Rhetoric in a Crisis Age: An Analysis of Selected COVID-19 Speeches of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo

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Abstract

This paper aims to explain how former Ghanaian President Akufo-Addo utilized rhetoric within the crisis context during the COVID-19 period. The research questions were: 1. How did the ex-President utilize crisis management techniques to handle the COVID-19 pandemic? 2. How effective were the rhetorical elements and rhetorical devices in managing the COVID-19 pandemic? From a crisis rhetoric perspective, these speeches can be explained by their ability to utilize the attributes of speech and rhetoric to manage a crisis. It is expected that a leader will inspire and offer reassurance during these periods. Two theories underpinned this study: the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Rhetorical Theory. African Presidential Rhetoric, American Presidential Rhetoric, and Leadership Risky Behaviour provided the appropriate case studies for reviewing the broad area of presidential crisis rhetoric. The research approach involved the rhetorical analysis of four of the addresses, which investigated the effectiveness of the rhetorical elements and devices used to manage the pandemic. This rhetorical analysis of the crisis then examined the meta-linguistic insight primarily through a qualitative approach. This methodological exercise provided an understanding of the rhetoric and its significance, explaining the similarities in the rhetorical patterns. The findings showed that the addresses were: in a narrative mode; the use of the possessive pronoun; repetition of particular words and phrases; use of political jargon and propaganda. The narrative mood also provided the opportunity to examine the speeches from a linguistic and stylistic perspective. In the area of literary devices, there was the use of the aesthetic

element, which offered pleasure in oral, visual, and aural terms. The outstanding aspects of the speeches were the arrangement in terms of language, characters, events, settings, and imagery.

Introduction

From a presidential crisis rhetoric perspective, President Nana Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 addresses can be assessed by their capacity to utilize the attributes of speech and rhetoric to manage the COVID-19 crisis. There is always the expectation that a leader will inspire and provide reassurance in such challenging times (Davis & Gardner, 2012). Kiewe (1994), in explaining crisis rhetoric, describes it as a presentation by a leader to different stakeholders to show that a particular pathway is critical while offering the direction to resolve the situation. Davis & Gardner (2012) believe that a leader legitimizes a crisis, provides followers with information to support them, and strives to achieve the "national" goal. Thus, a president is expected, in such circumstances, to exploit speech and rhetoric to predict, deal with, or resolve a crisis (Davis & Gardner, 2012).

At the global level, there is now a growing research interest in epidemiology due to the impact of various pandemics. Apart from polio and Ebola, COVID-19 has had the greatest footprint on global public health. This development has led to the emergence of research into presidential health crisis rhetoric. Presidents communicate their perspective of a disease, which offers a pathway of how the media must transmit it and also how the citizenry must receive the message. As Zarefsky (2014) puts it, a president who knows how to deploy different forms of communication can define and outline the setting in which programmes or suggestions are understood by the masses. An examination of crisis communication shows that the channel and its trustworthiness are major facilitators for information processing and subsequently the expected adherence to intended preventative behaviours (Johnson-Avery, 2019). The issue of "best practices" offers guidelines for understanding crisis communication as a mode of firm theoretical method for strengthening such communication during a crisis within the large public space (Seeger, 2006).

Although his position is within public relations (i.e., corporate and health communication, PR, employee, stakeholder, and behavioural communication), presidential communication during crises is the scope of our study. In another study, Park & Avery (2019) developed a self-sufficiency index to offer a tool for researchers and practitioners to better appreciate the behavioral aspect of crisis response. From a presidential crisis rhetoric perspective, these addresses can be assessed by their capacity to utilize the attributes of speech and rhetoric to manage a crisis. There is always the expectation that a leader will inspire and provide reassurance in such challenging times (Davis & Gardner, 2012). Kiewe (1994), in explaining crisis rhetoric, describes it as a presentation by a leader to different stakeholders to show that a particular pathway is critical while offering the

direction to resolve the situation. Davis & Gardner (2012), on the other hand, believe that an executive validates the difficult period, offers data to the adherents for support, and strives to achieve the "national" goal. A President is expected in such circumstances to exploit speech and rhetoric for anticipating, addressing, or mediating a crisis (Davis & Gardner, 2012). In the United States, for instance, a crisis, whether it is real or based on perception, is critical to populist rhetoric across the political space (Agerberg, 2017**;** Brubaker, 2017; Caiani and Graziano, 2019; Corina & Meibauer, 2017; Handlin, 2018; Homolar and Scholz, 2019; Moffitt, 2015; Stavrakakis, 2018). Within this political context, external crises may not align with what the majority of officials in power propose and may negatively impact their electoral fortunes (Ahlquist et al. 2020; Brubaker 2017).

According to Boin et al. (2016, p. 5–6), a condition that poses a risk to a lot of institutions and humanity is termed a crisis. This situation usually calls for swift action. Still within this larger context of rhetorical strategy, we can explain it as the intentional gathering of opinions for a specific event and context in the face of its anticipated effects and the requisite techniques (Martin, 2015, p. 29). Essentially, the foundation of crisis management, to a large extent, is the tactical stylistic selections deployed. Although practice requirements often drive these practices, they can also be based on systematic research and a grounded theoretical approach. Grounded theory provides broad standards as the area of practice evolves (Seeger, 2006). Grounded theory emanates from an inductive position and strives to appreciate a phenomenon partly by showing the patterns and conceptual categories within the data set. Best practices in crisis communication entail getting a large sample from which generalized rules and principles can be synthesized.

A challenge in grappling with best practices in any crisis communication context is how to address the various goals of the strategic stakeholders. In this instance, the clear and present goal, apart from the broad one of reducing and containing harm, is how to deal with the priorities of the major stakeholders: government, citizenry, "frontline" workers, patients and potential patients, select NGOs, and the media. Crisis communication and the appropriate rhetorical strategic choices form the basis of crisis management. Crises normally put a burden on leaders and can offer opportunities for political dividends. In any crisis, the masses envision their superiors to … offer a commanding evaluation of the situation, and the measures put in place to curb the situation (Ansell et al, 2014, p. 9). Rhetoric, on the other hand, deals with how rhetoric emerges from speeches delivered by public speakers and serves as pathways and guides for such public delivery. Such rhetoric becomes the embodiment of persuasion. Persuasion is now seen as critical in any analytical framework. Persuasive addresses aim at impacting the attitudes, principles, and behaviours of their audiences (O'Hair & Stewards, 1999). This study aims to assess the crisis rhetoric of the COVID–19 addresses delivered by President Akufo-Addo. While this research endeavor is mainly aimed at analysing the speeches from the perspective of crisis, the study attempted to examine how these speeches were used to explain how rhetoric specifically

was used to manage the crisis during the period of the pandemic. Various rhetorical devices and linguistic elements were therefore deployed, encompassing sentence structures, imagery, repetition, and the three appeals of rhetoric. Specifically, this study raised two questions, which were:

1. How were crisis management techniques used by the ex-President to handle the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. How effective were the rhetorical elements and rhetorical devices in managing the COVID-19 pandemic?

Literature Review
African Presidential Rhetoric

In a study which examined the speeches of three African Presidents, namely, Buhari (Nigeria), Akufo-Addo (Ghana), and Cyril Ramaphosa (South Africa), within the Speech Act Theory, the authors explained that the three presidents deployed performative and constative acts to command, request, urge, appeal, direct and inform their people on the COVID-19 disease condition (Anyanwu & Abana, 2020). They explained that Speech Act Theory operates on the position that speeches are actions on their own, which have the capacity of producing huge consequences on the hearer and such acts can impact on the lives of the listeners, depriving them of or restoring their freedoms, which can make them committed to a line of action (Ezeifeka, 2018).

Fagbayibo & Owie (2021), in their study on the crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic, explain that the pandemic has shown how challenging this disease has been for both countries and regional organisations. This has exposed the gaps in the political leadership as it relates to the readiness of the social, economic, and public health systems. Another study, which was a textual analysis of one of the COVID-19 addresses, examined the circumstances that evolved in Ghana, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how President Akufo-Addo used the medium of speech to manage this global health emergency (Rockson et. al, 2023). This research centred on the creative strategies and the way various sentence structures, political jargon, repetitions, and other language attributes were used. Nsanzabaganwa (2024) explained that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected nearly every aspect of life, causing global economies to stall, impacting the way individuals work and interact with their loved ones, and stretching national health systems. Countries were forced to introduce punitive measures against citizens to control the proliferation of the virus.

American Presidential Rhetoric

In an examination of crisis and rhetoric in a populist incumbency, Lacatus & Meibauer (2021) analyse Donald Trump's speeches. The authors throw the searchlight on how such incumbents grapple with the rhetorical tactics and strategies in addressing critical issues. Emrich et al (2001) provided some useful insights into the first study. They explained that Presidents who produced more image-based rhetoric were rated higher in charisma. In the second study, Presidents who engaged in more image-based rhetoric, in the address that historians saw as their most significant, were rated higher for both charisma and greatness.

Murphy & Kirk (2022), in their paper (i.e., Presidential Rhetoric in Times of Health Crisis within the Periods of the Presidencies of Eisenhower, Obama, and Trump), examined speeches, addresses, and social media posts. Their goal was to explain the rhetorical strategies that each President deployed. They all aimed at eradicating particular diseases and removing the fears of the citizens. President Eisenhower was confronted with matters related to vaccine hesitancy. His rhetorical strategies entailed emphasising a respect for American science. Eisenhower compared the virus to a physical fight and an appeal to common sense. On the other hand, President Obama's rhetorical strategy on the Ebola crisis offered some similarities to the situation of Eisenhower. The two Presidents called for Congressional action and the outlining of a clear government response plan. President Obama deployed various rhetorical strategies, such as an appeal to American nationalism, a highlight of preventative measures, and a description of personal anecdotes. Again, it has been noticed that when a country is forced to grapple with a "collective crisis", the citizens look up to their president for guidance and comfort (Neville - Shepard, 2021) Crises boost" faith in leaders" since the citizens perceive them as "more powerful" and identity more with [them] as a coping mechanism (Bligh et al, 2004, p. 212).

McCabe (2018), in a project which examined US Presidential Leadership and Crisis Rhetoric, attempted to determine what Presidents endeavoured to achieve with their speeches, especially the ways such leaders use their positions to address crises. This is important because their responses to such crises can be seen as a reflection of how their leadership qualities are perceived by the citizens. The author addressed the research question by analysing four speeches: Kennedy's speech on the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy's address, Bush's speech on the Cuban Missile Crisis after the September 11 attacks, and Bush's speech after Hurricane Katrina. The author sought to determine whether or not these addresses could be considered as "successes" or "failures" based on public approval ratings and polls published by sources like Gallup. Factors like the tone and the political environment were used to explain why these leaders utilised particular rhetorical strategies. Here, factors like the political context and the location of the speeches played a role in how the citizens viewed the success of the President's address and the general handling of the

crisis.

Ghasemi (2020) believes that persuasive strategies in political discourse offer opportunities for politicians to guide and control their audiences. This author examines the persuasive aspect of the language used in presidential speeches delivered by Barack Obama and Hassan Rouhani. It delineates persuasive strategies based on the Aristotelian approach by using Aristotle's three means of persuasion (ethos, pathos, and logos). The results showed the prominent role of logos in presidential speeches as the most frequent strategy. Also, the analysis indicated three contrastive themes of religion, time, and participant names in the speeches, which signified their different cultural and political discourse. Cart (2014), in a textual analysis study that compared six speeches of Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan during times of crisis, the researcher investigated the speeches of both presidents to determine their deployment of predefined and common rhetorical devices during crisis periods. It must be noted that earlier research had shown clear patterns in presidential rhetoric, like the frequent use of civil religious words and symbols, collective focus, and imagery in these speeches. The findings show that each president frequently used the uplifting of democracy and civil religion in their addresses.

Leadership Risky Behaviour

A paper on leadership risky behavior, which investigates if the anti-scientific rhetoric of modern populists can induce followers to engage in risky behavior (Ajzenman, Cavalcanti, & Mata, 2021), explains the speech and risky behavior of leaders during a pandemic. The study gathered electoral information, in-person card transactions, and geo-localized mobile phone data for about 60 million devices in Brazil. This became an issue when the president of Brazil publicly rejected the risks of the COVID-19 pandemic and challenged scientific recommendations, social distancing in pro-government localities. This led to general in-person transactions increasing while expenditure in pharmacies grew. These findings were driven by areas with higher media penetration levels, active Twitter accounts, and large groups of Evangelical Christians.

Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical frameworks underpin the study. These are Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Rhetorical Theory.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which has three components (crisis, crisis response strategies, and a system for assessing the situation and the

strategies), provides a framework for theory and empirical testing for the identification of strategies for responding to crisis (Coombs, 2013). The crisis is hinged on the reputational threat and the response strategy. There are crisis clusters like a victim cluster (where the entity is also a victim), an accidental cluster (the actions that led to the crisis were not intentional), and a preventable cluster (where the organization knowingly put the people at risk, undertook inappropriate activities, or violated regulations (Mitroff, 1988). Another major component of crisis is the crisis response strategies, and here SCCT offers three options: no crisis exists; package the crisis to make it more appealing; and finally, strive to project the organization in terms of reputation (Coombs, 2013). The SCCT, therefore, matches the crisis response strategy to the crisis context (victim, accidental, and preventable (Coombs, 2013).

Rhetorical Theory

Rhetorical theory can be found in the sign itself, its historically contextualised uses, and potential for further meaning that can be determined through a performative engagement with it. During the last fifty years, the work on rhetoric has multiplied and even incorporated scholars who rarely use the sign rhetoric or rhetorical theory, like Foucault, Habermas, Butler, and Levinas (Simonson, 2020). The theory has moved from composition, literary studies, communication, and classics to management, organisational studies, public relations, education, anthropology, biblical studies, and law. Peter Simonson (2020) offers a broad genealogical light on rhetorical theories, where he provides a historical sociology of knowledge influenced by feminist and postcolonial studies to identify invention, institutionalisation, and the changing meanings. This approach, which emerged from the late 19th century, explains three structuring patterns.

First of all, there was the valorisation of European civilisation, which joined the settler colonisation and its manifestation in university campuses, where the theory became materially grounded. Rhetorical theory's emergence, its use and proliferation were underpinned by the growth of the US research university, the professionalisation of the study of rhetoric within the discipline of English and speech/communication, and the hierarchical developments of status and power within them. One of the major milestones in the study of rhetorical theory was the position articulated by Kenneth Burke. This is the line of argument Kenneth Burke advances in his introduction to "Dramatism in Communication: Concepts and Perspectives" (Hansen, 1996). Burke's writings on theoretical theory show his passion for artistic communication within social life. His writings offer pathways in the early development of their theories of how people utilise language within a social context. Burke's is a grammar that shapes the routine aspects of creativity. In the end, his theory offers means for tracking the importance of the various modes of speaking within various contexts.

Methods

This study, which entails the rhetorical analysis of President Akufo-Addo's COVID–19 addresses, involved four of the addresses, which were described as updates, namely: the 6th, 10th, 12th, and 28th, focusing on two research questions. The research questions were: How did the President utilize crisis management techniques to manage the COVID-19 pandemic? How effective were the rhetorical elements and rhetorical devices deployed to manage the COVID-19 pandemic? A research investigation entails a scientific approach to understanding a topic, and this is undertaken through the utilization of various approaches. In trying to use a data collection approach that will be most appropriate for this study, three methods were examined to determine the most appropriate.

First, the case study method was used. Gerring (2004, p. 342) describes a case study as the "intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units". Here, each speech was analysed to appreciate what the President's sole accomplishment was. There are times when the goal of a case study is to confirm or to disconfirm a model that is statistical (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). The second option, which looks at quantitative data and analysis, is deployed to garner several structural research instruments, and the results are based on larger sample sizes than the smaller representative sizes of the population (Labaree, 2009). A better context for the goal of a quantitative study is the focus, as it relates to the empirical investigation and an inquiry into the subject area (Soy, 1996).

A crisis rhetorical analysis offers an opportunity to examine a meta-linguistic insight into an address through both quantitative and qualitative means. Such an analysis of the speeches delineates rhetoric and its significance, showing similarities in rhetorical patterns across similar contexts. It informs the way speeches are selected and how they are reviewed. At the quantitative level, computational linguistic tools have been deployed to analyse data in such speeches. The use of such analysis has been employed as an analytical method, spanning various disciplines (Monroe and Schradt, 2008). Computer-coded textual analysis has also been used across disciplines (Monroe and Schrodt, 2008). In a study on political speeches under three leaders, two linguistic applications were used, namely, Coh-Metrix and Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) (Windsor, 2013). While such an analysis can be employed as a quantitative research method by assigning terms and patterns of numerical values through coding, this study utilized descriptive, qualitative data. Specifically, descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data. The analysis took the form of content analysis, where various themes were looked at, and the occurrence of designated terminologies from the addresses was determined. The approach entailed the investigation of the use of rhetorical devices like Christian allusions, collective focus, conversational speech, democratic rhetoric, imagery, justificatory discourse, and familiarity with followers (Cart, 2014; Andrews, 2011).

The main literary devices deployed in this study were the use of metaphors and metonymies, essentially linguistic symbols offering real labels to abstract ideas due to the known similarity between concepts and objects. Metonymy is utilised when a concept is replaced by a single word or feature that is associated with it. Analogies, when used, were also offered in situations where contemporary events are compared with historical activities, and here the ideas and concepts should be explained in an analogy by explaining them with known examples (Beard, 2000).

Findings

The addresses include the challenges and achievements that were identified during the period of the pandemic. The President's addresses are in a narrative mode and generally in the past tense since this tense is the favoured one in narration:

> *"We are all agreed that this novel disease has thrust the whole world into unknown and uncharted territory, and we are having to learn as we go along".*
(Update No. 12: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

The next important linguistic element discerned in the president's speech is the use of the possessive pronoun 'we', which was used throughout the addresses. The repetition of the pronoun 'we' can be spotted in these sentences, which have become a salient feature of his speeches throughout (Update No. 6, 10, 12, 28). Repetition of particular words, phrases, and sentences can also be discerned in the addresses. 'Fellow Ghanaians' and 'Akufo-Addo graduates' were used three times. Another rhetorical feature that was identified was the use of political jargon or even propaganda as an aspect of political discourse. The President also utilises persuasive language to place an emphasis on particular words and concepts. Political claptrap, as an aspect of political jargon, can also be identified in his speeches. And as realized under repetition as a rhetorical instrument, expressions like 'Fellow Ghanaians' and 'Akufo-Addo graduates' were utilized in the addresses. Also, the textuality of the speeches can be discerned in the discourse and linguistic aspects.

Narrative Mood

The narrative mood also provides an opportunity to analyse the various aspects of the speech from a linguistic and stylistic perspective. This ranges from explaining the varied efforts undertaken by his government, achievements, the challenges, expressing gratitude and sorrow for the death of different actors and stakeholders. Two different tenses, both past and future, were utilized for the narrative modes. Meanwhile, sorrow is also expressed in the speech while showing the indebtedness of the nation to the health

workers:

> *We continue to be indebted to our health workers, and express sorrow over the deaths of Dr. Harry Owusu Boateng, a paediatrician at the SDA Hospital in Kwadaso, Kumasi, and Sophia Addo, a nurse with the Ghana Manganese Company Hospital in Tarkwa, who both died in the line of duty.*

(Update No. 12: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

The President often deploys auxiliaries (have) and modals (will, can, and must) in his speech. For instance, the use of the modal 'must' depicts the line of action he expects the citizens to follow:

> *"It bears repeating that they must all adhere strictly to enhanced personal hygiene and social distancing protocols, regularly wash their hands with soap under running water, refrain from shaking hands, and wear masks to protect themselves and others. These rules apply to all of us. Each one of us must be part of the fight to stop the spread of the virus. The primary auxiliary 'have' and the modal 'will' are also used effectively to express intent and plan of action: Through the National Food and Buffer Stock Company, enough food supplies have been distributed to all schools".*

(Update No. 12: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

Literary Devices

Some elements of literature, like the aesthetic element, were employed where the addresses have a form that gives pleasure in oral, visual, and aural terms. The pleasure in the speeches is how he arranges these addresses in terms of language, characters, events, sounds, setting, and imagery:

> *"Fellow Ghanaians, the experts told us right at the beginning of this pandemic that whether the virus spreads or not is dependent on our behaviour. Someone put it graphically that the virus has not got feet, and cannot move by itself, and that we, humans, spread it".* (Update No. 12: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

President Akufo-Addo can move from warnings to pleas in a seamless manner. This is an example of a warning to the citizens:

> *"Before I conclude, let me remind all Ghanaians, once again, that the wearing of masks is mandatory. Leaving our homes without a face mask, a face covering, or a face shield is an offence. The Police will conduct random checks in the enforcement of this*

directive. If you are arrested by the police for defying this directive, your sanction could be severe". (Update No. 12: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

Pleading

Sometimes, the President pleads with the citizens:

"So, please, let us, at all times, wear our masks. I appeal to every one of you to take this as a personal challenge and help rid Ghana of the virus. Let us remain focused and adhere to the enhanced hygiene, social distancing, and mask-wearing protocols that have, and must, become part and parcel of our daily lives for the foreseeable future. We can do it if we work at it". (Update No. 12: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

I appeal to you, let us, in the meantime, continue to comply with the measures, let us maintain good hygiene and respect the social distancing protocols, even when you are going out to receive the food (Update No. 6).

Akan
Me-srɛ   mo,   asɛm   aa   makai,   mo-n-di su.
1SG-SUBJ.PRES-beg 2PL.OBJ, matter REL 1SG.SUBJ.PST-say. 3PL-IMP-eat top

'I plead with you, obey what I have said.'
Me-ma   mo   afehyia pa
1SG.SUBJ.PRES-give 3PL.OBJ year-meet good
'I wish you a happy new year'

Ga
Minkpa   nyɛ   fai,   nibii   ni   n-kɛ,   nyɛ-ye   nɔ.
1SG-SUBJ.PRES-takeoff 2PL.OBJ,hat   things REL 1SG.SUBJ.PST-say. 3PL-IMP-eat top

(to beg—literally means to take off a hat in Ga)
'I plead with you, obey what I have said.'

Afi oo afi.
Year oo year
Happy New Year
(Update No. 6).

Alliteration

There were cases of alliteration in the speech, with the two examples below

depicting the 't' sound and the 'w' sound, respectively:

We will, as much as possible, be guided by the data, with our focus on the 3-Ts, i.e., tracing, testing, and treatment. (Update No. 6).

"It has been three and a half months since we began our fight to defeat the Coronavirus pandemic in the country. It has, so far, been a coordinated and enhanced response, with tracing, testing, isolating, treating, and the maintenance of the relevant social distancing and hygiene protocols being the weapons we continue to employ to help contain the spread of the virus. In such an atmosphere, if we do not take care, the virus will continue to spread, which will lead to intolerable pressure on our health facilities and caregivers. Each one of us must be part of the fight to stop the spread of the virus". (Update No. 12: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

Cohesion

Another area that is of much significance is the issue of 'Cohesion', which deals with elements like 'connectives', 'argumentation', and 'parallelism' (Simpson, 2010:45). As a literary resource, it explains how all these elements combine to create cohesion in an address.

Anaphora

Another example is the use of anaphora, a rhetorical device in a situation where there is a repetition of a word or expression at the start of a sentence, clause, or phrase to ensure a poetic impact. Here, the ideas are assembled to create an environment of cadence, coherence, and emphasis. This construction offers different stylistic effects like a rousing rhythm and also a couple or more perspectives through the continuous phrasing, producing a more memorable effect:

"Even though, we now have a better understanding of the dynamism of the virus in our country; even though the majority of people who contract the virus do not show any symptoms at all; and even though Ghanaians are not dying in the hundreds and thousands that were originally anticipated, we cannot afford to be complacent, and let our guard down" (Update No. 12: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

Civil Religion

One strategy that is seen in former President Reagan's speech is civil religion (Cart, 2014, p. 25)." During the period under review, President Akufo-Addo used Biblical allusions or civil religion in addressing several issues:

Fellow Ghanaians, today is Maundy Thursday, and tomorrow, a few hours from now, Friday, 10th April, Good Friday, is the start of Easter, which, for us Christians, commemorates the unique sacrifice that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, made for our salvation on the cross of Calvary (Update No. 6).

"May God bless us all, and our homeland Ghana, and make her great and strong" (Update No. 12: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

The affective element in the address also arouses our emotions because of the way the issues have been articulated, whether in terms of meeting the aspirations of the country when it comes to education, or the cases of stigmatization:

"Without an educated populace, it will be difficult to transition from the status of a developing to a developed nation". Summing it up, that most noble Ghanaian, James Kwegyir Aggrey, said, a hundred years ago, and I quote, "I want all my people, my country women and men to be educated ..., and thus render Africa indispensable in intellectual, spiritual and commercial products of the world." (Update No. 12: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

Conversational Speech

The President uses conversational speech, which entails language that engenders an intimacy between the speaker and his audience and focuses on the trustworthiness of the rhetor, and this is highly anecdotal" (Lim, 2002, p. 346). One of the notable examples of the use of rhetorical strategy is the effective use of conversational speech in his addresses:

I have, first of all, to tell you how proud and privileged I am to be your President, not just to fight for you, but also to fight with you, and to help shepherd our country out of this crisis. (Update No. 6).

Justificatory Discourse

In the area of justificatory discourse, Presidential remarks focus on the understanding and rationalization of crises (Cherwitz & Zagacki, 1986, p. 309). President Akufo–Addo uses this rhetorical strategy in his speeches:

Clearly, until we have the situation fully under control, we cannot, at this time, open our borders. (Update No.6).

We now see that the decision to close down our borders has been justified. (Update No.6).

It appears that our common efforts have been modestly successful in containing the virus and minimising its spread. Undoubtedly, the decisions taken from day one (1) to act quickly and decisively, and impose what may have seemed like harsh restrictions, have now proven to be effective and have saved a lot of lives. (Update No.6).

Collective Focus

In such instances, singular nouns that connote plurality refer to social groups, task groups, and geographical contexts (Davis & Gardner, 2012). The President also deploys the rhetorical strategy of positioning himself as part of the conversation when he delivers his addresses:

We are used to attending Easter Conventions, making merry, visiting friends and family, and having a good time. (Update No.6).

Yes, like a lot of you, I was also looking forward to visiting Kwahu during this time of the year, which I have been doing for several years. (Update No.6).

Metaphors

Lakoff & Turner (1989) see the metaphor as a projection and mapping across what they call conceptual domains; that is, its use is basically a cognitive mental process, of which the metaphorical word, phrase, or sentence is only the linguistic aspect and expression. The conceptual view of the 'metaphor' claims that the common use of language is essentially metaphorical and that metaphors structure the pathway persons perceive what they believe they know, and how they think.

In a study on the deployment of the metaphor in political addresses delivered by Kwame Nkrumah, Wiredu (2021) analysed how the metaphor was used to transmit information. He explained how rhetoric, especially the metaphor, was deployed to achieve Kwame Nkrumah's goals in political communication. President Akufo-Addo utilized effectively this figure of speech in his addresses:

We decided that we would (i) limit and stop the importation of the virus, (ii) contain its spread… (Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

I have come again, for the tenth (10th) time, into your homes to speak to you about the Coronavirus pandemic…. (Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

… outline to you the decisions I have taken about the next chapter of our common

battle.

(Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

Today is the sixth time I am coming into your homes since we began our collective effort to combat the Coronavirus pandemic, and to implement measures aimed at containing and defeating it. (Update No.6).

Solidarity, Unity, Involvement, and Commitment

The effective use of these phrases: 'Fellow Ghanaians', 'Fellow Nigerians', and 'Fellow South Africans', in the three speeches shows solidarity, unity, involvement, and commitment. While 'Fellow Ghanaians' was used three times in Ghana's Akufo-Addo's speech, Buhari's speech deployed 'Fellow Nigerians' twice, while in Ramaphosa's speech, 'Fellow South Africans' was used five times. All of these were utilized to achieve a stylistic impact. Akufo-Addo's use of repetition was for a pragmatic effect.

Results and Discussions

The first set of addresses was selected, coded, and examined using content thematic analysis. The strategies captured in the thematic analysis included framing Covid-19 as a war, ensuring nationalism and patriotism, showing appreciation and gratitude, threatening sanctions, and using Christian values. Also, the historical, social, and political contexts of Ghana and elsewhere were invoked in Nana Addo's speeches to legitimize the country's response to the pandemic.

From a presidential crisis rhetoric perspective, these addresses can be assessed by their capacity to utilize the attributes of speech and rhetoric to manage a crisis. There is always the expectation that a leader will inspire and provide reassurance in such challenging times (Davis & Gardner, 2012). Kiewe (1994), in explaining crisis rhetoric, describes it as a presentation by a leader to different stakeholders to show that a particular pathway is critical while offering the direction to resolve the situation. Davis and Gardner (2012), on the other hand, believe that a leader legitimizes the crisis, provides information to the followers for support, and strives to achieve the "national" goal. A President is expected in such circumstances to exploit speech and rhetoric for anticipating, addressing, or mediating a crisis (Davis & Gardner, 2012). For a President, moments like this, a crisis, can be very defining in the political and public sphere and therefore offer an opportunity to change the national climate with their communication skills and control of the rhetorical strategies (Cart, 2014).

One major factor in crisis rhetoric during the pandemic was how President Akufo-Addo dealt with crisis management as a leader. The President had to be packaged as a

leader who could handle the major strategic actors like the medical professionals, the media, educational institutions, religious bodies, and the military. The rhetorical aspects that were analysed had been used in earlier studies (Munawar, 2018; Cart, 2014; Andrews, 2011). First of all, for the rhetorical devices: civil religion, collective focus, and imagery were identified by Cart (2014), who distinguished between the rhetorical devices and rhetorical elements, and who noted the presence of repetition, simile, metaphors, and mood. Thus, the two former presidents – Roosevelt and Reagan – used some tactics to address critical issues for Americans.

Conclusion

It has been noticed that, when a country is forced to grapple with a "collective crisis", the citizens look up to their president for guidance and comfort (Neville-Shepard, 2021). Crises boost "faith in leaders" since the citizens perceive them as "more powerful" and identify more with [them] as a coping mechanism (Bligh et al, 2004, p. 212). The ever-expanding crisis communication research is designed to advance knowledge about that field. Part of that knowledge includes insights into crisis communication that can be used to enhance the practice of crisis communication. Effective applied communication does help to improve the field to which it is applied.

Presidents assume the role of "comforter-in-chief" by consoling the citizens after disasters and tragedies that have caused collective distress (Childers & Bird, 2019). President Akufo-Addo played this role very well during the COVID-19 pandemic. This position contrasts sharply with the stance President Trump took. Trump violated the rhetorical conventions which are associated with a presidency during a period of national crisis (Neville-Shepard, 2021). As the author explains, Trump's populist leanings made him claim that he had been marginalised. The author further explains that exploiting the wearing of masks is a test of loyalty, a mark of female weakness, and a sign of oppression of the body. The President turned this pandemic into a crisis of masculinity. The parameters of crisis communication led to the merging of crisis communication (more PR) and risk communication (health behavioural change) to the merged approach described as "crisis and emergency risk communication" (Reynolds, Galdo & Sokler, 2002).

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