

A Rhetorical Stylistic Study of Olusegun Obasanjo's Letter Challenging Muhammadu Buhari's Second Term Bid in Nigeria's 2019 Presidential Election

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Abstract

In the run-up to Nigeria's 2019 presidential election, political gladiators attempt to outwit their opponents in the struggle for power largely by harping on the perceived incompetence of their opponents and seeking to worm themselves and their alternative agenda into the hearts of the audience. This article examines the rhetoric of challenging the power of incumbency in Olusegun Obasanjo's press statement entitled 'The Way out: A Clarion Call for Coalition for Nigeria Movement' to Muhammadu Buhari in January 2019. It characterises the press statement as a prototype discourse of 'speaking truth to power' given its bold presentation and also analyses the rhetorical-cum-stylistic features appropriated by the writer to dare the authority of the interlocutor. It adopts Foucauldian theory of parrhesia to unpack the characteristics of a bold speech in the press statement with regard to the speech being produced by a powerful figure in society to challenge another equally powerful figure who, however, occupies a position of higher authority. The study reveals that the rhetorical style of the text is confrontational, combative and manipulative. It also demonstrates that the press statement fits in with the requirements of a bold speech

as stipulated in Foucault's conception of political truth telling.

Key words: Ideology, parrhesia, power, press statement, rhetoric, truth

Introduction

Barely two and a half years after the All Progressives Congress' ascendancy to the seat of power under the Presidency of Muhammadu Buhari, there were insinuations as far back as 2017 that President Muhammadu Buhari would seek re-election in the 2019 general elections. As part of the reactions to the much-touted re-election bid of the incumbent President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo former military Head of State and later democratically elected president sent an open press statement to the Presidency entitled 'The Way out: A Clarion Call for Coalition for Nigeria Movement'. The letter addresses socio-political, economic and security issues as well as ethical issues bearing upon the integrity of a national leader, insinuating why the incumbent president might not be the right candidate for re-election by the Nigerian electorate.

Given the seriousness of the issues raised in the press statement and the fearless tone with which Obasanjo challenges the authority of the Presidency as well as his engagement of a manipulative tone to sway the audience to reason with him, one can see in Obasanjo's press statement the trappings of a kind of political speech which French Philosopher Michel Foucault calls *parrhesia*. Parrhesia is a Greek word which literally translates as a 'bold speech'. Foucault (1983) also refers to it as a frank speech that is risk-accompanied. He submits that such a frank speech must

be *true* and the speaker must be addressing a higher authority which is where the risk lies: the risk of the speaker losing their social position, being punished or even death. Parrhesia, as Foucault (1983) posits, is an investigation of the socio-political sphere which requires sincere fidelity to the present with the intention to counter operations of the power and governmentality.

One who engages the tools of parrhesia to challenge the higher authority is technically referred to as the *parrhesiastes*. The following traits qualify the parrhesiastes: the speaker must be a male citizen of the nation; the speaker must not be a slave; and the speaker must be of the same social class with the authority they are addressing (Foucault 1983, p 10). We will quickly drop the hint that Foucault's claim of a parrhesiastes being a male does not apply in contemporary times because both male and female could engage in political participation. It is noteworthy that parrhesia developed into phraseology in the social theory construct as an act of 'speaking truth to power'. 'Speaking truth to power' is an act of taking a stance and believing deeply in it. Stance, according to Chandrasegaran and Kong (2006), is an evaluation of a writer's attitude towards what they are talking about. Sayah and Hashemi (2014) also suggest that it is used to show opinion and authority. Foucault (2001) states further that anyone under duress to speak the truth is not a parrhesiastes, for a parrhesiastes speaks the truth not out of compulsion but sees speaking the truth as a duty.

In challenging the higher authority of Nigeria's Presidency in his press statement, Olusegun Obasanjo engages the tools of rhetoric as postulated by Aristotle

(2004) to appeal to his audience as to why the incumbent President should not be given a second term mandate. Kamalu and Tamunobelem (2015), citing Bloor and Bloor (2007), see rhetoric as a component of communication which enhances the way language is used. Rhetoric involves the artistic manipulation of certain linguistic devices in a text or a speech and their effectiveness on the hearer or reader. Therefore, the aim of the study is to investigate how Obasanjo in the press statement appropriates rhetorical-cum-stylistic devices not only by underlining the parrhesiastes posture he assumes in producing a bold speech but also by attempting to make his audience see things from his perspective and thereby think and act in a premeditated manner desired by him.

Some studies on the rhetoric of political discourse have largely investigated inaugural speeches and election campaign discourse. Adetunji (2009), Babatunde and Odepidan (2009) study some presidential inaugural speeches, examining the pragma-rhetorical strategies deployed in the political/presidential speeches. From a pragmatic point of view, Kenzhekanova (2015) explores the applicability of pragmatic tools in terms of their manipulative influence on the electorate. Koutchade (2015), adopting a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective, studies the language of inaugural speeches to highlight ideologies and attitudes expressed to reinforce persuasive strategies in speeches. Ahmed (2017) applies classical and cultural rhetoric, and linguistics to review the different ways ideological and hegemonic struggles are discursively constructed in Nigerian political campaign discourse. The study reveals how cultural rhetoric can contribute to the diversity of

approaches to textual interpretation by not relying only on western systems of knowledge but also drawing upon cultural and historical ways of thinking.

Akinwotu (2013) also examines the mobilisation strategies of presidential candidates to persuade the electorate towards the desired goal of winning elections. Emeka-Nwobia (2016), using Norman Fairclough and Michel Foucault's social theory, unpacks the workings of power in political language and unravels the underlying meaning in the grossly manipulative language use in the utterances of candidates campaigning for the presidential position in Nigeria. Ekhareafo and Akoseogasimhe (2017) examine from the sociocognitive point of view the manipulative use of language in the presidential election campaigns in Nigeria, revealing the presentation of positive identity construction of the self and negative labelling of the other in political campaign discourse.

Some linguists have also examined the rhetoric of presidential speeches as well as its persuasive and manipulative nature in political discourses (Adetunji, 2006; Opeibi, 2006; Finlayson and Martin, 2008; Tenuche, 2009; Adegaju 2012) in Independence/Democracy Day and inaugural speeches. From a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach, Daramola (2008) explores aspects of political discourses pertaining to participants and events to analyse the popular speeches 'A Child of Circumstance' and 'A Child of Necessity' produced by Chief Ernest Shonekan and General Sani Abacha, respectively, to legitimise the interim government of the former and the military government of the latter during Nigeria's 'June 12' crisis. Linguists have also examined the rhetoric of

manipulation in the restructuring debate discourse, with Adetoye (2016), Farayibi (2017) and Olu-Adeyemi (2017) reviewing the agitations for restructuring in Nigeria with a view to understanding the rhetoric of restructuring debate in Nigeria.

From the foregoing, it is established that a lot of studies have been carried out on the rhetoric of aspects of political discourse in Nigeria as well as some other African countries. However, the rhetoric of press statements which challenge the power of incumbency, especially with the incumbent president supposedly seeking re-election, has not been adequately investigated in Nigeria's political discourse. A rhetorical analysis of Olusegun Obasanjo's press statement which typifies the discourse of 'speaking truth to power' preparatory to a presidential election in Nigeria's democratic system would, therefore, be scholarly engaging for political discourse analysts and rhetoricians.

Truth Telling and Rhetoric

The question of truth telling has generated different views in the spheres of religion, academics, economics, politics and philosophy. For the purposes of this study, we will focus on truth telling in politics and in philosophy with close reference to its embodiment in the theory of parrhesia. Parrhesia is the courage to express the speaker's convictions for political expediency. However, Foucault observes that the idea of free and bold speech is about to be misinterpreted to mean freedom of speech both in politics and philosophy. Foucault (2011, p. 88) retorts:

I would correct this everyday definition of the word parrhesia, by saying that it is not just freedom of speech; it is frankness, the profession of truth [...] when we say 'speaking freely' this of course is an everyday readymade expression which does not have a strong meaning. Nevertheless, it remains the case that free speech is a political problem [...]. I would say the same is true of parrhesia; it is an everyday, current, familiar and obvious meaning, and then this precise and technical meaning.

Foucault draws his notion of frankness of speech from the ancient Greek notion of parrhesia when he describes it as a radical solution to the hegemonic logic of society. Kim (2015) refers to truth-telling as a revolutionary practice in democracy and an exercise in international citizenship.

Foucault gives two general moments of parrhesia to be political 'problematization of parrhesia' and philosophical 'problematization of parrhesia'. Political parrhesia is a practice of fundamental importance for political realm and revolves around four conditions as Foucault (2001) asserts: it is part of democracy; it includes a 'game of ascendancy'; it involves truth telling and it is executed with courage. Foucault makes it clear that truth is not readily given, or simply established through truth-telling itself; it is rather an unstable affair. Truth is not constituted by words but it is supported by words. Parrhesia is not about only being honest; it is rather an act of telling truth. It functions to enact truth as well as the performance and externalisation of the

speaker's truth claim. Foucault asserts that truth telling in politics quivers and does not sediment once and for all.

The second moment of parrhesia problematisation is philosophical parrhesia. Foucault posits that unlike political parrhesia, philosophical parrhesia does not involve risk because the philosopher does not take the risk of reproaching someone powerful for their injustices but advises the powerful. Foucault notes further that this is not done by addressing the powerful directly but by speaking in general principles to all parties. This modification in philosophical parrhesia douses the efficacy of parrhesia because the core of parrhesia is being bold. Truth telling is an engagement which is both painful to the speaker and to the hearer. It is painful to the hearer in the sense that it often threatens a comfortable position and demands a new responsibility. To the speaker, Foucault asserts that it requires a relationship with truth, as the bold speech holds the potential of being rejected. It could also spell doom for the speaker who could even face the risk of death.

Foucault argues that philosophical parrhesia is somewhat rhetorical. In this light, he argues that parrhesia and rhetoric are incompatible. Rhetoric, in Foucault's (1983) lecture, is a form of expression where the speaker uses vague explanation to convince the audience of their points whether truthful or not, whereas in contrast to this, he emphasises parrhesia as being the more direct and concise form of speech to convey what the speaker truthfully believes. Foucault (2001, p. 19) gives an all-encompassing definition of parrhesia that differentiates it from rhetoric:

Parrhesia is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type of relation to himself or other people through criticism [...]. In parrhesia, the speaker uses freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of false or silence, criticism instead of flattery, moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy.

However, some other scholars object that parrhesia and rhetoric are compatible. O’Gorman (2005) asserts that what is meant by telling the truth reveals rhetoric as a rich ethical approach to communication. Bonhoeffer (1997) also argues that rhetoric is a rich ethical vision and a normative vision of human sociality. He argues that truth telling is an act that is strongly contingent and situation-dependent in the same way as rhetoric is predominantly conceived as context dependent-communication.

In a similar vein, Pernot (2016) raises an argument against Foucault’s position. Pernot (2016) asserts that political parrhesia is equivalent of rhetoric and actually a root of ethical parrhesia. He argues further that ethical parrhesia which is Foucault’s main focus is actually a newer form of political parrhesia in which a citizen speaks truthfully to his/her superior or ruler in order to critique policies. In line with Pernot’s (2016) position, Townsend (2017) also argues that rhetoric and parrhesia are compatible, drawing upon Foucault’s (1983) enlightenment and modernity. Townsend (2017)

concludes that rhetoric is that parrhesia which requires a gentler nudge in the direction of truth according to the constraint of the situation at that time. For Tomboukou (2012), truth is not only about being political or philosophical. It is rather about understanding complex configurations that have become dominant and unveiling the truth behind them. To unveil the truth, therefore, requires that the discourse reader explore the rhetorical style with which the parrhesiastes constructs the text.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Foucauldian Rhetorical Theory of Parrhesia. According to Foucault, parrhesia is a form of criticism either towards oneself or towards another. Foucault asserts that the said truth must anger or endanger the interlocutor before it could be said to be an act of parrhesia. He explains:

Parrhesia is thus always a 'game' between the one who speaks truth and the interlocutor [...] the parrhesia may be a confession of what the speaker himself has done insofar as he makes this confession to one who exercises power over him and is able to censure or punish him for what he has done. (Foucault, 2001, p.17)

Thus, the parrhesiastes sees truth telling as a duty. Foucault posits that one who is compelled or under duress to speak the truth is not a parrhesiastes. One can infer that parrhesia is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses their personal relationship to truth. Not only that, they risk their lives because they recognise truth

telling as a duty to improve or help other people as well as themselves.

Parrhesia, as Miller (2006, p. 36) asserts, is both a means of resistance and legitimation in government. It is then safe to say that parrhesia or truth telling is not only an instrument of philosophical didacticism but also a practice of critique which offers a history of thought. Foucault (1983) notes that the parrhesiastes is an equal with those they speak truth to, and not a mere person. This is an indication of power relation in truth telling. The producer of the text used in this study qualifies as a parrhesiastes given his political stature, a statesperson who has served as former military Head of State and President. Besides, Obasanjo is not just a political leader in Nigeria; he is an international figure. Miller (2006, p. 34) posits that parrhesia is both the fact and manner of speaking the truth which is directly linked to those citizens who are in the first ranks, that is, those who have political right as well as the ability and courage to 'speak to power'.

Foucault distinguishes between two types of parrhesia: the pejorative and coincidence between belief and truth. The pejorative parrhesia, as Foucault (2001, p. 23) asserts, 'is not far from chattering which consists in saying anything or everything one has in mind without qualification'. It is a verbal act which reflects every movement of the heart and mind. Foucault thus refers to this as a negative sense of parrhesia. The second type of parrhesia which Foucault refers to as the positive parrhesia is one that has an exact coincidence with belief and truth. Foucault submits that the coincidence between belief and truth does not take place in the

mental experience but in the verbal activity which is parrhesia. How the speaker in the present study makes the verbal activity persuasive to his audience will be unpacked with an analysis of the rhetorical-cum-stylistic devices he deploys in the process.

Zizek (1989) submits that parrhesia should not be seen as unrealistic speech acts, ideological mystification or fetishist disavowal, but as truths which point to and anticipate the present reality while also attempting to transform that very reality. In other words, truth speaking or parrhesia requires knowledge. Knowledge, according to Ghachem (2015, p. 265), is an organised mental structure consisting shared factual beliefs of a group or culture which may be verified by the historically variable truth criteria of that group or culture. In other words, truth telling is not based on opinion. Opinions, as Ghachem (2015) argues, are sets of beliefs in social memory that are not dealt with in terms of truth criteria. Parrhesia can be said to require sincere fidelity to the present and the intention to counter the operation of power and governmentality. How Obasanjo shares knowledge in his press statement in order to criticise Buhari's governance style will also be analysed by teasing out the rhetorical strategies of doing so.

Finally, Perkins (1995) refers to parrhesia as a guide for reforming public policy. A parrhesiastes gives need for reformation of policy and is courageous to say it to the authority not minding the outcome or consequence. Parrhesia serves as an eye opener and transforms somewhat or seemingly rotten world. Foucault (2011) opines that parrhesia allows us to engage in a potentially transformative relation with the

world, to bring about that which does not exist and transform that which exists. In essence, parrhesia mirrors the present while inviting change in the future. Foucault submits that parrhesia provokes interference between the present reality and knowledge of our past history. Not only can parrhesia provoke interference between the present and history, it can as well disclose unthought-of possibilities in the future. It will be interesting to show in the analysis how Obasanjo is able to appropriate the goal of policy transformation which is a hallmark of parrhesia in his press statement and the rhetorical tools he uses to appeal to the sensibilities of his audience.

Methodology

The data for the study was sourced from *The Punch Online Newspaper* of 24th January, 2018 which contains the special press statement by Olusegun Obasanjo entitled 'The Way out: A Clarion Call for Coalition for Nigeria Movement'. The press statement was selected for rhetorical analysis based on the timeliness of its release when there were insinuations that the incumbent President, Muhammadu Buhari, could seek re-election in 2019. The volatility of the debate about whether or not the All Progressives Congress (APC) government had considerably fulfilled its 'change agenda' campaign promises equally motivated the choice of the data. The study adopts qualitative analytical method which considers the political context of the delivery of the discourse. It then describes and analyses the rhetorical strategies and stylistic devices used by the discourse producer to thread underlying ideologies in the text.

Analysis and Discussion

It is interesting how Obasanjo gives the impression that the concerns he raises in the letter are in the spirit of being nationalistic instead of being self-serving. The strategy of harping on policy reform in democracy as opposed to politicking is central to the goal of ‘speaking truth to power’. Consider the extract below:

Excerpt 1

Four years ago when my PDP card was torn, I made it abundantly clear that I quit partisan politics for aye but my concern and interest in Nigeria, Africa and indeed in humanity would not wane. Ever since, I have adhered strictly to that position. Since that time, I have devoted quality time to the issue of zero hunger as contained in Goal No. 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. We have set the target that Nigeria with the participating States in the Zero Hunger Forum should reach Zero Hunger goal by 2025 – five years earlier than the UN target date. I am involved in the issue of education in some States and generally in the issue of youth empowerment and employment. I am involved in all these domestically and altruistically to give hope and future to the seemingly hopeless and those in despair. I believe strongly that God has endowed Nigeria so adequately that no Nigerian should be either in want or in despair. (Paragraph 3)

From the outset, the speaker seeks to persuade the audience as to the motive of his criticism of the Buhari administration in the press statement by demarcating politicking from engaging in policy reform. Obasanjo reels off a number of his engagements in policy reform matters in a series of nominal elements: 'the issue of zero hunger as contained in Goal No. 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN', 'Zero Hunger goal by 2025', 'the issue of education in some States' and 'the issue of youth empowerment and employment'. All of these nominal elements are used to parade the speaker's credentials as one committed to national development even when he no longer occupies any political office. In so doing, he rhetorically tries to whip up emotions by endearing himself to his audience and thereby prepare the ground for distancing Buhari from the audience in his press statement.

It is interesting how Obasanjo plays the game of selling his credentials to the audience in the declarative sentence: 'I am involved in all these domestically and altruistically to give hope and future to the seemingly hopeless and those in despair'. He engages in the rhetorical strategy of self-marketing by using the first person singular pronoun 'I', the adverb of place 'domestically' and the adverb of intentionality 'altruistically' to modify the verb 'am involved'. Of rhetorical relevance to the audience are the beneficiaries of his policy reform engagements, hence his use of the perceived victims of poor governance in society in the object: 'the seemingly hopeless and those in despair'. His choice of singling out 'the seemingly hopeless and those in despair' for recognition and help in the press statement as opposed to paying attention to the elite is a

rhetorical attempt to create rapport which has to do with a speaker's attempt to create a sense of friendliness and receptivity on the part of the audience. It is also interesting how the parrhesiastes plays on the elements of time by focusing on his activities in the present and the expected results in the future as contained in the verb phrase 'to give hope and future'.

In line with offering criticism in political parrhesia, Obasanjo assesses the place of Nigeria among other countries in Africa in terms of the benchmarks for development and the strides made by Nigeria thus far towards reaching some height as shown in the extract which follows.

Excerpt 2

For Africa to move forward, Nigeria must be one of the anchor countries, if not the leading anchor country. It means that Nigeria must be good at home to be good outside. No doubt, our situation in the last decade or so had shown that we are not good enough at home; hence we are invariably absent at the table that we should be abroad. (Paragraph 4)

The modal auxiliary 'must' is used repeatedly in sentences one and two in the extract above '[...] Nigeria must be one of the anchor countries [...]' and '[...] Nigeria must be good at home to be good outside.' to underline the sense of compulsion which his views carry. To strengthen his criticism of the Nigerian situation, he uses the conjunct 'no doubt' to express his strong opinion about Nigeria's underperformance which is captured in

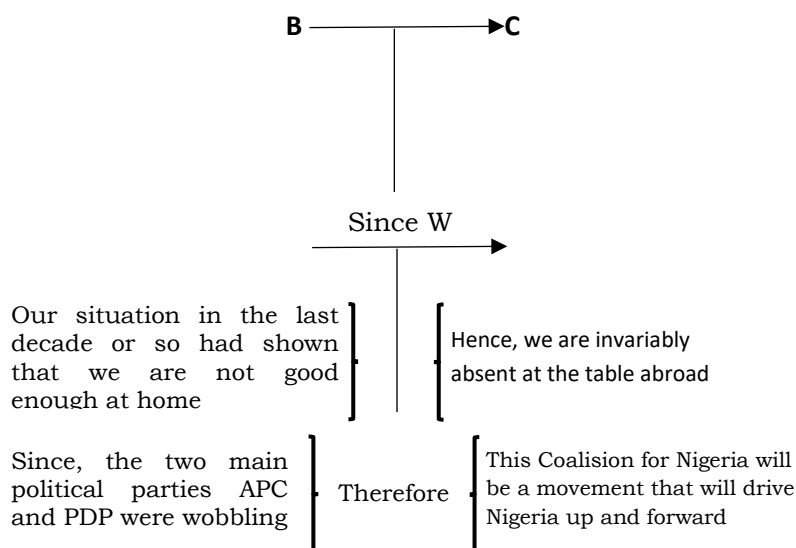
the declarative sentence '[...] we are not good enough at home'.

In fact, the writer's juxtaposition of the proximal adverbial of place 'at home' with the distal adverbial of place 'abroad' further exposes the depth of underdevelopment he seeks to portray to his audience. Reference to 'table' at the centre stage of the meeting of all countries is metaphoric, as it suggests that pedestal where countries making development strides stand. Regrettably, the writer claims Nigeria is not a partaker at that level. It is also interesting how the writer appropriates the factor of time in his criticism. Reference to the adverbial element 'in the last decade or so' certainly transcends Buhari's administration. But it all the same covers the administration such that the writer tactfully indicts the present leadership under Muhammadu Buhari. This is an interesting aspect of the parrhesia which provokes interference between the present reality and knowledge of past history. The impression is, therefore, given that the Buhari administration has not improved the state of the nation significantly since its assumption of office.

Since truth speaking requires knowledge as opposed to sharing mere opinions, we appeal to the tools of argumentation in rhetoric to examine the validity of Obasanjo's criticism. Toulmin (2003) states that an assertion necessarily involves a claim and if the claim is challenged, we must be able to establish it and show that it is justifiable. Toulmin (2003) makes it clear as how to justify a claim, which is to be able to point to some facts in the claim. He states that such an argument may be challenged, and if this is done, we need to indicate the bearing on our conclusion on the data already being

produced. Toulmin (2003, p. 91) explains further that 'our task is not to strengthen the ground on which our argument is constructed, but rather to show that, taking these data as a starting point, the steps to the original claim or conclusion is an appropriate and legitimate one. He submits that what are needed are general hypothetical statements which act as bridges to which our particular argument commits us. He, therefore, calls such a hypothetical bridge a warrant (W). When applied to Obasanjo's argument, we will arrive at an argumentation structure below:

Figure 1: Illustration of Obasanjo's Claim with Toulmin's Argumentation Model



The kind of argument put forward by Obasanjo is a deductive argument. This is because it moves from the general to the specific. The conclusion he finally draws in

the argument discloses a possibility in the future. This conclusion which is his recommendation of the Coalition for Nigeria movement will be revisited in our final analysis.

In a swift attempt to single out the Buhari administration for castigation, and without mincing words, the writer specifically catalogues past problems of the country which the change agenda of the APC has not been able to resolve. The writer identifies the case of incompetence on the part of the President and his buck-passing attitude in the extract below:

Excerpt 3

The second is his poor understanding of the dynamics of internal politics. This has led to wittingly or unwittingly making the nation more divided and inequality has widened and become more pronounced. It also has effect on general national security. **The third is passing the buck.** For instance, blaming the Governor of the Central Bank for devaluation of the naira by 70% or so and blaming past governments for it, is to say the least, not accepting one's own responsibility. Let nobody deceive us, economy feeds on politics and because our politics is depressing, our economy is even more depressing today. If things were good, President Buhari would not need to come in. (Paragraph 9)

Using the graphological device of boldfacing, Obasanjo creates an eye-catching effect in the paragraph

where these grave issues are raised such that the reader no matter how cursorily they have read the piece would claim to have glossed over these serious allegations. With reference to the first allegation, the writer's use of the comparative mode of the adjective in 'more divided' and 'more pronounced' touches on a vital aspect of parrhesia which has to do with the invocation of national history in line with present developments. In the present discourse, reference is made to the supposed worsening of the crisis of nationhood which has been a national problem since independence in Nigeria. By using the comparative mode of the adjectives, the speaker seeks to intensify his view about how awry the Nigerian situation has become under the Buhari administration in the present. Further, the writer's use of the rhetorical tool of exemplification in 'For instance, blaming the Governor of the Central Bank for devaluation of the naira by 70% or so, and blaming past governments for it [...]' with regard to the allegation of buck-passing shows courage on the part of the parrhesiastes to indict a President for gross ineptitude and dereliction of duty where a President should be seen to take responsibilities for grave policy matters affecting the country's economy. Dispelling the buck-passing engagement of the APC government, the writer uses the adverbial clause of condition 'If things were good' as a dependent clause in the main clause 'Buhari would not need to come in' to remind the President of his responsibilities as the occupier of the highest office in the land. This reminder shows courage on the part of the parrhesiastes.

Generally, by emphasising the perceived negativities of the Buhari administration without mincing words in this extract, for instance, by using the

possessive pronoun 'his' in 'his poor understanding of the dynamics of internal politics' where 'his' refers to 'President Buhari's', the writer shows bravery. Obasanjo could have sounded evasive probably by using the definite article 'the' which may not necessarily indicate the subject being referred to in this case. But by choosing to speak directly to the number one citizen even using the adjective 'poor' to qualify the president's understanding, he can be truly referred to as a parrhesiastes because as Foucault posits a parrhesiastes dares and has the courage to speak the 'truth' not minding the consequences of such an action. Undoubtedly, it is weighty for anyone to accuse the president of a country of 'poor understanding' in a confrontational press statement like this. This can only be done by someone of equal status or rank with the addressee as Foucault postulates.

The parrhesiastes shows further courage to remind the President of his responsibilities as the occupier of the highest office in the land for which he need not pass any buck. Talking about responsibilities in governance, Obasanjo reminds the President:

Excerpt 4

He was voted to fix things that were bad and not engage in the blame game. Our Constitution is very clear, one of the cardinal responsibilities of the President is the management of the economy of which the value of the naira forms an integral part. Kinship and friendship that place responsibility for governance in the hands of the unelected can only be deleterious to

good government and to the nation.
(Paragraph 9)

By choosing to use the passive voice in 'He was voted to fix things that were bad [...]' and not the active voice 'The people voted him to fix things that were bad [...]', the writer draws attention to the grammatical subject 'He' (Buhari) as the point of reference, hence the use of the stylistic device of fronting the object-turned-subject. In fact, the use of the rhetorical appeal to authority in the declarative sentence 'Our Constitution is very clear' clears the air as to any doubt the audience may want to cast on the veracity of the writer's views on leadership and responsibilities, particularly in managing the economy.

Obasanjo further exposes Buhari's supposed inability to harness human resource to make up for his perceived incompetence in office. Obasanjo explains:

Excerpt 5

I knew President Buhari before he became President and said that he is weak in the knowledge and understanding of the economy but I thought that he could make use of good Nigerians in that area that could help. Although, I know that you cannot give what you don't have and that economy does not obey military order. You have to give it what it takes in the short-, medium- and long-term. Then, it would move. I know his weakness in understanding and playing in the foreign affairs sector and again, there are many

Nigerians that could be used in that area as well. They have knowledge and experience that could be deployed for the good of Nigeria. (Paragraph 7)

Obasanjo's use of the verbs of cognition 'knew' and 'thought' as well as the adversative conjunction 'but' to delineate his initial knowledge from his after/thought in the declarative sentence 'I knew President Buhari before he became President and said that he is weak in the knowledge and understanding of the economy but thought that he could make use of good Nigerians [...]' evokes the interplay of knowledge (in the past) and anticipation of the President's shrewdness (in the future) to harness available human resource for national development. In a fit of disappointment and seeming utter frustration, Obasanjo lashes out at the President in the concessional finite clause 'Although, I know that you cannot give what you don't have and that economy does not obey military order'. This declarative sentence appears to be the reality which dawns on the speaker in the present contrary to his knowledge of danger in the past and anticipation of escape route in the future.

Foucault writes that parrhesia is painful to the hearer in that it often threatens a comfortable position and demands a new responsibility. This principle is what Obasanjo appears to drive at given his barrage of vitriolic attacks on the President. The parrhesiastes intentionally seems to threaten the competence face of the addressee as a President who offered to serve the people because he purportedly possesses the political and administrative acumen to do so only to grope in the office of the President. Obasanjo's use of the metaphor of 'military

order' which the economy does not obey gives a hollow picture of Buhari as having found himself in an unfamiliar terrain as the President. As a result, Buhari is presented as a political figure who fumbles with policy issues which the 'military order' he is accustomed to giving as a former General now President cannot regrettably handle. Without mincing words, the parrhesiastes appears to paint the picture of 'a square peg in a round hole' in Nigeria's Presidency following which the country cannot engage in realistic policy formulation. These unmistakable vitriolic attacks on the competence of the President attest to the courage with which parrhesia is executed.

Going by Fairclough's (2009) view that ideology addresses the social wrongs of the day, by analysing their sources and causes, resistance to them, and the possibility of overcoming them, we will analyse Obasanjo's proposal for a Coalition movement. Obasanjo's proposal invokes an interesting aspect of parrhesia whereby it mirrors the present while inviting change for the future. Consider the extract below:

Excerpt 6

We need a coalition for Nigeria, CN. Such a movement at this junction need not be a political party, but one to which all well-meaning Nigerians can belong. That moment must be a coalition for democracy, and good governance social and economic well-being and progress. Coalition to salvage and redeem our country. (Paragraph 19)

One of the principles of parrhesia is for the parrhesiastes to propose a reform policy and be courageous enough to say it to the authority. Obasanjo thematises the political option and also foregrounds it graphologically with the use of bold face in the first sentence. In so doing, he emphasises the topicality of the issue and thereby calls people's attention to it. The new political movement that the writer seeks to sell to the Nigerian people is advertised as a marked departure from the familiar as seen in the contrastive structure '[...] need not be a political party but one to which all well-meaning Nigerians can belong'. The use of the negative modal verb 'need not be' to capture composition of the movement expresses the contrast between the old order and the writer's proposed new order, hence the use of the adversative conjunction 'but' to underline the shift of focus from party politics. In this regard, Obasanjo's offer of the Coalition for Nigeria (CN) as an alternative platform for political rebirth in Nigeria resonates with the principle of parrhesia which is aimed at bringing about that which does not exist and transforming that which exists.

The use of the declarative sentence 'That movement must be a coalition for democracy [...]' still cuts a lofty identity for this proposed political agenda. Obasanjo's choice of the modal auxiliary 'must' to foreclose any other agenda which the movement will pursue resonates with the insistence tone of parrhesia as posited by Michel Foucault. A way of realising a collective consent in a political speech of this nature is what Jeffries (2010, p. 9) refers to as naturalisation. She submits that some ideologies may be 'naturalised' to the extent that they become 'common sense' to members of the community. Obasanjo makes the goal of the

Movement become common sense to the people with the modal verb 'must'. It is interesting in the text that Obasanjo identifies himself with the 'well-meaning Nigerians' with his submission that 'You can count me with such a movement'.

On a final note, Obasanjo who has assumed the role of a parrhesiastes in his press statement seems to be aware of the price the parrhesiastes is likely to pay for daring to challenge the authority of the Presidency. Hence, he submits:

Excerpt 7

I know that praise-singers and hired attackers may be raised up against me for verbal or even physical attack but if I can withstand undeserved imprisonment and was ready to shed my blood by standing for Nigeria, I will consider no sacrifice too great to make for the good of Nigeria at any time.
(Paragraph 6)

With the verb of cognition 'know', Obasanjo tries to summon courage to face the repercussions of his act of speaking truth to power. His use of the correlative junction 'or' in 'verbal or even physical attack' shows the options of the dire consequences of speaking boldly to the President. While verbal attack is commonplace in politics in the form of press statements and rejoinders, physical attack is somewhat vague as it may even entail assassination bid. This thought of assassination is not far-fetched with the speaker making reference to his resolve in the past to shed his blood by standing for Nigeria.

By cutting the figure of a martyr with his readiness to shed his blood, the speaker seems to show the height of his loyalty. Therefore, in his final show of commitment to national development even at the cost of his life, Obasanjo declares in the expressive speech act: 'I will consider no sacrifice too great to make for the good of Nigeria at any time.' An expressive speech act is used "to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content" (Searle 1976, p. 12). Invocation of the metaphor of sacrifice (even paying the supreme price) used by the writer ultimately shows the daring disposition and uncompromising attitude of the parrhesiastes. Interestingly too, the writer seeks to appeal to the emotions of the audience that true loyalty to one's country could involve paying the supreme price which he appears ready to do.

Conclusion

The rhetorical style of the text is confrontational, combative and manipulative considering the critical nature of the text as parrhesia and the courageous figure of the parrhesiastes cut by the text producer. Generally, the rhetorical style has implications for understanding power struggle and mind control in a fledgling democracy where a political public speaker cuts the figure of a parrhesiastes, daring the power of incumbency, by deploying available persuasive means to sway the audience and charting a course of a future action. Given Aristotle's postulation about the essence of rhetoric, we find in this study that the rhetorical style is also largely proof-centred instead of being flowery. The speaker draws upon available means of persuasion ranging from invoking commonly held opinions as premises to validate

truth, arousing emotions in the audience, projecting self as a worthy character (particularly in selling his practical intelligence and status), to using logic to project share knowledge with the audience.

It is revealing that the rhetorical strategies we have analysed and the stylistic markers go a long way to validate Obasanjo's press statement as a prototype of political parrhesia. The rhetorical features and stylistic devices centre on the features of political parrhesia as being part of democracy, including the game of ascendancy, involving truth telling, being executed with courage, being a guide for reforming public policy, and finally being a risky affair. With the kind of political space which allows such a bold speech, the impression is given that there are checks and balances in Nigeria's political system where the voice of the opposition could be raised to challenge relevant authorities with a view to making the democratic culture thrive better.

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