

## **Discourse Style of Nigerian Coup Plotters**

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### **Abstract**

This essay examines the discourse style of Nigerian coup plotters. For more than two decades the military junta dominated the political landscape of Nigeria, during which they informed Nigerians of their sustained takeover of government from the discredited civilian or military predecessors. As they ruled through the barrel of the guns, they outsmarted the civilian politicians in corruption, executive lawlessness, culture of impunity and reckless irresponsibility. They shed the blood of their military comrades in sheer lust for power and constituted themselves into tin gods. This paper investigates selected speeches of Nigerian coup plotters with a view towards ascertaining their discourse styles. The paper speculates that the broadcast idiolect revolves around propaganda, polemic and discursive styles as well as a style which this paper calls fox, Tartuffe or tortoise through which they intimidate their opponents and the civilian populace into submission. This paper, by its nature, involves both qualitative and quantitative kind of research as it relies heavily on observation and library research. The military class succeeded in intervention mission but failed abysmally in the thrust of salvation. Their selfish quest made them neocolonialists in military garb. This paper, therefore, argues that their dismal failure in political governance of their father land ends up leaving the

masses much poorer and more disillusioned than they had been under the corrupt civilian government. The unmitigated disaster the military precipitated in political governance constrained Nigerian literary patriots to publish social satires – in all genres - amidst propaganda; they reprehensively indict the military villains and keep calling for a revolution from the disconsolate Nigerians.

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**Keywords:** Stylistic features, propaganda, military interregnum, social satire, breach of logical rules

## Introduction

Nigeria won its Independence from Imperial Great Britain on a platter of gold on October 1, 1960 and on October 1, 1963 it became a Republic. Nigerians were full of hopes and optimism what political goodies the fledging Republic would bring to them. But no sooner the Independence was heralded, expectations got soar as a result of mismanagement of the gains of democracy, owing to increasing incidence of nepotism, tribalism, election rigging, doctoring of election results, arson and looting, high profile corruption and executive lawlessness among the political elite.

Being the giant of Africa in terms of population, galaxy of human talent and fecundity of natural resources, Nigeria should be a great asset to its citizens. The sad political situation is rather a reflection of what we find in the continent. The evidence of this assertion can be confirmed in the corpora of literary works of many African literary writers cutting across Anglophone, Francophone through Lusophone (Literature in Portuguese) literatures. For instance, we read Chinua Achebe's works of *A Man of the People*, *Anthills of the Savannah* and *The Trouble with Nigeria*; Ayi Kwei Arma's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (from the West African sub-region); Ngugi wa Thiong O's *Petals of Blood* (from East Africa). The literatures of writers from South Africa centred on protest against Apartheid; while Lusophone literatures from the five Portuguese-speaking nations of Africa like Angola, Mozambique, Carpe-Verde, Sao Tome and Principe as well as Guinea Bissau, were more of protest against the shackles of colonialism. Some of the Portuguese literary writers include Rui de Noronha and Joao Dia (Mozambicans); Sum Marky (Sao Tome); Fernando Castro Soromenho Agostiniho Neto, Aires de Almeida Santos, Alexandre Daskalos, etc (Angolans).

At this point, a brief examination of some keywords of the essay is deemed necessary for the knowledge which equips us with better understanding of the broadcast language style of the coup plotters. The lexical and grammatical categories are stylistic features, those of propaganda, social satire, breach of logical rules, etc.

## Stylistic Features

Style domiciles in the language. The uniqueness of style is that it is idiosyncratic to an individual, as no two persons, not even identical twins, have exactly the same style. Style, therefore, is a hallmark of the man. That may be why Leech and Short (9) say that “‘STYLE’... refers to the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose....” They welcome the distinction Saussure (9, 13) has made between his lexical creations of *langue* and *parole*; *langue*, being the code or system of rules common to speakers of a language and *parole* being the particular uses of this system, or selections from this system, that speakers or writers make on that occasion. Saussure’s lexical inventions approximate to Chomsky’s (11) diction he prefaces as *competence and performance*, which he summarizes as indices of grammaticality.

When we come to style and its features, we lean on Fowler’s (23) recipe of this term; according to him, the style of a literary text is the sum total of the features of the phenomenon which occurs as variables, not constants. He says:

Convergence of stylistic features could of course be present in an utterance; it is, in itself, nothing special. At any point in a text there is stratification of form, patterns at several levels working simultaneously. The style of a text is the totality of these patterns, especially patterns which are variables, not constants. We can compare styles as the sums of several stylistic features, taking each in turn as an individual feature for comparison.

The features of style, as documented by Anyachonkeya (17), indicate that they include “the cinematic style, the discursive style, the legalese style, the mass communication style, the epistolary style, the military style, the pedagogic style, the polemic style, the propaganda style, the memoir style, the question style, Socratic or jurisprudence style and the reality style.”

In addition to these style features captured by Anyachonkeya, there is yet a unique and innovative style this paper calls the *fox*, *Tartuffe* or *tortoise* style amply harnessed by the coup plotters in their broadcast speeches. The *Tartuffe* style domiciles in the ideation stage of communication; it is, indeed, a linguistic feature in that language comprises spoken, written and paralanguage or nonverbal cue. The style encases such unwholesome psychological constructs as deceit, trickery, corruption, graft, selfishness and Machiavellian pursuit; they are actually a bunch of negative values. The style is silent in all the agenda of the actors but everywhere manifest through their

programme implementation. In fact, the Tartuffe style is veiled since it situates in the milieu of ideation stage of communication; it manifests itself clearly when it is overt in the actions and thought processes of the character or person. In other words, the fox or Tartuffe style is unveiled in the actions of the individual. So, in this essay, we will observe how the Nigerian military coup plotters allowed the tortoise style to betray them in what they did and said or what other persons said about them which run contrary to the context of their text broadcast; in the execution of their policies or political agenda or even what other sources outside as nonparticipant observers say about them. In effect, the Tartuffe style is hidden agenda (more or less) of the gladiators.

We call this style feature fox, Tartuffe or tortoise; to represent shades of motifs we find in the oral literature of certain land and clime. Anyachonkeya (25) captures these motifs in his poetics thus: “If a Ghanaian tricks you/Show him a spider/If a Senegalese tricks you/Show him a rabbit/If a European tricks you/Show him a fox/If an Igbo tricks you/Show him a tortoise....” This style feature and those cited in Anyachonkeya thus represent “the totality of...patterns, which are variables, not constants”, as aptly described by Fowler.

### **Discourse Style of Propaganda**

As shown above, propaganda is a discourse style. Propaganda has a pleasant history until it acquires a controversial meaning it assumes today. The word dates back to 1622, when Pope Gregory XV set up a committee for the propagation of Catholic faith. The Committee *Congregatio de propaganda fidei* now, APF – Association for the Propagation of the Faith was charged with the responsibility of overseeing foreign missions and the dissemination of the faith.

Today, however, the word has acquired controversial connotation to mean an “organized circulation by a political group, etc., of doctrine, information, misinformation, rumour or opinion, intended to bring about reform, etc...” Robinson (1110). To some, propaganda means indoctrination, promotion or inculcation (Geddes and Grosset,471).

Propaganda is amply used in politics, among advertising agencies or organizations, religious bodies, and others. Information passed as propaganda may be true or false. When it is true, it does mean that it is positive or beneficial to the society; but when it is false, it is negative or harmful to the populace. The military coup plotters used propaganda a great deal– negative, of course, - to discredit their predecessors in a bid to justify their ascendancy in power through a putsch, in a seeming mission of salvation. In their harmful use of propaganda they flagrantly violate logical principles and thus indulge in tremendous commission of logical fallacies; in

this way also, they negate with impunity fundamental rules or principles of logic, such as honesty, knowledge/awareness of the rules of logic, avoidance of emotional reaction and prejudice, avoidance of common errors in logic and adequate consideration of problems.

Let us at this point examine some of the broadcast speeches of coup plotters in the history of military intervention in Nigeria political governance.

### **Broadcast Coup Plot Speech of Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, August 1, 1966**

My Fellow Countrymen,

The year, 1966, has certainly been a fateful year for our beloved country, Nigeria. I have been brought to the position today of having to shoulder the grave responsibilities of this country with the consent of the majority of the Armed Forces and members of the Supreme Military Council, as a result of the unfortunate incidents that occurred in the early morning of July 29, 1966.

However, before I dwell on the said issue of July 29, 1966, I would like to recall to you the sad and unfortunate incident of July 15, 1966, which bears relevance. According to certain well-known facts, which have so far not been disclosed to the nation and world, the country was plunged into a national disaster by the grave and unfortunate action taken by a section of the Army against the public. By this I mean that a group of officers in conjunction with certain civilians, decided to overthrow the legal government of the day, but their efforts were thwarted by the inscrutable discipline and loyalty of the great majority of the Army and the other members of the Armed Forces and the Police.

The Army was called upon to take up the reins of government until such a time that law and order had been restored. The attempt to overthrow the government of the day was done by eliminating political leaders and high-ranking Army officers, the majority of whom

came from a particular section of the country.

...

There followed a period of determined effort of reconstruction ably shouldered by Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, but unfortunately certain persons caused suspicion and gave doubts of the Government's sincerity in several quarters ....

The position on the early morning of July 29 was a report from Abeokuta Garrison that there was a mutiny and two senior and one junior army officers from a particular country were killed. This soon spread to Ibadan and Ikeja.

The Supreme Commander was by this time at Ibadan attending the natural rulers' conference and was due to return on the afternoon of July 29. The government lodge was reportedly attacked and the last report was that he and the West Military Governor were both kidnapped by some soldiers. Up till now, there is no confirmation of their whereabouts....

I promise you that I shall do all I can to return to civil rule as soon as it can be arranged...(Asomugha, 2016:21-27).

### **Analysis of Yakubu Gowon's Broadcast Speech**

The greeting or complimentary style of coup plotters to their fellow nationals is often "Fellow Nigerians, citizens" or "countrymen", an idiolect meant to curry the cooperation of the citizenry and to carry them along and make them believe that the reasons for intervening in the political governance of the nation were patriotic and in their best interest. Thus they present themselves as the Messiah. General Gowon adopts this discourse style with a high degree of excellence. Through his speech style, he portrays himself in all saintliness, as most coup plotters do, anyway. He, for instance, faults his military predecessor as culpable of the crisis. In his broadcast, the General admits: "There followed a period of determined effort of reconstruction ably shouldered by Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, *but unfortunately certain persons caused suspicion and gave doubts of the Government's sincerity in several quarters ....*" Where does the General belong, the loyal Army to the slain Supreme Commander or the dissident

group that decimated his mentor and benefactor? Again, General Gowon adopts Machiavellian style. The failed bloody coup that claimed the life of General Murtala Mohammed, where he is implicated by Colonel Buka Suka Dimka, the exponent and leader of the February 1976 coup, is a shiny example of his Machiavelli temper. Of course, Ojukwu (339) unveils the psychic milieu of the man Gowon when he declares:

- We accuse Gowon of murder, for plotting the death of his benefactor, Major-General J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi, late Supreme Commander and Head of the Nigerian Military Government.
- We accuse Gowon of duplicity and bad faith for consistently failing to honor agreements mutually arrived at.
- We accuse Gowon of genocide for seeking to exterminate 14, 000, 000 Biafrans in a most gruesome manner.
- We accuse Gowon of aspiring to be Hitler of Africa.

On the contentious commission of heinous and gross genocide, Ojukwu accuses Gowon, it is bizarre and amazing that Gowon could do that or even yet involved himself in bloody coup considering his Christian background. Ojukwu declares this vexed issue thus:

Genocide, I repeat, proscribed by the United Nations Charter. It is a crime under the United Nations Convention on Human Rights. It is totally condemned by all the Christian churches. Yet Gowon claims to be “a Christian and the son of a Methodist minister” – a claim calculated to impress foreign churchmen and press correspondents who do not know that he is in reality the leader of a Muslim jihad directed toward the annihilation of Biafrans and the Islamization of Biafra (233).

General Gowon indulges in negative propaganda by twisting the rules of logic in order to present himself as credible alternative and advance his agenda to the generality of Nigerian citizenry. Textual evidence will attest to this assertion. “The attempt to overthrow the government of the day was done by eliminating political leaders and high-ranking Army officers, *the majority of whom came from a particular section of the country.* ...”The italicized portion of the excerpt tends to suggest that the power-hungry-and-



blood-thirsty General does not know the truth that the coup was carried out by five majors cutting across ethnic divides and the unavoidable circumstances which crept in resulting in the elimination of certain “political leaders and high-ranking Army officers.” His adoption of this breach of logical rules is aimed at whipping up sentiment and heating up the already charged body polity.

Gowon’s hidden agenda in the sustained coup in which he has denied being a participant observer unveils his fox style. A fake friend is worse than a declared enemy.

Moreover, Gowon reports: “The government lodge (of Ibadan) was reportedly attacked and the last report was that he and the West Military Governor were both kidnapped by some soldiers. Up till now, there is no confirmation of their whereabouts....” He feigns ignorance of what actually took place, (another evidence of his tortoise style exposed), when in actual fact he was not only privy to the bloody putsch, but also the kingpin. His dastardly act of the coup d’état worked out for him; he was not successful but his criminal venture sustained. Yes, we say *sustained*, not *successful* because coup d’état borders on illegality (Momah, 34). The General betrayed his sinister machinations as one who is economical with the truth when he assured Nigerians: “I promise you that I shall do all I can to return to civil rule as soon as it can be arranged”; an inconsistent and insincere affirmation that lasted for more than nine years but for the intervention of bloodless coup of General Murtala Mohammed (Asomugha, 21-27). Gowon’s broadcast coup speech is replete with stylistic features that may not be exhausted in a delimited space of this essay.

### **Broadcast Coup Plot Speech of Col. Murtala Mohammed, July 29, 1975**

Fellow Nigerians,

Events of the past years have indicated that despite our great human and material resources, the government has not been able to fulfill the legitimate expectations of our people. Nigeria has been left to drift.

This situation, if not arrested, would inevitably have resulted in chaos and even bloodshed. In the endeavour to build a strong and virile nation, Nigerians have shed much blood; the thought of further bloodshed, for whatever reasons, must, I am sure be revolting to our people.



The Armed Forces, having examined the situation came to the conclusion that certain changes were inevitable.

After the civil war, the affairs of state, hitherto a collective responsibility became characterized by lack of consultation, indecision, indiscipline and even neglect. Indeed, the public at large became disillusioned and disappointed by those developments. This trend was clearly incompatible with the philosophy and image of a corrective regime.

Unknown to the general public the feeling of disillusionment was also evident among members of the Armed Forces whose administration was neglected but who out of sheer loyalty to the nation, and in the hope that there would be a change continued to suffer in silence.

Things got to a stage where the head of the administration became virtually inaccessible even to official advisers; and when advised was often ignored. Responsible opinion, including advice by eminent Nigerians, traditional rulers, intellectuals, etc was similarly discarded. The leadership either by design or default had become too insensitive to the true feelings and warnings of the people. The nation was thus being plunged inexorably into chaos.

It was obvious that matters could not be allowed to continue in this manner and in order to give the nation a new lease of life, and a sense of direction, the following decisions were taken.

- The removal of General Yakubu Gowon as Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.
- The retirement of General Yakubu Gowon from the Armed Forces in his present rank of General with full

benefits, in recognition of his past services to the nation.

- General Gowon will be free to return to the country as soon as conditions permit; he will be free to pursue any legitimate undertakings of his choice in any part of the country. His personal safety and freedom and those of his family will be guaranteed....All civil commissioners in the Federal Executive Council are relieved of their appointment with immediate effect....

I appeal to you all to cooperate with the Government in our endeavour to give this nation a new lease of life. This change in Government has been accomplished without shading blood; and we intend to keep it so. Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Good night (Asomugha, 2004: 29-37)

### **Analysis of Murtala Mohammed's Broadcast Speech**

We have already observed the broadcast opening speech style of coup plotters, which is "Fellow Nigerians". From the no-nonsense General, he begins with a discursive style; his choice of non-bloody change of government, to reduce shedding of blood of fellow nationals. General Mohammed explains: "This situation, if not arrested, would inevitably have resulted in chaos and even bloodshed. In the endeavour to build a strong and virile nation, Nigerians have shed much blood; the thought of further bloodshed, for whatever reasons, must, be revolting to our people."

He provides, through discursive style, why the peaceful change of guard was inevitable, which we cite here again.

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Unknown to the general public the feeling of disillusionment was also evident among members of the Armed Forces whose

administration was neglected but who out of sheer loyalty to the nation, and in the hope that there would be a change, continued to suffer in silence.

Things got to a stage where the head of the administration became virtually inaccessible even to official advisers; and when advised was often ignored. Responsible opinion, including advice by eminent Nigerians, traditional rulers, intellectuals, etc was similarly discarded (30).

Of course, a patient and analytic populace would believe General Mohammed in the drifting ship and uncaring government of General Yakubu Gowon, who promised to return the nation to civil rule as soon as it could be arranged. Gowon's assurance turned out to be bitter kola sound in the ear which is antithetical to its taste in the mouth.

After his discursive speech, he announces a plan of action on the deposed and discredited General:

- The removal of General Yakubu Gowon as Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.
- The retirement of General Yakubu Gowon from the Armed Forces in his present rank of General with full benefits, in recognition of his past services to the nation.
- General Gowon will be free to return to the country as soon as conditions permit; he will be free to pursue any legitimate undertakings of his choice in any part of the country. His personal safety and freedom and those of his family will be guaranteed....

General Mohammed ends his speech with a fervent wish for Nigeria and parting greeting: "Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Good night."

The broadcast speeches of Generals Obasanjo, Buhari and Babaginda are similar in terms of synonymous styles and logical presentation of their prose texts.

It is from the military that the linguistic style "with immediate effect" came into the register or idiolect of Nigerian English.

## **Broadcast Coup Plot Speech of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari, January 1, 1984**

Fellow Nigerians,

You are aware of the change in the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which was announced early this morning. In pursuance of the primary objectives of saving our great nation from total collapse, I, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari of the Nigerian Army, have, after due consultation amongst the (service chiefs) of the armed forces, been formally invested with the authority of the of the Head of the Federal Military Government, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

It is with humility and a sense of responsibility, that I accept this challenge and call to national duty. As you have heard in that announcement, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has been suspended, except those of it which are exempted in the Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree to be issued in due course.

This change became necessary in order to put an end to the serious economic predicament and the crisis of confidence now affecting our nation...(Asomugha, 51-61).

### **Analysis of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari's Broadcast Speech**

We also note the formal style of opening speech broadcast by each coup plot leader. The coup plotter does not spare any indictment for the deposed civilian government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. In the broadcast General Buhari accuses Alhaji Shagari government of mismanaging the national economy; do-or-die temper of politicians at the peril of the electorate; corruption and indiscipline, among other things. However, findings elsewhere reveal that those accusations were neither here nor there, in terms of their real motive in their intervention in Nigerian politics, instead of confining themselves in the rule of engagement (RoE). Put differently, all of it amounts to blatant lies.

The retired Generals who recycled themselves into power did, and still do, are selfish. They did and still do so to protect their looted economic

interests from being destroyed by the government policies of the civilian government; they also feel sidelined in policy-making matters. So out of greed and fear they come together again in another palace coup to topple the civilian government of Shehu Shagari on the smokescreen of corruption and ineptitude. It is out of this selfish motive that the Tartuffe, fox or tortoise style manifests itself in the (hidden) agenda of the coup plotters.

We hereby investigate the unpatriotic and selfish background under which the military juntamingle(d) themselves in or back to politics including the 'civilian' governments of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and the present President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB), we have to quote our source in full without dilution to showcase their employment of fox style. According to Braji (172-174):

The battle for political power is unequivocally mired in conspiracies and intrigues. Hence, retired Generals with political ambitions do not have immunity against this malady. Thus, during the Second Republic (1979-1983), it was the retired Generals that schemed and supported the coup that toppled the civilian regime of President Shehu Shagari in 1983. These retired officers as indicated above represent big business and also wield significant influence in the military. Scared of losing political privileges and apprehensive of the collapse of their individual (and collective) investments in the various sectors they moved (sometimes, separately at other times jointly), to defend their capitalist interest, which appeared threatened by the mismanagement of the civilian government of Shehu Shagari.

Braji names the retired military gladiators in these schemes. He reveals:

General Danjuma's experience provides example that buttresses our argument. The General had considerable investments in Dantata jetty, Wimpey jetty, and Noli jetty, which almost collapsed a few years after he retired from service. These jetties had handled big ships and large barges. In fact, during the civilian government of President Shehu Shagari a decision was made to close these

jetties along with all others operating in the nation's seaports as they were justifiably suspected of assisting or involved in smuggling. Feeling threatened by the move, General Danjuma came out clearly to oppose the Shagari Government. He was reported to have said in an interview that the civilian government of Shehu Shagari was a 'cabinet of touts.' He accused them of 'touting contracts,' as well as aggressively looting the treasury thereby 'killing the economy (173).'

The next dramatic actors, as it were, among the retired army Generals implicated in the overtures, are General Olusegun Obasanjo and General ShehuYar'Adua. Our informant, Braji, continues:

Retired General Obasanjo too had never hidden his disgust and hostility against the Shehu Shagari Government for failing to protect the poultry industry in which he had substantial investment. He was also irked by the regime's failure to accord him the respect he deserved as a former head of government. Also General Shehu Yar'Adua who was so unhappy with the Shagari economic policy, along with other civilians such as Dr. Mahmud Tukur formed a faction within the ruling NPN party which they Christened 'Concerned Goup.' This faction was formed with the aim of forming an alliance with UPN to defeat the ruling party during the 1983 General Elections (173-174).

The desperate power brokers of the retired Generals collaborated with serving high-ranking military officers. Again Braji continues to lay the cat out of the bag as he unveils the mask:

Turner and Badru in an exciting study have related the linkage between the retired Generals and serving officers within the Nigerian military formation. These scholars have claimed that retired Generals had, on realizing Shagari's moves to hand over power

to his service chiefs, called a meeting under the instigation and leadership of General Obasanjo to forestall the move. In attendance were serving Generals Buhari and Babangida and retired Generals GoeGsarba, and Zamani Lekwot. The purpose of the meeting was to finalize the execution of a long-planned military coup to preempt the Shagari maneuver.

Retired Major Mustapha Jokolo relates that while the 1983 intervention was being planned, some serving military officers 'pleaded with General Obasanjo to publicly condemn Shagari's Government', because they 'believe that the weight of Obasanjo's criticism would help in justifying' the coup d'état. The General was an eager collaborator as he had his personal reason to discredit the regime for failing to approve enough import licences for his farm 'which were not given to him to his satisfaction.' ...The botched attempt to overthrow General SaniAbacha's military government was also linked to (the) two retired Generals, Obasanjo and Yar'Adua, who were consequently imprisoned. The latter died in detention while the former was fortunate enough to come out of the prison to contest the elections in 1999, which with the support of retired army officers saw him President.

The skirmishes of retired army Generals are an eye opener under which they recycle themselves to power as patriots, who in actual fact are mercenaries. The situation is still the same with the APC-led Federal Government under the headship of PMB; they have concealed motive, which is selfishness. That PMB appointed himself Minister of Petroleum; and his recent appointments whereby he allotted ten key positions to the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy the lion share, leaving out entirely an ethnic stock and zone that did not give him winning votes belie his claim that he is for everybody and belongs to nobody as well as his claimed "change begins with me" political philosophy. So the change mantra is sham and phoney.



**Broadcast Coup Plot Speech of Major Gideon Orkar, April 22, 1990**

Fellow Nigerian Citizens,

On behalf of the patriotic and well-meaning peoples of the Middle Belt and the Southern parts of this country, I, Major Gideon Orkar, wish to happily inform you of the successful ousting of the dictatorial, drug baronish, evil man, deceitful, homo-sexually-centered, prodigalistic, unpatriotic Babaginda. We have equally commenced their trials for unabated corruption, mismanagement of national economy, the murders of Dele Giwa, Major-General Mammam Vasta, with other officers as there was no attempted coup but mere intentions that were yet to materialize and other human rights violations.

...We wish to emphasize that it is not just another coup but a well conceived, planned and executed revolution for the marginalized, oppressed and enslaved people of the Middle Belt and the South with a view to freeing ourselves and children yet unborn from eternal slavery and colonization by a clique of this country.

Our history is replete with numerous and uncontrollable instances of callous and insensitive dominatory, repressive intrigues by those who think it is their birthright to dominate till eternity the political and economic privileges of this great country to the exclusion of the people of Middle Belt and the South. They have almost succeeded in subjugating the Middle Belt and making them voiceless and now extending same to the South... (Asomugha, 85-96).

Indeed, Major Orkar's failed coup is heavily replete with the styles of polemics, discursive, propaganda, reality, and memoir. We can go and on to do an inventory of the opulent discourse styles he has used. As a matter of fact, Major Orkar's broadcast coup speech is a must read. At the end of the reading encounter, the reader will be constrained to think aloud with Sunny

Okosun in his music captioned “*Which Way Nigeria?*”jurisprudence narrative style.

### **Implications of Findings**

We have used language, in this essay, to meet the two exigent needs of language in our exploration of discourse style of broadcast language of Nigerian coup plotters. These two exigent uses or needs, according to I. A. Richards (261-271), are scientific and emotive; we employ language to achieve emotive needs when we write poetry, be it lyrical or narrative poems. In like manner, when we write literary prose and non-literary prose we engage in scientific use of language. Even though Richards is silent on plays and criticism as part and parcel of literary ventures, we include them as features of genres of literary prose, for they are all creative endeavours. In effect, we harness the resources of language to query the discourse style of broadcast speeches of Nigerian coup plotters, for language exists basically in literature; an assertion Obobolo (246) prefaces as language being the material of literature.

It is expedient therefore that we examine the discourse styles of broadcast speeches of Nigerian military coup plotters against the backdrop of their claimed salvaging missions to ascertain their successes and failings. For one thing the military junta ruled through the barrel of the gun. They used the gun to intimidate the citizenry. No one had the stamina and courage to query their pillaging and crippling of the national economy.

A high profile corruption characterized the military administration; through the military suspension of relevant sections of the constitution, they embarked on unrestricted liberty to create more States. The provincial structure of State creation as well as delineation of geo-political zones was achieved by them. No Republic of Nigeria, from 1960 till the Eighth Republic, has been able to create more States other than those created by the military irrespective of the fact that it is expedient to do so in the South East geopolitical zone, which has only five States. In spite of spirited efforts of various constitutional reforms and amendments, the various Republics after the civil war have not got the stamina to create further States.

Our investigation shows that each coup plotter accuses the other of corruption, looting, ineptitude and betrayal of the citizenry. General Muhammadu Buhari lays the charges of corruption and indiscipline, among others on the civilian government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari; General Ibrahim Babaginda does not spare General Muhammadu deposed government of similar charges in addition to highhandedness and uncaring attitude to his military colleagues. General Babaginda berates Buhari: “Major-General Muhammadu Buhari was too rigid and uncompromising in his attitude to issues of national significance.”So, it has been a case of kettle calling pot

black. While castigating the military dictatorship in his critical essay on Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, Maduka (65, 66) observes:

(Achebe) casts a look at the role of the military in Nigerian politics and provides an insight which has a resonance for the whole of Africa. He feels disturbed that the soldiers who have routinely organized coups and taken over governments in various parts of Africa have become worse than the civilians they have replaced. After years of being in power, they have *out-Nangancd Nanga* in greed, avarice, selfishness, corruption, purposeless leadership and insensitivity to people's needs.

Ex-raying the role of the military in Nigerian political governance, Nwachukwu-Agbada (81-107) describes their political adventurism as "intervention without salvation."

Other literary critics do not spare the military and their adventurous incursion into Nigeria politics. Using Achebe's social satire *Anthills of the Savannah* Inyama describes military dictatorships in political governance as "a panoramic examination of their absurd dilemma with leadership and power"; and Gordimer (7-8), quoted in Inyama, describes their mission as a 'tyranny of clowns.' Awosika (243) includes "corruption led by unlimited power wielded by military politicians, and the tragedy of the future generation" among the certain evils that currently stifled the healthy growth of Nigeria. The ills precipitated by the military in national governance are borne out of selfishness as they recycle themselves back to the civil politics of the land. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (retired Army General and former Head of State), recycled himself successfully; General Ibrahim Badamosi Babaginda, former Military President, tried and failed; General Muhammadu Buhari, also former Head of State, tried repeatedly and succeeded ultimately; General Abacha tried to commute himself as military Head of State to civilian President and died for it while in office; other retired military top notches are standby warming up. While working on Achebe's *Anthills of Savannah*, Ngara (260) castigates the military in national governance as a result of multiplicity of ills they bequeathed to posterity; Ngara describes writers as metaphoric "gadflies that prick our consciousness" to the plethora of social evils the military and political elite entrench into our social psyche.

The avid military power brokers have tasted power; so they recycled themselves to power in order to continue to amass wealth via corrupt means.

It is the continued mess of corruption, executive lawlessness and gross ills which persuade literary writers to publish satires to attack the ills the military made of the national economy. General Ibrahim Babaginda, for instance, as military President, appointed himself Minister of Defence and brought the State Security Service (SSS) directly under his purview. In like manner, President Muhammadu Buhari appointed himself Oil Minister, dissolved the Management positions of the NNPC; and of the fifteen key positions of the management cadre, he gave ten slots of it to the Hausa-Fulani mafia; gave three slots to the Yoruba nationality and two slots to the South-South. The Igbo race of the South East got nothing of the slots, a zone with three States (Abia, Anambra and Imo) as oil-producing States. This is among the legacies of military dictatorship in political governance of Nigeria, which now spill over to the civilian government.

Given this anomaly, you do not flog a child and order him not to cry. Today Nigeria is bedeviled with revolutionary freedom fighting blocs of IPOB, MASSOB, NDA (Niger Delta Avengers), Boko Haram, Middle Belt agitations, the Odua People's Movement as well as an avalanche of social ills as cattle rustlers, hate speeches, quit notices of entire races to leave certain sections of the country, masquerading Fulani herdsmen(who PMB calls criminals rather than terrorists organization as Boko Haram), baby factories, kidnap-for-ransom saga, armed robbery, agitations for the restructuring of the country, restructuring of tertiary education, true federalism, enduring leadership, etcetera.

For an enduring friendship to exist we must eschew deceit. Ogoni Land must be cleaned; the hiccups must be addressed; if they are not addressed Operation Crocodile Smile, Operation Python Dance and Operation Dole, etc, declaration of IPOB as terrorist organization *cannot* be the panacea. What has been crying – that plugged the nation into thirty-month civil war –is still crying. That ominous bird that used to cry when a corpse (person) is about to die has begun to cry again. Deal with the problems at their very roots. Sadly, we foresee, pessimistically, that owing to greed, deceit, and ethnic or mafia selfishness, the imbroglio will not be addressed. The patient who is being treated of elephantiasis of the scrotum and at the same time is suffering from swelling of the stomach must fetch what he left at the Evil Forest. The land is hereby aptly described in emotive language of I. A. Richards' categorization(10): "A land of simmering contrasts/In conflicting diversities/Masquerading egalitarianism/Amidst Apartheid/A land where true Federalism/Is utopian and/A bunch of luxury." That has been *the trouble with Nigeria*, the sad *truth of fiction* (Achebe, 1-68; 107-121). We are merely trading on a keg of gunpowder, oblivious of when it will explode; Nigeria political leaders venture where angels fear to tread.

## Conclusion

This essay has attempted to examine the discourse style of broadcast style of Nigerian coup plotters. The paper investigated selected excerpts of broadcast language of Nigerian coup plotters with a view to ascertaining the discourse styles they exploited. The paper speculated that the broadcast idiolect revolves around propaganda, polemic and discursive styles through which they intimidate their opponents as well as the civilian populace into submission and resignation to fate. Facts of style reveal that the military exploited polemics, discursive, propaganda, fox, among the salient discourse styles.

Thus the military class succeeded in intervention mission but failed woefully in the thrust of salvation. Their selfish quest left them neocolonialists in military garb.

The paper argued that their dismal failure in political governance of their father land ended up leaving the masses much poorer than they had been under the corrupt civilian government, that the disconsolate people soliloquize, thinking aloud of going back to Egypt.

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