

The Leader is a Watchman: A Pragma-Dialectical Reading of Olusegun Obasanjo's My Watch

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Abstract

Olusegun Obasanjo's My Watch explicates a representation of Nigerian socio-political history and is laden with political arguments. This paper investigates the pragma-rhetorical devices and the strategic patterns utilized by Olusegun Obasanjo in My Watch - a three-volume text. However, only Volume Two: Political and Public Affairs (PPA) was considered for the analysis. Adopting van Eemeren and Grootendorst's pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, this paper analyses Obasanjo's argument on Odi Military Action and the Third-Term issues as presented in PPA. It identifies five presentational devices: positive pragmatic argument, praxs, presuppositions, negative lexicalization, passive construction; and six strategic maneuvering techniques: blame game, smokescreen techniques, prerogative argument, fallacious appeal to authority, ad-hominem attacks, and ethotic appeal. The paper posits that Obasanjo's presentational devices and strategic maneuvering techniques are adapted strategically to the beliefs and preferences of his audience. It concludes that Obasanjo's narration focuses not on 'redemption' but 'justification' and the argument adopted the standard strategic maneuvering of political rhetoric which is often polarizing and destructive; therefore, his strategic maneuvering derails.

Keywords

pragma-rhetorical devices; strategic maneuvering techniques; Olusegun Obasanjo's narration; my watch



I. Introduction

Autobiographical argument creates a unique self in discourse, exemplifying the human desire to connect, construct, and share life experiences as data to support a claim. It focuses on a person's critical influences, experiences, and identity that are strategically utilised in making a claim about oneself (Habermas and Bluck, 2000). One crucial way to evaluate argumentation, especially in a political autobiography, is to offer reflections on the sorts of disagreements and predicaments that engage entire political units, societies, or cultures, and how such disagreements are addressed by an author. How an autobiographer chooses to define problems, support claims, validate premises and state conclusions is crucial to whether readers are likely to accept the argument or not.

Autobiographical texts that expound Nigerian politics have enjoyed considerable attention in scholarship from different perspectives such as literary (Nwachukwu, 1987, Oriaku, 2007, Ojaide, 2015), discourse analysis (Adeoti, 2003, Hunjo, 2010), and pragmatics (Ocholor, 2015; Odebunmi, 2019). One noticeable trend is that most of these studies have focused on the lives of significant persons in the Nigerian society as they reflect the cultural values, aesthetic trends, and practices of the people as well as their socio-historical epochs. The tilt towards self-presentation makes a reflection on the dissonance in points of view and the myriad of conflicts that characterize the Nigerian

society and at the same time enhance dialogue between the authors of political autobiography and the Nigerian public.

A notable figure in Nigeria, whose autobiographical narratives have often generated heated political arguments, is Nigeria's former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. He is, arguably, Nigeria's most celebrated elder statesman. His acceptance of Biafra's surrender ended the turbulent Nigerian Civil War and, he was the first Nigerian Military Head of State to hand over power to a democratically-elected civilian Head. His penchant for writing, most especially in documenting important facts about Nigeria's political history is undeniable. He published *My Command* (1980), *Not My Will* (1990), *This Animal Called Man* (1998), and *My Watch* (2014).

My Command and *Not My Will* are political memoirs. The former is a graphic description of the traumatic conflicts that ravaged Nigeria between 1967 and 1970, narrated from Olusegun Obasanjo's perspective while the latter detailed the general direction which the military administration of Muritala/Obasanjo pursued from July 1975 to October 1979. *My Watch* (Volumes 1-3) completes a trilogy of his two previous memoirs and it chronicles Obasanjo's early life, his civil war experience, the stewardship of his first stay in power, the interregnum, his return to the political landscape as well as his views on the present and future of the "Project Nigeria".

All of these books revolve around Obasanjo's account of Nigeria's political history in his quintessential role as a leader and an elder statesman and have generated (and still generates) serious national political arguments among Nigerians. For instance, *My Watch* which provides the data for this study is presented as a realistic and true account of events that culminated in the development of the author and his unalloyed influence on Nigerian political development. Thus, the conceptions of selfhood, the recoverability of private cum public past experiences, and the self-reflexive character in the texts invite a context of doubts, oppositions, objections, and counterclaims. This larger and more open-ended sense of political argumentation in the autobiographical narrative affords this study the advantage of approaching Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Watch* through a pragma-dialectic examination of some of the strategic manoeuvring it invites. The assumption that guides this research is on the pragma-dialectical conviction that both logic and rhetoric see argumentation as the socio-cultural practice of constructing, presenting, criticizing, and revising arguments and at the core of which is the process of Arguing (Johnson 2003). Obasanjo's use of language and the description of others on the conviction that he is the one appointed by God to watch over Nigerians have continued to generate heated arguments. Examining the linguistic manipulations in Obasanjo's memoirs is instructive in providing clarification for the difference of opinion at issues and the positions of the author on those issues that have continued to generate heated debates in the Nigerian political circle.

II. Review of Literatures

Previous studies on Olusegun Obasanjo's self-constructs have largely concentrated on his speeches and have mostly excoriated his use of language both in public and private spaces (Awonuga, 2005, Ayoola, 2005, Adetunji, 2006, 2009, Shopeju and Ojukwu 2008, Babatunde & Odepidan, 2009, Tenuche, 2009, Adedun & Atolagbe, 2011, and pragmatic

(Odebonmi, 2019) use of language while many others are in form of book reviews, newspaper commentaries, and blog posts. This infrequent attention in scholarship has robbed the reading public of the rational evaluation of the various moves made in the discourse and the strategic patterns behind Obasanjo's dialectic and rhetorical goals.

2.1 Theoretical Perspectives

Olusegun Obasanjo's narrative lends itself well as a very interesting ground for exploring argumentative discourse as an exchange of verbal moves ideally intended to resolve a difference of opinion. Although the discourse is entirely narrative, the segmentation of different topical issues in the text invites a reading of argumentative moves as pragmatic acts functioning in a context of disagreement. The present study aligns with van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984) conceptions of rhetorical argumentation, Houtlosser, Jackson, and Kauffeld's conception of speech acts in argumentative discourse, Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1969) informal argumentation techniques, and Toulmin's (2003) proposition that to do justice to an argument, a standpoint needs to be presented in a reasonable way such that it is acceptable to addressees who are in doubt rather than a logical proof of its truth.

2.2 Speech Acts in Argumentative Practice

The pragmatic act theory is a reaction to the speech act theory - a theory which has a deep base in the philosophies of J. L. Austin (1962), Paul Grice (1957), and John Searle (1969). Consequent upon the limitation of J. L. Austin's Speech Act Theory, Mey proposes the Pragmatic Act Theory as not just a theory of reference but a theory of action which situates speech acts in the appropriate socio-cultural contexts (Osisanwo, 2017). Mey (2001:43) argues that "the context determines what one can say and what one cannot say," even in argumentative activities. Mey posits that in order for speech acts to be effective they have to be situated: "they both rely on, and actively create the situation in which they are realized ... there are no speech acts, but only situated speech acts, or instantiated pragmatic acts" (Mey 2001: 218). While the current paper is guided by the activity part, which includes acts that can be performed by interactants in communication, the other side, the textual part has a list of components which make the context (or co-text). The activity part (on the left) covers speech acts, indirect speech acts, conversational ("dialogue") acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts and physical acts.

The approaches by Houtlosser, Jackson and Kauffeld and van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1993) on the ways that speech acts provide normative frameworks for argumentative interactions is of particular interest in this paper. Houtlosser, Jackson, and Kauffeld demonstrate how an initiating speech act can provide part of the normative framework necessary to coordinate a productive argumentative interaction between people who disagree. In the approaches of Jackson and Kauffeld, many different speech acts can be used to accomplish different tasks. In any given case, arguers thus have a choice of the speech act to use to initiate their interaction. The utilization of different speech acts in the defence of Obasanjo's standpoints on the Military action in Odi and the Third term saga would be explored in this study.

2.3 Pragma-Dialectical Theory

Pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation views argumentative discourse as an exchange of verbal moves with the sole intention (ideally) of resolving differences of opinion. The theory aggregates the age-long differences between rhetoric and dialectic (critical evaluation) by combining normative (dialectical) approaches to argumentation based on reasonableness with rhetorical approaches aiming at persuasive efficiency. The

postulation is that, an argumentative discourse has not only a dialectical but also a rhetorical dimension. This inclusion of rhetorical consideration in argumentative discourse helps in realising the rhetorical aims while also complying with the requirements of reasonable dispute resolution. This (rhetorical dimension) is termed strategic maneuvering in the extended pragma-dialectical theory.

The term “strategic maneuvering” is described by Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002:16) as the management of discourse which is aimed at making the strongest possible case while at the same time avoiding all unreasonable moves. Van Eemeren (2010:40) characterizes strategic maneuvering as the “continual efforts made in all moves that are carried out in argumentative discourse to keep the balance between reasonableness and effectiveness.” Taking up the concept of strategic maneuvering as developed by van Eemeren (2010) within the pragma-dialectic theory, Olusegun Obasanjo’s *My Watch* is assessed to discern the persuasive efficiency and the rationality of the arguments (argumentative reasonableness) presented concerning self-representation.

A key part of the theory is the critical discussion model that provides a formula for establishing whether the standpoint advanced by the protagonist of a viewpoint can withstand criticisms or doubts of an antagonist. The pragma-dialectical theory specifies the resolution process, its stages, and the various types of speech act instrumental in each particular stage. To resolve a difference of opinion on the merits, an argumentative discourse must pass through four analytic stages. The first is the confrontation stage that manifests itself in those parts of the discourse where it becomes clear that there is a standpoint that meets with real or projected doubt or contradiction, such that a potential disagreement arises (Kienpointner, 1997). The opening stage is where each party try to establish the procedural starting points they consider most workable and to state in clear terms, an unambiguous point of departure for the discussion. It is after this stage in the discourse that the parties go through the argumentation stage where there is an advancement of argumentation to overcome the other party’s doubts, and in which the other party continues to be critical until he has been convinced. This is where the acceptability or otherwise of the standpoint is tested. The fourth stage is the concluding stage, in which the parties conclude the result of their attempts to resolve the difference of opinion.

In a bid to ensuring an all-around evaluation of argumentative discourse, three inseparable aspects with distinct types of choices that are made in strategic maneuvering are distinguished by van Eemeren & Houtlosser (2002). First, due to the availability of a great number of possible arguments a protagonist can choose from for defending his standpoint, there is the need to select, from the topic potential, the line of argument that suits best. The concern on the audience demand is the second aspect. This is where the choice of how to adapt the argumentative moves made in the strategic maneuvering to the requirement pertinent to the audience that is to be reached is considered. It is expected that the protagonist makes a selection that pleases the audience or places the case in a perspective that suits the audience. While the third is the exploitation of the presentational devices which involves the choice as to how the argumentative moves are to be presented in the way that is strategically best.

In this way, the extended pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation has given a new perspective that bridges the traditional division between the dialectical approach and the rhetorical approach to argumentative discourse by enabling an integrated approach in which both dialectical and rhetorical insights are systematically taken into account. The concern in this study is to offer reflections on how the topical potential of the two controversial situations is strategically used by Obasanjo. How does Obasanjo adapt his argument strategically to the beliefs and preferences of his audience? And how are

presentational devices strategically exploited? These are the questions that an integrated dialectical and rhetorical analysis should answer for all four stages of the discussion process.

III. Research Methods

Obasanjo's *My Watch* is in three volumes. Volume One focuses on his Early Life and The Military, Volume Two details the Public and Political Affairs during his second coming as Nigeria's Head, while the Third Volume; *Now and Then*, gives an expressive reflection on the state of Nigerian political affairs after his presidency. *My Watch*; Vol. Two (Henceforth PPA) is the focus of this research because it captures the contestation on most of the recurrent issues that predominated Obasanjo's rule that this paper is interested. Through an examination of the topic potential, the audience demand, and the presentational devices, the study interrogates Olusegun Obasanjo's representation of self in PPA by appraising the arguments that are explicitly or implicitly advanced and the argumentation structures that are developed to determine the conclusion that is reached on some of the selected topical issues raised in the text.

The analysis follows Houtlosser, Jackson, and Kauffeld's conception of speech acts in argumentative interactions and van Eemeren and Grootendorst's (1993) model of critical discussion wherein all or combinations of speech acts that have a constructive function in the various stages of the resolution process are surveyed. There is an attempt to make explicit, speech acts that remain implicit in Obasanjo's arguments but are relevant to the resolution process (addition), reformulating speech acts whose function would otherwise be opaque in an unequivocal way (substitution), rearranging speech acts whose order does not reflect their function in the resolution process in a more insightful way (permutation), and abandoning speech acts that do not play a part in the defense of Obasanjo's standpoints (deletion) from consideration (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson, and Jacobs, 1993). The approach would be utilized to analyse Obasanjo's argument on Odi killings and the Third Term issues during his two terms as Nigeria's President as presented in PPA.

IV. Discussion

The analysis is organized under three inseparable aspects that are made in strategic maneuvering- topic potential, the audience demands, and the presentational devices as distinguished by van Eemeren & Houtlosser (2002). For the topic potential, Obasanjo manages to confront the disagreements on Odi military action and the Third term issue from a convenient spot by utilizing evasion strategies and arguments from a victim perspective. He used the slippery slope fallacy and exploited the audience's cultural and societal leanings to weave arguments that absolve him of any blame. The analysis reveals that Obasanjo's presentational devices include accusation of others, smokescreen techniques, prerogative argument, fallacious appeal to authority, ethotic appeal, presuppositions and negative lexicalization. At the argumentation stage, Obasanjo adopted three argumentative strategies with different pragmatic acts meant to dissuade negative opinion against his action.

4.1 Military Action in Odi

Nigerians woke to the news on the early morning of 20th November 1999 that Odi, a densely populated averagely-sized town lying at the foot of the River Nun in Bayelsa State, had been razed by the Nigerian Soldiers. Numerous News outlets reported that

rounds of Shells were thrown into the town, fighter jets bombed houses and yam barns, and at the end of the fracas, most of the houses in the community had been razed and many people killed including the king of the town. Human Rights groups put the death toll at 2500 plus. However, the Federal Government of Nigeria headed by former President Olusegun Obasanjo insisted that the number was lower. Whichever version is correct, the indisputable fact is that some people were killed and some properties were destroyed. As the head of the newly inaugurated democratic government, Olusegun Obasanjo was at the center of the storm and was blamed for authorising such a dastardly act against his people. This disagreement sets the stage for the confrontation as the former President defends his position by narrating that:

In Odi area, four policemen on legitimate security duties were killed. When the news of the killing of the policemen broke, soldiers were sent on similar security duties and five of them were killed too. I called the State Governor, Diepreye Solomon Peter Alamiyesigha, to say that as the Chief Security Officer of the State, he had a responsibility to assist in locating the killers of both the policemen and the soldiers. I impressed on him that there was no way that I or he could carry out maintenance of law and order within his State or anywhere within the country if security men on legitimate assigned security duties were killed and the killers got away free. I appealed to the Governor to use his local knowledge to ferret out information to track down some if not all, the killers. He retorted that there was nothing he could do. I then instructed the commander of the military to use all necessary intelligence to investigate and arrest some of the killers of the policemen and the soldiers. The security men and women to whom everybody run for help in the event of armed robbery or murder must be given the confidence to help victims and complainants, going where they might be treated with impunity and nobody, even their Commander-in-Chief, caring. I must retain the ability to be able to send security men anywhere their services were needed and for me to be sure that they would obey, knowing that they would be fully backed up. If we connived at the killing of security men in the legitimate pursuit of their security duties, without assurance of protection or protective reaction, we will all be unsafe and insecure. Impunity must therefore not be encouraged in any form or circumstance. I believe in human rights just as I believe in citizen's obligation and sanctity of life and, therefore, impunity in taking other people's lives, which only God alone can create, must not be condoned. There was no repeat of impunity killing of any security officer anywhere in the Niger Delta area after Odi. Source: My Watch Vol.11 (303-306).

The kind of complexity inherent in this narrative argument tends to lead readers astray as it is capable of creating uncertainty and ambiguity. For instance, the agentless passive construction in the opening stage four policemen on legitimate security duties were killed (by who) persuasively defined the victims and strategically anonymized the killers. This strategic silence is a deliberate attempt to construct the police as victims and demonise Odi. It would seem that there is no difference between the killers and Odi people. At the argumentation stage, Obasanjo adopted three argumentative strategies with different pragmatic acts meant to dissuade negative opinion against his action.

a. Blame Game

Obasanjo utilizes the practs of calling (line 3), appealing (line 8), and instructing (line 9) to weave a narrative that slyly absolves him of any wrongdoing and at the same time points to where the blame should be directed. For instance, after the killing of four policemen (line1) Obasanjo called the State Governor (line 3-4), and appealed to the Governor. The Governor's inability to act left Obasanjo with no other option than to instruct soldiers to unravel the cause of the death of the policemen and five of them were

killed too (line2). The presupposition is that the military action in Odi was embarked upon after all necessary precautionary measures have been exhausted.

The narrative is both justificatory and face-saving. Obasanjo manages to confront the disagreement from a convenient spot by highlighting the desirous consequences of not taking the action against Odi rather than responding directly to the genocidal allegation. The evasion strategy utilised is a deliberate suppression of the main issue which is the mass killing of the people of Odi by the Nigerian Military. Rather, Obasanjo approaches the topic from the victim's perspective by reconstructing the victim as being the soldiers rather than Odi villagers.

b. Smokescreen

Smokescreen technique is manifested through the exploitation of practs of instructing, investigating, and arresting. Obasanjo reiterates that what he did was to instruct (Line 9) the commander of the military to use all necessary intelligence to investigate and arrest (Line 10) some of the killers of the policemen and the soldiers. This is against a picture of killing, maiming, or destructing as being alleged and it is skewed to paint a picture of military or police action defending the rule of law and not a genocidal mission. The objective is to give an inclination that the accusation by the Nigerian public and various Human rights groups that Obasanjo intentionally ordered genocide in Odi is not true. The argumentative scheme that is employed in this narrative depicts that Obasanjo is cognizance of his rhetorical responsibility which is to veil his response to the genocidal allegation in line with the publicly held opinion that police are meant to protect not to destroy citizens.

c. Prerogative Argument

Obasanjo uses his conviction as the yardstick to determine the social advantage of the decision to strike Odi. He spells out the undesirable consequences that can befall the entire country such as the breakdown of law and order, general insecurity, and loss of confidence in the government if security men on legitimately assigned security duties were killed and the killers got away free. This is strategically placed to intimidate the opponents of his action and at the same time to save his face from being labeled as a killer rather, a safer of all. Thus, it lends credence to Obasanjo's ideological disposition that if the killers could not be tracked, Odi should be razed. However, this underlying ideology is rhetorically achieved through the manipulation of specific lexical items necessary intelligence, investigate and arrest to vague the interpretive implicitness in his line of argument and to shroud his beliefs.

To accommodate the audience demand, Obasanjo uses the slippery slope fallacy to dialectically imply that those who killed the soldiers are not just the enemy of the President but also the Nigerian populace. Therefore, for the security of all, such people and their accomplices must neither be spared nor pitied. He uses this to cement his disposition that those who are speaking against his action in Odi are also potential victims if security men are killed with such impunity. The perspective that is extensively sold to the reader is that Obasanjo is a safer whose main preoccupation at the time of deciding on Odi is to save all Nigerians.

The concluding stage however takes a new twist. At first, Obasanjo advanced an argument scheme from moral values by rebutting dissenting voices against the military action in Odi on the pretext that he believes in human rights just as he believes in citizen's obligation and sanctity of life to justify the goal that impunity in taking other people's lives, which God alone can create must not be condoned (Line 19-20). However, his justification that there was no repeat of impunity killing of any security officer anywhere

in the Niger Delta area after Odi killings (Line 21) presupposes that the action against Odi was the best and there is no regret for doing so. This is a dangerous rhetorical tactic and has elements of assumptive threat. It justifies the subjugation of Odi villagers and places a premium on the lives of security operatives. The conclusion exposes the ideological weakness in his argument and it can, therefore, be concluded that the argument fails persuasively because the rhetor did not give due consideration to the preference of his assumed audience.

4.2 The Constitution Amendment and the Third Term Saga

At the twilight of Olusegun Obasanjo's second and final term in office, various Nigerian news media outlets were awash with the speculation that the President was concocting a tenure elongation scheme through a constitutional amendment process spearheaded by the President's self-appointed members of Political Conference Group. It was widely speculated that the process would allow Obasanjo to serve one more term after the constitutionally allowed two terms. The rumour was quite disturbing that Nigerians were expecting the President to make a statement to either denounce or affirm the rumour. The former President, however, failed to make his position officially known to the public until after the nullification of the whole constitutional amendment process by the 5th National Assembly. The much-awaited detailed clarification only came out in his autobiographical account published after almost seven years where he argued that;

Although the Constitution as it is practised places the responsibility for its amendment on the Assemblies, I thought that establishing a national political conference composed of selected representatives across the board could tremendously enhance the representation and openness of the amendment. The Political Conference Group was finely composed to include all groups that needed to be represented including for the first time, Nigerians in the Diaspora. Of course, no human arrangement or effort can ever be regarded as perfect as perfection is of God and belongs only to God. Except for muted misgivings, the composition was generally accepted

Meanwhile, the National Assembly had begun its process of Constitution amendment under the Deputy Senate President, Senator Mantu, and the Deputy Speaker, Honourable Austin Opara. To respect the constitutional right of the Assemblies to amend the constitution, I formally handed it over to the National Assembly at a joint meeting of the Senate and House of Representatives. I regarded my job done at that stage. But what transpired after that was monumental mischief and misrepresentation by a man I personally brought into government and who believed that he would ride to become president on the ashes of Obasanjo's presidency. Through lies, propaganda, blackmail, and the purchase of all buyable in the media and the National Assembly, he and his associates mounted a campaign of calumny.

The constitution amendment which contained more than one hundred issues was turned into a one-issue affair – term of office. Whereas the committee considering “term of office” had put up three recommendations for the National Assembly, the chief mischief-maker personalised the issue to refer to my own term of office and called it “the third term”. The so-called third term developed a life of its own. It was stoked by the chief and his associates. Obasanjo as an ambitious man who wants a third term became the issue rather than the constitution amendment. On the few occasions that I denied my involvement in the constitution amendment in any way, the print media blocked it out.

Sen Florence Ita Giwa, my Special Adviser on National Assembly matters maintained that " At no time was I mandated by President Obasanjo nor did I facilitate a strategy session between the National Assembly and the Presidency to discuss a tenure elongation or third term bill. If my adviser on National Assembly Matters, Senator Ita-

Giwa, did not know about my so-heralded third term ambition or was sent to anybody or group in the National Assembly to work on such a bill on my behalf, and if my Attorney General, Honourable Bayo Ojo, was neither secretly nor openly requested to work on a third term agenda, how can I be charged with maneuvering or planning for a third term? My watch Vol. 11 (87-112).

Pragmatically, the narrative is a standard argumentative situation with two opposing parties; Obasanjo vs Atiku (Lines 18-19, 27, 47) who are embroiled in a succession battle, and the third party is the Nigerian media (Lines 21, 30, 53-54) and others who are both portrayed as parties that are accomplices in the campaign of calumny through lies, propaganda, blackmail, and purchase of all buyable (lines 20-22), for whom the campaign of calumny against Obasanjo becomes more important than the wholesome constitutional amendment (lines 25–26) or are manipulated and misled (lines 50–54) and those, whose perceptions are suffused with hatred and recriminations (lines 64–67).

Ordinarily, one can infer that Obasanjo is explaining his roles in the constitutional amendment crisis. A simple reading of this treatise suggests that the former President offers to assist the National Assemblies in performing its constitutional role of amending the constitution. However, considering the timing of this offer and the furore generated by the composition of the group members handpicked by the President, it becomes complicated as to what the intentions are and whether they are genuine or not.

In confronting this disagreement, Obasanjo manipulates the position of the parties strategically by utilizing the persuasiveness of the positive version of ‘pragmatic argument. He extols the positive effects of setting up the national political conference which is to enhance the representation and openness of the amendment (Line 3-4) and listed all the desirable positive outcomes using the practs of deliberating and recommending geared towards achieving the goal of making Nigeria indissolubly great (Line 4-8). This type of strategic maneuvering is in danger of becoming fallacious because Obasanjo did not mention any negative effect of his meddling with the National Assembly affairs.

An examination of how Obasanjo’s argument is adapted to his audience explicates four types of strategic maneuvering. One is blame-game wherein the former President sells his ideology of Obasanjo saves all by emphasizing that the Political Conference Group was finely composed to include all groups that needed to be represented but for the monumental mischief and misrepresentation by a man I (Obasanjo) personally brought into government that transpired afterward. The strategy is also utilized to paint a picture of his opponents who blocked Obasanjo from denying his involvement (Line 27) to justify the goal that the so-called Third term was stoked by the chief (Atiku) and his associates.

The second is an appeal to authority which can be unproblematic and may even be conclusive provided that the source being referenced is indeed a good source to rely on in the case concerned. Obasanjo boasts of the truth of his thesis (Line 30) by alluding to the authority of Senator Oman Hambagda Line 32) and Senator Ibrahim Mantu (Line 34). Also cited is the authority of Senator Florence Ita-Giwa and Honourable Bayo Ojo who are Obasanjo’s National Assembly Liaison Officer and Attorney General respectively. Obasanjo’s conclusion on this standpoint is that if these personalities do not know about a third term, there is no justification for being accused of plotting a third term.

To test the acceptability of the standpoint, it is imperative to examine the opposing views or the likely bias from the audience. Thus, to reach an agreement on the legitimacy of the authority being cited, the other party needs to share in your sentiment and agree that you have cited a competent source. However, the fact that both Florence Ita Giwa and Honourable Bayo Ojo are Obasanjo’s political appointees and they are answerable to him nullifies this authority and therefore puts a question mark on the source of Obasanjo’s

defense of this very important allegation against him. His appeal to the authority derails. It is considered irrelevant, and therefore fallacious.

The third is an ad hominem attack. Ad hominem fallacy is committed if the point of attacking the person is to attack some claim (or argument) from that person. Obasanjo's use of direct attacks against all opposing views weakens his argument. Atiku Abubakar is a blatant and shameless liar (Line 47) whose main goal is to use the third term plot against Obasanjo as a means of riding on its ashes to be a Nigerian President (circumstantial). Nasir el-Rufai is a brilliant man, economical with the truth (Line 51), and has a track record of a turncoat (abusive), Condoleezza Rice and the US Embassy received their information from the mischievous elements in the Nigerian Media. (Line 52-54). The use of abusive and circumstantial ad hominem attacks in supporting the claim undermines rational discourse and brings Obasanjo's credibility into question. The argument signals element of desperation and lack of quality. For instance, his description of Nasir el-Rufai as a brilliant man who has a track record of a turncoat is completely irrelevant to the argument, and poisoning Condoleezza Rice's source of information is an explaining away technique that is logically incorrect and structurally unsound.

Another presentational means used for strengthening the argument at the concluding stage is an ethotic appeal. Appeal to ethos can be used to maneuver strategically when the arguer has successfully established credibility with the intended audience such that the audience is convinced that the writer is trustworthy or believable. Obasanjo mentioned his past achievements as a leader to influence the audience's opinion. This takes the form of a loaded question If I did not want tenure elongation when I was military Head of State why should I be accused of coup plotting by Abacha and tenure elongation by Atiku? It draws its strategic significance from Obasanjo's political antecedents and emotionally compels the readers to share in Obasanjo's reasoning that the accusation was rather gratuitous and vindictive. However, the inflammatory nature of this purgation derails the rationality of the argument. His declaration that I only need to satisfy my God, my conscience and those who genuinely wish to know the truth further expose the ineffectiveness of Obasanjo's rhetorical argumentation strategy. In all. Obasanjo manipulates the speech act of accusations and he does this in a highly elevated narrative style of story-telling that protects his image as a leader and Nigeria's watchman.

V. Conclusion

The analysis reveals that Obasanjo's presentational devices include: positive pragmatic argument, facts, presuppositions, negative lexicalization, and passive construction while the strategic maneuvering techniques deployed are blame game, smokescreen techniques, arguing from personal prerogative and public advantage, fallacious appeal to authority, ad-hominem attacks, and ethotic appeal. The paper posits that the focus of Obasanjo's narration is not on 'redemption' but 'justification' and the argument adopted the standard strategic maneuvering of political rhetoric which is often polarizing and destructive. Hence, his strategic maneuvering derails. In the study, self-representational strategies were analyzed and this has led to reaching some conclusions that are significant to the practice of rhetorical discourse analysis on the one hand, and, on the other, the deployment of rhetorical arguments in an autobiographical discourse.

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