/, and that democracy is the "Government by the will of the people"<sup>TM</sup>, and Nigeria, and indeed Africa (experiencer) is ripe for democracy (theme).

It (theme)/ is my sincerest wish (motive) that democracy (goal)/ continues to be consolidated/ in the continent of Africa (location)/ and it (theme)/ will even get better.

For it (theme) has always been my consistent desire (motive)/ to help consolidate/ peace (theme)/ and cultivate/ democracy (theme)/ in Nigeria and across the Continent (location).

The first transformation (source) / â€˜ must be â€˜ /a shift in our mindset (goal).

We (agent)/ have to make/ the decision (patient)/ to make the rights (theme)/ of our people (beneficiary)/ our priority (goal)/ when making government and investment decisions (theme).

Rather than spending money (patient)/ on resources (goal)/ that will run out, we (agent)/ should be investing it (patient)/ in people who (beneficiary)/ are/ the key constant elements (theme)/ in the socio-economic transformation of society...

The constitution (experiencer)/ recognizes anyone (percept)/ born in Nigeria (location)/by Nigerian parents (agent)/ as a citizen (theme). We (agent)/ must go/ the next step (goal)/ and accept all Nigerians (theme)/ residing in/ any part of the country (location)/ as equal citizens (beneficiary)...

I (experiencer)/ am/ so very proud of my country (beneficiary).

And I (experiencer)/ believe [it (theme)/ is only right and proper for me] (percept)/, and every Nigerian (source)/ to be able to proudly proclaim, in our villages, in our towns, in our cities, in our country and anywhere in the world (location):

“Civis Nigerianus Sum” (theme)/

I (experiencer)/ AM A CITIZEN (theme)/ OF NIGERIA (location)

*Text 3: FB 17 June 16*

I (Source) / condole with /the families (beneficiary) of /those (maleficiary) killed in Adamawa (location)/by terrorists (agent).

Whenever it (theme)/ occurs, /terrorism (source)/ affects /all Nigerians (maleficiary), because none of us (maleficiary) are safe until /all of us (beneficiary) are safe.

s such /we (agent) must unite against /terror (theme). I (agent)/ urge all Nigerians (patient)/ to support the FG (beneficiary)/ in its fight (theme) /against terrorism (maleficiary).

I (agent)/ also salute /our security forces (beneficiary)/ who (agent)/are doing /so much (patient)/ to protect /us (beneficiary).

We (agent)/ owe them (beneficiary)/ a huge debt of gratitude (theme).

Looking at the different passages analysed here, it should be obvious that the agency is not very much with President Jonathan. In most cases, he is source of something positive or the experiencer who has desires that are good. He encourages as source and the goal is usually the Nigerian people. In most cases, the beneficiary of the positive energy and themes is usually the Nigerian people or society. In another case, it is the opposition party. We also have the agency being ascribed to the electoral umpire. His agency usually has the Nigerian people as



beneficiary of the action. In one case, the maleficiary is the act of terror, which again has an agency that is negative to the Nigerian people.

In this wise, we note that when you have a case of maleficiary in the texts that has to do with the Nigerian people, it has terrorists as being source of such malevolence. He essentially asserts that the Nigerian people have been negatively affected by the terror acts and they need to also react against it and free themselves from its evil albatross.

In the same vein, when we compare the thread running through the formal speech and the ordinary Facebook posts, we can see that there is consistency of seeking the benefit for the Nigerian people and malevolence for anything that seeks their harm. It is also observed that consistently, his argument is for a better Nigeria. In the long run, he avers that being proud of the citizenship of Nigeria is fundamental to achieving the global benefit for all and sundry. Using his *experiencer* status, he encourages all to put on their gab of patriotism and don their citizenship to move Nigeria into the status of a worthy twenty-first century nation. The only malevolence shown is directed towards the terror peddlers as seen throughout his speeches and posts.

The texts analysed above thus indicate that the trends in his linguistic choices are actually to lead the people into taking their place for the advancement of Nigeria and against anything at variance with the advancement of Nigeria. This leadership posture can thus be aligned with the Munroe [13] view that leadership is by inspiration. In addition, one could also see his calling on all Nigerians to take their place in the joint venture of advancing Nigeria as being in agreement with the assertion by Clare [10] that the twenty-first century leadership will be about the people and not one great individual.

Quite clearly, the application of the theta theory easily helps see that the psychology of President Jonathan in relation to the kind of language he uses concerning Nigeria in his posts seems more conciliatory and seeking the common good. This reveals a consistency in his usage that affirms his tendency to reveal responsible leadership in his linguistic choices in his public comments on issues relating to Nigeria and her people.

## 8.2. Theme-rheme analysis

This section analyses the data using the theme-rheme instrument. The thematic structure basically presents the clause as a message. The first part is the focus of information, while the second part is the information provided about the theme. Essentially then, the focus of information is important in deciphering the intent of the speaker at this point. The analysis above has already shown a psychology of the collective good as the motivation for the linguistic choices of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan. We wish to see whether the SFG analysis of the speeches, using the textual metafunction, bears this out.

This section takes random samples from the texts above to enable us be faithful to the analysis (Tables 1–3).

Theme	Rheme
My friends on Facebook,	I want to remind us all that
We	have no other country other than Nigeria and as
We	approach the election, it is wise that
We	speak good and peaceable words over Nigeria because
We	will have to eat our words, so let us make them sweet rather than bitter.

Table 1. FB 9 February 15

Theme	Rheme
I	said before the last election that
my political ambition	was not worth the blood of one Nigerian.
I	was true to my word when on March 16th, 2015, just after the election,
when the results	were still being collated by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC),
I	called my opponent, General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) to concede, in order to avoid any conflict and ensure a peaceful transition of power.
The first transformation...	must be ... a shift in our mindset.
We	have to make the decision to make the rights of our people our priority when making government and investment decisions.
Rather than spending money on resources that will run out,	we should be investing it in people
who	are the key constant elements in the socio-economic transformation of society.
I	am so very proud of my country.
And I	believe it is only right and proper for me,
and every Nigerian	to be able to proudly proclaim, in our villages, in our towns, in our cities, in our country and anywhere in the world: "Civis Nigerianus Sum"
I	AM A CITIZEN OF NIGERIA

Table 2. FB 6 June 16

Theme	Rheme
I	condole with the families of those killed in Adamawa by terrorists.
Whenever it occurs,	terrorism affects all Nigerians,
because none of us	are safe until all of us are safe.
As such	we must unite against terror
I	urge all Nigerians to support the FG in its fight against terrorism.
I	also salute our security forces who are doing so much to protect us
We	owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

Table 3. FB 17 June 16

Looking at the posts once again, the application of the theme-rheme analysis seems to bear out the finding in the theta theory analysis. **Table 1** (FB 9 February 15) has the theme throwing up the collective NPs – complex NP and pronoun ‘we’ – serving as the theme in all occurrences of the clauses. This table seems to represent a leadership of inclusiveness in which the leadership role involves everyone. What needs to be done to move Nigeria forward is not an exclusive of anyone. This shows a responsible and realistic use of language to get everyone involved in bringing about the needed success of the general elections.

**Table 2** (FB 6 June 16) has a mixture of the first person and some adjuncts serving as the theme. The interesting thing here is that the need for the person talking being an example of what is perfect as the way forward is clearly marked. Nonetheless, the example is expected to catch on and be the source of the forward movement that will be to the benefit of all and the country at large.

**Table 3** (FB 17 June 16) provides a very interesting scenario. The timing of the continued attacks on Nigeria gives concern to the speaker. He further takes the lead of appreciating those that have been at the forefront of destroying those that are working towards ending the unity of Nigeria. He ends the post by bringing together all Nigerians as being indebted to the efforts being made by the armed forces to end the activities of Boko Haram. He started with the sympathy for the loss of Nigerians to the North-East insurgency and ended with the need for all Nigerians to be grateful and involved in the efforts to end the social and security malaise harming the Nigerian nation's advancement. In the same vein, he uses his influence as a former leader of Nigeria to call on all Nigerians to support the efforts of those presently in government to rout the Boko Haram group because until all Nigerians are safe, no one is actually safe in Nigeria.

## 9. Findings

Looking through the Facebook posts of President Jonathan, one perceived trend is that he uses language for the purposes of bringing Nigerians together for the good of the country. He appears to believe more in keeping everyone in the country together rather than apart. He appears to take on the role of an inspirer, thus moving from the manipulative and managerial level of leadership to align to [13] ‘spirit’ of leadership realm. Munroe calls this sort of leadership that which inspires. The interesting thing about Jonathan's style is the fact that he tries to connect to the audience in a very direct manner, which gives them the opportunity to engage him. Even though one could not find evidence of his responding to comments on his posts, one still feels that the positive energy emanating from the kinds of linguistic choices he makes shows him as a very responsible leader. In addition, his attempt to make the whole citizens involved in the process of taking Nigeria to where she should be as a society seems to also affirm the assertion by Kruse [7] that leadership is not about a great personality but a collective responsibility.

What then is the practical implication of these? One could easily note that part of the problem of the world today is that many of her leaders are not ready to take their place in the scheme of things. When the people to be led are seemingly in a dire situation, it makes a lot of sense that the leader should show that they can feel what the people feel and relate with what the people face. These can be achieved by choosing to speak a language that meets the

needs of the people and that represents their position. Even when one does not sometimes agree with what the people want, it is important that the leader is able to let them see that you can relate to their issues.

## 10. Conclusion

In essence, responsible leadership appears to be a spirit [7] that oozes through the linguistic choices of the speaker. In addition, using the theta theory of the GB syntax and theme-rheme instruments of analysis appears to confirm that the psychological base of the linguistic choices has reality in the message content as textually manifested in the thematic structure. The theta roles assigned to the arguments are borne out by the thematic realisations of the same. This once again shows that the TGG and SFG can actually help to uncover nuances of syntactic meanings that would otherwise have been quite hidden if and when they are combined as instruments of syntactic analysis [34]. Our conclusion is thus that there is a constancy in the positive and cautious statesmanship in linguistic choices of President Jonathan in his Facebook posts – formal and informal usages, thus showing him as taking seriously his responsibility as a leader in Nigeria and exhibiting the desire to keep Nigeria one as top priority, which he also stated many times on his Facebook page.

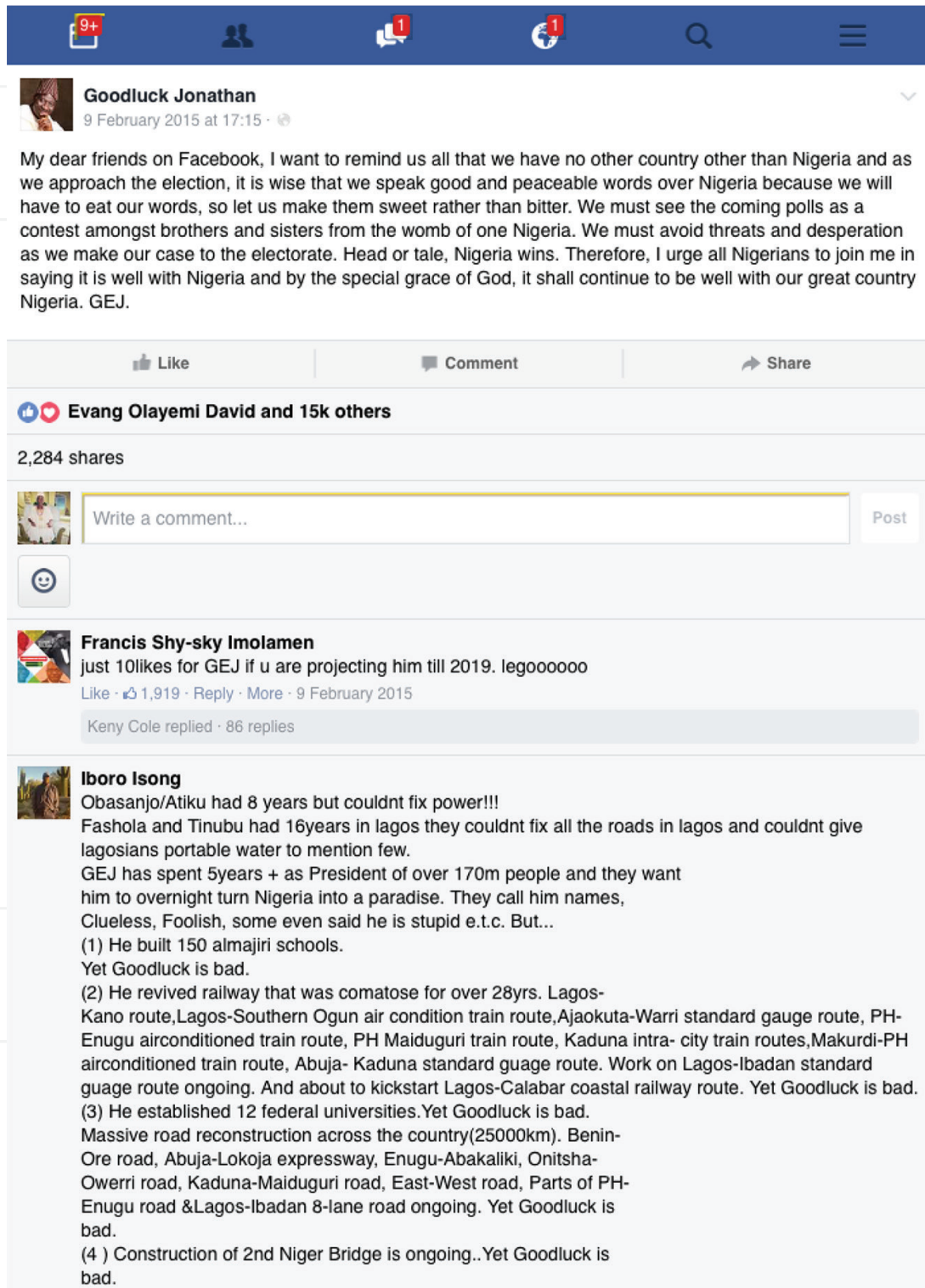
At the international level, what is the implication of these findings and the conclusion drawn. Our view is that if the leaders of the world learn to take a position of responsibility in the type of language they speak, a lot of things that are wrong with the world could be avoided. This is why President-elect Donald Trump's seeming conciliatory language after his surprising win of the American presidential elections is in order in our opinion. Whether he means this or not, going by his antecedents, is an entirely different matter. To a large extent, the linguistic choices of a man who will be the leader of the free world over the next four or so years will be important.

It has also been noted above that the kind of linguistic choices that led to the Rwandan massacre could have been avoided if the interest of the Rwandan citizens had been the uppermost element in the mind of her leaders. In this regard, one has to give kudos to President Goodluck Jonathan for avoiding such chaos in Nigeria. The Kenyan experience of electoral violence has not been forgotten; the International Court of Justice continues to remind us. In the same vein, the Cambodia genocide is part of the world's dark history. All that led to the avoidable wars in history had usually been the issue of linguistic choices that are either wrong or a body language that followers misinterpreted and acted on. All these make it important that leaders need to develop the art of leadership that is responsible. Even the silence of the Russian leadership may not always be golden as the destruction of the city of Aleppo in Syria is proving to be in their contest with America over the control of the Syrian airspace while the United Nations helplessly look on.

All these show that the responsibility that comes with leadership goes beyond the one-man hero, but requires the cooperation of all stakeholders while the arrow head becomes artistic in executing the will of the people and the group they lead. The world can only get better if her leaders get more responsible in language choices. In this way, another disaster could be avoided as the world is full of too many already.

## Appendix

FB 9 February 15



**Goodluck Jonathan**  
9 February 2015 at 17:15 · 🌐

My dear friends on Facebook, I want to remind us all that we have no other country other than Nigeria and as we approach the election, it is wise that we speak good and peaceable words over Nigeria because we will have to eat our words, so let us make them sweet rather than bitter. We must see the coming polls as a contest amongst brothers and sisters from the womb of one Nigeria. We must avoid threats and desperation as we make our case to the electorate. Head or tale, Nigeria wins. Therefore, I urge all Nigerians to join me in saying it is well with Nigeria and by the special grace of God, it shall continue to be well with our great country Nigeria. GEJ.

Like Comment Share

👍❤️ **Evang Olayemi David and 15k others**

2,284 shares

Write a comment... Post

**Francis Shy-sky Imolamen**  
just 10likes for GEJ if u are projecting him till 2019. legooooooo  
Like · 🔄 1,919 · Reply · More · 9 February 2015  
Keny Cole replied · 86 replies

**Iboro Isong**  
Obasanjo/Atiku had 8 years but couldnt fix power!!!  
Fashola and Tinubu had 16years in lagos they couldnt fix all the roads in lagos and couldnt give lagosians portable water to mention few.  
GEJ has spent 5years + as President of over 170m people and they want him to overnight turn Nigeria into a paradise. They call him names, Clueless, Foolish, some even said he is stupid e.t.c. But...  
(1) He built 150 almajiri schools.  
Yet Goodluck is bad.  
(2) He revived railway that was comatose for over 28yrs. Lagos-Kano route, Lagos-Southern Ogun air condition train route, Ajaokuta-Warri standard gauge route, PH-Enugu airconditioned train route, PH Maiduguri train route, Kaduna intra- city train routes, Makurdi-PH airconditioned train route, Abuja- Kaduna standard guage route. Work on Lagos-Ibadan standard guage route ongoing. And about to kickstart Lagos-Calabar coastal railway route. Yet Goodluck is bad.  
(3) He established 12 federal universities. Yet Goodluck is bad.  
Massive road reconstruction across the country(25000km). Benin-Ore road, Abuja-Lokoja expressway, Enugu-Abakaliki, Onitsha-Owerri road, Kaduna-Maiduguri road, East-West road, Parts of PH-Enugu road & Lagos-Ibadan 8-lane road ongoing. Yet Goodluck is bad.  
(4 ) Construction of 2nd Niger Bridge is ongoing.. Yet Goodluck is bad.

Source: Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's Facebook Page on 9 February, 2015 from [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=900959303287778&id=105479482835768](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=900959303287778&id=105479482835768).



## FB 6 June 16



**Goodluck Jonathan**  
6 June at 11:37 · 🌐

"Civis Nigerianus Sum" - I am a citizen of Nigeria.  
A Speech by H.E. Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan,  
Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.  
Delivered at Bloomberg Studios, London, United Kingdom.  
Monday, 6 June 2016

Since leaving office one year and one week ago, I have had the luxury of time to be able to reflect on the future of my great country, Nigeria.

So today is not about my personal memories or a litany of 'what ifs'. No! Today I would like to share with you what I believe is the key learning from my experiences for the future of democracy not only in Nigeria but also across the entire continent of Africa.

I said before the last election that my political ambition was not worth the blood of one Nigerian.

I was true to my word when on March 16th, 2015, just after the election, when the results were still being collated by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), I called my opponent, General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) to concede, in order to avoid any conflict and ensure a peaceful transition of power.

This was without precedent in my country and I am proud that it achieved my goal of no conflict arising from the result of the election.

Some may think it is ironic that perhaps my proudest achievement was not winning the 2015 Presidential Election. By being the first elected Nigerian leader to willingly hand over power via the ballot box, to the opposition party, without contesting the election outcome, I proved to the ordinary man or woman in the country that I was his or her equal.

That his or her vote was equal to mine, and that democracy is the 'Government by the will of the people', and Nigeria, and indeed Africa is ripe for democracy.

It is my sincerest wish that democracy continues to be consolidated in the continent of Africa and it will even get better.

For it has always been my consistent desire to help consolidate peace and cultivate democracy in Nigeria and across the Continent.

In fact, it was the key foreign policy objective of my Administration when we were able to help broker peace and restore democracy in Niger, Mali, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire.

- In Niger – The first challenge that confronted ECOWAS when I was Chairman in 2010 was the military intervention there. We were able to resolve it through sheer determination and prudent consultations which paved the way for the country's return to constitutional rule and democracy.
- In Mali – As the Co-mediator of the effort to return the nation to democracy after a surprising military take-over, I was the only sitting President to visit Mali and meet all the stakeholders in the early and difficult times of the crisis.

I ensured that Nigeria played the leading role in all the negotiations coordinated by ECOWAS. Our efforts produced a political timetable for the holding of democratic elections. I was happy that our work led to the historic Peace and Reconciliation Agreement signed in Bamako on 15th May, 2015, which I was privileged to witness.

- In Guinea Bissau, a nation known for its long history of political crises. As leaders of ECOWAS then, we worked hard to bring about peace by building international consensus around a transition arrangement. This led to the full restoration of constitutional order in the country. After leading the negotiations that produced an interim government, Nigeria provided both financial and logistic support, making it possible for a successful election to hold. The process produced a democratic government that is currently running the country.

Source: Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's Facebook Page on 6 June, 2016 from [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=1171403292910043&id=105479482835768](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1171403292910043&id=105479482835768)

FB 17 June 16

The image is a screenshot of a Facebook post from the profile of Goodluck Jonathan. The post is dated 17 June at 23:56 and is public. The text of the post reads: "I condole with the families of those killed in Adamawa by terrorists. Wherever it occurs, terrorism affects all Nigerians, because none of us are safe until all of us are safe. As such we must unite against terror. I urge all Nigerians to support the FG in its fight against terrorism. I also salute our security forces who are doing so much to protect us. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude. May God bless Nigeria. GEJ." Below the text are buttons for "Like", "Comment", and "Share". The post has 8.7k likes and 1,483 shares. A comment box is visible with the placeholder text "Write a comment...". Below the post, there are several comments from other users, each with a profile picture, name, and text. The comments are: 1. Anthony Ibora Simon: "Prophet GEJ. All you warned us against have come to pass in Nigeria. We can't even cry because we were fore-warned. The change has really changed us!!!" (282 likes, 28 replies). 2. Amauche Idoko: "Everybody is blessing him now. Same people who said crucify him, He is this and that. Hypocrites! Now GEJ is no longer the father of BKH abi? Daris God ooooooooo" (201 likes, 33 replies). 3. Samson Ojileh: "The voice of a great Nigerian. Our Hero of Democracy, a champion of good governance, a detribalized leader, a humble and selfless servant, a compassionate leader, and a lover of Peace. May it continue to be well with you Sir." (148 likes, 17 replies). 4. Jauro Jabbo Tukura: "Thank you Dr.Jonathan, Nigerians are behind you, Nigerians are regretted for losing you. I cry out, with loud voice calling you to come and rules Nigeria again Sir. Jonathan- Jonathan- Jonathan come and save us again Mr President." (122 likes, 30 replies). 5. Akinbode Mayor Ajetunmobi: "Continue to preach the peace you believe in. Generations yet unborn will mark all of that and let".

**Goodluck Jonathan**  
17 June at 23:56 ·

I condole with the families of those killed in Adamawa by terrorists. Wherever it occurs, terrorism affects all Nigerians, because none of us are safe until all of us are safe. As such we must unite against terror. I urge all Nigerians to support the FG in its fight against terrorism. I also salute our security forces who are doing so much to protect us. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude. May God bless Nigeria. GEJ.

Like Comment Share

8.7k

1,483 shares

Write a comment...

**Anthony Ibora Simon**  
Prophet GEJ. All you warned us against have come to pass in Nigeria. We can't even cry because we were fore-warned. The change has really changed us!!!  
Like · 282 · Reply · More · 18 June  
28 replies

**Amauche Idoko**  
Everybody is blessing him now. Same people who said crucify him, He is this and that. Hypocrites! Now GEJ is no longer the father of BKH abi? Daris God ooooooooo  
Like · 201 · Reply · More · 18 June  
Prince Adeoye Hafe... replied · 33 replies

**Samson Ojileh**  
The voice of a great Nigerian. Our Hero of Democracy, a champion of good governance, a detribalized leader, a humble and selfless servant, a compassionate leader, and a lover of Peace. May it continue to be well with you Sir.  
Like · 148 · Reply · More · 18 June  
Wona Patrick replied · 17 replies

**Jauro Jabbo Tukura**  
Thank you Dr.Jonathan, Nigerians are behind you, Nigerians are regretted for losing you. I cry out, with loud voice calling you to come and rules Nigeria again Sir. Jonathan- Jonathan- Jonathan come and save us again Mr President.  
Edited · Like · 122 · Reply · More · 18 June  
Raychael Okonkwo replied · 30 replies

**Akinbode Mayor Ajetunmobi**  
Continue to preach the peace you believe in. Generations yet unborn will mark all of that and let

Source: Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's Facebook Page on 17 June, 2016 from [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=1179031118813927&id=105479482835768](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1179031118813927&id=105479482835768)

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